SCJ 648 – Qualitative Research Methods
Fall 2017

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Class Schedule: 571 CLJ, 6:00-8:40pm, Mondays
Office Hours: 1:30-2:30pm Mondays or by appointment

Course Objectives: Despite criminology’s deep qualitative roots, the field is now one in which quantitative methods are predominant, as are the epistemologies that hold these methods in high esteem. Despite the routine characterization in criminology of qualitative works as “exploratory,” “descriptive,” or even “anecdotal,” such works have and continue to offer significant theoretical insights on crime and justice. To understand these insights requires an understanding of qualitative ways of thinking and knowing, and appropriate standards for assessing methodological and theoretical rigor. Qualitative Research Methods investigates the philosophical underpinnings and goals of qualitative research, in the social sciences generally and in criminology/criminal justice specifically. The course is not about the practice of qualitative research, but instead designed to provide foundational knowledge from which you can build in applied courses that more deeply engage with the ‘nuts and bolts’ of study design, data collection, data analysis, and presentation. Issues under consideration will include:

• The place of qualitative research in criminology/criminal justice
• The processes by which qualitative researchers move between method, theory building, theoretical refinement and expansion
• Strategies for ensuring methodological rigor in qualitative research
• The role of positionality, including insider and outsider statuses, in qualitative research and theorizing
• Considerations of the future of qualitative criminological research, including its relationship to quantitative criminological knowledge-building

Learning Goals: This course is designed to prepare you, upon completion, to:

1. Understand the goals and philosophical underpinnings of qualitative research, and how such methodologies contribute to knowledge-building in criminology and criminal justice
2. Develop critical thinking skills about criminological research through an in-depth exploration of (1) how qualitative scholars orient to the research enterprise, their epistemological commitments and approaches to theory, key debates among qualitative scholars and how these create the foundations for qualitative research; and (2) how these are positioned and understood in the field
3. Understand the ways in which qualitative and quantitative research in criminology and criminal justice might better work in tandem for knowledge-building
4. Read, appraise and evaluate qualitative research
**Required Readings:**
1. Selections from Jody Miller and Wilson Palacios, eds., *Qualitative Research in Criminology (QRC)*
2. Additional articles and chapters posted on Blackboard
3. Carla Shedd, *Unequal City: Race, Schools, and Perceptions of Injustice*
5. John Van Maanan, *Tales of the Field (2nd edition)*

**Course Requirements:** The final grade will be assessed based upon your performance on the following assignments:

*DISCUSSION LEADERSHIP – 15%*

Three times during the semester, you will be teamed with one or more additional students to lead class discussion of the readings. For this role, you should be prepared to summarize the main arguments of the readings, consider the ways they dialogue with or challenge one another, and have questions prepared to facilitate class discussion.

*READING REACTION ESSAYS – 40%*

Each week, you are expected to submit a 2-3 page reaction essay prior to class. The reaction essays are designed as an opportunity for you to reflect on the readings, discuss ideas, and/or raise questions, by thinking through the philosophical, methodological, and/or theoretical issues raised by the readings, and in particular, paying attention to how different readings engage or debate with one another. Please do so from an analytic perspective, not simply based on personal beliefs. These should be typed and emailed to me by noon on the day of class.

*ASSESSMENT: GENERATING CROSS-METHOD RESEARCH QUESTIONS – 20%*

This assignment requires you to select two articles – one qualitative and one quantitative – each of which investigates a question or topic related to crime or criminal justice. Drawing specifically (though not exclusively) from the position presented in Wright et al. (in *QRC*), provide, for each article, a careful assessment of the main findings and contribution to knowledge. Then, for the quantitative article, identify the specific concepts and ideas that might be better understood and further refined through a qualitative investigation, explaining why and how this might be accomplished. For the qualitative article, identify the specific concepts and theoretical elaborations that merit testing using quantitative methods, again explaining why and how this might be accomplished. In selecting articles, I suggest relying on pieces that appear in what are considered leading journals in the field (for example, *Criminology, Journal of Quantitative Criminology, British Journal of Criminology*), criminological articles in leading sociology journals (for example, *ASR, AJS, Social Problems, Social Forces*) or otherwise are considered seminal works.

*GROUP PROJECT: EVALUATING CRIMINOLOGY METHODS TEXTS – 25%*

Inspired by Schwartz-Shea and Yanow’s assessment of methodology texts in political science, as a group, you will assess how methodology textbooks construct criminology/criminal justice as an academic field. You will work together to (a) identify the key methods textbooks utilized by instructors in our field and (b) determine an assessment strategy across texts. Each of you will be responsible for an assessment of two texts, and you should plan to meet one or more times with the other student(s) assessing each selected text, to compare your assessment and build toward a consensus evaluation. Please ensure that you do not work with the same student(s) for the two texts evaluated.
Class Participation
The Reading Reaction Essays and Discussion Leadership assignments are designed to ensure that you actively participate in the seminar discussion and come to class ready to engage. This is a basic expectation for a graduate course. Two unexcused absences will result in the loss of a letter grade; each additional unexcused absence will result in a half letter grade reduction. All members of this class are required to conduct themselves in an appropriate and professional manner.

Academic Conduct Policy
Please do your own work. Students who plagiarize will receive a zero on the assignment, and the case may be forwarded to the University’s academic misconduct board. Plagiarism includes direct verbatim quotations lifted from written sources without citation, as well as paraphrasing quotes without citations. If you are using the ideas of an author, give the author credit for her or his work. For more details, see the document Avoiding Plagiarism posted on the course Blackboard site.

Disability Services: Students who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact the Office of Disability Services for Students (973-353-5300) as soon as possible to ensure that such accommodations are arranged in a timely fashion.

PLEASE NOTE: I will make every attempt to stick to the syllabus as written, but scheduling conflicts may come up that require us to make minor adjustments.

Course Schedule & Assigned Readings

9/18   Introduction and Course Overview

9/25   Qualitative Research: A History and Overview
READINGS: Adler and Adler, Membership Roles in Field Research, Part I: The History and Epistemology of Fieldwork Roles
Charmaz, “An Invitation to Grounded Theory”
Miller and Palacios, “Introduction: The Value of Qualitative Research for Advancing Criminological Theory” (QRC)
Hobbs, “Criminal Practice: Fieldwork and Improvisation in Difficult Circumstances” (QRC)
Agar, “Kites from Drug Research Rehab” (QRC)
Wright et al., “Where are We? Why Are We Here? Where are We Going? How Do We Get There?” (QRC)
Questions of Ontology and Epistemology

DISCUSSION LEADERS: Chase and Chris

READINGS: Shweder, “Quanta and Qualia: What is the ‘Object’ of Ethnographic Method?”
Becker, “The Epistemology of Qualitative Research”
Mishler, “Missing Persons: Recovering Developmental Stories/Histories”
Groves and Lynch, “Reconciling Structural and Subjective Approaches to the Study of Crime”

Positionality and Reflexivity

DISCUSSION LEADERS: Christiane and Lauren

READINGS: Twine, “Racial Ideologies and Racial Methodologies”
Bourgois, “Violating Apartheid in the United States: On the Streets and in Academia”
Bucerius, “Being Trusted with ‘Inside Knowledge’: Ethnographic Research with Male Muslim Drug Dealers” (QRC)
Contreras, “Recalling to Life: Understanding Stickup Kids through Insider Qualitative Research” (QRC)
Lichterman, “Interpretive Reflexivity in Ethnography”
Lather, “Issues of Validity in Openly Ideological Research”

Theory and Qualitative Research

DISCUSSION LEADERS: Shelby, Valeriya and Vijay

READINGS: Snow et al., “Elaborating Analytic Ethnography”
Lichterman and Reed, “Theory and Contrastive Explanation in Ethnography”
Charmaz, “Reconstructing Theorizing in Grounded Theory Studies” and “Symbolic Interactionism and Grounded Theory”
Burawoy, “The Extended Case Method”
Tavory and Timmermans, “Two Cases of Ethnography”

Approaches to Theory in Qualitative Criminology/Criminal Justice Research

DISCUSSION LEADERS: Chris, Lauren, and Vijay

READINGS: Manning, “Qualitative Research as Theorizing” (QRC)
Zhang and Chin, “Swim Against the Tide: Using Qualitative Data to Build a Theory on Chinese Human Smuggling” (QRC)
Haney, “Observing Prisons, Conceptualizing Punishment: Ethnography and the Possibility of Theory” (QRC)
Liebling, “Appreciative Inquiry, Generative Theory, and the ‘Failed State’ Prison” (QRC)
Rios, et al., “Ethnographies of Race, Crime and Justice”
10/30  **Interviews and Narratives: Debates and Insights**  
Preliminary Qualitative Analysis Strategies  

**DISCUSSION LEADERS:** Chase and Shelby  
**READINGS:**  
- Jerolmack and Khan, “Talk is Cheap: Ethnography and the Attitudinal Fallacy”  
- Orbuch, “People’s Accounts Count”  
- Miller, “Grounding the Analysis of Gender and Crime”  
- Sandberg, “What Can Lies Tell Us About Life?”  
- Presser and Sandberg, “Research Strategies for Narrative Criminology” (QRC)  
- Charmaz, “The Logic of Grounded Theory Coding Practices and Initial Coding”  
- Spradley, “Analyzing Ethnographic Interviews” and “Making a Domain Analysis”

11/6  **Reading Ethnography I**  
DUE: CROSS-METHOD ASSESSMENT  

**DISCUSSION LEADERS:** Christiane and Valeriya  
**READINGS:**  
- Shedd, *Unequal City: Race, Schools, and Perceptions of Injustice*

11/13  **Photo-Ethnography in Criminology**  

**Guest Lecturer:** Heith Copes, University of Alabama-Birmingham  
**READINGS:**  
- Bourgois, “The Moral Economies of Homeless Heroin Addicts”  
- Ranard, “A Little Less Shock and More Therapy”  
- Copes and Ragland, “Considering the Implicit Meanings in Photographs in Narrative Criminology”  
- Marsh et al., “Creating Visual Differences”  
- Copes et al., “Photo-Elicitation Interviews with Vulnerable Populations”

11/20  NO CLASS: HAPPY THANKSGIVING!!

11/27  **Reading Ethnography II**  

**DISCUSSION LEADERS:** Chase and Lauren  
**READINGS:**  

12/4  **Writing Strategies I: Issues of Representation**  

Presentation and Discussion: How Research Methods Texts Construct Criminology  

DUE: METHODOLOGY TEXTBOOK ASSESSMENTS  

**DISCUSSION LEADERS:** Chris, Shelby, and Valeriya  
**READINGS:**  
- Van Maanen, *Tales of the Field*  
- Fine, “Ten Lies of Ethnography”  
- Donmoyer, “Two (Very) Different Worlds: The Cultures of Policymaking and Qualitative Research”
DISCUSSION LEADERS: Christiane and Vijay

READINGS:
- Decker et al., “A Woman’s Place is in the Home”
- Mullins and Wright, “Gender, Social Networks, and Residential Burglary”
- McCorkel, “Embodied Surveillance and the Gendering of Punishment”
- Carbone-Lopez and Miller, “Precocious Role Entry as a Mediating Factor in Women’s Methamphetamine Use: Implications for Life-Course and Pathways Research”
- Lindegaard et al., “Cultural Heterogeneity, Transitory Mobility and Victimization Risk among Young Men of Color: Insights from an Ethnographic Study in Cape Town, South Africa”