

# SCJ 648 – Qualitative Research Methods

## Fall 2023

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Class Schedule: CLJ 567, 1:00-3:40pm, Mondays

Office Hours: 4-5pm 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 Canvas
3. Mario Small and Jessica Calarco, *Qualitative Literacy: A Guide to Evaluating Ethnographic and Interview Research* (University of California Press)
4. Charles Bell, *Suspended: Punishment, Violence, and the Failure of School Safety* (Johns Hopkins University Press)
5. Judah Schept, *Coal, Cages, Crisis: The Rise of the Prison Economy in Central Appalachia* (NYU Press)
6. Michael Walker, *Indefinite: Doing Time in Jail* (Oxford University Press)

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

#### *DISCUSSION LEADERSHIP – 10%*

Twice 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 briefly summarize the main arguments of the readings, consider the ways they dialogue with or challenge one another, and have questions prepared to facilitate and guide class discussion. For substantive readings, be sure to focus careful attention on relevant methodological issues/assessment. Please submit the notes/materials you have prepared for discussion leadership *prior to* the start of class.

#### *READING REACTION ESSAYS – 40%*

Each week, you are expected to submit an approximately 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. Please do so from an *analytic* perspective, not simply based on personal beliefs. This could include, for example, reflecting on how the week's reading(s) engage, dialogue or debate with one another; how they dialogue with previous course readings/materials, and/or how they relate to other topics or debates relevant to the course. *You are NOT required to write a reading reaction essay on the dates you are responsible for leading class discussion.*

#### *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 that scholars could further build from in future research. Then, for the quantitative article, identify the specific concepts and ideas that might be better understood and further refined through additional 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*, *Punishment & Society*, *Theoretical Criminology*, *Justice Quarterly*), criminological articles in leading sociology journals (for example, *ASR*, *AJS*, *Social Problems*, *Social Forces*) or otherwise are considered seminal works. Please get my approval if you use article(s) that are not listed above. Be sure to provide full citations for each article.

### *CODING EXERCISE – 20%*

While our primary focus in this seminar is to understand the foundations of qualitative research, an introduction to the analytic ‘nuts and bolts’ of such work is one way to illustrate these foundations in practice. For this exercise, you will be provided with a single qualitative interview, and will complete preliminary coding of the interview utilizing three distinct coding strategies (open, domain, and narrative). In addition to submitting all your produced coding materials (e.g., marked up transcripts, other work products), you will (1) summarize your preliminary findings, (2) compare and contrast the insights gleaned from the three strategies, and (3) offer your suggestions for how the study might be further developed to more deeply investigate the themes you have preliminarily identified as important and meaningful, considering, for example, sampling and further analysis.

### *CODING EXERCISE EXCHANGE – 10%*

The goal of the coding exercise exchange is (1) for each of you to have the opportunity to receive detailed feedback from a colleague about your preliminary coding, and (2) to evaluate your own coding in relation to a colleague’s. Coding involves active processes of interpretation and sense-making, which means data analyses are inseparable from study findings – each of us may see things others missed and see things through different interpretative lenses. There are thus two parts to this assignment. Please provide to me and the colleague whose coding exercise you review: (1) feedback on the thoroughness and insights of their coding, and (2) assesses and compares your own coding with that of your colleague, considering the following: What did both of you see? What did one/the other miss? Did you see anything in different ways/with a different interpretive lens? To what consequence?

### **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.

**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**

9/11 Introduction and Course Overview

- 9/18 Qualitative Research: A History and Overview  
*DISCUSSION LEADERS:* Jordan & Ryan  
*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*)
- 9/25 Questions of Ontology and Epistemology  
*DISCUSSION LEADERS:* Emily & Rosheka  
*READINGS:* Shweder, “*Quanta* and *Qualia*: What is the ‘Object’ of Ethnographic Method?”  
 Becker, “The Epistemology of Qualitative Research”  
 Groves and Lynch, “Reconciling Structural and Subjective Approaches to the Study of Crime”  
 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*)
- 10/2 Positionality, Reflexivity, Ethics  
*DISCUSSION LEADERS:* Carolina & Chloé  
*READINGS:* Twine, “Racial Ideologies and Racial Methodologies”  
 Bucarius, “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*)  
 Panfil, “Queer Anomalies? Overcoming Assumptions in Criminological Research with Gay Men” (*QRC*)  
 Vanderstaay, “One Hundred Dollars and a Dead Man”  
 Lichterman, “Interpretive Reflexivity in Ethnography”  
 Lather, “Issues of Validity in Openly Ideological Research”
- 10/9 Theory and Qualitative Research  
*DISCUSSION LEADERS:* Robert & Sarah  
*READINGS:* Snow and Morrill, “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”  
 Bajc, “Abductive Ethnography of Practice in Highly Uncertain Conditions”

- 10/16 Approaches to Theory in Qualitative Criminology/Criminal Justice Research  
*DISCUSSION LEADERS:* Allan & Kathy  
*READINGS:* 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*)  
 Lynch, “Penal Artifacts: Mining Documents to Advance Punishment and Society Theory” (*QRC*)  
 Ferrell, “Cultural Criminology as Method and Theory” (*QRC*)
- 10/23 Coding Qualitative Data: A Brief Introduction  
*DISCUSSION LEADERS:* Jordan & Katy  
*READINGS:* Miles, Huberman and Saldaña, “Fundamentals of Qualitative Data Analysis”  
 Charmaz, “The Logic of Grounded Theory Coding Practices and Initial Coding”  
 Spradley, “Analyzing Ethnographic Interviews” and “Making a Domain Analysis”  
 Presser and Sandberg, “Research Strategies for Narrative Criminology” (*QRC*)
- 10/30 NO CLASS: ASIAN CRIMINOLOGICAL SOCIETY MEETINGS
- 11/6 Interviews and Narratives: Debates and Insights  
**DUE: CODING EXERCISE**  
*DISCUSSION LEADERS:* Ryan & Sandy  
*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?”
- 11/13 Assessing Qualitative Research  
**DUE: CODING EXERCISE EXCHANGE**  
*DISCUSSION LEADERS:* Robert & Rosheka  
*READINGS:* Small and Calarco, *Qualitative Literacy*
- 11/20 Reading Ethnography I  
*DISCUSSION LEADERS:* Kathy & Katy  
*READINGS:* Bell, *Suspended*
- 11/27 Reading Ethnography II  
*DISCUSSION LEADERS:* Chloé & Sarah  
*READINGS:* Schept, *Coal, Cages, Crisis*

12/4 Reading Ethnography III

**DUE: CROSS-METHOD ASSESSMENT**

*DISCUSSION LEADERS:* Carolina & Emily

*READINGS:* Walker, *Indefinite*

12/11 Writing for Criminology & Criminal Justice Journals

*DISCUSSION LEADERS:* Allan & Sandy

*READINGS:* Wooten, “If It Don’t Kill You, It’ll Take Away Your Life”

DiPietro, “Roads Diverged”

Fredriksson and Gálmander, “Fearful Futures and Haunting Histories in Women’s Desistance from Crime”

Pennington and Farrell, “Role of Voice in the Legal Process”

Huebner et al., “Structural Discrimination and Social Stigma Among Individuals Incarcerated for Sexual Offenses”

Rocha Beardall, “Police Legitimacy Regimes and the Suppression of Citizen Oversight in Response to Police Violence”

Ellis, “Redemption and Reproach”

Crewe et al., “Comparing Deep-end Confinement in England & Wales and Norway”

## Course Packet

- Adler, P. and P. Adler. 1987. *Membership Roles in Field Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Bajc, V. 2012. "Abductive Ethnography of Practice in Highly Uncertain Conditions." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. 642: 72-85.
- Becker, H.S. 1996. "The Epistemology of Qualitative Research" Pp. 53-71 in *Ethnography and Human Development: Context and Meaning in Social Inquiry*, edited by R. Jessor, A. Colby, and R.A. Shweder. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Burawoy, M. 1988. "The Extended Case Method." *Sociological Theory*. 16: 4-33.
- Charmaz, K. 2014. *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Crewe, B., J. Laursen, and K. Mjåland. 2023. "Comparing Deep-end Confinement in England & Wales and Norway." *Criminology*. 61: 204-233.
- DiPietro, S.M. 2019. "Roads Diverged: An Examination of Violent and Nonviolent Pathways in the Aftermath of the Bosnian War." *Criminology*. 57: 74-104.
- Ellis, R. 2020. "Redemption and Reproach: Religion and Carceral Control in Action among Women in Prison." *Criminology*. 58: 747-772.
- Fredriksson, T. and R. Gålnander. 2020. "Fearful Futures and Haunting Histories in Women's Desistance from Crime: A Longitudinal Study of Desistance as an Uncanny Process." *Criminology*. 58: 599-618.
- Groves, W.B. and M.J. Lynch. 1990. "Reconciling Structural and Subjective Approaches to the Study of Crime." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*. 27: 348-375.
- Huebner, B.M., K.R. Kras, and B. Pleggenkuhle. 2019. "Structural Discrimination and Social Stigma Among Individuals Incarcerated for Sexual Offenses: Reentry Across the Rural-Urban Continuum." *Criminology*. 57: 715-738.
- Jerolmack, C. and S. Khan. 2014. "Talk is Cheap: Ethnography and the Attitudinal Fallacy." *Sociological Methods & Research*. 43: 178-209.
- Lather, P. 1986. "Issues of Validity in Openly Ideological Research: Between a Rock and a Soft Place." *Interchange*. 17: 63-84.
- Lichterman, P. 2017. "Interpretive Reflexivity in Ethnography." *Ethnography*. 18: 35-45.
- Lichterman, P. and I.A. Reed. 2015. "Theory and Contrastive Explanation in Ethnography." *Sociological Methods & Research*. 44: 585-635.

- Miles, M.B., A.M. Huberman and J. Saldaña. 2019. "Fundamentals of Qualitative Data Analysis." Pp. 61-99 in *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Miller, J. 2011. "Grounding the Analysis of Gender and Crime: Accomplishing and Interpreting Qualitative Interview Research." Pp. 49-62 in *The Sage Handbook of Criminological Research Methods*, edited by David Gadd, Susanne Karstedt, and Steven F. Messner. London: Sage Publications.
- Orbuch, T.L. 1997. "People's Accounts Count: The Sociology of Accounts." *Annual Review of Sociology*. 23: 455-478.
- Pennington, L. and A. Farrell. 2019. "Role of Voice in the Legal Process." *Criminology*. 57: 343-368.
- Rocha Beardall, T. 2022. "Police Legitimacy Regimes and the Suppression of Citizen Oversight in Response to Police Violence." *Criminology*. 60: 740-765.
- Sandberg, S. 2010. "What Can 'Lies' Tell Us About Life? Notes Towards a Framework of Narrative Criminology." *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*. 21: 447-465.
- Shweder, R.A. 1996. "*Quanta* and *Qualia*: What is the 'Object' of Ethnographic Method?" Pp. 175-182 in *Ethnography and Human Development: Context and Meaning in Social Inquiry*, edited by R. Jessor, A. Colby, and R.A. Shweder. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Snow, D.A. and C. Morrill. 2003. "Elaborating Analytic Ethnography: Linking Fieldwork and Theory." *Ethnography*. 4: 181-200.
- Spradley, J.P. 1979. *The Ethnographic Interview*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Tavory, I. and S. Timmermans. 2009. "Two Cases of Ethnography: Grounded Theory and the Extended Case Method." *Ethnography*. 10: 243-263.
- Twine, F.W. 2000. "Racial Ideologies and Racial Methodologies." Pp. 1-34 in *Racing Research, Researching Race: Methodological Dilemmas in Critical Race Studies*, edited by F.W. Twine and J.W. Warren. New York: NYU Press.
- Vanderstaay, S.L. 2005. "One Hundred Dollars and a Dead Man: Ethical Decision Making in Ethnographic Research." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*. 34: 371-409.
- Wooten, T. 2020. "'If It Don't Kill You, It'll Take Away Your Life': Survival Strategies and Isolation in a Long-running Gun Conflict." *Criminology*. 60: 581-605.



### **Accommodation and Support Statement**

Rutgers University-Newark (RU-N) is committed to the creation of an inclusive and safe learning environment for all students and the University as a whole. RU-N has identified the following resources to further its mission of access and support:

**For Individuals Experiencing Disability:** The Office of Disability Services (ODS) works with students with medical, physical, and/or mental conditions who encounter disabling barriers to determine reasonable and appropriate accommodations for access. Students who have completed the process with ODS and have approved accommodations are provided a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) specific to each course. To initiate accommodations for their course students must both provide the LOA and have a conversation with the course instructor about the accommodations. This should occur as early in the semester as possible. More information can be found at the [RU-N ODS website \(ods.newark.rutgers.edu\)](https://ods.newark.rutgers.edu). Contact ODS at (973) 353-5375 or via email at [ods@newark.rutgers.edu](mailto:ods@newark.rutgers.edu).

**For Individuals who are Pregnant:** The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance is available to assist with any concerns or potential accommodations related to pregnancy. Students may contact the Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance at (973) 353-5063 or via email at [TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu](mailto:TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu).

**For Short-term Absence Verification:** The Office of the Dean of Students can help with absences related to religious observance, emergency or unavoidable conflict (illness, personal or family emergency, etc.). Students should refer to [University Policy 10.2.7](#) for information about expectations and responsibilities. The Office of the Dean of Students can be contacted by calling (973) 353-5063 or emailing [deanofstudents@newark.rutgers.edu](mailto:deanofstudents@newark.rutgers.edu).

**For Individuals with temporary conditions/injuries:** The Office of the Dean of Students can assist students who are experiencing a temporary condition or injury (broken or sprained limbs, concussions, recovery from surgery, etc.). Students experiencing a temporary condition or injury should submit a request using the following link: <https://temporaryconditions.rutgers.edu>.

**For Gender or Sex-Based Discrimination or Harassment:** The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance can assist students who are experiencing any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, or stalking. Students can report an incident to the Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance by calling (973) 353-1906 or emailing [TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu](mailto:TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu). Incidents may also be reported by using the following link: [tinyurl.com/RUNReportingForm](https://tinyurl.com/RUNReportingForm). For more information, students should refer to the University's Title IX Policy and Grievance Procedures located at <https://uec.rutgers.edu/wp-content/uploads/60-1-33-current-1.pdf>

**For support related to Interpersonal Violence:** The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance (VPVA) can provide any student with confidential support. VPVA is a confidential resource and does **not** have a reporting obligation to Title IX. Students can contact the office by calling (973) 353-1918 or emailing [run.vpva@rutgers.edu](mailto:run.vpva@rutgers.edu). VPVA also maintains a confidential text-based helpline available to students; students can text (973) 339-0734 for support. Students do not need to be a victim/survivor of violence to receive assistance; any student can receive services, information, and support.

**For Crisis and Concerns:** The Campus Awareness Response and Education (CARE) Team works with students in crisis to develop a plan of support plan and address personal situations that might impact their academic performance. Connect with the CARE Team by using the following link: [tinyurl.com/RUNCARE](https://tinyurl.com/RUNCARE) or emailing [careteam@rutgers.edu](mailto:careteam@rutgers.edu).

**For Psychological Support (Stress, Mood, Family Issues, Substance Use concerns and other personal challenges):** The Rutgers University-Newark Counseling Center provides individual therapy and support groups for students dealing with psychological issues. To schedule an appointment, email [counseling@newark.rutgers.edu](mailto:counseling@newark.rutgers.edu) or call (973) 353-5805.

Additional support is available to any RU-N student through Uwill services:

- Umatch: Teletherapy with flexible scheduling, starting with a free account.
- Uhelp: Crisis support at 833-646-1526 (available 24/7/365).
- Urise: Wellness-based video collection with a free account.

Access Uwill@RUN at <https://my.rutgers.edu> using your netid. Services are confidential and free.

**For emergencies,** call 911 or Rutgers University Police Department at (973) 353-5111.