

# Research design research paper example

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## Introduction

Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California is a book that is authored by Ruth Gilmore. The content in the book is as a result of research that was done in California Prisons (Gilmore 34-45). The author takes an ironic reproach to the conservative politicians and self-proclaimed criminologists who argue that prisonisation is the rational process to end crime rates and dispel fear from the streets. She takes a sharp critique at the unprecedented prison expansion in the United States. California is nicknamed 'the Golden State' since it houses natural beauty within rectangular borders. The power of the state is exemplified by golden gulag. The prison industry in California is hidden from the public domain. The prison is neither detected by sound or sight since the prison is nestled within the mountains especially in Great Central Valley. The existence of the prison is felt through the taxes paid to the state for its maintenance. Billions of money has been assigned to it in terms of salaries that are paid to the guards. Gilmore, in her book, exposes the journey of rehabilitative programs of 70's to a situation in which there is super incarceration. Gilmore point out that the crime rate increased in 1980 and declining thereafter but unevenly. The population in the prison grew to about 500 percent between the years 1982-2000.

In her book, Gilmore discusses two theoretical terms. She discusses the relationship between surplus labour and economic restructuring of in California. In her book, Gilmore states that poverty is on the rise. Gilmore analyses mass incarceration in the Golden state. She hypothesizes the economic and geographic conditions which could have contributed to

massive growth of population. The central thesis in her book is about the prison boom and the fourfold surplus such as capital, labour and state capacity. She discusses the mechanisms behind the finances that support the prisons. She goes an extra mile to illustrate how the supply and demand curve has led to prison boom and rendered the construction immune to public speculation.

Gilmore explores the intentions behind the prison system and the reasons behind the growth in the past forty years. She gives three possible accounts that led to the booming of the prison industry. The first is the concern raised by the public on the crime rates and the social decadence. This state of affairs sparked implementation of tough crime policies. The second reason, she cites is the increase in drug dependence and the threat the public faces due to unrestrained use of the same ( Gilmore 34-45). The third reason behind this prison boom is structural changes in the employment that have made people to indulge in illegal ways eking a living.

Historically, the purpose of prison was to solve the above problems through four processes which are; rehabilitation, incapacitation, deterrence and retribution. Among the four, the accepted goal is incapacitation. This is through isolation from the target community to reduce the crime rate.

Gilmore chooses California as the case study due to its unique history and the structure. The diversity in industry, population, gender, locale and citizenship has led to inequalities (Gilmore 34-45).

These problems have been rooted in the historical uneven development of the state. The state experienced a surplus of land, finance capital, and state capacity (Pattillo 36-45). She explains that the development of prison

industry aimed at fixing the existing problems. It was meant to use the idle land and the citizens invested in the public institution. This institution took over 160, 000 workers from the streets. The privatization of the prisons for profit led to the boom of prison industry.

Qualitative and quantitative research designs are distinct from each other and require a wise choice in order to perform the research. Gilmore chooses and uses the right research design for her research. In her book, Gilmore uses qualitative research design (Seale 40-54). Qualitative research design provides a subjective way of looking at a situation. There is the sense of anthropological and ethnographic approach in her study. She explores the societal structure in California.

She investigates the history and the discrepancies that contributed to the development and emergence of the prison industry. She relates how Great Depression reforms led to the turmoil in the mid 60's (Gilmore 34-45).

Gilmore explains how the surpluses in California led to the stimulation of the crisis. Through the qualitative approach, she explains the ideal case of California led to the explosion of the prisons. In her book, she does this from historical, economic, political and sociological point of view (Gilmore 65-70).

She further explains that the social stratification that is present in the modern society explains the conditions that are experienced in the in the Golden State (Gilmore 65-70). This condition arises from problems in employment, politics and community development. The author compares the prison system to some kind of a reconstructive surgery. In her strategy, the author gives an introduction to political economy in California.

The framework of the qualitative research that has been used by the author

gives the evaluative approach to the issue of the prison boom in California. She does an extensive research on the issue. Empirical inquiry forms the main aspect of evaluative approach used by the author. Generalized framework can be used in the assessment irrespective of the evaluative purpose. The year 1982 forms the core of Gilmore narrative (Gilmore 34-45). She explains how the legislature approved facilities such as Riverside, San Diego and LA and a whopping \$495, 000, 000 as bond for building new prisons with an aim of enhancing public safety.

Qualitative research represents an in-depth analysis of the problem in question. There is an explorative aspect in the research design (Seale 40-54). The framework used in the study draws heavily from the previously carried out research. It uses the general methodological literature and other existing literature. The persistent criterion used avoids over-prescription and being entirely procedural. It aids at making informed decision making but not mechanistic ruling. The research done by Gilmore is comprehensive in nature in that it offers an inclusive research on the problem. The author traces back all the indicators that form the basis of the researcher (Gilmore 65-70).

Participatory action research is an old dimension which seeks to understand the social problems of the world by working reflectively. This tradition uses the principles of inquiry grounded with experiences in social history. There are three aspects that are characteristic of Gilmore's work; participation, action and research (McIntyre 23-35). These are qualities of participatory action research. This proves the fact that Gilmore uses participatory action research in her study.

The book is an elaborative analysis of the structural forces behind the prison boom in California. The scholar also engages in research on struggles for social justice. She tackles the spirit . of social movements and the people who form them. In the book she talks of the brave groups of mothers who struggle to reclaim their sons from the penal system. In the book, there is a reconciliatory approach whereby the author separates the social theory and the transformative politics via an informative and detailed explanation of the social suffering (Gilmore 34-45). According to Gilmore, the prisons are vessels that led to mass incarceration (Gilmore 34-45).

The narration in the book forms a case study in which the book focuses on the prisons in California State. There is a touching account of several painful stories which represent desperation and struggle by women who offer an opposition to prisonization (Pattillo 36-45). Gilmore shed light on structural violence that has been orchestrated by the neoliberal state to the vulnerable social groups. This is seen through the State's apparent use of biased penal system. The grim realities that have been described in the book do not offer the grounds for pessimism rather a collective resistance and solidarity. In her book, the author gives a neo-Marxist point of view in which the penal development are connected to other factors such as social, political and economic transformation(McIntyre 23-35).

The causal design in the book Golden Gulag draws much inference from the increment in the number of prisoners in the U. S. The book describes the processes that led to this massive boom. In the book there is a description on the political economy that contributed to the carceral expansion in the Golden State (Jacobson 45-56). The design for the research reveals a cyclic

description which commenced in early 70's and opened doors for social change. She defines the crises to be driven by redundant economic realities such as labour force, capital and the state capacity (Gilmore 34-45). She agrees to the fact that crisis is neither objectively good nor bad, but signifies the development of change, which can be obtained through social change. The research uses the cross-sectional study to explain the research problem. She examines different cases in order to arrive at the conclusion (Seale 40-54). In order to maintain the objectivity of her argument, the author makes a full analysis of contributing factors that culminated to the crisis. She gives an analysis of economic transition and political realignment which later manifested in the production of deviants (Gilmore 65-70). This necessitated the use of punishment as one of the government strategy forged by the protagonists such as the police forces and criminal justice system. Paradoxically, she shows what was once considered to be a haven lead to a crisis. She explains how women form a movement to object the increment in the correctional facilities (Gilmore 65-70).

The study uses both historical and descriptive approaches in the examination of the political problem. It gives the basis of the crisis while it is descriptive in that it provides a detailed explanation in the progression of the problem and the recommendations for solving it. She gives the counter-narration on the causes and possible solution of the crisis. The methods for data collection used in the study relate much on peer-reviewed publications. The secondary texts used give a rough view on the historical factors that contributed to the crisis. There is a lot of observation on the trends in California that led to the development of the prison crisis (Strauss 65-78).

Golden Gulag is an impassioned account that showcases the author's values and perspectives. The texts assert the author as person who stands for human rights. Indeed, an aspect of activism surfaces in the text (Seale 40-54). The book illustrates a person who objects social oppression and advocates for sound economic and political developments. In the book, there is an element of biasness when the author delves in subjective genealogies (Jacobson 45-56).

In her account, she illustrates that the marginalized group people in economic, racial and geographic terms comprises the prison population in the US. The surplus population is a result of the emerging target for the prisonization process (McIntyre 23-35). The question that most readers would like to know is whether the subjective surplus led to the formation of prisonization process (Strauss 65-78).

The research has massive impacts on the criminal justice system in the US. The policy formulators need to understand that the solution to the crime levels in the streets is to provide the people with the right social amenities. Creation of job opportunities and education will help in street clean-up, but in a positive manner (Jacobson 45-56). Prisons should only serve as rehabilitation centres or corrections but not to absorb those who are purported to have committed crime. The research provides an epistemological insight to the research problem. It sheds light to the coordinates that led to the development of the penal system. In the qualitative aspects, the work done by Gilmore is a refining theory, which gives the insight to the possible explanation of the expansive penal system. The researcher adheres to the guidelines that define a social researcher. She



examines the root cause of the explosion of the problem. She gives an account of the historical injustices that led to the problem. What defines a social researcher is examining the build-up of the problem and providing the solution. The research has been done in an inclusive manner. It is a comprehensive work that answers the research problem (Gilmore 34-45). The work of Gilmore can be replicated in a bid to give a detailed account of the expansive criminal system. The qualitative research design is best suited for the problem since it is evaluative and inductive. It tries to explain the underlying reasons for the existence of the problem.

## **Summary**

The work by Gilmore is not only informative but also exemplary. She chooses California or better known as Golden State as the ideal case for her study. The author takes an ironic reproach to the conservative politicians and self-proclaimed criminologists who argue that prisonisation is the rational process to end crime rates and dispel fear from the streets. She takes a sharp critique at the unprecedented prison expansion in the United States. The diction used gives the insight of how the penal system represents the dehumanization in California (Strauss 65-78). She shows how the prisons represent a state sanctioned process of dehumanization. The results obtained are important for criminologists who should forge for reforming the prison system (Strauss 65-78).

In this case, the prisons should be rehabilitative and set the necessary standards for instilling discipline. Golden Gulag is a form of value addition to the redesigning of penal system. The data and analysis given by Gilmore is fascinating and equally disturbing. Gilmore evaluates the logic behind

neoliberal liberation (Jacobson 45-56). She theorizes the role of political economy to be the reason behind super incarceration.

## **Works Cited**

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