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Review 1 of "Snitch. Snake. Mole.: Examining Responses to 'Insider/Outsider' Researchers in Corrections"

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I believe this article is sound enough to publish. I do offer some thoughts below which, if the authors are persuaded, might lead to some modest revisions. I think they' d improve the paper, but I don' t think they' re necessary for publication.

[Please put additional info below, as/if you see fit:]

- I found this paper to be interesting and well-written. I think it makes a contribution to the literature as an account of how one researcher had different experiences as an insider/outsider in her imbedded prison research. For qualitative researchers this is an example of navigating the need to establish rapport with participants which may include both establishing oneself as serious and knowledgeable enough to write about the subject, and also trustworthy enough—that the researcher isn' t there determined to report bad things about the office or organization, etc.
- Overall, I think some readers will find the work light on presentation of field note data. There are a few long quotes from the field notes, often establishing one example of being called a snake, a mole, etc. If the authors were able to provide more examples from the field notes I do think it would improve the manuscript. In addition to including excerpts, for example, the authors could provide more indications of some counts of how many times the researcher was called a snitch, snake, mole.
- I have a comment about the framework of exploring the different implications of snake, snitch, and mole. The setup of the paper leads the authors to probe for different implications of being called these three names. I found myself wondering if there was really that much difference in the three, or if rather they all were similar expressions of distrust of the outsider consistent with the “research paranoia” concept the authors discuss. My thoughts here would be that the underlying concern with a snitch, snake, or a mole is that the observer will (or could) ultimately communicate things to other people that have negative implications for the one being observed. Sure, Derwin said “snakes just record” but isn' t there some underlying implication that eventually those writings will be communicated to outsiders? Aside from pinning too much on what might' ve been an offhand quip of one of the participants, it seems like all of these terms could be seen as similar expressions of distrust, labeling the researcher as

an outsider. So rather than spend the effort trying to make a case for the different nuances among those three labels, the paper might actually be more compelling by presenting these as three very similar expressions of research paranoia. Related to this, I wonder whether the fourth label or nickname of “Books” should be more formally incorporated into the structural setup (and even paper title). Interestingly, that nickname seems to have reflected a more favorable insider status for the same sort of behavior that generated the negative snitch, snake, and mole titles. I’ m voting to accept the paper, so I recognize the authors may not agree, but for this one reader I was less than convinced that snitch/snake/mole were really three distinct concepts in the minds of the participants who spoke them. That made parts of the paper less compelling to me, but the overall thrust of the insider/outsider points don’ t rely on having these as three distinct concepts so some reshaping of that presentation would be an improvement in my view.

The paper gives quite a bit of attention to Convict Criminology in the introduction and I expected that some theoretical arguments would be advanced linking prison research with Convict Criminology constructs throughout. Yet the rest of the paper, including the discussion and conclusion, abandons any mention of Convict Criminology. I’ d suggest either dialing back the attention to CC in the first part of the paper, or else carrying the parallels through with some discussion of CC-prison research linkages towards the end of the paper.