

Week 8 Assignment: Competing Perspectives

Assignment #2

Instructions

For this assignment, you will be reading two excerpts from sociological works on race and crime.

The first excerpt is "Policing America: Racism, Reform, and Redefining Justice" Download "Policing America: Racism, Reform, and Redefining Justice" by Professor Stephanie A. Jirard.

The second excerpt is from Chapter 5 of The New Jim Crow by Professor Michelle Alexander.

After reading these two excerpts, you will answer the following questions on each work individually before comparing and contrasting their perspectives in the final part. Video instructions for this assignment can be found on the Week 8 Learning Materials page.

Part A - Excerpt from "Policing America: Racism, Reform, and Redefining Justice" by Stephanie A. Jirard (2020)

1. Briefly describe the metaphor of a house that the author uses to explain structural racism and institutional racism.
2. What is implicit bias? According to the author, what are the consequences of implicit bias in the criminal justice system?
3. What does it mean to say that there are institutionalized practices of racism in policing? How is this different from there being 'a few bad apples'? Discuss one of the three examples given of these practices.
4. On June 24, 2020, three police officers from Wilmington, North Carolina were overheard on an audiotape talking about race relations when someone said, "We are just gonna go out and start slaughtering their f-----g n-----rs. I can't wait. God, I can't wait." The officers then talked about the need for a civil war to "wipe 'em off the f-----g map. That'll put 'em back about four or five generations." When confronted about their statements, the officers said they were not racists and were suffering from the stress over protests since George Floyd's death. The officers were fired.

You be the judge: Are the statements evidence of structural/institutional racism, or are the officers simply “bad apples” who were having a bad day?

Part B - Excerpt from Chapter 5 of The New Jim Crow by Michelle Alexander (2010)

1. According to Michelle Alexander, how does the system of mass incarceration work to “trap Black Americans in a cage” and sustain a racial caste system?
2. Why does Michelle Alexander use Chicago as an example of the criminal justice system being used as a form of social control? Provide 2 statistics that she uses to make her argument
3. What parallels does Michelle Alexander claim exist between the current system of mass incarceration and Jim Crow Laws? Briefly describe each one
4. At times, Michelle Alexander seems reluctant to say that individual people can be racist and that policies can be explicitly based on racism. Does this bother you and/or is it the right approach for her audience?

Part C - Compare and Contrast

Compare and contrast the two excerpts:

1. Compare and contrast each of the author’s views on the criminal justice system in the US. Were there aspects of the criminal justice system that one of the readings focused on more than the other?
2. What do the authors have in common in how they build their arguments? In what ways are the structures of their arguments different? Do you find that one of them is more effective than the other?
3. Which of the authors did you find easier to understand? Which of the authors, if either, did you find to be more persuasive?

Purpose

The purpose of this assignment is to introduce students to different perspectives on racial discrimination and develop skills to evaluate and analyze arguments.

Grading Criteria

- Please refer to the rubric below for this assignment.
- Submit your answers as a .doc, .docx, or .pdf by 11:59 on Sunday. One point (aka 5%) will be taken off your grade for each day the assignment is late.

Submitting your Assignment

[How to Upload a File as an Assignment Submission](#)

Points: 100

Submitting a file upload

[Link to Conflicting Perspectives Assignments](#)