

Paper Proposal: Controlling the Lower Class Through Prisons.

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## **Proposal**

My paper will address the development of factory prisons in the United States from a Marxist perspective. I selected this topic because I believe that the philosophy and economics of this type of prison system are products of American society that are still present today. I believe this is a good topic because the underlying functions of prisons have not changed since the early 1900s in the United States; prison functions as a tool to suppress the minority classes for the benefit of the dominant class. The underlying social purposes of the prison system, when examined over a period of time, clearly illustrate those purposes.

I will research prisons systems from three different eras in American society and the underlying social issues that produced maintained them. These cases will consist 1930's factory prison system in the North East, which was further refined in the 1940's and 1950's and spread across America in the 1960s to form the present prison system. I will then examine those key social issues outside of the prison system shared across the cases. These shared characteristics will then be used to identify the continuing social purposes of prisons.

I will define Marxism. I will explain Karl Marx's theory of class conflict in shaping the nature of society. I will illustrate Marx's theories by using examples from his own writings, then augment those examples other sociologists and my own. I will then apply his understanding of society and his research methodology to explain the social function of the modern prison system in the United States.

Finally, I will offer a conclusion that summarizes the key issues and facts I presented in the paper and identifies the things I have learned. These sociological insights will then be used to construct a solution. I will also identify what I have learned in this research and what aspects of those topics that need research.

## **Outline**

### **I. Introduction**

1. The factory prison defined.
2. Why this subject is an important sociological topic.
3. Literature selection

### **II. Review of Literature**

#### **1. Marxism sociology defined**

- A. Class conflict defined and examples presented
- B. Social manipulation procedures of the dominant class in modern society

#### **2. Social Eras**

- A. 1930's factory prison system in North-East United States
- B. The factory and agricultural prison system of the 1940's and 1950's
- C. The modern prison system

#### **3. The Modern Factory Prison**

- A. Prison Economics
- B. Prison Population
- C. Benefit of modern prison system to dominate class

### III. Marxist social theory applied

1. An explanation for the development and current state of prisons will be presented through an application of Marx's class conflict theory to establish:

A. The Social Model of Criminal Justice

B. The social functions of prisons: social stability as a benefit to those in power.

C. Function of crime: social evolution as a benefit to those un-empowered.

### III. Conclusions and solutions

1. Identifying alternative avenues to the goals of maintaining criminal populations in society.

### **Current Reference List**

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Helpfort, K. 2007. *The Sociology of Crime*. Washington, San Francisco: Eggs Academic Publishing.

Todiford, G. 2001. *Caging America's Best Hope*. Newport, NC: Bird in a Cage Press.

Zigfell, F. 2005. *Imprison the Guilty Capital Class*. Atlanta, GA: Greenford Press.