**COM 803-12: Hermeneutics and Communication**

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**Professor**

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**Assignment #3 - Essay on a case study**

**Write a 5-page paper on a specific event or phenomenon (e.g., a historical event, cultural practice, a legal decision), and interpret it from a hermeneutic perspective. This would involve understanding the event within its context and recognizing the role of your prejudices in shaping your interpretation.**

**The student should direct developmental readings from Assignment #2 on the hermeneutic issue for this assignment.**

**2. Paper Outline**

**a. Begin with an introductory paragraph that has a succinct thesis statement.**

**b. Address the topic of the paper with critical thought.**

**c. End with a conclusion that reaffirms your thesis.**

**d. Use a minimum of eleven scholarly research sources (two books and the**

**remaining scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles).**

**Exploring Gun Culture: A Hermeneutical Analysis**

Gun culture refers to the mindsets, perceptions, behaviors, and activities pertaining to firearms in each society or a community; it is primarily influenced by historical, cultural, social, and political factors (Vegter & Haider-Markel, 2022). As Felson and Pare (2020) have provided it, the gun culture differs from place to place and country to country, signaling different opinions on the functions of guns in self-protection, sport shooting, hunting, and identity development. It encompasses practices such as gun ownership and shooting sports that create norms, values, and rituals binding enthusiasts together.

 This is a phenomenon which is deeply inherent in societies and leads to more controversy, and hence, requires a hermeneutical approach in its study. The essay focuses on dynamic environments and interrelated facets, including sociology, history, media, law, and politics. Gun culture is not easy to understand, to do so, one must assess personal biases which go beyond merely assuming a reflective attitude to ensure a better and objective interpretation. This project seeks to help bring about a more informed and humane discussion, creating an environment founded upon a greater, positive understanding of the intricacies of gun culture.

**Conceptualizing Gun Culture**

Gun culture is engraved in the pages of history across different societies and civilizations. The emergence of firearms dates back in 9th century in China where the manufacturing of gunpowder started. The unique innovation rapidly spread throughout the Silk Road and towards the Middle East and Europe (Zheng, 2021). Similarly, in medieval Europe, the use of gunpowder weapons revolutionized warfare; battles such as Crecy and Orleans demonstrated the tactical significance of firearms (Barr et al., 2023). During the colonial period in America, firearms evolved from military apparatuses into essential elements of frontier living, used for defense, hunting, and independence assertion (Barr et al., 2023). The American revolution capped the link between guns and nationality, embodied by the Second Amendment. The mid-19 th century saw a new development in firearms during the American Civil War and Europe in the industrial revolution that promoted a gun culture infused with militarism (Cukier & Sheptycki, 2012).

Gun culture is very closely associated with socioeconomic factors and cultural values. As Bellesiles (1996) notes, guns were tools of self-sufficiency in the societies where economy conditions dictated self-sufficiency, such as the American frontier, and a representation of individualism. On the other hand, in feudal Japan, which came with a rigid social construct, the control and sharing of firearms was quite controlled to maintain social order (Barr et al., 2023). Cultural norms, too, significantly influenced perceptions on guns (Felson & Pare, 2020). In the US, the myth of the ‘frontier spirit’ and the ideology of self-reliance added to a positive image of weapons while the countries with a history of imperial rule, guns were most often identified with oppression and foreign dominance (Bellesiles, 1996).

Media representation of guns plays a major role in how the public perceives guns and, therefore, shapes gun culture (Dowler, 2022). In the media, from Hollywood blockbusters to news coverage, all that happens with firearms is sensationalized, as certain stereotypes and narrative are reinforced. Dowler (2022) states that pseudonymization of gun violence in movies and video games may make people numb to the true consequences of the inappropriate use of guns. On the other hand, popular culture, such as literature, music, and art, also influences gun stories. Normalization of guns in entertainment influences cultural acceptance of firearms and how people see them and relate to them.

It is undisputed that the gun culture is inseparable from the legal and constitutional framework pertaining to guns (Carlson et al., 2019). An analysis of gun laws that determine the success or failure of gun culture is a study of legislative efforts that control access, ownership, and implementation. As Vernick et al. (2011) note, the relationship between constitutional rights, more particularly the Second Amendment in the United States and the possession of guns has been a bone of contention. The balance between the individual right for protection and public safety remains a challenge to strike due to the different approaches to law across different countries that determine these attitudes and behaviors associated with firearms.

Finally, political dimensions are integral in determining gun culture, for different ideologies have different views on guns. Rightist philosophies usually bring attention to the individual right to bear arms and have them as protection from both attackers and the government itself (Wolpert & Gimpel, 1998). However, the liberal ideologies mostly place emphasis on security of the public and propose tougher gun control legislation to curb gun violence. Such ideologies often result in fiery debates and discussions on policies related to guns. Moreover, interest organizations, for instance, the National Rifle Association (NRA) in the United States, significantly impact gun-related policies through lobbying and campaign funding (Yamane, 2017). These interest groups can be associated with some political ideology, which are poised to have an impact on policy and public whether gun ownership should be allowed and in the case of regulation. They can be seen in the legislative development, on how the laws and policies are formulated that either promote or limit the use of firearms.

**Prejudice and Interpretation**

The nature in which people perceive gun culture is often based on their prejudices which create in them a perception of or attitude towards guns. The biases could be influenced by personal experiences, socio-economic background, or cultural upbringing and all these things could significantly affect the way one interprets the gun issues (Shapira et al., 2021). For instance, in the community where I was brought up, guns were mostly linked to criminal activities. As a result, whenever the topic of guns is brought up, I seem to display some level of bias that is negative. On the opposite side, a person who comes from a remote area where guns are part and parcel of life will perceive them positively. Identifying and admitting personal biases is necessary for achieving the more objective reading of gun culture. As it has been stated in the reference of Shapira et al. (2021), self-awareness is very important to minimize the effect of personal bias. As a result of self- awareness, people judge their prejudices and accept the topic with an open mind.

In addition, the cultural setting defines the essence of an individual’s perception of gun-related matters. Factors such as cultural values, traditions, and historical experiences are effective enough to affect the perception of communities or individuals on firearms and what roles they play in society (Shapira et al., 2021). Thus, for instance, in societies where hunting is part and parcel of traditions, guns can be seen as a means of subsistence and cultural heritage. On the contrary, in societies that have a legacy of political instability and violence, guns might invoke fear and distrust. It is paramount to understand the impact of cultural bias to promote a better appreciation of gun culture. The push for a balanced and consciousness of other cultural perspectives involves actively searching for the opinions of those considered in another cultural background and recognizing the legitimacy of the different point of view. We must be aware of the cultural constructs that determine perceptions of firearms. This would allow people to participate in a wider and more compassionate interpretation of gun culture that goes beyond cultural prejudice and encourages positive communication.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the perspective taken to unravel gun culture has proved to be a hermeneutical approach, which has presented a tapestry composed of historical, socio-economic, cultural, legal, and personal threads. Viewed from this analytical perspective, we have explored the historical origins of gun culture which began with a series of significant events that have determined the relationship between society and firearms. Furthermore, we looked at how socio-economic factors and cultural values influence the development and interpretation of gun culture, taking note of the intricacies involved. The investigation was broadened to the coverage of media and pop culture on public opinion, the part of laws and constitutionally given rights in determining gun culture. Significantly, this trip addressed the deep effects of personal and cultural prejudice, stressing upon the need for self-consciousness and an incorporative attitude to evolve a more humane perception of this controversial, but multidimensional phenomenon. Therefore, a hermeneutical analysis reveals the multilayered nature of gun culture which confirms that to be completely clear on the issue, one needs to analyze all the aspects of gun culture.

# **Works Cited**

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