

Name: _____ Mark: _____ / 24

Teacher or Date and Time: _____

Read Chapters 1-4 of *Dear Martin* by Nic Stone

In this week's homework, we will further our investigation into profiling via an opinion piece and a novel. In the process, we will also investigate the issues of clothing and equality.

Judging Judgements

Read the opinion piece "Does profiling make sense - or is it unfair?" by David Edmonds.

"Does profiling make sense - or is it unfair?" by David Edmonds

Whether we know it or not, our lives are influenced by profiling in many ways. You may think it's sensible, or that it's unfair... you may even be tempted to think that it's both at once.

Imagine you're a police superintendent in charge of security at a political rally at which the president is speaking. You have information that someone may attempt to assassinate her. You know nothing about the potential killer and as usual you're stretched for resources. Should the few officers you have at your disposal give equal attention to all members of the crowd? Or would it make sense for them to concentrate more on men than on women? Might it be reasonable to conclude that those who appear to be over 75 years old pose less of a threat?

Profiling is always in the news. Racial profiling in particular has been held partially responsible for riots from **the UK** to **the US** to **France**.

Profiling is the practice of categorising people and predicting their behaviour on the basis of particular characteristics. We're profiled all the time - by businesses and insurance companies, for example. Companies that agree to give us car insurance want to know what we do for a job, where we live, our age and marital status. This information is a proxy, a clue to our lifestyle and behaviour. It helps them assess the likelihood that we will be involved in accidents. A proxy is a stand-in - a trait such as race, or sex, or religion, used as a short cut to judge something else.

Insurers would like to ask about the sex of the driver because women are safer drivers than men. But in the EU at least, that's no longer allowed (not that it seems to have reduced **the gap between male and female premiums**.) The puzzle is that profiling with certain proxies can seem at one and the same time both rational and unfair.

Of course, the belief that individuals within one group are more likely than others to have a certain characteristic or more prone to a particular type of behaviour, may not always be grounded in sound evidence. The view that one group is on average meaner with money, or richer, or more disposed to

dishonesty, may be based on ignorance or prejudice.

But where there are statistical differences between groups, it seems logical to act upon them. Is it really worth the police stopping octogenarian women if they're hunting for criminals carrying knives?

The appeal of profiling is that it saves time and resources, says Tarun Khaitan, associate professor in law at Oxford and Melbourne universities.

Take an airline that wants to make sure its pilots have 20-20 vision.

"There is some statistical evidence that the eyesight of elderly people deteriorates," he says. "So instead of the airline having to figure whether their pilots retain good eyesight by testing everyone over 65, it may be cheaper to have a mandatory retirement age." Here age is a proxy for good vision.

Some proxies will be tougher than others to access. A genetic test may be an accurate proxy for predicting whether people will develop a certain disease, but it may be easier and cheaper to gather information on less precise proxies, such as diet or smoking habits.

It's always important to interrogate the numbers, especially when using proxies such as sex and religion.

First, how big is the statistical difference? If 50.1% of women are linked to behaviour X, and 49.9% of men, using sex as a proxy for X is going to be pretty useless.

Second, how many false negatives and false positives will there be? That is to say, how many threats will you miss if you target only one group, and how many innocent people will come under suspicion?

Suppose it is overwhelmingly the case that a particular crime is committed by people from a particular religious background. If nonetheless only 1% of people from that background are implicated in that crime the 99% end up being tarred with the same brush, despite being innocent.

Is profiling ever justified?

Which brings us to the impact of profiling on the individuals being profiled.

Tarun Khaitan says that groups in a "socially and politically and economically vulnerable position" will perceive profiling as "not just unfair but humiliating". He offers this example. If a person is profiled based on their star sign, Virgo or a Sagittarius and so on, they may regard that as eccentric and even unjust. They probably won't feel it's demeaning. But we identify ourselves more closely with our ethnicity, religion, and sex, so when disadvantaged people are profiled on the basis of these characteristics it tends to have a far more noxious effect.

Obviously the impact of profiling will depend upon what is at stake. If a person's job prospects are affected by profiling, that really matters. If profiling only alters the likelihood of facing additional scrutiny at airport security on your annual holiday, that matters a bit less. Frequency is a relevant consideration too. Innocent African-American males who are constantly stopped and questioned by police naturally feel a powerful sense of injustice.

Profilers should bear in mind that the policy may have one of two unintended consequences.

It could generate a vicious circle, entrenching the very pattern upon which it is based. For example, members of one race may become alienated at constantly being stopped and searched, and some innocent people within this racial group may be tempted into crime. If one group comes to believe it is being targeted by the state, that's almost bound to undermine its commitment to abiding by the state's rules.

A different effect is also possible. If would-be terrorists become aware that young men of Middle-Eastern appearance are more closely inspected, then they could try to plant bombs or weapons on those arousing the least suspicion - children or old women. Targeting individuals in particular groups then becomes self-defeating.

Despite the pitfalls, profiling can work.

Criminologists such as Bryanna Fox of the University of South Florida have used statistical techniques to investigate property and violent crimes. An ex-FBI special agent, Fox subdivided burglaries into various categories and analysed the characteristics of those convicted of committing these crimes. For example, where burglaries were clearly sophisticated and premeditated, the criminals tended to be older, male, white and with a long criminal history but few arrests. Police departments that experimented by using her profiles solved over 300% more burglaries compared to the departments that did not.

With that kind of success, profiling is not going to disappear. Indeed, in the digital age, as more and more data becomes available for analysis, profiling in its myriad forms is likely to become ever more prevalent.

But Tarun Khaitan warns us that "we should calculate the costs that racial profiling imposes on already vulnerable groups alongside the efficiency savings that might accrue". He believes that the benefits outweigh the costs only under exceptional circumstances.

Does profiling make sense or is unfair? Explain.

Grammar: There are no errors.	0.25 0.5 0.75 1
Structure: There is a topic sentence, transitions, and a concluding sentence.	0.25 0.5 0.75 1
Style: There is strong diction and a variety of sentence structures.	0.25 0.5 0.75 1
Content: There is a logical argument that is supported with examples and explanations.	0.25 0.5 0.75 1 1.25 1.5 1.75 2

Dear Martin

Answer the following questions on Chapters 1-4 of *Dear Martin*. Your answers will be evaluated based on the following rubric:

Content: Review the rubric above.	0.25 0.50 0.75 1 1.25 1.50
Grammar: Review the rubric above.	0.25 0.50

1. What evidence does the officer use to profile Justyce as “punk” who was “up to no good”?

Content: ____ / 1.5 Grammar: ____ / 0.5

Read the following excerpt from a chapter in *Pursuing Trayvon Martin: Historical Contexts and Contemporary Manifestations of Racial Dynamics*. Review the lecture and do research for context.

“Should Black Kids Avoid Wearing Hoodies?” by Chike Jeffers

ARE HOODIES MEANINGLESS?

A useful way to think about what is involved in saying that we do the wrong thing when we choose to wear this or that item of clothing is to think of our clothing choices as forms of communication. If I attend an event promoting the equality of women wearing a t-shirt with an image of a scantily clad woman in what could be considered an objectifying pose, it can be argued that I am communicating a heinous message of disregard for the event’s theme. So what does a young black person communicate when he or she wears a *hoodie*?

One plausible answer is “nothing.” What some have tried to point out in response to Rivera’s comments and Zimmerman’s non-emergency dispatch call (in which he spoke of Martin’s hoodie while reporting as looking suspicious) is that *hooded sweatshirts* are among the most ordinary, common, and banal forms of casual wear available. Some have compiled photos of public figures sporting hoodies, including actor Brad Pitt, singer Justin Bieber, Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg, right-wing icon Sarah Palin, and—sitting together at a baseball game—Fox News hosts Bill O’Reilly and Rivera himself? As these photos feature hoodies but do not seem sinister in the slightest, the implication put forth that it is utter nonsense to suggest that the hoodie itself is scary and threatening. What put Martin at risk is not what he was wearing but the fact that he was a young black male, and no change in his choice of clothing could have changed that fact.

On the basis of this point, one might be led to answer the question of whether black kids should avoid hoodies by saying: “No, to ask black kids to avoid hooded sweatshirts is to seek a false sense of security and give into the distraction of focusing on what is ultimately very nondescript form of clothing.” The claim being made here might be that the hoodie is really completely irrelevant to how dangerous black kids are perceived as being and this it really makes no difference whether it is worn or not. More modestly, and more plausibly, the claim might be that a hoodie on a young black person is admittedly more associated with danger than some other items of clothing at present, but given how irrational this association is and how little it has to do with the nature of the hoodie itself, we have to reason to think a simple shift toward other forms of clothing would do anything but give rise to equally irrational associations.

Especially in its more plausible version, I suspect there is something right in the above argument. Nevertheless, I wish to pursue the question of what we ought to say if we decide that hoodies are *not meaningless*. What if we accept that, although both Sarah Palin and Trayvon Martin have worn hoodies, it meant something different when Martin wore one? What if, when Martin wore a hoodie, it communicated something about *what is cool among black kids*? Rivera suggest that the hoodie, when worn by black and Latino kids, communicates a message of this type but that what is being taken to be cool is a dangerous persona: “If you dress like a *wannabe gangster*, some knucklehead is gonna take you at your word.” If this is an accurate depiction of what the hoodie communicates, then Rivera is

right: black kids should avoid wearing hoodies.

2. Should Justyce wear hoodies? Explain.

Content: _____ / 1.5 Grammar: _____ / 0.5

3. Should you wear hoodies? Explain.

Content: _____ / 1.5 Grammar: _____ / 0.5

4. Why does Justyce write about Shermar Jackson?

Content: _____ / 1.5 Grammar: _____ / 0.5

5. Are “all men created equal”? Explain using examples from *Dear Martin* or reality.

Grammar: There are no errors.	0.25 0.5 0.75 1
Structure: There is a topic sentence, transitions, and a concluding sentence.	0.25 0.5 0.75 1
Style: There is strong diction and a variety of sentence structures.	0.25 0.5 0.75 1
Content: There is a logical argument that is supported with examples and explanations.	0.25 0.5 0.75 1 1.25 1.5 1.75 2

6. What is a problem with Jared’s belief that “America is a pretty color-blind place now”?

Content: _____ / 1.5 Grammar: _____ / 0.5

7. Did Justyce’s mom give him good advice? What advice would have given Justyce? Explain.

Content: _____ / 1.5 Grammar: _____ / 0.5

8. What is Manny guilty of? Explain.

Content: _____ / 1.5 Grammar: _____ / 0.5