**Power Trip:**

**The Social Issues of Power in Predictive Policing**

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**Introduction**

In today's digital age, data has become a powerful tool that shapes our lives in many ways. From the products we buy to the decisions we make; data is used to inform and guide us. Data is also a critical resource for businesses, governments, and organizations that seek to understand and engage with their customers or citizens. With the rise of big data and advanced analytics, the power of data has only increased, allowing for deeper insights. As Deming, W. E. (1986) once said, "In God we trust. All others must bring data." This quote accurately represents the level of trust or reliance placed on data, making it ever so powerful. However, with this power comes responsibility, as data can also be used to perpetuate existing social issues. The author argues that the use of data in PredPol, a predictive policing algorithm used by many police departments, reinforces existing biases, and leads to social issues of power, particularly for communities of color.

**Synthesis**

PredPol is a predictive policing algorithm that analyzes historical crime data to pinpoint geographic locations in the community that are most likely to experience criminal activity in the near future. Police departments use PredPol to allocate their resources to high-risk areas in an attempt to prevent crime before it happens. The crimes can be broken down into two primary categories: those that involve violence, such as murder, arson, etc., and those that involve annoyance, such as pickpocketing, theft, and so on. Including the latter in the model skews the analysis, as the more low-level crimes there are in an area, the more the police are drawn to that neighborhood. The use of PredPol can lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy, as the over policing of certain communities can lead to more arrests and convictions, which in turn promotes the belief that these communities are inherently more criminal. The author mentions this while saying that:

This creates a pernicious feedback loop. The policing itself spawns new data, which justifies more policing. And our prisons fill up with hundreds of thousands of people found guilty of victimless crimes. (O’Neil, 2016, p. 78)

This feedback loop demonstrates how algorithms can amplify existing social issues of power. Rather than addressing the underlying issues that lead to crime, the algorithm support biases in law enforcement, which leads to unwarranted targeting of certain communities. In this sense, the algorithm becomes a weapon of math destruction, creating further inequality in the criminal justice system.

**Conclusion**

It is imperative that we conduct an in-depth analysis of how data is used in policing and make sure that it is done so in a manner that is both ethical and fair. The use of algorithms and data analysis should not be used as a shield to justify discriminatory practices, but rather as a tool to promote public safety and justice for all. We must work towards a system that is transparent, accountable, and prioritizes the well-being and dignity of all individuals, regardless of their race or ethnicity. The power of data should not dominate the power that humanity holds to create a better world.

Reference

O’Neil, C. (2016). *Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data increases inequality and threatens democracy.* Crown.

Deming, W. E. (1986). *Out of the Crisis.*MIT Press.