Bias Crimes, Police Reports: *Unknown*

2012-2020

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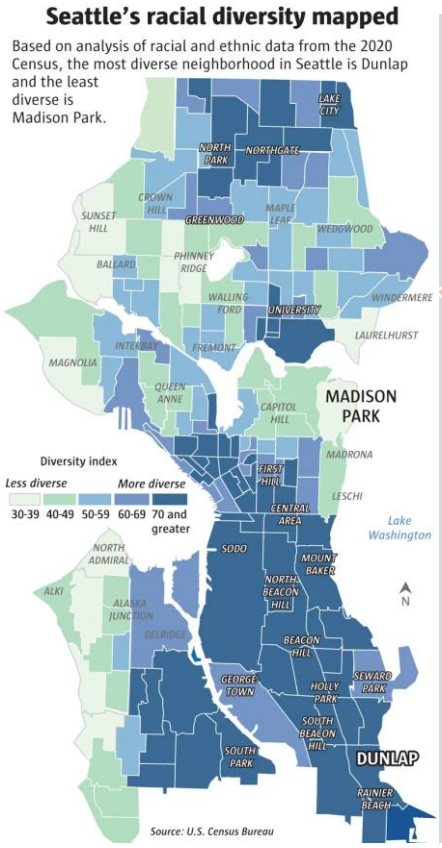
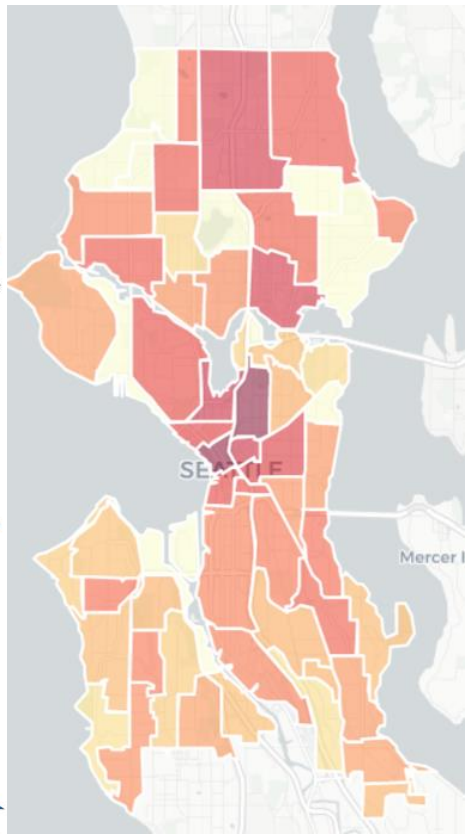
Our project focuses on the reimagining and representation of police-biased incident cases. We initially decided to focus on a publicly available data table detailing self-reported incidents where the police believed themselves to have unethical biases toward citizens, with incidents ranging from 2012 to 2020. Upon immediate inspection, we found many issues with the dataset. The data itself gave away very little information, nor did it explain itself in any way. There is also no way to learn more about the nature of this data beyond the table itself, as it has since been removed from the data.seattle.gov website. One critical problem is that rows in the dataset do not have actual details about the incidents they describe; there is only general information like the date and neighborhood in which they took place and nothing about the specific crime or people involved. The only information that each officer marked down was a "bias." This is an extremely unreliable description of what the officer perceives the crime to be motivated by. Some examples include "Gay," "Anti Gay," "Gay & Lesbian," "Heterosexual," "Gender Male," "Political Ideolgy," "Jewish," "Other Ethnicity," "Other Ethnicity- India," "Lesiban, multi-racial group." All misspellings occur in the original dataset. Along with the unreliable data setting, these further obfuscate the details of these incidents.

Furthermore, it's impossible to find any context regarding the data. One column included in the dataset is GO number, or General Offense number. GO numbers differentiate each case, the official case number for the reported incident. Alarmingly, we found zero search results when looking up a GO number in google, seattle.gov, or seattle.gov/police.

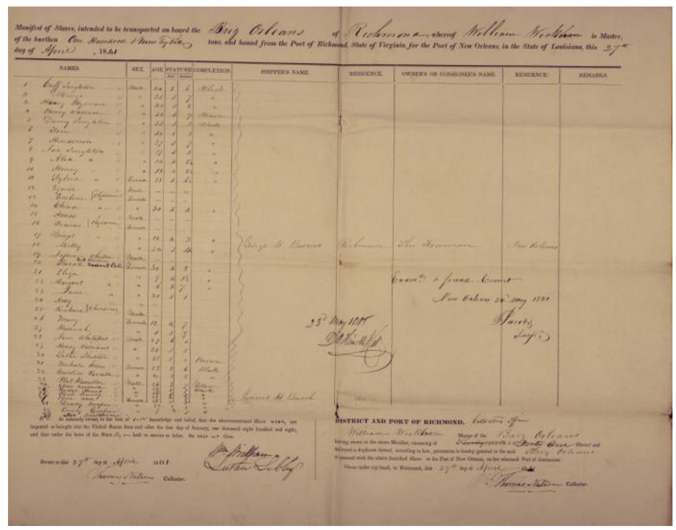
The table is visually unclear. Looking over the data gives viewers no real grasp of the location, the frequency, or–most importantly–the intensity and hatred with each act. Some of the data is sorted incorrectly, jumping from 2020 to 2017 with no apparent pattern. Our visceralization was the two choropleth maps we created. They both visualize the same location data, but the second is logarithmically scaled. This helps to show more granularity in the data, as the default map's high concentrations near Cap Hill tends to drown out other areas of Seattle. Together they paint a clearer picture of the data.

We put the data through a geographic/cartographic lens. By creating a visual representation of where and how often these incidents are being reported, the audience can see which areas are more prone to cases of "bias" crime, or at least which areas have either a higher police presence or better incidence reporting. Additionally, this data is more comparable with other visual data, like maps with demographic information. When comparing the Seattle census map and our reimagined data map, we can see those areas with more diversity, like the University District, Northgate, and the Central Area additionally, have reported more police incidents involving bias.





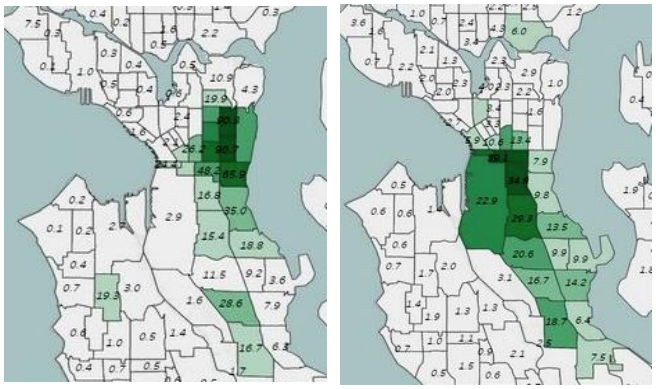
Sadly, the table lacks context; the dataset falls victim to removed humanity, to a lack of emotion–hence the “god trick.” Similarly to the Brig Orlean cargo manifest, these people are faceless numbers that fall under labels where they are dehumanized and broken down. They are defined by their case number, time of happening, and location. It's nearly impossible to tell the stories of the victims, what they were feeling at the time, and how the incident might have affected them afterward. Additionally, the data set fails to group these people into communities. Comparatively, in our map, viewers can see the intensity and groupings of where these incidents take place; moreover, viewers can see which communities have been affected the most and which police have targeted ethnic communities.



We wanted to highlight the geographic view of where exactly these crimes were most common. When presenting the idea to classmates, we got feedback from Seattle-born students who weren’t surprised by where the crimes were heightened. Our visceralization allows people to see where precisely biased crimes happen in Seattle. We decided on a visual map due to the reflection on the history of redlining as told by The Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project (SCRLHP). The neighborhoods that are higher in bias crimes tend to reflect locations that are historically Black and Asian American/Pacific Islander. Comparing the 1970 maps from SCRLHP to our map, there seems to be a correlation between locations. The densest area of bias crimes sits a little above and between an area with a high Black population and an area with a high Asian American/Pacific Islander population. This likely concerns the higher amounts of

biased crime due to historical and current racism. Although many people would like to believe Seattle has gotten rid of most racism, it simply isn't true; the bias has only disguised itself and hidden throughout the community. (Black population on the left, Asian American/Pacific Islander on the right)

Overall, this visceralization went smoothly, with no significant issues or conflicts. Originally our group consisted of Max Bennett and Natalie Barbera. The idea started with both parties offering an idea on which to base the project on. Both parties collectively decided to create a map with a data set Max presented. We then added Quinton Yap to the group and explained the idea. One large issue in completing this project was time. The coding was understandably a long process, but that pushed back the ability to finish the artists' statement. Because our group kept consistent communication on additional ideas and alterations, we could write the artistic message to explain our data in a way authentic to its creator (Max). Max used the data set to code an interactive map to complete the visceralization. Quinton and Natalie completed the artists' statement to further explain the visceralization.



Natalie: The biggest obstacle for myself was creating time slots in between work to complete the visceralization while making sure that I kept in consistent contact with Max and Quinton. I wanted to be sure everything I wrote and the ideas I produced would be something they agreed with, not a separate idea pushed into the project.

Quinton: Personally, I wanted to compare how we transformed the data. This meant analyzing the differences between the data sets, what they represent, what they show, and what they don't show. The most challenging part for me was realizing that our data didn't produce as profound of a story as I wanted it to. I would like to say that I struggled with how our process of visceralization was different from other problematic methods of data presentation.

Max: I had a lot of trouble "cleaning" the data into a presentable format. The officers who collected it gave very sparse information about the victims, perpetrators, and location. The only information on location was a general neighborhood name, but these names did not match up with other lists I found online. I had to make some guesses about where exactly an officer meant by "Capitol Hill" or "Morgan" or "Alaska Junction," and then manually create the map structure by recombining existing maps of Seattle. By doing this, and aggregating the data into a choropleth, we lose information about the real events that occurred and people that were harmed.

Works Cited:

Guy, Gene Balk / FYI. “Where Does Your Seattle Neighborhood Fall in This 'Diversity Index'? Check the Map.” The Seattle Times, The Seattle Times Company, 12 Oct. 2021, https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/data/where-does-your-seattle-neighborhood-fall-in-this-diversity-index-check-the-map/#:~:text=Seattle's%20least%20diverse%20neighborhood%20is,of%20the%20residents%20are%20white.

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