Hayden Outlaw

PHIL 3560

Final Project Preliminary Report 2

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My project has been to examine service calls, misconduct reports, and use of violence complaints that are public and published by the New Orleans Police Department and examine them for both disparate over-policing and under-policing of demographic groups. I also assert that both identifying such societal injustice in the best language that we have available, as well as contributing to the general discourse about methods to identify and protect against such abuses of power, is a moral act.

First, thankfully police brutality audit reports are increasingly frequent both in academic and amateur settings. However, this means that there are many different projects of different scope and depth, and the discussion space for these kinds of audits is incredibly saturated. I met with faculty at Tulane to examine how to maximize the impact of my project within the time and resources at my disposal while minimally restating conclusions others have made; we both concluded that under-policing and over-policing are not often directly juxtaposed, and certainly not within the context of the New Orleans legal system. In this way, I can be somewhat sure that this project is both worth the time I am putting into it, and genuinely contributing to the discourse around both the NOPD and police brutality on a wider scale.

Second, I managed to source the data I wanted to use for this project. While there were multiple options[1], many projects were further refinements or statistics done on secondary source datasets. While some were collected independently of governmental oversight, the data source I landed on was the direct publication from the NOPD themselves; even though it was less clean, I both considered their direct publication practice choices as deliberate and wanted to minimize outside philosophical decisions made by other organizations filtering the data.

Third, I managed to bring on a few more people to the project; I am unskilled when it comes to dealing with geographic or map-based raster or polygon data, and especially for data like this, precise and deliberate geographic analysis is critical to examining the underlying

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[1] As a part of the FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program, there are both national, state, and municipal requirements for public police data publishing

relationships of the events. The inclusion of more GIS-centric software and analysis both makes the project more efficient with respect to time, and more effective in contributing new information to the discussion around systemic police brutality. It also makes the results more accessible to those with less of a mathematical, computational, or statistical background, as the visual diagrams hopefully require less training to digest.

Finally, I managed to publish the project as an open-source repository[2], so that it can both be independently viewed and independently audited for technological errors and methodological criticism. In this way, I can both open the project up to review, but also guarantee that the information is made available to others – the ethical claim to the project lies in the publication and accessibility of the findings, and anything discovered and kept private, I will argue later, does not count as a moral act.

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[2] Available at: https://github.com/outlawhayden/neworleanspd