Thesis Proposal

Co-policing Surrounding the University of Chicago

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Research Question

The Hyde Park area offers a unique opportunity to study the interaction of private and public policing on a significant scale. The University of Chicago has a rich history of using the policing of "things", through urban renewal policies, and the policing of people to further their own agenda. The university created their own police department in the 1960's in response to parents' concern about the safety of their children, and the administration's concern about enrollment (Sherman 2019). While the university started by convincing the Chicago police commissioner to deputize their officers, an Illinois law passed in 1989 gave universities the power to swear in their own police officers (Sherman 2019).

The University of Chicago Police Department is the largest police force in Chicago (Reaves 2008), encompassing a jurisdiction of approximately 6.5 miles and 65,000 people (Larson 2012). Officers, like those on campus across the United States, are fully accredited, armed, and sworn (Heaton et al. 2016) and authorized to operate throughout all of Cook County (Sherman 2019). The UCPD patrols Hyde Park and five surrounding neighborhoods, sharing the area with Chicago Police patrols (Sherman 2019).

This shared patrol area by two large police forces, provides ample opportunities to study the different forces that drive public and private policing. This project aims to answer how and why UCPD and the CPD interact and react differently to crimes in the Hyde Park area. We would expect that the UCPD handles fewer violent crimes and processes less arrests than CPD over the same time period. It is likely the reports of crimes and responses to crimes by the UCPD escalate during the school years, with less activity during summer break. Certain types of crimes, like sexual crimes or thefts are more likely to be handled by UCPD.

Societal Importance

Throughout history, different trends in policing have come and went, but policing has only become a more integral part of society. In the United States, there has been considerable growth in private policing in

the last half century, spurring questions about the motivations and accountability of these private forces (Shearing 1992). It is now common for public and private police departments to collaborate within their jurisdictions (Shearing 1992). As governments have sought to cut costs, and private organizations have seen it more cost effective to hire their own workforce for protection, there has been a shift in social control out of the public sphere (Shearing 1992).

This has serious consequences for all people, but especially those in society that are already disadvantaged. There is a long history of public policing being racialized or otherwise not applied equally across the population. Communities of color have been consistently over-policed, exacerbating inequality through social ramifications, like distrust for police and authority, and economic consequences, like higher proportions of single parent households due to mass incarceration of men of color (citation needed). These problems exist with public police even in communities where minorities are politically well represented in their local governments (citation needed).

With private police these issues with accountability and representativeness become even more difficult to address. Private organizations have decided that hiring their own forces is more cost effective than relying on public police (Shearing 1992). It might be possible to adjust the cost through activism like boycotts or protests, but that gives no guarantee of hurting an organization's bottom line enough to change. For example, universities oftentimes run their own private police departments, which not only patrol the campus but also the surrounding community. Students may be able to protest the practices of the university police by transferring to another school, but community members have less recourse. Picketing off campus in the hope that the threat of bad public relations convinces the university to change their polices, is one of the few options.

Policing has always been a problematic necessity. Giving someone the right to exert physical force over others has deep running psychological ramifications, as shown most infamously by the 1971 Stanford Prison Experiment. The perceptions and opinions of police affect the results of victims of crimes, who are less likely to report crimes if they do not feel they are taken seriously (citation needed). Lives can be preserved or broken at the whim of law enforcement officers. Everyday, all of us are affected by the policing policies around us, both public and private, even if we never interact with an officer. The policies that drive public policing are considerably more translucent and malleable than those that control private policing, making it even more essential that the interactions and effects of private police forces be studied.

Literature Review

The use and support of private policing has waxed and waned throughout the history of the United States. Americans quickly became disillusioned of private policing in the early years of the mining and railroad industries. Citizens generally felt the private police forces used by the companies in these industries lead to a protection of assets over employees and went against the public interest. This resulted in a long period where the state held a "monopoly" on policing. However, starting in the 1960's private policing began to expand, partly in response to a RAND report that re-framed private policing as "an 'industry' providing a 'service' " (Shearing 1992).

Supporters of this expansion of private police forces claimed that public police had not been provided enough resources to adequately patrol their jurisdictions, creating this "vacuum" which private police were filling. This was framed as a win for everyone, as private police were now performing a role which taxpayers needed but also did not have to fund, and regulations would limit their power (Shearing 1992). Critics were concerned that now companies could give employees "state authority" (Shearing, Stenning, and others 1987), and that this cooperation between governments and corporations would only protect the interests of the elite (Flavel 1973).

A significant part of this shift in private policing has been the increasingly widespread establishment of private police departments by universities. As the market for higher learning has expanded, schools have focused their efforts on advertising amenities that attract more students and their parents (citation needed). A significant concern for parents sending off their offspring to a new life in a new place is the safety of that area. On the flip side, universities want to maintain squeaky clean images of academic excellence, and avoid tarnishing their reputation and prestige (citation needed). Stronger campus police can fulfill both of these roles, reducing crime by outsiders around campus, and better containing the carefree attitudes of students.

While campus police, as private police, certainly help to further the interests of the institution, they are a unique case of private policing that is often ignored. In some ways, campus police can better serve the public's interests than public police departments. Police officers employed by universities must undergo Title IX training as all university employees must, and often complete more training about sexual harassment than their municipal counterparts (Smith, Wilkes, and Bouffard 2016). Officers with specialized training pertaining to sexual crimes typically scored lower on scales of rape myth acceptance (Smith, Wilkes, and Bouffard 2016). Officers who scored lower on a rape myth acceptance scale were also more likely to support campus anti-sexual assault efforts (Smith, Wilkes, and Bouffard 2016).

Campus police officers also play different roles in the lives of those within their jurisdiction. Police on

campuses often must play the role of a more parental figure, as most young adults at college are growing into and adjusting to their first experiences living on their own (Williams et al. 2016). This puts campus police officers in an interesting situation, where they are thought of by many students to be "not real cops", while oftentimes still having the same legal powers as public law enforcement officers (Williams et al. 2016). Students feel that campus police officers should protect them while simultaneously not interfering with their lives, such as "overreacting" to students participating in underaged drinking (Jacobsen 2015).

This lack of legitimacy of campus police in students' eyes may also stem from the history of campus police. Early campus police in the first half of the twentieth century were little more than security guards, who could investigate and detain, but only refer to the administration for punishment (Sloan 1992). As unrest became widespread on campuses across the country in the late 1960's, college administrators faced losing control of their student populations, and a reliance on outsiders to keep peace on campus (Sloan 1992). Colleges were also growing rapidly during this time, which was accompanied by increases in crime (Sloan 1992). This led to the founding of official campus police departments made up of sworn law enforcers whose training, duties, and organization mirrored that of traditional urban police departments (Sloan 1992).

However, the attitudes of university police officers greatly contrast that of students attending the university. Overwhelmingly, campus police felt that students were, in general, respectful of the rules and cooperative with officers (Sloan 1992). Officers felt that while a minority of students created most of the trouble, outsiders posed the greatest threat to campus security (Sloan 1992). Campus police felt a strong sense of duty towards serving the university community and enforcing campus rules (Gelber 1972).

Methodology

This project relies heavily on computational methods of analysis. While the City of Chicago releases downloadable data-sets of police reports for the entire city, the University of Chicago only publishes records on a university website. Therefore the data from the UCPD on crime reports, traffic stops, and field interviews will be web-scraped into a usable data-set using the `rvest` package in R. Additional sources of data may be gathered to supplement the analysis, such as demographic data from the US Census API, national data-sets on crime from federal organisations like the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and non-public information like the full text of police reports from the City of Chicago through a Freedom of Information Act request or contact with the Office of the Inspector General.

Unsupervised Machine Learning techniques will be used alongside an exploratory data analysis to better understand the reports that each police department handles within the jurisdiction of the UCPD. This

would likely include extensive visual analyses of the data to create a breakdown of reports in the area and ascertain clusterability. Unsupervised clustering could be used to reduce the feature space of the data from each respective department, to clarify what types of crimes are happening in which locations, or to discern whether a combined data-set of all reports from both departments can be reliably separated on their attributes alone.

A variety of modeling methods would be used to predict which department (or both) responded to a specific report. This will provide more evidence for how each department uniquely responds to reports of crimes and what possible social and police ramifications this could impose. The modeling algorithms used would have to be able to predict categorical outcomes, ruling out typical linear regression. A logistic model could be used to model only a binary outcome between either department. More complicated methods such as Linear or Quadratic Discriminant Analysis, Naive Bayes, K-Nearest Neighbors, Decision Trees, or Random Forests would be used and their performance compared to pick the best models to analyze.

A formal text analysis would also be conducted to shed light on structural relationships within these reports. Using topic modeling we can attempt to understand general trends in these reports. The results of the topic models can be compared between the different corpora of texts that each organization collects. Any results from the topic models or other general text analysis methods can be used to engineer new features that can be used in the models described previously. For example, in the data-set of UCPD reports, each observation of a report not only includes a category of the reported crime, but also a textual description. While the crime might be categorized as a "theft", the description will often include what was reported missing, allowing us to create new features distinctly categorizing thefts of electronics from thefts of bikes, or an estimated value of the missing goods.

Sources

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