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Week 9 Reading Summaries
Big Data and Law Enforcement

How Predictive Policing Software Works

Police departments use learning algorithms to determine a grid square's risk for criminal activity. By inputting a series of information about the area (like 20 questions), the algorithm will determine how likely it is for a crime to happen there.

Websites and Apps for Sharing Crime and Safety Have Become Outlets for Racial Profiling

Reporting apps that allow users to report suspicious activity see a lot of racial profiling from those users, who "pick on people they don't like".

Is Predictive Policing the Law-Enforcement Tactic of the Future?

This article contrasts two opposing views that predictive policing is effective. A professor at Johns Hopkins and an attorney relate both how the systems are useful and reduce crime and how they are also biased.

Interactive Predictive Policing Program in South Pasadena, California

The South Pasadena Police Department has a predictive policing program that creates a weekly "crime forecast" that helps supervisors to decide where to send officers as preventative measures.

How Big Data is helping the NYPD Solve Crimes Faster

NYPD, Canadian cities and Chicago are a few departments that have implemented crime predictors by using software that detects gunshots, license plates, and 911 calls to keep officers informed and on top of crime before and as it happens.

Algorithms in the Criminal Justice System

Risk assessment tools use statistical data about a person to determine how likely it is that they'll commit a crime. This has become a topic of concern in court because some people feel these RA tools use bias and that defendants can't challenge the results.

Machine Bias

ProPublica conducted a study to see whether or not black people were being mislabeled as more likely to be a repeat offender than whites. Their conclusion was that more often than not, this was the case.

Response to ProPublica article by developer of computer program

Argues that the ProPublica study didn't take into account the base rates for recidivism in blacks and whites, and that they used false assertion through the rest of their analysis because of this. They said that ProPublica didn't describe the samples descriptive statistics, which could account for the difference in risk scores for blacks and whites.

ProPublica rejoinder to developer's response

ProPublica defends its position that the Risk Assessment program is disproportionately labeling blacks as high risk when it is incorrect. They argue that with a 60% correct rate, Northpointe can't ignore the rest of the cases.