

PREDICTIVE POLICING

What is Predictive Policing? LAPD Chief Charlie Beck defines predictive policing as:

“With new technology, new business processes, and new algorithms, predictive policing is based on directed, information-based patrol; rapid response supported by fact-based prepositioning of assets; and proactive, intelligence-based tactics, strategy, and policy. The predictive-policing era promises measurable results, including crime reduction; more efficient police agencies; and modern, innovative policing.”

What does it really mean? Predictive policing, with roots in business analytics, relies on using advanced technological tools and data analysis to take proactive measures to “pre-empt” crime. Basically it is another tool to legitimize Speculative Policing.

TALKING POINTS

LAPD Predictive Policing Project:

- Is deceptive and problematic because it presumes that data inputs and algorithms are neutral. "The accuracy of predictive policing programs depends on the accuracy of the information they are fed."
- It promotes racial profiling
- Predictive Policing is inherently biased against poor people and people of color – creating what has been called the “feedback looping of injustice.” The War on Drugs has shown intense disparity and racism where, blacks and latinos are disproportionately arrested and incarcerated at much higher rates than whites. That’s the deep bias in information that’s being fed into computers to predict where crime is going to happen creating the “feedback looping of injustice.”
- Veteran cops and prominent academics are skeptical about this latest crime-fighting gadget. Many say predictive policing doesn't work.
- Philip Stark, chair of the statistics department at UC Berkeley, reviewed documents and evaluated claims of reducing crime. "I'm less than convinced," he says. Stark has studied demographics, climate models, and even methods of earthquake prediction. "Does using it lead to a decrease in the crime rate?" he says. "You would need to do a comparison of similar-sized cities, with similar conditions, similar trends in their crime rates, with one group of cities using predictive policing, and the others not. Then you'd compare them to each other." "A comparison of the same jurisdiction to itself means nothing," he continues. "Crime fluctuates normally from year to year in the same city."
- Jerry Ratcliffe, the chair of Temple University's department of criminology says that predictive policing as a technology is "not proven by a stretch."
- Ed Schmidt, a criminologist and veteran police officer has serious reservations about Predictive Policing's supposed effectiveness. Schmidt just completed a review of

predictive policing efforts across 156 cities, and says there is little actual data that predictive policing works. Even if it does work, there's no guarantee that using it will actually reduce the overall rate of crime in a city.

- Many others say predictive policing doesn't work. Some even say specifically that Predictive Policing's algorithm do not accurately predict future crimes, and that it has no proven record of reducing crime rates. Others worry that gadget-obsessed police and their contractors will not just waste public dollars on snake-oil solutions, but that in the process they'll actually undermine public safety.
- The project is rife with vested interests of corporate profit making. There is clear conflict of interest between research and practice. In fact LAPD Chief Beck's article in Police Chief Magazine Jan 2014, is co-written with Colleen McCue, President and CEO of MC2 LLC based in Midlothian Virginia. A company that is showing "Fee Delinquent" on the company profile search engine Wysk. It also shows nothing on Hoover's which a Dun and Bradstreet search engine for company profiles.. all it shows is \$88,000 revenues and 2 employees.

What's Feedback looping of injustice: black people and Latinos are arrested, prosecuted and convicted for marijuana offenses at rates astronomically higher than their white counterparts, even if we adjust for income and geography. We also know that whites smoke marijuana at about the same rate as blacks and Latinos. Therefore we know that marijuana laws are not applied equally across the board: Blacks and Latinos are disproportionately targeted for associated arrests, while whites are arrested at much lower rates for smoking or selling small amounts of marijuana. Now consider that these arrest data are put into computer programs instructed to spit out information to officers about where to target police patrols -- what's called predictive policing. The returned intelligence telling police departments where to target their patrols is supposedly accurate because arrest data fed into a computer algorithm produced it. But if historical arrest data shows that the majority of arrests for marijuana crimes in a city are made in a predominately black area, instead of in a predominately white area, predictive policing algorithms working off of this problematic data will recommend that officers deploy resources to the predominately black area -- even if there is other information to show that people in the white area violate marijuana laws at about the same rate as their black counterparts. If an algorithm is only fed unjust arrest data, it will simply repeat the injustice by advising the police to send yet more officers to patrol the black area. In that way, predictive policing creates a feedback loop of injustice.