**Community conversations on algorithms**

NNIP Camp 2021

5/19/21

1. Are you noticing conversations around Automated-Decision-making in your city? in what issue areas (criminal justice, housing, child welfare, other)?
2. How do you think your organizations could engage?
   1. Probes: introductory conversations with government agencies, documenting uses in government, behind-the-scenes organizing, co-hosting, educating community groups/philanthropy
3. Are there lessons on framing from other conversations including government and community that you’ve participated in?

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Facilitator: Mychal Cohen

Attending:  Sonia Torres Rodriguez, Liz Whelan-Jackson, Anthony Galvan, Kathy Pettit, Katie Pritchard, Shiloh Deitz, Carlos BNIA (WordPress)

Mychal and Chris:  Talked about biases

Katurah:  framed how these conversations need to be incorporate and engage community members.  They may not even know that these ADS are affecting their lives.

Anthony:  We need to be advocates for use data and pushing back against unchecked machine learning.  How do we navigate that space?  Making sure there are community members at the table.  Bring them if if they are not there.

Are you noticing conversations around Automated-Decision-making in your city? in what issue areas (criminal justice, housing, child welfare, other)?

Sonia - that is something we took away from the discussion. This is a place where ADS is inviisble on purpose as part of a surveliiance package.  We can reach out to those being sueveilled .  Resident engagement always good, but we don't know .

Katie - we have a project - a sponsored Data Dream- Project Return.  Want to document the shortage of housing for people returning to community from prison.  Departments. of corrections will give us data on how they rate people's risk.  Doing interviews with people to learn what these scores miss.  Whether they have access to vouchers -> access to housing -> whether there is recidivism.

There are separate vouchers, but they only give them to people with certain ratings.  One of the factors is family stability - what you are going back to.

Lutheran Foundation - does alot of prison ministry - is funded it.

She thinks it will generate a good reason to ask.

Interviewing people recently released as well as probation officer.

Anthony  - lots of these ADS are built to impact vulnerable populations to begin with.  Those returning from incarceration, justice-involved of any kind (pre-trial or sentenced or suspect).  Bringing in community members may be good for some systems - school and surveillance more broadly.  People in CJ systems are not represented in who we usually meet in "community engagement."

Liz - are there other groups that fill in gaps?

Katie - they are ineligible for housing authority vouchers.

Mychal - question the algorithm but the central assumption.  People who are MORE at risk may deserve housing more.

Shiloh - Is it that people don't have a chance to say no?

Anthony - you might automate something that is low-impact.  Like red-light cameras.  We can all agree that running red-lights is bad.  Decisions should require more discretion and viewing .  Pre-trial detention - we want them to appear in court.  That should be the goal and we should encourage a system that encourages them to be there instead of one that predicts that they don't /

Shiloh - They are creating master data management - data lake - to use these data to address homelessness. Looking at this project - the data will tell us how to address homelessness.  The framing might be well-being, but trusting data and algorithms over human decison-making.  Lots of talk about governance and creating procedures on governance anti-surveillance.  All the agencies want to do these things - but at what cost?

Kathy - what is the motivation for bureaucrats "wanting" ADS?

Shiloh - police dept - developed dashboard to see real-time shelter vacancy.  They wanted cover to give them permission to clear homeless camp.  Our mayor has political reasons - the belief that data can decide.

Mychal - people use them as a substitute for a goal, end game.  Use data or metrics for saying "we want to end homelessness by x date"   In SF, they set specific targets around reducing homelessness and through Tipping Point initiative and automated end-take system to automate.

Bob Gradeck in Pittsburgh documenting where things are

Liz - where you would classify- how to define?  Liz - examples so far seem like about individual.  Place-based models on automated data systems - where to prioritize trail dollars?

Anthony - working on a project for home visiting for child abuse prevention - state put together risk model to identify at risk zip codes.  They ran some correlations and took all ones with high correlations.   They picked up alot of people that add up to 100 - households on SNAP and poverty (measuring the same thing).  Their model weighted heavily towards poverty & 1 for teen-pregnancy.  Locations of risk were poor places.  Without noticing what happened, they corrected after the fact to select places with teen mothers. The first think I said - this is why I hate doing research and finding something wrong with everything.  We need something to be guiding decisions.

Shiloh - is it about Identification, Audits, Establish oversight/governance (Kathy thinks it is all).

Shiloh - what is the role of metadata?

Mychal - we talked about govt created algorithms.

Liz- - I was thinking about  - we will be offered some automated way to do scenario planning. Hard for us to accept it because they say it is proprietary and we can't look under the hood.  How often are under-resources, understaffed ?  how to make people more information? Provide procurement education/advice.

Kathy do some digging on if those principles

Anthony - how often is the procurement of ADS isn't intentional  - you buy a platform and there is predictive aspect/feature that you don't know about.  If you buy a Record Mgmt System vendor - tracking court cases, computer in the patrol calls - and it includes ADS and you might just start to use it.

Shiloh - if we think about visualizations, we can use data to tell the story you want.  My experience in the political world, she is told they want to make a data-driven decision but they see the results and change their mind.  The ADS might be accomplishing goals that are politically-expedient.

Mychal - that is definitely the conversation about that is the end goal.  Is automation getting past difficult conversations.

Katie - awareness topic at [Data Day](https://www.datayoucanuse.org/6th-data-day-2020/) - we are in the early stages of it.  How can there be more community engagement in the review.  What is the range of things?

Liz - regional data agenda - every three years - we added an exclamation point around bias in data, educating people - setting the standard for more participatory analysis.  We would be interested to follow up with others to get new ideas.

Kathy - could you partner with ACLU, Urban League.

Mychal - suggests Data for Black Lives (add link).