

HW 5

Musie Gebreegziabher

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This homework is meant to give you practice in creating and defending a position with both statistical and philosophical evidence. We have now extensively talked about the COMPAS ¹ data set, the flaws in applying it but also its potential upside if its shortcomings can be overlooked. We have also spent time in class verbally assessing positions both for and against applying this data set in real life. In no more than two pages ² take the persona of a statistical consultant advising a judge as to whether they should include the results of the COMPAS algorithm in their decision making process for granting parole. First clearly articulate your position (whether the algorithm should be used or not) and then defend said position using both statistical and philosophical evidence. Your paper will be graded both on the merits of its persuasive appeal but also the applicability of the statistical and philosophical evidence cited.

The COMPAS dataset which contains information about defendants from Broward County has been used in measuring recidivism risk in bail decisions. The use of this dataset in this purpose has shown to be biased against certain racial groups. In regards to whether the algorithm should be used or not, I believe that the COMPAS dataset shouldn't be used for a number of philosophical and statistical reasons.

Philosophical concerns regarding the use of the COMPAS dataset start off with its concerns with personal autonomy. This is the capacity for an individual to decide for oneself a course of action and pursue it, sometimes independent of a moral character. In the case of measuring recidivism risk in bail decisions, this would be the capacity for an individual's personal circumstance to be the determinant of their treatment, rather than the historical circumstances of individuals.

Statistical concerns surrounding the utilization of the COMPAS dataset pertain to its potential for disparate impact, wherein certain demographic groups, notably based on race, are disproportionately affected. This issue is exemplified by algorithmic bias within the dataset and its application.

¹<https://www.propublica.org/datastore/dataset/compas-recidivism-risk-score-data-and-analysis>

²knit to a pdf to ensure page count