"Preemptive Policing (Or Predictive Policing)"

Often criticized in science fiction or fantasy but what does it look like in the real world?

Apple's Attempt at Preemptive Policing

- One of the implementations of preemptive policing comes from Apple's attempt to combat child sexual abuse material, or CSAM.
- Their plan to go about this involved scanning users photos for CSAM as they were uploaded into the iCloud.
- While efforts to combat CSAM are certainly commendable, Apple actually faced a great deal of push back on this idea and ultimately ended up not going through with it
- What was the cause for the backlash?
- Many criticized the proposal for its privacy issues and potential for abuse

Source:
https://www.foxbusiness.com/technology/apple-ditching-controversial-plan-scan-icloud-photos-child-abuse-material-amid-privacy-push

Source:
https://cyberlaw.stanford.edu/blog/2022/12/some-thoughts-about-apple%E2%80%99s-new-advanced-data-protection-feature

Troubles of Accuracy with Preemptive Policing

- One could maybe defend the privacy issues of preemptive policing (although I wouldn't) if it were more effective but the technology still has a long way to go.
- One example is the case of Michael Oliver in Michigan, 2019 where he was wrongfully arrested on felony charges based on a match from facial recognition technology.
- However when both he and the judge actually reviewed the footage of the crime, they both agreed there were very few similarities between Oliver and the perpetrator…besides both being black.
- Overall, facial recognition technology that might be used for these purposes tend to be less accurate when it comes to those with darker skin tones.

Source:
https://www.cbsnews.com/news/detroit-facial-recognition-surveillance-camera-racial-bias-crime/

Troubles of Biases with Predictive Policing

- One of the other forms of preemptive policing comes from collecting data about the location, times, and nature of previous crimes in order to guide where or when police should patrol.
- This data however has to come from previous records of reported crime, which may already be biased by the police officers who reported them in the past.
- There are laws that many people break often without even thinking about it (like jaywalking) but those crimes aren't going to be reported unless there are both police present and willing to enforce laws. The selective enforcement of laws[1] (whether knowingly or unknowingly done) will bias the data, which will in turn lead to more police presence, which will cyclically skew the data even more.
  - Example, "Disproportionate Risks of Driving While Black" or Disparities in arrest rates for marijuana possession
- "Over time, predictive policing has been shown to be, at best, of questionable effectiveness, and at worst, deeply flawed and infused with racial bias." - Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals

Source:
https://www.techdirt.com/2020/07/27/appeals-court-bashes-predictive-policing-judge-who-argued-people-high-crime-areas-want-fewer-rights/

A Chance For Predictive Policing To Still Be Useful

- There's a very good chance that if predictive policing were to be fully embraced and implemented, it would lead to an overpolicing of low-income and minority communities
- For many in these communities police presence can be seen as something to fear and represent a threat of violence or worse.
- Perhaps predictive policing can better serve these communities by taking police out of the equation.
- Instead of using the crime data to guide police patrols, perhaps there can be more of an effort to understand the crime data. And maybe with more understanding of the crimes, other resources can be offered to these communities that might better help than increased police presence.