

Reading Response March 25

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Actuarial risk assessments have long been discussed as a statistical method that propagates discrimination as they most of the time work on the data that already have historical bias in them and thus propagate them likewise. But this paper is giving a user a different perspective on how to use this method as a diagnosis and intervention purposes rather than just for prediction and punishment way. It argues mostly around bringing this matter to a more ethical light by talking about risk mitigation more often than just plain prediction of the risk scores. I feel this is a step towards shining a different perspective to the matter. Rather than discussing just bias, which we have seen in previous papers as well that is not easy to take out of algorithms that are based on probabilities and predictions, the author argues that it would be ethical if we use these methods for the rehabilitation and more diagnostic purposes. They therefore conceptualized a new idea of using risk assessments for a more semi-personalized intervention. One thing I really like about this paper is that they are bringing the right intention to the table and also talking about a more humane sounding approach when they talked about the RNR (risk-needs-responsivity) framework. They have a good envisioning of seeing them as an individual – capable of reform through intervention. They see it as a long-term goal every system administration should incorporate and are missing on it currently. But these dynamic data driven tools require observations, interviews, and surveys of probation staff. And one thing to note here is that these are more range of inputs that can vary from individual to individual. There is still a lot that these tools need are human driven. So some might argue that not much has been achieved in terms of automating the probation and rehabilitation process. But then we miss the opportunities a chance. Amidst all that we have I don't see this as a bad tool or concept. I feel AI can do better with a little human intervention. What I do not like about the paper is that it did not discuss if there is a said math or framework that they are still using and have therefore failed to convince me entirely on topic scientifically. The concept however sounds ethical, the question is can it work?