Syllabus
L&S 39D: Race, Policing, and Data Science
Professor McCrary
Fall 2015

Class Room

105 Cory Hall

Tuesdays

3:30pm - 5:30pm

Office

Simon 586 and Barrows 350J

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Preliminaries

Course Description

Few issues are as enduring in the United States as are tensions between police departments and the communities they serve. In virtually every city in the United States, members of minority groups are arrested at rates disproportionate to population prevalence. Recent events have emphasized that this disproportionality extends as well to far more extreme events, such as death in custody. In this class, we will review available data sources on race and policing and ask what those data have to say about current events and the types of claims, typically causal, commonly invoked in public discourse surrounding these issues. We will review the history of policing in the United States with a particular focus on the transition of police departments from being nearly exclusively white to comparatively diverse, discussing their role in limiting and fueling the riots of the 1960s and since, and examine the role of the federal courts in leading that integration. With an eye towards the present, we will cover the applicability of federal, state, and local law for collection of data and citizens' right of access to those data. We will address research design questions about the ability of those data to speak to the broader questions of interest such as whether a more diverse department will improve police performance and under what conditions. And we will discuss the challenges of combining information on departments collected from disparate sources, including data collected mandatorily by governments, data collected by government on a voluntary basis, data belonging to administrative repositories, and crowdsourced data such as `fatalencounters.org`.

Prerequisites

- None

Class Requirements

- Concurrent enrollment in STAT94 or professor permission

- Periodic assignments

Office Hours and Availability

- Professor McCrary will hold office hours on Thursdays from 2-4pm in Simon 586

Course Website

- The course website is available via bCourses

Required Books

- There is no required textbook for the course. Readings will be drawn primarily from the web and articles.

Topics

1 Background

- History of policing in the United States

- Data on police personnel

- Data on policing activities and crime

2 Police Shootings

- Crowdsourced data

- http://www.fatalencounters.org/spreadsheets

- http://killedbypolice.net

3 How Diverse are Police Departments Today? How Has Diversity Changed over Time?

- EEO-4 data

- LEMAS data

- Police department annual reports

- Explanations and causality

4 What Do Police Officers Do? How Does Race Play Into That?

- Uniform Crime Reports (UCR)

- Administrative data

- Research design