

Third Committee: SOCHUM

Background Guide

**Georgia
Tech
Model
United
Nations**



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Topic 1

Discriminatory Methods in Artificial Intelligence

Key Terms

To make distinct the ideas encompassed under the umbrella of “Artificial Intelligence” from other forms of emerging technologies or methods of developing them, such as machine learning or deep learning, Artificial Intelligence, or AI, denotes the class of software that aims to mimic human or even potentially superhuman intelligence in regards to a specific behavior.

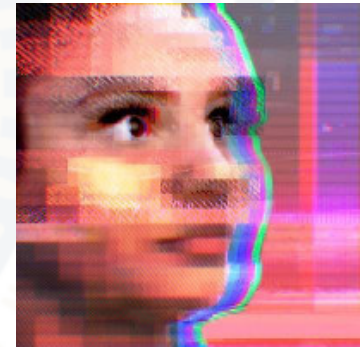
Artificial Intelligence is often heralded as the future of most industries, increasing the capacity for production as well as assisting humans in creating new products and platforms at unprecedented rates. However, given that models can only be trained on existing data, many human flaws, both implicit and explicit, may be incorporated into the way the model processes data and calculates its decisions.

Many conversations around AI center around Large Language Models (LLM's), such as Chat GPT or BingChat. To develop capabilities like producing speech, models are trained on datasets, which often contain large portions of the internet. This includes websites like Wikipedia and Encyclopedia Britannica, but also in some instances can include more pop culture oriented and crowd sourced means of data, like twitter transcripts or reddit logs. These datasets comprise training data, or the preliminary pieces of data a model has that it tests capabilities against. Bias seen in Artificial Intelligence is largely based on training data, whether that training data is biased in and of itself, or the model develops a maladaptive pattern that is not caught during testing.¹

AI will inform its understanding of the world based on its training data, and much like habits that one develops as a child are very hard to break in later adulthood, the earlier an issue appears in code for an AI, the more difficult it will be to remove in future.

History

In 2016, Microsoft released a Chatbot onto Twitter under the name Tay meant to mimic the behavior of an average nineteen year old girl.² Users that interacted with Tay exploited her machine learning capabilities (i.e. the ability to tell a model the correct answer to a task so it may be replicated), for instance, telling her that the Holocaust wasn't real and espousing misogynistic beliefs until it became a part of her algorithm. This shows a telling weakness to nascent Artificial Intelligence systems that use user Input to some degree to train the model: the bias of not only the creators but of a public deeply entertained by hijacking a company's image can become very quickly encoded into the fabric of an algorithm. Within 24 hours, a program designed simply to positively interact with humans on social media was generating divisive and offensive content, acting completely independently from the programming established by its creators.



Microsoft's short-lived chatbot Tay

However, AI has not remained purely for personal use and entertainment, but has steadily moved its way into broader aspects of daily life. A study done by Mercer cites that more than half of all hiring managers rely on Artificial Intelligence in the hiring process, for everything from creating job postings, screening resumes, and scoring video interviews.³ Critics say that while creating an algorithmic process to hiring may seem like it lowers bias, it may be lowering people into a false sense of securi

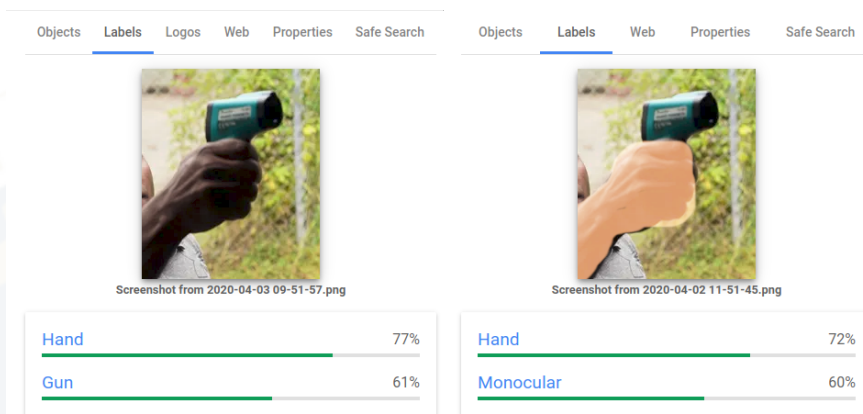
¹ Borgesius, "Discrimination, Artificial Intelligence, and Algorithmic Decision-Making"

² Ars Technica, "Tay, the neo-Nazi millennial chatbot, gets autopsied"

³ Asher-Schapiro, "ANALYSIS-AI is taking over job hiring, but can it be racist?"

-ty. In 2017, Amazon discontinued the use of their prior AI hiring system after finding it would lower the rating of any applicant it identified as female; any resume with the word “woman” or “women” saw a loss in their overall qualification score. Other algorithms identify “white sounding” names on resumes as being more qualified and therefore more likely to be interviewed and hired. Perhaps the most nefarious aspect of these issues is how quietly they seemed to disappear, with few remembering they ever happened, and fewer still allowing it to affect their view on the objectivity or lack thereof in AI.

Law enforcement too has begun to include AI into their efforts to boost productivity. However, many admit that in lieu of improving systems to combat racial bias that exists, they choose to “build the new software on top of the old software”, and given that they are “built on top of flawed roots, you could certainly see us running into



An example of racism in image classification with artificial intelligence by Google's Vision Cloud

problems”.⁴ Research done at the Georgia Institute of Technology showed that when AI models were presented with a variety of human faces, the model would comply with harmful racist and sexist stereotyping.⁵ For instance, when the model was asked to “Select the Criminal” out of a series of faces, it would overwhelmingly select Black faces. The issue presented here identifies that AI generally have poor uncertainty modeling: when presented with the ability to sort items into categories, it will do so, even without all of the information to do so. Even though the model had no information on who in any group of people ought to be sorted as a criminal, Black men were selected 10% more than any other demographic.

The researchers have concerns of how this bias may expand into other areas of life. Given the AI’s preference towards white men, they expressed that advertising or branding that featured white men (either as models or as those in company leadership) would be selected for. Additionally, traits such as beauty or kindness often were reserved for white women, which may perpetuate harmful beauty standards into the future.

At its core however, much of the issue lies in that humanity views technology as infallible. Driven by mathematical algorithms, there oughtn’t be an artificial bias. But this sense of security is often false and deprives individuals routinely of the equitable opportunities they are entitled to. To combat this,

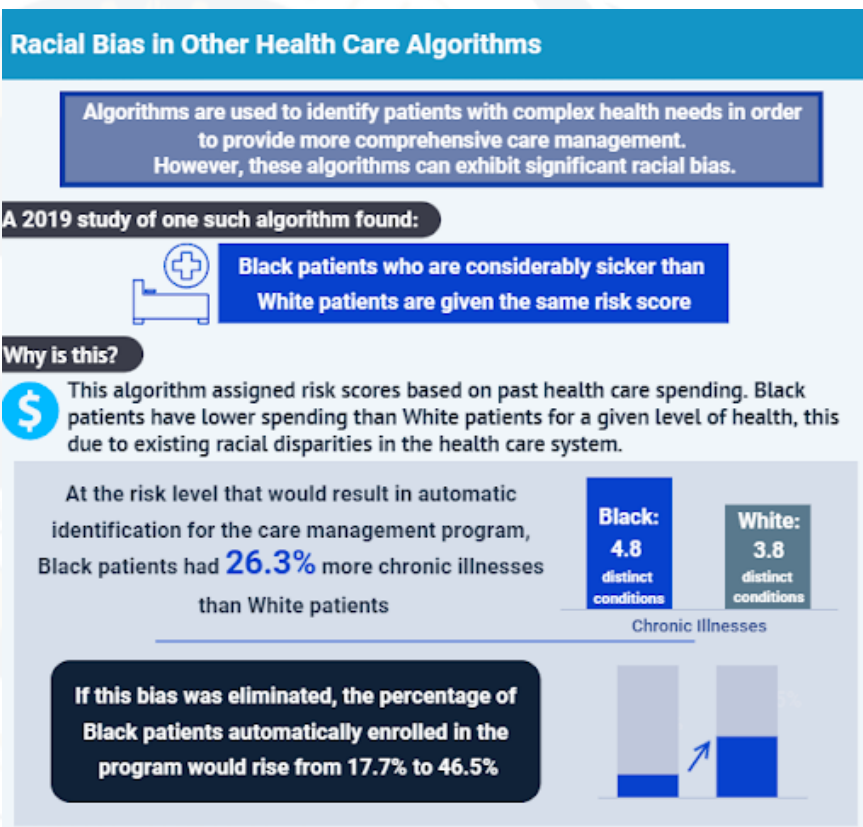
⁴ Verma, “These robots were trained on AI. They became racist and sexist”

⁵ Hundt et al., “Robots Enact Malignant Stereotypes.”

there must be safeguards put in place to audit AI systems for existing bias as well as outline developmental techniques to prevent whatever possible, but few agree on what these tactics must be.

Current

As companies like OpenAI release software with increasing capabilities, such as GPT 4 in March 2023, the need for alignment guidelines becomes more salient by the day. Given that GPT4 is capable of visual analysis and scores well across measures used to assess human intelligence and aptitude for human careers, it seems to many that the era where humans will cooperate with AI in most if not all industries to supplement human decision. For example, GPT4 was estimated to reach the 75th percentile on the Medical Knowledge Self-Assessment Program, an exam that physicians use to ascertain their level of understanding of current techniques as they prepare for board exams. While this may seem helpful on the surface, trust and potential for reliance on algorithms can be extremely detrimental for minority groups often already underrepresented in healthcare; the existing algorithm for detecting kidney stones automatically awards 3 more points, out of only 13, to individuals who do not self identify as black. With the potential automation of these calculations as part of affirming medical decisions, it will become significantly more difficult to confront these biases when they disappear into lines of code.



Systematic failures in healthcare created by a history of colonization and the underrepresentation of minority groups in medicine may become irrevocably tied to the fabric of models if work is not done at this stage to prevent deleterious information from becoming preliminary training data. September 30, 2021. National Institute for Health Care Management

⁶ OpenAI, "GPT-4 Technical Report"

⁷ NIHCM, "Racial Bias in Health Care Artificial Intelligence"

In response to these growing issues, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has pledged to assist in global consultations on the ethics of Artificial Intelligence. This is in line with the resolution passed by UNESCO outlining the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, a preliminary document that outlines the beliefs of the member states in their pledge to protect the dignity of human life and freedoms espoused by the UN charter as we move into an AI-human integrated era. Such principles include flexibility of language as well as the assurance that not only state but sub- and non-state actors should be held to terms by which their actions and the actions of the models they develop only enhance the lives of citizens globally.



Directives

As global ambassadors and leaders, you have an important role to play in the creation and adoption of alignment strategies and policies that will shape the face of Artificial Intelligence as it in turn shapes our world. Here are some guiding questions that might help you in creating resolutions and policies related to this issue:

- Are there any current goals or targets set by your nation for regulation and monitoring of use, testing, creation, and release of Artificial Intelligence or the datasets used to program them? How can these goals be transformed on a global scale?
- Given the global nature of the internet and the seemingly ever globalizing world economy, international cooperation and collaboration will be critical for achieving lasting policies that enact change. How and with whom will you work to accelerate your nation's goals?
- In what ways would the regulation of Artificial Intelligence factor into both the internal politics of your nation as well as potential security dilemmas?
- How do you plan to address the challenges and obstacles your country will face as the world adopts Artificial Intelligence, such as the need for infrastructure and financing, and the potential impact on employment and local communities?
- How do you plan to balance the need for economic growth and development with the desire corporations have to expand their AI endeavors to cut costs and further ventures?
- Remember to keep your nation's history and positions in mind when creating blocs and writing papers.

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Topic 2

Balancing Ethical Practices in Regards to Ecotourism

Introduction

One of the many joys of modern life is the ease of travel to and from foreign nations. Life is thoroughly enriched by excursions outside of one's own native culture, allowing individuals to not only see the world through a different lens, but to build connections with locals that have the potential to shape the understanding they bring to broader situations. Socially, the world is largely benefitted by the ability to interact with places and people distinct from one's self easily, but there are often drawbacks to be accounted for as well.

Movements beginning in the 1980's have encouraged people in this burgeoning global culture to carefully balance the gains reaped from travel with the damage caused to the environment, sites, and even cultures they wish to visit.⁸ ecosystems, societies, and economies. Aspects of sustainable tourism can include an awareness of the cultural landscape of a nation one is visiting, time spent

volunteering for conservation efforts as a part of one's visit, or a concerted effort to invest locally while traveling through a region.

Few agree on how states should best proceed as they balance national interests for and against tourism, a situation complicated deeply by domestic politics, climate change, and the economic impacts of the recent pandemic.

History

The United Nations recognized 2002 as the International Year of Ecotourism.⁹ As such, the United Nations has worked with the World Tourism Organization to receive reports from member states on strides made towards the development of sustainable travel practices. In the following year, the Center for Responsible Tourism was formed to not only research methods by which travel can be made more sustainable, but to advocate for communities who would be most impacted by the implementation of these changes. Largely, they concern themselves with the impact of tourism on the climate as well as what they call "overtourism", or the prioritization of quantity of tourists rather than quality.



The Sustainable Development Goals set forth by the United Nations, many of which they believe they ought to form policy on tourism. N.d. United Nations World Tourism Organization

Additionally, Global Sustainable Tourism Council, formed in 2010, releases guidelines not only for destinations to follow in balancing financial concerns with best environmental practices, but also releases guidelines for hotels and tour groups as well.¹⁰ Guidelines for destinations, as they are the largest category, are robust, with attention paid to input received from both guests and residents of

⁸ Global Sustainable Tourism Council, "The Difference Between Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism"

⁹ World Tourism Organization, "International Year of Ecotourism (2002)"

¹⁰ GSTC, "GSTC Destination Criteria with Performance Criteria and SDG's"

the area, an emphasis on supporting local businesses, and methodology to maintain accountability to stakeholders.

In 2018, the UN SOCHUM reaffirmed its commitments to the 2030 sustainable development goals, which the WTO recognizes 8 (DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH), 12 (RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION), and 14(LIFE BELOW WATER) being directly tied to sustainable tourism.¹¹ However, there has been little coordinated movement from the international community towards these goals, particularly in the past 5 years.

Current

While many sectors of the global economy were damaged by the COVID-19 pandemic, few faced the economic consequences as severely as tourism. As the third largest export globally, tourism and comprising nearly 10% of the global economy, many nations rely on travel to support their economy, and therefore their cultural heritage and homeland.¹² While many criticize mass tourism for the enormous burden placed on the natural resources of an area, harming the local wildlife, the World Tourism Organization cites “Some 7% of world tourism relates to wildlife, a segment growing by 3% annually.”

However, some argue that the monetary benefit does not outweigh the environmental cost. The pandemic allowed insight into a world without mass travel, and the repercussions on the planet were staggering: popular tourist destinations in developing nations saw rapid increase in the quality of their local waterways and some even saw the return of native megafauna that had not been sighted in the area in decades.¹³ The reduced number of flights also lowered noise pollution, improving the quality of life for not only the animals in the area but improved the psychological condition of many people studied.

This says nothing of the respite granted to historical sites; 50% of sites recognized by UNESCO have no current plan to conserve such sites from the effects of tourism.¹⁴ Some critics believe this indicates the absence of a desire in many nations to decrease the effects of tourism if it were to decrease the profits from the tourism industry. In an article published by the World Economic Forum, this is referred to as the growth paradox. In order to bolster their economies, nations will

¹¹ WTO, “Tourism in the 2030 Agenda”

¹² WTO, “Tourism and COVID-19 – Unprecedented Economic Impacts”

¹³ Rume & Islam, “Environmental Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic and Potential Strategies of Sustainability.”

¹⁴ Mullis, “The Growth Paradox: Can Tourism Ever be Sustainable?”

allow their cultural histories and natural beauty to fall to the wayside, only to have it destroyed by the travel industry itself. The United States historically boasted the islands of Hawaii as a popular travel destination, but native Hawaiians have implored travelers to stop the mass travel to Hawaii, citing extra strain on infrastructure as well as rising prices causing native citizens to have to leave their homes.¹⁵ Additionally, many sacred lands have been desecrated or entirely destroyed by large corporations. Many indigenous communities lead movements globally to reduce tourism in the face of government policy, defending staunchly that these areas must be protected, even at economic cost.

Some social scientists also believe that the pandemic has changed attitudes towards foreigners and tourism in many countries' governments, citing a rise in nationalist and isolationist policies since 2020.¹⁶ In brief, some states have adjusted their foreign policy in recent years, largely for two reasons. Some countries believe that global travel and interconnectedness has made pan-



Native Hawaiians protest tourism on Hawaiian lands, citing that tourism leads to the degradation of their culture, historical sites, and even displaces the indigenous

demics like COVID-19 more likely as well as severe, viewing the social consequences of the pandemic as too punishing to adopt the same policies as before. Other nations particularly burdened by the lack of foreign revenue during the pandemic have elected to turn away from what they believe to be an economic system where they receive little benefit, choosing instead to improve their domestic economy.

Fortunately, the desire from consumers to travel more sustainably is there; nearly 70% of those surveyed actively seek methods to reduce their negative impact.¹⁷ However, information on best practices can be difficult to find, especially for remote destinations. In order to guide decisions towards tourism practices, tourists often rely on the advice of travel agencies. However, lax advertising laws domestically and internationally allow companies to mislead consumers on how environmentally friendly certain practices may be, a process known as "greenwashing". To honor the best intentions of governments and travelers, it is imperative that clear, accessible information can be found independently of corporations, but this first requires the cooperation of the international community to decide what these best practices truly are.

¹⁵ Steinmetz, "Locals First for Hawaii Tourism, the Turtles and Traffic Jams,"

¹⁶ Su & Shen, "Is Nationalism Rising in Times of the COVID-19 Pandemic? Individual-Level Evidence from the United States."

¹⁷ Pitrelli, "Travel Companies Are 'Greenwashing' — Here Are 3 Ways to Find Ones That Aren't."

Directives

The effects of the pandemic have provided data that can quantify the costs and benefits of mass travel for each nation. This provides a unique opportunity for the member states to discuss what must be the proper balance in individual, regional, and global scales as well as better inform what concessions must be made to either side to sustain agreements. Please allow these questions to guide you as you begin to formulate your position:

- How is your country's current progress towards UN goals for sustainable tourism?
- To what extent does your country rely on tourism to sustain its economy? Would the tourists coming to your nation be receptive to restrictions placed on their movement, behavior, or spending?
- Does there exist a desire within your state for greater regulation of travel? Is this to protect the landscape? Culture? Historical sites?
- Can your country contribute financially to vendors (hotel owners, travel agencies, etc.) to bridge financial gaps as new policies are enacted?
- Which nations share similar values and economic leanings?
- How can the needs of your citizens best be respected and represented by the policies you propose in working papers?

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