SQL Homework 6
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CALEN LAU

Reflect on your previous work and how you would adjust to include ethics and inequity components.

ML and AI stand at the forefront of innovation with mass adoption across all industries, promising unprecedented advancements and positioned to permeate every facet of our lives. There simply is no stopping this revolutionary technological tidal wave. However, beneath the veneer of progress lies a complex web of ethical and inequity concerns that demand our immediate attention. Bias is not just a peripheral issue in AI and ML; it is structurally embedded into all of the defining qualities that make each human unique, influencing gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, culture, and language. We must identify and reconcile how these technologies mirror our conscious and unconscious biases, and advocate to embed structure in the design of our ML and AI solutions to minimize these ethical pitfalls.

Because at the core of AI and ML systems are data and algorithms crafted by humans. This human involvement means that biases—whether explicit or implicit—are woven into the fabric of these technologies. For instance, facial recognition software has been notoriously less accurate in identifying individuals with darker skin tones, leading to misidentification and reinforcing racial stereotypes. Language models may inadvertently perpetuate gender biases by associating certain professions predominantly with one gender. These examples are not mere glitches; they are symptomatic of a larger structural problem where AI systems reflect and amplify societal prejudices.

The unintended consequences of AI deployment are manifesting in alarming ways. Take the case of human content moderators on social media platforms like Facebook and the tremendous psychological trauma caused from manually reviewing a myriad of very disturbing events. Or the algorithmic moderating software from major social media apps that have struggled to distinguish between hate speech and legitimate discourse, often silencing minority voices, while at the same time, failing to curb the spread of misinformation. From a socioeconomic view, the proliferation of AI's powerful ability to automate 24/7 is already displacing jobs with repetitive tasks that disproportionately affect lower socioeconomic groups and widens the inequality gap. The promise of greater productivity overshadows the unintended negative societal consequences of unemployment.

Furthermore, the influence of bias extends beyond individual interactions, permeating cultural and linguistic contexts. AI-powered language translation services can misinterpret idioms or cultural nuances, leading to misunderstanding, which results in outward misrepresentation, harmful cultural homogenization, and marginalizing vulnerable communities.

Perhaps more concerning is the leveraging of AI for destructive purposes, notably in warfare. Autonomous weapons and AI-driven surveillance systems raise profound ethical questions about accountability, consent, and the value we place on human life. The potential for AI to escalate conflicts or enable oppressive regimes is a stark reminder of the double-edged sword that technology presents.

Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach. First, regulatory frameworks from governments and international bodies need to keep pace with technological advancements and establish guidelines that prioritize ethical considerations and protect against misuse. A wider range of perspectives can help identify and mitigate biases that a homogenous group might overlook. Second, transparency in algorithms and data sources is crucial. Open dialogue about how AI systems make decisions can foster trust and allow for external auditing to detect biases. Third, there must be a concerted effort to diversify the teams developing AI technologies.

Education also plays a pivotal role. As consumers and end-users of AI technologies, the public must be informed about the implications of AI and empowered to advocate for ethical standards. Tech literacy can no longer be a niche skill, but rather, a societal imperative.