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30 August 2023

Coded bias

The documentary that I chose to watch was “Coded Bias” by Shalini Kantayya. Within this documentary they talk about the computer vision technology and the biases that arise within the data sets. The facial recognition primarily recognized white males compared to those of color, because those who had written the coded unintentionally included their bias within teaching the program. It was said that those who own the code have the most power over those who use it. In London UK, the police are using facial recognition to match pedestrians to a watch list but 98% of those matches were incorrect. It was argued that the police shouldn’t be allowed to easily use facial recognition on the public. Because like your fingerprint and DNA, your facial biometrics is your identity which law enforcement has procedures and policies that prevent them from taking so easily. A man got stopped and fined because he didn’t want his face to be scanned and covered it from being scanned. Many corporations use algorithms to try and obtain power over the poor and those who aren’t even aware of the system. While other corporations like banking apps, might see facial recognition as a benefit like preventing identity fraud and having a better way to verify certain situations and transactions. Within the documentary they covered how Joy Buolamwini testified to congress on how the facial algorithm was biased towards those of color and how it’s being misused and that there should be regulations implemented. As of today, there aren’t any official regulations implemented to regulate the use of facial recognition. This means anyone can use facial recognition how they see fit until someone files for a lawsuit.

I think that in today’s world there is more awareness on how inaccurate facial recognition can be but it’s still worrisome of how easily corporations and even governments trust AI systems despite not knowing how it works. In London the software was 2% accurate and law enforcement still believed and conducted interrogations on pedestrians rather than go back to make sure that the person truly did match with what the AI had said. That kind of incompetence can make a small interrogation grow into someone getting hurt or even killed. Especially in today’s society when you have to walk on eggshells around law enforcement, more so for those of Color than Caucasians. Regulations on how facial recognition software should be used would help avoid that kind of issue. Law enforcement shouldn’t primarily base their suspicions because the AI said the person was a match but rather through a thorough and extensive investigation after seeing that the AI had made a match. Another way law enforcement could better use facial recognition is for missing person’s cases and kidnapping to track and be able to find people better than through reports. As for the bias within the code of facial recognition, changes to the code and even including a more diverse range of profiles when training the programs could help eliminate a majority of the bias. As well as checking if the software is running like it’s supposed to every 3 months. Just minor changes can help improve the accuracy of the AI but also decrease the number of false matches against the innocent. If regulations and policies aren’t put in place, then uncontrolled and unjustified use of facial recognition will continue and even get to the point of violating people’s right to privacy, freedom of expression, non-discrimination and freedom of assembly and association.