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Discussant Questions (11/10: Labor)

**Question 1:**

How can Amazon ensure the drivers of delivery service partners keep their Mentor app open at all times/drive safely, without risking the stability of their jobs or losing their well-earned bonuses?

**Answer:**

As one anonymous Amazon driver said, “Either you turn the app off so you can deliver faster or you leave it on and deliver slower and don't get your bonuses." Another further problem with leaving the Mentor app on is that the bosses of many delivery service drivers force them to turn it off a few hours into the day. If these drivers refuse to turn the app off, they may lose more than just a bonus, they lose their job as a whole. As mentioned in the article, Amazon knowingly places all of the liability for the drivers on small delivery companies who hire these same drivers. Thus, one way that Amazon can ensure that drivers are driving safely/using the Mentor app through the entirety of their shift, is to hire drivers directly instead of using pseudo-independent companies to do their “dirty work” for them. One solution, that is a little more likely than the aforementioned option, and has been implemented by a few delivery stations already, is to no longer use driving scores as a bonus metric. Although this option has more of a chance of being implemented than the previous one, this could have a great impact on Amazon’s “rate” which it prides itself on and Amazon may have a hard time letting go of a system it's used for so long.

**Question 2:**

In the article *Amazon Drivers Are Instructed to Drive Recklessly to Meet Delivery Quotas* by VICE, apps like Mentor and AI like Netradyne had the power to influence driving scores which decide who got bonuses or not. In *Uber drivers to launch legal bid to uncover app's algorithm*

by The Guardian, profiling data on Uber drivers such as evaluations of a person’s reliability, behavior, location, and movements decided who got what routes and when. With this said, should non-transparent AI be used by companies to decide pivotal aspects of an employees job? If not, what do you suggest should be done\what would make you okay with their use in the workplace?

**Answer:**

The answer to this question branches out farther than merely just automation in the workplace, instead non-transparent AI should never be used on subjects in almost any circumstances, especially when it is supposed to serve and protect some of those same individuals. Transparency, as described in the article *The Age of Secrecy and Unfairness in Recidivism Prediction* by Rudin, Wang, and Coker*,* provides the public with the opportunity to scrutinize the methodology and calculations behind certain automated decision making outcomes such as the aforementioned FICO driving scores, or the algorithms Uber uses to decide who gets which routes and when. Without knowing and understanding how certain metrics are calculated, and getting the opportunity to fight back if they are unethical, the use of AI shouldn’t be used in the workplace. However, if corporations and private entities can offer the public and educated auditors enhanced details on the methodology behind their calculations, then the helpful and fair automated decision making systems can make their way into the workplace wherever necessary.

**Bonus Question:**

In *Labor* by Kate Crawford, the author points out that crowdsourcing and forced human-AI collaboration leads to the overall exploitation of human workers. With that said, do you feel like complete automation of certain aspects of labor would be a net positive? Or should AI be completely removed from the workplace? Or somewhere in between?

**Answer:**

Although things such as “fauxtomation” force human laborers to work grueling 14+ hour shifts to trick investors into thinking that automated machines are truly automated, I don’t believe complete automation would be a net positive for human workers. Automation, in its current state, allows for lower wages, as human labor becomes even more “replaceable” than it already was. Furthermore, I don’t believe automation in the workplace is necessarily a bad thing in the first place. Instead, just like with facial recognition technology, the ethicality of automation in the workplace comes down to how and why people use them. The main problem with automation roots back to the same labor problems we’ve been having for centuries, for-profit entities over working and undercompensating their employees in non-optimal conditions.