Technology Exploration – Social Credit Scores

1. Up until recently, how had the credit system in China differed from ours in the United States?

* Until recently, the credit system in China differed from ours in the United States in several ways. For many years, China did not even have a credit system at all, with most of the population primarily using cash.

2. In a sentence or two, what is the purpose of the social credit system devised by the Chinese State Council?

* The purpose for a social credit system is to create a system rating how good or bad a person is. Having a bad credit score would result in penalizations, whereas having a good credit score would give you benefits.

3. What are some things for which the State Council wants to penalize citizen scores?

* Ways in which the State Council would penalize citizen scores would be making friends with people with bad credit scores, partaking in bullying, cheating, swindling, playing video games, and job professions.

4. What were some of the benefits mentioned for users with high Zhima Credit scores?

* Some benefits include better hotel deals, premium loans, streamlined visas, and favorable lones.

5. What do Zhima Credit’s Connections, Characteristics, and Behavior categories consider as part of your credit score?

* The connections category consider the credit of you friends and contacts in Alipay’s network, the characteristics consider the kind of car you drive, your profession, and what school you attended, and the behavior category scrutinizes the life of the consumer, focusing on actions that correlate with good credit.

6. What historical factors in China led to the idea of gamifying a citizen’s rating?

* After the revolution, the state assigned the population into local work units. Each unit would spy on each other to make sure they were doing their jobs and keeping in line with government regulation. However, over the last few decades of China’s rapid growth and development, such a system proved unfeasible. Therefore, the idea of gamifying a citizen’s rating made sense.

7. What areas of our lives in the United States are algorithms used for similar purposes?

* In the United States, there is a credit system that can be used to determine a person’s chance to get a loan or certain credit cards.

Opinion Section

1. What are your thoughts on a system such as this? Is this punishing those that have made some transgressions, or is it rewarding those that outperform?

* Personally, I think a system like this, if done properly, could be greatly beneficial to society. It encourages people to manage their finances better. However, the way it is currently implemented proves more detrimental to people as a whole; if you make a few small mistakes, it requires an extraordinary amount of effort to make up said mistakes. I like the idea of rewarding people for having good credit, but I do not like the idea of punishing people who don’t.

2. If you had to design a social credit system that assessed the “quality” of a citizen, what factors would you use? How heavily would you weight each portion? What factors would you definitely exclude from consideration?

* If I were to design a social credit system that assessed the quality of a citizen, I would use factors such as obeying the law and reliability the heaviest. Put simply, I would weigh whether a person follows the law and reliably pays the bills on time. For example: if a person were to break a traffic law (like crossing a red light or nearly crashing into a person by merging onto a lane too slowly), one would lose some social credit. On the other hand, if a person were to have a “streak” of days without any traffic hazards, they would gain credit. Factors that I would definitely exclude from consideration would be what kind of career you have, your friends, and your hobbies.

3. Do you think we will ever see a system like this in the United States? Why or why not?

* To some extent, yes, I do think we will see a system like this in the United States. Obviously, a fully-fledged system like the one being implemented in Chia would be impossible, as it would violate privacy laws. However, being rewarded for your actions is already a thing here – for example, if you go a year without getting into a car crash, some car insurers will decrease your insurance cost, or even return some of your money. If you reliably pay your loans on time, your credit score will go up.