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8/23/2020

A Humbler Data Science

The concept of data science is an ever-evolving one as technology is constantly improving and shifting. It seems to be inevitable that, with many ventures in data science being run by private companies, there is a risk of the field becoming profit-driven and losing its humility. Before reading this article, I had not thought about many of the ethical elements of the field. After reading the article, I do believe that a humbler data science is in order to attempt to avoid the many possible pitfalls of using the tools of data science. Personally, I believe that data should be used in order to benefit people, specifically those who are on the margins of society and who do not have as many resources readily available to them. Instead, the article suggests that many data scientists are becoming more focused on the technological aspects of the field, rather than the human implications. Taking the time to focus on the people who are being impacted by the data development and use would likely allow for the programmers and data scientists to reevaluate their goals and motivations for doing their work. With this humbler approach, the work done by these people would likely be even more effective because they are looking at the problems in and of themselves instead of focusing on the technology that could solve certain problems. There is always a danger, when a field becomes popular or profitable, that the original purpose and goals of the field will be skewed. Based on the information in the article, it seems that the field of data science has come to this crossroads.

The concept of pitfalls along with promise seems to be an essential part of analyzing the need for humbler data science. It is always important to note the parts of an endeavor that are going well and the fact that data scientists are able to analyze phone data to differentiate between the wealthy and poor in countries and distribute aid more effectively is definitely something that people should gain hope from. However, it is important to recognize the pitfalls of data science. It is these pitfalls that point to the need for data science to be much humbler. The fact that there can be unanticipated effects of things such as “digital credit” or that algorithms used can be implemented before they are fully tested demonstrates that the field of data science may be growing in such a way that it is losing touch with the integrity of the mission of collecting the data in the first place. If data science were to be approached in a humbler way, it is likely that the unanticipated effects of using data could be better accounted for or that there would be time for different programs to be tested and validated. In addition, a lack of regulation seems to point to the idea that people within the field of data science may not be as interested in the honesty of their work, but rather the with profits that could be gained since the private firms that dominate the industry are often no longer incentivized by anything other than profit.

By taking a step back to a humbler state, the field of data science would be able to evaluate its work and work to validate its work, customize it to the specific needs of people in certain areas, and work to collaborate with people in the field and in the areas the data collection is focused on. As with any other field, an increased focus on profit demands that a humbler approach should be taken. I believe that, although money is always a motivation factor, the needs of people in communities who could benefit from the work of data scientists are so much more important. Data science has such broad-reaching possibilities to impact the world in a positive way. The technology of the field is essential, but it leads to a risk of losing the humanity of the field. It would be a tragedy if it were lost to the interests of private firms instead of serving the interests of the people who the data is focusing on for reasons such as aid.