

AI BIASES VS HUMAN BIASES

PABLO WINANT, ESCP BUSINESS SCHOOL

A SMALL QUESTION

- Are you ready to be driven by an AI-driven car, 5 years from now?
- Info about car accidents (today)
 - AI: 9 crashes per million mile
 - human: 4 crashes per million mile
 - but almost no major injury in AI driven cars
- AIs are easy to fool
 - incorrect reading of traffic signs with small modifications
 - see [nature](#)

AIS WILL TAKE MORE AND MORE DECISIONS

- AIs will take more and more decisions
 - decide what you'll watch on Netflix
 - drive your car
 - select the recruits you will hire
 - decide whether you should be receiving treatment from the nearby hospital
 - invest your personal finances
 - decide optimal monetary policy of the central bank
- But there will always be a human overseeing these AI decisions?
- ...right?

WHAT IS A DECISION

- Several seemingly different cases:
 - recommendation
 - decision with immediate consequences
 - a part of a decision process
- These cases are not so clearly separable
- Precise agency is not important here
- We'll call of these "decisions"
 - (alternatives: "predictions"/"choices"/...)

Cassie Kozyrkov, chief decision scientist from Google:

We define the word “decision” to mean any selection between options by any entity

DECISION INTELLIGENCE

- Who studies AI decisions?
- A new emerging field: "Decision Intelligence"
- Defines "decisions" as
 - a choice of an "output" from a set of "input"
 - choice is irreversible
- Relates data-science with different fields

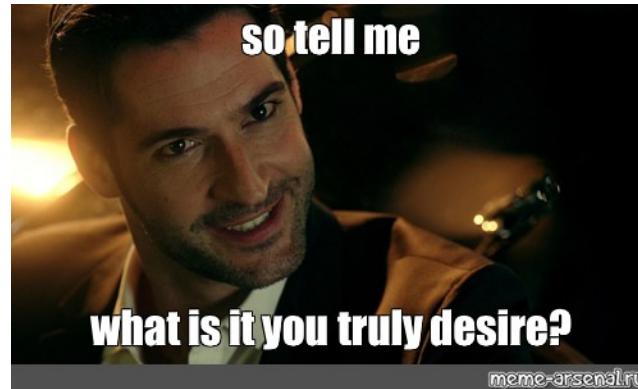
Example of questions: (from Cassie Kozyrkov, chief decision scientist from Google)

The decision sciences concern themselves with questions like:

- “How should you set up decision criteria and design your metrics?” (All)
- “Is your chosen metric incentive-compatible?” (Economics)
- “What quality should you make this decision at and how much should you pay for perfect information?” (Decision analysis)
- “How do emotions, heuristics, and biases play into decision-making?” (Psychology)
- “How do biological factors like cortisol levels affect decision-making?” (Neuroeconomics)
- “How does changing the presentation of information influence choice behavior?” (Behavioral Economics)
- “How do you optimize your outcomes when making decisions in a group context?” (Experimental Game Theory)
- “How do you balance numerous constraints and multistage objectives in designing the decision context?” (Design)
- “Who will experience the consequences of the decision and how will various groups perceive that experience?” (UX Research)
- “Is the decision objective ethical?” (Philosophy)

THE SPECIFICITIES OF AN ECONOMIC APPROACH

- Consider different ways to analyse AI behaviour from an economic perspective (*people's decisions*)
 - deviations from rationality
 - specification of a precise objective



THREE KINDS OF BIAS

- predictive bias
 - ... we know what want but are doing it wrong
- preference bias
 - ...we're wrong about the ultimate objective
- behavioural bias (next week)
 - ...we're doing it wrong

PREDICTION BIAS

DEFINITION OF STATISTICAL BIAS

Prediction Bias: systematic error made by an algorithm producing a prediction

- Here, *systematic* must be understood as *in average* or *in expectation*

SOURCES OF PREDICTION BIASES

- Problems with the data (*data-driven*)
 - **selection bias**
 - **attrition bias**
 - ...
- Problems with the model (*algorithmic bias*)
 - **ommitted variable bias**
 - ...
- Other sources (essentially *human bias*)
 - **funding bias**
 - **social prejudice**
 - **human limitation**
 - ...

IMAGE LABELLING

An AI or you must choose labels to best describe this image:



AN EXAMPLE OF A SELECTION BIAS



Obviously, the way the AI (or you) makes category, depends on the dataset it has been exposed to.

- Experience/learning produces a prototype of a watermelon (i.e., an object representative of its class)

HOW DO WE MEASURE IT ?

- Sometimes bias is easy to measure with
 - precise criterium (e.g. no discrimination)
 - precise measure (e.g obvious distribution discrepancies)
- But in general it requires:
 - an experiment
 - some econometric work
- Often, biases are easier to assert for AIs than humans
 - their training occurs in a controlled environment

DO YOU WANT TO BE TREATED BY AN AI?

[Nature, 25/01/2017](#): Dermatologist-level classification of skin cancer with deep neural networks



- analyze skin images to recognize malignant melanoma
- as good as human dermatologists
- more cost-effective (can work on a smartphone)

DO YOU (REALLY) WANT TO BE TREATED BY AN AI?

[The Lancet, 2022](#): *Characteristics of publicly available skin cancer image datasets: a systematic review*

- They review 21 open access databases, with skin lesion images
 - 106 950 images
 - Of the two datasets containing data on ethnicity (1585 images in total), 45, 47 no images were from individuals with an African, Afro-Caribbean, or South Asian background
 - Coupled with the geographical origins of datasets, there was massive under-representation of skin lesion images from darker skinned populations.
- Conclusion?

OR DO YOU PREFER TO BE TREATED BY A HU(MAN) ? (1)

Health Services As Credence Goods: A Field Experiment

(Gootschalk, Mimra, Weibel)

- The same "test patient" was sent to 180 dentists who offered treatment recommendation and cost estimate.
- Test patient did not need treatment (caries lesions limited to enamel).
- 28% of practitioners made a wrong treatment recommendation! 😱
- What were the determinants of the bias?
 - Social Economic Status (-)
 - Lower Waiting Time (+)

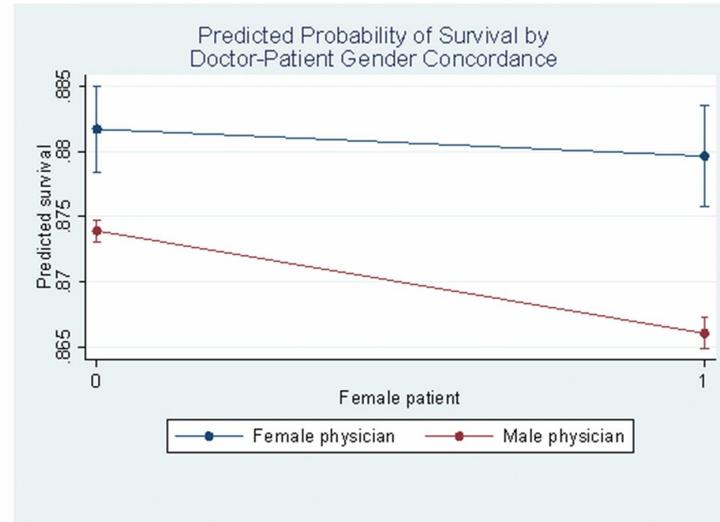


OR DO YOU PREFER TO BE TREATED BY A HU(MAN) ? (2)

Perceived Risk of Heart Attack: A Function of Gender?
2004, (Leanne L Lefler)

Patient-physician gender concordance and increased mortality among female heart attack patients
(Greenwood, Carnahan, Huang)

- mortality rate for women in the year immediately after suffering a heart attack was 38%, compared to 25% for men
 - woman delay assistance seeking (it's a men problem)?
- higher probability of survival when same-sex doctor
 - driven by treatment from male doctors (the majority of cardiologists)



MARKET BIAS

- Job Market
 - *Job discrimination*: the decision to hire someone at a given salary should not depend on his/her gender, appearance, social origin, age, ethnicity, ...
 - *Wage gap*: also the wage gap between people with the same overall productivity should be zero, no matter their gender, appearance, ...
- Big problems:
 - how do you measure "same overall productivity"?
 - wrong measurement leads to **ommitted variable bias**
 - how do you find two people with different characteristics and exactly same productivity?
 - in general many characteristics are linked with productivity (for instance, name is correlated with IQ)

A NOT SO-FICTIVE EXAMPLE OF A FAILED ANTI-DISCRIMINATION POLICY



Bob from Texas

FAMOUS EXAMPLE: AMAZON

[Reuters](#) 11/10/2018: Amazon scraps secret AI recruiting tool that showed bias against women



- What happened?
 - Amazon started to train (use?) internally a ML algo to preselect CVs and counteract human biases
 - Algorithm started to discriminate against woman
 - Sentences containing strings like "women's" were discriminated against (like "champion of women's chess cup")

ANOTHER HUMAN BIAS



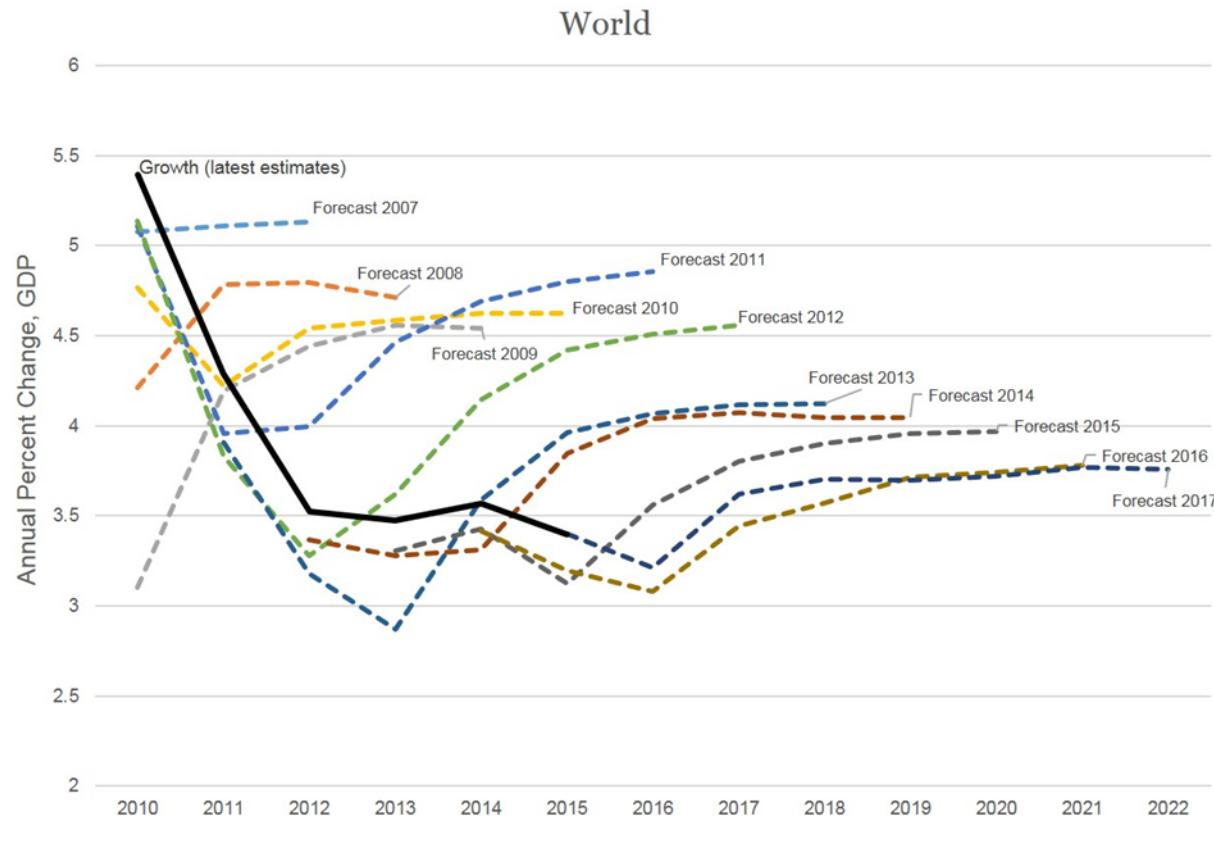
- PNAS 2017, *Extraneous factors in judicial decisions*, Danziger, Levav and Avnaim-Pesso
 - analyse parole decisions by boards presided by jewish isreali judges
 - probability of "parole" falls between the two snack breaks! 🤯
 - find a strong "hungry judge effect"

CONCLUSIONS

- AI and humans *both* suffer from **selection bias**
- AI can reproduce human biases
 - in the way algorithm is designed
 - if it imitates humans or if its objective incorporates human bias, conscious or not
- AI's don't have all human biases
 - no hungry judge effect
 - no funding cost (or do they?)

ANOTHER EXAMPLE: WEO FORECAST

Here is the history of IMF forecasts (form WEO 2017)



Is it biased?

PREFERENCE MISSPECIFICATION

WHAT IS THE RIGHT WAY TO DESCRIBE ECONOMIC BEHAVIOUR?

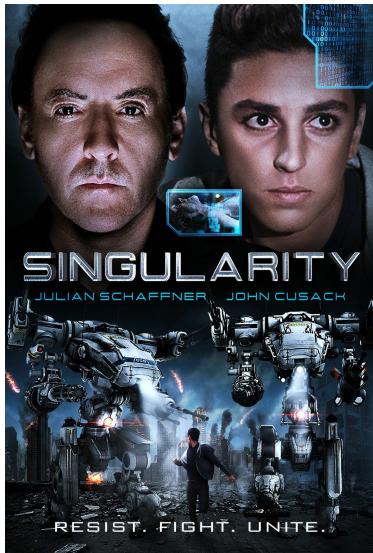
- In economics, we derive agent's behaviour from their ultimate objective
 - maximize profits
 - maximize consumption, leisure
 - something else
- This is very close to the implementation of AI now:
 - ML: miniminize empirical risk (sum of square residuals), maximize the fit
 - AI: robots are explicitly told what to do (not how)
- Biases should be precisely defined w.r.t. a well specified goal

EXAMPLE: BREXIT



- Was the collective decision of leaving the UK biased, based on available evidence?
- Here, the objective might not be well specified. There are unsaid, unconscious, objectives

EXAMPLES: AI OBJECTIVE MISSPECIFICATION

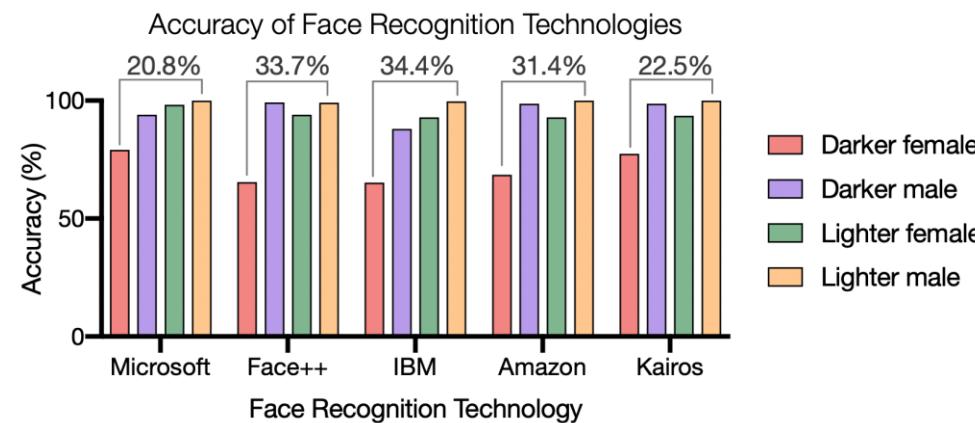


- AI with the wrong objective is evil
- Explored a lot in science-fiction
 - Asimov's law of robotics
 - the smiling man, ...
- Many (all?) "mistakes" from AI come from preference misspecification

EVOLUTIONARY BIAS

- It is sometimes optimal to keep a biased decision process in certain situations
- When taking bias decisions provides a survival advantage, it is called an **evolutionary bias**
 - treat unknown species as "hostile"
- Rationals
 - Limit processing cost
 - Provide informational value, i.e. help to learn faster
 - ...

AN EXAMPLE OF "TRIMMING"



- AI algorithm have become very good at recognizing and distinguishing faces...
 - ... mostly white men
 - selection bias again
- Adults have the same biases: they distinguish better faces from their own reference group
- Strikingly 6 month old babies don't: they recognize all faces (Netflix; "babies")

AN EXAMPLE OF LEARNING EXTERNALITY

- Why do newer movies have better ratings than older ones on movie databases (like Allocine)
- And why are website not doing anything about it?
- New movies are intentionnaly overrated
 - to push consumers towards "exploring"
 - to produce more information
 - and improve the rating of new movies
- It can be interpreted as a learning externality

PREFERENCES VS UTILITY

- Another issue is that *humans are not one-dimensional maximizers*
- Theories of **preferences** are larger than utility maximization
 - Among choices \mathcal{X} , we say that x is preferred to y if $x \geq y$
- Preferences can be more general than utility maximization
 - ideally transitive if $x \geq y$ and $y \geq z$ then $x \geq z$
 - but there isn't necessarily a total order (complete ranking) $x_1 \geq \dots \geq x_n$
 - even if there is there is no notion about "how much" x is preferred to y
- Generalized Preferences arise naturally from
 - real-world individuals
 - multi-objective agents
 - collective choices (cf Arrow Theorem)

MULTI-OBJECTIVES

- Ideal AIs should be multi-objectives:
 - have sensible default for out of sample **situations**
 - produce more intelligent behaviour
 - mitigate wrong objectives given by humans
- The problem is when AIs are trained to follow multiple objectives (which they need if they need a notion of context) their bias become harder to measure/explain

EXAMPLE: PARCOURSUP, A MULTI-OBJECTIVE RANKING ALGORITHM

- parcoursup match universities wishes and students wishes
 - it aggregate individual's preferences
 - while respecting current laws
- it is a variant of a stable marriage problem
- how do you formulate the optimum?
 - impossible to satisfy everybody
- implementation details makes random decisions
 - in order to avoid bias!
 - and satisfy local regulations
- has created a lot of discontentment

CONCLUSIONS

- The concept of predictive bias is contingent to the right, scalar (i.e. a number), objective specification
- Formulating the wrong the objective leads to a prediction bias
- Objectives are inherently hard to formulate exhaustively
- The presence of several objectives complicates the pictures
 - for humans
 - and AIs

BEHAVIOURAL BIASES

- ... Next time:
 - how do we know when humans act non-rationally?
 - Can we then establish some patterns in their behaviours?

FINAL WORD

It's good to follow your own bias as long as it is climbing it.

Andre Gide