Can a Machine Be Racist or Sexist?

On Social Bias in Machine Learning

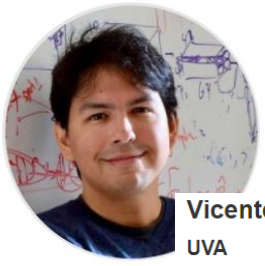
Renée M. P. Teate

HelioCampus

1. This talk: Introducing concepts and examples of social bias in machine learning to get us all on the same page (~30 mins)
2. Panel Discussion w/ Audience Q&A (~20 mins)

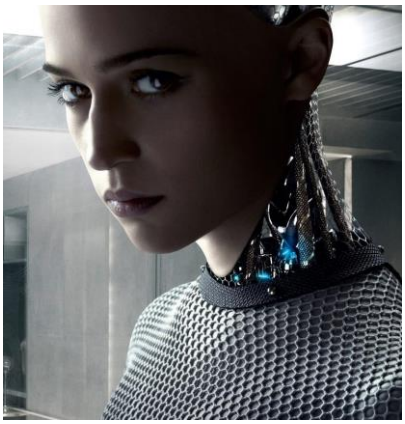
Emily Crose
Undisclosed
Threat Hunter

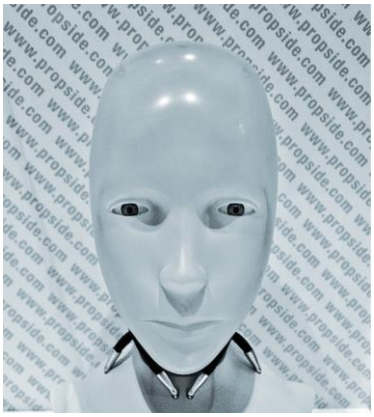
Ines Montani
Explosion AI
Founder



Vicente Ordonez
UVA
Assistant Professor

What comes to mind
for most people
when they are asked about
their fears related to
“Artificial Intelligence”
or “Machine Learning”?





Los Exterminadores De Skynet (Terminator) by Hersson Piratoba on Flickr
Ex Machina from film affinity
EXPOSYFY I, Robot by Urko Dorronsoro from Donostia via Wikimedia Commons

So what is ***already*** going on
with AI and Machine Learning
that ***should*** concern us?

And are the impacted people and communities aware of what's already happening?

Are the people who design these systems aware of the possible impacts of their work on people's lives as they design and deploy data products?

"But if we take humans out of the loop and leave decisions up to computers, won't it reduce the problems inherent in human decision-making?"

Can a Machine Be Racist or Sexist?

Can a Machine Learning Model
Be ***Trained*** to Be
Racist or Sexist
(or made biased or injust
in other ways --
intentionally or not)?

Let's define

Machine [Algorithm]

"a step-by-step procedure for solving a problem"

Merriam-Webster Dictionary

Racism

"racial prejudice or discrimination"

"a belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that **racial differences produce an inherent superiority** of a particular race"

Merriam-Webster Dictionary

Racism

"a doctrine or political program based on the assumption of racism and ***designed*** *to execute its principles*"

[or, not designed NOT to execute its principles!]

Sexism

"prejudice or discrimination based on sex"

"behavior, conditions, or attitudes that foster **stereotypes of social roles based on sex**"

Merriam-Webster Dictionary

Institutional or Systemic Racism and Sexism

a **system** that **codifies** and **perpetuates discrimination** against individuals or communities based on their race or sex

(note: these systems are designed/engineered by people)

Statuses Protected by Laws in the U.S.

- Race
- Sex
- Religion
- National Origin
- Age
- Disability Status
- Pregnancy
- Citizenship
- Familial Status
- Veteran Status
- Genetic Information

Example: Bank Loans Before Machine Learning

Bank officer deciding whether to give a loan, assessing **likelihood to repay**:

- Employment Status and History
- Amount of Debt and Payment History
- Income & Assets
- “Personal Character”
- Co-Signer
- References
- Credit Score
  - Based on amount of debt, credit card payment history, debt-credit ratio etc.
  - May seem fair, but remember things like on-time payment of rent not included
  - Feedback loop - no/bad credit history, can’t get credit, high interest, can’t improve credit score
  - Is somewhat transparent, and errors can be corrected

Example: Bank Loans With Machine Learning

Algorithm assessing **likelihood to repay**:

- Employment Status and History
- Amount of Debt and Payment History
- Income & Assets
- ~~“Personal Character”~~
- Co-Signer
- ~~References~~
- Credit Score
- Detailed Spending Habits
  - Expenditures per month
  - Where you shop
  - Bill payment patterns
- Where You Live
- Social Media Usage
- Time You Wake Up
- Workout Consistency
- Driving Habits
- Time Spent Playing Video Games
- Favorite Music
- Browser History
- Facebook Friends’ Financial Status
- etc etc etc

Is it **fair** for your interest rate,
or whether you even get a loan offer,
to be based on the default rates of
"similar" people who, for instance, listen
to the same kind of music as you?

What does it mean for decisions to become increasingly data-driven and automated?

We're still making the same types of decisions
(Who should receive funds from government programs? Who is at risk of dropping out of a university, and how do we intervene? What medical treatment should be applied based on a set of symptoms? Where should we locate the next branch of our business? etc etc),
but now we're using much more data,
and programming computers to help us find patterns
from datasets larger than humans could sensibly process.

If designed well,
machine learning systems
can improve our world!

Better more targeted answers faster!

More efficient use of taxpayer dollars, students receiving financial aid and intervention tutoring to help keep them in school, highly customized medical treatments, lower-risk business decisions!

But we have to keep in mind that now:

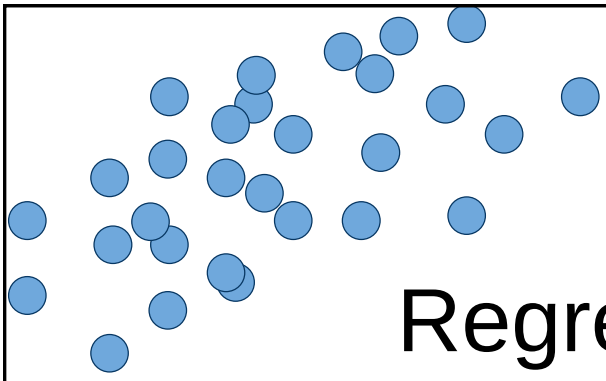
"...we have the potential to make bad decisions far more quickly, efficiently, and with far greater impact than we did in the past"

-Susan Etlinger, 2014 TED Talk

How can human biases get into a machine learning model?

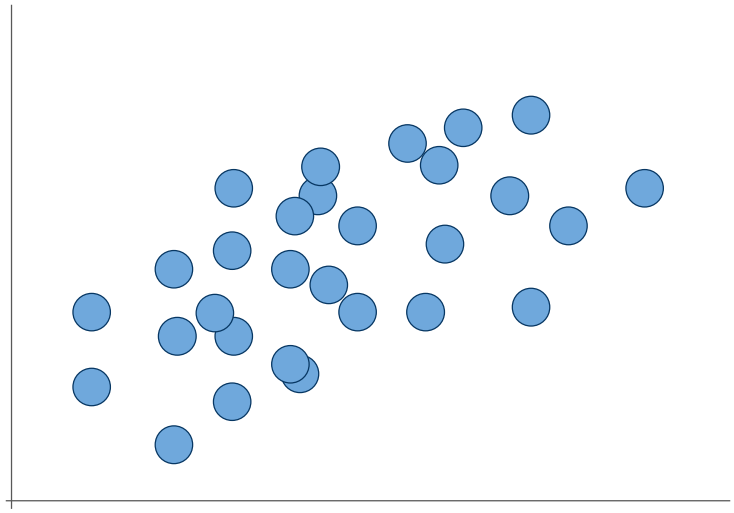
Let's explore how machine learning systems are designed and developed

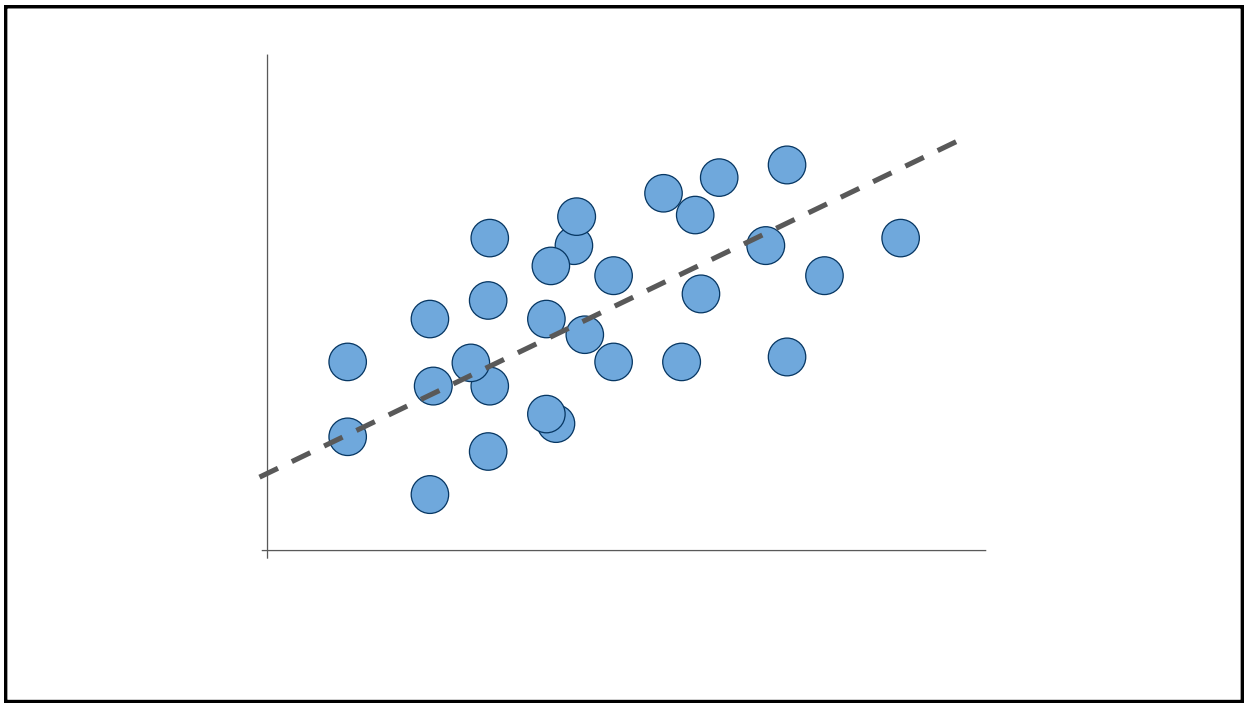
Some Types of Machine Learning Models

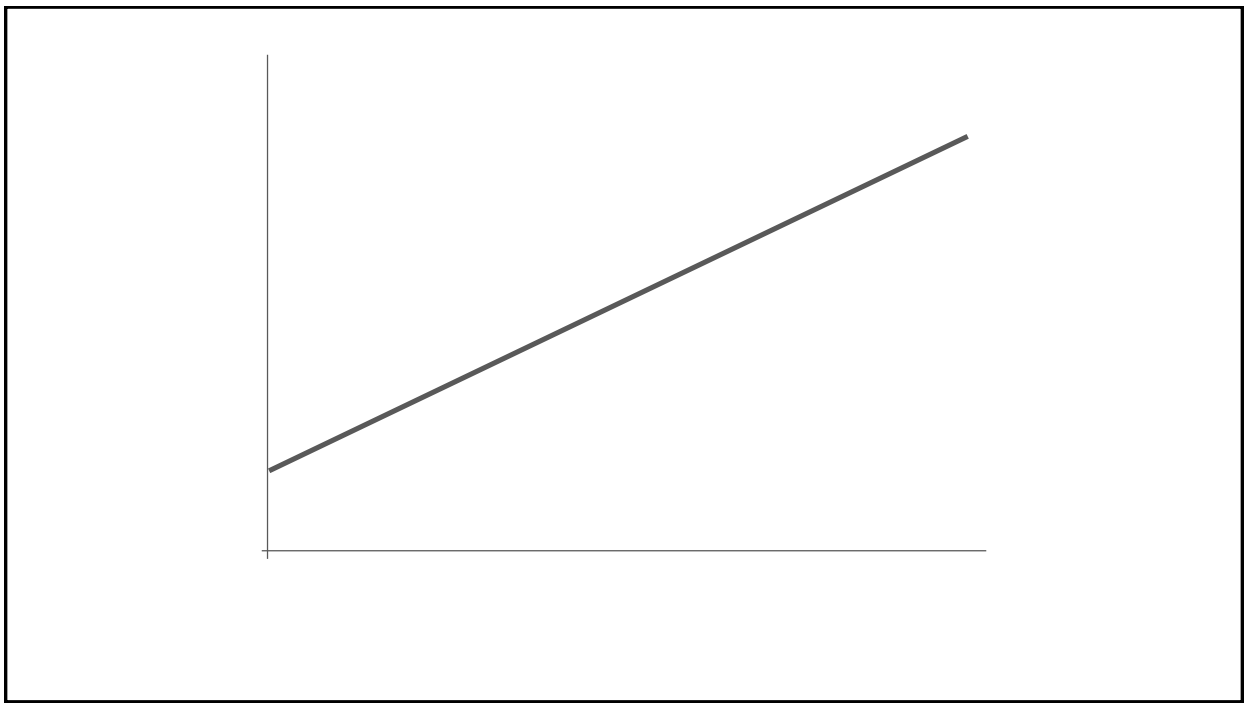


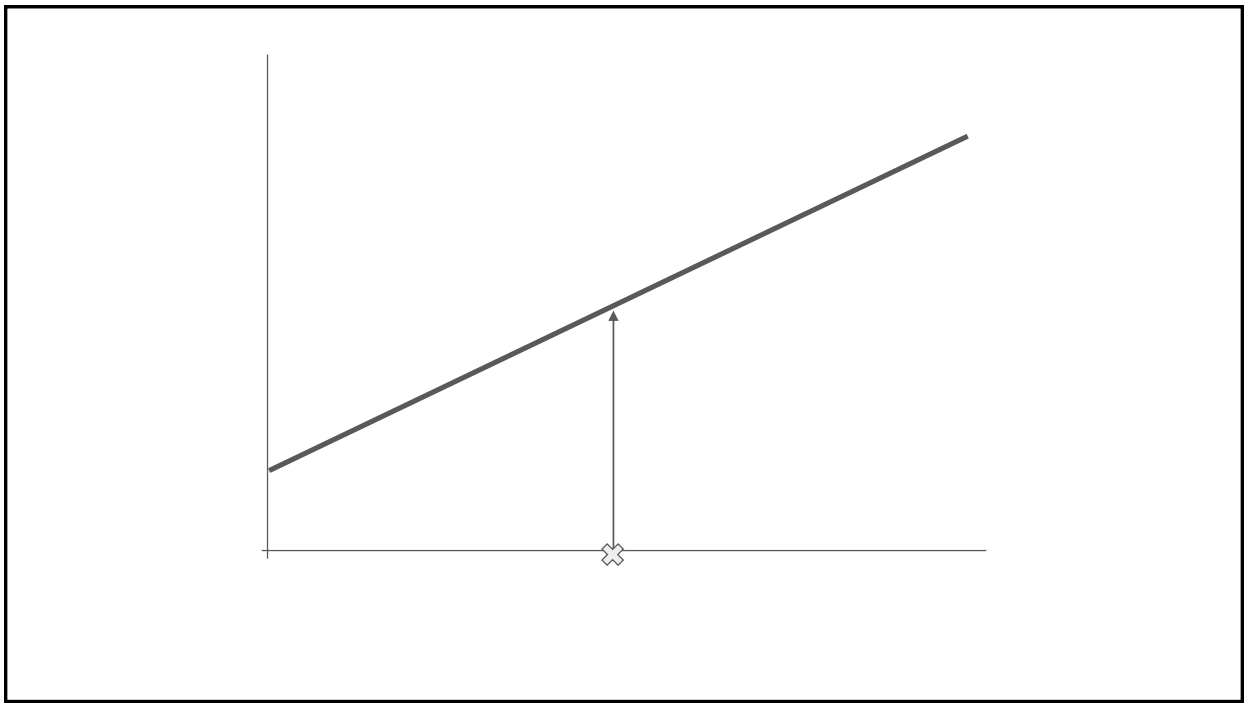
Regression

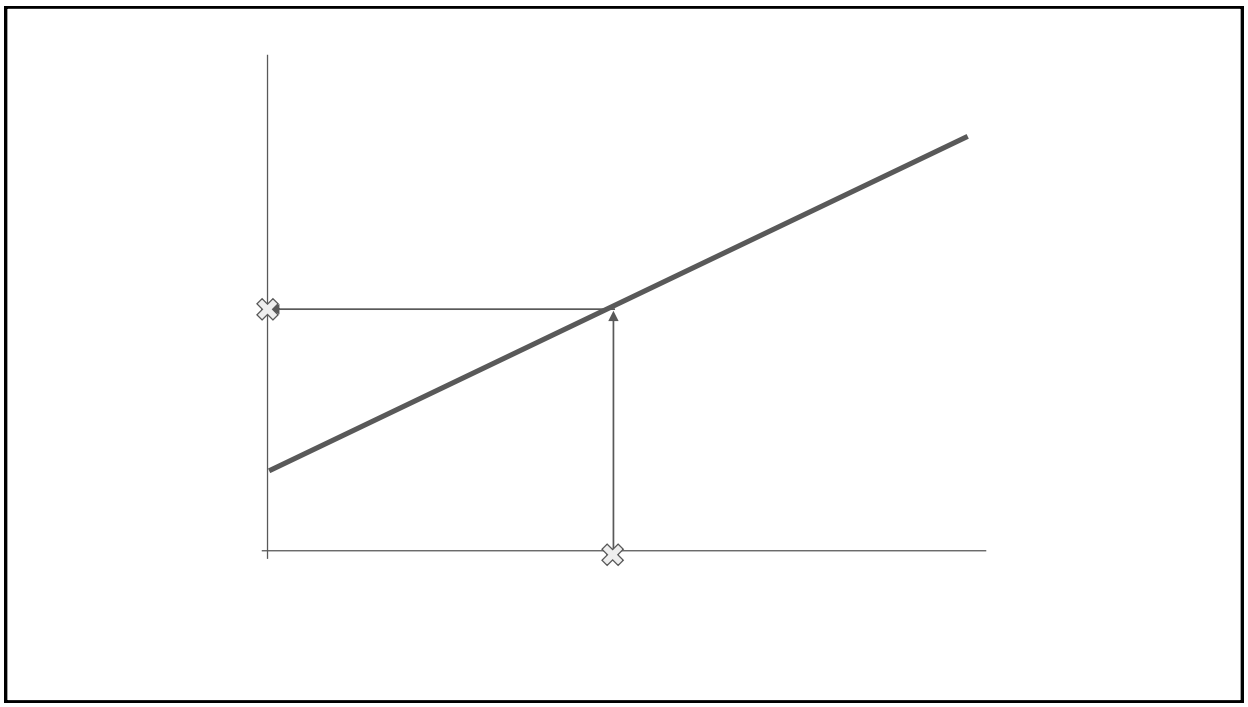
What output value do we expect an input value to translate to?

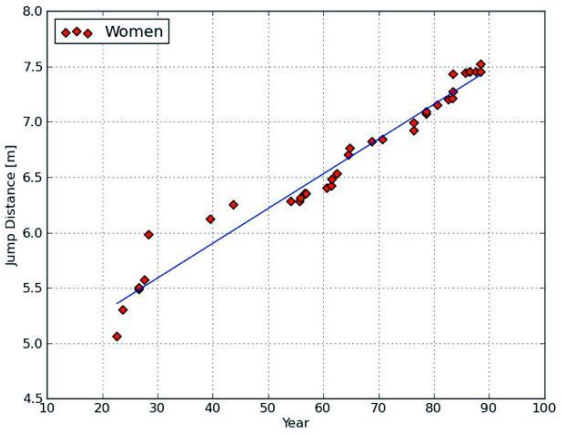












Forecasting Record-Breaking Long Jump Distance by Year

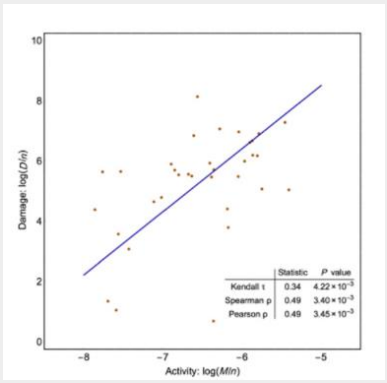
"Olympics Physics: The Long Jump and Linear Regression"

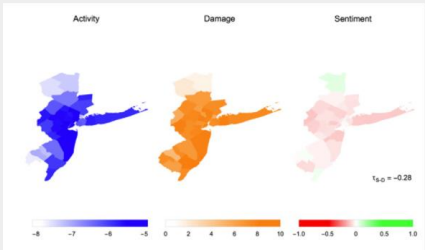
https://www.wired.com/2012/08/physics-long-jump-linear-regression/

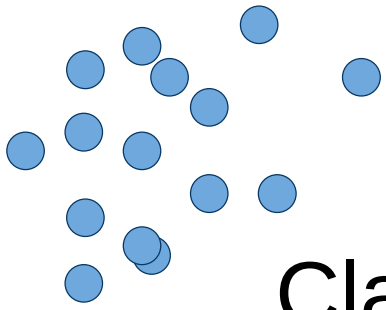
Predicting Natural Disaster Damage by Counting Relevant Social Media Posts

"Rapid assessment of disaster damage using social media activity"

http://advances.sciencemag.org/content/2/3/e1500779/tab-figures-data

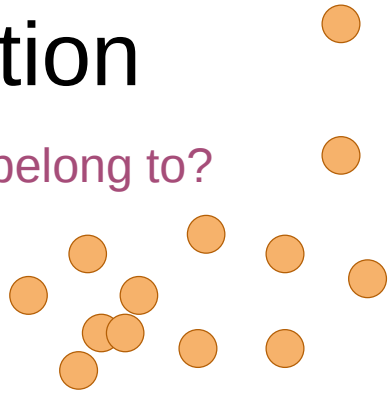


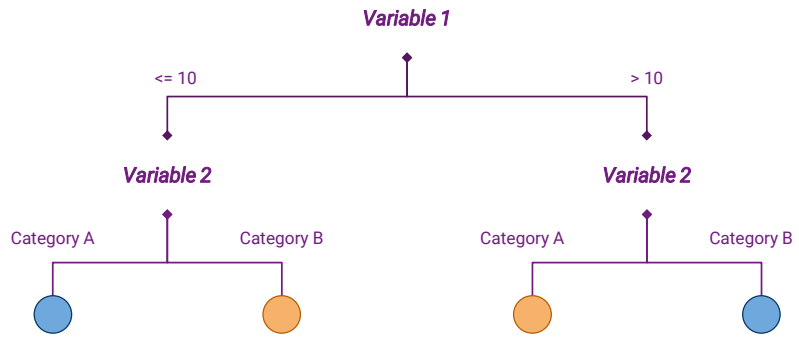


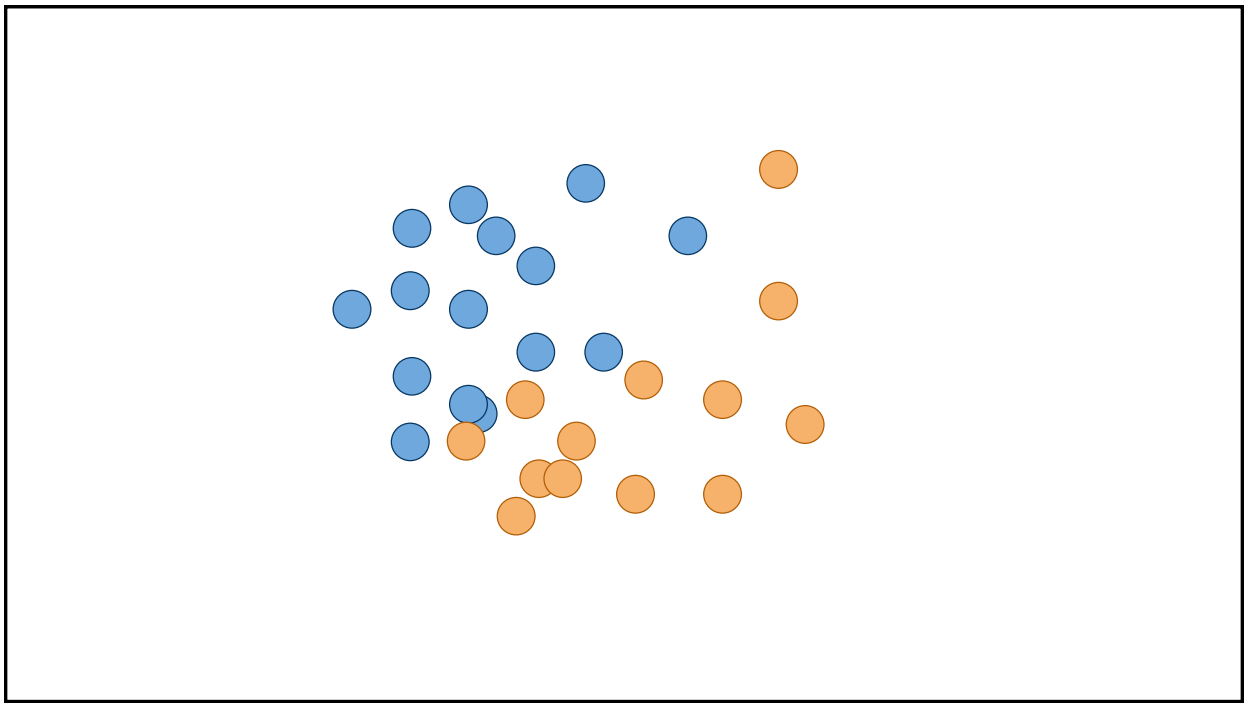


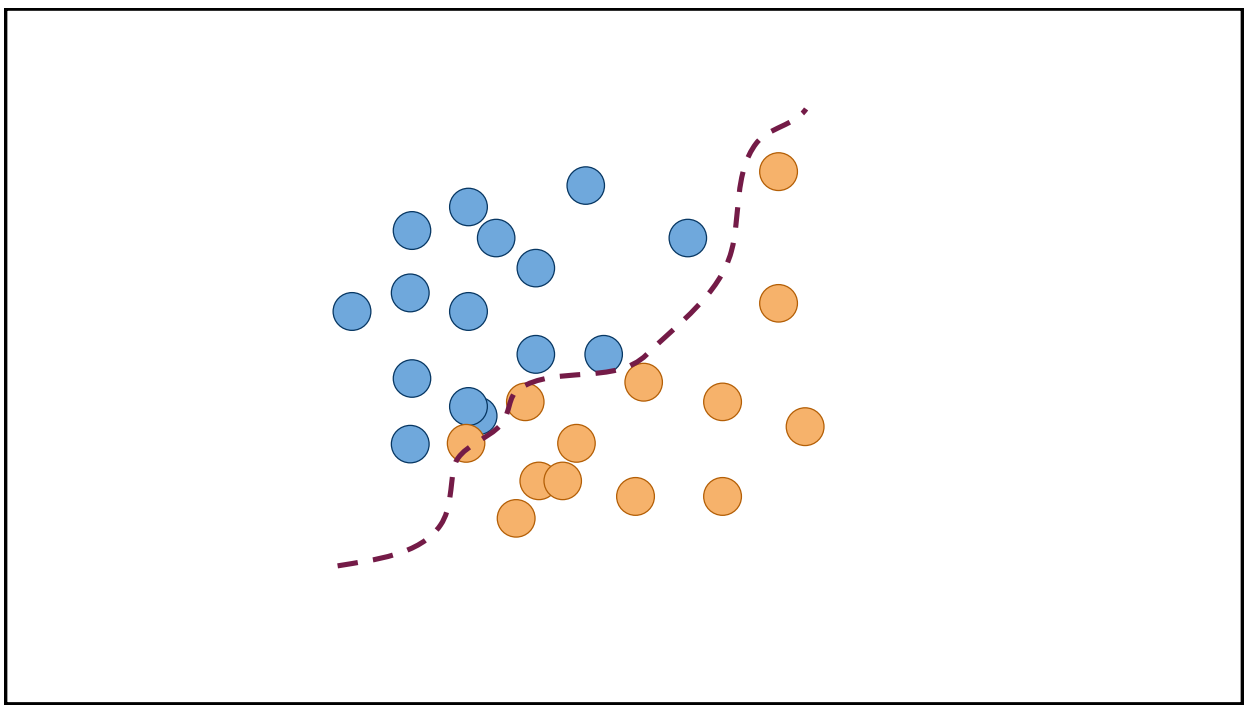
Classification

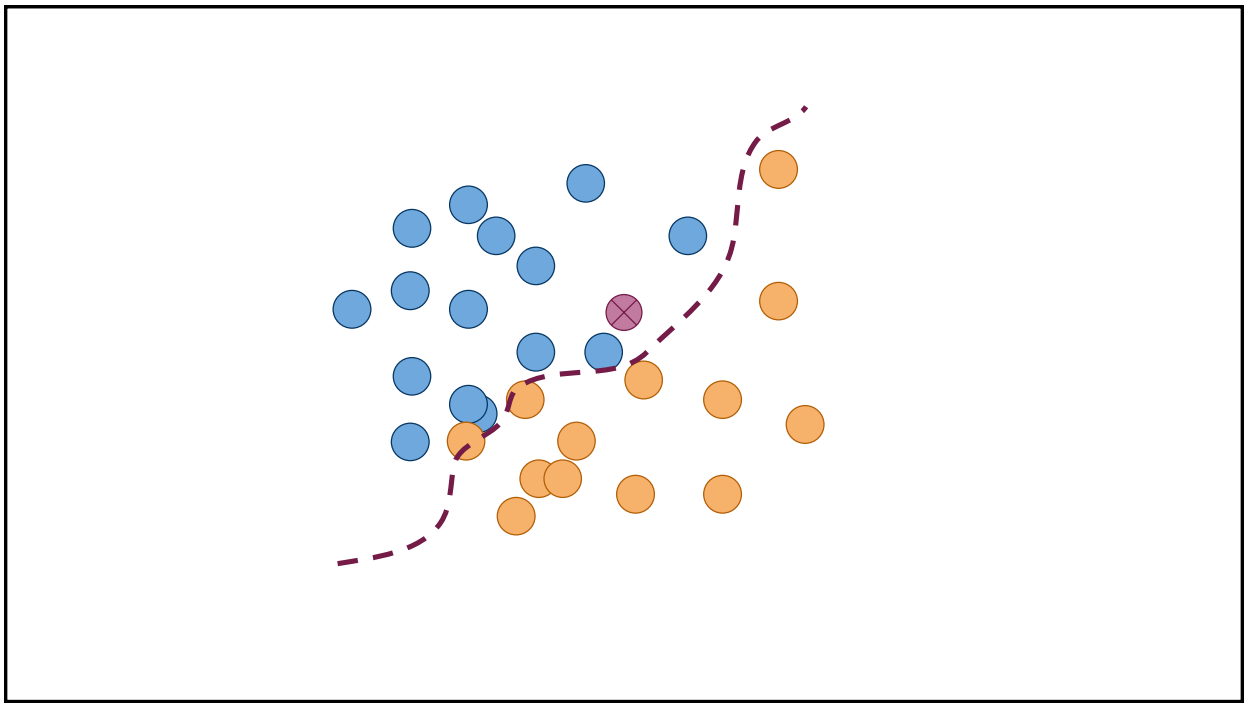
Which group does X belong to?

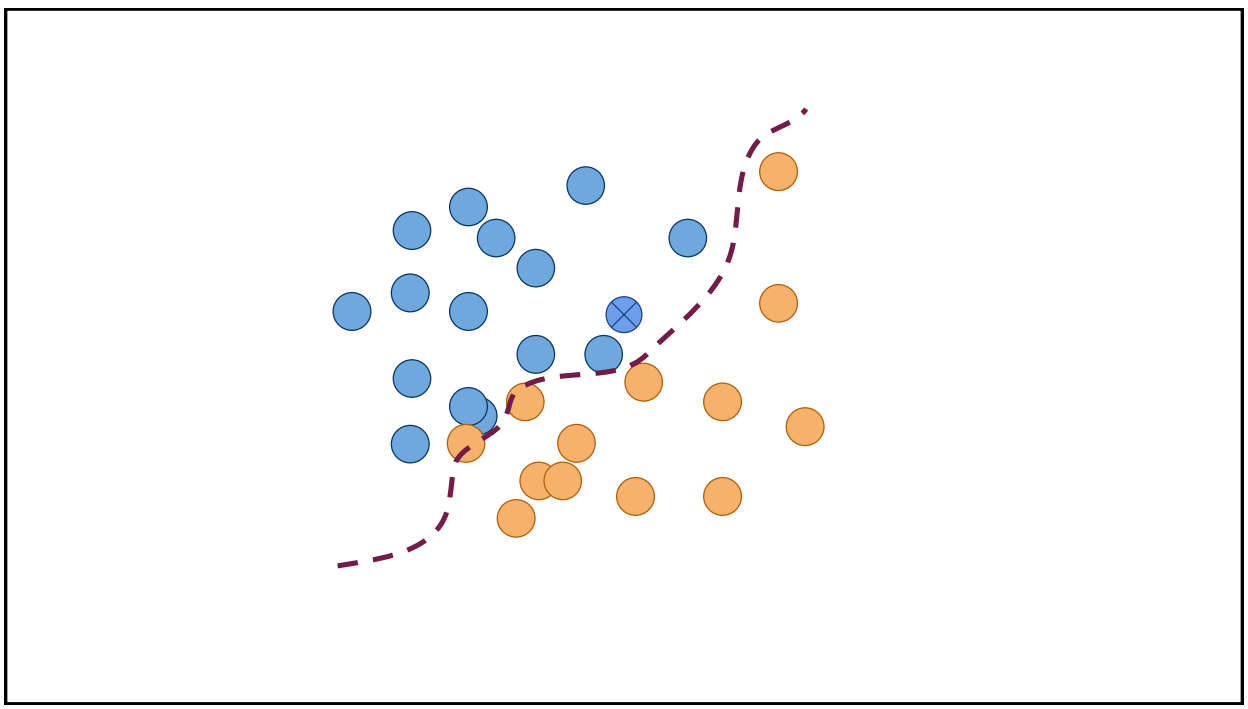


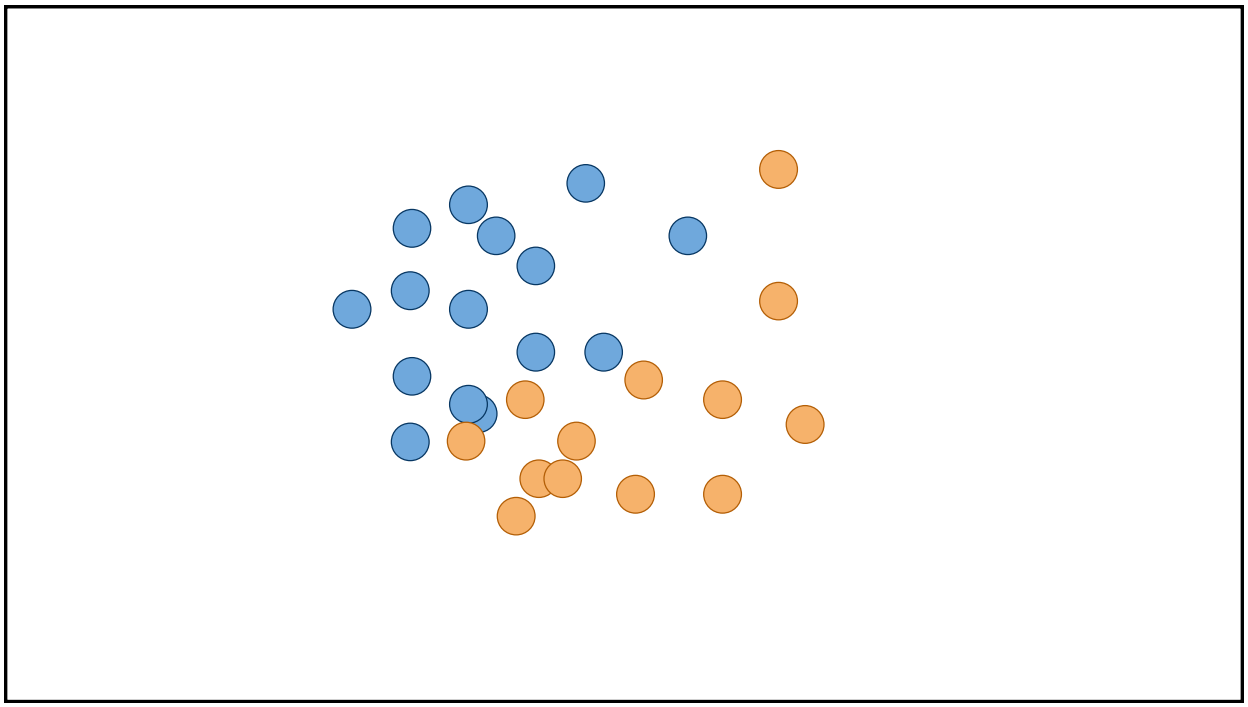


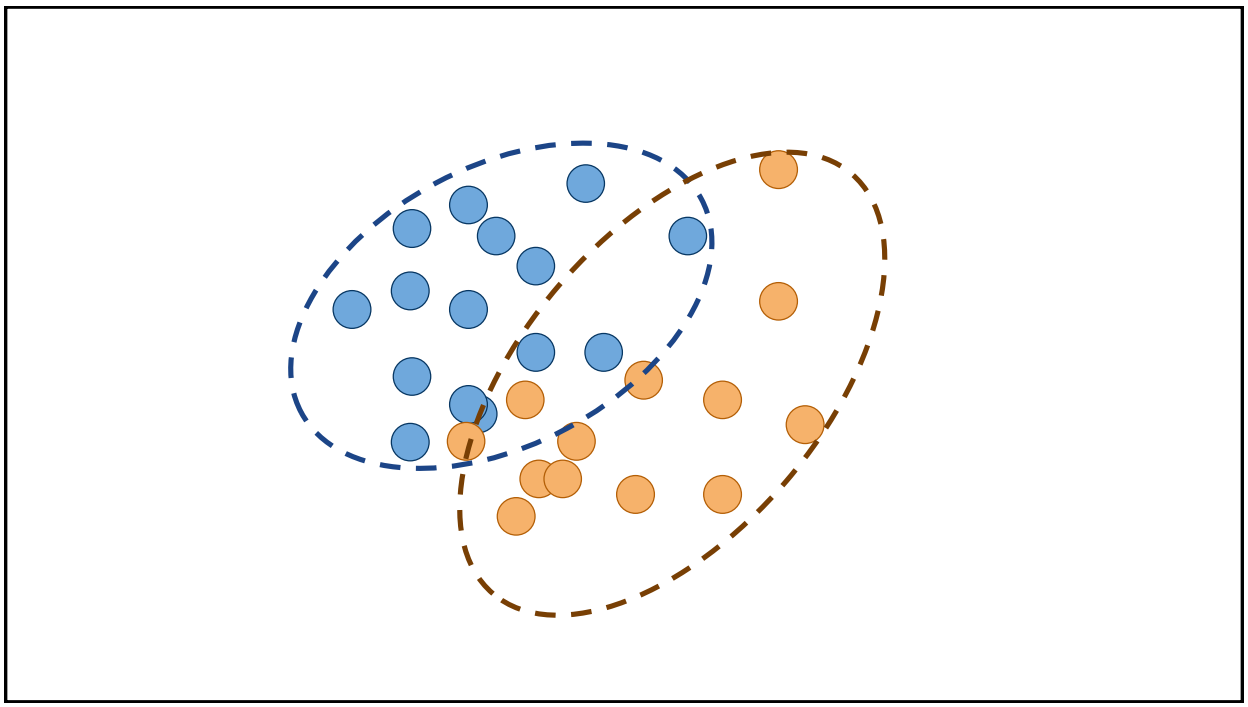


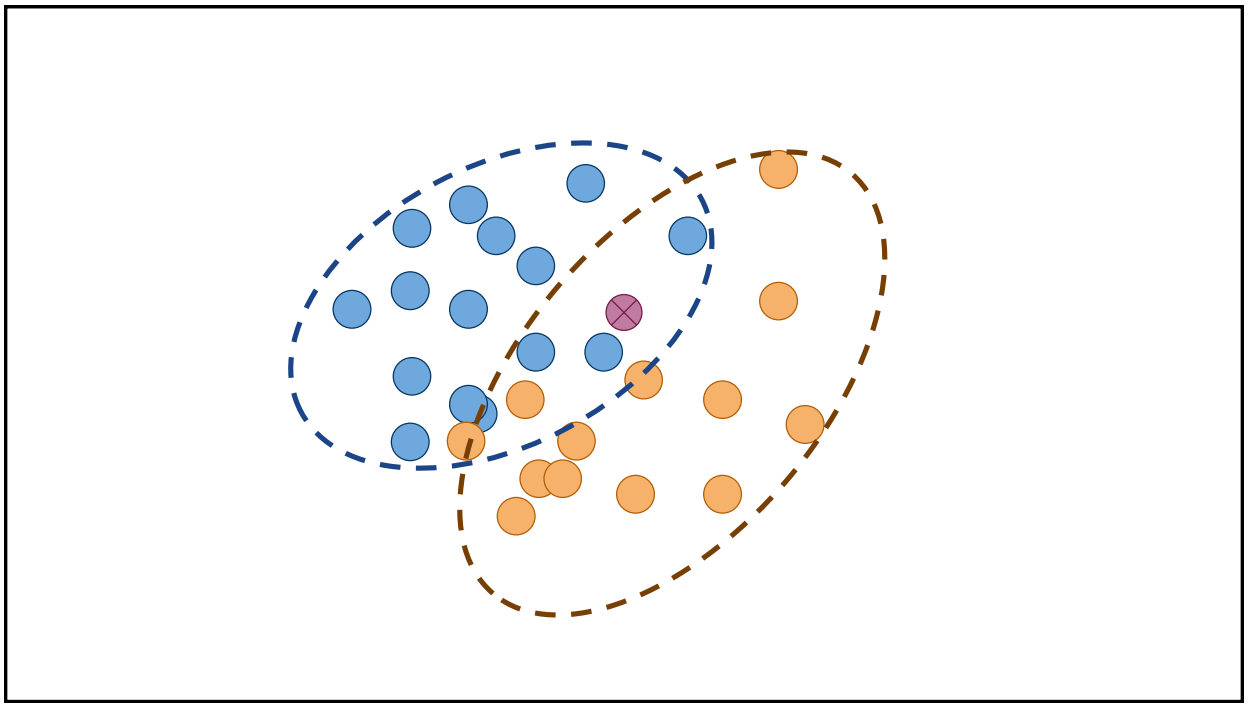


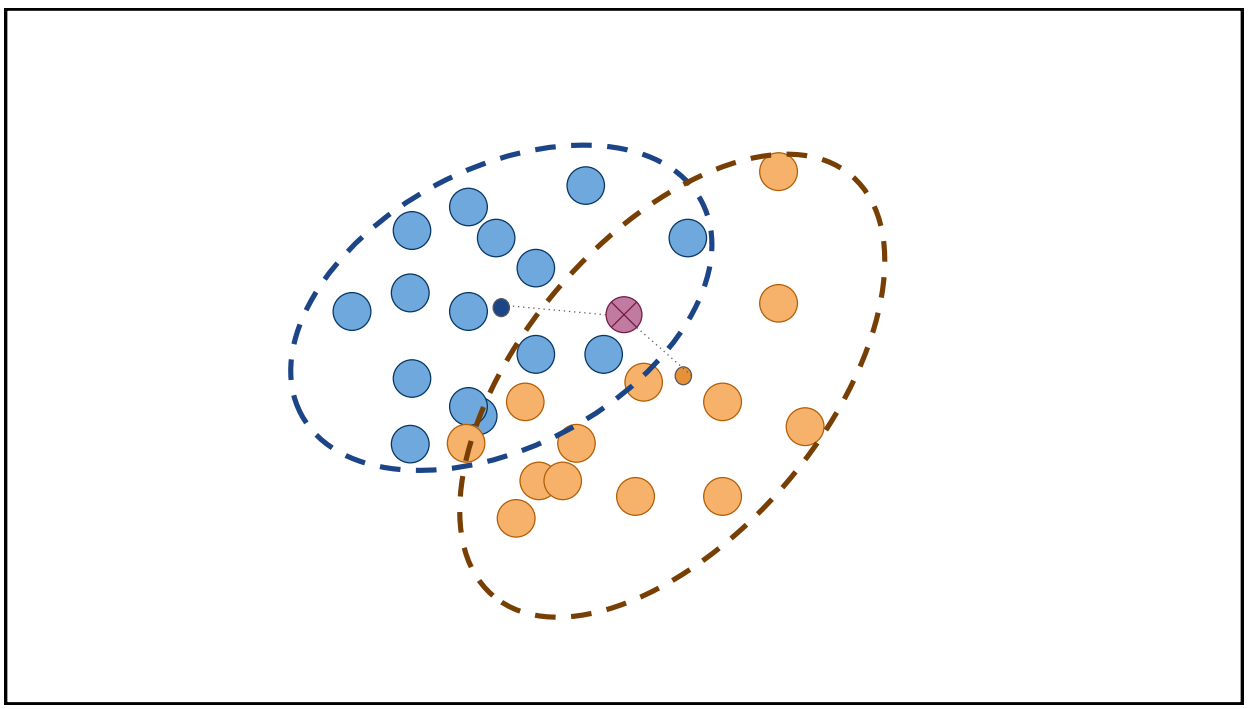


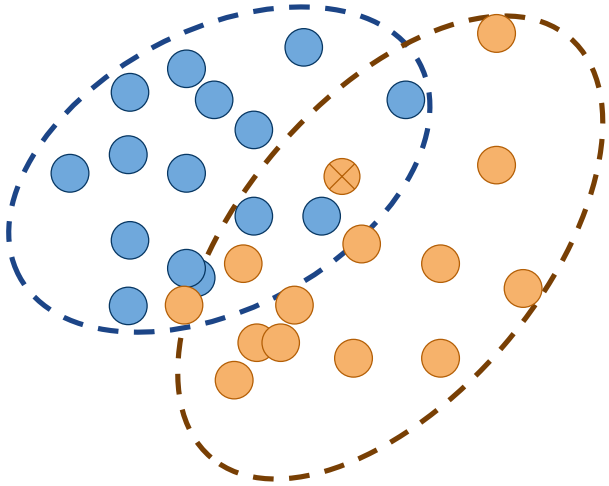












Is there an animal in this camera trap image?

"Deep learning tells giraffes from gazelles in the Serengeti"

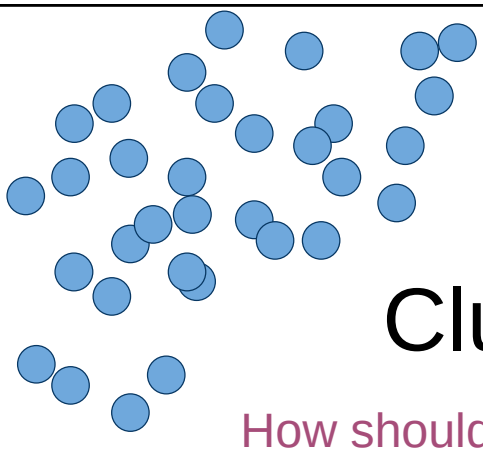
https://www.newscientist.com/article/2127541-deep-learning-tells-giraffes-from-gazelles-in-the-serengeti/

Is a crime scene gang-related?

"Artificial intelligence could identify gang crimes—and ignite an ethical firestorm"

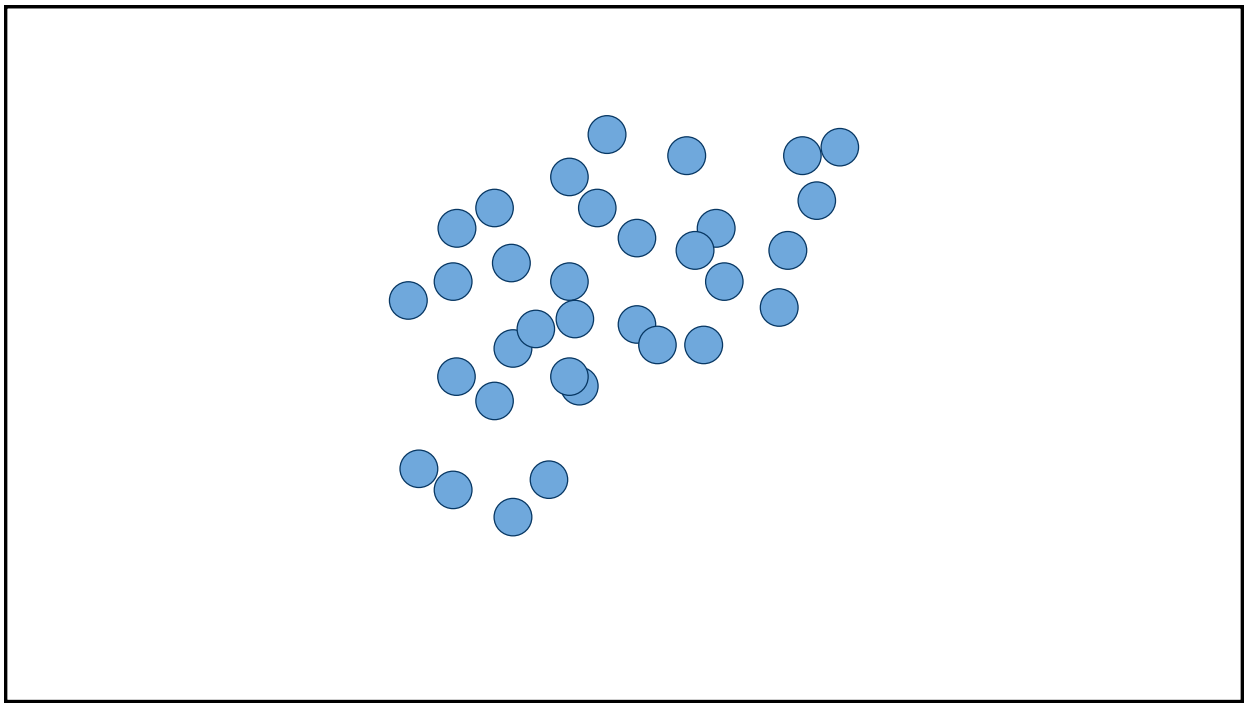
http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2018/02/artificial-intelligence-could-identify-gang-crimes-and-ignite-ethical-firestorm

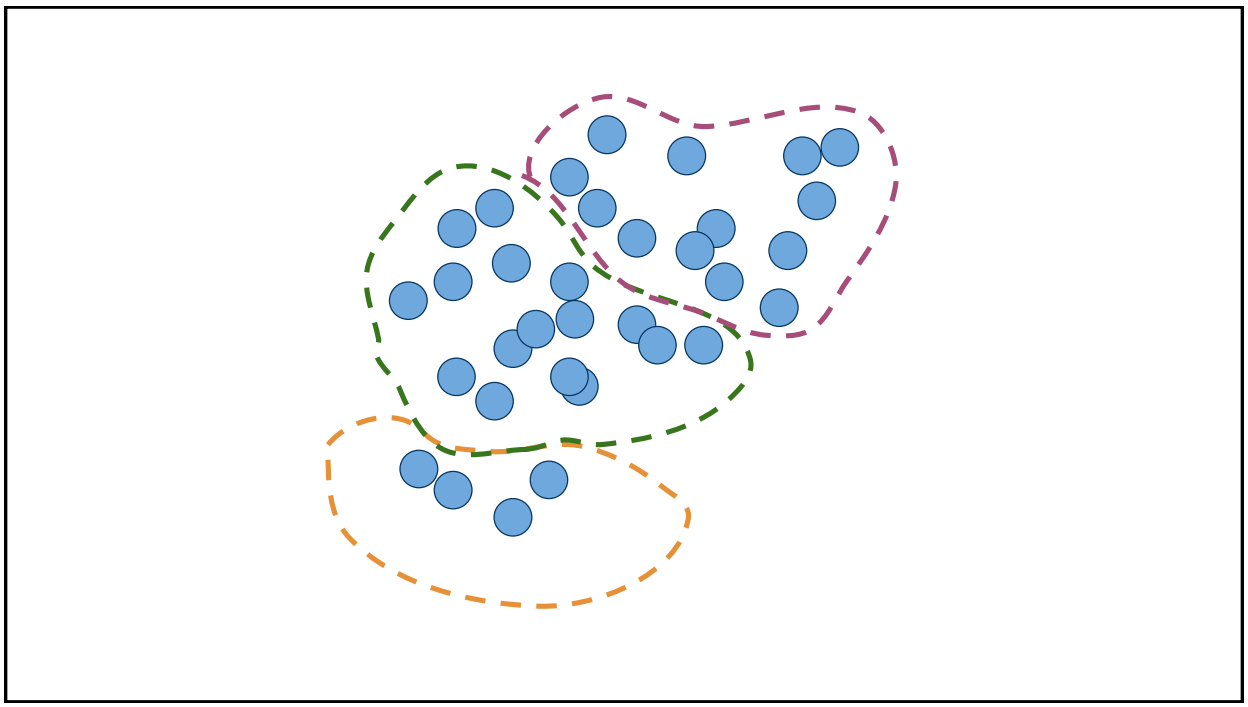
ISTOCK.COM/DENISTANGNEYJR

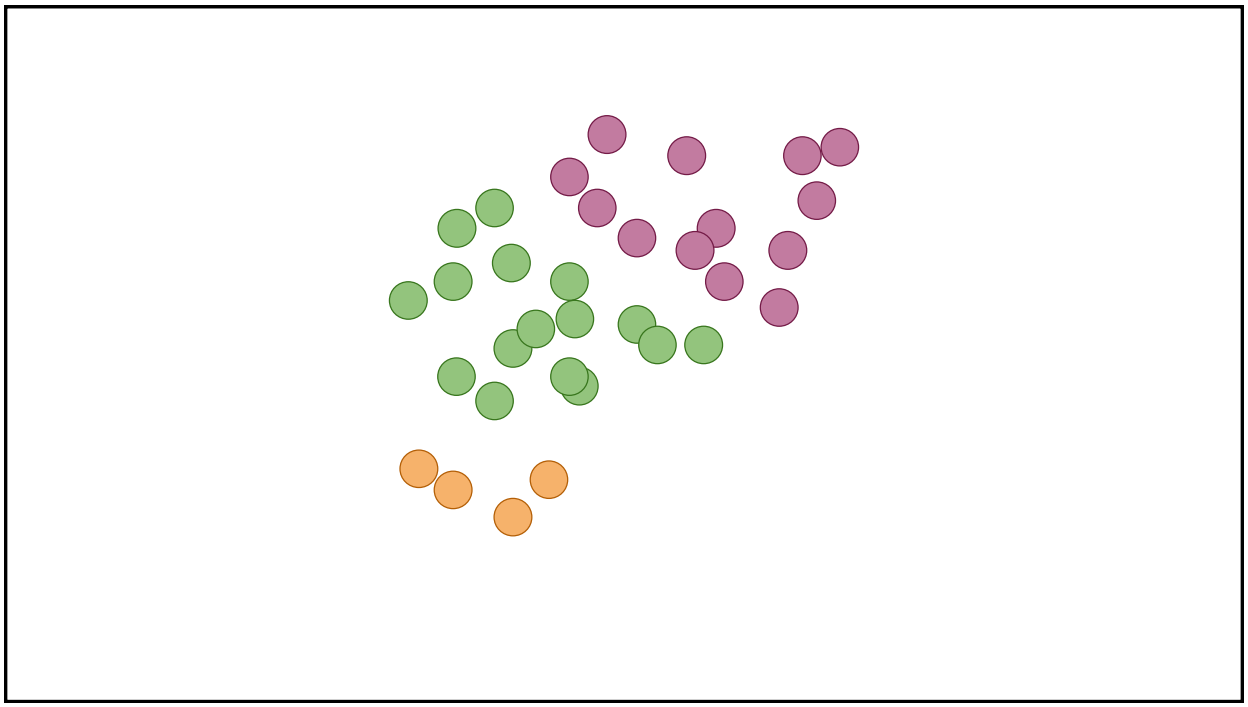


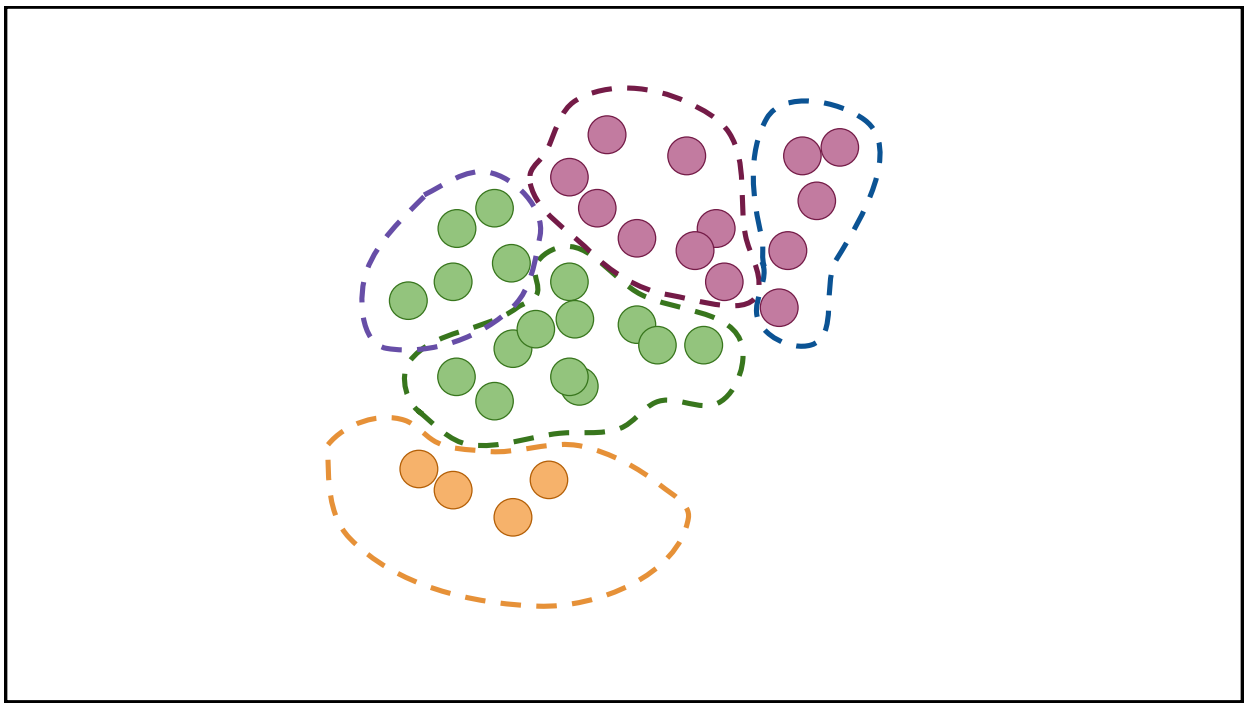
Clustering

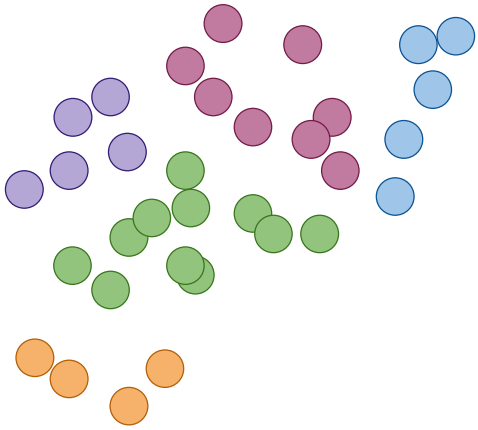
How should we group this data?

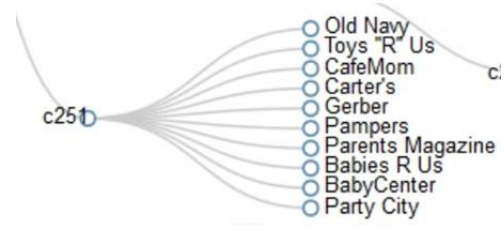


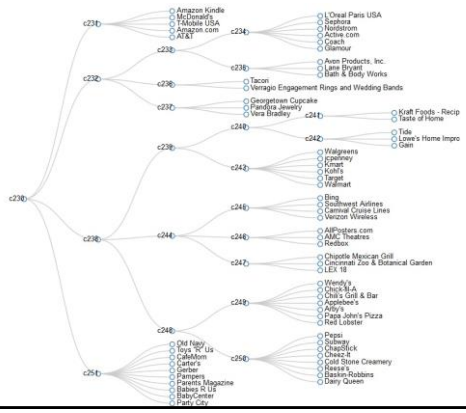












How might we segment our customers?

"Understanding, Analyzing, and Retrieving Knowledge from Social Media"

http://cucis.ece.northwestern.edu/projects/Social/

Which neighborhoods are most likely to experience home burglaries this month?

"Crime Forecasting Using Spatio-Temporal Pattern with Ensemble Learning"

https://www.cs.umb.edu/~csyu/YU_resume%202016_01_08_files/yuPAKDD2014.pdf

(2) August 2009

Artificial Neural Networks

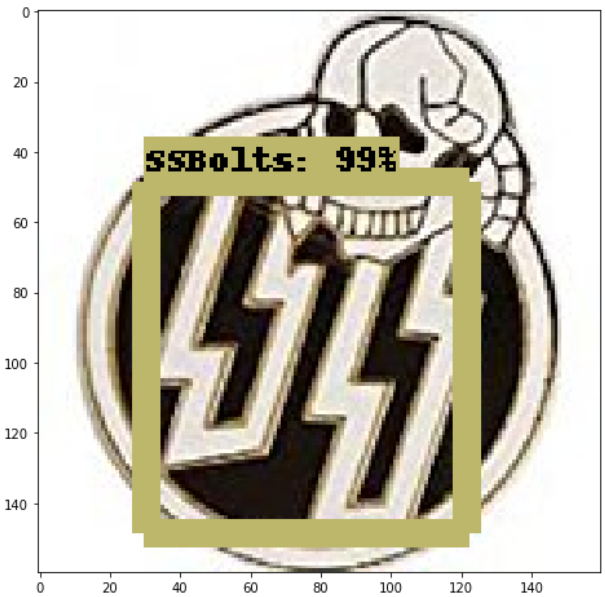
Reinforcement Learning

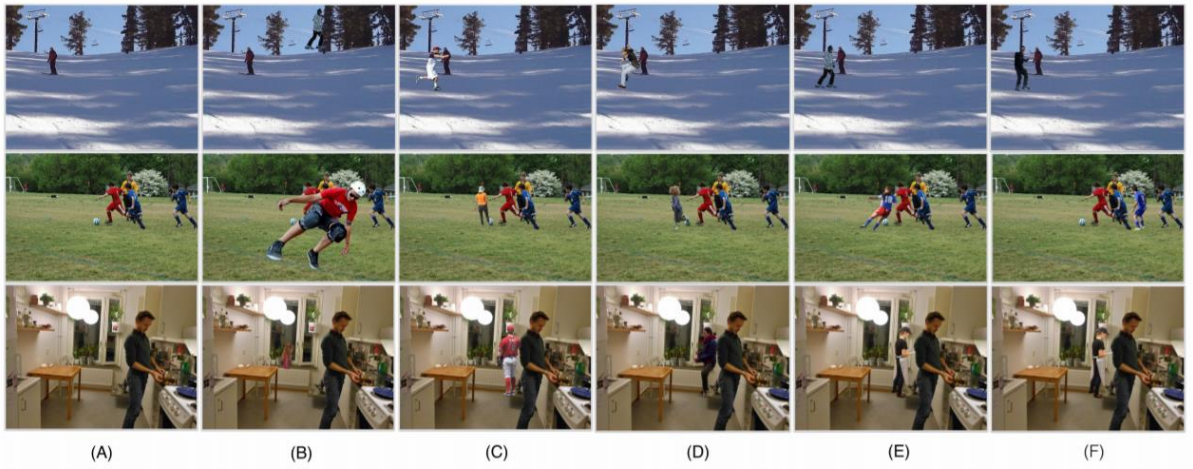
Collaborative Filtering

etc.

The purpose of most of these algorithms is to find patterns, trends, group things that are similar...

In other words, we're basically asking the computer to use lots of information to make generalizations, or stereotype.

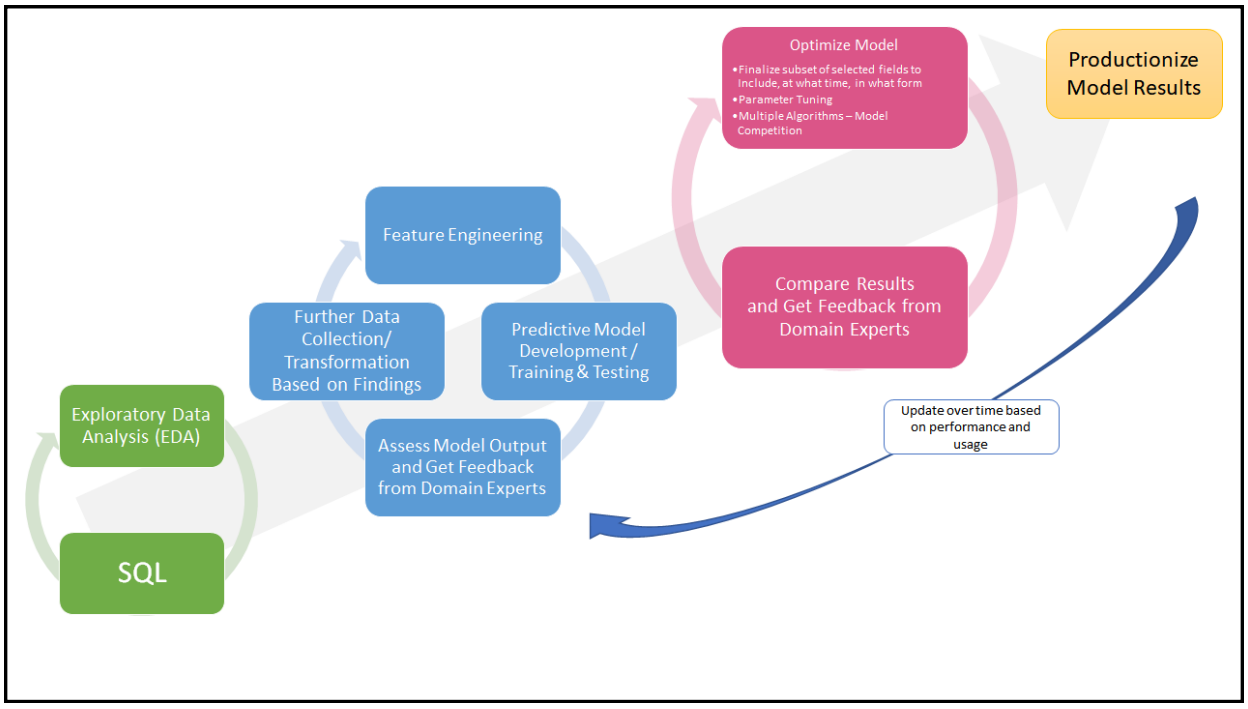



(A)
(B)
(C)
(D)
(E)
(F)

Predictive Model Development Process

Predictive Model Development

- Deciding what you're predicting / optimizing for
- Data collection and storage
- Data cleansing/preparation
- Feature selection & engineering
- Importing data into different algorithmic models
- Training & Testing
- Model evaluation & competition; Deciding what qualifies as a "good model"
  - Parameter Tuning, Cost function, Selecting cutoff values or stopping conditions, etc
- "Productionizing" - Applying to live data, building interactive reports for end-users, explaining what the results mean and how to use them to make decisions
- Monitoring, Improving, and Re-training over time



Where within this process can social biases be introduced?

Data Collection: Incorrectly Recorded

Hearing focuses on Texas troopers wrongly recording drivers' race

By: Claire Ricke

Updated: Sep 20, 2016 01:57 AM CDT

Data Collection: Manipulated

Prison time for some Atlanta school educators in cheating scandal

By **Ashley Fantz, CNN**

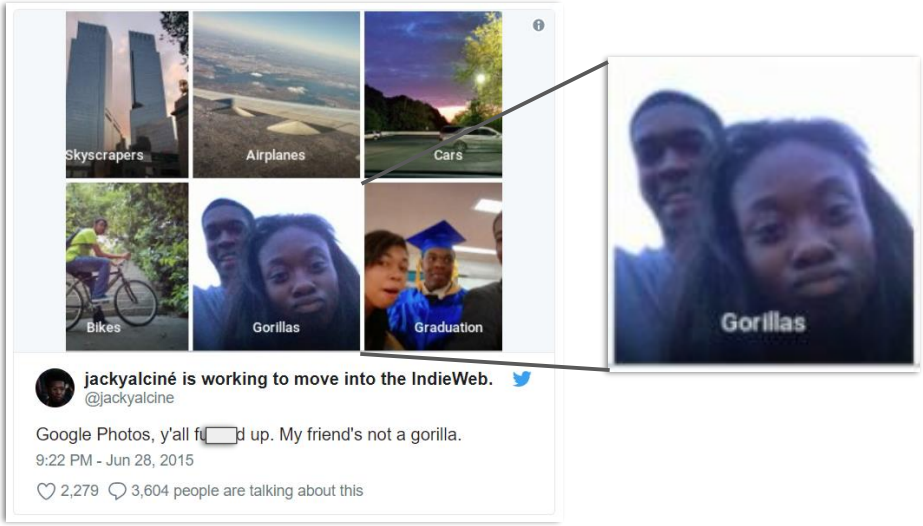
Updated 7:03 AM ET, Wed April 15, 2015

The cheating is believed to date back to 2001, when scores on statewide aptitude tests improved greatly, according to a 2013 indictment. The indictment also states that for at least four years, between 2005 and 2009, test answers were altered, fabricated or falsely certified.

A review that former Gov. Sonny Perdue ordered, determined that some cheating had occurred in more than half the district's elementary and middle schools.

Michael Bowers, a former Georgia attorney general who investigated the cheating scandal, said in 2013 that there were "cheating parties," erasures in and out of classrooms, and teachers were told to make changes to student answers on tests.

Data Collection: Not Representative



Update...

Google 'fixed' its racist algorithm by removing gorillas from its image-labeling tech

Nearly three years after the company was called out, it hasn't gone beyond a quick workaround

By James Vincent | @jjvincent | Jan 12, 2018, 10:35am EST

Data Collection: Contains Historic Biases

Is Your Computer Sexist?

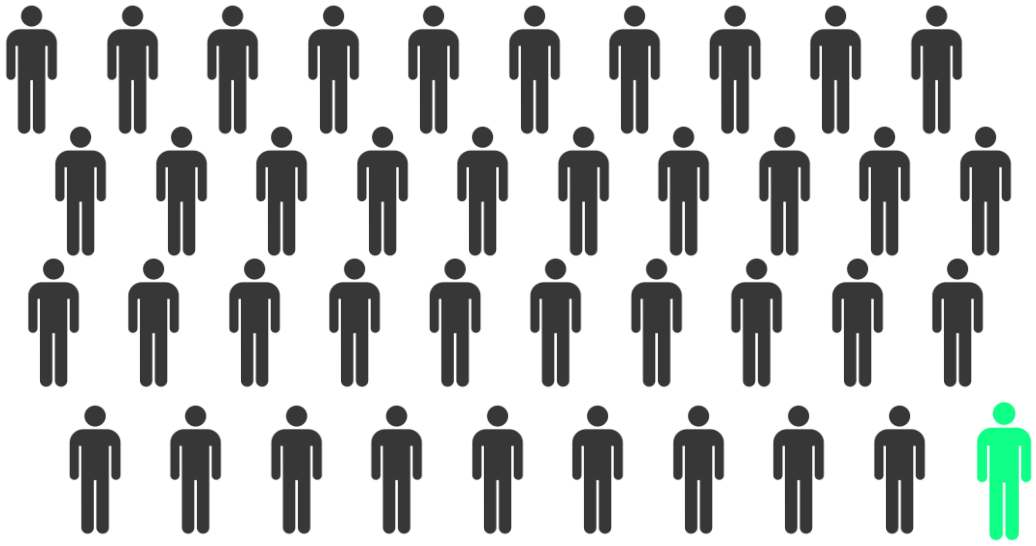
It may say "boss" is a man's job, BU and Microsoft researchers discover

12.06.2016 By Rich Barlow

But word embeddings can recognize word relationships only by studying batches of writing. The researchers particularly focused on word2vec, a publicly accessible embedding nourished on texts from Google News, an aggregator of journalism articles. Turns out that those articles contain gender stereotypes, as the researchers found when they asked the embedding to find analogies similar to "he/she."

The embedding spit back worrisome analogies involving jobs. For "he" occupations, it came up with words like "architect," "financier," and "boss," while "she" jobs included "homemaker," "nurse," and "receptionist."

Data Availability: Imbalanced Dataset



Model Evaluation: Confusion Matrix & Cost

Accuracy

If 99 people out of 100 don't have cancer, and there is a test that just always comes back negative (predicts that no one has cancer), that test is still 99% accurate

	Has Cancer	**Does Not Have Cancer**
Tests Positive for Cancer	TRUE POSITIVE	FALSE POSITIVE
Tests Negative for Cancer	FALSE NEGATIVE	TRUE NEGATIVE

Model Evaluation: Confusion Matrix & Cost

	Has Cancer	**Does Not Have Cancer**
Model Predicts Patient Has Cancer	0	0
Model Predicts Patient Does Not Have Cancer	10	990

This model doesn't have any False Positives, and is "99% Accurate", but also has no Positive Predictive Value.

How is it Penalized for that?

Model Evaluation: Confusion Matrix & Cost

	Has Cancer	Does Not Have Cancer
Model Predicts Patient Has Cancer	5	90
Model Predicts Patient Does Not Have Cancer	5	900

What is the "cost" of each type of error?

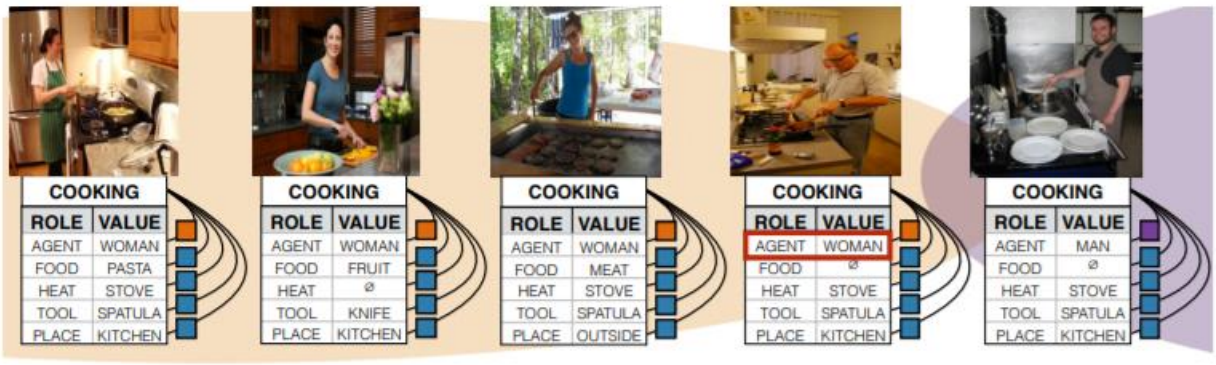
Data Pre-Processing: Dropping Data

Remove Missing Data

Now that you know how to mark missing values in your data, you need to learn how to handle them.

A simple way to handle missing data is to remove those instances that have one or more missing values.

Model Training: Bias Amplification



http://vicenteordonez.com/files/bias.pdf

Feature & Algorithm Selection - Different algorithms handle different types of data in different ways

Target Selection/Optimization Goal - What are you optimizing for? (Technical & Business Decision)

Model Evaluation - How good does your model have to be to decide to stop improving it? And how do you define “good”?
Consider “cost” of each type of error.

Example: Optimizing for maximum video viewing time may incentivize the display of alarming/intriguing information, whether or not it is true (propaganda)

YouTube, the Great Radicalizer

By Zeynep Tufekci

March 10, 2018

The New York Times

It seems as if you are never "hard core" enough for YouTube's recommendation algorithm. It promotes, recommends and disseminates videos in a manner that appears to constantly up the stakes. Given its billion or so users, YouTube may be one of the most powerful radicalizing instruments of the 21st century.

Implementing the Trained Model - In what scenarios can your model be applied? How generalizable is it?

Interpretation - How do you interpret the results? How do you document and explain to others how to interpret the results?

Maintenance - For how long can the current model be applied? When does the model need to be retrained? Does the "ground truth" change?

Can your model be gamed?

How to persuade a robot that you should get the job

Do mere human beings stand a chance against software that claims to reveal what a real-life face-to-face chat can't?

Stephen Buranyi

Sat 3 Mar 2018 19.05 EST

A fightback against automation has emerged, as applicants search for ways to game the system. On web forums, students trade answers to employers' tests and create fake applications to gauge their processes. One HR employee for a major technology company recommends slipping the words "Oxford" or "Cambridge" into a CV in invisible white text, to pass the automated screening.

Could your model cause harm?

Or perpetuate existing social hierarchies, preventing a fair playing field?

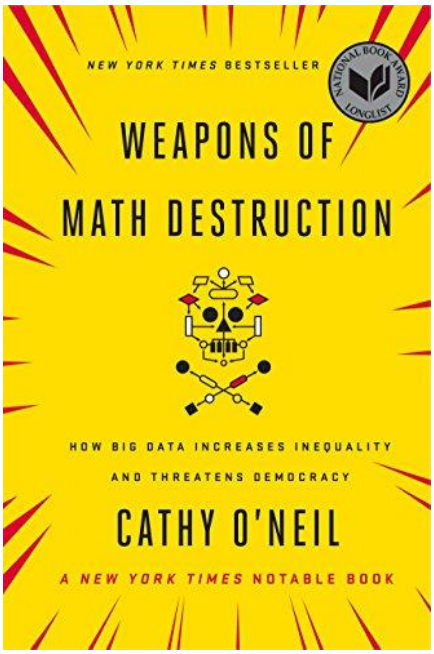
Some Types of Harm a Model Can Perpetuate

Allocative harms - resources are allocated unfairly or witheld (transactional, quantifiable)

Representational harms - systems reinforce subordination/perceived inferiority of some groups (cultural, diffuse, can lead to other types of harm)

- stereotyping
- underrepresentation
- recognition
- denigration
- Ex-nomination

(from Kate Crawford's talk at 2017 NIPS Conference, The Trouble With Bias)



What makes a model a “Weapon of Math Destruction”?

- **Opacity** - inscrutable “black boxes” (often by design)
- **Scale** - capable of exponentially increasing the number of people impacted

“The privileged...are processed more by people, the masses by machines.”

- **Damage** - can ruin people’s lives and livelihoods

So, Can a Machine Be Racist or Sexist?

YES

"…there is nothing "artificial" about [Artificial Intelligence] — it is made by humans, intended to behave like humans and affects humans. So if we want it to play a positive role in tomorrow's world, it must be guided by human concerns."

"…there are no "machine" values at all, in fact; machine values *are* human values."

-Fei-Fei Li
How to Make A.I. That's Good for People, New York Times, 3/7/2018

What can we do about it?

- **Be aware** of the potential for bias and disparate impact machine learning models can perpetuate (and help educate others)
- **Test for bias** in your models & evaluate model performance on minority classes in your dataset
- **Evaluate possible uses** (or misuses) of your model, and "perverse incentives" it may create in the system into which it's being deployed
- **Improve transparency & explainability** of how your model categorizes and predicts things (LIME)

- **Document Data Source & Transformation Pipeline** to help manage data governance & provenance and allow reproducible research
- **Communicate context**, and explain model generalization limits to end-users
- **Involve Domain Experts** who know the history of the data collection, actual field definitions, data quality issues, system changes over time, how the model will likely be applied, ethical issues and laws in the field of application, etc.
- **Gather Representative Training Data**

- Include **fairness as an optimization objective**, add social bias penalties (research emerging, more needed)
- **Research and Develop** new tools and techniques for detecting bias and reducing disparate impact caused by machine learning models
- **Build adversarial tools** to stress-test your own models, and thwart others that are causing harm
- **Hire Diverse Teams**
- **Demand Accountability and Regulation** in the industry, and in your own organizations

Organizations working on this

AI Now Institute at NYU https://ainowinstitute.org/

Algorithmic Justice League https://www.ajlunited.org/
(Watch Joy Buolamwini's TED Talk!)

Data for Democracy, Bloomberg, BrightHive
Data Science Code of Ethics
http://datafordemocracy.org/projects/ethics.html

Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency in Machine Learning
https://www.fatml.org/

Example research

Men Also Like Shopping:
Reducing Gender Bias Amplification using Corpus-level Constraints

Jieyu Zhao[§] Tianlu Wang[§] Mark Yatskar[‡]
Vicente Ordonez[§] Kai-Wei Chang[§]

Fairness-Aware Classifier with Prejudice Remover Regularizer

Toshihiro Kamishima[1], Shotaro Akaho[1], Hideki Asoh[1], and Jun Sakuma[2]

Certifying and removing disparate impact*

Michael Feldman *Haverford College*
Sorelle A. Friedler *Haverford College*
John Moeller *University of Utah*
Carlos Scheidegger *University of Arizona*
Suresh Venkatasubramanian† *University of Utah*

A STUDY OF PRIVACY AND FAIRNESS IN SENSITIVE DATA ANALYSIS

MORITZ A.W. HARDT

Learning Fair Representations

Rich Zemel, Yu Wu, Kevin Swersky, Toni Pitassi, Cynthia Dwork ; Proceedings of the 30th International Conference on Machine Learning, PMLR 28(3):325-333, 2013.

More resources

Flipboard Magazine where I collect articles on this topic:

https://flipboard.com/@becomingdatasci/bias-in-machine-learning-rv7p7r9ry

https://www.becomingadatascientist.com/2015/11/22/a-challenge-to-data-scientists/

https://developers.google.com/machine-learning/fairness-overview/

https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/the-risk-of-machine-learning-bias-and-how-to-prevent-it/

https://www.fatml.org/resources/relevant-scholarship

https://twitter.com/random_walker/status/961332883343446017

"How do we govern ourselves? How do we instill that trust in others that we as stewards of that data understand the power that we have, and want to make sure that we're doing right by the people who are trusting us with that data?"

-Natalie Evans Harris

Data for Good Exchange 2017, Inside Bloomberg

Renée Teate

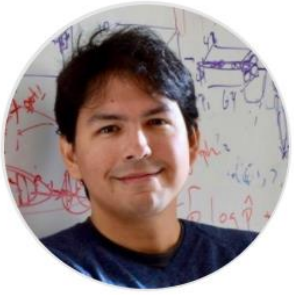
BecomingADataScientist.com

@becomingdatasci

Social Bias in Machine Learning Panel

Emily Crose
Undisclosed
Threat Hunter

Ines Montani
Explosion AI
Founder



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