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Subject: Final What the Tech Memo for Cultural-Focused Group

I. Background

Our Community

      Our community is drawn from our cultures. This includes identities drawn from regions, home country, and ethnicity as well as those built on experiences like being a first generation college student. This wealth of shared experience builds community and acts as a lens through which to view new technologies. At the same time, everyone has a different connection to their community and plays a different role within it. The perspective of a first generation immigrant is unique from that of a second generation immigrant– or indeed from any other first generation immigrant.

      Specifically, the four of us chose to investigate the impact of AI on New England, Greece, Asian American, and First Generation College Student communities. All of these draw on a shared culture built through individual experiences.

AI and Our Communities

      To investigate the interactions between AI and culture, each of us interviewed someone else from our sub-community. The individual style of each interviewer combined with the breadth of experience of the interviewees resulted in unique insights on the impact of AI. The community members we interviewed mainly view the concept of AI as referring to high level decision making such as trained ML models. Most feel that low level programs such as conditionals are not AI, but find it difficult to draw an exact line.

      The college students interviewed used AI similarly, with ChatGPT cited as the main tool actively used and social media algorithms as the most impactful passive uses. ChatGPT users expressed that ChatGPT was most useful within extremely well defined and documented technical disciplines and for summarizing documents, but struggled when conflicting information or implementations were present. Everyone interviewed use social media and content delivery platforms regularly. These include dating apps, instagram, and Spotify. Many interviewees indicated that they felt like the algorithm was over-tuned to their preferences, resulting in homogenous feeds that reduce spontaneity and discovery and leading to endless advertisements based on one interaction.

      The use of AI as a translating and editing tool to communicate with other community members was seen in one interview to navigate the language understanding asymmetries that

exist within some cultural communities. AI tools are getting better and better at navigating these situations, allowing those who may be less familiar with a language to communicate with others.

II. Options

Positive Impacts

Through interviews and class discussions, we've seen how AI profoundly impacts cultural groups and minorities, influencing our interactions and cultural identities. Social media algorithms can allow people to get more in touch with their culture by finding others who identify within the same group, learning languages, and sharing knowledge about different lifestyles. AI also can enhance the quality of life if it is used correctly as it can be employed in many different fields, such as education, to personalize a user's experience or provide clarifying points. In this way, we have found that this technology makes the world more efficient and interconnected in a way, enabling people to share experiences, explore their background, and expose themselves to other walks of life that they would not be able to otherwise. Because of this, the idea applies to all of our sub-groups.

Potential Issues and Worries

Although there are quite a few benefits to AI technology, there are also some drawbacks that could be mentioned. For example, machine learning has shown racial bias on occasion due to a non-diverse training set. This is detrimental to technological inclusivity as it could prevent certain groups of people from taking full advantage of what AI has to offer. Additionally, there remains the issue of possibly introducing bias subconsciously when creating these tools, which is why policies to regulate the use of AI are important going forward. We think the growth and development of AI should be paused so that we can address the current AI's ability to produce accurate, reliable, and accessible results.

Furthermore, this technology can only be beneficial to those who have the means to use it. When we were speaking with the representatives from Tech Goes Home, it was made clear that digital equity has still not been reached. AI should be beneficial, but in cases like this, it can be a significant drawback, considering some things are only accessible through technology. Even with the access to technology, certain AI features require monetary means to use. Depending on a person's background, they may not have the privilege of being able to use it to its full extent.

Lastly, within our interviews, we found that many, regardless of cultural background, are not aware of what AI truly is or what it can be used for. Due to the inherent fear of the unknown, this has led to apprehensive thoughts regarding the technology and reluctance to use it in some cases. Thus, it is evident that education about AI is necessary for future development. It seems like there is an easy avenue for exploitation with AI, whether it be from users or creators, as a result of this lack of education as well.

III. Recommendations

Values for AI Policies

Drawing from our own experiences as well as interviews with members of our communities, we have synthesized five values that characterize the responsible use of AI: communication, respect, openness, diversity, and equity.

Communication requires that those writing policies surrounding AI understand the technology and tools available and can understand the needs of the community. A respectful policy must take into account community traditions and how open members are to new technologies. Policies should not ask communities to change their way of life through sweeping mandates. Openness means that any use of AI should be disclosed to the reader. This includes textual citations as well as image attributions. Embracing diversity is also important, as many AI tools are not trained on data from diverse sources, which can lead to marginalization within the community. This ties in with equity, as both access to new tools and the tools themselves should be equitable.

Principles for AI Policies

City employees should be informed as to the tools available to them, what they are useful for, what their weaknesses are, and how to use them securely. Education allows individuals to make decisions on what tools will work best for them.

Do not mandate the use of AI tools, or incentivize their use. City employees should have the flexibility to decide when applying AI works for them, since they are ultimately responsible for the actions AI takes on their behalf.

Suggestions for AI Policies

We have come up with one application of AI as well as one guideline that we believe would make for effective policy.

Our cultural community includes members who are not native English speakers. Our interviews suggest that AI can be an effective tool for translation and communication within these communities. We suggest that AI translation tools can be applied to city resources to improve accessibility.

As AI becomes more pervasive, we have witnessed greater uncredited usage across mediums. Generative AI is being used in images on social media, texts from scammers, and even in academic research papers without being attributed as such. Lest people's faith in the government be eroded, it is important that any usage of AI be clearly called out as such, whether it is used for translation, concept art or graphics, or to write memos.