PEAs in Pods
Community | Engagement | Research

Additional Activity 2.5: Power and Positionality in AI

Duration: 30-40 minutes

Aim:

- To encourage participants who work in the field of data science/ AI to examine how their backgrounds, identities, and assumptions may influence data interpretation, ethical decision-making, and interactions in data-related work.

Requirements:

Computer (with internet connection) and screen; paper and pens

Activities:

1. To introduce this activity, context can be provided using slides 3 – 5.
   - Slide 3 - Ethical positionality reflection is featured within the Ethical impact assessment: a tool of the Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence - UNESCO Digital Library
   - Slide 4 – Introduce the wheel of privilege and power. The closer you are to the centre the more power you are.
   - Slide 5 – a You tube video Available here What Is Privilege? – uses a visual human experiment to illustrate privilege. The questions asked can be found on the link above.
2. The activity (Slide 6) encourages participants to understand how their identities can affect the data science process, leading to greater self-awareness in their data interpretation, decision-making, and ethical considerations.
   a. **Reflect and List (5 minutes):**
      Ask participants to jot down five aspects of their identity or background that may shape their approach to data (e.g., technical expertise, cultural background, gender, socioeconomic background, prior work experience, nationality, etc.).
   b. **Consider Positionality in Data Work (10-15 minutes):**
      Have participants reflect on these aspects and think about:
      - How might one or more of these aspects impact my perspective on data interpretation or decision-making?
      - Where do I hold more power, privilege, or potential bias in the data science process (e.g., model building, data collection, ethical considerations)?
      - Encourage participants to consider specific examples, such as how assumptions may shape the questions they prioritize, data sources they trust, or patterns they notice.
   c. **Pair and Share (10 -15 minutes):**
      In pairs, participants discuss:
      - An area in which their background may add value to data interpretation.
      - An area where they may need to be cautious of potential biases or limitations due to their positionality.
      - They should focus on listening to their partner's insights on how different backgrounds can lead to diverse interpretations of the same dataset or analytical goal.
   d. **Discussion (5 minutes):**
      Conclude with a brief discussion on how an awareness of positionality can contribute to ethical and equitable data practices. Highlight how recognizing different perspectives can help prevent biases in data science and support responsible data use.

Resources:

- PEAs in Pods Training - Activity 2.5 - Resource - Power and Positionality in AI.pdf

Facilitation notes:
Slides 3 – 5 do provide context for participants, especially from technical backgrounds. The video (slide 5) is optional but is very impactful.