

FACIAL RECOGNITION TECHNOLOGY – MY TAKE

Facial recognition technology (FRT) is everywhere. It is not a futuristic concept anymore; it has become a normal part of our everyday lives. From its mundane uses, such as enabling us to unlock our smartphones with just a glance, to its more advanced applications by police and public safety efforts, the usage of FRT has had numerous advantages. And precisely because of all the various ways in which this technology is utilized today, we have become so accustomed to it, without realizing the dangers FRT brings.

Even though FRT is often cited as one of the safest and most effective identification methods in biometric technology, its effectiveness is actually what I have the most issues with. There are numerous examples of facial recognition software misidentifying individuals because FRT works best on certain groups, mostly Caucasian males.

For example, I have tried PimEyes, a facial recognition search engine that allows you to upload photos of yourself and do a reverse image search of your photos on the Internet. The search engine did find some of my photos, but some of the anticipated ones weren't included in the results. The results comprised images of various women, some of them bearing no resemblance to me, or even to each other. What is concerning is that some of those photos were explicit, and I don't want my face to be associated with content in that industry.

But errors facial recognition systems make can be much more horrifying than getting a collection of photos of people who look nothing like you. Those systems make more errors on individuals with darker skin tones, which means that FRT used by police forces can lead them to make false arrests, and innocent people could be charged. Also, the technology can be fooled by using different lighting levels and camera angles, which demonstrates FRT is biased and imperfect.

On the other hand, the problem of flawed FRT will probably be solved in the future, since many companies are working on improving it (e.g. Google's FaceNet, Microsoft's Azure Face). This, however, leads to a variety of ethical and civil rights issues, and possibly to an Orwellian future I am not eager to face. Hopefully, more regulations and laws regarding facial recognition technology will be created, and the future might then not seem like such a dark, gloomy place, with Big Brother watching us.