

Data & |! Stories Manifesto

As the influence of data-driven technologies on our societies and environment continues to rise, we find it crucial to recognize and tackle the challenges it brings to storytelling practices. Data storytelling holds significant potential to inform opinion and shape collective beliefs, attitudes, and actions. In a world where data is relentlessly collected and used to exploit and police vulnerable communities, we urge data storytellers to play a critical role in translating complex data worlds into meaningful narratives that promote social justice, inclusivity, and overall societal flourishing.

The **Data & |! Stories Manifesto** establishes an ethical framework for data storytelling that upholds the dignity, autonomy, and rights of everyone involved in collecting, producing, and analyzing data, as well as those affected by the consequences of our stories. We acknowledge that data is never "raw" or "neutral" but rather the product of complex social interactions. We also acknowledge that how we collect, analyze, and interpret data can

have significant implications for social justice, equity, and human rights. When we prioritize the well-being of the collective over individual profit or power, data stories have the potential to be a powerful tool for driving social change.

We pledge to a data storytelling approach that challenges assumptions, recognizes biases, amplifies marginalized voices, and promotes more equitable outcomes for all through eight ethical principles.

1. Respect the rights of our interlocutors: Data Storytellers must respect the privacy, dignity, and autonomy of the individuals and communities represented in the data. We refuse to participate in data practices that violate the privacy rights of individuals and communities or manipulate their decision to decline data collection. We commit to obtaining informed consent from individuals who voluntarily provide their data and make sure that the terms and conditions are easily accessible. They are interlocutors, not our subjects.

2. Avoid stereotypes: Data Storytellers must not perpetuate harmful stereotypes that contribute to the marginalization or oppression of any group. We reject unnecessary representations, graphs or images, generalizations, and blanket statements that rely on stereotypes. Instead, we commit to narrating our data stories through care practices towards our interlocutors while avoiding generalizations—based on individual differences such as gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, sexual preference, or any other marker—that do not aspire to promote social good or generate inclusive practices.

3. Consider the broader context: Data Storytellers must consider the complexities of the issues being addressed and the historical, cultural, economic, and political forces that shape the collection, interpretation, and use of the data. We acknowledge that data does not exist in a vacuum and is always situated within a broader sociotechnical world. We commit to radical contextual analysis in our work, foster inclusivity,

and incorporate diverse perspectives and experiences in our data stories.

4. Foster collaboration and open

communication: Data Storytellers must promote collaboration and open communication with and among various stakeholders, such as researchers, social movements, local communities, funders, and individuals whom the outcomes of data-driven decisions will impact. By fostering these relationships throughout our story-crafting practices, we can ensure that diverse perspectives are taken into account and that data-driven decisions are grounded in a nuanced understanding of the issues at hand. We commit to crafting stories resulting from dialogues and will develop collaborative methodologies prioritizing collective understanding. We also commit to identifying local knowledge sources and valuing them equally to knowledge from any other party involved in the process.

5. Craft transparent narratives: Data Storytellers must be transparent about their sources, methods, tools, and concepts, their positionality, and analytical limitations. We want our audiences to know where our stories are coming from. Our commitment is to craft accurate and reliable stories and avoid manipulating or misrepresenting our interlocutor's perceptions and experiences. We reject any attempts by outside entities to influence our data stories or include "secret agendas" within our narratives. False conclusions drawn from the data are unacceptable to us. To avoid opacity and distortions that could impede social inclusivity, we will track and disclose any edits we make to the data, and we pledge to ensure that data practices are adequately reviewed by Institutional Review Boards (IRBs).

6. Craft stories responsibly: Data Storytellers must refuse to take their stories lightly. We understand that our narratives and actions or inactions have consequences, and we refuse to make recommendations without considering the material effects they may have and their potential to exacerbate conditions of inequality. Our primary objective is to promote a better world for everyone, and we pledge to prioritize practices that promote social growth and inclusivity above all else.

7. Challenge power dynamics: Data Storytellers must challenge power dynamics and expose instances of systemic inequality. We acknowledge that power dynamics exist everywhere within our society and recognize the potential for data storytelling to reveal instances of injustice that often go unnoticed. Through our stories, we are committed to promoting transparency and exposing the power structures that uphold and benefit from systemic inequality. We pledge to work

collaboratively with social movements in the fight against these harmful systems.

8. Advocate for change: Data Storytellers must use their stories to inspire social action and move our audience to participate in creating positive change. We reject the idea that data storytelling should be a passive, neutral, or objective endeavor divorced from real-world consequences. We also refuse to present a bleak picture of reality without providing solutions and means for change. Instead, we are committed to using our stories to advocate for social justice, equity, and human rights. Our stories will envision better futures and suggest alternatives promoting a more inclusive, resilient, and equitable world.

Data & | ! Stories Group

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