"Stunning and creepy…I gotta learn this": Exploring Concepts of Information Ethics in Deepfake Creation Tutorials on YouTube

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Deepfakes combine artificial intelligence with machine deep learning to produce manipulated images and are best understood as manipulated videos made to appear hyperrealistic to viewers (Westerlund, 2019), complicating, if not, preventing viewers from separating fact from fiction and eroding trust in video footage or images from reputable mainstream news sources. Deepfakes are used in politics and in everyday contexts, such as the sharing of images and videos across social media platforms that proliferate mis/disinformation. While previous literature has articulated the dangers of deepfakes audiences or tracked their dissemination, this ongoing project explores deepfakes from the creation side by seeking to understand who makes deepfakes through analyzing deepfake tutorials on YouTube. Understanding the creators of deepfakes and their methods helps us differentiate, and potentially, regulate deepfakes that are innocently creative vis-a-vis those that are harmful. A thematic analysis of the content and production features of YouTube deepfake creation videos provides a critical perspective of how and why individuals instruct others to do so. Preliminary findings of 73 YouTube videos indicate higher proportions of European, Scandinavian, and American masculine-presenting creators who appear to be in their 20s or early 30s. The utilization of Hindi, Chinese, and Filipino text, some with visible creators potentially matching these identities, suggests a larger than anticipated non-Western participation in deepfake creation. While still ongoing, these early findings impact how LIS professionals frame deepfakes in relation to mis/disinformation and suggest that in order to overcome deepfakes we must understand them in relation to larger socio-technical discourses.

ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS
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