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Data Feminism
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MIT Press, 2020

Read the book at: datafeminism.io
“Data is the new oil.”

- The Economist, Intel CEO, Reliance Industries CEO, UAE Minister of Artificial Intelligence, Google execs, etc, mainly elite white men

“Data is the same old oppression.”

- BIWOC, white women, Indigenous people, immigrant communities, LGBTQ+ individuals, + more…
Dr. Timnit Gebru, until recently being fired, was Co-Lead of Ethical Artificial Intelligence (AI) team at Google.


The Abuse and Misogynoir Playbook
by Katlyn Turner, Danielle Wood and Catherine D'Ignazio

In the January 2021 State of AI Ethics Report from Montreal AI Ethics Institute.
Feminist: the person who believes in equal rights for men and women and non-binary people.

- Beyoncé (mostly)
Feminism: organized activity on behalf of women’s and non-binary people’s rights and interests.

- Merriam Webster (mostly)
Feminism: the theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes.

- Merriam Webster
Intersectional feminism is not only about women and gender.

It is about power - who has it and who doesn’t.

In today’s world, data is power.
Intersectional feminism, when applied to data science, can help that power be challenged and changed.
7 Principles of Data Feminism

Examine power
Challenge power
Rethink binaries and hierarchies
Elevate emotion and embodiment
Embrace pluralism
Consider context
Make labor visible
An Incomplete List of Missing Data Sets

This list will always be incomplete, and is designed to be illustrative rather than comprehensive, from the perspective of the U.S., though the complete list of datasets features:

- Civilians killed in encounters with police or law enforcement agencies
- Sales and prices in the art world (and relationships between artists and audiences)
- People excluded from public housing because of criminal records
- Trans people killed or injured in instances of hate crime (note: existing data is incomplete)
- Poverty and employment statistics that include people who are behind bars
- Muslim mosques/communities surveilled by the FBI/CIA
- Mobility for older adults with physical disabilities or cognitive impairment
- LGBT older adults discriminated against in housing
- Undocumented immigrants currently incarcerated and/or underpaid
- Undocumented immigrants for whom prosecutorial discretion has been exercised
- Measurements for global web users that take into account shared devices
- Firm statistics on how often police arrest women for making false rape reports
- Master database that details if/which Americans are registered to vote
- Total number of local and state police departments using stingray phones
- How much Spotify pays each of its artists per play of a song


Principle: Examine Power
Feminicides in Mexico by María Salguero, 2015–present

#NiUnaMenos

Principle: Challenge Power
COVID19 & Counterdata (US)

- NYT Case Tracker
- The COVID Tracking Project
- Data for Black Lives – cataloguing which states and counties are releasing data by race/ethnicity
- Solutions Journalism Network – Covid data by race/ethnicity at the state level
- COVID-19 risk assessment in Indian Country – (Rudolph Rüser)
- Note: Sex/gender data are missing from all these efforts!
Narratives of Displacement and Resistance, Anti-Eviction Mapping Project

Principle: Embrace Pluralism

The Anti-Eviction Mapping Project, 2013 – present

Phyllis Bowie
Midtown Resident

Please do not use any of these stories for your own work without first checking with us. Interviewees have only authorized the release of their stories to the AEMP.
Principle: Embrace Pluralism

The Eviction Lab, Princeton University
**Participatory process for data science:** Feminist design prioritizes the participation of people who have been most marginalized by the system.

We center the voices of those who are directly impacted by the outcomes of the design process. – Design Justice Network

Principle: Embrace Pluralism
Principle: Elevate Emotion and Embodiment
U.S. Gun Deaths, by Periscopic (2013) vs. a bar chart in The Washington Post

Principle: Elevate Emotion and Embodiment
Q. when do you make data science feminist?

A. all the time and everywhere in the pipeline
Data Feminism requires an expanded definition of data science
What You Can Do

Examine power – Do work that interrogates and exposes sexism, racism, and other forces in data and in the world.

Challenge power – Collect counterdata, introduce new communities to data and digital tools, use data to advocate for equity at your workplace/institution.

Elevate emotion & embodiment – Experiment with creative forms of data presentation and communication (quilts, sculptures, murals, VR)

Embrace pluralism – Include more people in data projects – impacted communities, especially. Center the work of minoritized people and follow their leadership.

Make labor visible – Make sure you credit your data sources and research support staff, make your process transparent, and reflect on your own identity.
thanks & be in touch!
More info about the book at: datafeminism.io

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