Data Feminism

Catherine D’Ignazio and Lauren F. Klein

MIT Press, 2020
“Data is the new oil.”

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

“Data is the same old oppression.”

- Women of color, white women, Indigenous people, immigrant communities, LGBTQ+ individuals, + more…
Merriam-Webster’s Word of the Year for 2017 is feminism. The word was a top lookup throughout the year, with several spikes that corresponded to various activist efforts and developments.
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
Legitimize embodiment and affect
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 exhaustive.

- Civilians killed in encounters with police or law enforcement agencies
- Sales and prices in the art world (and relationships between artists and dealers)
- People excluded from public housing because of criminal records
- Trans people killed or injured in instances of hate crime (note: existing trans data is often mostly 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 impairments
- LGBT older adults discriminated against in housing
- Undocumented immigrants currently incarcerated and/or underpaid
- Undocumented immigrants for whom prosecutorial discretion has been invoked
- 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 song

Femicides in Mexico by María Salguero, 2015–present

#NiUnaMenos

Principle: Challenge Power
Principle: Embrace Pluralism

The Anti-Eviction Mapping Project, 2013 - present
Reporting Sexual Assault: What the Clery Act Doesn’t Tell Us

By Emerson College Journalism Students: Patrick Torphy, Michaela Galnon and Jillian Meehan, 2016

Used with permission

Clery report data and anonymous survey results leave vastly different impressions of rape culture on college campuses.

Boston University

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Climate Survey</th>
<th>Clery Report</th>
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<tr>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
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Boston University surveyed its students in 2013, with a response rate of 22 percent. Nearly one in five respondents reported experiencing some type of sexual harassment or assault during their time at Boston University, compared to one in 2500 who reported assault in 2014.

Emerson College

<table>
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<th>Clery Report</th>
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<tr>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>0.05%</td>
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Emerson College surveyed its students in 2013, with a 32 percent response rate. About one in 10 respondents said they experienced nonconsensual sexual contact on campus during their time at Emerson, compared to one in 666 students that reported forcible sex offenses in 2014.

Harvard University

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<tr>
<th>Climate Survey</th>
<th>Clery Report</th>
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<tr>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
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Harvard University surveyed its students in 2015, with a response rate of 53.3 percent. About one in six undergraduate respondents said they experienced some type of nonconsensual sexual contact during their time at Harvard, while the school’s Clery report indicated one in 714 students reported forcible sex offenses to the school in 2014.

Data via Boston University, Emerson College, and Harvard University survey results.
Data Khanga Fashion Show

By DataZetu ("Our Data" in Swahili), 2018

Principle: Elevate Emotion & Embodiment
The Data + Feminism Lab uses data and computational methods to work towards *gender and racial equity*, particularly as they relate to *space and place*.