The Datafication of #MeToo: Whiteness, Racial Capitalism, and Anti-Violence Technologies | Big Data & Society

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This article illustrates how racial capitalism can enhance understandings of data, capital, and inequality through an in-depth study of digital platforms used for intervening in gender-based violence. Specifically, we examine an emergent sociotechnical strategy that uses software platforms and artificial intelligence (AI) chatbots to offer users emergency assistance, education, and a means to report and build evidence against perpetrators. Our analysis details how two reporting apps construct data to support institutionally legible narratives of violence, highlighting overlooked racialised dimensions of the data capital generated through their use. We draw attention to how they reinforce property relations built on extraction and ownership, capital accumulation that reinforces benefits derived through data property relations and ownership, and the commodification of diversity and inclusion. Recognising these patterns are not unique to anti-violence apps, we reflect on how this example aids in understanding how racial capitalism becomes a constitutive element of digital platforms, which more generally extract information from users, rely on complex financial partnerships, and often sustain problematic relationships with the criminal legal system. We conclude with a discussion of how racial capitalism can advance scholarship at the intersections of data and power.

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