



Study: We're Teaching Artificial Intelligence to Be Just as Racist and Sexist as Humans



Charles Pulliam-Moore

4/14/17 11:19am · Filed to: HUMAN AFTER ALL ▾



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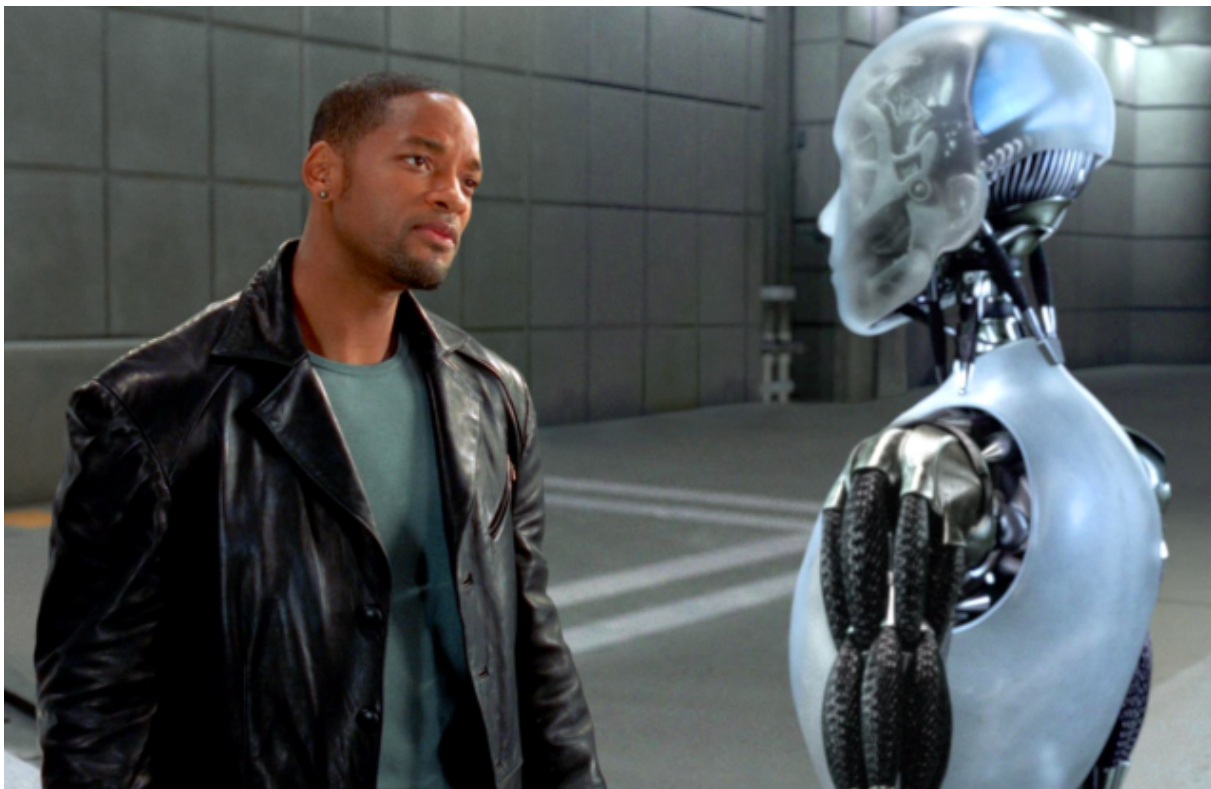


Image via Fox

We live in a world that's increasingly being shaped by complex algorithms and interactive artificial intelligence assistants who help us plot out our days and get from point A to point B.

According to a new Princeton study, though, the engineers responsible for teaching these AI programs things about humans are *also* teaching them how to be racist, sexist assholes.

The study, published in today's edition of *Science* magazine by Aylin Caliskan, Joanna J. Bryson, and Arvind Narayanan, focuses on machine learning, the process by which AI programs begin to think by making associations based on patterns observed in mass quantities of data. In a completely neutral vacuum, this would mean that AI would learn to provide responses based solely on objective, data-driven facts. But because the data sets fed to the AI are selected and influenced by humans, there's a degree to which certain biases become a part of the AI's diet.



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To demonstrate this, Caliskan and her team created a modified version of an Implicit Association Test, an exercise that tasks participants to quickly associate concrete ideas like people of color and women with abstract concepts like goodness and evil. You can take one right now if you want to.

In the past, Implicit Association Tests have been conducted on human participants to measure how much more inclined people are to, say, associate black people with crime or women with domesticity. While it's interesting to think of IATs as being able to give us a glimpse into what kind of people we are,

it's widely known that a person's individual results can vary widely between different tests and that, ideally, you would have to take hundreds, if not thousands, to get a more accurate read on your average results. This isn't a problem for AI programs, though, who can chug through these tests with a speed far beyond the abilities of a human *and* provide clues as to how they came to make their decisions.



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Caliskan's team found that, because they were trained with text laden with everyday human biases, the AI were inclined to replicate those ideas. For example, the AI were prone to assigning names more commonly associated with black people with negative connotations. While these findings might seem objectively innocuous in a lab, we have to take into account that as AI programs become more widely used in broader applications like, for instance, sorting through job applications, biases like these could pose unique difficulties for certain marginalized groups.

In a followup description of her methodology, Caliskan insists that these sorts of problems are a fact of life for the way that machine learning works currently, but that there *are* solutions that can be implemented in the future. For one, it would be beneficial to hire more AI developers who are people of color and/or women and have a more acute awareness of these biases from the jump. But also, Caliskan said, there's a need for transparency as to how these machines are being taught.

“Most experts and commentators recommend that AI should always be applied transparently, and certainly without prejudice. Both the code of the algorithm and the process for applying it must be open to the public,” she explains.

“Transparency should allow courts, companies, citizen watchdogs, and others to understand, monitor, and suggest improvements to algorithms.”

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io9 staff writer. Professional nerd. Cyclops was right.

WikiLeaks Offers \$100,000 for 'Trump-Comey Tapes'



David Boddiger

Today 12:35pm · Filed to: POLITICS ▾



914



19



4





Image via AP

Back in 2016, Donald Trump loved tweeting about WikiLeaks, especially anything that mentioned his campaign opponent at the time, Hillary Clinton. Trump tweeted at least 12 times that year about WikiLeaks and Clinton.

Now Trump himself is the subject of WikiLeaks tweets, with the group on Friday offering \$100,000 for copies of alleged tape recordings of Trump's conversations with fired FBI Director James Comey.

The offer followed a Trump tweet also on Friday that has caused a firestorm, with the president appearing to threaten Comey over the FBI's investigation into Russian influence on last year's elections and potentially on members of Trump's campaign team.

"James Comey better hope that there are no 'tapes' of our conversations before he starts leaking to the press!" Trump tweeted.

White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer later refused to respond to reporters' questions about whether the recordings existed. Democratic Reps. John Conyers and Elijah Cummings requested copies of any such recordings from White House counsel, CNN reported.

But at this point, it's unclear whether Trump actually has recordings of his conversations with Comey, including during a January dinner in which Trump claims Comey said the president is not under investigation by the FBI, or if he is bluffing.

WikiLeaks also called for bitcoin donations from supporters to increase the payment amount for the alleged "tapes." One thing is clear: If the recordings do exist, the race is on to obtain them first.

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David Boddiger's Discussions

All replies



☆
JRW > David Boddiger

5/13/17 12:41pm

Perhaps "tapes" is in quotes because they are digital recordings.

↳ Reply



☆
5 **Dikt1** > JRW

5/13/17 1:54pm

↳ Reply 1 replies

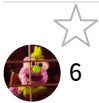


Hello_America, Laser-Focused > David Boddiger

5/13/17 12:43pm

As much as I want these tapes out, if Wikileaks has them they'll just be used as Assange's personal political tool - he will control how they're released, when they're released, and how much of them are released. He cares only about his own power.

↳ Reply

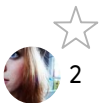


MisterMcGibblets > Hello_America, Laser-Focused

5/13/17 12:48pm

If any such tapes exist, no one who would leak them has access to them. This is just WikiLeaks using the news cycle to get donations.

↳ Reply



Hello_America, Laser-Focused > MisterMcGibblets

5/13/17 12:50pm

I'm not sure no one would leak them (strange times!) but that's a good point about just trying to get donations.

↳ Reply



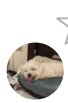
☆ **MisterMcGibblets** > Hello_America, Laser-Focused

2

5/13/17 12:59pm

There are certainly people in the administration who would leak them, but there's no reason they would have access or even knowledge. If the recordings exist, only Bannon and/or Kushner (and maybe one SS IT guy) would be in on it.

↳ Reply



☆ **Sassinak11** > MisterMcGibblets

1

5/13/17 1:34pm

Maybe, maybe not.. remember, the president doesn't control infrastructure.. and this would fall into that category. Now the question is, are the mics always running, or running when someone WANTS them to. If they are always running, then I'm very interested in hearing them... if they are on selectively.. then less so because selective recording is almost as bad as no recording..

↳ Reply



☆ **Ara_Richards** > Hello_America, Laser-Focused

1

5/13/17 2:25pm

He would destroy them to keep his Russian bosses happy.

↳ Reply



☆ **MisterMcGibblets** > Sassinak11

2

5/13/17 2:43pm

The only infrastructure involved would be either a physical recording device at the dinner, or a program on his cell for the two phone calls. And there's no doubt the recordings would be selective. Everyone learned their lesson from Nixon: If you make a practice of recording everything, any missing recordings are automatically suspicious and prima facie evidence of a coverup. I doubt any president since has had a record all policy. And no president ever has had as much incentive to minimize the official record as Trump does.

If these recordings exist at all, they were Bannon's idea. And that paranoid fuck buried them in plausible deniability. But my guess is this is all moot. 90% chance Trump is bluffing like usual. 5% the tapes exist and

contain nothing incriminating. 5% the tapes exist, but are actually from October and Trump's tweet was reminding Comey of a threat he already made.

↳ Reply