News Item

Algorithms associating appearance and criminality have a dark past | AlterNet

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> 'Phrenology' has an old-fashioned ring to it. It sounds like it belongs in a history book, filed somewhere between bloodletting and velocipedes. We'd like to think that judging people's worth based on the size and shape of their skull is a practice that's well behind us. However, phrenology is once again rearing its lumpy head.
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> In recent years, machine-learning algorithms have promised governments and private companies the power to glean all sorts of information from people's appearance. Several startups now claim to be able to use artificial intelligence (AI) to help employers detect the personality traits of job candidates based on their facial expressions. In China, the government has pioneered the use of surveillance cameras that identify and track ethnic minorities. Meanwhile, reports have emerged of schools installing camera systems that automatically sanction children for not paying attention, based on facial movements and microexpressions such as eyebrow twitches.
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> Perhaps most notoriously, a few years ago, AI researchers Xiaolin Wu and Xi Zhang claimed to have trained an algorithm to identify criminals based on the shape of their faces, with an accuracy of 89.5 per cent.
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Source: [Algorithms associating appearance and criminality have a dark past – Alternet.org](#)