The Black Social Ranking Experience at Uber: A Racialized Reflection on Contemporary Surveillance

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Abstract

This study analyzes the social ranking experience of Black users and drivers of the private transportation company Uber in the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. With the attention turned to the experience and evaluation system of the company, it is observed how they appear in the contemporary logic of surveillance. Based on discussions and observations carried out in exploratory research, the study asks: with data surveillance mechanisms in operation, how are Black people experiencing the social logic of ranking in Uber's environment? Cartography was the methodology chosen for the study, considering the possibility of monitoring processes and their commitment to experimentation — with flexible data production procedures — as well as its research-intervention nature (Escóssia et al., 2009). Thus, the main objective of the research was to investigate this experience in order to broaden the analysis of contemporary surveillance with a racialized approach; and among the specific objectives, we aim at breaking the silencing and invisibility of Black theoretical perspectives (Ribeiro, 2017). The theoretical framework of the study will be divided into two study axes: race relations and surveillance. It is therefore realized that, in the era of big data, discrimination can appear in a hidden way as technologies perform a false neutrality that accelerates and deepens it (Benjamin, 2019).

Keywords

social ranking, Uber, racism, surveillance

A Experiência Negra de Ranqueamento Social na Uber: Uma Reflexão Racializada da Vigilância Contemporânea

Resumo

Este estudo analisa a experiência de ranqueamento social de usuários e motoristas negros da empresa de transporte privado Uber, na cidade do Rio de janeiro, Brasil. Com os olhares voltados para a vivência e para o sistema de avaliação da empresa, observa-se como a experiência aparece na lógica contemporânea da vigilância. A partir de discussões e observações realizadas em pesquisa exploratória, o estudo questiona: na ambiência da Uber, com mecanismos de vigilância de dados em operação, de que modo os negros estão vivenciando a lógica social de ranqueamento? A cartografia foi a metodologia escolhida para o estudo, considerando a possibilidade de acompanhar processos e sua aposta na experimentação, com procedimentos flexíveis de produção de dados, bem como o seu caráter pesquisa-intervenção (Escóssia et al., 2009). Assim, o objetivo principal da pesquisa é investigar essa vivência com o intuito de ampliar a

análise da vigilância contemporânea com um recorte racializado e entre os objetivos específicos pretende-se romper com o silenciamento e a invisibilidade de perspectivas teóricas negras (Ribeiro, 2017). O arcabouço teórico do estudo será dividido em dois eixos: estudo das relações raciais e os estudos de vigilância. Percebemos, assim, que na era do *big data* a discriminação pode aparecer de forma oculta, pois as tecnologias performam uma falsa neutralidade, o que acelera e cria discriminações ainda mais profundas (Benjamin, 2019).

Palavras-chave
ranqueamento social, Uber, racismo, vigilância

"Dude, That Is So Black Mirror"

Jack, rating 3.7; Chester, rating 3.1; Ethan, rating 4.1. Who are these people? What do they have in common? They are characters of a society whose social interactions are mediated by a social network with a ranking system in which the members can rate each other from one to five stars. In this context, this trio is far close to an average of 4.5, which would segment them as premium users, the social elite of that ambience. If you watched the first episode of the third season of the British series *Black Mirror*[1], "Nosedive" (Wright, 2016), you may not have even paid attention to these characters. They are the three out of four Black characters who have outstanding ratings. In a critical tone, they occupy positions on the margins of a society woven throughout the episode with an air of dystopia and futurism.

For Uber drivers and users, this reality may sound somewhat familiar. Created in 2009 by Travis Kalanick and Garret Camp in California, the American private car transportation service company started to become popular in Brazil in 2014, with Rio de Janeiro being the first city to receive the service, followed by São Paulo and Belo Horizonte ("Serviço de caronas remuneradas Uber inicia operações no Brasil", 2014). Currently, Uber is present in more than 60 countries and more than 900 cities, with the United States and Brazil being the countries with the most cities served by it (Ghedin, 2019).

The initial proposal of the company was to offer transportation in luxury cars — performing the same function of taxis; it was boosted with the mediation of the service request application, which contributed to the project becoming one of the pioneers of the category named as e-hailing. E-hailing is the possibility to request a service through an electronic device, such as a smartphone or tablet (FutureBridge, 2020). Among its distinguishing features are the possibility of electronic payment, real-time location using a geolocation tool and the low cost of the service, considering that its maintenance is lower. In the context of Uber, the service request platform is an application, in which, at the end of the ride, both the passenger and the driver rate each other from one to five stars.

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[1] Created by screenwriter Charlie Brooker, *Black Mirror* was launched in 2011, in the United Kingdom, and broadcasted on Channel 4. Four years later, the streaming service Netflix bought the series, which became popular all over the world with a sci-fi plot built in a tone of dystopia, with emphasis on the interaction between humans and technologies. The series has episodes with independent narratives, as well as cast and characters (Plunkett, 2015).

"What is your Uber score?" In the week I watched the episode "Nosedive", I found this question in an article that was circulating on the social network Facebook, in 2017. Here, first-person positioning is necessary to explain the motivational triggers of this research. At the time, the rating given to drivers was highlighted at the end of the ride, but most users were unaware that they were also rated by drivers. It took a long step-by-step procedure within Uber's application in order to access the passenger rating. When checking my rating, I was surprised by my 4.85 score and questioned what criteria the drivers used for this assessment. So, at the suggestion of my then master's advisor Robson Braga, we decided to study the mechanisms of immediate surveillance and punishment within a logic of daily surveillance, which resulted in a first mapping of this experience, systematized and described in the article "Meeoo, isso é muito Black Mirror: A nota da Uber como punição do comportamento social na sociedade da vigilância distribuída" (Dude, That Is So Black Mirror: The Uber Ranking as Punishment for Social Behavior in the Distributed Surveillance Society; Braga & Evangelo, 2017).

In the first exploratory study, the racial issue did not appear in a decisive manner; however, as Almeida (2018) emphasizes, "contemporary society cannot be understood without the concepts of race and racism (...). Racism is always structural, that is, it is an element that integrates the economic and political organization of a society" (p. 15). In view of the interest in expanding the perception of this experience, the continuity of this research will deal with the reality that Black Brazilians experience daily in the city of Rio de Janeiro, and that will be explored from Uber's logic in order to create a magnifying glass that could be used to look at other Black experiences within the current context of surveillance.

That said, the main objective of this study is to continue mapping this experience with the intention of expanding the analysis of contemporary surveillance from a racialized perspective on the subject. Uber's experience from this perspective, which is mediated by the assessment system of the company, can stimulate reflection on contemporary monitoring and social control mechanisms and current surveillance models, and initiate a cartography of a society anchored in a ranking logic, one that appears when it is necessary to classify the collected data, as we will explore throughout the study.

Methodology: Cartography

How did cartography appear as a fruitful methodology? We understood as researchers Escóssia et al. (2009) that this methodology proposes to monitor processes and it bets on experimentation. "This is the meaning of cartography: path monitoring, production processes involvement, networks or rhizomes connection" (Escóssia et al., 2009, p. 10). Among the main references for systematizing the method are its founders Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari; concepts like networks and rhizomes already point to the roots of the methodology. Kastrup (2008) emphasizes that the method was created to study the production of subjectivity, that is, it says about its procedural dimension.

> Every cartography seeks to draw a certain rhizome, consisting of hetero-
> geneous vectors: economic, political, social, technological, linguistic, eco-
> logical, etc. According to Deleuze and Guatarri, cartography is one of the
> operating principles of the rhizome. The map is always a map of a rhizome,
> which is a kind of an open whole in constant motion, composed of mul-
> tiple heterogeneous lines, whose connections can be altered and broken
> (...). Making a map is then capturing lines, movements, a plane of forces.
> (Kastrup, 2008, p. 469)

It is worth mentioning that we are facing an unusual field. The analyzed field expe-
rience takes place within a private urban transportation, is mediated by an application,
involves a ranking practice, among other issues; thus, being an unconventional field
to be accessed. Part of the studied experience is constantly lived by drivers and, in the
case of users, the other part is sporadic. In this way, experimenting is necessary. By not
proposing specific procedures, cartography is revealed as a method compatible with
experiences that escape from traditional research elements. "Several procedures can be
adopted with regard to interview techniques, data analysis, and qualitative or quantita-
tive strategies" (Kastrup et al., 2014, p. 9).

Therefore, for the present study, three data production procedures were used:

- Literature review: focused on the theoretical fields of racial relations and surveillance studies.

- Participant observation in Uber rides: conversations with drivers and observation of personal expe-
  rience with Uber rides.

- Questionnaires for Uber drivers and Black users in the city of Rio de Janeiro: they were distributed
  in the first half of 2020, initially on the Facebook group "Uber - Motoristas (APP) RJ" (Uber - Drivers
  [APP] Rio de Janeiro), a group with more than 78.000 members. I have been following this group
  since 2017, and, in its beginning, it used to deal with issues about Uber experiences but has now
  become an advertisement space, with cars, insurance and leases sales and offers. In that group, I
  found a Whatsapp group called "A grande família Uber/99" (The big Uber/99 family), with 68 driv-
  ers, in which I also distributed the questionnaire. Users began to be called on personal networks
  and the distribution also occurred on Facebook groups engaged with racial issues, among them:
  "Afrocentricidade" (Afrocentricity) with 6,400 members in January 2021, "RAP – Redes de Afro
  Profissionais" (Afro Professional Networks) with 13,500 members in January 2021, and "Mulheres
  Negras" (Black Women) with 12,700 thousand members in January 2021.

We are before a combination of stages, which aims to look at the research object
from different angles, in its complexity and multiplicity. In this study, the analysis will be
presented together with the consolidation of data done in a descriptive way, which will be
distributed throughout the text in dialogue with the theoretical framework. The effort to
merge data, analysis and framework is based on the understanding that field practice is
not done in isolation; there is mutual interference between field and study practices and,
thus, the text accompanies the fluidity of both.

Those interacting with the research questionnaires were called collaborators, con-
sidering the role of collaboration with the mapping of the studied experience. Collabora-
tors is also the way Uber calls its drivers, in a new logic of working relationship. Their

identities will be preserved, being presented using numbers, the role in the experience, their rating, and how they declare themselves according to racial criteria. Here, I highlight that self-declaration was not requested in the questionnaire according to the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics) parameters; the question was asked in an open way so that interactants could define themselves according to the way they call their racial origin — an attempt to also observe how collaborators relate to racial discussion. In the first questionnaire distribution, we obtained 33 responses, of which 31 were users and two were drivers. Their experiences will be cited throughout the text according to the following identifications:

- Collaborator 1 (Uber user; 4.57 rating; self-declared Black woman);
- Collaborator 2 (Uber user; 4.72 rating; self-declared Black man);
- Collaborator 3 (Uber user; 4.79 rating; self-declared mixed race man);
- Collaborator 4 (Uber user, 3 rating; self-declared Black man);
- Collaborator 5 (Uber user; 4.75 rating; self-declared Black man);
- Collaborator 6 (Uber user; 4.77 rating; self-declared Black woman);
- Collaborator 7 (Uber user; 4.92 rating; self-declared Black woman);
- Collaborator 8 (Uber user; 4.81 rating; self-declared Black man);
- Collaborator 9 (Uber user; 4.89 rating; self-declared Black woman);
- Collaborator 10 (Uber user; 4.83 rating; self-declared Black woman);
- Collaborator 11 (Uber user; 4.96 rating, self-declared White woman);
- Collaborator 12 (Uber user; 4.89 rating; self-declared Black woman);
- Collaborator 13 (Uber user; 4.75 rating; self-declared Black woman);
- Collaborator 14 (Uber user; 5 rating; self-declared Black woman);
- Collaborator 15 (Uber user; 4.76 rating; self-declared Black woman);
- Collaborator 16 (Uber user; 4.77 rating; self-declared White woman);
- Collaborator 17 (Uber user; 0 rating; self-declared Black man);
- Collaborator 18 (Uber user; 4.93 rating; self-declared Black woman);
- Collaborator 19 (Uber user; 4.72 rating; self-declared Black woman);
- Collaborator 20 (Uber user; 4.87 rating; self-declared Black woman);
- Collaborator 21 (Uber user; 4 rating; self-declared mixed race man);
- Collaborator 22 (Uber user; 4.97 rating; self-declared Black woman);
- Collaborator 23 (Uber user; 4.92 rating; self-declared Black woman);
- Collaborator 24 (Uber user; 4.87 rating; self-declared Black woman);
- Collaborator 25 (Uber user; 4 rating; self-declared Black man);
- Collaborator 26 (Uber user; 4.9 rating; self-declared Black woman);
- Collaborator 27 (Uber user; 4.77 rating; self-declared Black man);
- Collaborator 28 (Uber user; 4.95 rating; self-declared Black man);
- Collaborator 29 (Uber user; disregarded rating; self-declared Black woman);

- Collaborator 30 (Uber user; 4.81 rating; self-declared Black man);
- Collaborator 31 (Uber user; 4.67 rating; self-declared Black woman);
- Collaborator 32 (Uber driver; 4.4 rating; self-declared Black woman);
- Collaborator 33 (Uber driver; 4 rating; self-declared Black man).

Surveillance Origins

> Drivers are often indifferent when they see a black woman waiting for an Uber ride; they often ignore the fact that it is me there waiting for the service and drive straight past me even though I have my cell phone in hand and have sent a message informing my exact localization. (Collaborator 6)

We are experiencing every day a more remarkable presence of digital communication technologies in daily practices. In this scenario, Uber consolidated itself with its e-hailing system in the private transportation segment, with a service request application, the possibility to pay with a credit card and a service evaluation system. The impact of the company on urban mobility in the more than 900 cities in which it is present is notable. With more affordable prices, it has made the use of private transportation services — traditionally made by taxis — more democratic; however, for historically subordinated groups, it may not be as democratic as that, as we can see from the introductory account.

Collaborator 6 is part of the 15 of the 33 Uber users and drivers (31 users and two drivers) who interacted with the questionnaire of the present research and who perceive the influence of their racial origin in the Uber experience in Rio de Janeiro. Her account opens the subject, and we observed that the user was often not recognized as a possible passenger by company drivers. She interprets the experiences with the eyes of gender and racial oppression present in society. With the report, we also observed that, for some Uber drivers, she is invisible. This type of situation is a clear reproduction of racism, insofar as she is not recognized as a possible consumer of the service due to her characteristics. But, how has racism been reproduced in a consumer experience mediated by communication technology?

In order to think about the issue, it is important to map the origin of the mechanisms that we are going to deal with in this study, such as ranking, segmenting, personalizing, punishing, and even excluding, which are part of the innovative logic of the service and experience of Uber drivers and users. These actions can be observed in digital environments based on surveillance models, which operate according to the interest of the institution that structures it, be it public or private.

In this way, we start from the analysis of surveillance practices made by Michel Foucault (1975/2014) regarding the society he calls "disciplinary". It is characterized by the continuous passage of people through confinement means: from family to school, to factories, and, in eventual cases, to hospitals and prisons (Deleuze, 2013). In this context, Bentham's panopticon appears as a symbolic architectural figure. "The principle is

known: on the periphery a ring construction; in the center, a tower (...). The panoptic device organizes space units that allow you to see without stopping and recognize immediately" (Foucault, 1975/2014, p. 194). It appears that this surveillance model is of the order of visibility and that it has an automatic power, as it is not possible to verify who is being observed and if it is actually happening. According to the philosopher, the model induces a conscious state of constant visibility.

But for what? In disciplinary society, situated in the 18th and 19th centuries and which reached its peak in the 20th century, order prevailed; for this, one of its practices was punishment, whose main purpose is to be normalizing. In Foucault's words, it "traces the limit that will define difference in relation to all others, the external limit of the abnormal" (Foucault, 1975/2014, p. 179). In this logic, the disciplinary penalty is directed to deviations from pre-established social rules. As practical examples, in school and in the army, micropenalities of time are commonplace, such as delays and absences. Punishments could be subtle, such as deprivation or even humiliation.

It is worth mentioning that one of the most important objects in his analysis of disciplinary society is prison, which in countries such as Brazil and the United States (country of origin of the platform that makes up the object of this study) mass incarcerates the Black population[2]. Prisons that were born between the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century mark the passage from torture punishment to incarceration.

In a revisit to Foucault's analysis, Gilles Deleuze (2013) states that disciplinary societies collapsed after the Second World War, considering the crises in the confinement means analyzed by Foucault. Disciplinary societies have been replaced by control societies, in which closed systems are overcome by ultra-fast forms of outdoor control.

> In disciplinary societies one was always starting again (from school to the
> barracks, from the barracks to the factory), while in societies of control one
> is never finished with anything, the corporation, the educational system,
> the armed services being metastable states coexisting in one and the same
> modulation. (Deleuze, 2013, p. 226)

It is important to highlight here that Foucault's social analysis of disciplinary power, to which mechanisms of surveillance and punishment have been devoted in modern times, leads us to revisit it in a non-transitory and not completely overcome way. By looking at the evaluation system mechanism of Uber, for example, it is possible to make a clear analogy to the docilization of disciplinary society and also the logic of the ultra-fast forms of outdoor surveillance of the "society of control". The ratings given to drivers and

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[2] "The prison, as we understand it today, emerges as a correction space; however, it distorts more than it corrects. In fact, we could ask ourselves: has it ever corrected? And corrected for what? The remnants of torture, as a penalty, remain; although, according to tradition, deprivation of liberty is what would be the punitive focus. This process is entangled as follows: 64% of the prison population is black (Infopen, 2016), while this group makes up 53% of the Brazilian population (IBGE, 2014). In other words, two out of three prisoners in Brazil are black" (Borges, 2019, p. 19).

users are nothing more than a way to constantly keep track of good behavior; otherwise, you can be excluded from the platform usage, which for drivers can mean losing their means of sustenance and for users the access to the service.

Big Data Surveillance: The Light Under Democratic Aspects

> For now, know that Every borders cross, every purchase you make, every call you dial, every cellphone tower you pass, friend you keep, site you visit and subject line you type is in the hands of a system whose reach is unlimited, but whose safeguards are not.
>
> Edward Snowden to Laura Poitras, 2013 (Lyon, 2015, p. 1)

In June 2013, the world had access to detailed information on mass surveillance mechanisms. There is a consensus among contemporary researchers that Edward Snowden's revelations are another watershed to think about. As Bruno (2013) recalls, the documents revealed the operation of the PRISM program. This allowed the American Security Agency to have access to servers of large internet companies, being able to mass monitor citizens (such as search history, emails, photos exchange, and videos, for example), as well as espionage practices by the American government, in which Brazil was also a target (Bruno, 2013). Lyon explains that Snowden's revelations were very significant, as they exposed the conditions of the 21st century surveillance specific type, and also stimulated fundamental questions about the legal, ethical and democratic limits of it.

> Under the visible flow of exchanges and social conversations, an immense, distributed and versatile system of tracking and categorizing personal data is constituted, which in turn feeds advertising strategies, security, development of services and applications, inside and outside these platforms. To cross this process, companies and governments specialize themselves in monitoring and collecting traces generated by users' Internet browsing, building databases and profile composition techniques that guide commercial, political, insurance, and administrative actions. (Bruno, 2013, p. 9)

Today we are, therefore, in the context of big data[3]. For Fernando Amaral (2016), big data is not just a type of mechanism that generates a gigantic volume of data, but a social and cultural change that shapes a new stage of the industrial revolution. "The size of the social, cultural and business impact is still uncertain, but we can already say that it will change the world as we know it today" (Amaral, 2016, p. 9). Shoshana Zuboff (2018) believes that big data configures a new logic of accumulation, which she calls

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[3] "Big data is the phenomenon in which data is produced in various formats and stored by a large number of devices and equipment (...). The cheapness, miniaturization, and increased processing capacity lead to the dissemination of equipment, devices and processes capable of producing and storing data, virtualization, cloud computing, and the internet. Thus, we have Big Data"(Amaral, 2016, p. 7).

"surveillance capitalism" (p. 18), and that would be a new model of information capitalism whose main characteristic is to predict and change human behavior in order to produce revenue and control the market. Also looking at this scenario, Lyon (2015) names the current moment as "big data surveillance" (p. 76).

And what are the possible interests of a company such as Uber to mine user data in more than 66 countries, including 900 cities? Mahmoudi et al. (2016) created a metaphor to explain the context of big data, which helps us to think about how companies follow the same colonizer-colony logic, seeking to acquire resources through data in order to generate economic value for it. In this scenario, big data is a commodity and there is an asymmetrical relationship of power in which people are daily stripped of all the data they produce on the most diverse platforms. Researchers name as "data colonialism" (Mahmoudi et al., 2016, p. 4) the process of capitalist accumulation through expropriation and colonization, which turns everyday life into goods in a way never seen before.

For Mahmoudi et al. (2016), this new way of generating data has fallen into normality, in an asymmetry in which large technology companies colonize life in exchange for a quantification of their users' daily lives, providing pleasant experiences and having their lives ordered by algorithms. They cite, as an example, restaurants' offers based on geolocation and sexual partners on dating apps. Big data thus works in a colonial logic that, instead of opening markets, becomes subject to them (Mahmoudi et al., 2016).

Resuming Snowden's revelations to *The Guardian*, for Lyon (2015), in addition to the analyst showing the world that we are immersed in a scenario of global mass surveillance, also through them, it was possible to analyze how surveillance decisively affects minorities. An example explored by the Canadian sociologist is the story of Faisal Gill, an American lawyer who served in the navy and was a senior member of the Department of Homeland Security in the George W. Bush administration. The American Security Agency secretly monitored his emails within the terrorist and foreign spy segmentation. Why did an American patriot, republican, lawyer, with children in Catholic schools, become a monitored target of the American government? Because he was a Muslim, explains Lyon. This became the reality for several Americans after the September 11 attacks in the United States, who lost their right to privacy (Lyon, 2015, p. 91).

Based on Lyon's observation that minorities would also have their experience curtailed in the context of contemporary surveillance, the research seeks an analysis focused on studies of race relations.

A Racialized Analysis of Contemporary Surveillance

> The experiences of these groups, socially located in a hierarchical and non-humanized way, means that intellectual productions, knowledge and voices are treated in an equally subordinate manner, in addition to social conditions keeping them in a structurally silenced place. This in no way means

> that these groups do not create tools to face these institutional silences; on
> the contrary, there are various forms of political, cultural and intellectual
> organization. The point is that these social conditions hinder the visibility
> and legitimacy of these productions. A simple question that helps us to
> reflect is: how many black authors and readers, who attended college, read
> or had access to graduation? How many black teachers did they have? How
> many black journalists, of both sexes, are there in the main newsrooms of
> the country or even in the so-called alternative media? (Ribeiro, 2017, p. 65)

Among the questionnaire interactants in the present study, 54.5% did not perceive the influence of racial origin in the Uber experience and consequently affirm that they did not experience any situation that they consider to be racist. In the words of collaborator 12, "you left me inculcated. I had never stopped to think about it. Any driver declining a ride or assessing me based on my color. In general, apparently, I had no problems of this nature".

Yet, when analyzing the response of other research interactants, it is clear that it is urgent to think of racism as a structure, considering the normalization of reported episodes. "Despite not having suffered from racist acts, I realize that, with black people, drivers are less friendly, and for that reason, I rate them with two stars or less", said collaborator 13. Collaborator 19 also stated that she had never been in a racist situation; however, she says: "I am always asked if my disembarking point is in the slums or downtown".

Being treated less cordially and linking someone's characteristics to specific territories are racist experiences. It is clear that there is an urgent need to expand the theoretical framework for the investigation of the Black experience at Uber, because, until we break Black silencing, symbolic violence will not be faced socially. Foucault's founding analysis of surveillance studies does not explore the racial perspective. As it has already been pointed out, it cannot be ignored any more, since not racializing any social experience is making racist acts invisible and/or imperceptible, even for Black people, allowing their normalization.

> Race is one of the raw materials with which difference and surplus are produced,
> that is, a kind of life that can be wasted or spent without reserve. It matters little
> that it does not exist as such, and not only because of the extraordinary genetic
> homogeneity of human beings. It continues to produce mutilation effects, because,
> originally, it is and will always be that in whose name censorship operates within so-
> ciety, warlike relations are established, colonial relations are regulated, and people
> — whose lives and presence are considered symptoms of a limit condition and
> whose belonging is contested because they come, in the current classifications,
> from surplus — are distributed and imprisoned. (Mbembe, 2013/2018, p. 73)

This production of difference highlighted by Mbembe (2013/2018), a legacy of the colonial period, is the basis for racism, which, for Kilomba (2008/2019), is the

combination of prejudice and power. She classifies the practice of oppression in three forms of dynamics: structural racism, institutional racism, and everyday racism. The first is characterized by the exclusion of Black people from social and political structures, that is, dominant ones, which privilege White people. Institutional racism operates within the scope of educational agendas, the labor market and criminal justice — in which there is clearly an unequal treatment — and, finally, daily racism, characterized by a focus on vocabulary, speeches, images, gestures, actions, and looks.

> The term "daily" refers to the fact that these experiences are not one-off. Daily racism is not a "single attack" or a "discrete event", but rather a "constellation of life experiences", a "constant exposure to danger", a "continuous pattern of abuse" that is repeated over and over again throughout someone's biography – on the bus, at the supermarket, at a party, at dinner, in the family. (Kilomba, 2008/2019, p. 80)

In the context of the present object of study, it is possible to perceive the combination of racist dynamics, which begins at a structural level, passes through the institution and reaches the tip of everyday experience. On Uber's official website, the company presents itself in the "About Us" section with the following phrase: "we ignite opportunity by setting the world in motion. When people can move, anything is possible. Opportunities arise, doors are opened and dreams come true" (Uber, n.d., "Criamos Oportunidades ao Colocar" section). Collaborator 19 reported in the questionnaire that, thanks to the company's service, she was able to develop dance works, which, due to the lack of night transportation previously, she was unable to do. Collaborator 7 makes also a positive assessment of the application usage:

> my experiences were generally good, as the application offers a cheaper price, and the driver is usually a professional. Anyway, I see Uber as an efficient transportation alternative, safer and cheaper than a taxi, which improves the life of workers and students.

Considered as innovative in the area of urban mobility, Uber's service has reduced the cost of private transportation, which used to have taxis as its protagonists, aiming to be more democratic and plural. "Our goal is to create an inclusive workplace that represents the diversity of the cities we serve. We want people to be themselves and the authenticity of each one to be a source of pride", it continues in its presentation (Uber, n.d., "Compromisso com a Diversidade" section).

Through studies that cross technologies and race, Simone Browne (2015) and Ruha Benjamin (2019) help to think how the diversity policy of a technology company needs to be connected with an entire structural review of society and the company itself; and, in this context, understanding surveillance practices also from a racial perspective is urgent.

After mapping different analyses, which consider and disregard the classic architectural model of the panoptic in surveillance studies, Browne (2015) presents the roots

of Black body monitoring and control, in her words, to demonstrate that surveillance is not something new for the group and that this perspective was neglected in classical analyses. The notorious example comes from the colonial period, in which she points to the architecture of slave ships as a structural model of surveillance, as opposed to the panopticon. In them, Black bodies were huddled in the cellars, with no light, hygiene or movement, as they were attached to chains. Control affected the body; there, disease, hunger, thirst, and death circulated. The author classifies slave ships as a contemporary antecedent of surveillance technologies, whose characteristic of violence regulated Black bodies.

The image of the British slave vessel, which became publicly known only in the 18th century and which showed the inhumanity of how enslaved people were transported, is the architectural model of how discipline was combined with racial surveillance in the slave system. In it, men and women were categorized and, as we can see, the mechanism of categorizing seems central to racial surveillance. Men, women and children were transported in a segregated manner, the provision of accommodation for the enslaved produced gender subjectivities. The men were shackled around the ankles, two by two, with the right leg of one chained to the left leg of another, and also with the hands shackled in the same way. In turn, women and children were not shackled, but were transported close to the captains' cabins. The form of transportation showed that the only feared insurrections were the masculine ones.

When considering the two models of surveillance, we were able to establish a major difference when we racialize the debate from Browne's (2015) reinterpretation about the architectural model of surveillance. While the Foucaultian panopticon analyzes how surveillance mechanisms create docile bodies through a strategy of constant sensation of visibility, the Canadian researcher demonstrates how the slave ships preceding prisons are an exemplary symbol of racial surveillance and how they created the subjectivity of dehumanized Black bodies. With Browne (2015), we were able to perceive a vigilance that already creates categorization, by segregating what they considered violent bodies, in the figure of Black men imprisoned by chains, and of women, close to White men, with the maintenance of not only physical but also symbolic violence.

In this sense, the perspective of the drivers who answered the questionnaire is central to understanding why the experience studied is much closer to the model defended by Browne (2015) rather than to the Foucaultian one. In relation to Uber's experience, only two collaborators reveal how race and gender are crossed. Collaborator 33 affirms that many users hid their bags when they got into the car and showed concern about arriving at their final destination. We clearly see the stereotype of danger, in which the skin color of the male driver is criminalized; the construction of the violent Black man is perceived symbolically from the chains on the slave ships. As with the driver, the experience is also lived by users. Collaborator 21 reported: "I have felt embarrassed a few times before, when I had to take an Uber at night and the driver [started to] comment on thefts/robberies as soon as I got in".

In turn, collaborator 32 sees racism in the assessment and interaction with men:

> a white man thought that because I was a black woman and a driver, I could also provide sexual services; he made several insinuations during the ride, embarrassing and harassing me. I didn't leave him in the middle of the road because it was a good ride; I needed the money that day because the requests for the service were really low.

While the Black male body is criminalized, the Black female body is objectified. The collaborator also affirms that her rating drops with rides for White people, who make comments about her being a woman driving. Here, it is possible to perceive the intersection of sexism and racism. Akotirene (2019) points out Kimberlé Crenshaw as the founder of the term "intersectionality" to talk about the consequences of the interaction of three or more axes of oppression and/or subordination, such as racism, patriarchy, and class oppression.

Ruha Benjamin (2019) states that the surveillance feeling is not new in her life and its origin comes long before the big data scenario. She reports that, as a Black woman, living in the suburbs of Los Angeles, most of her childhood memories involve the police: when she came back from school and saw the policemen watching her and her friends in the rearview mirror, seeing schoolmates being searched, and even the sound of police helicopters passing so close to the roof of her house that it was impossible to ignore the noise. Some territories in the city of Rio de Janeiro, as well as Benjamin's neighborhood, are symbolically excluded from circulation according to some reports by the collaborators. Collaborator 17 shared the maximum punishment experience of the application. He was expelled from using the platform when requesting a ride to Morro do São Carlos, in Estácio neighborhood. Resident of Copacabana neighborhood, he affirms that during Carnival he was on a ride with his girlfriend, also Black, and after about a minute, as soon as the driver noticed where they were going, he expelled them from the car and said that Uber would notify the reason for that situation.

> When the driver saw my destination and two black people in the car, he stopped and told us to get off right there, without explaining the reason. He said that the next day Uber would inform me. I had a 4.8 rating and I was banned from Uber that Carnival, in a 0.5km ride, in which I remained a minute inside the car. I was in Largo da Prainha going to Morro do São Carlos in Estácio, when the Uber driver noticed the destination, stopped the car and told us to get off, claiming to Uber sexual activity in less than a minute in the car. The next day, I had my account permanently disabled from the app. According to Uber, there was an act of a sexual nature, that in a 0.5km ride lasting one minute! (Collaborator 17)

Uber could easily analyze if an act of a sexual nature would possibly happen or not in a 0.5 km ride; however, the collaborator suffered the maximum punishment of the application based on the prejudiced analysis of the company's driver, in which territory and ethnicity cross. The episode illustrates Benjamin's (2019) concept, which will be essential for the research: "the new Jim code".

> I grew up with a keen of being watched. Family, friends, and neighbors —
> all of us caught up in a carceral web, in which Other people's safety and
> freedom are predicated on our containment. Now, in the age of big data,
> many of us continue to be monitored and measured, but without the au-
> dible rumble of helicopters to which we can point. This doesn't mean we no
> longer feel what it's like to be a problem. We do. (Benjamin, 2019, preface)

Just as the study Benjamin (2019) explores in the context of everyday activities, how looking for a job, in the origin of names or even when shopping, technologies, seen as objective and scientific, can reinforce racism and create other forms of iniquity. Through the concept of new Jim code, she points out that, in the era of big data, discrimination can, beyond all, appear in a hidden way, as these technologies, in her view, perform a false neutrality that also accelerates and deepens discrimination. "I call it the New Jim Code: the use of new technologies that reflect and reproduce existing inequalities, but which are promoted and perceived as more objective or progressive than the discriminatory system of an earlier era" (Benjamin, 2019, p. 5).

The researcher identifies that coding based on racial origin was born as a tool for social control. She reports that, in an audit of the California gang database, Blacks and Latinos are 87% of those listed, some of them babies under the age of 1, described as individuals who could be part of a gang. How can a database state the criminal potential of a baby? Benjamin (2019) replies that the predictability of these technologies is at the crossroads of territory and race that encodes the name of someone who can offer social risk. She denounces that, once the name is included in similar databases, the person is exposed to more surveillance and to the risk of losing more rights.

And here, with the dialogue between Browne's reinterpretation (2015) about the Foucaltian panopticon and Benjamin's (2019) analysis, the question arises again: what is the racial origin of the people who occupy the prisons studied by Foucault in countries such as Brazil and the United States? Benjamin (2019) explains that she designed the new Jim code inspired by Michele Alexander's *The New Jim Crow*. The book shows how the American prison system produces a caste system by arresting people based on a "color blind ideology", labeling stigmatized groups as criminals in a state legalized manner. The Jim Crow laws, which were in effect in some southern American states, have been known to impose racial segregation between the late 19th century and the mid-20th century and show how racism was institutionalized in the United States. Benjamin (2019) is emphatic in stating that, today, "criminal" is the code for blackness and also for the poor, immigrant, disposable, and undesirable individuals (Benjamin, 2019, p. 9).

Final Considerations

From the reports shared by the interactants of this study, it is possible to perceive that the technologies present in our daily lives have a forged concept of neutrality and mediate environments and new modes of racial oppression, as demonstrated by the concept of Benjamin (2019), the new Jim code. Thus, reviewing how surveillance practices emerge in the Foucaultian context of modernity, in the logic of the panopticon, made us realize loopholes in the racial perspective and, therefore, that it is necessary to broaden the debate to reach a more democratic social vision.

In this sense, Browne (2015) takes us to the architectural model of slave ships and shows how surveillance has historically affected Black bodies, as well as created specific subjectivities for men and women who were enslaved in the colonial period. This leads us to understand that oppressions overlap and need to be looked at intersectionally, instigating us to seek theoretical contributions from Black thinkers, such as Djamila Ribeiro, Grada Kilomba, Silvio Almeida, Ruja Benjamin, and Simone Browne.

The remains of the Brazilian colonial period still appear in the logic of daily racism; so, it is essential to see through a critical eye for an everyday experience cut by raciality in the context of contemporary surveillance. In this sense, the study shows how the social mediation of new technologies creates new outlines for the surveillance experience and also of racism; and Uber is an example to think about this scenario, as it uses the big data produced by its users and drivers to create a consumption experience that hierarchizes, differentiates, segments, and excludes.

If surveillance practices were socially structured with a central disciplinary objective, it is possible to see how the capital appropriates them for commercial purposes. And, in the context of the capital, racial minorities suffer daily violence and, as we have seen, from some reports, they are often not perceived by the oppressed themselves.

Hence, this analysis intends to move towards mapping the experience and raising the question: how can companies contribute to a anti-racist experience? Based on the case of Uber's experience from a racial perspective, it is possible to problematize how communication technologies reinforce and create new experiences of racism and, consequently, think of strategies for democratic experiences.

Translation: Nilen Cohen

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