

race after technology

race after technology is a critical concept that explores how race and technology intersect, influencing society, culture, and innovation. This article delves into the historical and contemporary relationships between racial dynamics and technological advancements, highlighting the impact of systemic biases embedded in technological development. It examines the ways technology can both perpetuate and challenge racial inequalities, focusing on areas such as algorithmic bias, surveillance, and access to digital resources. Understanding this complex interaction is essential for developing equitable technology policies and fostering inclusive innovation. The discussion further addresses the implications of race in emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence and data science, emphasizing the need for ethical frameworks. This article provides an in-depth analysis of the race after technology phenomenon, its societal consequences, and potential pathways toward more just technological futures. The following sections outline key themes and considerations to guide this exploration.

- The Historical Context of Race and Technology
- Algorithmic Bias and Racial Disparities
- Surveillance Technologies and Racial Profiling
- Access to Technology and the Digital Divide
- Emerging Technologies and Racial Equity

The Historical Context of Race and Technology

The relationship between race and technology has deep historical roots that reflect broader social and political power structures. Throughout history, technological innovations have often been influenced by prevailing racial ideologies, shaping who benefits from advancements and who is marginalized. From the industrial revolution to the digital age, technology has played a role in both reinforcing and challenging racial hierarchies. The development and deployment of technologies were frequently aligned with colonial and segregationist policies, embedding racial biases in the systems themselves. Understanding this historical context is crucial for analyzing contemporary issues related to race after technology and recognizing patterns that persist in modern technological landscapes.

Technological Development in the Era of Segregation

During periods of overt racial segregation, technology often served to maintain discriminatory practices. For example, innovations in transportation, housing, and communication were designed or utilized in ways that perpetuated racial segregation and exclusion. Technologies such as redlining algorithms and racially biased policing tools have historic antecedents in these earlier systems. This era demonstrated how technology could be manipulated to uphold systemic racism, influencing economic

opportunities and social mobility for marginalized communities.

The Role of Technology in Civil Rights Movements

Conversely, technology has also been instrumental in advancing racial justice. The civil rights movements of the 20th century leveraged emerging communication technologies, such as television and radio, to raise awareness and mobilize support. These technologies helped document racial injustices and expand the reach of activist messages, demonstrating technology's potential as a tool for empowerment and social change within the framework of race after technology.

Algorithmic Bias and Racial Disparities

Algorithmic bias represents one of the most significant contemporary challenges at the intersection of race and technology. Algorithms, which underpin many digital systems, can inadvertently perpetuate racial disparities if trained on biased data or designed without awareness of social contexts. This phenomenon has profound implications for areas such as criminal justice, hiring, lending, and healthcare, where algorithmic decisions affect life outcomes. Addressing algorithmic bias is essential to mitigating racial inequalities in the digital era and ensuring that technology serves all communities equitably.

Sources of Algorithmic Bias

Algorithmic bias often arises from several sources including:

- Biased training data that reflect historical inequalities or discriminatory practices.
- Flawed assumptions embedded in algorithm design or development processes.
- Lack of diversity among technology creators and decision-makers.
- Insufficient testing and validation of algorithms across diverse populations.

Recognizing these sources is the first step toward creating fairer algorithms that do not exacerbate racial disparities.

Examples of Racial Disparities in Algorithmic Decision-Making

Instances of racial bias in algorithms have been documented in various sectors:

- Facial recognition systems showing higher error rates for people of color.

- Predictive policing tools disproportionately targeting minority neighborhoods.
- Hiring algorithms screening out candidates from underrepresented racial groups.
- Credit scoring models disadvantaging applicants from marginalized communities.

These examples illustrate the need for rigorous oversight and inclusive design practices to combat bias.

Surveillance Technologies and Racial Profiling

Surveillance technologies have increasingly been linked to racial profiling, raising concerns about privacy, civil liberties, and systemic discrimination. The deployment of advanced surveillance tools often disproportionately impacts racial minorities, reinforcing patterns of over-policing and social control. The intersection of race after technology is evident in how these tools are used, who is targeted, and the broader social implications of surveillance on marginalized communities.

Facial Recognition and Its Impact on Communities of Color

Facial recognition technology has been criticized for its higher false positive rates among Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC). This inaccuracy can lead to wrongful arrests and increased scrutiny, exacerbating existing inequalities in law enforcement practices. The technology's deployment without adequate regulation raises ethical questions about consent, transparency, and accountability.

Mass Surveillance and Racialized Social Control

Mass surveillance programs often disproportionately monitor and target minority populations under the guise of security and crime prevention. This practice contributes to a climate of fear and mistrust, undermining community relationships with law enforcement and perpetuating systemic racial injustices. The implications of mass surveillance highlight the crucial need to evaluate technology policies through a racial equity lens.

Access to Technology and the Digital Divide

Access to technology remains unevenly distributed across racial and socioeconomic lines, contributing to a persistent digital divide. This divide affects educational opportunities, economic participation, healthcare access, and civic engagement. In the context of race after technology, addressing disparities in access is critical for ensuring that technological advancements benefit all segments of society rather than reinforcing existing inequalities.

Factors Contributing to the Digital Divide

The digital divide is influenced by multiple factors:

- Economic barriers limiting the affordability of devices and internet connectivity.
- Geographic disparities, with rural and underserved urban communities lacking infrastructure.
- Educational inequalities affecting digital literacy and technology skills.
- Systemic marginalization that restricts access to technology resources.

Understanding these factors is essential for developing comprehensive strategies to bridge the divide.

Efforts to Promote Digital Inclusion

Various initiatives aim to close the digital gap, including public-private partnerships, community technology centers, and policy reforms focused on expanding broadband access. These efforts recognize the importance of equitable technology access in empowering marginalized racial groups and fostering social inclusion. Ongoing investment and innovation are necessary to sustain progress in digital equity.

Emerging Technologies and Racial Equity

Emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, and big data analytics offer potential benefits but also pose risks related to race and equity. The race after technology framework calls for proactive engagement with ethical considerations to ensure that these innovations do not replicate or deepen racial disparities. Incorporating diverse perspectives and rigorous ethical standards is vital for guiding the responsible development and deployment of emerging technologies.

AI Ethics and Inclusive Innovation

AI ethics emphasizes transparency, fairness, and accountability in technology design. Inclusive innovation requires the participation of diverse stakeholders, including racial minorities, in the creation and governance of new technologies. This approach helps identify potential biases early and fosters equitable outcomes.

Policy and Regulatory Approaches

Governments and institutions are increasingly considering policy frameworks that address the intersection of race and technology. These include regulations to prevent algorithmic discrimination, standards for data privacy, and mandates for diversity in tech development teams. Effective policies can mitigate risks and promote technology as a tool for social

justice.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the main focus of the book 'Race After Technology'?

The book 'Race After Technology' by Ruha Benjamin focuses on how technology can perpetuate racial biases and inequalities, arguing that technological systems often reinforce existing social hierarchies rather than eliminating them.

How does 'Race After Technology' explain the relationship between race and algorithms?

'Race After Technology' explains that algorithms are not neutral; they often encode racial biases present in their design and data, leading to discriminatory outcomes in areas like policing, hiring, and lending.

What examples does 'Race After Technology' provide to illustrate racial bias in technology?

The book provides examples such as facial recognition systems misidentifying people of color, predictive policing tools targeting minority communities, and hiring algorithms that disadvantage marginalized groups.

How can we address the issues of racial bias in technology according to 'Race After Technology'?

'Race After Technology' advocates for integrating social justice principles into the design and deployment of technology, promoting accountability, transparency, and inclusive participation to mitigate racial biases.

What role does the concept of 'the New Jim Code' play in 'Race After Technology'?

Ruha Benjamin introduces the concept of 'the New Jim Code' to describe how discriminatory social structures are encoded into technological systems, leading to new forms of racial discrimination that appear objective and technical.

Why is it important to consider race when developing technological systems, based on insights from 'Race After Technology'?

Considering race is crucial because ignoring it allows existing racial inequalities to be embedded and amplified in technological systems, perpetuating injustice and limiting equitable access to technology's benefits.

How has 'Race After Technology' influenced discussions on ethics in AI and machine learning?

The book has significantly influenced discussions by highlighting the need for ethical frameworks that address racial justice, encouraging developers and policymakers to critically examine biases and power dynamics in AI and machine learning.

Additional Resources

1. *Race After Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code* by Ruha Benjamin

This foundational text explores how emerging technologies can perpetuate racial biases and systemic inequalities under the guise of neutrality. Ruha Benjamin introduces the concept of the "New Jim Code," where racial discrimination is embedded in algorithms and digital systems. The book calls for an abolitionist framework to redesign technology in ways that promote social justice and equity.

2. *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism* by Safiya Umoja Noble

Noble investigates how search engine algorithms, particularly Google, reproduce racist and sexist biases. She reveals how these technologies reflect and amplify societal prejudices, especially against marginalized communities. The book challenges the notion of technological objectivity and urges for accountability in algorithm design.

3. *Technicolor: Race, Technology, and Everyday Life* by Alondra Nelson

This book examines the intersection of race and technology in everyday contexts, from digital media to biotechnology. Nelson discusses how race shapes technological development and usage, influencing identity and social dynamics. The work highlights the cultural and political implications of racialized technology.

4. *Black Software: The Internet & Racial Justice, from the AfroNet to Black Lives Matter* by Charlton D. McIlwain

McIlwain traces the history of Black involvement in the development of the internet and digital activism. The book shows how Black communities have used technology to resist oppression and advocate for racial justice. It highlights the ongoing struggle to harness digital tools for empowerment.

5. *Race in Cyberspace* edited by Beth E. Kolko, Lisa Nakamura, and Gilbert B. Rodman

This anthology presents diverse perspectives on how race is constructed and contested in online spaces. Contributors analyze social media, gaming, and virtual environments to uncover racial dynamics and digital inequalities. The collection emphasizes the importance of understanding race in the digital age.

6. *Automating Inequality: How High-Tech Tools Profile, Police, and Punish the Poor* by Virginia Eubanks

Eubanks explores how automated systems in social services reinforce economic and racial disparities. The book documents the impact of data-driven technologies on marginalized populations, often leading to increased surveillance and exclusion. It critiques the myth of technological neutrality and calls for more humane policy approaches.

7. *Data and Goliath: The Hidden Battles to Collect Your Data and Control Your World* by Bruce Schneier

While broadly about data privacy, Schneier addresses how surveillance technologies disproportionately affect racial minorities. The book explains the power dynamics behind data collection and the implications for civil rights. It encourages readers to consider the intersection of technology, privacy, and social justice.

8. *Race and Technology: A Reader* edited by Lisa Nakamura and Peter A. Chow-White

This comprehensive reader compiles key essays on the relationship between race and various technological forms. Topics include digital culture, cyberactivism, and racial representation in tech industries. The collection is essential for understanding how racial meanings are produced and contested through technology.

9. *Surveillance, Race, and Technology: Policing and Power in the Digital Age* by Simone Browne

Browne investigates the role of surveillance technologies in reinforcing racial hierarchies and state control. The book connects historical practices of racial surveillance to contemporary digital monitoring. It offers critical insight into the intersections of race, technology, and power structures.

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more complicated concepts. It is used for image recognition, speech recognition, natural language processing, video game and board game programs, and even medical diagnosis. #3 The development of Beauty AI is just an example of how race is a form of technology. It extends beyond just attractiveness and into questions of health, intelligence, criminality, employment, and many other fields. #4 Racist robots represent a much broader process: social bias embedded in technical artifacts, the allure of objectivity without public accountability.

race after technology: *Not My Type* Apryl Williams, 2024-02-06 In the world of online dating, race-based discrimination is not only tolerated, but encouraged as part of a pervasive belief that it is simply a neutral, personal choice about one's romantic partner. Indeed, it is so much a part of our inherited wisdom about dating and romance that it actually directs the algorithmic infrastructures of most major online dating platforms, such that they openly reproduce racist and sexist hierarchies. In *Not My Type: Automating Sexual Racism in Online Dating*, Apryl Williams presents a socio-technical exploration of dating platforms' algorithms, their lack of transparency, the legal and ethical discourse in these companies' community guidelines, and accounts from individual users in order to argue that sexual racism is a central feature of today's online dating culture. She discusses this reality in the context of facial recognition and sorting software as well as user experiences, drawing parallels to the long history of eugenics and banned interracial partnerships. Ultimately, Williams calls for, both a reconceptualization of the technology and policies that govern dating agencies, and also a reexamination of sociocultural beliefs about attraction, beauty, and desirability.

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the confluence of digital data and rapid developments in biotechnology. This collection aims to broaden the definition of the digital divide in order to convey a more nuanced understanding of access, usage, meaning, participation, and production of digital media technology in light of racial inequality. Contributors: danah boyd, Peter Chow-White, Wendy Chun, Sasha Costanza-Chock, Troy Duster, Anna Everett, Rayvon Fouché, Alexander Galloway, Oscar Gandy, Eszter Hargittai, Jeong Won Hwang, Curtis Marez, Tara McPherson, Alondra Nelson, Christian Sandvig, Ernest Wilson

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fortify Zionist settler-colonialism. Through anti-Palestinian censorship and erasure often justified by so-called “terms of service” or “community standards” violations, these Big Tech companies provide the Israeli occupation forces with AI technology and metadata used to streamline genocidal colonial violence against Palestinians. Through original analysis and careful documentation, Omar Zahzah, Assistant Professor of Arab, Muslim, Ethnicities and Diasporas (AMED) Studies at San Francisco State University, traces the timeline from the Sheikh Jarrah uprisings of 2021 to the beginning of October 2023 to the most current developments to explain social media’s role in advancing and suppressing Palestinian narratives. This revealing and alarming book explores what makes anti-colonial counter-narratives across digital platforms so urgent, and what resistance can and must mean in light of the consolidation of Big Tech with Israeli colonialism and genocide.

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the 1948 Hostage Case in which a US military tribunal in Nuremberg acquitted General Lothar Rendulic of devastating Northern Norway on account of his honest factual error. The volume critically reappraises the law and facts underlying his trial, the no second-guessing rule in customary international humanitarian law (IHL) that is named after the general himself, and the assessment of modern battlefield decisions. Using recently discovered documents, this volume casts major doubts on Rendulic's claim that he considered the region's total devastation and the forcible evacuation of all of its inhabitants imperatively demanded by military necessity at the time. This book's analysis of court records reveals how the tribunal failed to examine relevant facts or explain the Rendulic Rule's legal origin. This anthology shows that, despite the Hostage Case's ambiguity and occasional suggestions to the contrary, objective reasonableness forms part of the reasonable commander test under IHL and the mistake of fact defence under international criminal law (ICL) to which the rule has given rise. This collection also identifies modern warfare's characteristics—human judgment, de-empathetic battlespace, and institutional bias—that may make it problematic to deem some errors both honest and reasonable. The Rendulic Rule embodies an otherwise firmly established admonition against judging contentious battlefield decisions with hindsight. Nevertheless, it was born of a factually ill-suited case and continues to raise significant legal as well as ethical challenges today. The most comprehensive study of the Rendulic Rule ever to appear in English, this multi-disciplinary anthology will appeal to researchers and practitioners of IHL and ICL, as well as military historians and military ethicists and offers ground-breaking new research. Nobuo Hayashi is affiliated to the Centre for International and Operational Law at the Swedish Defence University in Stockholm, Sweden. Carola Lingaas is affiliated to the Faculty of Social Studies at VID Specialized University in Oslo, Norway.

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