

who pays?

3. weightless data.

3.1 exoticized minorities.

3.2 digital colonization.

3.3 the data gap.

The problem of the politics of knowledge in a globalised world is exacerbated by a 'not seeing' (...). It is basic to colonisation because the colonisers create a vacuum, an invisibility, where previously there had been people, language, culture and traditions around all kinds of social activities. If they are not invisibilised, they are exoticised, cultural forms appropriated, distorted and sold back to the 'natives' at a profit. Even the most 'domesticated' of social groups - women - have been exoticised by the sexualisation industries of pornography and prostitution through which they are then sold back to the society in which they live. These and other forms of exoticisation dispossess the oppressed of their dignity and humanity reducing both to commodities to be bought and sold. (...)

"Whatever is unnamed, undepicted in images, whatever is omitted from biography, censored in collections of letters, whatever is misnamed as something else, made difficult-to-come-by, whatever is buried in the memory by the collapse of meaning under an inadequate or lying language -this will become, not merely unspoken, but unspeakable."

Adrienne Rich is writing about the gaps and distortions in writing about and by lesbians, but her words apply also to any person or group or being that is marginalised or despised, for whatever reason. In the last few years, the mainstream publishing industry has picked up on the idea of diversity, but the trend is for a consumerist version of diversity: one blue, two green, one purple person within the larger group that is mainly white, male and mobile. (...) Betty Mclellan came up with the idea of 'fair speech'. In doing so, she is challenging the Patriarchal Universe of Discourse exemplified in the destructive power of 'anything goes speech' that allows hate speech - the vilification and subjection of people, especially when directed at others because of race or ethnicity, sex, class or caste, religion, sexual orientation or disability.

An analysis of fair speech must consider the effects of silencing. Censorship is not only the straightforward culling and banning of the words of writers and artists, and the imprisonment, torture or killing of those who utter rebellious words. It also ventures into the realm of social conditioning.

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In Pornography and Silence, Susan Griffin makes the connection between the violence of pornography and women's silence. She argues that the silence is as much internal as external. This is also the case for colonised peoples in general. Judy Atkinson outlines the trauma inflicted on indigenous people, which is passed on from generation to generation. Those from the working class are familiar with similar kinds of transgenerational trauma, as are people marginalised by hatred (in a Christian-dominant world, Jews and Muslims have suffered this fate).

Susan Hawthorne (2018). "Bibliodiversity: The Politics of Knowledge and the Distribution of Ideas".

digital colonization.

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In an environment where nascent artificial intelligence Twitter bots can become white supremacists within hours, where auto-generated tags classify photos of African Americans as gorillas and where searching Google for “Latina lesbian” delivers only pornography, what exactly does a self-determined representation for any minority group look like online? (...)

In November of this year Mikaela Jade, a developer with Indigital Media, an Australian indigenous media company, was notified by Apple that her company’s new app, Indigital Storytelling, had not been approved for inclusion in the iTunes store. The augmented reality app was designed to function within the space of indigenous cultural specificities by using the phone’s camera to recognize sites of indigenous significance. When a user is in the presence of such a site, a video of an oral history with a community elder begins to play, providing the user with context-specific

knowledge detailing the cultural importance of the place to the history of the community. The app functions even without access to the internet, an acknowledgment of the realities of technological barriers to access in remote areas. (...) This app concept follows from Indigital’s mission to “ensure Indigenous People have access to developing cutting edge, safe, affordable, quality digital engagement that is appropriate to our social, cultural and economic needs.” What reason did Apple have for denying the request, even after Google’s iTunes counterpart for Android phones had launched the app to acclaim? According to Mikaela Jade, Apple found the app’s usefulness to be “limited.” After the press gave attention to the story, Apple reversed course and the app continues to be available for download.

This example is one of many in the larger story of colonial thinking as expressed through technological change, as well as one of the anti-colonial resistance responses of indigenous peoples around the world. The story speaks to the barriers to access to contemporary tools of communication that exist at multiple levels throughout the technological infrastructure, including those through which individuals access the internet. (...)

The internet is often perceived as connecting the world in such a way that renders one’s physical location irrelevant, however Christian Sandvig neatly describes the contradiction this poses for indigenous peoples the world over: “The state of indigeneity, in contrast, is a continual assertion of place...” (...)

Indigenous communities today may have greater access to the physical technology and meaningful education in how to make use of it, but the barriers do not cease once indigenous-produced content is published the web. Unless the issues surrounding algorithm bias are addressed, little will have changed from this assessment made nearly 20 years ago. The rise of importance of algorithms that perform a gatekeeper role for information online in effect continues to build the same barriers to access that have plagued these communities under colonial structures. For this reason, the utility of the digital divide argument is limited because the business model of online visibility as represented through algorithmic decisions will always place subordinate cultures at a disadvantage. Access is more than simply having and using existing technology, rather it is having an infrastructure that is content neutral.

Melissa Gasparotto (2016). “Digital Colonization and Virtual Indigeneity: Indigenous Knowledge and Algorithm Bias”.

the data gap.

Most of recorded human history is one big data gap. (...)

Films, news, literature, science, city planning, economics. The stories we tell ourselves about our past, present and future. They are all marked – disfigured – by a female-shaped ‘absent presence’. This is the gender data gap. (...).

They impact on women’s lives every day. The impact can be relatively minor. Shivering in offices set to a male temperature norm, for example, or struggling to reach a top shelf set at a male height norm. Irritating, certainly. Unjust, undoubtedly.

But not life-threatening. Not like crashing in a car whose safety measures don’t account for women’s measurements. Not like having your heart attack go undiagnosed because your

symptoms are deemed ‘atypical’. For these women, the consequences of living in a world built around male data can be deadly.

One of the most important things to say about the gender data gap is that it is not generally malicious, or even deliberate. Quite the opposite. It is simply the product of a way of thinking that has been around for millennia and is therefore a kind of not thinking. A double not thinking, even: men go without saying, and women don’t get said at all. Because when we say human, on the whole, we mean man. (...)

Artificial intelligence that helps doctors with diagnoses, that scans through CVs, even that conducts interviews with potential job applicants, is already common.

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But AIs have been trained on data sets that are riddled with data gaps – and because algorithms are often protected as proprietary software, we can’t even examine whether these gaps have been taken into account. (...).

Data is just another word for information, and information has many sources. Statistics are a kind of information, yes, but so is human experience. And so I will argue that when we are designing a world that is meant to work for everyone we need women in the room. If the people taking decisions that affect all of us are all white, able-bodied men (nine times out of ten from America), that too constitutes a data gap – in the same way that not collecting information on female bodies in medical research is a data gap.

And as I will show, failing to include the perspective of women is a huge driver of an unintended male bias that attempts (often in good faith) to pass itself off as ‘gender neutral’. (...)

If there is a data gap for women overall (both because we don’t collect the data in the first place and because when we do, we usually don’t separate it by sex), when it comes to women of colour, disabled women, working-class women, the data is practically non-existent. Not simply because it isn’t collected, but because it is not separated out from the male data – what is called ‘sex-disaggregated data’. In statistics on representation from academic jobs to film roles, data is given for ‘women’ and ‘ethnic minorities’, with data for female ethnic minorities lost within each larger group.