

Chapter 4

Algorithmic Power and Digital Colonialism in the Age of Inequality and Resistance: How Algorithms Reshape Power and Digital Life

S. Yoganathan

 <http://orcid.org/0009-0007-5583-0924>


Faculty of Management Studies, CMS Business School, Jain University, India

Ravishankar S. Ulle

 <http://orcid.org/0009-0008-1011-8738>


Faculty of Management Studies, CMS Business School, Jain University, India

Bharath Sampath

 <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7721-2026>


Faculty of Management Studies, CMS Business School, Jain University, India

Shashi Kant Dikshit

 <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4760-1490>

Faculty of Management Studies, CMS Business School, Jain University, India

Balaji Gopalan

 <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1082-5597>

Faculty of Management Studies, CMS Business School, Jain University, India

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3373-4531-4.ch004

Copyright © 2026, IGI Global Scientific Publishing. Copying or distributing in print or electronic forms without written permission of IGI Global Scientific Publishing is prohibited. Use of this chapter to train generative artificial intelligence (AI) technologies is expressly prohibited. The publisher reserves all rights to license its use for generative AI training and machine learning model development.

ABSTRACT

This chapter, critically examines the concept of digital colonialism and its influence on algorithmic power and authority in contemporary societies. It explores how algorithmic systems, governed by corporate and state actors, perpetuate new forms of control, centralization, and socio-technical inequality, often mirroring historical patterns of domination and dependency. The analysis maps mechanisms such as data extraction, surveillance, computational bias, and the creation of digital dependencies, demonstrating their impact on marginalized communities, particularly in the global South. By integrating critical theory, postcolonial studies, and empirical case analysis, this chapter interrogates the intersections of digital colonialism with related ideologies, such as digital imperialism and digital racism, and highlights resistance efforts and alternative digitalities that advocate for pluralistic and equitable digital futures.

INTRODUCTION: FRAMING DIGITAL COLONIALISM

Over the past decade, *digital colonialism* has gained prominence as a critical framework for understanding how older colonial logics are being reproduced through contemporary digital systems. The concept draws attention to the ways global digital infrastructures—largely owned and governed by multinational technology corporations headquartered in the Global North, particularly the United States—extend colonial patterns of control, extraction, and inequality into the digital realm (Couldry & Mejias, 2019; Nothias, 2025). Unlike classical colonialism, which relied on territorial conquest and direct political rule, digital colonialism operates through the control and commodification of intangible resources, including user data, algorithmic systems, and forms of digital labor. These processes generate new dependencies while sustaining long-standing structures of exploitation and cultural domination (Coleman, 2019; Kwet, 2019; Dahiya, 2023).

The intellectual foundations of digital colonialism can be traced to earlier debates on media imperialism, dependency theory, and postcolonial critiques of power and knowledge. Scholars such as Herbert Schiller (1969, 1989) and Thomas McPhail (1981) examined how the global expansion of Western media and communication infrastructures functioned as mechanisms of ideological influence and economic extraction, closely aligned with the interests of imperial states and corporations. Their work anticipated the rapid expansion of global communication networks and digital technologies in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, developments that have dramatically intensified the scale, speed, and reach of asymmetric power relations (Couldry & Mejias, 2019; Nothias, 2025).

34 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/algorithmic-power-and-digital-colonialism-in-the-age-of-inequality-and-resistance/407326

Related Content

Generating Test Case for Object-Oriented Software Using Genetic Algorithm and Mutation Testing Method

Yamina Mohamed Ben Aliand Fatma Benmaiza (2012). *International Journal of Applied Metaheuristic Computing* (pp. 15-23).

www.irma-international.org/article/generating-test-case-object-oriented/64641

Performance Enhancement of Differential Evolution by Incorporating Lévy Flight and Chaotic Sequence for the Cases of Satellite Images

Krishna Gopal Dhal, Md. Iqbal Quraishiand Sanjoy Das (2015). *International Journal of Applied Metaheuristic Computing* (pp. 69-81).

www.irma-international.org/article/performance-enhancement-of-differential-evolution-by-incorporating-lvy-flight-and-chaotic-sequence-for-the-cases-of-satellite-images/129012

Sustainable Digital Transformation Through Energy-Efficient Edge and Fog Computing

Venkata Ramana Kaneti, B. Senthilkumaran, K. Dhivya, B. Chitra, T. Nithya, B. Yuvasriand V. Arunkumar (2025). *Energy Efficient Algorithms and Green Data Centers for Sustainable Computing* (pp. 373-398).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/sustainable-digital-transformation-through-energy-efficient-edge-and-fog-computing/375648

Prevalence of Metabolic Syndrome in Subjects with Osteoarthritis Stratified by Age and Sex: A Cross Sectional Analysis in NHANES III

Ashish Joshi (2012). *Innovations in Data Methodologies and Computational Algorithms for Medical Applications* (pp. 60-72).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/prevalence-metabolic-syndrome-subjects-osteoarthritis/65152

Pseudorandom Number Generators Based on Asynchronous Cellular Automata

(2018). *Formation Methods, Models, and Hardware Implementation of Pseudorandom Number Generators: Emerging Research and Opportunities* (pp. 66-108).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/pseudorandom-number-generators-based-on-asynchronous-cellular-automata/190214