Chapter 6
Digital Feminism:
Reclaiming Power and Identity in the Algorithmic Age

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ABSTRACT

In the algorithmic age, digital platforms are vital for visibility, expression, and agency, making feminism crucial at empowerment and control intersections. Digital Feminism transcends an online movement; it's an evolving ideological space challenging patriarchy in data systems, algorithmic design, and AI. This chapter as per the author, explores gender bias in digital infrastructures, marginalizing feminist voices while offering resistance and solidarity tools. Using feminist theory, digital humanities, and media studies, it views Digital Feminism as critiquing and reconstructing algorithmic culture. Interdisciplinary reflection examines feminist activism in digital spaces, algorithmic patriarchy implications, and feminist data ethics. The chapter advocates inclusive, transparent, feminist-aligned digital futures where technology aligns with equity, accountability, and care.

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Algorithmic Age and Gendered Power

The 21st century is a time of profound entanglement between algorithmic systems, especially artificial intelligence (AI), and the infrastructures that link up with data with our everyday social, economic and political lives. Algorithms now filter access to information, organise participation in digital publics and have a growing effect on decision-making in areas such as employment and education as well as policing and welfare. Those systems are not neutral or purely technical tools, but socio-technical assemblages situated within historical and institutional power relations.

It is fair to say that algorithms have been shown to be biased because they adopt and foster the biases of the social environments in which they were created. As (Noble, 2018; Benjamin 2019), and (Crawford, 2021) make clear, with varying accents, algorithmic systems are trained on historically situated datasets and developed within unjust organizational settings. As result, in social practice (in political context, but not only), they frequently re-produce gendered, racialized and classist hierarchies under the aegis of being objective or expedient. Indeed, gender in particular becomes a central axis through which algorithmic power is both felt and exercised, determining whose bodies, voices and experiences become visible or legible, credible or valuable.

Instagram, TikTok, YouTube and LinkedIn are among the digital spaces which do the work of what we used to call "spaces of appearance" – shaping collectively understood practices and norms in our cultures, as well as social recognition. Through algorithmic curation, ranking, and recommendation, platforms promote what is amplified and down-rank or marginalize the rest. Feminist researchers have pointed out that these processes reproduce patriarchal norms of beauty, productivity, affect and desirability via algorithmic patriarchy (Bechmann & Kim, 2020). Instances such as sexist hiring algorithms, racist facial recognition software and female submissive voice assistants demonstrate how each of the artificial systems preserve and normalize gender inequality through code.

It is in this algorithmic context that Digital Feminism is presented as a necessary critique to the expansion of data-driven power. Digital Feminism does not celebrate the liberatory potential inherent in technology, nor dismiss it as necessarily oppressive. Instead, it understands digital infrastructures as contested spaces marked by power relations whose inevitability and destiny may be subject to critique, challenge, and reimagination. As (D'Ignazio and Klein, 2020) suggest, feminist data practice opens space for care, accountability and justice in relation to data and algorithms in ways that contest dominant logics of efficiency, profit and extraction.

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