Race, Technology, and Trust: Examining the Cheating Discourse Among Black and Asian AI Users

Alia Hall
University of Central Florida
Orlando, FL, USA
alia.hall@ucf.edu

Yingzi Kong
University of Central Florida
Orlando, FL, USA
yingzi.kong@ucf.edu

Abstract* - *Artificial Intelligence (AI) is emerging in academia and presents innovative and idealistic opportunities for many students. As with any new technological craze, there is the challenge of biased humanistic influence, which can sometimes cause apprehension in technological use. This study examines the existing notions of cultural biases and presumptions of cheating by Black and Asian (AI) users. We evaluate the implication that Black and Asian students may be less than honest in academia, specifically when using AI tools. Studies show that marginalized students are sometimes affected by systematic racial constructs, deeming them less than truthful when using technology to assist in educational activities. Critical technocultural discourse analysis (CTDA) and autoethnography, a research method involving the researchers' personal experiences and reflections, will examine Black and Asian students' cheating discourse. CTDA is a multimodal method that assesses digital social phenomena from cultural theorists, feminist, and technological perspectives to examine technocultural findings. Moreover, CTDA formulates technology as a societal representation of social constructs and investigates technological associations of digital phenomena. We evaluate recent studies to share contextual commonalities and thematic experiences of Black and Asian AI users, highlighting marginalized narratives and demonstrating our findings.

Index Terms* - *Artificial intelligence (AI), critical technoculture discourse analysis, cheating discourse, AI pedagogy.

INTRODUCTION

Communication is changing with the development of AI technologies, disrupting dominant narratives around intellectual labor and technological experiences. Historical racial and cultural biases are challenging digital practices and behavioral norms. Unfortunately, the notion of cheating has taken a new form, sending mixed signals to the less-than-powerful and marginalized users, often struggling to legitimize their work and find a space in society. AI is rapidly creating trend-setting strategies for knowledge development and collaboration; however, it is doing so at the cost of trust, integrity, and inherited biases. Building on Bolter's assertion that older informational hierarchies may not simply graft onto network technologies, systemic inequalities tied to race, gender, and class continue to thrive [1]. It becomes evident that Black and Asian users—especially those whose identities engage with AI—risk pathologization by dominant narratives that perpetuate entrenched power structures even in supposedly novel digital spaces. While AI tools like ChatGPT celebrate innovation and entrepreneurialism in many academic contexts, confident students and scholars, notably Black and Asian users, view AI usage as a cause for heightened scrutiny. As students and educators navigate the nuances of the new technological phenomena, they are aware that racial and inherited stereotypes may influence how marginalized students engage in AI usage, cultivating paths of impartiality. This research critiques the biases and stereotypes perpetuated by AI, particularly the framing of Black and Asian users as "cheaters" or hyper-reliant on technology. As Black and Asian feminists, we apply CTDA [2] and autoethnographic experiences to answer two research questions: 1) How are the tech-centric identities of Black and Asian users represented, celebrated, or problematized in academic discourse in the age of AI? 2) How does increasing AI literacy empower Black and Asian AI users to challenge the notion of cheating?

BACKGROUND

Even though older information-technology hierarchies do not directly transfer onto today's new media space, deeply rooted biases related to gender, race, and economic status continue to wield influence [1]. Technology's power does not simply serve humanity's common good, but it also infiltrates social, political, and economic structures [3].

Digital evolution often provides social and academic progress, but its presence can reinforce racially driven social hierarchies [3, p. 35] and communicatively oppressive constructs [4]. Moreover, digital tools can exacerbate racial inequalities and foster engagements that mirror social biases and inequitable cultural prowess. Technological progress is not purely liberatory because its presence can turn into instruments of surveillance, profit, or hierarchy, sending harmful, racially oppressive messages to its users [3]. Data are not neutral or objective; they are the product of unequal social relations [5, p. 8]. They do not speak for themselves as technology mediates their processing and interpretation, thus reconfiguring their meaning. AI users' experiences are defined by the receptiveness of their outcomes and messages received from their work evaluators. As Noble [6] and Steele [7] reveal, Black women's experiences in digital environments have long been overshadowed by racialized and gendered pathologies in the public imagination. However, Digital Black Feminism is a powerful force that aims to reposition Black women to examine the evolving digital landscape. Black women have led platform migrations and pushed policy changes [7, p. 5]. The strategies and fortitude with which Black feminists navigate racial challenges move cultural equality forward, benefiting white and non-white users. Their relationship with technology changes how people in technology assess the complex relationships of digital praxis [7, p. 5]. The Phrase "Listen to Black women" became popular after the forty-fifth president, and Twitter used creative memes to consistently remind society that Black women keep trying to save America from itself [7, p. 5]. Moreover, Nakamura [4] suggests that Asians and other marginalized communities can identify harmful patterns because of their experiences as people of color. Their struggle to integrate into less-than-accepting environments of power and privilege encourages their collective visibility, which often looks for oppressive signs and signals. Subsequently, their less-than-positive experiences encourage the develop socially derived supportive networks for their non-white community, which sometimes reshapes digital discourses and their experiences.

I. Cultural Critique of Cheating

Cultural biases are sometimes embedded deeply within the structural context of how we do things, formulating counterproductive ideologies that are hidden. Racial stereotypes can erode instructors' trust in particular students, while past experiences of bias can erode marginalized students' trust in supposedly impartial technologies or authorities. For example, a group of Chinese international students at a U.S. university alleged that they were unfairly targeted by an instructor who perceived a culture of cheating among them [8], [9]. A recent survey of 2,000 college students found that Black and Asian/American students reported being accused of plagiarism or cheating at roughly double the rate of students overall [10]. In another study, forty Black high school students participated in a critical race technology course that exposed anti-blackness as the organizing logic and default setting of digital and artificially intelligent technology. The results of this study show that educators who emphasize colorblind and race-neutral ideologies hinder the growth and development of educational practices that justly serve students [11, p. 52]. Moreover, stifled evolution is sometimes rooted in invisible white supremacy and anti-blackness, and students challenging systematic racism need cultural technological training to equip them to subvert racial praxis. Dominant narratives about academic integrity, cheating, or gaming the system remain anchored in racialized assumptions and power structures. Cheating accusations are not just about isolated misconduct but about defending or redefining cultural boundaries of what counts as legitimate knowledge production. Marginalized communities are sometimes not seen unless they are hyper-visualized by surveillance and suspicion [3].

Systematic racism is embedded in academic regulations or AI detection tools, and not all students are treated equally. The discourses around cheating detection or AI use are not purely about upholding academic standards but can also be a vehicle for racialization because educators and administrators bring their inherent biases to the scholarship. Not everyone approaches AI usage with an unbiased lens; therefore, a system of humanistic evaluation practices is unfairly developed. And it is led by mighty, often white, individuals with no experience as members of marginalized communities. There is a critical need for more diverse leadership in this development. As the educational community scrambles to address ballooning fears about the unethical, ineffective, and immoral use of AI by students [11], it is essential that we also address the racial biases in AI evaluators. Some academy members are oblivious to their preconceived notions about AI users and the implications of non-integral practices. Consequently, critical cultural and technological scholars are calling attention to these concerns about the design and use of AI by institutions of power in ways that exacerbate racial violence and educational inequity for marginalized students.

II. Cultural Bias in Large Language Models (LLMs) and AI

Large language models that AI systems are trained on often encode cultural biases via skewed data and opaque algorithmic structures [12]. LLMs might flatten or misrepresent cultural identity [12]. As a result, educational systems might misread the authentic intellectual labor of Black and Asian students and scholars as abnormal or suspicious. Because anti-blackness exists as the default setting and organizing logic of artificial intelligence technologies [6], [13], [14], race-evasive and historical

approaches to AI design and deployment in schools often have devastating results for Black students. With a rise in misinformation and the inappropriate and usually vague academic guidelines of AI usage, students may have challenges with integral AI preparation, and some students struggle to select an appropriate AI tool for a given task or have difficulties composing prompts that return the most relevant and related results [15]. This gap in training emphasizes poorly developed AI practices that forge divisive relations between students and educators. Implementing critical digital literacy practices prepares students to be empowered and have informed experiences with AI that improve their technocultural narratives [16].

III. AI Literacy and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

As Tichavakunda [10] notes, communication biases often result from underdeveloped pedagogy—not the student. AI biases perpetuate stereotypical biases that already exist in many educational settings. Although intended to enhance students' academic writing, AI tools like ChatGPT paradoxically exacerbate linguistic insecurity because their use is associated with suspicion, cheating, and diminished authenticity of student work [8]. Not all students are born into colonialist English environments; therefore, AI literacy should be a culturally responsive pedagogy. Thus, AI technology must embrace and integrate pedagogical practices to encourage technological growth through studies and education. The academy must embrace diverse teaching strategies and content that validate and reflect students' multicultural heritages. For example, when discussing cases of AI in the classroom, an instructor might include perspectives of Black or Asian students, perhaps drawing on scenarios like those in our study to illustrate why some might be wary of technologically enhancing tools. Educators should be mindful of their biases and resist any impulse to scrutinize some students more than others. Educators must exercise caution when an AI detector flags a paper by evaluating the situation from an intentionally unbiased space, mitigating inherent biases, and fostering fair and inclusive learning environments for all students.

METHODOLOGY

Our research approach is rooted in qualitative, critical methodology, combining feminist autoethnography with Critical Technocultural Discourse Analysis (CTDA). This mixed framework allows us to center marginalized perspectives through autoethnography, integrating personal reflections while critically examining socio-technical discourse through CTDA [2].

Feminist methodologies recognize that knowledge is always situated, acknowledging that all knowledge is partial, and all knowledge is situated within specific social, cultural, and political contexts [5, p. 83]. The autoethnographic methodology allows our feminist experiences to add richness to the research by integrating our lived experiences of the cultural phenomenon [17]. Feminist autoethnography highlights personal narratives and subjectivities as valid forms of knowledge production while challenging traditional paradigms. As Black feminist scholar Rachel A. Griffin [18] argues, autoethnography can be a tool for Black women academics to critically narrate their experiences of oppression and resilience, thereby writing ourselves into existence in spaces that often marginalize our voices. This approach allows us to foreground how cultural contexts shape individual experiences, particularly in contested areas like academic integrity and technological trust.

While feminist autoethnography centers on personal perspective, critical technocultural discourse analysis (CTDA) systematically analyzes the external discourses and technologies relevant to our inquiry. CTDA focuses on how technology users perceive, articulate, and ultimately define the technocultural space in which they operate and exist [2]. By integrating critical cultural theory, CTDA offers a systematic approach to technology artifacts, providing insight into technocultural practice in a cultural context [2].

FINDINGS

I. Our Autoethnographic Perspective

As Black and Asian graduate students, we carefully navigate the nuances of AI usage and technological integration. We have found that as Black and Asian students, the increased encouragement to use AI tools for innovation can lead to judgment of some evaluators, which causes a fear of being mistreated by less technologically aware educators. We tend to self-police to avoid negative perceptions of less-than-capable scholarly production or linguistic inadequacies. From a personal experience, as a Black scholar, I've felt that my work is sometimes devalued because AI is available, leading to a stigmatizing and callous perception that it is being used to develop my academic projects. These personal experiences have made me less inclined to use technology without announcing it to those who will review and critique our work. Additionally, from a young age, Black students are typically mindful of underlying ideologies impactful to their academic and professional journey. Any form of dishonesty or notion of misconduct may affect long-term educational and professional aspirations. As marginalized students of both Black and Asian descent, we see AI-driven tools like ChatGPT as an extension of our research repertoire, reflecting a broader communal ethos of mutual learning, technological progression, and shared inquiry.

Meanwhile, we notice that different cultures have different ethical standards and experiences. There is an uncommon standard of identifying cheating using AI systems that are not culturally succinct. Some cultures might view AI as an enhancement tool, while others deem

it academically inappropriate. As Ahmed [19] emphasizes, institutions often treat policy language as naturally universal. These vague policies typically reflect the norms of power structures within the institution, shedding light on their cultural norms.

II. Critical Race Algorithmic Literacy (CRAL) as a Solution

Critical race algorithmic literacy (CRAL) demands a bold reenvisioning of the power and purpose of AI in the educational context as well as a shift in how we teach, learn, and engage with AI systems [11, p. 38]. By engaging students in CRAL, educators can turn a source of anxiety – the biased AI writing detector—into a learning opportunity where students dissect how and why the bias occurs and brainstorm ways to counter it. CRAL. Recent work by Tanksley [11] provides evidence of CRAL's effectiveness. CRAL prepares Black students to critically read the algorithmic word (e.g., data, code, machine learning models, etc.) to resist, survive, rebuild, and reimagine the algorithmic world [11, p. 51]. Students' critical race algorithmic literacies (CRAL) connected their experiences with analog algorithms– such as low teacher expectations, zero tolerance policies, and assumptions of Black incompetence and criminality– to inequitable, distressing.

From a pedagogical standpoint, CRAL aligns with the principles of culturally relevant teaching, which seeks to make education responsive to students' cultural contexts and empowers students as stakeholders in technology, not just subjects. It can also benefit all students, not just students of color, as CRAL creates a classroom ethos where integrity is seen as individual honesty and a collective commitment to fairness and justice in our tools and systems. Integrating technological pedagogy into academia through standard educational practices with schools like CRAL empowers students of diverse backgrounds and cultural ethnicities to navigate technological innovation with confidence and the integral and humanistic characteristics of self-advocacy.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this critical cultural technological discourse analysis highlight a broader need for the academic community to address how racialized biases shape perceptions of technological tools and their users. While AI systems can extend research repertoires, reflecting a broader communal ethos of mutual learning and shared inquiry, the cheating accusations and cultural biases amplified by social media platforms and news outlets reveal the fragile terrain some non-white cultures navigate. Political decisions sometimes exacerbate subtle forms of exclusion, stripping away critical structural supports and reinforcing harmful stereotypes. Cultivating diverse standards in the AI era details the impact of students shaping the future of techno-culture learning, a form of education that integrates technology and culture. This concept forces us to critically assess how educators and students view the cultural implications of technological advancements and posit the question of fairness and integrity. Tanksley's proposal of introducing critical race algorithmic literacy (CRAL) to AI pedagogy supports a proactive pedagogical approach that benefits all users. Moreover, this strategy fosters a sense of cross-culturalism, encouraging diversification and equitable treatment, bridging the gap between the powerful and the less affluent. It empowers educators and students to develop inclusive, well-defined guidelines and training for implementing AI usage in diverse settings and formulating a critical response to academic questions about technological advances and culturally fair practices. Students trained in race algorithmic literacies are more socially aware [11] and have tools to navigate techno-culture oppressions, expanding technological growth while mitigating harmful pedagogical practices.

ACKNOWLEDGE

The authors are grateful to Dr. Anastasia Salter for their encouragement and "Humanities in the Age of AI" class. Alia Hall would like to thank the McKnight Doctoral Fellowship Program for their support of her academic journey.

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About the Authors

Alia Hall is a second-year UCF Texts and Technology doctoral student studying Scientific and Technical Communication and Human-centered AI, Digital Humanities, and Internet Research.

Yingzi Kong is a second-year UCF Texts and Technology doctoral student studying game-based language learning, digital media localization, user experience research and technical communication.