

TEC 154 2014S, Class 13: Perspectives (1)

Overview

- Admin.
- A feminist perspective.
- Futuring methods.
- Small-group consideration of questions.

Preliminaries

Admin

- Note takers (send me five main points): ZS and TD
- Readings for Wednesday
 - Ch 10: The Role of Technology in Society
 - Ch 11: Technology, the Opiate of the Individual
- Readings for Friday
 - Ch 12: Why the Future Doesn't Need Us
 - Ch 13: A Response to Bill Joy
- Silver stains are probably permanent
- Congrats to our women swimmers for placing first in conference
- Extra credit:
 - Men's BB, Wed at 5:30
 - Swim meet, Saturday at 10:00
- Also good
 - Men's tennis, today at 2:00 (SDSU, we think?)

Notes from ZS

1. Women have been underrepresented in terms of both their numbers and values in the world of technology.
2. Technology itself is a mechanism for expanding upon and pushing the technocratic ideal forward.
3. The technocratic ideal is closely related to Manifest Destiny-esque notions that progressive thinkers from the 18th century were the pinnacle of human development, and that it was their god-given right to expand their influence.

4. Women have also been underrepresented in the world of technology by not being given proper credit for their inventions and by technologies associated with what has historically been viewed as women's work having been largely ignored in scholarly writings.
5. Futuring techniques are logical, rational, and scientific methods that can be used to improve society, and the futurists that use them play a large role in the creation of new types of technology.

A Feminist Perspective

What is Wajcman's thesis?

- Women are underrepresented in technology
 - Numbers
 - Not many women produce technology
 - Not many women who previously produced technology are credited with doing so
 - Values
 - Ecofeminist claim that technology dominates nature, just like it dominates women (p. 72)
 - The "technocratic ideal"
 - Need to deconstruct enlightenment ideals which privilege rich white males
 - Inherent male warriorq
- What are these terms?
 - Technocratic ideal - Related to manifest destiny - Technology is a mechanism for expansion and pushing ideology further. (Another name for "technological determinism." Tech
 - Enlightenment ideals
 - Rationalism - "Logic" is our primary mechanism for understanding the world
 - Manifest destiny - It's our "god given" right to expand
- What other ways are women underrepresented in technology?
 - Women inventors have their work owned by their husbands
 - More generally, patent holders are not necessarily inventors
 - The technologies we write about do not normally include the technologies that are most closely related to "women's work"
 - Important issue: We have blinders on when we think of "technology"
 - Perhaps relate to Whittaker
 - The people who write about technology don't write about women

What related issues does she raise?

- Inherent masculinity of technology / values
 - "Traditionally male-associated values" vs. "Traditionally female-associated values" (M vs. F)
 - Yes, the labeling is problematic.
 - M - Rational, Domination/authority/power of _

- F - Intuition, subjectivity, compassion, user-centered
- And yes, we are seeing the TFAV as natural issues
- Who is making the technology, who are they making it for?
 - Women using machines made for men are disadvantaged
- It's not just about men vs. women, it's about power vs. lack of power
 - De-skilling (and dehumanizing) of factory workers
- p. 76, bottom of second paragraph - Capitalist and military ideals; How does our military-industrial complex affect civilian technologies?
- Can we develop a technology that does not favor one group over another? (A technology that is not biased?)
 - Sam's example: The pencil
 - Biased based on physical abilities/differences
 - Accessibility
 - Assumes other materials

What questions does W ask us to ask about technologies?

- Who is involved in the production of the technology?
 - Who developed it and who is credited with that development?
- What perspectives are revealed in the development of the technology?
- What are our preconceived notions about this technology?
- What groups are advantaged/disadvantaged by this technology?
 - A variant of Winner's perspective, although asking about more than just politics
- What are we failing to designate as "technology"?

Futuring Methods

What is Cornish's goal?

- To teach you about "Futuring Techniques" - Techniques to anticipate likely future conditions.
 - That's what "Futurists" do.
 - They also use these methods to make the future a better place - "to improve"

What is Cornish's thesis?

- We can use logical, rational, techniques for anticipating the future; it's not just intuitive guesswork.
- And doing so will make society better.
- And you should do so, too!

Why do you think Teich included this article in *Technology and the Future*?

- It's a traditionally-masculine-value technology
- Futurists play a serious role in the creation of technology, so we should understand what they do.
 - More broadly, technology is a bit of a "futurist" endeavor

Cornish lens?

- When you want to think about technology, apply futurist methods.
 - Poll experts (preferably using the Delphi method)
 - Play/design games/simulations
 - Trend stuff - What are the trends in this technology?
 - Better, faster, bigger/smaller, more, ...?

Future stuff

- How effective has futurism been?

Small-Group Discussion

How do Wajcman's definitions of technology on page 69 challenge or expand the definitions we came up with earlier in the class? What would we change about our definitions after reading Wajcman?

On page 73 Wajcman says, "Labor-process analysts were especially critical of a technicist version of Marxism in which the development of technology and productivity is seen as the motor force of history. This interpretation represented technology itself as beyond class struggle." What does the author mean by that?

Wajcman argues that many technologies are inherently patriarchal. This reminded me of Winner's argument that technologies can also be inherently political. Do you think there is a way to design a technology that does not have some sort of inherent bias? Would including women in the design of such a technology be sufficient for alleviating Wajcman's concerns? (Which I don't think it is, but why not)? It seems like no matter what humans do, we always exclude a group/many groups of people.

Much of Wajcman's chapter focuses on society's failure to recognize women's contributions for inventions throughout history. Of course women should be accredited for all of their work, but don't most people use technology 99% of the time without giving the inventor of the item a single thought? Will women receiving rightful credit for inventions help dismantle the male dominated tendencies of technology?

Proliferation of personal computers and nuclear desalination plants were both predicted but only one came true. What are some predictions today that you think will not become reality, what about those that you expect to see? Why?

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