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(Un)dressed : How AI Reinforces Regressive Gender Politics

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Chunk 1 In recent years, deepfake technology – a sophisticated application of machine learning – has transformed the creation of video and audio content by seamlessly blending recorded faces, expressions, and speech patterns into other images and videos¹. Originally touted as a VFX tool for special effects in movies, political satire or artistic experimentation, such as TikTok’s famous “Deep Tom Cruise”², deepfakes have since revealed a darker side. Now widely available and easy to use at the click of a button, deepfakes have become a powerful tool in the arsenal of those wanting to spread fake news and disinformation³. Once more, AI technologies continue to perpetuate existing social biases and inequalities, particularly against women and marginalized groups.

Chunk 2 In January 2024, AI-generated explicit images falsely depicting Taylor Swift were widely shared across social media platforms, including X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, Reddit, and Instagram. One particular post garnered over 45 million views before its removal⁴.

Chunk 3 The photograph supposedly displaying the pop star was later debunked as a deepfake. Subsequently, OpenAI faced backlash when it released a voice model that users compared to Scarlett Johansson’s character in Spike Jonze’s film “Her”. The AI-generated voice was described as eerily similar to the actress’s, sparking widespread concern about the unauthorized replication of

1: MIT Sloan (2020) ‘Deepfakes explained’. Available at: <https://mitsloan.mit.edu/ideas-made-to-matter/deepfakes-explained> (Accessed: 7 January 2025).

2: TikTok (n.d.) ‘Deep Tom Cruise’. Available at: <https://www.tiktok.com/@deeptomcruise?lang=en> (Accessed: 7 January 2025).

3: Van der Sloot, B. and Wagenveld, Y. (2022) ‘Deepfakes: regulatory challenges for the synthetic society’, *Computer Law & Security Review*, 46, p. 105716.

4: New York Magazine (2024) ‘Taylor Swift’s Endorsement Is Part of the AI Backlash’. Available at: https://nymag.com/intelligencer/article/taylor-swifts-endorsement-is-part-of-the-ai-backlash.html?utm_campaign=feed-part&utm_medium=social_acct&utm_source=hatgpt.com (Accessed: 7 January 2025).

celebrity identities. Although OpenAI eventually withdrew the voice model, the incident highlights how generative AI technologies can be misused without regard to personal and professional boundaries.

As this article will explore, the misuse of AI reveals a troubling paradox: women who dress modestly are subjected to digital undressing, while those who sport more revealing outfits are artificially clothed – a dynamic that underscores patriarchal efforts to exert control women’s bodies.

The Rise of Non-Consensual Intimate Deepfakes

One of the more recent alarming developments is the commercialization of deepfakes for sexual exploitation, also called “deep nudes” or “non-consensual intimate deepfakes” (NCID).

5: Meyer, R. (2022) Wilde Forensis. Zur Ikonologie digitaler Bildevidenz.

6: Pörksen, B. (2018) Die große Gereiztheit. Wege aus der kollektiven Erregung. München: Hanser Verlag.

Chunk 4 Vast amounts of sexualized deepfakes are flooding the internet, specifically targeting politicians, celebrities, and activists. These digitally manipulated images and videos, which merge stolen intimate content and facial data, are not

solely marketed as entertainment but also wielded as instruments of harassment and suppression. The objective is evident: to undermine and intimidate public figures, particularly women, by degrading them into objects of ridicule and animosity.

Even when such images are debunked as fake, their effects linger. As Roland Meyer observes, in the age of digital manipulation, a “characteristic uncertainty about authenticity” has become ingrained in how audiences engage with digital media^{5 6}. Yet, this suspicion does little to mitigate the harm inflicted on victims.

Chunk 5 Those affected often experience guilt, anxiety, and lasting reputational and emotional harm, even after the manipulation is exposed.

The Almendralejo Case

These deliberate manipulations through deepfakes, reached a peak in the autumn of 2023, when Spanish mothers took to the streets in protest after AI-generated nude images of their underage daughters had been circulated in WhatsApp groups in the Spanish town of Almendralejo. In the original photos, the teenagers were fully clothed.

7: El Español (2023) ‘Mothers Protest AI-Generated Nude Images of Spanish Teens’. Available at: <https://netzpolitik.org/2023/deepfakes-in-spanien-gefaelschte-nacktbilder-von-maedchen-sorgen-fuer-aufschrei/> (Accessed: 7 January 2025).

Chunk 6 The images, which had been obtained illegally from their Instagram accounts, were then modified using an AI application and shared within WhatsApp groups. The perpetrators of this non-consensual manipulation were themselves mi-

norors, as were the victims, the youngest of whom was 11 years old⁷. The Almendralejo case highlights the harm the misuse of AI can inflict, but it also reflects a broader pattern of how AI technology is being weaponized to enforce patriarchal norms.



Credit: Image from *The Ladies' Home Journal*. Wyeth, N. C. (Newell Convers), 1882-1945.

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III. p. 81, Chunk 10: Die
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The Tradwife Movement or Dressing Women for the Patriarchy: How AI Rebrands Traditional Gender Roles

What began as a trolling tool on 4chan – originally a hub for internet subculture and an increasingly notorious platform for gender-based extremist content ⁸ – has evolved into a stark example of the dangers AI poses to women and marginalized communities. The emergence of “Dignify AI”⁹, an app designed to “modestly dress” women on X, highlights this troubling trend.

Through the app, women’s bodies are digitally re-clothed, tattoos and piercings are erased, and, occasionally, children are added to the images. Interestingly, these supposedly “dignifying makeovers” often involve enlarging women’s breasts and cleavage, further sexualizing them under the guise of traditional modesty.

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8: Phillips, J.B., Ingram, K.M., and Campion, K. (2024) ‘Gendered Extremism in the Pacific on 4chan: A Mixed-methods Exploration of Australian and New Zealanders’ Concepts of Women, Gender, and Sexual Violence on /Pol/’, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 1–22. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2024.2384044> (Accessed: 7 January 2025).

9: Twitter/X (n.d.) ‘Dignify AI Official Account’. Available at: <https://x.com/dignifai?lang=en> (Accessed: 7 January 2025).

10: Sykes, S. and Hopner, V. (2024) ‘Tradwives: Right-Wing Social Media Influencers’, *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 53(4), pp. 453–487. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/08912416241246273>

11: Richter, H. (2024) ‘Hausfrauen wurden schon immer attackiert und verachtet’, *SZ-Magazin*, 15 August. Available at: <https://sz-magazin.sueddeutsche.de/leben-und-gesellschaft/hausfrau-modell-ehe-mann-frau-leben-kinder-94192?reduced=true>

12: Proctor, D. (2022) ‘The #tradwife Persona and the Rise of Radicalized White Domesticity’, *Persona Studies*, 8(2), pp. 7–26. Available at: <https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/informit.873023567302359> (Accessed: 7 January 2025).

Tristan Beaulieu @Trixxxy19 · 6h
What's better than a tatted blonde? 🤔



dignifAI @DignifAI · 53m
a woman who has dignity #dignifAI



Dignify AI, Copyright Tristan Beaulieu

This digital reconfiguration is not happening in a vacuum. Far-right influencers have long been vocal in the promotion of traditional heteronormative renditions of femininity and their opposition to intersectional feminism¹⁰. Recently, another trend on social media has been championing the “tradwife” role – a nostalgic idealization of women confined to domesticity. “Dignify AI” aligns seamlessly with this broader #tradwife movement, which romanticizes a return to traditional gender roles and vilifies feminism and professional career advancements. In this narrative, women are praised for their domestic lifestyle, where their primary concern is what to wear and what to bake next for their hardworking husbands¹¹, who provide for and protect their families¹². Functioning as both, an AI-based application and X bot, “Dignify AI” exemplifies the troubling ways in which AI is leveraged to perpetuate regressive and patriarchal views of womanhood, actively reposting redressed or so-called “dignified” images of women and thereby reinforcing these antiquated visions in the digital public sphere.

(Un)dressing Power Dynamics

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Both deepfakes and apps like “Dignify AI” stem from the same cultural and societal biases encoded into AI systems.

13: D’Ignazio, C. and Klein, L. (2020) Data Feminism. MIT Press.

Chunk 10

These technologies do not merely reflect the world – they actively shape and amplify the power dynamics that dictate who is valued

and who is marginalized¹³.

14: European Parliament (2024) ‘Combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child sexual abuse material. Recast.’ Available at: [https://oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/en/procedure-file?reference=2024/0035\(COD\)](https://oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/en/procedure-file?reference=2024/0035(COD)) (Accessed: 7 January 2025).

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This problem does not lie in the technology alone but in the broader structures of power and privilege that govern how AI is developed, deployed, and weaponized.

The new EU directive on combating sexual abuse represents a necessary step in addressing AI’s misuse, particularly by criminalizing non-consensual intimate deepfakes and

15: <https://ministers.ag.gov.au/media-centre/new-criminal-laws-combat-sexually-explicit-deepfakes-05-06-2024>

introducing enhanced protections for victims, acknowledging the urgent need for legal frameworks to adapt to surging digital violence¹⁴. These measures, such as improved penalties and reporting mechanisms, aim to curb the harmful impacts of digital violence, as seen in cases like the Almendralejo scandal.

On June 5, 2024, the Australian government became the first to introduce the Criminal Code Amendment (Deepfake Sexual Material) Bill 2024¹⁵, establishing new criminal offences to prohibit the distribution of non-consensual, sexually explicit deepfake material. Yet, legal action alone cannot dismantle the cultural and structural issues that perpetuate these harms.

As Catherine D'Ignazio and Lauren Klein argue in their book *Data Feminism*, true

16: D'Ignazio, C. and Klein, L. (2020) *Data Feminism*. MIT Press.

systemic change requires challenging the power structures that shape technological development¹⁶. AI design must move beyond reactive measures to adopt participatory, inclusive approaches that confront entrenched inequities and amplify the voices of those most affected.

At a time when AI technology is being used to deliberately dress and undress women in an attempt to redefine women's roles, combating the misuse of AI requires both legal and cultural efforts. Laws and legislation can create accountability, but changing how AI is developed and governed will be key to ensuring that these tools promote equity rather than exploitation. By addressing the legal and cultural dimensions of these challenges, we can begin to reshape AI as an instrument of public interest that protects, rather than undermines, human dignity.

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