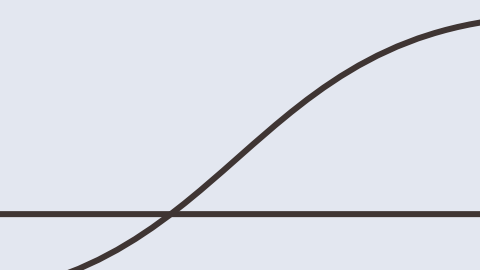# Critical Perspectives on AI in Education:
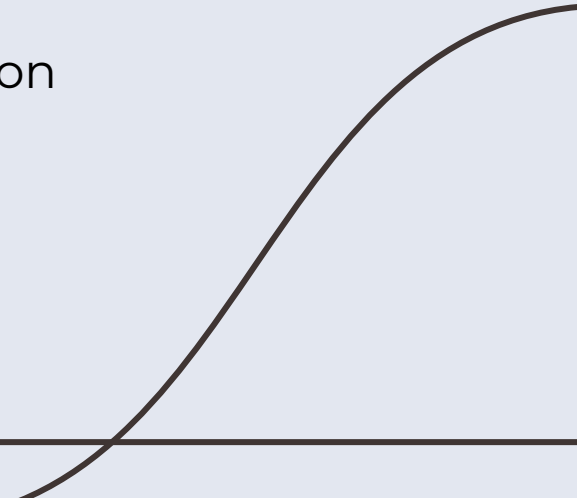# Neither Utopia nor Dystopia

Anne Drew Hu
(they/them)
PhD Candidate
Ed Psych & Ed Tech (EPET)

How can I make this presentation helpful for you?

- What questions/wonderings/hypotheses do you have?

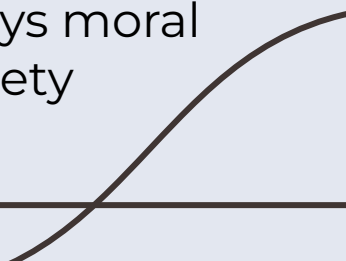- Bonus points for "To what extent" questions

Topics

- AI is neither utopia nor dystopia for education

- Critical theory

- Applying this to new tech (AI)

Utopia or Dystopia?

Utopia

- Personalized intelligent tutors

- Free, universal access to education

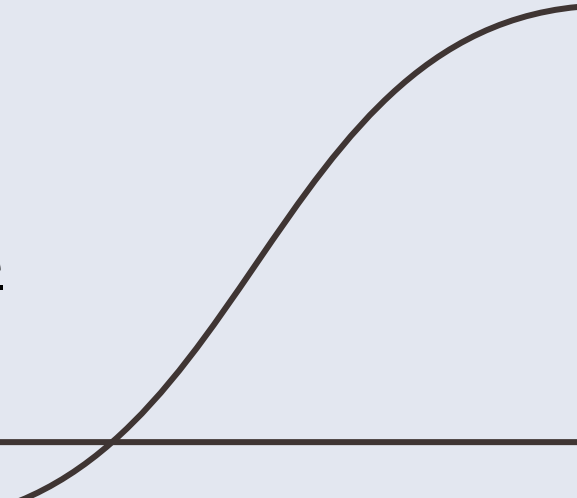- Labor saving ushers in a new age of wealth and leisure

Dystopia

- Abolishing student-teacher interaction

- Irreparable harm to socio-emotional learning

- Explosion of academic dishonesty destroys moral fabric of society

What other predictions have we heard? Both utopian and dystopian…

To what extent do you agree with these predictions?

My Argument: Technorealism

- Generative AI will be neither utopian nor dystopian

- In fact, it will fail to fundamentally change education at all

- It *will* make an impact on the daily lives of teachers and students, <u>maybe even a large impact</u>

- However, these changes will not be transformational in nature

- Rather, they will only <u>exacerbate or alleviate existing conditions</u>
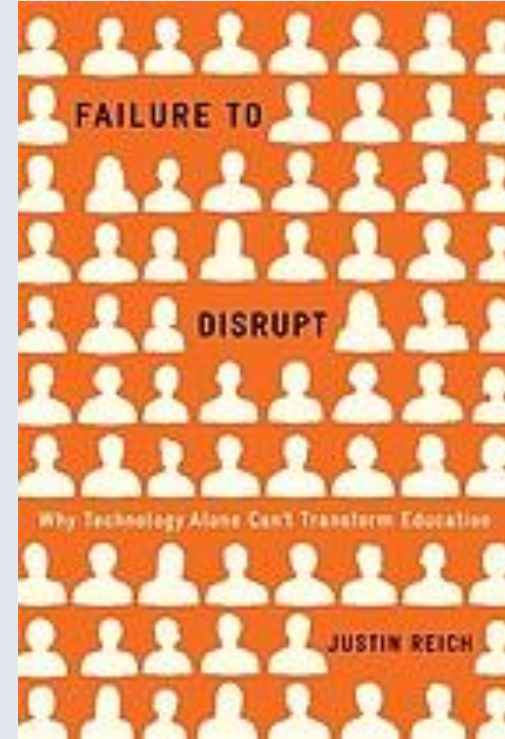
Failure to Disrupt

Ed tech has failed to live up to its promises

Useful tools? Yes, in some cases.

Decentralization of knowledge? *Nope*
Personalized intelligent tutors? *Nope*
Global access to education? *Nope*

Permanence of Racism

Derrick Bell, one of the creators of Critical Race Theory argues...

Racism is **permanent**, not just endemic

As we create policies to mitigate racism, racism shape-shifts to renew its power

How does this apply to AI in education?

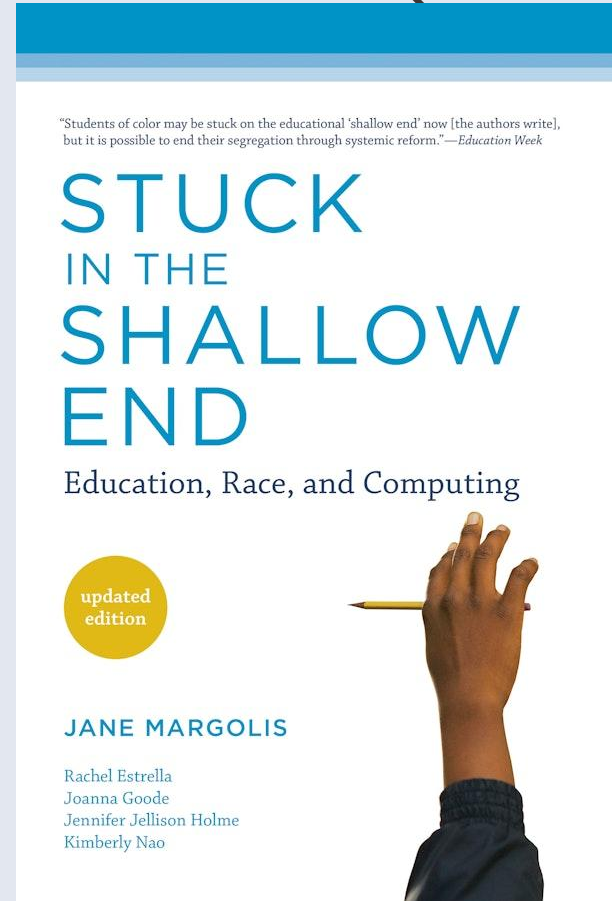# AI Fails to Disrupt Injustice

- Ed tech has never disrupted education

- AI claims to not only disrupt education, but make it more equitable!

  - See, claims from <u>Khan Academy</u> and <u>Duolingo</u>

- If we aren't careful, AI may exacerbate inequities

  - Diverting valuable funding to imaginary tech

  - Disrupting student-teacher relationships

  - Solitary learning harms socio-emotional learning

Stuck in the Shallow End

- Jane Margolis argues in this book that access to computing is inequitably distributed:

- Students in districts with more students of color and lower SES have…
  - Less access to computing resources
  - Shallower types of engagement

- Inequity in computing mirrors overall inequity in education

"Students of color may be stuck on the educational 'shallow end' now [the authors write], but it is possible to end their segregation through systemic reform." —*Education Week*

STUCK IN THE SHALLOW END

Education, Race, and Computing

updated edition

JANE MARGOLIS

Rachel Estrella
Joanna Goode
Jennifer Jellison Holme
Kimberly Nao

The "Shallow End" of AI in Education

- I predict that access to AI tools will be similarly inequitably distributed

- The "shallow end" of AI usage

  - Using AI to offload cognitive labor instead of engaging in high cognitive demand tasks

  - Using AI in ways resembling existing technologies (e.g. search engines) instead of transformative new tools

- Low SES, schools of color will continue to be stuck in the shallow end with AI

AI Rollout Failures

[California's Two Biggest School Districts Botched AI deals. Here Are Lessons From Their Mistakes](#)

(Johnson, 2024)

Group Discussion

What questions do we have for each other?

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