

Commentary
Tracy Kennedy

I have reflected on this type of scenario before in regards to the automated check-outs at the grocery store.

My concern with such a scenario is the implication of automation on the workers. Specifically, female workers.

Many of the jobs at grocery stores or places like Walmart are held by women, and most of these positions are not full time with paid benefits etc (at least not in Canada). What automation will do is further cut back service industry jobs that are traditionally held by women, making the attainment of part time employment (which many women do because of family obligations) very difficult, and eventually unattainable. Where will automation leave them? This is also the case for teenagers and young adults who work part time for school or whatever.

With the onset of automated workplaces, I also foresee changes in job titles and job descriptions - we'll move to IT Managers in Walmart (where it once may have been Store Manager or Dept Manager) - these new positions might also squeeze out women and minorities because of the social stereotypical expectation that women are not good with technology. Job requirements will include IT schooling & experience, which can also exclude women & minorities...