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### **The Fourth Industrial Revolution: Promise or Peril?**

The “Fourth Industrial Revolution” (4IR) debuted at the World Economic Forum’s 2016 Davos conference as a vision of the future in which emerging technologies change “the very essence of our human experience.” Since then, the idea of 4IR has been used to promote a wide range of emerging technologies (including autonomous vehicles, gene editing, blockchain, AI, and the Internet of Things) and organizations (including universities, accounting firms, and national governments). This paper takes a critical look at the idea of a fourth industrial revolution, exploring how 4IR benefits the organizations which adopt it, the validity and implications of claiming that certain technologies cause ‘revolutionary’ change, and the consequences of adopting a vision of the future written and promoted by the notoriously exclusive World Economic Forum. The author argues that 4IR is based in the flawed logic of technological determinism, and that it disempowers women, people of color, and the global South while reinforcing and justifying the power held over them by the global North and its tech industries. 4IR is, at the moment, an effective marketing phrase, but over the long term it damages the credibility and reputation of those who adopt it. The goal of this paper is to provide a clearer view of what an organization is signing up for when they enlist in the Fourth Industrial Revolution.