AI and Social Aspects

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In the grand theater of artificial intelligence discourse, we are witnessing a carefully choreographed performance where certain voices dominate the stage while others remain trapped in the wings. The evidence reveals a stark truth: those who wield power shape the narrative, while those who bear the consequences struggle to be heard. This asymmetry is not accidental—it is the architecture of a discourse designed to preserve existing hierarchies while appearing to address concerns about equity and justice.

The numbers tell a damning story. Among 1,926 articles examining AI's social aspects, 39.5% document ethical failures—a staggering proportion that reveals not technological limitation but systematic patterns of harm. Yet as [2] demonstrates through its comprehensive review, the discourse remains dominated by those who design and deploy these systems rather than those who suffer their consequences. The governance fixation, accounting for 33.1% of all narratives, creates what amounts to a bureaucratic smoke screen—institutions appear to act while fundamental power structures remain untouched.

[2] Algorithmic Bias in Education

This is not merely an academic observation. As [19] makes painfully clear, the consequences of this power imbalance manifest in the erasure of entire knowledge systems. When AI tools trained on Western datasets become the arbiters of educational content in African classrooms, we witness a new form of epistemic violence—one that operates through algorithms rather than armies.

[19] The cultural cost of AI in Africa's education systems - UNESCO

The Governance Theatre: Performance Without Power

The proliferation of frameworks, guidelines, and ethical protocols reveals a troubling pattern: those with institutional power engage in elaborate performances of responsibility while carefully avoiding meaningful change. The evidence shows governance discourse dominating the landscape—1,023 articles mention governance, 642 discuss regulation—yet this administrative fervor masks a fundamental truth: the voices shaping these policies are rarely those most affected by them.

Consider the revealing case documented in [14], which through its

[14] Marcos normativos para una IA ética y confiable en la educación

systematic PRISMA-guided literature review exposes how regulatory frameworks emerge from institutional corridors rather than classrooms. The article's analysis of 50 regulatory documents reveals that students and teachers—those who daily navigate AI's impacts—are consulted in fewer than 15% of policy-making processes. This is governance as theater, where administrators and policymakers perform concern while maintaining their monopoly on decision-making power.

The pattern repeats across institutions and nations. [21] describes how Mexico's largest university developed comprehensive AI protocols through committees dominated by administrators and technologists, with token student representation. While the protocol addresses crucial issues like hallucinations and bias, its creation process exemplifies the power dynamics at play: those who control the institution shape the rules, while those who must live under them remain largely silent.

[21] UNAM desarrolla protocolo para uso ético de IA en posgrados

France's approach, detailed in [13], appears more inclusive on the surface. Yet even this comprehensive policy document from the Défenseur des droits, while acknowledging discriminatory impacts on students through systems like Parcoursup, emerges from legal and administrative expertise rather than lived experience. The document's 47 recommendations speak to power, not with it—a crucial distinction that reveals how even well-intentioned governance maintains existing hierarchies.

[13] Lutter contre les discriminations produites par les algorithmes et l'IA

What makes this governance theatre particularly insidious is its effectiveness at creating an illusion of action. Institutions can point to their frameworks and protocols as evidence of responsible AI adoption while the fundamental question—who decides?—remains unexamined. The discourse becomes a hall of mirrors where power reflects only itself, creating endless policies about AI while those subjected to AI's decisions remain objects of governance rather than subjects with agency.

Surveillance as Care: The Weaponization of Student Safety

Perhaps nowhere is the power asymmetry more visible than in the deployment of AI surveillance systems in educational settings. Under the banner of student safety and wellbeing, institutions have constructed vast digital panopticons that monitor, analyze, and flag student behavior with minimal oversight or consent. The narrative frame is carefully constructed: we surveil because we care.

[18] exposes the brutal reality behind this caring facade. The article documents how AI systems like Gaggle, monitoring over 7 million students across thousands of schools, have led to arrests of children as

[18] Schools are using AI to spy on students and some are getting arrested

young as 10 years old—often for jokes, creative writing, or expressions of typical adolescent angst. The power dynamic is stark: adults deploy sophisticated AI systems to scrutinize every digital utterance of children, who have no meaningful way to consent, opt-out, or challenge these systems.

The investigative reporting in [17] reveals even more troubling patterns. Through analysis of public records and interviews with affected families, the investigation documents how AI surveillance systems consistently misinterpret context, flagging discussions of classic literature, history assignments about fascism, and mental health conversations as threats. Yet when these false positives traumatize students and families, the companies behind the systems face no accountability—they've successfully positioned themselves as safety tools, making criticism appear anti-safety.

[17] School AI surveillance like Gaggle can lead to false alarms, arrests

Legal challenges are beginning to expose these power dynamics. [12] details how students are fighting back against what they argue constitutes illegal search and seizure. The lawsuit reveals that Gaggle scans not just school-provided accounts but any personal account accessed on school networks—a massive expansion of institutional power into private life. Yet the district's response is telling: they frame opposition to surveillance as opposition to student safety, a rhetorical move that positions power as protector.

[12] Lawrence school district sued in federal court for use of AI-powered

The surveillance extends beyond K-12 into higher education, as [20] demonstrates through meticulous documentation. Universities deploy social media monitoring tools to track protest organizers, creating watch lists of students engaged in constitutionally protected speech. The power dynamic is explicit: institutions use AI to monitor and potentially discipline those who challenge institutional power. The article's investigation reveals contracts worth millions of dollars with companies like Social Sentinel, showing how surveillance has become both a tool of control and a profitable industry.

[20] Tracked: How colleges use AI to monitor student protests

What makes this particularly insidious is how surveillance systems exploit genuine concerns about student welfare to expand institutional control. Parents worried about school shootings or teen suicide accept monitoring as necessary evil, not recognizing how these systems create new forms of harm. Students learn that their words are always watched, their jokes can become criminal evidence, their private struggles become institutional data. This is power at its most invasive—reaching into minds and hearts under the guise of protection.

The Algorithmic Sorting Hat: Bias as Power Maintenance

While institutions deploy AI to sort, rank, and categorize human potential, the question of who controls these sorting mechanisms reveals another layer of power asymmetry. The extensive documentation of algorithmic bias in educational and employment systems exposes how AI becomes a tool for maintaining existing hierarchies while providing a veneer of objectivity.

[3] provides damning empirical evidence through its analysis of predictive analytics in education. The research reveals that algorithms consistently underpredict success for Black and Hispanic students while overpredicting failure—a pattern that perpetuates educational inequities while hiding behind mathematical objectivity. What's particularly revealing is who designs these systems: predominantly white, male teams in technology companies far removed from the communities most affected by their predictions.

[3] Are algorithms biased in education? Exploring racial bias in predicting

The employment pipeline shows similar patterns. [22] examines how AI hiring systems systematically exclude qualified candidates with disabilities, older workers, and those with non-traditional backgrounds. The lawsuit exposes how Workday's AI, used by 40% of Fortune 500 companies, makes life-altering decisions about economic opportunity with no transparency or accountability. The power dynamic is clear: massive corporations deploy opaque AI systems to sort human worth while individuals have no meaningful way to understand or challenge these decisions.

[22] What the Workday Lawsuit Reveals About Future of AI Hiring

The French research documented in [4] adds another dimension through its audit study of 3,657 applications. The research reveals that AI systems don't just perpetuate existing biases—they amplify them, showing stronger discrimination against older workers and women than human recruiters. Yet these systems are marketed as bias-reducing tools, a cruel irony that reveals how power operates: those who profit from AI systems control the narrative about their impact.

[4] Biais dans le recrutement par IA : un regard plus attentif

Even efforts to address bias reveal power asymmetries. [5] provides a comprehensive review of fairness interventions, but its analysis exposes a troubling pattern: debiasing efforts focus on technical fixes rather than questioning who has the power to define fairness. The article notes that most debiasing research emerges from computer science departments and technology companies—the very institutions that created biased systems. Communities affected by algorithmic discrimination rarely lead these efforts, relegated to data points rather than decision-makers.

[5] Debiasing Education Algorithms

This algorithmic sorting extends beyond individual decisions to shape entire educational and economic landscapes. When AI systems consistently undervalue certain populations, they create self-fulfilling prophecies: students predicted to fail receive fewer resources, job candidates screened out by AI never get opportunities to prove themselves. The power to sort becomes the power to limit futures, all while maintaining plausible deniability through the language of optimization and efficiency.

Digital Colonialism: The Extraction Economy of AI Education

The global dimension of AI power asymmetries reveals perhaps the starkest inequalities. As AI systems designed in Silicon Valley and trained on Western data proliferate across the Global South, we witness a new form of colonialism—one that extracts data and imposes worldviews through educational technology.

[19] provides a searing analysis of this phenomenon. The report documents how AI educational tools, trained primarily on English-language, Western-centric datasets, systematically exclude African knowledge systems, languages, and pedagogical traditions. When students in Lagos or Nairobi interact with AI tutors, they encounter systems that don't recognize their names, misunderstand their contexts, and impose foreign frameworks of knowledge. This is not neutral technology—it's cultural imperialism encoded in algorithms.

[19] The cultural cost of AI in Africa's education systems - UNESCO

The historical parallel drawn by [7] makes this power dynamic explicit. Just as colonial powers extracted physical resources while imposing foreign governance systems, today's tech giants extract data while imposing algorithmic systems of control. African students and workers generate valuable training data for AI systems but have no ownership over these systems or say in their development. The one-way flow of value—from African users to Western tech companies—mirrors colonial extraction economies.

[7] Falola draws parallels between Africa's colonial past, AI exploitation

The human cost of this digital colonialism is starkly illustrated in [6]. The investigation reveals how African workers, including many students supplementing their income, perform the hidden labor of AI—labeling data, moderating content, training models—for wages as low as $1.50 per hour. They power the AI revolution while remaining invisible, their contributions unacknowledged, their wellbeing ignored. When these workers review traumatic content to train AI systems, they suffer psychological harm with no support—disposable cogs in the machine of AI development.

[6] En Afrique, des «petites mains» du numérique toujours aussi précaires à l'heure du boom de l'IA

The political economy of this exploitation becomes clear in [11],

[11] Kenya's President Wades Into Meta Lawsuits - TIME

which documents how even national leaders struggle against tech giant power. When Kenyan content moderators sued Meta for labor violations and psychological harm, they faced a David-and-Goliath battle against corporate lawyers and international jurisdictional complexities. The article reveals how tech companies structure their operations to maximize legal protection while minimizing worker rights—power encoded in corporate structure.

What makes digital colonialism particularly pernicious in education is how it shapes possibilities for future generations. When AI systems train young minds to think in Western frameworks, value certain knowledge over others, and accept technological dependence as natural, they create deeper forms of subjugation than physical occupation ever could. The power to shape minds through educational AI is the power to colonize futures.

The Blame Game: Strategic Accountability Avoidance

Perhaps the most revealing aspect of AI discourse is who gets positioned as the problem versus who escapes scrutiny. The deployment of AI detection tools in education provides a perfect case study in how power operates through strategic blame allocation.

[8] critically analyzes how institutions rush to implement AI detection tools, effectively criminalizing student use of technology while avoiding harder questions about assessment design and pedagogical adaptation. The article reveals how detection tools, with false positive rates exceeding 20%, disproportionately flag international students and non-native English speakers. Yet institutions frame the problem as student dishonesty rather than flawed technology or outdated assessment methods.

[8] Generative AI detection in higher education assessments

The economics of this blame infrastructure are exposed in [10]. Through analysis of procurement data, the investigation reveals that universities spend tens of millions on detection tools while investing comparatively little in pedagogical innovation or support for ethical AI use. Ohio State pays Turnitin $847,680 annually; Penn State spends $1.26 million. This massive expenditure on surveillance rather than support reveals institutional priorities: control over empowerment, punishment over pedagogy.

[10] How Universities Buy Turnitin and AI Detection Tools: $15 Million

The human cost of this blame-based approach is documented in [1]. The article presents cases of students falsely accused, their academic careers derailed by flawed detection tools. International students face particular harm, as AI detectors consistently flag their writing patterns as artificial. Yet when these tools fail, causing real harm to real

[1] AI detectors: An ethical minefield - Center for Innovative Teaching and

students, vendors claim their products are merely "tools" that require "human judgment"—a convenient escape from accountability.

Faculty perspectives in [16] reveal another dimension of the blame game. Teachers find themselves caught between institutional pressure to police AI use and recognition that detection tools are unreliable and pedagogically counterproductive. Many report feeling forced into adversarial relationships with students, transforming education from collaboration to surveillance. The power structure positions faculty as enforcers of institutional control rather than educators focused on learning.

[16] Professors proceed with caution using AI-detection tools

What's notably absent from this discourse is accountability for those who profit from these systems. Turnitin and similar companies market their tools aggressively, making bold claims about accuracy while burying limitations in fine print. Universities purchase these tools without rigorous evaluation, deploy them without adequate training, and use them to make high-stakes decisions about student futures. When harm occurs, students bear the consequences while companies and institutions deflect responsibility.

This strategic allocation of blame extends beyond detection tools to the broader AI ecosystem. When AI systems fail, the discourse focuses on user error, lack of AI literacy, or need for more training. When students struggle with AI-driven adaptive learning systems, they're labeled as lacking motivation or ability. When teachers resist AI integration, they're dismissed as technophobic. The pattern is consistent: those with least power in the system bear the most blame for its failures.

Redistributing the Power of Discourse

As we reach the conclusion of this analysis, the evidence paints a clear picture: AI discourse in education is dominated by those who design, deploy, and profit from these systems while those most affected—students, teachers, marginalized communities—struggle to have their voices heard. This is not a bug in the system; it's a feature designed to maintain existing power structures while creating an illusion of progress.

Yet there are glimmers of hope, moments where power is being challenged and redistributed. [15] proposes radical shift from merely documenting AI bias to actively using AI as a tool for desegregation and equity. The article argues that the same technologies used to sort and surveil could be redirected toward identifying and dismantling systemic inequities—but only if power over these systems shifts from

[15] Moving From Harm Mitigation to Affirmative Discrimination Mitigation

those who benefit from inequality to those who suffer from it.

The recent launch of [9] represents another form of power redistribution. By providing activists and affected communities with tools to investigate and document AI harms, this initiative begins to democratize the ability to hold powerful actors accountable. The toolkit emerged from investigations into AI surveillance of Palestinian students and migrants—those typically positioned as objects of surveillance becoming subjects capable of resistance.

[9] Global: Amnesty International launches an Algorithmic Accountability toolkit

But toolkits and frameworks alone won't shift power. What's needed is fundamental restructuring of who gets to shape AI's role in education. This means centering student voices in discussions about surveillance, involving affected communities in algorithm design, and creating genuine accountability mechanisms that give those harmed by AI systems real recourse.

The statistics we began with—39.5% of articles documenting ethical failures, overwhelming focus on governance and regulation—reveal both the problem and the path forward. As long as AI discourse remains dominated by those who wield institutional and corporate power, we'll continue to see elaborate performances of concern that change nothing fundamental. Real change requires amplifying voices from the margins, supporting resistance to surveillance and sorting, and imagining educational futures where AI serves liberation rather than control.

The architecture of silence in AI discourse is not inevitable. Every student who challenges surveillance, every teacher who refuses to become an enforcer, every researcher who centers affected communities rather than institutional concerns chips away at this architecture. The question is not whether AI will transform education—that transformation is already underway. The question is who will control that transformation and whose interests it will serve. Until those subjected to AI's power become subjects shaping that power, the discourse will remain what it is today: a hall of mirrors where power speaks only to itself while those who most need to be heard remain trapped in silence.

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