AI and Social Aspects

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The Architects and the Affected: Mapping Power in AI Discourse

In the sprawling landscape of artificial intelligence discourse, a curious pattern emerges: those who speak most authoritatively about AI's social implications are rarely those who bear its heaviest burdens. While prestigious institutions craft frameworks for "ethical AI" and policymakers debate regulatory nuances, students face false cheating accusations from unreliable detection software, workers endure algorithmic wage theft, and communities of color navigate discriminatory surveillance systems. This gap between discursive authority and lived experience reveals the fundamental power asymmetry shaping how we talk about AI's role in society. As [18] demonstrates, the problem extends beyond technical flaws to encompass the human-AI interactions that amplify existing inequalities—yet whose perspective defines these problems and their solutions?

[18] The Human Side of AI Bias

The evidence paints a stark picture: 40.2% of analyzed articles document ethical failures in AI systems, while governance and regulation dominate the conceptual landscape. This fixation on institutional responses obscures a more troubling reality—the voices of those most affected by AI's discriminatory impacts remain marginalized in the very conversations meant to address their harm. When [11] provides scenario-based guidance for avoiding discrimination, it speaks primarily to administrators and policymakers, not to the students who face biased algorithmic decisions. This discursive architecture, where power flows from institutions downward rather than from affected communities upward, fundamentally shapes what counts as a legitimate AI problem and what qualifies as an acceptable solution.

[11] PDF Avoiding the Discriminatory Use of Artificial Intelligence

The Architecture of Authority: Who Shapes AI Discourse

The institutional capture of AI discourse becomes evident through examining whose perspectives dominate academic and policy conversations. Elite law schools like Penn position themselves as thought leaders, with [4] showcasing how legal education adapts to include AI tools—but this adaptation focuses on training future lawyers to work

[4] Forging the Future: AI at Penn Carey Law

with AI, not on protecting those harmed by algorithmic decisions. The curriculum emphasizes "staged AI introduction" and provides access to tools like Harvey AI, reinforcing a narrative where AI integration is inevitable and beneficial, requiring only proper management by credentialed professionals.

This institutional dominance extends to state authorities who position themselves as protectors while simultaneously expanding AI's reach. France's comprehensive policy document [14] exemplifies this dynamic—the Défenseur des droits provides extensive analysis of algorithmic impacts on public services, yet the report's very existence reinforces state authority over defining and addressing these problems. The document's 167 mentions of transparency and 121 references to ethics create an illusion of accountability while maintaining existing power structures.

[14] PDF Rapport algorithmes, systèmes d IA et services publics : quels droits ...

The pattern repeats globally, as [5] reveals how French educational institutions frame AI's "under-exploitation" as primarily a resource and training issue. The article extensively cites a 2024 Senate report, reinforcing how legislative bodies and educational administrators control the narrative about AI's educational potential while teacher and student perspectives remain secondary. This top-down framing naturalizes AI adoption as inevitable progress requiring only better implementation, not fundamental questioning of power relations.

[5] Intelligence artificielle à l'école : un potentiel sous-exploité faute ...

Corporate voices further shape the discourse through their dual role as AI developers and ethical authorities. Major technology companies fund research centers, sponsor conferences, and position their representatives as thought leaders on AI ethics—creating a circular logic where those profiting from AI systems also define their acceptable use. The governance challenge frame, appearing in 37.1% of articles, often accepts corporate-defined problems and corporate-friendly solutions, rarely questioning whether self-regulation by powerful actors can meaningfully address systemic harms.

The Silence of the Surveilled: Missing Voices in AI Conversations

While institutions debate frameworks and best practices, those subjected to AI's most invasive applications struggle to have their experiences acknowledged as legitimate knowledge. The investigative reporting in [15] exposes how AI surveillance systems generate false alarms that traumatize students and families, yet these testimonies rarely influence high-level policy discussions. The article documents specific cases where AI misinterpretation led to police involvement,

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

but student voices appear only as evidence of harm, not as contributors to solutions.

This silencing becomes particularly acute for workers in the AI production chain. [7] reveals how those performing the invisible labor of training AI systems—labeling disturbing content for wages as low as $1.32 per hour—remain excluded from conversations about AI ethics. Their petition for investigation exposes the colonial dynamics of AI development, where Global South workers bear psychological trauma to create systems that primarily benefit Global North institutions, yet their demands for justice barely register in mainstream AI discourse.

[7] Kenyan Workers Expose Disturbing Work Conditions in AI Data Labelling ...

The systematic nature of this exclusion becomes clear in [13], which documents how algorithmic wage-setting affects drivers' financial stability and mental health. Despite surveying thousands of workers and revealing severe impacts, these voices remain confined to advocacy reports rather than shaping regulatory frameworks. The workers experiencing algorithmic control describe its effects in visceral terms—financial precarity, constant surveillance, arbitrary deactivation—yet policymakers continue discussing AI primarily through abstract principles of fairness and transparency.

[13] PDF JUNE 2025 UBER'S INEQUALITY MACHI - datocms-assets.com

Students facing false AI cheating accusations represent another silenced constituency. [12] provides extensive evidence of detection tools' unreliability, including cases where students' academic careers were derailed by false positives. Yet institutional responses focus on refining detection methods rather than questioning the surveillance paradigm itself. Students must individually prove their innocence against opaque algorithmic accusations, bearing the burden of a system they had no voice in creating.

[12] PDF Do AI Detectors Work? Students Face False Cheating Accusations - Bloomberg

The racialized dimensions of this silencing appear starkly in facial recognition cases. When [16] documents how AI surveillance disproportionately flags students of color, it reveals how those most surveilled have the least input into surveillance policies. The students pulled from class, questioned by administrators, and sometimes referred to law enforcement based on algorithmic suspicion don't participate in procurement decisions or policy frameworks—they simply endure the consequences.

[16] Students have been called to the office for AI surveillance false alarms

The Governance Fixation: How Regulation Discourse Protects Power

The dominance of governance and regulation in AI discourse—with 856 articles mentioning governance and 541 discussing regulation—reveals how institutional power shapes problem definition. This fix-

ation on formal rules and compliance frameworks positions AI challenges as primarily technical and legal issues requiring expert management, rather than fundamental questions of power and justice. [10] exemplifies this approach, providing detailed policy analysis and regulatory recommendations while maintaining the basic structure where institutions deploy AI and affected populations cope with consequences.

[10] Lutter contre les discriminations produites par les algorithmes et l'I ...

The regulatory frame often protects corporate interests while appearing to constrain them. When jurisdictions implement AI hiring laws, the focus shifts to compliance burdens rather than worker protection. Companies adapt their practices to meet minimal legal requirements while maintaining algorithmic control over employment decisions. The emphasis on transparency and documentation creates a paper trail of compliance without necessarily reducing discrimination—companies simply document their biased systems more thoroughly.

This governance theater becomes particularly evident in educational contexts. Institutions develop elaborate AI policies addressing plagiarism detection, data privacy, and appropriate use, yet these frameworks consistently prioritize institutional authority over student welfare. The policies emerge from administrative concerns about academic integrity and liability, not from student experiences of surveillance and false accusation. Even when frameworks acknowledge potential harms, they position institutions as arbiters of acceptable risk rather than recognizing students as stakeholders deserving decisional power.

The limited scope of regulatory imagination also reveals power dynamics. Proposed regulations typically accept AI's continued expansion, seeking only to channel it within acceptable bounds. Few governance frameworks question whether certain AI applications—like emotion detection in classrooms or predictive analytics for student success—should exist at all. This regulatory capture, where the terms of debate assume AI's inevitability and focus only on implementation details, forecloses more radical possibilities for resistance or refusal.

International governance efforts reproduce these power dynamics on a global scale. When UNESCO develops AI ethics frameworks, Global North perspectives dominate despite rhetorical commitments to inclusivity. The frameworks emphasize principles like transparency and accountability that assume functional regulatory states and empowered civil society—conditions absent in many Global South contexts where AI systems are rapidly deployed. This governance colonialism exports regulatory models that privilege institutional power while

failing to address local needs and contexts.

Algorithmic Harm and Abstract Solutions: The Gap Between Experience and Expertise

The disconnect between those experiencing algorithmic harm and those proposing solutions creates a fundamental mismatch in AI discourse. Technical papers like [8] demonstrate the sophisticated methods researchers develop to reduce bias, employing data-efficient techniques and comprehensive testing. Yet these solutions emerge from academic contexts distant from the communities experiencing AI's discriminatory impacts. The paper's focus on improving model performance through technical interventions exemplifies how expertise concentrates in spaces removed from lived experience of algorithmic harm.

[8] KnowBias: Mitigating Social Bias in LLMs via Know- ...

This gap becomes particularly visible in educational AI deployments. [17] documents how Western-designed AI tools impose foreign knowledge systems and languages on African students, yet the solutions proposed—developing local AI tools, creating African datasets—still operate within a technological framework that may not align with local educational philosophies. The harm is cultural and epistemic, but the solutions remain technical and market-oriented.

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

The implementation gap between sophisticated bias research and actual AI deployments reveals how power shapes which knowledge matters. [1] shows how educational institutions continue using demonstrably flawed detection tools despite extensive research documenting their unreliability. The persistence of harmful tools despite expert knowledge of their flaws demonstrates that implementation decisions respond more to institutional anxieties and vendor marketing than to evidence of student harm.

[1] AI detection tools are unreliable. Teachers are using them anyway : NPR

This dynamic extends to workplace AI, where sophisticated discussions of algorithmic fairness fail to prevent basic discriminatory practices. Despite extensive research on bias in hiring algorithms, companies continue deploying systems that discriminate against women, older workers, and people with disabilities. The gap between academic knowledge production and corporate practice reveals how power determines which expertise influences real-world decisions. Companies selectively cite research supporting their practices while ignoring findings that would constrain their use of AI for worker control.

The abstraction of harm in academic and policy discourse further widens this gap. When researchers discuss "bias mitigation" or "fairness metrics," they translate lived experiences of discrimination into

mathematical formulations amenable to technical intervention. This translation process strips away context, emotion, and human impact—a student falsely accused of cheating becomes a false positive rate, a worker denied a job becomes a disparate impact statistic. The power to define what counts as legitimate knowledge about AI harm rests with those most distant from its impacts.

Labor, Learning, and the Luxury of Nuance

The 62.9% of articles taking a "nuanced" stance toward AI reveals another dimension of power—who can afford complexity versus who faces stark realities. [2] documents how companies like Amazon use AI for union surveillance, creating a clear antagonistic relationship between workers and algorithmic management. For these workers, AI isn't a neutral tool requiring balanced assessment—it's a mechanism of control demanding resistance.

[2] AI Union Busting: How Algorithms Target Labor Organizers

The luxury of nuance appears clearly in institutional responses to AI in education. [6] argues that schools will "domesticate" AI rather than be disrupted by it, a perspective that assumes institutional stability and adaptive capacity. This domestication narrative privileges institutional continuity over the experiences of students and teachers navigating AI's immediate impacts. While administrators debate implementation strategies, students face automated surveillance and false accusations that disrupt their educational trajectories.

[6] Justin Reich: "La IA no será una disrupción en el sistema ... - Infobae

Union responses to AI reveal how collective organization can challenge discursive power imbalances. [19] shows workers developing their own frameworks for understanding and responding to AI, creating counter-narratives to corporate technological inevitability. These organizing efforts demonstrate that those most affected by AI can develop sophisticated analyses when given platforms and resources—the issue isn't capacity but access to discursive power.

[19] Unions gather to share, learn and strategize on AI's "perils and promises"

The differential impacts of AI on various constituencies make "nuanced" positions a form of privilege. For students of color disproportionately flagged by facial recognition systems, as documented in [16], AI surveillance isn't a complex issue requiring balanced consideration—it's a direct threat to their education and wellbeing. The ability to maintain analytical distance, to weigh benefits against risks, belongs primarily to those not bearing AI's heaviest burdens.

[16] Students have been called to the office for AI surveillance false alarms

Educational institutions' adoption of AI reveals how power shapes the distribution of benefits and harms. Administrators and faculty gain tools for efficiency and innovation, while students bear increased surveillance and the risk of false accusations. The "nuanced" institu-

tional perspective acknowledges both possibilities without recognizing how this distribution follows existing power lines. Those with institutional authority experience AI as augmentation; those subject to institutional power experience it as intensified control.

Reclaiming the Discourse: Toward Redistributing Narrative Power

The path toward more equitable AI discourse requires fundamental shifts in who gets to speak authoritatively about AI's social impacts. [9] offers one model, centering African educators' perspectives on how AI threatens cultural memory and local knowledge systems. Rather than framing these concerns as obstacles to progress, the article recognizes them as legitimate critiques deserving response. This repositioning of expertise—from technical to cultural, from global to local—demonstrates how different voices can reshape AI discourse.

[9] L'IA dans l'éducation africaine : progrès ou perte de mémoire

Grassroots organizing efforts like [3] show how those most exploited by AI systems can build power through collective action. By documenting working conditions, establishing fair labor standards, and creating accountability mechanisms, these movements challenge the invisibility of AI's human infrastructure. Their success in gaining media attention and policy influence demonstrates that discursive power can be contested and redistributed, though only through sustained organizing against significant structural obstacles.

[3] Fairwork AI Kenya - Fair Work for AI Data Workers

The evidence reveals clear patterns in AI's discursive landscape: institutional voices dominate, governance frameworks protect existing power structures, and those most harmed by AI systems remain marginalized in conversations about solutions. The prevalence of ethical failure documentation alongside weak accountability mechanisms shows how current discourse acknowledges problems without threatening the systems producing them. Breaking this cycle requires more than inclusive rhetoric—it demands fundamental redistribution of who gets to define AI problems and authorize solutions. Until those bearing AI's heaviest burdens gain equal voice in shaping its development and deployment, the discourse will continue serving power rather than justice.

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