

AI, Firms, and Inoperative Communication Risks with the Fragmented-Social Collective

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Abstract

As complex social systems, firms could benefit from moving beyond traditional transactional views of communication. Firms are increasingly turning to Artificial Intelligence (AI) chatbots to generate their social communications. Such AI-generated content risks becoming “inoperative,” meaning it fails to engage or resonate with diverse social groups, due to its overwhelming ubiquity and simulacral quality. At its core, an inoperative statement is one that is not socially accepted and therefore does not function effectively regarding the rhetorical intent of its sender. As the ontological boundaries of firms become blurred, achieving message coherence is complicated by the polyvocality required to communicate with the fragmented social collective, which refers to the diverse and often disconnected segments of society. More concretely, the fragmented social collective is any group that is diverse in terms of its membership and disconnected in terms of its social solidarity, but one in which individuals can maintain a sense of personal identity and group affiliation. AI’s potential to produce content quickly can lead to messages that are superficially tailored to specific audiences but lack authenticity, thereby becoming inoperative. By examining how AI contributes to communication challenges, firms can rethink their ontological assumptions and develop strategies that integrate better social systems and technological advancements. AI can streamline communication processes, but if not aligned with legitimate needs, it may fail to sustainably support the goals of firms and society. By exploring these connections, this paper contributes to a deeper understanding of how AI impacts firm communication within complex social systems, ultimately pointing to the need for more authentic engagement and solidarity.

Keywords

Authenticity, Authority, Engagement Strategies, Ontology, Technology, Society

1. Introduction

Work, and by extension all those who are engaged in its execution, will end up being either revolutionary or reactionary. There are no sustainable compromises between these two extremes. As William Butler Yeats explained poetically in *The Second Coming* (Yeats, 1920), “things fall apart; the centre cannot hold.” In today’s rapidly evolving technological landscape, firms are turning increasingly to Artificial Intelligence (AI) to *revolutionize* their communication strategies (Panda et al., 2019; Pinto & Bhadra, 2024; Rane et al., 2024). Yet “revolutionized” communication strategies, such as the widespread adoption of AI, can just as easily result in reactionary organizational realities, like the further subjugation of workers, than in any emancipatory outcomes originally envisioned or proposed during implementation. More generally, revolutionary *means* can always be put to reactionary aims.

As firms integrate AI into their operations, they encounter a complex interplay of opportunities and challenges that are already redefining traditional communication paradigms (Bakke & Barland, 2022; Farooq et al., 2025; Iyer & Bright, 2024). This paper examines the implications of AI-generated content within firms, exploring how it can either enhance or hinder effective communication. By examining the dynamics of ontological boundaries, polyvocality, and the fragmented social collective, we aim to shed light on the potential of AI to transform organizational communication. In the context of this study, the fragmented social collective is any group that is diverse in terms of its membership and disconnected in terms of its social solidarity, but one in which individuals can maintain a sense of personal identity and group affiliation (Achmad, 2022; Jackson, 2025b; Sevinç, 2022). Mobilization is required if that transformation is to be liberating to workers rather than merely profitable for capitalists and executives (Jackson & Heath, 2025a; Jackson & Heath, 2025b). This exploration invites the reconsideration of the foundational assumptions of firm communication, urging a critical reflection on how AI can be harnessed to foster authentic engagement, solidarity, and address the diverse social needs of internal and external stakeholders in an increasingly interconnected world.

AI transforms firm communication by enabling rapid, personalized interactions that cater to diverse audiences (Akbari & Jastacia, 2024; Davies et al., 2024; Weaver et al., 2023). As firms integrate AI into their communication strategies, they face the challenge of balancing the benefits of tailored messaging with the risk of creating inauthentic, simulacral content that may fail to resonate with stakeholders. AI’s ability to replicate existing communication patterns can entrench semantic divides, complicating efforts to maintain a coherent organizational message (Bajohr, 2024; Fernández, 2024). The concept of polyvocality, where AI enables multiple voices within a single entity, offers opportunities for nuanced communication but also poses challenges in aligning these voices with a unified corporate narrative (Chubb et al., 2024; Hussainey, Albitar, & Alkaraan, 2022; Aarzo & Lal, 2024). As firms navigate these complexities, they benefit, at least indirectly,

from ensuring that AI-driven communication strategies enhance authenticity and solidarity, foster genuine engagement, and address the needs of workers and society.

This study's scope encompasses exploring AI's impact on firm communication within the intricate social systems it inhabits. By examining the ontological boundaries, polyvocality, and the fragmented social collective, the study seeks to understand how AI-generated content can transform organizational communication dynamics. The purpose of this study is to critically assess how AI can both enhance and complicate firms' communication strategies, particularly in terms of authenticity and stakeholder engagement. Through this lens, the study aims to provide insights into AI's potential to bridge or deepen existing divides within and among firms, workers, and society, ultimately influencing their ability to communicate effectively with diverse audiences. By rethinking the ontological assumptions underpinning firm communication, this study aspires to guide organizations in leveraging AI to foster more authentic interactions that align with the broader social needs and strategic objectives of those working in the firm and all those affected by its (in)actions.

This paper includes a discussion of its theoretical framework (Section 2), which contains an examination of social systems and communications in firms (Section 2.1), and ontological boundaries, polyvocality, and the fragmented social collective (Section 2.2). AI's impact on communication effectiveness was explored (Section 3), focused on the risks of inoperative AI-generated content (Section 3.1), and authentic versus simulacral messaging (Section 3.2). Strategies for integrating firm AI communication into the social sphere were developed (Section 4), with attention given to aligning firm AI communication with social needs (Section 4.1) and rethinking the ontological assumptions of firms (Section 4.2). The conclusion (Section 5) contains a summary of the key points along with extensions and implications for action.

2. Theoretical Framework

This philosophical examination of AI, firms, and the risk of increasingly inoperative communication with the fragmented social collective was developed as a constructivist study. Key to constructivism is the view that knowledge is constructed socially (Berger & Luckmann, 1967), and that language and context figure prominently in the constructivist process of knowledge creation (Behrens, 2021; Jackson, 2025a; Mohajan & Mohajan, 2022; Szabó & Csépes, 2023). As defined by Berger and Luckmann, "the sociology of knowledge is concerned with the relationship between human thought and the social context within which it arises" (p. 4). Because firms can be understood as consisting of at least semi-autonomous collectives (Carnall, 1982; Ingvaldsen & Rolfsen, 2012; Katz, 1965), they represent distinct sites of social context. In this way, there is the potential for unique forms of knowledge, ways of communicating, and distinct thought patterns in each organization. When communication is internal to a given firm, peculiarities are largely habitu-

alized to the point of subconscious acceptance (Kuba & Scheibe, 2017; Nussbaum-Gomes, 1994; Polites & Karahanna, 2013). When communication is directed externally, the potential that any given articulation is inoperative increases. Constructivism focuses attention on precisely these elements.

Selecting a constructivist, or any other, approach is never purely objective. Instead, the selection reflects a privileging of one form of understanding over alternatives. In this case, the selection of constructivism reflects an underlying commitment to social progress, individual emancipation, and solidarity. As explained by Czarniawska (2008), “the reason for taking a constructivist stance is ... the hope that it is possible to show how things become constructed, and in this way facilitate other constructions, or even destruction if desired” (p. 5). As AI increasingly enables firms to automate tasks that heretofore required human thought, there is a risk that communication becomes simulacral and inoperative. Those displaced by AI, those forced to use AI to generate organizational communications, and those continually inundated by AI-generated messages have the power to decide to pursue and enact alternative constructions to this emergent reality.

The theoretical framework of this study touched upon two interrelated threads. The first thread (Section 2.1) focused on social systems and communication in firms. The second (Section 2.2) covered ontological boundaries, polyvocality, and the fragmented social collective (Section 2.2). Collectively, these areas provide pivot points around which social constructions of reality might occur within firms.

2.1. Social Systems & Communications in Firms

Understanding interrelationships among AI, firms, and the increasingly inoperative communication between AI and the fragmented social collective benefits from examining two distinct areas: social systems and communications in firms. These areas are important for a variety of reasons. First, firms are social systems that operate within other social systems (Clarke, 2024; Valentinov et al., 2021; Wacquant, 2019). Each existing firm contends with operational aspects shaped and constrained by contexts only partially under its control or influence. Laws vary by state, region, and nation. Skills and expectations of employees vary as well. Examining social systems in general provides constructive insight into these influential concerns. Second, communication is essential for articulating what a firm does, how it does it, and the rhetorical justification for whatever action is ultimately selected. Taken together, insights from social systems and communication in firms provide a foundation for awareness and subsequent action.

A social system is a network of interdependent elements that function together, informed by a shared ideology (Barber, 2021; Bianchin, 2021; Wisman, 2023). Common examples of social systems include families, schools, businesses, and governments (Branz et al., 2021; Kerig, 2019; Rachmad, 2023). Disparate social systems like these comprise what Althusser (2020) called *Ideological State Apparatuses* (ISAs), “which present themselves to the immediate observer in the form of distinct and specialized institutions” (p. 17), but are unified “beneath the ruling ideol-

ogy which is the ideology of ‘the ruling class’” (p. 20). Firms can be considered an ISA as well (Alami & Dixon, 2020; Udas & Stagg, 2019; Wolff, 2020). All social systems involve the application of power. At their core, dominant social systems operate to maintain the *status quo* through the establishment of rules and expectations (De Oliveira & Dambrun, 2007; Eidelman & Crandall, 2012; Gaucher et al., 2011). Communication is a necessary condition for the operation and maintenance of social systems. Whether stated explicitly through rules and laws or implicitly through ideology and norms, the unifying precepts of a social system are transmitted via communication. For this study, it is constructive to examine communication in the social system of the firm.

When dealing with firms, the focus of communication instruction, development, and dressage is often on aspects including the importance of message clarity, active listening, and providing constructive feedback (Dimbleby & Burton, 2020; Dwyer & Hopwood, 2019; Guffey et al., 2021). These elements are important. However, from a critical perspective, their ubiquity suggests that there is more to the story than what is presented. Communication in firms is sometimes more than simply filling out a form or applying a template. Jackson (2021) indicated that within organizations, “novel insights might require novel communication approaches,” and that “in such situations one might need to exercise strategic non-compliance and select a communication style which provokes thought” (p. 218). Such an act is inherently problematic as deviation from established rules and expectations entails a risk of censorship and is always enacted with a degree of uncertainty. Berger and Luckmann (1967) explained, “institutions must and do claim authority over the individual, independently of the subjective meanings he may attach to any situation. The priority of the institutional definition of situations must be consistently maintained over individual temptations at redefinition” (p. 62). Institutions, operating with formal authority, can delimit the parameters of discussion, thus constraining debate, if their definitions are accepted by workers (internally) and the polity (externally) as being operative.

When such institutional definitions are accepted implicitly, they are generally operative. Such a designation conveys little, perhaps nothing, as to the information’s accuracy. Operative statements function organizationally and socially. Statements from those in authority tend to be operative until their falsity is established socially beyond a reasonable doubt. As such, not all statements of a firm are operative. Whereas this example is now somewhat dated, the Nixon administration’s response to the Watergate investigation provided perhaps the most explicit example of inoperative statements. According to Time (1973), “White House Press Secretary Ronald Ziegler enlarged the vocabulary ... [by] declaring that all of Nixon’s previous statements on Watergate were ‘inoperative.’ Not incorrect, not misinformed, not untrue—simply inoperative, like batteries gone dead” (para. 1). Using this perspective provides useful insight for assessing firms’ communications. Operative statements could be false; inoperative statements might be true. The accuracy of its content does not define the functionality of a given statement, just its social

acceptance. From the firm's perspective, an operative statement is socially accepted and produces the desired outcome. As previously indicated, an inoperative statement is one that is not socially accepted and therefore does not function effectively regarding the rhetorical intent of its sender. Through the social rejection of an inoperative statement, resistance to the firm's interests or desired outcome could mobilize.

Firms, as social systems that operate within other social systems, contend with operational aspects that are shaped and constrained by context. This examination of the social system provided constructive insight into the role communication plays in articulating what firms do, how they do it, and the rhetorical justification for their selected actions. Establishing that communications by firms can be inoperative is an important step in understanding the interrelationships among AI, firms, and the increasingly inoperative communication between AI and the fragmented social collective. Informed by these initial insights, this perspective is extended by examining ontological boundaries, polyvocality, and the fragmented social collective.

2.2. Boundaries, Vocality, and the Fragmented Social Collective

In today's rapidly evolving business landscape, organizations navigate a complex interplay of internal and external dynamics, shaped by an intricate web of ontological boundaries. These boundaries, representing the conceptual divides between various elements within structured systems, influence how firms communicate, operate, and engage with stakeholders. As organizations increasingly integrate AI into their operations, these ontological boundaries become more pronounced, affecting the transparency and coherence of corporate communication. AI, trained on an organization's unique data, replicates existing communication patterns, potentially entrenching the semantic divides among these boundaries.

Polyvocality emerges as a critical consideration in this context, where AI enables firms to express multiple voices, catering to diverse audiences with increasing precision. This multiplicity of voices, while offering opportunities for tailored communication, poses unique, emergent challenges in maintaining a unified organizational message. The fragmented social collective, characterized by disconnected social ties and diverse affiliations, presents an additional challenge for firms striving to communicate authentically and effectively. As firms harness AI to navigate these ontological boundaries more efficiently, the balance between radical individualization and coherent, collective messaging becomes paramount. Whereas AI-driven personalization can enhance consumer engagement by addressing individual preferences, it may hinder efforts to foster solidarity and shared purpose within broader stakeholder groups. Understanding when and how to leverage AI-enabled communication is crucial for firms aiming to achieve their strategic objectives, whether in driving consumption or building cohesive relationships.

Organizations are shaped and constrained by ontological boundaries (Azevedo, 2024; Heracleous, 2004; Karakayali, 2015). In summary, an ontological boundary

is the conceptual separation existing between different elements within a given structure (Alessandroni & Malafouris, 2023; Guzman, 2020; Högström & Philo, 2020). The parameters of a set of ontological boundaries are simultaneously definable and contestable. As Gilyazova (2019) explained, “the ontological boundaries of the events are not always clear or contextually understood ... The criteria to define the boundaries are not always available, especially when the object of one ontological status exists in the context of another ontological status, or when one reality acts as an agent of another reality” (p. 197). The most pressing ontological boundary for firms is likely the one that divides internal and external stakeholders. The ontological boundary between these stakeholders can influence elements of organizational transparency, communication, and action (Jahansoozi, 2006; Leonardi, 2014; Parris et al., 2016). To the extent that AI is trained explicitly on an organization’s unique data, any differences in communication between the two sides of this ontological boundary will be replicated. In fact, where humans are prone to deviation from organizational scripts (Jackson, 2021), the grooves of this semantic separation are likely to become increasingly entrenched through the adoption of AI.

Through replication, the AI-produced communication of firms is prone to deepen the semantic divide among the groups formed by its ontological boundary. Internally, this could be the boundary between executives and management, management and workers, or staff and field. Externally, this could be the boundary between rivals and customers, customers and potential customers, or members of the enforcement class and those of society. Firms exist and operate within a complex web of ontological boundaries. Each element offers firms the ability to use AI to tailor their message with increasing precision and decreasing attention. Rather than being represented by a single voice and message, AI enables firms to become polyvocal.

Polyvocality is the existence of multiple voices (Angel, 2025; DeAngelo & Douglas, 2023; Sitzia, 2023). Vocality can exist in various forms. In generic terms, vocality can exist as a single entity with a single voice, a multitude of entities with a single voice, a multitude of entities with a multitude of voices, and a single entity with a multitude of voices. Under this taxonomy, polyvocality could be either a multitude of entities with a multitude of voices or a single entity with a multitude of voices. The first forms a structural basis for encouraging diversity, equity, and inclusion (Carrigan et al., 2023; Savage & Lynch, 2024; Sturgis et al., 2020). As articulated by Tsenova, Wood, and Kirk (2023), “polyvocality can champion, engage, and explore...from diverse perspectives” (p. 15). Human diversity is sufficient for the continuation of this form of polyvocality. Whereas AI can be applied here, AI is not essential for its existence, perpetuation, or growth. It is the second form of polyvocality, that of a single entity with a multitude of voices, which is radically facilitated by AI and is more problematic for firms. Ultimately, AI-facilitated polyvocality among the elements comprising a firm’s ontological boundaries can be deconstructed to the individual. Can the polyvocality of firm communication that is directed at the individual, or narrow groups of constituents de-

fined by its ontological boundaries, be aggregated meaningfully into a unified message with sufficient coherence? Mitigating against any such coherence is the need for firms to communicate effectively with the fragmented social collective.

The fragmented social collective is “any group characterized by diverse and disconnected social ties, in which individuals maintain their identities and affiliations but lack cohesive interaction and shared purpose” (Jackson, 2025b: p. 316). Singular firms employing a multitude of voices with the diverse elements formed through their unique ontological boundaries, potentially exhibit a polyvocality through the adoption of AI that is inoperative when communicating with the fragmented social collective. Addressing the particular, by definition, speaks to the individual. AI enables radical individuality in firm messaging (Mansell & Steinmueller, 2022; Pattanayak, 2020; Reddy et al., 2023). Such a strategy is probably effective for a firm because individuals do not tend to communicate with others within any of the other relevant groupings. If, however, individuals start to communicate with each other across the ontological boundaries, they could come to realize the disconnects in a firm’s tailored message within the fragmented social collective. When this occurs, the firm’s communication will become inoperative as it will be found to lack authenticity. Radical personalization in firm communication enabled by AI will fail to reach the group to the degree it successfully reaches the individual.

If a firm is focused primarily on selling a good, product, or service, the radical individualization offered by AI is likely beneficial. This represents a transactional view of corporate communication (Kamil et al., 2021; Kenny & Gunter, 2020; MacDonald et al., 2023; Seely, 2022). Using the transactional approach to communication, the firm should be able to tailor its message to coerce consumption. If a firm attempts to induce solidarity within a group among its ontological boundaries, radical individualization and a transactional approach likely preclude such a formulation. As such, AI-enabled communication holds potential for communicating with external individuals who are potential consumers. This tailored specificity might speak to individuals, as individuals, and entice them to consume whatever the firm offers. AI-enabled communication holds less potential for speaking to external consumers, who are looking for some coherent solidarity amongst those who identify as consumers of a firm’s product, or internal workers looking for some connection and meaning associated with the shared enterprise of production. Firms benefit from understanding when personalization is beneficial or detrimental to achieving their desired ends.

The integration of AI into organizational communication strategies offers both opportunities and challenges, particularly in navigating the intricate web of ontological boundaries that shape, constrain, and define modern firms. While AI enables a level of nearly instantaneous, personalized communication that can effectively engage individual consumers, it simultaneously risks entrenching semantic divides and undermining the coherence of a unified corporate message. The concept of polyvocality, facilitated by AI, underscores the potential for firms to express multiple voices. Yet, such a multiplicity may not always align with the goals

of fostering solidarity and shared purpose among broader stakeholder groups and society. As organizations strive to balance radical individualization with collective messaging, they must consider the implications of AI-enabled communication on authenticity and solidarity. Ultimately, the success of AI-driven strategies will depend on the firm's ability to discern when personalized communication enhances or hinders its strategic objectives, ensuring that the pursuit of individualized engagement does not come at the expense of cohesive and meaningful interactions with the fragmented social collective. Exploring these dynamics further benefits from examining AI's impact on communication effectiveness and the risks of inoperative AI-generated content.

3. AI's Impact on Communication Effectiveness

Integrating AI into organizational communication strategies presents a complex landscape of opportunities and challenges. As previously discussed, as firms navigate this terrain, they benefit from addressing the delicate balance between personalization and preserving a cohesive corporate message. AI's capability to deliver rapid and personalized communication holds potential to enhance consumer engagement; at the same time, it poses the risk of deepening semantic divides and disrupting a unified corporate narrative. The concept of polyvocality, enabled by AI, allows organizations to express diverse voices. Such synthetic diversity must be managed to ensure alignment with the goals of solidarity and shared purpose among various stakeholders. As organizations endeavor to harmonize individualized communication with collective messaging, they benefit from reflecting on how AI-driven interactions impact authenticity and solidarity. The success of these strategies hinges on a firm's ability to apply personalized communication in a way that supports, rather than detracts from, its strategic objectives.

Delving deeper into these dynamics necessitates an exploration of AI's influence on communication effectiveness, setting the stage for a more comprehensive analysis in the subsequent section. For this examination, AI's impact on communication effectiveness can be bifurcated to facilitate focus. The first area of analysis (Section 3.1) focused on risks of inoperative AI-generated content. The second (Section 3.2) covered aspects of authentic vs. simulacral messaging. Taken together, these two areas explore the stakes associated with the adoption of AI by firms.

3.1. Risks of Inoperative AI-Generated Content

When things work well, they largely go unnoticed (Dalmer & McKenzie, 2019; Gable et al., 2018; Wilson & Daugherty, 2018). As such, one is often unaware of effective firm communication. When it is effective, firm communication is broadly accepted subconsciously (Brierley et al., 2020; Cyna et al., 2024; Khanna, 2020). For communication to be categorized by an individual as inoperative, one must be aware of its content and reject its legitimacy in some fashion. There is a spectrum along which one might reject inoperative communication, ranging from

ignoring it to advocating for an alternative. Between these extremes, responses can escalate from passive disagreement to critique, and from active dissent to resistance.

Before adopting AI-generated content, firms benefit from examining the consequences of these various responses to their strategic goals. Notionally, firms experience escalating consequences as the response to inoperative firm messages increases along the spectrum identified. Whereas the response-consequence relationship developed here is notional, seeing the relationship graphically helps conceptualize the response space. The notional response-consequence relationship to an inoperative firm message is presented graphically in **Figure 1**.

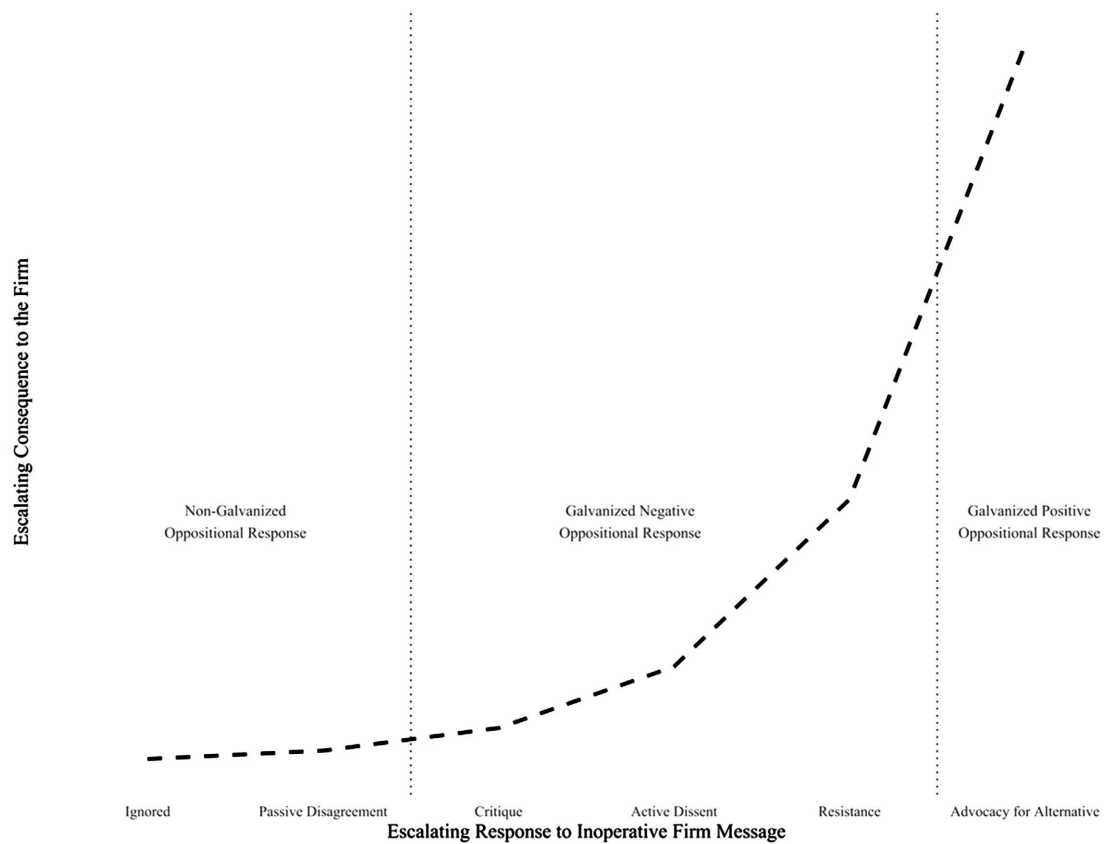


Figure 1. Notional response-consequence relationship to an inoperative message.

The notional response-consequence relationship to an inoperative firm message is presented in terms of an escalation of response. The first section, Non-galvanized oppositional response, contains two reactions: ignored and passive disagreement. Ignoring a response is simply pushing it out of one's mind and giving it no further attention. Whereas this response is negative, it produces negligible consequences. Passive disagreement reflects a slight degree of engagement, albeit docile. It is likely marked by a conscious withholding of positive action more than a commitment to negative action in response to the ineffective firm message. Collectively, non-galvanized oppositional responses are relatively benign, and a firm

will likely operate routinely without addressing the underlying issue. This is not true for actions produced under the galvanized, negative, oppositional responses.

Galvanized, negative, oppositional responses include the reactions of critique, active dissent, and resistance. The first response, critique, is when an individual or the collective gives voice to their displeasure over the ineffective firm message. This is the first response along the spectrum defined here, containing an active, negative commitment in response to the inoperative firm message. Critique is frequently offered as a means of correction (Bejtac, 2023; Kern et al., 2017; Li, 2010). In short, those who care to improve the situation engage in critique to improve the situation. When critique goes unanswered, the situation can escalate to one marked by active dissent, in which the focus moves from dialogue to action. This action is negative in the sense that it is against the firm and its ineffective message. When further radicalized and effectively mobilized, active dissent can become resistance, which necessitates solidarity. These negative responses, containing both thoughts and actions, are movements against a firm. Given the structural imbalance of power, firms can frequently respond so that these galvanized, negative oppositional responses are neutralized. This is not necessarily the case when firms contend with galvanized, positive, oppositional responses.

Working through the dialectic of opposition from negative to positive results in advocacy for an alternative. When this occurs, those subjugated by the inoperative message of a firm envision something different and mobilize to enact that alternative vision. As the famous quote attributed to Victor Hugo suggested, “nothing is more powerful than an idea whose time has come” (Quotersearch, 2023). When workers are confronted with egregious hypocrisy that remains unmitigated, eventually, they will unite, respond, and overcome. A galvanized, positive, oppositional response through advocacy for an alternative poses an existential risk to firms. The continued legitimacy of the firm rests more on its ability to co-opt that vision than thwart it (Andersson & Liff, 2018; Pallas & Fredriksson, 2011; Trumpy, 2008).

There is a spectrum of responses to ineffective firm communication with varying degrees of opposition that can arise when messages are not effectively conveyed or accepted. Initially, non-galvanized oppositional responses, such as ignoring or passive disagreement, may be benign and manageable. However, as dissatisfaction intensifies, responses can escalate to critique, active dissent, or even outright resistance, posing increasingly significant challenges. These galvanized, negative reactions highlight the potential for conflict within organizations, necessitating strategic attention to communication practices. More critically, when opposition transitions from negative to positive, with advocacy for alternative solutions developed by workers rather than executives and management, firms face an existential threat. Such a situation underscores the importance of addressing and aligning communication strategies with workers’ and society’s evolving expectations and needs. Moving forward, it will become imperative for firms to address the concerns of authenticity and simulacral messaging adequately when harness-

ing AI-driven communication, not only to mitigate these oppositional responses but also to align with broader social needs, ensuring that their messages resonate positively and constructively with the workforce and society.

3.2. Authentic vs. Simulacral Messaging

AI facilitates rapid, tailorable messaging by firms (Giorgi et al., 2023; Jackson, 2023; Long et al., 2024; Schmälzle & Wilcox, 2022). There is potential here. However, there are perils as well. Among the perils are reputational risk associated with inappropriate content, or hallucinations in which AI generated content is factually incorrect or misleading, data privacy concerns, and ethical issues related to bias and discrimination, accountability gaps, and internal communication challenges related to the erosion of employee trust and loss of communication skills within the firm (Budish, 2021; Canhoto & Clear, 2020; Heath et al., 2025; Nigmatov & Pradeep, 2023; Rana et al., 2022). Each of these concerns is potentially significant and consequential. These issues proliferate as firms integrate AI further into their organizations and operations. Whereas each of these concerns is pressing, the concern with authenticity versus simulacral messaging is most central here.

What is authentic communication in an organizational sense? Authentic communication for a firm involves engaging in genuine, transparent conversations that align with one's true self and intentions (Bilgeri, 2023; Jiang & Shen, 2023; Yang & Battocchio, 2021). Authentic communication is characterized by honesty, respect, and a commitment to truthfulness, even when discussing challenging topics (Gallego-Alvarez et al., 2020; Stone et al., 2023; Washington, 2022). Authentic communication fosters trust and credibility among workers, managers, and executives and between the firm and its various stakeholders, as it allows individuals to express their thoughts and feelings openly without pretence or hidden agendas (Greenwald, 2020; Kalogiannidis, 2021; Rothouse, 2020). In the professional realm, authentic communication can lead to more meaningful and productive interactions, as it encourages individuals to engage with one another sincerely and collaboratively, which can form a basis for solidarity. Such an approach not only potentially enhances relationships but also contributes to a more cohesive and effective organizational culture (Bakhshandeh & Zeine, 2025; Dessel, 2024; Yue et al., 2021). Authentic communication supports the natural evolution of an organization by creating opportunities for genuine connection and progress, rather than relying on superficial exchanges. These qualities are lacking from simulacral messages. This is consequential because AI, at its core, is inherently simulacral.

Simulacral messaging in firms refers to communication that is detached from authenticity, often creating a façade or illusion that does not accurately represent the true nature of the organization or who (if anybody) is communicating its intentions. This concept is rooted in the philosophical ideas of Jean Baudrillard, who described simulacra as copies or representations that become more real than reality itself, leading to a hyperreality where distinctions between the real and the ar-

tificial blur. More specifically, Baudrillard (1994) explained that at the extreme, “there is no real, there is no imaginary except at a certain distance” (p. 121). Messages from executives, managers, human resources, or marketing departments might prioritize style over substance, focusing on creating a positive impression rather than communicating genuine information or intentions (Hall, 2017; Jackson & Heath, 2024; Shulman et al., 2021). This can include exaggerated claims, selective storytelling, or omitting inconvenient truths. Internally, firms might promote a culture or set of values that are not genuinely practiced or supported within the organization. This can lead to disconnects between what is communicated to workers and their actual organizational experiences. In interactions with customers, firms might use simulacral messaging to create an idealized version of their products or services, which may not align with the actual customer experience (Ali Mohamed Nada, 2022; Tursunova & Qizi, 2023; Yadav & Sharma, 2020). Simulacral messaging can undermine trust and credibility if stakeholders, whether employees, customers, or society, perceive the communication as inauthentic. This highlights the importance of aligning messaging with perceived reality to foster genuine relationships and maintain integrity.

Both authentic and simulacral messages are real in terms of their underlying facticity. Both forms of messages exist; they are. As such, they are real. Facticity is a relatively low bar for *real* communication in firms. A real message, in a deeper human sense, is more than mere facticity. The real, in this deeper sense, is an attempt to communicate values, aspirations, fears, and desires through an ongoing process of mutual respect and empowerment (Achmad, 2022; Hegseth, 2024; Valdmane, 2016) as a basis for collective action. Only authentic messages can be real in this deeper sense. Whereas AI does not foreclose the ability to engage in authentic communication, it does pollute the semantic environment with simulacral messages. The fight for authenticity due to AI is just beginning.

Integrating AI as the basis of firm communication presents a dilemma, offering both unprecedented opportunities and significant challenges. Whereas AI enables firms to deliver rapid and customizable messaging, it does so while raising critical concerns about authenticity and ethical communication. The tension between authentic and simulacral messaging highlights the need for organizations to navigate the complexities of AI-generated content carefully. Authentic communication, characterized by transparency, honesty, and alignment with core values, fosters trust and credibility among stakeholders. In contrast, simulacral messaging risks creating a façade that may undermine trust if perceived as inauthentic or inoperative. As firms rely increasingly on AI, the challenge lies in ensuring that communication remains genuine and reflects a firm’s true intentions and values. This necessitates a strategic approach to integrating AI communication within the social sphere, where authenticity and solidarity are paramount.

4. Integrating Firm AI Communication in the Social Sphere

In today’s digital landscape, the integration of AI into firm communication strat-

egies has become not only relevant and essential but increasingly dominant (Ferràs-Hernández et al., 2023; Gligor et al., 2021; Subhadra et al., 2024). As organizations increasingly leverage AI to enhance their communication capabilities, they face the challenge of aligning these efforts in the broader social sphere. Such alignment ensures that AI-driven communication resonates authentically with diverse audiences and meets societal needs. The relevance of this endeavor is underscored by the potential consequences of failing to address the fragmented nature of modern communication, where messages risk becoming inoperative or disconnected from the social collective (Esmailzadeh, 2023; Jackson, 2025b; Murdock, 1993). Organizations can navigate the complexities of AI integration more effectively by developing strategies that focus on aligning AI communication with social needs and rethinking the ontological assumptions of firm communication. This strategic approach fosters meaningful interactions and positions firms to contribute positively to the social fabric, thereby enhancing their credibility and trustworthiness in an increasingly interconnected world and fragmented society.

The strategies for integrating firm AI communication in the social sphere, as developed here, are focused on two components. The first (Section 4.1) is focused on aligning firm AI communication with social needs. The second (Section 4.2) presents a rethinking of the ontological assumptions of firms. Collectively, these two areas provide a basis for understanding what is potentially at stake in overcoming the current trajectory of AI in firms and the increasingly inoperative communication with the fragmented social collective.

4.1. Aligning Firm AI Communication with Social Needs

In examining the intersection of capitalism, Marxian critique, and the evolving role of AI in the workplace, it becomes evident that there is a profound conflict between the prevailing capitalist ideology and critiques rooted in Marxian theory. Capitalism, characterized by its focus on maximizing shareholder wealth, often overlooks workers' social and personal needs, as highlighted by Marx's concept of surplus value and the resulting worker exploitation. This dynamic is further complicated by the integration of AI, which, while promising increased efficiency and innovation, poses risks of perpetuating inequality and alienation. As firms utilize AI increasingly to drive productivity and reduce operational expenses, there is a potential to either abrogate or achieve legitimate social needs traditionally met through work, such as community and a sense of accomplishment and meaning. The challenge lies in navigating these complexities to ensure that AI not only enhances organizational efficiency but also addresses the social needs of workers, thereby reconciling the tension between technological advancement and humanist values.

Conflict exists between the dominant capitalist ideology and Marxian critiques of capitalism. This is obvious, longstanding, and ultimately incommensurable. Under capitalism, firms exist to maximize shareholder wealth (Allen et al., 2007; Jones & Felps, 2013; Reiter, 2016). Fox News opinion host Sean Hannity defended

capitalism by stating that, “people can make money. They provide goods and services people want, need and desire. That’s America. It’s called freedom, capitalism, and as long as it’s honest right? People decide” (Tapp, 2020: para. 7). The Marxian critique of capitalism from a workers’ perspective centres on the concept of surplus value, where workers are paid less than the value of what they produce, allowing capitalists to profit from their labour (Barclay Jr. et al., 1975; Marx, 2024; Rosa & Wellen, 2020). Such a critique highlights the exploitation inherent in capitalist systems, where the extraction of surplus value benefits higher-echelon employees (i.e., managers and executives) and shareholders at the expense of workers. Workers’ wages stagnate as productivity increases while profits and executive compensation grow, exacerbating inequality. Marx argued that this dynamic leads to alienation and a lack of fulfilment for workers, as their labour is commodified and disconnected from their personal and social needs (Ma & Niu, 2023; Sawyer & Gampa, 2020; Ward, 2021). Capitalism tends to prioritize profit over workers’ well-being, leading to a persistent lack of solidarity and collective action among the working class to address these systemic issues (Christophers, 2024; Mascarenhas et al., 2024; Wolf et al., 2022). Consequently, firm communication, based on the dominant capitalist ideology and propagated through increasing use of AI, holds the potential to abrogate legitimate social needs of workers.

Social needs commonly addressed through work, at least rhetorically, include the development of relationships and a sense of community and fulfilment (Bryer, 2020; Turner, 2022; Waller, 2020). Work provides opportunities for social interaction, collaboration, and the building of authentic relationships (Castañer & Oliveira, 2020; Cutler et al., 2021; Schot et al., 2020). These interactions hold the potential to fulfil the human need for belonging, solidarity, and meaning. However, the extent to which work meets these social needs can vary (Diener et al., 2020; Kaluza et al., 2020; Methot et al., 2021). Some people thrive in social work environments, enjoying the camaraderie and support from interacting with colleagues. For others, especially those who prefer solitude or who have different social needs, work may not satisfy these desires. The recent shift towards remote work has highlighted these differences, as it changes the dynamics of workplace social interactions (Bielinska-Dusza et al., 2023; Kakkar et al., 2023; Schwoerer et al., 2024). Marxian critiques of work under capitalism suggest that work is a source of subjugation and alienation (Marx, 2022; Michel-Schertges, 2022; Rioux et al., 2020). Ultimately, the degree to which work fulfils social needs depends on individual preferences, the nature of the work, and the organizational culture. How firms employ AI can influence the development and maintenance of their organizational culture and enhance or preclude the fulfillment of social needs.

Optimistically, AI will influence organizational culture by automating routine tasks, enhancing efficiency, and allowing employees to focus on more meaningful work, which can foster innovation and job satisfaction. More pessimistically, reliance on AI will distort human relationships, and if not managed appropriately, AI will perpetuate biases, impacting fairness and equity. Beyond the general alienat-

ing impact of technology, one would expect, in a capitalist system, when assessed through a Marxian critique, the simulacral AI messaging of firms could contribute further to worker alienation by precluding individuals and groups from interfacing with *anybody* with authority or actual, real being. Lastly, integrating AI may lead to job displacement and affect cultural stability. Balancing these factors effectively ensures that AI enhances organizational culture and fulfils social needs.

The integration of AI within capitalist frameworks presents both opportunities and challenges in addressing the social needs of workers, highlighted by Marxian critiques. Whereas AI has the potential to enhance organizational culture by automating mundane tasks and fostering innovation, it risks exacerbating existing inequalities and alienation. The task for (post)modern firms is to navigate these complexities, ensuring that technological advancements complement humanist values and contribute to a more equitable workplace. This balance is essential for reconciling the inherent tensions between profit-driven motives and the achievement of the legitimate social and personal needs of workers. Doing so requires us to rethink the ontological assumptions underpinning firms, exploring how these foundational beliefs shape and constrain organizational strategies and influence the broader socio-economic milieu.

4.2. Rethinking the Ontological Assumptions of Firms

In the contemporary business environment, integrating AI into organizational operations benefits from rethinking the ontological assumptions underpinning firm structures and communication strategies. As discussed, ontological boundaries, which represent the conceptual divides within and between organizations, play a pivotal role in shaping how firms interact with internal and external stakeholders. As AI technologies become increasingly embedded in business processes, these boundaries influence corporate communication's transparency, coherence, and authenticity. Firms must reconsider several key ontological assumptions associated with the content and approach to their communications to ensure that AI is used to liberate workers and fulfill their individual and social needs.

Firms must recognize that AI, trained on organizational data, can entrench existing communication patterns and semantic divides. This calls for a reassessment of how AI is deployed to bridge rather than deepen these divides, especially among internal stakeholders such as executives, managers, and workers, and external stakeholders like customers and competitors.

The ability of AI to facilitate polyvocality, understood as expressing multiple voices within a single entity, requires firms to balance personalized communication with the need for a coherent organizational message. This involves rethinking how diverse voices can be harmonized to maintain authenticity and foster a shared purpose among stakeholders. The risk is that AI-generated, synthetic polyvocality could suppress or distort the authentic, human polyvocality that already exists among an organization's stakeholders by generating content that placates individuals to a point of mindless consumption devoid of either message coherence or

social action. Firms must address the challenges posed by the fragmented social collective, characterized by disconnected social ties and diverse affiliations. AI-enabled communication strategies should enhance solidarity and shared purpose, rather than focusing on radical individualization that will isolate and mitigate against the formation of class consciousness among workers. Whereas AI offers powerful tools for personalized communication that can drive consumer engagement, firms must also consider the broader implications of such strategies. The ontological assumption that individuality can be prioritized without affecting collective cohesion needs reevaluation. Firms should explore how AI can support both individual and collective well-being.

The success of AI-driven communication strategies hinges on its ability to maintain authenticity. Firms should critically assess how AI can enhance communication without compromising the integrity of the organizational message or alienating stakeholders. By rethinking these ontological assumptions, firms can harness AI not only to improve operational efficiency but also to create a more inclusive and fulfilling work environment. This involves leveraging AI to support worker needs and fostering an organizational culture that values personalization and collective engagement.

5. Conclusion

This paper explored the transformative impact of AI on organizational communication, highlighting both opportunities and challenges. As firms increasingly integrate AI into their daily operations, they encounter a complex interplay of ontological boundaries, polyvocality, and the fragmented social collective, which shape and redefine communication dynamics. This study underscored the potential of AI to enhance communication through rapid, personalized interactions, while also cautioning against the risks of inauthentic, simulacral messaging that may undermine trust. By examining the implications of AI-generated content, we advocated for a strategic approach that aligns AI communication with social needs, fostering authenticity and solidarity among workers and diverse stakeholders. Ultimately, this research called for a rethinking of the ontological assumptions underpinning firm communication, urging the leveraging of AI to support individual and collective well-being, thereby contributing positively to the broader social fabric.

Berger and Luckmann (1967) provided an insight that has only grown in importance with the development and encroachment of AI in the social-organizational sphere, when they noted that “social order exists only as a product of human activity. No other ontological status may be ascribed to it without hopelessly obfuscating its empirical manifestations. Both in its genesis (social orders are the result of past human activity) and its existence in any instant of time (the *social* exists only and insofar as human activity continues to produce it), it is a human product” (p. 52). Or at least it has been before AI. Now, social order can be legitimated, sustained, and perpetuated without direct human activity. One mecha-

nism for this is algorithmic bias inherent in AI which entrenches existing social norms and dominant power dynamics into automated communication patterns. Czarniawska (2008) described that “action patterns become embedded in machines, and as there are more and more machines that are increasingly complex, it will become more and more difficult to see through their design and question it” (p. 63). Such a manifestation further obfuscates the manipulative power manifested through the structural dynamics associated with the commodity form of capitalism (Jackson et al., 2022; McGowan, 2025).

Several limitations of this study warrant consideration for future research. First, the reliance on existing literature constrains the exploration of emerging AI technologies and their nuanced impacts on organizational communication. This study is constrained by the speculation required to attempt to make sense of an emergent phenomenon. Additionally, the focus on ontological boundaries, polyvocality, and the fragmented social collective, while extensive, may not fully or even adequately capture the rapidly evolving dynamics of AI integration across diverse industries and cultural contexts. The potential biases inherent in selecting material and perspectives could limit the generalizability of these findings. Future research could extend this study by incorporating empirical investigations that examine applications of AI in organizational settings, thereby providing deeper insights into the practical challenges and opportunities presented by AI-driven communication strategies. Moreover, exploring cross-cultural perspectives and sector-specific adaptations of AI could enrich the understanding of how different organizational environments influence the effectiveness and authenticity of AI-enabled communication. By addressing these limitations, future research could contribute to a more holistic and nuanced understanding of AI’s role in shaping the future of organizational communication, work, and society.

Firms stand at a crossroads where their communication strategies, driven by AI, can either catalyze revolutionary change or entrench reactionary practices. The dual potential of AI to propagate communication while simultaneously posing risks of worker subjugation and inauthentic engagement underscores a critical need for strategic foresight. As AI continues to blur the ontological boundaries within organizations and amplify the challenges of polyvocality in addressing the fragmented social collective, the imperative is clear for those concerned with worker emancipation and social justice: firms must harness AI not merely as a tool for efficiency but as a catalyst for genuine, meaningful freedom from the drudgery of work and capitalist exploitation. Doing so requires a conscious effort to align AI-driven communication with the authentic social needs of both internal and external stakeholders, ensuring that technological advancements serve to liberate and empower rather than alienate and subjugate. AI complicates rather than simplifies the inherent tensions among workers, managers, consumers, and capitalists. The polyvocality of AI-generated messages exceeds special interest groups to the point of radical individualization. Defining what constitutes legitimate social needs requires more than AI currently offers. It requires empathy, understanding, and hu-

manity. It is time for organizations to embrace this challenge as an opportunity to redefine their communication paradigms, fostering environments where AI acts as a bridge to greater worker solidarity and contributes to the formation of a real sense of shared purpose and meaning.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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