

# Chapter 12

## Unpacking the Outputs of Generative AI Platforms and Revealing Gender and Social Re–Presentations

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### **ABSTRACT**

*With the rise of generative AI tools like ChatGPT, Midjourney, and DALL-E, new questions emerge about their role in reproducing societal biases, including gender-related ones, and how these tools can be integrated into sociological research. This paper argues that generative AI platforms act as epistemological machines that reflect and perpetuate biases present in their training data. It examines how these technologies can analyze and challenge social biases through their generated content, critiquing the use of “hallucinations” to shift responsibility from tech companies involved in data management. By focusing on the dialogic nature of AI interactions and prompting as procedural rhetoric, the paper underscores the connection be-*

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*tween agency, platform design, and societal norms. Empirical examples show that investigating AI outputs can reveal implicit biases and how media representations can reinforce or challenge existing disparities, stressing the need for a critical approach to understanding AI-generated content and its impact on social dynamics.*

## INTRODUCTION

The diffusion of generative artificial intelligence (here and after, AI) models raises the question of how to investigate human-machine communication (Esposito, 2022). Furthermore, whether and how the features and affordances of these technologies can be repurposed within media and sociological research practices.

Generative AI platforms do not merely represent “new technological discoveries”, but rather the culmination of a longstanding social process, marking the apex of work automation and societal quantification (Pasquinelli, 2024).

On the one hand, akin to previous waves of automation, AI doesn't merely supplant workers, but reshapes and reorganizes them within a new social framework. AI-powered technologies have already automated many jobs across various industries, including manufacturing, healthcare, customer service, and creative fields (e.g., writing, design, music). This shift has rendered some skill-sets of existing workers less relevant while emphasizing the importance of “new” skills needed to oversee and manage AI technologies (Acemoglu & Restrepo, 2020). Generative AIs possess the unique ability to mimic collective work and behaviors, thereby generating outputs that reflect various societal aspects, from work structures to shared knowledge (Pasquinelli, 2024).

On the other hand, generative AI platforms (e.g., ChatGPT, Google Gemini, Midjourney, DALL-E, etc.) offer several opportunities and pose challenges for academic research (Salah et al., 2023). For instance, the advanced capabilities of these technologies to efficiently and rapidly analyze/summarize various documents (from interview reports or scientific papers to social media content) can lead to deeper understanding of social phenomena (Elmas & Gül, 2023;; Dönmez et al, 2023; Islam and Islam, 2024). However, when it comes to the introduction of new ITCs, is vital to resist the tentation to give in to a celebratory of a yet another ‘Promethean moment’ most frequently associated with the initial hype. We thus urge to never underrate the level mediation and re-mediation such a technology implies.

Responding to such a concern, this chapter focuses on some generative AI platforms characterized by a dialogic design, inviting users to interact with them through *prompting*. That is an interaction mode/device that allows you to interrogate the machine through a dialogic exchange enabled by a Graphical User Interface (GUI)<sup>1</sup>, which is intuitive and simple to use, based on the question-answer format typical

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