**Epistemic justice and and authentic assessment**

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**Abstract**

**Introduction**

We cannot assess justly unless we consider the nature of the knowledge we seek to assess. This is such a fundamental, even obvious, idea that it may seem hardly worth saying. But that is not the case. Despite vast challenges and changes in the way we understand assessment over the past two decades, the idea that our practices should be more epistemically diverse is only just starting to be considered seriously. Assessment has long had a paradoxical place within higher education. The scholarship on assessment for learning convincingly demonstrates that assessment is key to how and what students learn (Carless 2015). In this way, assessment is absolutely central to the processes of student engagement in higher education, and not simply confined to final results or marks. At the same time, however, assessment policies and practices are notoriously resistant to real change or reform. Assessment, some seem to argue, is too important to meddle with. In this chapter, I turn this reasoning around. Assessment is too important *not* to meddle with, if we take meddling to mean challenging, critically reflecting, thinking in new ways and opening up entrenched practices to scrutiny and possible change.

Indeed, I will go so far as to say that – because of assessment’s role in shaping learning – we cannot decolonialise and we cannot move towards epistemic justice unless we take assessment with us; ensuring it is an integral part of the processes of change, and not simply an after thought or unwilling partner dragged in to make some symbolic but superficial reforms.

The link between assessment and social justice has gained increasing prominence over recent years (eg. McArthur 2016, 2018; Hanesworth, Bracken, and Elkington 2019) but little of this has focused specifically on epistemological issues in any depth or systematic way. Concomitantly, little of the literature on epistemic injustice focuses on assessment practices and outcomes. In this chapter I aim to bring these two bodies of literature into the natural conversation that they should have, supporting one another’s commitments and goals.

The link between assessment for social justice and epistemic justice is illuminated, I will argue, by the current popularity of the idea of authentic assessment in higher education. As I have argued elsewhere (McArthur 2022a), there is a danger that prevailing interpretations of authentic assessment are narrowly utilitarian and focus on generic skills for the workplace. There are a number of problems with this tendency: it mistakes the world of work for the whole of society; it places value on a task rather than whether the task is worth doing; and it reinforces the status-quo rather than embracing the transformative potential of education. If we then consider epistemic justice, further problems are revealed, because narrow conceptions of authentic assessment often ignore knowledge altogether; and if ignored, the dimension of epistemic justice can hardly be considered.

In this chapter, I want to build on this previous work on authentic assessment to consider in greater depth the epistemic dimension of my alternative conception of authentic assessment. I will do this by exploring the works of three writers who expand our understanding of the nature of knowledge, and hence our path towards greater epistemic justice. Firstly I consider Santos’s (2014, 2018) significant work on epistemologies of the South – which brings an essential decolonial dimension to our consideration of assessment and epistemic justice. I draw on Santos’s understanding of how knowledge is situated in people and the need to de-mercantile knowledge if we are to move towards greater epistemic justice. This involves the question of what we assess, but here understood very specifically in terms the impact on the knower, or student undergoing assessment. Crucially, Santos demonstrates how the knower is always socially-situated and the importance of that social context. This resonates with my alternative concept of authentic assessment, where we do not focus on or conflate the so-called real world or the world of world, but always understand the authenticity of assessment in its social context. Santos helps us understand the epistemic dimensions of this, particularly in this decolonial age.

Next I consider Bernstein’s (2000) understanding of knowledge legitimation and transformation, and the ways in which this lays the foundation for understanding the epistemological significance of assessment acts. Of the three authors explored in this chapter, Bernstein is the only to make an explicit link between knowledge and assessment, but there remains considerable scope to extrapolate the implications of this further. In particular, I will use Bernstein to help us understand what is being assessed and how this impacts on the rationale for choices about how we assess. In addition, Bernstein is particularly important for extending my argument that authentic assessment focuses not just on a task, but why it matters. Bernstein’s work, and that of those who have developed it, is a powerful reminder that in higher education assessment tasks must be grounded in authentic forms of knowledge and not simply “real world tasks”.

Finally, I turn to Fricker (2007) and her concepts of testimonial and hermeneutic injustice which demonstrate the different ways in which acts of injustice occur within the epistemic realm. Fricker moves our focus from the knowledge to the knower and is therefore important for understanding the relationship between the assessor and the assessed: who is doing the assessing and what is the relationship between them and how we assess? It is through this understanding, I suggest, that we connect to the third element of my conception of authentic assessment, and this is that it must genuinely move beyond reinforcing the status-quo and promote transformative change. Foundational to greater epistemic justice, is understanding the nature of the epistemic injustice.

**Santos: Epistemologies of the South and reframing our focus on communities, cultures and places**

Santos’s epistemologies of the South are contextualised in communities, cultures and places, and thereby knowledge is understood as situated in people. Santos’s work on epistemic injustice does not focus specifically on assessment, although he does make connections to higher education and curriculum development (Santos 2018). Santos (2018, 2014) offers a nuanced, multi-faceted and challenging conceptualisation of the epistemologies of the South. He is clear that this is not put forth in simple opposition to epistemologies of the North, in the sense of the former replacing the latter. Rather, Santos’s aim ‘is to overcome the hierarchical dichotomy between North and South….The issue is not to erase the differences between North and South, but rather to erase the power hierarchies inhabiting them’ (2018, 7):

The work of the epistemologies of the South consists of evaluating the relative reasonableness and adequateness of the dif­fer­ent kinds of knowledge in light of the social strug­gles in which the relevant epistemic community is involved. (Santos 2018, 39)

To achieve this dismantling of epistemic hierarchies, according to Santos, requires us to engage with the three inter-related phenomena of colonialism, capitalism and patriarchy. In this way, knowledge is always connected to people and to struggle and suffering that has been endured and which continues to shape the experiences of so many people:

The epistemologies of the South concern the knowledges that emerge from social and po­liti­cal strug­gles and cannot be separated from such strug­gles. They are not, therefore, epistemologies in the conventional sense of the word. Their aim is not to study knowledge or justified belief as such, let alone the social and historical context in which they both emerge (social epistemology is a controversial concept as well). Their aim, rather, is to identify and valorize that which often does not even appear as knowledge in the light of the dominant epistemologies, that which emerges instead as part of the strug­gles of re­sis­tance against oppression and against the knowledge that legitimates such oppression. Many such ways of knowing are not thought knowledges but rather lived knowledges. (Santos 2018, 2)

Santos refers to *the abysmal line*, where one crosses from the non-abysmal dimension to the abysmal. He describes the abysmal line as ‘the core idea underlying the epistemologies of the South’ (Santos 2018, 20). In the non-abysmal dimension, one can suffer injustice but it does not constitute a denial of our very human existence. Across the abysmal line, exclusion is ontological and rests on a denial of the very legitimacy of the subject’s human existence. To be clear, there is no suggestion that either form of exclusion is legitimate, but they are different, and understanding this difference is necessary for working towards overcoming injustice. Across the abysmal line the struggle is not for a better version of what exists (the colonial form) but rather for its total abolition.

Across the abysmal line, we have fundamental misrecognition. The injustice is grounded in the denial of the subject’s human existence and right to be. There can be no mitigation or remediation for there is no basis upon which it can occur. Santos (2018) refers to the further problem that some post-colonial efforts to relieve non-abysmal exclusions exacerbate abysmal exclusions. For example, the twentieth century efforts to improve worker conditions in the North drew upon a resources and form of capitalist organisation that aggravated suffering on the other side of the abysmal line (in the global South).

As in his refusal to position epistemologies of the South and epistemologies of the North as stark alternatives, Santos rejects most social dichotomies. Simple approaches of either/do not enable or require our understanding of the lived experiences, and engagement with knowledge, of people in different situations. This is important when understanding Santos’s critique of mercantilism in higher education. Santos is clear that we must reject the situation in which only knowledge with a market exchange value is regarded as legitimate. Such commodification of knowledge narrows the forms and types of knowledge higher education engages with, and severely narrows the pool of knowers welcome within higher education. In my view, Santos is certainly not arguing for a mythic opposite of knowledge for its own sake. Such a position is naïve and ignores the constant presence of suffering and resistance in his understanding of knowledge. Higher education can have an economic role but it does not need to be disarticulated from a social role and the conception of economic need not be mercantile and focus only on the winners and the powerful (see McArthur 2011).

So what are the implications of Santos’s work for the role assessment should play in greater epistemic justice? Here I shall focus on two areas: firstly, the questions of who and what we assess; and secondly I return to the currently popular idea of authentic assessment, and continue my project of rethinking authentic assessment, in light of Santos’s epistemologies of the South.

The challenge for epistemic justice that we can draw from Santos is that discussions of assessment should cease to talk about who we assess and what we assess as separate conversations. When we recognise the embodied nature of knowledge, and particularly in the epistemologies of the South, this division is revealed as both false and damaging. In assessment, unless we are responsive to what a student brings to an assessment task or practice (beyond simply formal curricular knowledge) then our capacity to understand and recognise their epistemic achievements is severely limited. Santos explains the need to:

promote prismatic perspectives between knowledges, cultures, and practices. Thus, for example, what is considered ignorance, or normality, or a student in a given context may well be considered wisdom, abnormality, or a teacher in another context and by a completely dif­fer­ent group. (Santos 2018, 252)

Here is an example of just this epistemic misrecognition drawn from a story I have heard several times, perhaps it is simply apocryphal, but nonetheless revealing. Parents and teachers worry that a young boy has learning difficulties. He is sent to a specialist to assess his cognitive abilities. His Mum is there but asked to keep quiet. The boy is shown a series of pictures and asked to identify each one; things like a cat, a ball etc – and then finally a tree. When shown the simple picture of a tree the boy says he doesn’t know what it is. The specialist asks again and the boy is adamant he doesn’t know what the picture is. Frustrated, his mother later asks – why did you say you didn’t know what that was a picture of? The boy replied that he couldn’t answer because he couldn’t tell if it was a birch or a beach tree.

This example comes from early childhood education, but can we go forward to the higher education space and consider whether the same misunderstanding of ignorance and wisdom also happens? Remember that Santos is clear he does not believe that knowledge is relative and nor do I believe that assessment should not meaningfully evaluate learning and achievement, but what Santos demonstrates so powerfully is that neither of these positions mean that we enforce the separation of knowledge from the knower when we assess. Here is a simple example of how this false separation is embedded in many assessment tasks: the use of the first or third person. The idea that writing in the third person is more ‘academic’ than the first person remains woefully embedded in many higher education disciplines and contexts. The valorising of the third person is meant to demonstrate objectivity in the student’s engagement with knowledge. But why? What is achieved by this writing sleight of hand? Indeed, how much is lost by this insistence on an artificial and awkward form of expression? If we insist on students’ use of the third person in their assessments, we try to achieve a separation of knower and knowledge, and ultimately diminish both.

Indeed, students are epistemically constrained if they are ‘socialised’ into this idea of separateness between knowledge and knower. This can be most clearly understood in common perceptions of the objective nature of scientific knowledge. As Blackie (2022) has explained with great clarity, there is a difference between chemistry at the level of the physical world (where the knowledge is fixed), the level of conceptual world (where changes in understanding are rare but do happen) and the level of the social world (where knowledge is shaped by the knowers). In an assessment sense, this is reflected in the difference between assessment of the building blocks of knowledge (eg the physical atomic level) and the application of knowledge (which is shaped by the community of knowers). While Chemistry degrees may progress from these building blocks to different sorts of project-based assessment, students are rarely given an explanation that they are in fact engaging with knowledge differently in the different tasks. This example is a small one to show how the engagement between epistemologies of the North and epistemologies of the South that Santos demands is possible and productive. We must remember, however, that that community of knowers cannot be regarded as benign. It is a community in which the suffering and resistance occurs and must be recognised.

The problem of benign assumptions brings me to the second way in which Santos’s epistemologies of the South can enable assessment to play its role in greater epistemic justice. I return here to the question of authentic assessment, which has become increasingly popular within higher education. I have several objections to the common usage of authentic assessment, but a significant one is the way in which this term is presented as benign: benign authenticity deliberately obscures the violence upon which the status-quo, including the epistemic status-quo is based. Closely linked to this is the way in which the awful term “real world” assumes there is one real world – and this is the world the values only commodified knowledge with an exchange value.

In my own work (McArthur 2022a), written from my position in the global North, I have challenged this disembodied notion of authenticity and sought to reconnect it to the critical theory understanding of social justice as mutual recognition. Authentic assessment should be that which enables students to demonstrate achievements that are socially-beneficial and as such beneficial to their own wellbeing. It is not a disembodied task that matters, but the social importance of that task, be it creating beautiful music or developing a new environmentally positive way of producing an industrial item. As Santos recognises, critical theory itself has some serious limitations when it comes to recognising epistemologies of the South and I have also sought to recognise its serious deficiencies in a decolonial age (McArthur 2021). I remain hopeful, however, that those situated within the epistemologies of the North can use this rethinking of authentic assessment as a way to understand the reason why we must rally against the separation of knowledge and the knower. From Santos’s work we can then move to further develop this rethinking of the fundamental purpose of assessment. Are we really sure our assessment methods are not just asking students to trot back out the information we gave them in a form acceptable to convention? Or are we enabling genuine engagement, which may mean assessment outcomes we did not anticipate: and which may still be welcome evidence of scholarly achievement (re-imagined beyond the confines of the Global north). Santos’s contribution is not that we choose between knowledge and meaningful activity, but rather that we see both knowledge and meaningful activity in mosaic-like forms outwith the confines of canonical knowledge and the false separation of theory and practice.

**Bernstein: knowledge legitimation and transformation**

Bernstein (2000) offers one of the few robust conceptualisations of how the nature of knowledge operates in an assessment context. Not only does Bernstein foreground considerations of the nature of knowledge, but he makes the important observation that the knowledge students engage with in an assessment task is not exactly the same as the knowledge in the curriculum or, indeed, that generated through research. In each of these three realms, Bernstein argues, there are processes of interpretation, legitimisation and transformation of knowledge. His concept of the ‘pedagogic device’ then explains this process by which new knowledge from research is recontextualised into the curriculum and then again transformed into the knowledge students engage with in assessment. So already we have a challenge from Bernstein when considering assessment and epistemic justice: we cannot simply consider knowledge in the research sphere and assume this is identical to that in the assessment sphere. At the same time, clearly the two cannot be unrelated.

Ashwin (2014) offers a useful re-interpretation of Bernstein’s work by distinguishing knowledge-as-research, knowledge-as-curriculum and knowledge-as-student-understanding. While Ashwin tends not to often use the vocabulary of social justice (although this is an interesting exception, Ashwin and McArthur 2020), the idea certainly resonates with his commitment to the transformative power of higher education (Ashwin 2020) which very much rests on transformative engagement with knowledge, seen through this Bernsteinian lens.

Shay (2008) also uses Bernstein to consider assessment, and also shares a strong commitment to greater social justice within and through higher education. As Ashwin argues (2014) the fact that knowledge is recontextualised through these three layers in Bernstein does not mean that the three dimensions are unconnected. Similar disciplinary conventions and understandings should be evident in all three forms of knowledge. Shay has a similar perspective and uses it to helpfully challenge some conventions of assessment practice: conventions which I argue may be among the main barriers to epistemic justice in assessment.

Traditional criteria of quality in assessment tend to focus on validity and reliability (eg. QAA 2018). But these can sometimes be interpreted in quite instrumental ways and form barriers to diverse and authentic practices rather than guidelines for quality enhancement. These are also not neutral terms, and in many ways have their foundations in positivist epistemologies, that believe in repeatable, generalisable and objective processes and outcomes. The conventional advice on assessment reliability and validity tends to be generic, though clearly implying a sense of epistemic context. Shay (2008), in contrast, helpfully suggests a more explicit approach to exploring quality issues by asking if the evaluative rules are consistent with their epistemic roots? This takes the challenge squarely to the issue of what assessment methods are used, because what Shay is arguing is that such methods must match the nature of the knowledge being assessed. The obvious example here is the use of multiple choice tests because they are easy to mark, and can even be automated, for the purpose of evaluating complex forms of knowledge that do not faithfully translate into the confines of the multiple choice question. Similarly common justifications for traditional, time-limited exams often focus on their being easily replicable and hence reliable. In both cases, the rationales are disarticulated from the nature of the knowledge being assessed, with convenience and reliability foregrounded over all else. The same is clearly also true of the ongoing claim that traditional exams must be used to ensure students do not cheat (ironically completely ignoring evidence from Dawson (2020) that exams are no guarantee against cheating). If we are taking epistemic issues seriously in an assessment context, then we need to look at forms of assessment that are most able to evaluate that knowledge, and then consider ways to ensure they are robust, secure and fair.

Bernstein’s pedagogic device suggests the injustice of assessing what Ashwin calls knowledge-as-student-understanding as if it was knowledge-as-research. This in turn has interesting implications for what we mean by authentic assessment (McArthur 2020). Bernstein, Ashwin and Shay all demonstrate the dangers of approaching assessment as though knowledge is unproblematic and can be easily broken into the generic categories of Kolb’s (1984) taxonomy. Indeed, the term authentic assessment has progressively drifted further and further from associations with epistemic issues and instead focused largely on the conflation of the so-called real world and the world of work (McArthur 2022a). The drift of authentic assessment to an association with task rather than knowledge is a particular concern for epistemic justice. For example, it is reasonably common for programmes across various disciplines to now include an assessment based around making a presentation, and the justification for this is often that students need presentation skills. This is a by-product of the problematic way in which higher education has embraced generic skills and generic attributes, with little or no sense of how they may sit oddly within a framework of knowledge engagement based on disciplinary and interdisciplinary bodies of knowledge. Quite often the presentation assessment is slipped in somewhere where it can do least harm, with little consideration of whether the knowledge being assessed in this format is best suited to the format. It is format driven assessment, rather than knowledge-based assessment. Bernstein, and more recently Ashwin (2020) provide much needed reminders of the significance of the nature of knowledge to higher education

Bernstein’s reminder of the importance of knowledge to assessment tasks, reinforces my own authentic assessment argument that we must move our focus from the task itself (eg a presentation) to why that task matters (McArthur 2022a). And this sense of mattering, lies in the epistemic nature of what is being done: the nature of knowledge is one element in shaping why the task is socially-important.

**Fricker: testimonial and hermeneutic injustice**

Like Santos, Fricker (2007) does not write explicitly about assessment but her work on epistemic injustice is invaluable to rethinking assessment and epistemic justice. Fricker’s approach differs from Bernstein et al by moving from the focus on knowledge as such, to a focus on people-as-knowers (as such it resonates with Santos). Fricker argues that people-as-knowers can be wronged epistemologically. She outlines two different forms of injustice. Firstly, testimonial injustice, where a person is not listened to or believed because of who they are. Her example is the character Tom Robinson in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Tom’s evidence in court is not believed simply because he is black – this is the testimonial form of epistemic justice. His knowledge is discounted because of who he is. There are many other bases on which a person’s knowledge is disputed or disbelieved simply because of who they are – be it gender, social class, ethnicity, age, disability or some other characteristic.

Issues of testimonial injustice, albeit not understood through this term, are not new to assessment. Indeed, in higher education assessment this has led us in two rather incompatible paths. On the one hand, students have become increasingly vocal about concerns that their marks are affected by who they are. There are fears, and some evidence to support this, that the work of female, working class or ethnic minority students is judged less favourably than that of male, white, middle class students. That this is seen as an issue of testimonial injustice is evidenced by the resulting calls for anonymous assessment. Such calls demonstrate a belief that they can be epistemologically wronged by assessment systems if the marker knows who they are. Sometimes this is phrased in very personal terms (eg the marker might not like me) but much more often the move for anonymous assessment has focused on broader identity groups that can be epistemologically wronged.

I am concerned, however, at anonymisation being the strategy chosen to prevent testimonial injustice. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, why should we have to hide our identity in order to receive the epistemic justice which is our right? How do we address injustice by de-identifying ourselves or our students: by pretending we do not have an identify of being black, female or from a different background? Would Tom Robinson in *To Kill a Mockingbird* gain epistemic justice if his identity was hidden, his evidence presented as though it was from a white man? How could that possibly be just? Indeed, surely it is a further act of injustice to deny his legitimate identity?

I will not go into all the pedagogical arguments against anonymous assessment and the associated depersonalisation of assessment here (I do outline these in Chapter 5 of McArthur 2018) but I do want to point out the contrary trends of assessment anonymisation and greater pedagogic personalisation and especially dialogical feedback. To return to the question of identity and assessment justice, if we take anonymisation seriously (and more than just another bureaucratic tick box procedure) then it only works by profoundly affecting the knowledge that students share in assessments. So much of the rich personal background that shapes how a Palestinian woman or a young, northern English working class lad engage with knowledge is forced into hiding. Indeed, in terms of Brown and Duguid’s (2000) distinction between decontextualised information and richly contextualised knowledge, we can only fairly assess information, rather than knowledge, anonymously in most disciplines. The assessment can only ever be genuinely anonymous if the student’s self is withdrawn.

Secondly, there is an important practical reason why anonymous assessment does not address testimonial injustice. The idea that a student can fully withdraw their self from their assessed work is itself problematic (as also argued by Santos). A student deeply engaging in an assessment task, in many disciplines, is likely to leave a rich trail of identity and contextual information. From the assessor’s perspective, there is also evidence that where an identity is withheld through anonymisation, the marker still infers an identity onto the piece of assessed work. Without even thinking or realising, the marker may think of the anonymous student as she or he, they may detect a certain background, age or set of experiences. If testimonial injustice is real, and I agree with Fricker that it is, then these assessment solutions are still ripe for injustice.

Indeed, proclamations by the UK Office for Students (Office for Students 2021) admonishing universities for not upholding the standards of “correct” English demonstrate this point. This government body supposedly created to look after university students’ rights and wellbeing, has raised the phantom idea that *inclusive* assessment practices mean the tolerance of poor writing practices. By contrasting the issues of “good writing” and inclusion, the Office for Students is explicitly making a claim about identity, and it is not a benign or helpful one. It is therefore unmistakably an issue of testimonial justice: whereby the quality of writing – of expressing knowledge – is judged by identity. The assumption is a stale and familiar one of the perfect English of a certain English-born social class compared with ‘others’. The final point to make here is that the Office for Students’ initiative is completely consistent with anonymous marking in its formal incarnations, but is a stark reminder of the tendency to infer identities on students because of writing styles and so forth.

Fricker’s second form of epistemic justice is hermeneutic injustice. This is a form of injustice that prevents a person accessing the concepts or meanings that would ensure they are recognised as a trustworthy knower in society. Fricker discusses the distress and confusion long felt by some women following the birth of a child. With little understanding, let along discussion, of post-natal depression until recent decades, women were left without the hermeneutic resources to explain their situation. The authority of the medical profession, partly responsible for women’s lack of access to necessary understandings about their own bodies, prevails and reinforces the misrecognition of these women’s very real suffering.

McLean (2020) draws Fricker’s analysis into the specific context of higher education. She questions whether we give all students the same opportunities to learn the specialised ways of thinking necessary to thrive in the discipline or profession. Do students in highly differentiated higher education sectors, like the UK, have the same opportunities to knowledge in order to enable them to become credible knowers? Here we can return to the UK Office for Students’ insistence of “proper” use of English in assessment. This could very easily promote the hermeneutic injustice of failing to recognise the assessment achievements of students who have not had access to a very particular form of ‘standard’ or ‘proper’ English.

In contrast, work by McLean, Abbas and Ashwin (2018) demonstrates that very often students at less prestigious universities suffer from testimonial and not hermeneutic injustice. They found that students at so-called low ranking universities were engaging with sociology knowledge with every bit the richness and transformative potential as those at the so-called prestigious institutions. The lower ‘ranked’ universities were not in fact perpetuating hermeneutic injustice by failing to enable students to engage with the full richness of sociological disciplinary knowledge. The existence of these rankings is therefore an act of testimonial injustice. A student with a first class degree classification at a less prestigious university is frequently judged as less proficient in the discipline that a student with the same degree classification at a more prestigious university. Mclean et al demonstrate, however, that the curricular and assessment structures are not vastly different.

The distinction between testimonial and hermeneutic forms of epistemic injustice is incredibly helpful as we consider the role of assessment in nurturing epistemic justice. As Fraser (2003) argues in a different but not unrelated context, we need to understand the source of an injustice in order to remedy it. Both forms of epistemic injustice suggest different assessment reforms: and this relates directly to my argument that we must consider authentic assessment in a transformative form and not simply a perpetuation of what already exists.

Understanding hermeneutic injustice in an assessment context asks us to look at the extent to which assessment policy and practices genuinely enables student participation in the disciplinary bodies of knowledge at the heart of higher education, and the academic debates that occur within those communities. Where we have plagiarism-led approaches to assessment and academic writing, I would argue we perpetuate hermeneutic injustice. By plagiarism-led, I refer to the established practice of foregrounding warnings against being caught plagiarising at the start of every programme or module and one the coversheets of every piece of assessment. Students are enculturated into a form of engagement with knowledge where avoiding being “caught” plagiarising is a proxy for academic success. And very often they measure this success by the so-called originality score on software such as Turnitin©. This entirely fallacious sense of supposedly good writing and good academic practice is deeply damaging. It creates a fear, even an aversion, to engaging with the minds of others: however, well-referenced a piece of work, Turnitin© may deem it dangerously unoriginal, whereas in fact, it could be an excellent piece of academic work based on rich engagement with the minds of others (McArthur 2022b). Access to academic knowledge relies on engagement with the minds of others, and if our assessment policies and processes distort this understanding and impair students’ abilities to engage then the outcome is hermeneutic injustice. Students are denied the epistemic skills to take part fully in the disciplinary knowledge community.

Another possible source of testimonial injustice can be found in the realm of presentations. Presentations are a “new” form of assessment increasingly finding their way into different disciplinary areas, often under the rationale of employability skills. But the assessment of presentations is a minefield of testimonial injustice because so many of the traits associated with a strong presentation can easily be seen to be highly gendered, class-based and/or culturally based. For example, the female student criticised for being too loud, while the male student criticised for failing to be assertive. We still have deeply ingrained ideas about how people should talk and in assessment we must be prepared to rigorously interrogate our own assumptions about clear and authoritative presentation skills. The inclusion of such assessment tasks are well-meaning but often not thought-through with sufficient criticality. Fricker’s concepts of hermeneutic and testimonial injustice provide that rigorous framework through which to consider whether our assessment tasks are just and whether they are genuinely assessing knowledge in the way we intended. This fine-grained understanding of epistemic injustice can then become the foundation for genuinely authentic assessment and transformative change.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

In this chapter I have outlined three, among many, ways to connect assessment and epistemic justice. I hope these are not taken as alternatives, although equally if used in combination their conceptual differences do need careful attention. I would summarise what each has to offer in the following ways.

Santos’s contribution is immensely challenging – yet undeniably necessary. Santos does far more than simply say there are lots of different epistemologies and so we should tolerate them all in some way. Rather he established the necessary battle to destroy the epistemic hierarchy between North and South. This battle is not optional or at the margins of assessment: it must be front and centre if we truly are enabling students to learn (through assessment) in ways that will enable them to flourish and enable them to take their social role in the flourishing of others.

Bernstein (also through Ashwin and Shay) offers a way into understanding knowledge in different forms and the essential idea that we recongise the progressive transformation of knowledge from that generated by researchers, to that which appears in the curriculum and that which students which then engage with as they are assessed. Bernstein’s contribution raises several issues of epistemic justice in assessment. Firstly, we must understand the difference between the knowledge we worth with as researchers and that which students demonstrate in their assessed work. Secondly, knowledge rarely exists in the unproblematic forms assumed by some of the great stalwarts of assessment practice, such as Kolb’s taphonomy. Thirdly, understanding the relationship between the initial disciplinary knowledge and that which students demonstrate in assessment may provide a better, and more just, form of ensuring the legitimacy of assessment tasks, compared with the standard reliance of particular notions of validity and reliability.

Fricker moves our focus to the knower and the forms of injustice dealt on them as knowers. This adds a much greater grounding to our sense of what epistemic injustice can mean. Clearly, Fricker is not focused on higher education, let alone assessment, but her understandings of testimonial and hermeneutical injustice are immensely relevant to what occurs when we assess. To be committed to challenge epistemic injustice does not mean we can focus just on the knowledge or just on the knower, but on the two as they relate to each other, and in this way Fricker very much reinforces Santos’s position. What is so clear from Fricker and Santos is that all this occurs in a social context. Injustice is not a disembodied notion: it occurs through the action of one (or many) to another (or others). I believe Bernstein enriches our understanding of the knowledges involved in epistemic injustice, while Fricker sharpens our sense of how the injustice occurs. And if we understand the source of injustice, we are better placed to address it and enable genuinely transformative assessment, and genuinely authentic, policy and practice.

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