

Epistemic in/justice: towards “Other” ways of knowing

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Abstract

This paper brings a critical awareness to the interrelations between epistemic injustice and knowledge hierarchies, through an insufficient attention to the Other as epistemically harmed. Because of the dominant empirical and theoretical authority Others are subjected to in research practices and dissemination, our paper explores how marginalised voices possess less epistemic agency due to their disciplining, neglect and subjugation as knowers through testimonial and hermeneutical injustice. We contribute two new categories of epistemic injustice in marketing; Silencing and Ignorance; areas, which reproduce and reify knowledge hierarchies but equally provide scholars with an opportunity to contest epistemic dominance. Through an explicit acknowledgment of the relationship between difference, power and knowledge in meaning making, we argue for Other consciousness which entails i) privileging Othered knowledge, ii) highlighting structural epistemic in/justice within Marketing academe and iii) advocating for artistic-inclusive processes, to alter how we theorise knowing Others, and Other knowers, in marketing scholarship.

Keywords: epistemic injustice, testimonial injustice, hermeneutical injustice; epistemic silencing, epistemic ignorance, Other consciousness

Introduction

Knowledge circulates within a “credibility economy” (Fricker 1999; 2007), determining who (knowers) and what (knowledge) is perceived as more or less epistemically valuable. Dominant disciplines and scientific methods exert considerable epistemic influence in knowledge production and in its circulation. Therefore, the research and dissemination practices which comprise such disciplines, require closer scrutiny as possible locations of epistemic injustice (Grasswick, 2017). If research is perceived as “inherently extractive and colonial, too easily bought and commodified within the elitist academy and anglophone white supremacy to be of use” (Fine, 2018; 117), then scholars have an obligation to not only recognise and contest epistemic dominant modes of meaning making, but to search for new ways to flatten such hierarchies, as “conformity and elitism produce distorted thinking, dangerous to Others” (Fine 2018; 119). Complications arise when we derive knowledge from marginalised locations, which can entail a double struggle: the struggle to articulate what cannot necessarily be told in conventional [dominant] terms, and the struggle to be heard without being (mis)translated into normative logics that occlude the meanings at hand (May, 2014). Hierarchies, therefore in what counts as worthy of being known, can lead some people to be regarded as less credible precisely, because of what it is they know (Heldke 2006), how they communicate and what they speak about. Thus, the only way to understand the normative demands of knowledge hierarchies is “by changing the philosophical gaze so that we see through the negative space that is epistemic injustice” (Fricker, 2007, 177).

Epistemic injustice occurs when dominant structures in knowledge production result in; exclusion and silencing, invisibility, inaudibility and having one’s contributions distorted, misheard and/or having diminished status in communicative practices (Fricker, 2007; Tuana 2019). Although we do not hear this term uttered in everyday life, the consequences of being

denied credibility are widespread in society. Recent examples include the populist forms of epistemic control (Herberg and Vilsmaier, 2020), exerted by those in power to undermine Others by evacuating their voices through a systematic white-washing of discussions on Covid-generated inequalities and institutionalised racism (Crockett and Grier, 2021). We therefore suggest that epistemic injustice requires closer examination, *precisely because* it is a pervasive feature of our personal, social and academic lives, in terms of who is afforded credibility and authority as knowers (Kidd, Medina and Pohlhaus, 2019).

Contemporary developments in marketing scholarship have revealed the corrosive nature of the devalued participant-knower (Varman and Vijay, 2018) and how epistemic violence is enacted through market-based legal language (Banjeree, 2018). Scholars have also highlighted how marginal subjects are delegitimised (Jagannathan, Packirisamy and Joseph, 2018) and the persistent failures by marketers to acknowledge and accurately represent diverse groups (Bennett et al, 2016). These developments challenge us to think about how market-mediated discourses and activities render some consumers as Other and irrelevant. Indeed, marketing scholars have also sought to critically interrogate the nature of epistemic dominance and the politics of knowledge dissemination in this journal (Firat and Dholakia 2006; Firat 2010; Jafari et al. 2012).

However, as epistemic injustice primarily operates in invisible ways, unless it is subjected to explicit scrutiny, harms experienced by Others remained concealed (Muzanenko and Chowdhury 2021). To this end our paper brings an explicit and critical awareness to the interrelations between epistemic injustice and knowledge hierarchies, through an insufficient attention to the Other as epistemically harmed. Although much espoused in critical philosophy circles, Fricker's (2007) seminal account of epistemic injustice remains disconnected from discussions about research practices and dissemination. As a contribution this paper extends epistemic injustice as a new conceptual lens in marketing theory to examine

how Others are epistemically harmed within these contexts. We explore how Others possess less epistemic agency due to their disciplining, neglect and subjugation as knowers through testimonial and hermeneutical forms of injustice. *Others* include i) participants who sit on the periphery of social reality, overlooked or misrepresented (Bennett et al, 2016) and ii) academics who are increasingly experiencing marginality as a consequence of their research interests and/or their identities (Cappellini and Hutton, 2022). Furthermore, we systematise debates at the interface of critical social epistemology and marketing theory to contribute two distinct epistemic practices: *Silencing* and *Ignorance*. These forms of epistemic injustice have not been explicitly confronted in Marketing and yet have particular deleterious implications for Others at the nexus of research/dissemination in our discipline. Finally, we argue that through epistemically just Other consciousness, we can radically alter how we make space for Other meanings in marketing scholarship.

Epistemic injustice: dominance and oppression through knowledge production

Epistemic injustice attends to how people are treated unfairly in their capacities as knowers (Sullivan 2017), thus connecting issues of knowledge, difference, understanding and participation to communicative practices (Kidd, Medina and Pohlhaus, 2019). Such practices can range from interactions with research participants to theoretical, methodological, analytical and dissemination choices. Conceived by Fricker (2007), as a first-order ethics of epistemic practice, it distinctively combines its ethical-social framing, with intersecting philosophies related to the mind, science, language and politics. Philosophically, epistemic injustice has evolved from liberatory epistemological frameworks transforming knowledge production obfuscated by dominant interests and values (Tuana 2019). Connected to feminism, critical race theory, disability studies, and queer, trans and decolonial epistemologies (Kidd, Medina

and Pohlhaus, 2019), it interrogates how “Others” can be rendered silent by virtue of group membership (Dotson, 2011). Yet, the fact that one is socially located on the oppressed side of power relations, does not mean that they/she/he is epistemically thinking from an oppressed epistemic location, an important distinction to note between social location and epistemic location (Grosfoguel, 2007). To avoid producing a “disembodied, unlocated neutrality and objectivity - an ego-politics of knowledge” (Pitts 2017, 150), therefore demands an epistemic shift towards a deeper engagement with marginalised authorial positions. This shift is critical in providing a new, more effective route to *knowing Others, Other knowledges* and researching *with the Other*. If privilege has an unfair advantage in structuring understandings of the social world (Fricker 1999), then we suggest that epistemic dominance is achieved by focusing predominantly on propositional knowledge, which is the knowledge that something is the case (the truth) and this is represented in language (Shotwell, 2019). Yet the over-emphasis placed on propositional knowledge as though it is the only form of knowing/communicating worth considering is itself epistemically unjust as it neglects epistemic resources that help marginal groups craft more just worlds. Written and spoken forms of language are not the only epistemic resources we and Others possess. As we will unpack later, there are growing attempts to use artistic-based approaches in marketing to overcome the dominance of language with recent scholarship demonstrating alternative forms of knowledge representations (e.g. Brown and Kerrigan, 2020; Rokka, Hietanen and Brownlie, 2018). Yet how we express what we “know” can still be subject to epistemic injustice particularly if the “truth” is unsayable and beyond articulation through conventional means. As a consequence, epistemic silencing and systematic productions of ignorance remain under-examined within marketing theory.

Continued preoccupation with knowledge *production* to the point of myopic disregard for the un/intentional silencing of participant-knowers renders us vulnerable, not only to epistemic injustice but to the development of pernicious stereotypes about Others (Bettany and

Woodruffe-Burton, 2009; Venkatesh, 1995). The hierarchical structuring of knowers and knowledges occurs due to a failure to “recognize legitimate differences in ‘ways of knowing’ possessed by diverse groups and peoples” (Denzin, Lincoln, and Giardina 2006; p.774). If the dominant view of Others (knowledges) is “subjective, biased, emotional, political, irrational, non-empirical, impure, and flawed; in other words, not *ideal*” (Kress 2011; 270), researchers should consider embracing Other knowledge, to diagnose and contest epistemic dominance.

Epistemic injustice is discriminatory and representational in orientation in how it interrogates how a person is wronged in their capacity as a knower (Fricker 2007). The question of epistemic agency has been addressed by marketing scholars who confront the gendered nature of marketing theorising and how this often masks dominant assumptions about Others’ experiences (Coleman, Fischer and Tuncay-Zayer, 2021; Maclaran, Stevens and Kravets, 2021). These contributions offer a critical window through which to view the relationship between epistemic privilege and discriminatory epistemic practices. In reviewing arguments within critical social epistemology and marketing theory, we systematise these debate around the two paradigmatic forms of epistemic injustice; i) testimonial injustice where the credibility of the participant/speaker is undermined because of social identity prejudice, thus rendering them less credible and less knowledgeable and ii) hermeneutical injustice whereby constraints are imposed upon disadvantaged groups because “the powerful have an unfair advantage in structuring collective social understandings” (Fricker 2007; 147).

Testimonial Injustice: credibility deficit and the “good” informant

Testimonial injustice is agentially-caused-epistemic injustice, related to social identity prejudice (Garcia 2019) where members of particularly social groups are epistemically undermined and perceived as less trustworthy and knowledgeable. Clarifying the distinctive requirements of the good informant as a near-idealised testifier, Fricker (1998) suggests that

the notion of the good informant has external and internal aspects comprising of competence, trustworthiness, and indicator-properties such that the inquirer can recognise the presence of the first two features, (p.251). The central characterisation of testimonial injustice is that of identity-prejudicial credibility deficit which is “systematic” in nature and functions as a “tracker prejudice” that negatively impacts a person “through different dimensions of social activity – economic, educational, professional, sexual, legal, political, religious, and so on” (Fricker 2007: 27–9). “Identity power” – power deployed through “shared imaginative conceptions of social identity” is therefore exercised over a person such that s/he is regarded as epistemically deficient and discredited as a testifier (Fricker 2007: 14). Testimonial agency as defined by constructions of the good informant is therefore beyond the reach of many marginalised Others.

Identity-prejudicial credibility-deficit is the defining feature of testimonial injustice and impacts members of subordinated groups, due to their broad experiences of social discrimination. Since credibility is a source of power, should anybody with credibility seek to increase it, credibility gaps become twisted epistemic tools of social oppression (Fricker 2012). Mills (2007) argues that it is to the benefit of those in power to actively ignore many aspects of the existence of oppressed groups. Expanding the notion of credibility deficit during communicative interactions, Pohlhaus (2017) discusses how the privileged; i) wrong knowers as knowers through testimonial suppression, ii) cause epistemic dysfunction - by distorting understanding or stymieing inquiry and iii) ignore and/or discredit particular intellectual traditions where one is encouraged to make one’s ideas congruent with those that have already dominated the field to preserve epistemic norms. Additional testimonial oppression occurs out of scientific convenience particularly in locations of social life where the powerful have no interest in achieving a proper interpretation, or where a benefit exists by maintaining the extant interpretation (Fricker 2007).

Within marketing, feminist scholars have attempted to correct the overrepresentation of middle-class family life as the ‘normalised’ way of being and doing family. Indeed, they have investigated the everyday life of less privileged women, showing how, for example, teenage mothers and women in poverty are often seen as less credible consumers by service providers, health professionals and shop assistants (Banister et al., 2016; Hutton, 2019). Having their experiences scrutinised, put in doubt, or simply ignored, women are often judged as ‘bad mothers’ since their consumption is seen as inadequate and distant from the dominant middle-class standards of mothering (Hamilton 2012). These marketing scholars demonstrate that credibility never applies to subjects individually and in isolation from others but always concerns clusters of people in particular social networks.

Hermeneutical Injustice: Othering through structural marginalisation

Hermeneutical injustice is concerned with “the injustice of having some significant area of one’s social experience obscured from collective understanding owing to a structural identity prejudice in the collective hermeneutical resource” (Fricker, 2007;155). Hermeneutical injustice is a structural phenomenon. It happens when a certain group is hermeneutically marginalised—that is, members do not get to participate fully in those social processes of meaning-making through which shared concepts and modes of interpretation are formed, as such they have a significant area of their social experience obscured from understanding (Fricker 2007). Extending this idea further, McCollum (2012) argues that the institutions that regulate significant aspects of our lives and our exchanges with others are similarly positioned to create hermeneutical injustice. To illustrate, food policies in school are mainly designed around consumption practices which resonate with white, middle-class, body-able (so healthy and wealthy) ideals of ‘good food’. Thus, under the apparently neutral language of nutrition,

these policies perpetuate hermeneutical injustice since they tend to disregard other ways of feeding and eating. They end up marginalising working-class mothers and children for whom the policies were initially developed for (Cappellini, Harman and Parsons, 2018). When policies are shaped by the consumption habits of the privileged, structural gaps emerge in conceptual and empirical resources which disadvantage subordinated groups in their ability to convey their experiences (Banister et al., 2016). Unequal social power of researchers (in this specific case, school policy makers) can skew shared hermeneutical resources, so they possess “appropriate” understandings of Others’ experiences, whereas the powerless are more likely to have social experiences with ill-fitting meanings to draw on in an effort to render them intelligible (Fricker 2007). The consequences of this, is hermeneutical marginalisation which occurs when Others enter a communicative interaction in a disadvantaged position and are therefore more likely to be misunderstood. The notion of marginalization is a moral-political one indicating subordination and exclusion from some practice that would have value for the participant, as such hermeneutical marginalization is always a form of powerlessness, whether structural or one-off (Fricker 2006; p.98). That wrongly demarcated groups are seen as untrustworthy, unknowledgeable, and intellectually inferior is a cause for concern, particularly when epistemic oppression arises from a situation in which social experiences of powerlessness are not properly integrated into collective understandings of the world (Fricker 2007, Dotson 2011, Medina 2013). Within marketing there have been attempts to correct hermeneutical injustice through the use of participatory tools for expressing different testimonies and thus counterbalancing a dominant narrative and understanding about the marginalised. The work of Hill et al. (2015; 2016) within a maximum-security prison creates a collaboration between inmates and scholars in which the role of researchers (and its epistemic privilege) is distributed over time. Conceptualised as an attempt to repair the hermeneutical injustice in which inmates are embedded, this study provides a vivid account of how alternative knowledge can be

produced though blurred the roles between researchers and those who experience identity-prejudice. Similarly accounts of consumers living with impairments details their market-mediated emotional suffering in ways that would otherwise remain obscured from collective understanding but for the sensitive ethnographic approach (Higgins and Hamilton, 2019).

Testimonial and hermeneutical injustice as constitutive and paradigmatic of epistemic injustice, play significant roles in theoretical and empirical development and generation of knowledge hierarchies. The two need not be mutually exclusive. A ‘double’ victim of this sort of injustice could both have their views not believed or distorted/misrepresented by powerful others while also doubting their own minds in representing their reality credibly and capably to themselves and others (Baird and Calvard 2019). Furthermore, hermeneutical marginalisation is compounded by testimonial injustice, whereby the subordination and persistent exclusion of Others from research practices/knowledge production from which they might derive value, further reinforces their subjugation.

Testimonial injustice erodes the values of equality, diversity and inclusion, inflicting a hybrid harm with both ethical and epistemic element and ill-effects, the cumulative harms of being denied credibility (Alcoff, 2019), and lead to epistemic objectification as a primary harm, in the denial of someone’s epistemic agency (McGlynn 2021). Furthermore, the harm of epistemic detachment can impact marginalised communities when the development of concepts by dominant (research) groups is not shared with participants. Such harms of ‘epistemic exclusion on the basis of social location’ play out in hierarchical systems and societies where members have (often unintentionally) internalised, to varying degrees, pernicious stereotypes regarding the cognitive and moral traits of socially constructed ‘kinds’ of people. Those stereotypes form an interlocking system in which dominant groups are defined to represent the human ‘standard’ or ideal, and Others are defined in relation to, and to varying degrees, as inferior to, that standard. For example, consumers experiencing poverty are

considered to be ‘*unsophisticated*’ in relation to those who are upper-middle-class and white (Crockett, 2017; Saatcioglu and Ozanne 2013).

Epistemic injustice generates and reproduces knowledge hierarchies through the epistemic harm of testimonial and hermeneutical injustice and through the communicative interactions and modes of representation enacted by those in dominant positions and the way this social power leads to epistemic power over “Others”. Next, we examine two new forms of epistemic injustice in marketing theory: i) Epistemic Silencing and ii) Epistemic Ignorance.

Epistemic Silencing

Scholars who concentrate on “silencing” typically focus on linguistic communication – how speakers’ words can be ignored, dismissed, twisted and used against them. However, Glazer (2019) examines non-linguistic communication, arguing that non-verbal gestures are no less susceptible to exploitation. Deliberate emotional silencing can negate and undermine an individual’s experience when non-linguistic cues are dismissed as less credible (Harel-Shalev and Daphna-Tekoah 2021). As Glenn (2004) asserts ‘silence can deploy power, as our talkative Western culture speech is synonymous with civilisation itself’ (4-5), hence silencing becomes a controlled and regulated form of hierarchy.

Fricker also makes a content-form distinction in how injustice can occur due to the speaker’s performative style. People who occupy dominant social positions fail to recognise the emotions of people who occupy subordinate locations as a protocol of oppression (Elfenbein and Ambady 2002; Glazer 2019). This results in emotional disregard towards Others that suppresses and distorts the credibility of their lived experience. Excluded knowledges can also occur pre-emptively when Others are denied an opportunity to participate in communicative exchanges or as a consequence of epistemic objectification (Fricker 2007). With the latter, we fail to treat Others as privileged knowers or epistemic agents who convey

valuable information, but mere sources of information, as valueless objects (Medina 2012). Different linguistic acts in research exchanges and how we use language during research encounters can prompt epistemic marginalisation if we overlook this complexity (Anderson, 2019). Although there are substantial cross-cultural similarities in non-linguistic emotional expression, there are also subtle cultural differences, amounting to distinct “dialects” of expression (Elfenbein and Ambady 2002). Failures to appreciate these cultural differences can lead to affective silences and emotional insularity on the part of the observer/researcher. Ignoring socio-linguistic realities through expression style exclusion such as gestures, emotional tone (Gracia 2019) and discounting various discursive forms thwarts any effort to embrace Other knowledge in order to redefine marginality (Kravets 2021).

Epistemic silencing can also occur through testimonial quieting when an audience fails to identify a speaker as a knower. This can occur through a failure to act through unintentional omission or the inability to recruit participants from particular backgrounds, consequently we are unable to hear and understand their voices. Highlighting the more intentional forms of testimonial oppression, Black feminists have challenged the structures which systematically undervalue them as knowledgeable people, creating epistemically disadvantaged identities through the deployment of controlling images (Collins, 2017; Dotson, 2011). Furthermore, testimonial smothering can exist during communicative exchanges that are charged with complex social and epistemic concerns (Dotson, 2011). One of the difficulties of tracking practices of silencing is that, by nature such examples are difficult to locate and make evident on the ground (Dotson, 2011). Yet testimonial smothering can also take the form of self-imposed silencing. The act of “not telling” contributes to a testimonial void where knowledge is withheld, these choices are voluntary and uncoerced but contribute nonetheless to a new form of testimonial injustice. Epistemic practices of silencing occur at both a structural and individual level. Such practices are often accidental and inadvertent but depending on particular

contexts can also be deliberate and conscious. Whatever the un/intention, the outcomes are the same, the disarticulation and suppression of Others. Fricker (2012) reminds us that both testimonial and hermeneutical injustice has a perpetrator, whether this wrongdoing is performed by an institution or by an individual, the practices of *ventriloquism* and *tricksterism* contribute forms of epistemic silencing in research practice and dissemination.

Turning first to the complexity of ventriloquy, we would like to consider its structural manifestations. Amidst a careful staging of equality, diversity and inclusion rhetoric, the academy can offer a perfunctory, symbolic commitment to its tenets but to remain virtuous and apolitical often consigns issues of exclusion, hierarchy, and epistemic injustice to the periphery and out of sight. This dynamic seeks to clean and anesthetize it, preserve our innocence, and buffer us from consciousness and struggle (Griffin, 1998; Srivastava, 2006). As Code (2018) notes, it is in fact institutionally produced knowledge which “functions as the arbiter of truth, whose faceless trickle-down effects in everyday lives play a constitutive-normative part in shaping the social order they analyse and inform - when the voices of testifiers-informants are removed from both individual and collective accountability” (p.26). Institutional ventriloquy reinforces and entrenches epistemic injustice. Fortunately, within marketing theory we are witnessing progressive moves to present, articulate and disseminate knowledge through the development of alternative epistemic forms (Brown and Kerrigan, 2020; Rokka, Hietanen and Brownlie, 2018). At an individual level, some methodological accounts can render oblique the ways researchers, construct their analyses and narratives. With some positivistic-oriented texts written as if researchers are simply vehicles for transmission, with no voices of their own – such researchers are thus positioning themselves (perhaps unwittingly) as ventriloquists (Fine 2001). Whilst we respect anonymity as a condition to protect participants’ identities, for those who claim neutrality through objectivity, ventriloquism means never having to say “I” in the text, keeping our mouths shut and denying authorial subjectivities and muffling participants by

treating them as objects – while calling them participants (Clark 1990; Fine 2001) By refusing to ventriloquize, we ironically reveal the everyday practices of epistemic ventriloquy bound up with normative research practices (Fine 2001; 215). Recognising this challenge scholars have advocated for explicit intellectual activism (Bradshaw and Firat 2007; Thomas et al. 2020) to challenge rigid epistemic norms. To address epistemic ventriloquy entails working towards what Lather (2007) terms “the doubled move” of both respecting and troubling the voice of the Other – both the participant and the researcher wrestle with being known. Acknowledging the epistemic challenges of failing and disappointing in our knowing of Others is both an epistemological and ethical consideration (Fricker, 2007; Lather 2007; Medina 2012).

Next, we consider the epistemic practices of the *researcher-trickster*, who possesses, no values, moral or social and yet through his/her actions all values come into being (Jung 1956; Radin, 1956). Stemming from African American and Native American Indian literature the trickster embodies twists in meaning-making, and so within research practices, scholars shape-shift to remain in control of their epistemic authority, indifferent to the Other. Utilising unauthorised representational and interpretive movements, by blending concepts and stories in ways to suit their hypotheses, but not the reality of Others. Exploring the parallel identities of mythological tricksters and ethnographic field researchers, VanMeijl (2005) outlines how researchers engage in complex realities from which they detach – oscillating between the contradictory locations of involvement and detachment. In this way, the notion of trickster is inherent to research activity caught between dimensions of involvement and detachment (participant and observation). The researcher becomes unreliable as mediator and as such creates methodological imbalances and epistemic tensions in how they silence Others. Muzanenhano and Chowdhury (2021) oriented us towards the objectification of research particularly the epistemic injustice experienced in publishing against the backdrop of ‘White supremacy’ definitions of research and scholarship’ and explicit dominance, which manifests

in claims of marginal work having no audience, subjecting scholars to exaggerated criticism, epistemic surveillance and disproportionate intellectual burdens.

It is important to note that silence can be an act of strategic resistance, particularly concerning situations where “unsafe” testimony is involved. This has been demonstrated for example through the collective choice of silencing by low-income consumers as a habit of hiding to protect themselves from shame during research encounters (Hutton, 2015). Furthermore, participants can engage in epistemic disobedience by challenging the privileged to become aware of their oppressive norms and resist neoliberalism in research processes and ethics (Tuana, 2019). Therefore, understanding the communicative dynamics in and through which people are differentially silenced is the key to understanding epistemic injustice (Medina, 2012). It challenges us to take note of absences and erasures which also silence Others and to consider who is *not* here (Nagar, 2003).

As a response to epistemic injustice Fricker develops an account of “responsible” or “virtuous” hearing (2007: 66, 76), arguing that prejudicial stereotypes are embedded in the fabric of the social imagination and, thus, hearers must exercise a “critical awareness” regarding identity prejudices that can (or do) inform their credibility judgments of speakers (2007: 89). This would necessitate the counter-intuitive approach of listening to/for multiple selves, in relation to Others, relative to the broader socio-cultural context, whilst also attending to absent, silent and unsayable experiences. Yet listening as a representational device, is something we infrequently see analysed within marketing (Hutton and Lystor 2020; Patterson and Larsen, 2019). This neglects the epistemic difficulties of who has the authority to represent reality and/or who must be silenced in order that these (scientific) representations prevail.

Epistemic Ignorance

The idea of a form of ignorance that is cultivated and maintained with the support of social-political structures was originally advanced by critical philosophers of race and feminists (Woomer 2019). In her seminal piece “Coming to Understand”, Tuana (2004) investigates the science of women’s sexuality, showing how ignorance is not simply an absence or lack of knowledge but “is often constructed, maintained, and disseminated and is linked to issues of cognitive authority, doubt, trust, silencing, and uncertainty” (p. 225–26). Rather than seeing ignorance as a simple result of imperfect knowledge, it can be framed as a consequence of practices of domination and disciplinary apathies, as recently re-discovered reflections on decolonising knowledges convey (Quijano 2007). We identify two forms of epistemic ignorance in marketing: the dominance of Western theories and the dominance of English language/US-based marketing journals.

Olberding (2015) and more recently Sandikci (2021) argue that the current lack of knowledge of non-Western philosophies in social science and in marketing theory is due to their lines of argumentation that make them challenging and indeed ‘beyond comprehension’. Sandikci (2021) makes the case of an epistemology of scaling in which novel marketing theoretical approaches and contributions originated in non-Western contexts, are seen as anchored to such contexts, and thus positioned as exceptional. The inclusion of such approaches and contributions is dependent on a scaling system of grading differences from the centre (here understood as Western context) and thus conceptualised in terms of lacking. To be appropriated these contributions need to pass an intelligibility test, which underlines how the legitimacy of a thought remains anchored to European sensibilities. If Western assumptions do function as gatekeeper, there is no dialectical relationship, as Olberding (2015) argues, but simply a monologue in which ‘other’ philosophies are judged as worthy/unworthy, without questioning the tools of the judge. According to Alcoff (2019) European epistemologies have

not been considered in terms of their genealogies and thus they have never been seen as ‘limited’ in their applicability, but rather as ‘universal’ and ‘global’ in their pertinence. As such Eurocentrism is not only a philosophical tradition, but a position and an epistemic practice supporting and perpetuating an epistemology of ignorance ‘born of imperial and colonial projects of plunder that legitimates a lack of investigation and study beyond one’s own domain’ (Alcoff 2019: 402).

In marketing the dominance of Western-centric theoretical understandings has received some attention over the years. In his seminal piece of ethnoconsumerism, Venkatesh (1995) argues that Western philosophies dominates because ‘the framework is sacrosanct, and the rest is a matter of detail’ (p.30). Indeed, he makes a convincing case outlining how marketing cross-cultural studies or studies conducted outside the US/Europe tend to emphasise differences rather than similarities and to explain such differences with frameworks originated in Western contexts. Ethnoconsumerism instead is ‘a conceptual framework to study consumer behaviour using the theoretical categories originating in a given culture’ (1995, 2). Without denying the role of culturally sensitive approaches, some have pointed out that an extremist culturalist position might risk of creating ‘shaky segmentations and essentialist perspectives’ (Askegaard and Linnet 2011: 393). Such a criticism has generated lively debates on geographical and cultural boundaries as well as the application of emic and etic perspectives in theorising (Chelekis and Figueiredo 2015). These debates are traceable in special issues (see Jafari et al 2012) and tracks, showing emerging sensitivities which have produced inspiring historical works. For example, Karababa’s (2012) investigation on the birth of the consumer culture during the Ottoman Empire, shows how the advent of consumer culture cannot be seen as the simple result of a Western trajectory of modernization. More recently other historical works have debunked myths and misunderstanding about non-Western contexts and the advent of a globalising consumer culture (Ger et al. 2018; Tadajewski and Saren 2008). There are also

ethnographic works which show how non-Western contexts can be studied outside the pervasive notion of incrementalism (Dholakia 2009) and outside the problematic dichotomy individualism/Western cultures *versus* collectivism/non-Western cultures (Kravets and Sandikci 2014; Vikas et al. 2015). For example, Vikas et al. (2015) show how a collectively shared order is exploitative for some individuals, and some elements of individualism facilitated by the marketisation become a respite from such an order.

The second form of epistemic ignorance relates to the dual dominance of the English language and so-called elite journals. The use of English as the *only* academic language operates as technological device of dominance, in which Anglo-American terminology, concepts, meanings and understandings become self-evident while the non-Anglo-American are presented as ‘different’, or simply ‘other’ (Dillard 2000). These self-evident concepts, meanings and understandings are imposed in their provincialism and universalism’ (Quijano 2007:177) as they are presented as the only possible ways of expressing *a* reality which is framed as *the* reality. Language is thus important not simply as a grammatical and lexical matter, but as a matter of syntax and the overall construction of an academic argument which has become more formulaic (Alvesson and Sandberg 2013). The appropriation of such writing skills might contribute to international debates, but these have not created space for other ways of theorising and representing realities. These debates represent monologues rather than dialogues (Olberding 2015).

It is within this monolingual landscape, that the politics of publishing can be fully appreciated. Boussebaa and Tienari (2019: 59) affirm that the complexities of publishing in management journals cannot be fully understood without unveiling the re-production of intellectual hierarchies in which the US and the UK dominate, creating a ‘scholarly monoculture and, hence, potentially stifling intellectual innovation’. While the use of English facilitates international exchanges, it also exacerbates power relations reaffirming the centrality

of “Englishized elites” and their journeys toward certain journals, thus ‘keeping those in the peripheries and semi-peripheries (and, to an extent, also non-natives in the centre and semi-centre) firmly in their place, at least in the short to medium term’ (Boussebaa and Tienari 2019: 63). Marketing scholars have expressed similar concerns regarding the exclusionary effects of the dominance of the English language and the elite marketing journals (Firat 2010; Jafari et al. 2012; Tadajewski, 2016). For many marketing academics, in fact the majority, English is not their mother tongue and writing in a different language might disadvantage their access to publications. While linguistic efforts might be easily achieved by some, it is noteworthy to remind that fluency in English are not evenly distributed across academic contexts, and that lacking familiarity with English academic writing is often (wrongly) associated with a lack of scholarly competence (Pudelko and Tenzer, 2019). To provide some context to the extent of this monolingual landscape, it is noteworthy that the number of journals included in the Web of Science indexes is 27,000 but only 9,000 are peer-reviewed scholarly journals published in ‘other’ languages. Most of these 9,000 journals (in fact almost all) are excluded from prestigious indexes and journal rankings created by international professional bodies, accreditation agencies and indeed newspapers including the *Financial Times* (Curry and Lillis 2018). The circulation of the non-English academic monograph is even more limited than journals. From the 1990 to 2012 the percentage of all non-English books translated, published and/or distributed in the UK and Ireland was around 3%. Within this 3%, academic titles are a very small minority: they have been included in the category of ‘narrative non-fiction’ which never exceeded 3.5 % (Büchler and Trentacosti 2015).

Language is not the only barrier for publishing in elitist academic marketing journals, which have low levels of studies based outside the US or low levels of studies authored by academics based outside the US (Rosenstreich and Wooliscroft 2006). These journals also tend to have ‘overlaps between boards and the board members’ involvement in authoring a large

proportion of the articles published in the top journals' (2006: 431). In a more recent study on the challenges of publishing marketing papers based on Africa and the Middle East, Lages and colleagues (2015) highlight the low interest from editors and reviewers on the context of study as one of the most pervasive barriers. In unpacking the notion of low interest, it emerges how this is due to a 'lack of editors' and reviewers' knowledge about these regions' as well as 'preconceptions of the region, namely the quality of research conducted and the possibility of generalizing the results to other countries and regions' (68). Ignorance of this sort becomes particularly recalcitrant when it operates at a meta-level (Medina 2013) in the form of structural epistemic insensitivity (Santos 2021) as dominant members perform exclusion.

However, it would be too simplistic to indicate academics as the unique perpetrators of exclusion and ignorance in producing and disseminating marketing knowledge. Academic journals are highly profitable business for publishers, which benefit for academic free labour in producing (writing, peer-reviewing, and often editing) the very articles that they sell back to university via subscriptions. The results of doing research are visible (and measurable) with the production of knowledge freely given to publishers 'who commodify it, repackage it, and then charge the universities for the privilege of accessing the work they have produced' (Beverungen et al. 2012 :932). In reflecting on the commodification of marketing knowledge in the nineties, Brownlie and Saren (1995) outline how journals might not be the major problem. Marketing knowledge has become a commodity since marketing academics do not have the sole authority to speak on marketing matters which are often trivialised in textbooks and popular narrative (Holbrook 1995). As they note 'the circulation of the cognitive currency of marketing is accelerating to the point where the difference between knowledge and information about knowledge is itself becoming problematic' (Brownlie and Saren, 1995: 620).

Towards *Other* consciousness for epistemic justice

Our paper diagnoses the complex nature of the epistemic practices of silencing and constructions of ignorance as substantively nourished by the very unjust social formations they work to hide from view. There is an urgent, timely and crucial need in marketing to continue the work of accepting Other knowledges and knowing Others. As epistemic injustice is still an evolving project (Fricker 2012), within marketing we now have an opportunity to reconstitute its structural relations with marginality, to achieve progress in setting out the terms of Other knowledges as recognised and valued (Cappellini and Hutton, 2022).

Privileging Othered knowledge

Epistemic hegemony as a form of domination is understood as what is “exerted not by force, nor even by active persuasion, but by a more subtle and inclusive power” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1998, p.116). It is an apparently inclusive power which, although not coercive, is repressive and perpetuates itself with the reproduction of epistemic injustice through practices of silencing and ignorance. Having identified these two analytically distinct categories of epistemic injustice, we can attempt to identify counter-practices which from macro to micro level, provide ways of repairing injustice and flattening hierarchies as we work towards Other consciousness. To develop *Other*-consciousness entails opening up to our knowledge blind-spots, and transitioning to modes of research which are diverse, unfamiliar, shifting and incomplete of knowing. It also necessitates a reflexive engagement with how we discursively construct the credibility of the Other in our work. The oppressive power of Othering derives from the impassable barrier it draws between ‘us’ and ‘them’ and the social distancing it creates (Krumer-Nevo and Benjamin, 2010; Fine, 1994). Those with social power and credibility define who the Other is. Drawing attention to the “invention” of the Other,

Mignolo (2009) challenges us by asking: Who invented the other if not the same in the process of constructing the same? Such invention is the outcome of an enunciation, the enunciation doesn't name an existing entity but invents it (p.163). This enunciation therefore requires an enunciator (agent), supported by a structure and a (public) outlet in making believe it exists.

Structural epistemic in/justice within Marketing academe

As the literature on epistemic injustice turns increasingly to the question of countering it, Fricker's (2007) focus on individual epistemic virtue of correcting for credibility deficit, although important, neglects the imperative of embedding epistemic justice as a virtue of social systems and institutions (Anderson 2019). Thus, to remedy epistemic injustice, we must transform the social environment where these transactions take place, involving fair and equal access to epistemic resources as markers of credibility, providing more democratic platforms for voicing social perspectives and the development of institutional mechanisms for eliminating identity markers from epistemic exchanges (Samaržija and Cerovac 2021). However, Muzanhamo and Chowdhury (2021) question if institutional epistemic justice can be achieved when the structure of academia promotes the 'decoupling of functions' and 'diffusion of responsibility', meaning that no specific individual is held accountable for inflicting and/or eliminating epistemic injustice. Scholars have also suggested that liberatory research practices are less possible when the researcher is a privileged academic, confined by the rules and regulations which circumscribe academic knowledge production (Byrne and Lentin 2000; First, 2010). Both constrained and enabled, researchers' capacities as reliable knowers is a central feature of our status (Alcoff 2010), where we occupy a contradictory location within academe – part of a cultural elite that receives work privileges by virtue of their claim to expertise, on the other hand they work as agents for change (Lynch 2000). Yet being marginalised within the mainstream academy is very different experience to being on the

outside, silenced and ignored like many of the participants and communities we research with. Commenting on the epistemic damage of hierarchical structures, Thorson and Baker (2019) highlight how the cognitive authority of the powerful means the knowledge they produce is rarely questioned. Maintaining privilege precludes an expansion of hermeneutical sensibilities and is motivated by the need to *not know*. Committing epistemicide (de Sousa Santos, 2014) means sealing ourselves off from those who have Other standpoints, and inflicting harm on those whose cognitive authority is undermined by their place in the social structure (Medina 2013). If a precondition of global social justice is global cognitive justice, then this entails acknowledgement and validation of knowledge and ways of knowing “developed by social groups as part of their resistance against the systematic injustices and oppressions caused by capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy” (de Sousa Santos 2014, p.x). As marketing researchers and scholars, we have a collective epistemic responsibility to facilitate everyone’s ability to participate in meaning-making and meaning-expressing practices. Diverse ways of knowing with equal value, existing in constant horizontal conversation, challenges and threatens hierarchy (Bernasconi, 2007), helping us to listen, to step down from the stage so Others can speak.

Artistic routes, Other ways of knowing

To flatten knowledge hierarchies in marketing research we are not arguing for a ‘pugilistic epistemological exchange’ in which sets of practices and values attempt to state their epistemological superiority (Brownlie and Saren 1995: 624). We rather argue for making space for different forms of knowledge within the marketing discipline. Our pledge is now new; others have argued for a plural approach in which other forms of knowledge are accommodated for the purpose of developing more innovative ideas and marketing knowledge (Brownlie and Saren 1995). In our argument we do ask for something else: we argue for the recognition and

legitimation of different ways of knowing for the sake of stopping the epistemic injustice towards the Other. It is via an embracement of a plurality of knowledges that a full recognition of difference, power and othering is possible. Forms where we can question our situated position, possible epistemic privileges and indeed the theoretical tools that perpetuate such privileges (Meynell 2008). In our field this implies potentiating the emerging novel ways of producing and disseminating knowledge.

Following Stern's (1998) critique of marketing's methodological tools for knowledge production, the last twenty years have seen a proliferation of arts-based approaches, most popular in the form of poetry (Downey, 2016; Rojas-Gaviria, 2020; Sherry and Schouten, 2002; Wijland 2011). As Canniford (2012, p.339) suggests, poetry provides the opportunity for "unfix[ing] marketing knowledge from dominant discourses within our field" utilised in two main ways: as a strategy for flattering hierarchies and power relationships in the field (Hill et al. 2016) as well as disseminating knowledge in marketing journals (Downey 2016). Poetry has been embraced in co-operative inquiry to privilege the epistemic realities of those who are dehumanized (Downey, 2021; 2020; Hill et al. 2015; 2016). Additional forms of arts-based research have been adopted in action-research marketing projects in disadvantaged communities, including artwork co-creation (author own; Seregina 2019) as well as theatrical performances (Burgess et al. 2017). These studies blur overt distinctions between researchers-participants, minimising power relations in fieldwork, offering participants (as co-researchers) more emancipatory possibilities in producing and disseminating knowledge through a medium that does not necessarily rely on their ability to verbalise ideas and experiences (Burgess et al. 2017).

Artistic-based routes recast knowledge production in marketing theory to activities to knowing, by acknowledging the relationship between power, difference and meaning. They help us dismantle rigidity in research production. Challenging researchers' propensity to

dismiss Other ways of knowing and experiencing the world, Lather (2007) asks how research/ers can move forward if their methodological and dissemination choices delimit any intentions they may have for openness. The centrality of creativity to artistic research methods, and especially the capacity of creative research practices to embrace contradictions and disturb binaries (Kershaw et al 2011) is central to how arts-based approaches interrupt Othering and create opportunities for openness. Commenting on the limitations of traditional scientific techniques to embrace more intellectual/methodological humility (Hoekstra and Vazire 2021; Narayan, 1988) scholars have suggested that being wrong, being creative, and recognising blind spots through a rejection of mastery offer routes out of ignorance and silence, particularly when connected to discussions of social oppression.

Generating art in research and disseminating through art, where aesthetics is a by-product of the endeavour rather than the focus is a key part of flattening knowledge hierarchies. Resistant modes of art espoused by movements such as Arte Povera (poor art) and the Fluxus manifesto (Maciunas 1968) have actively sought deconstruction of knowledge hierarchies, through a dismissal of mainstream prescriptions of art production. The intention behind artistic-based research is to explore new areas of knowledge, to be speculative and develop new approaches to inquiry and dissemination through divergent perspectives of being (Mazzei 2021). Indeed, a parallel emphasis has been made by marketing scholars to eschew less scripted methods in favour of emergent approaches (Yadav 2018) for increased accessibility (Jaakkola and Vargo 2021). Integral to broader critical thought, artistic inclusive methods integrate a range of liberatory epistemologies such as feminist, queer, auto-ethnographic and other methodologies of “indiscipline” whilst simultaneously problematising and moving beyond them, with a particular creative twist (Bonenfant 2012). As we have previously mentioned, art plays a crucial role in community projects with Others by building a relationship between action and the artistic processes in transformation and transgression (Elin 1996;

Harman, Cappellini and Campos, 2020). This makes knowledge more relevant to the very people who are often Othered through conventional research. It pushes dissemination boundaries to grip audiences in ways that move beyond spectatorial/analytical engagement (Leavy 2008). Artistic-inclusive processes that do not always rely exclusively on the use of formalised language can transmit multiply faceted meanings across registers of experience (Bonenfant 2012) helping to de-commodify knowledge, decrease ignorance and mitigate practices of silencing. These developments offer us a pathway to reframe power relationships in the fieldwork between researcher and participants and the way marginalised participants are offered a way of expressing themselves (Hill et al. 2016). They also offer a way of expressing the role of our own multisensory knowledge in the entire process of knowledge creation and the way we implicate ourselves in communicating and disseminating our knowledge. This does not mean artistic approaches are pure and quintessentially more democratic. It means that they propose a different way of knowing and as such they expose some of the hierarchical mechanisms and forms of othering that are present in dominant ways of knowing.

To conclude, we suggest that making space for Other knowledges will not happen via a ‘generous’ gesture of inclusivity operated by benevolent disciplinary figures, but only via a revamping of research practices and dissemination modes, so that the “stories and struggles we write about do not become completely inaccessible and/or meaningless to the people whose socio-political agendas we want to support or advance” (Nagar, 2003; p.360). Conveying the critical power of intelligibility from elsewhere, Medina (2006) outlines the need to search for new perspectives which shed light on our own myopias and limitations, thus enabling epistemic reform to correct for perceived deficits in credibility (Fricker, 2007). This is as important for the dominant as it is for Others because epistemic silencing and ignorance can render the privileged marginalised for, they become conceptually and empirically ill-equipped to understand precisely the thing, they may not want to understand (Media 2013). Reconfiguring

hierarchy will thus involve reflecting, reconnecting, and constantly balancing the social and epistemic facets of research and dissemination (Herberg and Vilsmaier 2020) to privilege Others in our work.

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