

Epistemic Injustice in and through AI

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Abstract

AI is rapidly transforming knowledge production and practices across a range of domains, yet AI technologies often embed and perpetuate epistemic injustices—privileging dominant perspectives while marginalising others. Despite growing awareness of AI biases, many frameworks used in HCI and AI ethics fail to fully account for how AI models reproduce historical and systemic exclusions. We propose to critically examine epistemic injustice in AI across six domains; generative AI, creative practice, healthcare, work, education and automated decision-making. We explore how AI systems respond to diverse sociocultural, linguistic, and epistemological inputs, revealing biases in representation, accessibility, and credibility. Through reflection and collaborative mapping, we aim to identify research priorities and intervention strategies at individual, community, and broader society levels. By fostering rich dialogue and nuanced evidencing, we seek to advance research on epistemic justice in AI and create pathways for more inclusive and equitable futures.

CCS Concepts

• **Human-centered computing** → **HCI theory, concepts and models.**

Keywords

Epistemic injustice, generative AI, postcolonial computing, critical theory, participatory design, AI bias

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1 Background and Significance

The rise of AI systems has reignited long-standing questions about who gets to author knowledge, whose voices are recognised, and how technology design contributes to the reproduction of global power hierarchies [8, 30, 44]. Critical scholars across philosophy and postcolonial studies argue that knowledge is not neutral. Fricker [8] frames this through the lens of epistemic injustice, where marginalised groups are denied credibility or interpretive tools. Spivak [44] critiques how dominant frameworks overwrite subaltern speech; and Mohamed et al. [30] call for decolonial foresight in AI to avoid reproducing these exclusions through emerging technologies.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to computer systems capable of performing tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as reasoning, decision making, perception, and pattern recognition [43]. These systems are used to process vast knowledge bases with adaptive algorithms. Generative AI systems like ChatGPT can learn to respond to human behaviour and have therefore found relevance in many people's everyday life. Far from being neutral, AI algorithms, and datasets used to train them, are arguably shaped by long histories of knowledge production and likely influenced by colonialism and epistemic inequality. As scholars have long argued in postcolonial computing, the legacy of empire persists not only in geopolitical terms but in how design knowledge circulates [17]. Even when AI system design appears *universal*, it often reflects culturally specific assumptions about users' values and social norms — assumptions that tend to centre Western, affluent, and dominant-world epistemologies. These are barriers to access and justice in



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and through AI, which we aim to unpack in the proposed workshop. This is not simply a problem of inclusion. It is, as Fricker [8] explains, a deeper issue of structural inequality in meaning-making itself.

1.1 Epistemic injustice

According to Fricker [8] epistemic injustice refers to forms of injustice related to knowledge, specifically, when individuals or groups are excluded, misrepresented, or discredited in their capacity as knowers. Fricker distinguishes between two key forms. *Testimonial injustice* which arises when prejudice leads to undermining one's credibility in their capacity as a knower, for instance, when someone's accent, gender, or racial identity causes others to doubt their intelligence or truthfulness. This form of injustice is often immediate and interpersonal but rooted in entrenched stereotypes that cast marginalised individuals as less competent or sincere. These stereotypes can be embedded in algorithms and datasets shaping AI. *Hermeneutical injustice*, the second form, occurs when marginalised groups lack access to the shared interpretive resources needed to make sense of their social experiences. For example, when language or conceptual frameworks do not yet exist to describe forms of oppression, such as the term "sexual harassment" prior to the 1970s, individuals suffer doubly: from the harm itself and from the inability to articulate it to others [8]. Fricker stresses that this is not merely an accidental omission but a reflection of unequal participation in shaping collective knowledge and social meaning, and further argues that power is a latent capacity embedded in social structures, reinforced through who is authorised to speak, be believed, or even be intelligible [8].

1.2 Resisting epistemic injustice

AI systems are not irredeemably fixed in their harms. As Kay et al. [20] argue, systems like generative AI also have the potential to resist epistemic injustice, not by erasing difference, but by surfacing it. When designed with attention to marginalised epistemologies, such systems can contribute to shared hermeneutical resources and expand public understanding of subjugated experiences. This is exemplified in Mim et al.'s [27] work in Bangladesh, which shows how generative AI reproduces colonial and patriarchal absences, such as the omission of women from AI-generated scenes of public marketplaces, while also illuminating the deeper knowledge hierarchies underpinning these exclusions. Though some outputs, such as hyperreal images of deceased public figures, triggered discomfort in religious communities, these moments of friction can also expose the cultural and spiritual assumptions embedded in AI systems. Such insights offer important lessons for reconfiguring technology not only as a tool for harm reduction, but also as a means to opening possibilities for more accountable and inclusive systems. This requires rethinking the conditions under which AI is trained, deployed, and evaluated. Crucially, it demands participatory engagement with affected groups, not as a gesture of inclusion, but as a restructuring of who gets to shape the epistemic ground on which these technologies stand.

2 Workshop themes and topics

This workshop invites participants to explore the entangled dynamics of epistemic injustice, computing, and AI through collaborative and experiential inquiry and discussion. We suggest six themes in contemporary work on AI applications that will prompt a discussion of scholarship with significant societal and therefore justice implications:

Generative AI: Generative AI's outputs often reproduce epistemic injustices — both testimonial, by silencing or misrepresenting marginalised voices, and hermeneutical, by rendering certain lived experiences unintelligible. Gillespie [9] argues that these outputs reflect the politics of visibility: what is assumed, what must be marked, and what is excluded. The theory of markedness [9], which describes how certain social identities are treated as the default while others are seen as deviations, helps explain why prompts for occupations often yield white-collar jobs like architects or software developers, while omitting blue-collar or precarious work such as cleaners or delivery drivers. Gillespie's audit of large language models (OpenAI ChatGPT, Gemini, and Microsoft Bing AI) [9] shows that even seemingly culturally neutral prompts, such as asking about "a holiday", tend to produce western and Christian examples such as Christmas or Thanksgiving. Zhu et al. [48] similarly found that prompts for "global cities" returned iconic Western landmarks like the Eiffel Tower or UK red buses, while erasing representations of local markets, informal settlements, everyday street life, or culturally plural spaces, flattening the rich textures of non-Western urban life. Lan et al. [22] extend this critique to identity representation, revealing not just stereotyping, but deeper hermeneutical injustice. Their study shows how East Asian women are depicted through Western beauty ideals: heavy makeup, exaggerated facial features, confident postures, as well as exoticised or inaccurate cultural symbols. Together, these findings reveal how generative AI flattens diversity into dominant scripts, reinforcing epistemic constraints that exclude what cannot be parsed through Western-centric norms.

Gillespie [9] reminds us that AI systems do not simply automate knowledge, they co-produce it. Addressing injustice requires more than refining prompts because representation in AI is not about surface inclusion but narrative power: Who gets to be seen, and on what terms. Without critically rethinking the defaults, generative AI will continue to reproduce not only statistical biases, but also the deeper historical asymmetries that shape who gets to speak, appear, and matter.

AI and creative practice: While AI systems have the potential to support and transform creative practice across writing, design, music, visual arts, and many more artistic fields, they also raise pressing concerns around epistemic injustice. Artists increasingly feel pressured to adopt generative AI tools despite possible misalignment with their values or practices, while some disengage, self-censor, or avoid AI altogether for fear of being misunderstood or delegitimised [42]. Other creatives protest its use outright, particularly where generative AI is perceived to replace human labour or misappropriate cultural and stylistic knowledge [10]. These tensions reveal how dominant AI systems can overlook or inadequately capture the situated, intuitive, and affective dimensions of creativity. This has the potential to lead to hermeneutical injustice, where

creatives lack the conceptual resources to make their experiences intelligible and also to testimonial injustice, as artists risk being dismissed in their resistance.

For example, text-to-image AI generators have been shown to reproduce generic or culturally flattened output, erasing non-Western modes of creative meaning making [28]. When an Ecuadorian indigenous artist describes how AI generated “a generic troll monster” instead of what they imagined in their prompting, not only do they lose interpretive agency, but face the hermeneutical injustice of working with an AI system that devalues collective, ancestral, and embodied knowledge systems [18]. This dynamic is not limited to factual representation—it extends into art and imagination. As Mineo [29] reports, debates over whether AI-generated art is “*real art*” point to the same struggle over meaning and authority. Some researchers argue resistance towards AI in art as technophobia, suggesting “many [artists] lack understanding of what AI actually is, how it works, and what it can and cannot be made to do,” calling creatives to reshape and perceive AI art making as a continuation of collective art history [25]. But this perspective reveals a shifting burden: rather than asking if AI can understand us, users are expected to adapt their prompts, their language, and even their worldview to align with machine logic. This behavioural shift is itself a form of epistemic injustice. When systems set the terms of intelligibility, marginalised ways of knowing become sidelined, not because they are invalid, but because they fall outside the trained expectations of the model.

AI and healthcare: Proponents of AI claim it can eliminate human biases in decision making across healthcare services [1]. However, many AI systems instead amplify existing human biases, mirroring their designers’ worldviews, as well as limitations in datasets used to build and train AI on [40], leading to societal consequences and injustices [35]. One such example is the use of recommender systems, which can directly impact the diagnosis and decision making of clinical experts [21]. These predictive models carry biases inherent to gender, race, and other social identities. For example, prediction models for cardiovascular disease claim to predict heart attacks five years before they occur, but are trained on predominantly male datasets, therefore falling short in the diagnosis of women [35]. These systems not only contain inaccuracies in prediction, but perpetuate forms of epistemic injustice by failing to account for the characteristics of underrepresented groups, biasing experts to trust the system over the lived experience of their patient and reflecting and reinforcing the norms of the dominant groups in the dataset.

Furthermore, the wide dissemination of health-related content and information via AI platforms raise concern, given the rapid growth of the market due to lack of regulation and governance in this space [45]. For example, AI tools such as conversational agents are increasingly embedded in digital mental health platforms in mobile apps [47]. Currently, only 3–4% of mobile mental health apps are grounded in evidence [24], while many others adopt scientific and evidential language without sufficient empirical backing [5, 23, 46]. This creates a false sense of credibility around these apps, which leads to prioritisation of AI-generated guidance over the insights of qualified mental health professionals. The issue may be amplified for marginalised groups whose lived experiences are not represented in the design of these systems, many of whom

are often unable to afford or access professional mental health support and therefore rely on off-the-shelf apps [2]. As a result, app users may doubt the validity of their own experiences or feel that their perspectives are dismissed or devalued. With circulation of health related content on algorithm-based social media such as TikTok, AI products are even further popularised and the risk of misinformation is compounded [13]. These examples only begin to uncover the depth of epistemic injustice in and through AI across the domain of healthcare [3].

AI and work: AI systems rely upon behind-the-scenes and invisible work, which becomes obscured as such labour is ignored, marginalised, taken for granted, or rendered out of sight. For instance, Gray and Suri [11] find that companies selling AI products like Google and Amazon are heavily dependent on a global, hidden workforce for tasks such as content moderation and data labelling. Their unseen work—what they call “ghost work”—is often underpaid, precarious, and is taken up by already disenfranchised groups (e.g., racialised minorities, migrants, the economically poor). The concealment of AI work creates profound ramifications for epistemic injustice; it not only excludes, under-recognises, and silences workers, but also reproduces existing structures of power and colonialism, revealing how modern innovations are embedded in longer histories of epistemic extraction and the devaluation of subaltern knowledge [32]. These discriminatory labour configurations are reinforced at the highest levels of AI governance, where technological companies claiming to be “post-racial” and “colour blind”—particularly in Silicon Valley—continue to be owned and directed by white, heterosexual, and cisgender men [36]. Technological elites safeguard their epistemic authority by selectively bestowing the most prestigious and influential positions to already privileged groups while distributing more laborious, unsafe, and less esteemed positions to socially and economically disenfranchised populations. As epistemic injustice, this systematic exclusion denies the relevance of race to technology development while excluding the voices of people of colour from both the workforce and knowledge production processes that shape AI systems [34].

The epistemic injustice of labour hierarchies extends into AI products themselves, where hegemonic meaning-making and representation become embedded in technological design of AI “workers.” Amazon’s Alexa exemplifies this dynamic by designing digital assistants to mimic educated white women [31], thereby erasing and depoliticising legacies of racialised exploitation in domestic labour. This figuration simultaneously obfuscates contemporary racialised labour networks that enable AI systems (e.g., factory workers, warehouse pickers) and misrepresents power dynamics where users perform unpaid data labour for technology companies [38]. Furthermore, AI in workplaces operates through regimes of discipline via epistemic means, relying upon machine-readable data, large data sets, and omnipresent surveillance of workers’ behaviours to indirectly yet powerfully regulate and control workers, especially those engaging in flexible work [33]. Despite such systemic constraints, workers individually and collectively continue to assert their agency by re-defining knowledge about and for AI work. For example, gig economy workers pool and create their own knowledge on online forums by sharing their experiences and generating resistance tactics [26]. Leveraging their experiential knowledge and sensemaking of algorithms and their processes—

thus (re)centring peripheral epistemologies—gig economy workers can better navigate, wield, and game AI to foster more beneficial and empowering interactions [19]. These forms of inequality and resistance support the need for reckoning with the structural power relations that underpin AI labour. In doing so, we lay the foundation for imagining more just, pluralistic, caring, and genuinely emancipatory forms of technological knowledge production.

AI and education: In classrooms around the world, AI is no longer just a subject of speculation, it is becoming a participant. From personalised tutoring bots to AI-generated student feedback, large language models (LLMs) are reshaping higher education. Their uptake is often framed within the vision of *Education 4.0*, a model of learning that embraces flexibility, student agency, and technology-enhanced teaching [37]. Education 4.0 is grounded in pedagogies that decentralise authority: *cyberpedagogy*, which uses digital platforms for interactive and flexible learning; *peeragogy*, which centres collaboration and co-learning among students; and *heutagogy*, which empowers learners to direct their own educational journeys. LLMs, in theory, are well suited to this shift as they offer tailored content, foster autonomy, and can simulate real-world problem solving.

Alongside generative AI's potential, important challenges arise. Kashmir Hill reports that, “The Professors Are Using ChatGPT, and Some Students Aren't Happy About It” [14], and highlights growing student concerns, not about AI's capabilities, but how teaching staff are using it. While educators once worried that AI would enable cheating, students now worry about the uncritical automation of feedback, teaching, and even care. For example, Vanderbilt University's AI-generated condolence email shows how handing over emotional tasks to machines can damage trust that is central to education [14]. This is not just about good or bad use; AI in education is a political project tied to systems of power that benefit dominant corporate or institutional interests [41]. Generative AI models trained on biased data, as Bishnoi et al. [4] show, can reproduce stereotypes related to gender, race, and class, further marginalising voices already excluded from mainstream curricula.

To counter these challenges, Deng and Joshi [7] propose a justice-oriented “people–AI fit” framework that aligns AI tools with human values through adaptive and context-sensitive governance involving both educators and students. This codesign approach promotes epistemic agency: the capacity to critically engage with AI outputs rather than accept them uncritically, and ensures generative tools support, rather than replace, the creative and interpretive work essential to meaningful learning. However, ethical infrastructure alone is insufficient. Drawing on Buber's I–Thou philosophy, Guilherme [12] cautions that over-reliance on AI risks reducing teaching to transactional interactions, erasing empathy, dialogue, and mutual recognition central to transformative education. While educational leaders may appreciate AI's practical benefits such as automating marking and streamlining communication [39], they must also protect the human-centred values that foster equitable and caring learning environments.

In sum, integrating AI into education is not a neutral or inevitable process; it is shaped by competing ideologies, institutional agendas, and social hierarchies. Although LLMs can support the goals of Education 4.0, offering personalised, autonomous, and peer-driven

learning, they also risk epistemic injustice, from undermining educator roles to reinforcing structural bias. Ensuring these tools support equity requires inclusive pedagogy, critical reflection, and collective governance.

Decentring AI and Automated Decision-Making: Much of the literature on what we are calling AI and Automated Decision-Making (ADM) foregrounds technical objects. Scholars investigate algorithms for analysing sentiment [6] or facial recognition systems [16]. This scholarship has been vital in understanding and critiquing emergent technologies. Yet, in framing the issue through a certain technology or technical problem, these accounts tend to make the effects of such technologies appear inevitable, as though they were hardwired into the technical assemblage itself. In technology-centric framings, the questions of where, by whom, and when ADM systems are developed and implemented fade into the background or are flattened into the regulatory landscape that must be navigated. We therefore require a different account of how such technologies are developed, take shape and transform lives around the world.

We propose an approach that is *decentred* [15]. The language of decentring signals a shift from geographical focus on “marginal” or derivative in accounts of ADM, but also in terms of a focus *upon practices* as they are situated in context. It does so not to establish universal tendencies across places and times, but rather to demonstrate the contingent yet powerful consequences of practices of ADM and to point the way toward more nuanced understandings of how such emergent technologies are used and how they might be enacted otherwise.

3 Organisers

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4 Workshop Structure and Activities

Grounded in interdisciplinary dialogue, the workshop will move between hands-on experimentation, reflective discussion, and collaborative mapping. Conversations will continually return to the question of equitable knowledge infrastructures in technical systems, innovation, and research practices. In doing so, we aim to generate not only critique, but also concrete strategies for resisting injustice and amplifying marginalised epistemologies in HCI.

Participants will be encouraged to bring to the workshop a case example from research or practice, to share and discuss. Cases will be mapped and discussed, followed by hands-on activities that reveal biases in AI-generated content and explore how these systems reinforce epistemic injustice. We will use prompts to guide small-group investigations and encourage interdisciplinary dialogue and critical examination of potential harms and emerging injustices. The workshop will end with reflection to develop a call to action. A tentative schedule is outlined below:

- 09.00 – 09.15 Welcome and introduction
- 09.15 – 10.00 Presentations
- 10.00 – 11.00 Mapping and group discussion
- 11.00 – 12.00 Activity 1: Creative experimentation with generative AI
- 12.00 – 13.00 Lunch
- 13.00 – 13.45 Activity 2: Critical examination of AI
- 13.45 – 14.30 Discussion and co-creating a call to action
- 14.30 – 15.30 Closing

5 Post-Workshop Plans

To extend the impact of this workshop, we will facilitate ongoing discussions and collaborations beyond the event through an online community (e.g. Miro, Slack, or a mailing list), where members can share resources, research updates, and further reflections. A workshop summary will be published on a dedicated website, capturing key insights from the activities. The Miro board used during the workshop will serve as a living repository of epistemic injustices identified in AI systems, mapping biases, and outlining potential research directions. In the closing session, we will collectively decide on potential future outputs.

6 Call for Participation

This workshop invites contributions that explore epistemic injustice in and through AI, examining how AI systems can marginalise knowledge, culture, and access. Participants will engage in critical discussions about how these technologies contribute to the inequitable distribution of knowledge and authority, not only in their outputs but also through their design, development, deployment, and governance.

We seek submissions reflecting on experiences, research, pedagogy, or design work that address how AI perpetuates epistemic injustice, or offer strategies and practices for resisting and mitigating these harms. Submissions may take the form of a 500-word abstract and can include case studies or reflections from fields such as HCI, AI ethics, education, design, creative practice, digital culture, justice, and policy. We welcome diverse perspectives from researchers, practitioners, educators, and artists to critically engage with how AI is reshaping knowledge systems and how we might

contribute to creating more inclusive, equitable, and just AI technologies. We anticipate hosting 35-50 participants at the workshop, aiming for rich, multidisciplinary discussions and collaborative exploration.

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