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Abstract

This study investigates the power relations that underlie assessment accommodations in the context of university mathematics. Assessment accommodations, such as extended testing time, have been claimed to be controversial and even discriminatory. This study approaches these practices through the viewpoint of power and governmentality to understand their sociocultural nature. Nine mathematics students with special needs were interviewed to give them a voice over their own accommodations. The analysis used three contrasting notions of power (sovereign, epistemological, and disciplinary power). The students understood assessment accommodations as unfair practices, which represents unilateral sovereign power. Epistemological and disciplinary power could be identified when the students normalised mathematical assessment, and in the ways the accommodations constructed exclusion. This study highlights the importance of understanding power in the context of assessment accommodations, to shed light on the power structures that might create inequity and injustice in mathematics assessment.

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Juuso Henrik Nieminen is a project researcher at the University of Eastern Finland. His multi-disciplinary research concerns the socio-cultural aspects of assessment in the contexts of higher education and mathematics education. Also, Nieminen has studied inclusive and accessible assessment practices. His Ph.D. thesis, conducted at the University of Helsinki, concerned student self-assessment from the viewpoints of agency and power.