



This is a repository copy of *Epistemic injustice and trans lives*.

White Rose Research Online URL for this paper:

<https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/146582/>

Version: Accepted Version

---

**Book Section:**

Cull, M. (2022) Epistemic injustice and trans lives. In: Erickson-Schroth, L., (ed.) *Trans Bodies, Trans Selves: A Resource by and for Transgender Communities*. Oxford University Press ISBN 9780190092726

---

Cull, M., Epistemic injustice and trans lives, In *Trans Bodies, Trans Selves: A Resource by and for Transgender Communities* edited by Laura Erickson-Schroth, 2022, reproduced by permission of Oxford University Press <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/trans-bodies-trans-selves-9780190092726>

**Reuse**

Items deposited in White Rose Research Online are protected by copyright, with all rights reserved unless indicated otherwise. They may be downloaded and/or printed for private study, or other acts as permitted by national copyright laws. The publisher or other rights holders may allow further reproduction and re-use of the full text version. This is indicated by the licence information on the White Rose Research Online record for the item.

**Takedown**

If you consider content in White Rose Research Online to be in breach of UK law, please notify us by emailing [eprints@whiterose.ac.uk](mailto:eprints@whiterose.ac.uk) including the URL of the record and the reason for the withdrawal request.



[eprints@whiterose.ac.uk](mailto:eprints@whiterose.ac.uk)  
<https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/>

## Epistemic Injustice and Trans Lives

Trans people suffer injustices in all aspects of our lives. One category of such injustices is the *epistemic* injustices: injustices to do with knowledge and our capacities as knowers. For instance, trans people often suffer a form of epistemic injustice that Miranda Fricker has called *testimonial* injustice, when attempting to tell others who we are. Testimonial injustice is the failure to give a speaker the appropriate level of credibility on the basis of some identity based prejudice: that the speaker is not believed when they ought to be believed, doubted when they should not be doubted. Trans people are the authorities on our own genders - we're the experts! Experts, moreover, should (in their area of expertise) be granted a high level of credibility; people should generally believe what they say. Yet trans people are often not afforded the high level of credibility we deserve when we assert our identities - our self-identifications are disbelieved, and we are misgendered. This effect is heightened given, as Talia Mae Bettcher has pointed out, trans people and especially trans women are often stereotyped as evil deceivers, hiding their 'true' sex, or 'make-believers', deluding themselves about their gender. These "controlling images", to use Patricia Hill Collins' terminology, unjustly imply that trans people are not trustworthy. Of course, this injustice is just one manifestation of transphobia and must be fought like all others.

Another form of epistemic injustice faced by trans people is *hermeneutical* injustice. To quote Fricker, hermeneutical injustice involves having a "one's social experience obscured from collective understanding" due to prejudice in society creating a 'gap' in our conceptual resources (155). For a young non-binary person, growing up in a binary gender system, and isolated from alternative ways of understanding gender, hermeneutical injustice manifests itself by preventing that person from accessing the concepts or labels by which they might understand their experience. Of course, through education, and *hermeneutic innovation*, whereby we, as trans people, develop new concepts to help us describe and share our experiences moving through our gendered lives, this kind of injustice can be overcome.

Talia Mae Bettcher. (2007) "Evil Deceivers and Make-Believers" *Hypatia* 22(3):43-65.

Collins, Patricia Hill. (2000) *Black Feminist Thought* New York: Routledge.

Fricker, Miranda. (2007) *Epistemic Injustice* Oxford: Oxford University Press.