**COMPREHENSIVE
REVIEW**

The influence of essentialist and social constructionist notions on perceptions of "realness": Implications for LGBTIQ+ experiences

Mik S. Bartels[1] | **Joel M. Le Forestier[2]** | **Anton M. O. Hug[3]** |
Thekla Morgenroth[4] | **Miguel Roselló-Peñaloza[5]**

[1]Discipline of Psychology, University of Canberra, Bruce, Australian Capital Territory, Australia

[2]Department of Psychology, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

[3]Department of Philosophy, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, Paris, France

[4]Department of Psychological Sciences, Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana, USA

[5]Facultad de Salud y Ciencias Sociales, Universidad de Las Américas, Santiago, Chile

Correspondence
Mik S. Bartels, University of Canberra, Bruce, Australian Capital Territory, Australia.
Email: Mik.Bartels@canberra.edu.au

Authors' Positionality
Located in multiple regions across the globe with varying degrees of LGBTIQ+ rights, protections, country status, and privilege, the author group includes individuals who are cisgender, trans, nonbinary, and agender, with various sexual orientations. In addition, the scholarship of the authors has been shaped by differing experiences of class status, privilege, neurodivergence, and

Abstract
Essentialism is an ontological belief that social groups share underlying "essences," while social constructionism suggests social groups are formed and upheld by cultural understandings. We aim to highlight that essentialist and social constructionist beliefs regarding LGBTIQ+ identities underlie psychological evaluations of whether an LGBTIQ+ identity is *real* (social recognition of existence). These evaluations have tangible consequences for LGBTIQ+ people such that LGBTIQ+ identities considered real are (de)valued while those considered not real are marginalized. Central to our examination is the concept of "naturalness," which often affords realness.

experiences of both advocacy and involvement in LGBTIQ+ communities and organizations.

This is reflected through essentialist thought at the individual level when evaluating the realness of LGBTIQ+ identities. However, while LGBTIQ+ people may embrace essentialist rhetoric to defend their identities as real, many draw instead on social constructionist notions. Lastly, we examine how essentialist and social constructionist rhetoric are evident in structural systems to either deny or legitimize LGBTIQ+ identities as real. By reimagining LGBTIQ+ research, we seek to expand the understanding of these identities.

INTRODUCTION

As the global socio-political climate rapidly changes for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, queer, questioning, and people of diverse sexualities or gender identities not covered by these labels (LGBTIQ+; Hässler et al., 2024), public discourse has challenged whether LGBTIQ+ identities are real (e.g., Denizet-Lewis, 2014). For instance, in 2024, controversial children's author J.K. Rowling (2024) posted online, "Astounding how often militant trans activists tell the rest of us, 'so what you're saying is, trans girls aren't real girls.' Yes, that's exactly what we're saying…" In reaction to such challenges, advocates for LGBTIQ+ people have also used language rooted in realness assertions. For instance, in blocking legislation that would ban trans youth from receiving appropriate gender-affirming care, Florida (U.S.) Judge Robert Hinkle stated, "The elephant in the room should be noted at the outset. Gender identity is real. The record makes this clear…" (Dekker v Weida, 2023, p. 4).

Assertions of existence regarding social identities can influence how those with such identities are treated. For example, recognizing the existence of trans and gender-diverse people may facilitate access to gender-affirming care, as per the statement above. However, recognizing an identity as real does not necessarily facilitate the act of social valuation, as treating a group negatively (devaluation) also requires the recognition of the existence of a group (Morton & Postmes, 2009). For instance, in reiterating opposition to same-gender marriage, Solomon Islands Governor General Sir Frank Kabui stated, "It is not wrong to be born with gay or lesbian inclination… there is however a choice either practicing it or not…" (Pacific Islands News Association, 2018). Conversely, the denial of the existence of LGBTIQ+ identities facilitates invisibility. For example, the presumption of heterosexuality, cisgender identities, and endosex bodies in healthcare spaces results in LGBTIQ+ people being unable to get their needs met (e.g., Lambrou et al., 2020; Paine, 2018).

The extent to which LGBTIQ+ identities are evaluated as real or not real may rely on the belief systems individuals draw upon regarding social categories. *Psychological essentialism* (*essentialism* hereafter) refers to the belief that there is an underlying "essence" (e.g., biological origin) that members of a social category (e.g., women, Black people) share that distinguishes them from other social categories (e.g., men, White people; Haslam et al., 2000; see also Gelman, 2003). In contrast, *social constructionism* posits that social categories like gender, sexual orientation, or race are human constructs reinforced through language, values, and norms (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Kitzinger, 1987; Schudson & Gelman, 2022). Though essentialism and social constructionism are

often seen as mutually exclusive, these beliefs can coexist (DeLamater & Hyde, 1998; Schudson & Gelman, 2022). For example, an individual may believe that a trans person was "born in the wrong body" (essentialist), but in parallel, critique binary gender categories (social constructionist) that see nonbinary people discriminated against.

Though much work regarding essentialist and social constructionist beliefs has highlighted their relation to prejudice or attitudes towards LGBTIQ+ people, scant research has examined how these belief systems may influence whether LGBTIQ+ identities are considered real (but see Morton & Postmes, 2009). The distinction between devaluation and assertions of social identity existence is vital. For a group to be devalued (e.g., through prejudice or discrimination) or valued (e.g., through inclusivity or acceptance), they must first be acknowledged as existing. Conversely, denying the existence of an identity can lead to unique forms of marginalization and invisibility (see Morton & Postmes, 2009). For instance, discrimination may see the existence of LGBTIQ+ individuals acknowledged (e.g., through antidiscrimination legislation in workplaces), yet still deem them less worthy of certain rights, such as marriage (see EqualDex, 2024 for a breakdown of global LGBTIQ+ legislation). In contrast, denying the existence of LGBTIQ+ identities can strip individuals of the grounds to advocate for LGBTIQ+ equality. For instance, by criminalizing any acknowledgment or expression of LGBTIQ+ identities in media, education, or public life that makes any form of advocacy punishable (Nicholls, 2023; "Russia: Expanded 'Gay Propaganda' Ban," 2022). That is, evaluations of realness seem to be an antecedent to devaluation (such as discrimination or prejudice) or valuation (e.g., inclusivity) practices. The denial of realness likely contributes to practices of marginalization (i.e., invisibility; e.g., Morton & Postmes, 2009).

Therefore, we examine how social constructionist and essentialist belief systems may guide evaluations of whether an LGBTIQ+ identity is real and how LGBTIQ+ people may use these belief systems to defend their identities as real. Throughout this paper, we use the term *realness* as it reflects the language increasingly used in societal debates about LGBTIQ+ identities (e.g., Dekker v Weida, 2023; Denizet-Lewis, 2014; see also Bettcher, 2007; Currah & Moore, 2009) and encompasses not just identity denial by non-LGBTIQ+ groups, but also public and personal assertions of LGBTIQ+ existence. *Realness*, in the context of this work, can be defined as the extent to which a social identity is recognized, acknowledged, and considered legitimate by a given society or cultural framework. It does not refer to what is objectively real (which may lend itself to essentialism) but instead involves both the social recognition of the existence of an identity and its acknowledgment as part of social reality (regardless of whether it is valued or not).

The aim of this paper is to highlight that essentialist and social constructionist beliefs underlie evaluations of whether an LGBTIQ+ identity is *real*. To do this, examining the social criteria that afford realness claims to social identities is first necessary. Drawing on observations from Queer and Feminist Theory, we reiterate that in many post-colonial contexts, LGBTIQ+ identities have been afforded realness when they equate with "naturalness." Second, we examine how these notions are reflected through essentialist thought at the individual level. Third, we highlight that while LGBTIQ+ people may also embrace these notions, they also experience and embody their identities in ways that conflict with the naturalness/realness binary, drawing instead on social constructionist notions to defend their identities as real. Fourth, we examine how essentialist and social constructionist rhetoric are evident in structural systems to either deny or legitimize LGBTIQ+ identities as real which carry consequences. By examining realness, we can better understand the material consequences of these beliefs on LGBTIQ+ individuals and the role of local societal norms in shaping these evaluations.

"NATURALNESS" HAS HISTORICALLY AFFORDED REALNESS

Dominant, colonial social structures (such as heteronormativism and gender binarism) are predominantly built on perceptions that "natural" is genuine and distinct from artificial (Foucault, 1976; Gutting, 1989). Further, perceptions of "naturalness" have historically been equated with morality (termed the *naturalistic fallacy*; Dar-Nimrod & Heine, 2011) such that categories seen as "natural" are considered more moral, while those considered "unnatural" have been considered less so (see Zaharin, 2022 and Stein, 2014 for discussions), which carry consequences. For instance, scholars have argued that dominant norms regarding ("natural") heterosexuality and the sex/gender binary are colonial impositions (Kerekere, 2021; Monaghan, 2015; Zaharin, 2022; see also Mogotsi et al., 2024; Svensson & Strand, 2024), which have positioned Indigenous sexualities, family structures, gender and the interrelated nature of these as "unnatural" (Swarr, 2023; see also O'Sullivan, 2021 for a discussion of gender and colonialism), thereby "justifying" violent, colonial interventions (Morgensen, 2010).

Moral panics where LGBTIQ+ people are positioned as threats to the "natural" nuclear family have increasingly emerged (Hodžić & Bijelic, 2014; Kuhar & Zobec, 2017), which may have implications for LGBTIQ+ group equality as historically, when framed as "unnatural" LGBTIQ+ groups have held a low legal status. For instance, sexual diversity criminalization falls under "unnatural" offenses in Pakistan (see Cherian et al., 2024 for a discussion), Nigeria (Criminal Code Act, 1990, s. 214 [Nigeria]), Malaysia (*Penal Code Act 545*, 2015, s. 377A [Malaysia]), and Ghana (see Mogotsi et al., 2024 for a discussion). Subsequently, much literature has been dedicated to the search for a biological basis for sexual orientation and gender identity (see Dar-Nimrod & Heine, 2011 and Diamond & Rosky, 2016 for reviews) as rendering genetic (considered "natural") explanations of stigmatized identities are thought to legitimize them. For example, in 2020, Hungary introduced legislation that redefined a term used to mean both sex and gender ("nem") to mean "biological sex based on primary sex characteristics and chromosomes" (Knight & Gall, 2020). Redefinition of the term in combination with legislation that prevents amending sex recorded at birth on legal documentation effectively disallows trans and gender-diverse individuals to be legally recognized as their current gender identity based on some perceived lack of "naturalness." That is, in dominant cisheteronormative systems, perceptions of naturalness have *afforded* realness claims to a social identity.

To contextualize how and why LGBTIQ+ identities may be evaluated as real or not, we briefly highlight how the concept of "naturalness" has been approached. Theoretical frameworks are active constructors of reality, influencing human understanding and interactions with the world, especially regarding social categories (see Mallon, 2007). For instance, *sex* (classifications based on groupings of genitalia, reproductive anatomy, chromosomes, hormones, and secondary features that emerge from puberty into dominant medical binary categories of *male* and *female;* Intersex Human Rights Australia, 2021) is often considered "natural" because it is perceived as inherent (e.g., Currah & Moore, 2009; Garfinkel, 2006); however, scholars have argued it must be considered within the cultural context. For instance, in a review of approaches to the development of sexual orientation and sex/gender, Fausto-Sterling (2019) challenges the notion that the binary classification of sex as either male or female is entirely dictated by nature. Intersex individuals–– who may have chromosomal, gonadal, or anatomical variations from binary medical definitions of male or female–– are often subjected to nonconsensual and unneeded medical interventions to ensure conformity to a socially constructed, binary classification of sex (de María Arana, 2005; see also Klysing et al., 2024). What is more, such classifications often occur within broader systems

of social and power hierarchies. For instance, the construction of rigid and binary sex categories has been used to maintain Eurocentric or Western standards of masculinity and femininity in professional sports (see Batelaan & Abdel-Shehid, 2021 for a discussion).

Within dominant cisheteronormative structures, naturalness has historically been equated with the realness of a social category. For instance, a person recorded as female at birth (sex) is then prescribed the social roles and responsibilities of "woman" (gender), termed the sex/gender binary (see Butler, 1990 for a discussion). However, as many Queer Theory and/or Feminist scholars (e.g., Foucault, 1976; Haslanger, 2012, 2016) have pointed out, naturalness does not equate to realness but rather has historically *afforded* realness; that is, some "natural" origin is perceived as affording membership to a socially constructed category (e.g., gender, sexual orientation). That is not to say that naturalness affords valuation, for there are a number of social categories (e.g., gender and race) that are devalued (e.g., through misogyny and racism), but rather, the ways it has been used is as a basis for such (de)valuation practices.

In sum, we wish to highlight, as many have before us, that what is considered "natural" is not always purely natural. However, in dominant cisheteronormative discourse, there seems to be a prevailing assumption that "natural" is real and, therefore good. Subsequently, tension arises when individuals experience, embody, or live their identities in ways that are seen to "conflict" with the perceived naturalness/realness binary. For instance, LGBTIQ+ people do not always define their identities in terms of naturalness, instead drawing upon the construction of social roles, political and personal dimensions, enacted behavior, and social relations (e.g., Kitzinger, 1987; see also Day, 2020). Consequently, those who experience and embody their identities in ways that are not reliant on naturalness claims are rendered invisible within dominant cisheteronormative frameworks (e.g., Yoshino, 2000; see also Erickson-Schroth & Mitchell, 2009). Understanding this structure allows for the examination of the tension between when non-LGBTIQ+ groups may evaluate LGBTIQ+ identities as real and how LGBTIQ+ groups may defend their identities as real. That is, when essentialist beliefs or social constructionist beliefs may be appealing for making realness claims.

PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL CATEGORIES

Within dominant social structures in which naturalness affords realness, social categories are often mistakenly perceived as inherent and unchangeable *natural kinds* (categories believed to exist independent of social practice; Haslam et al., 2000; Rothbart & Taylor, 1992) rather than *artifacts kinds* (socially constructed categories). Relatedly, how beliefs about categories are used can vary depending on the group under consideration. For instance, essentialism can serve as a rationale that justifies existing social hierarchies (e.g., the patriarchy, colonizer, or White supremacy; Brescoll et al., 2013) because it is based on the premise that group membership indicates qualities and abilities (e.g., Keller, 2005).

However, essentialism can take an additional form such that a perceived essence (e.g., a "gay gene") is seen as affording membership to a social category such as sexual orientation or gender identity (e.g., Dar-Nimrod & Heine, 2011); termed *sexual orientation and gender identity essentialism*, respectively. That is, in some instances, LGBTIQ+ identities may be evaluated in this way, but in other cases, characteristics (e.g., sexual behavior) are seen as stemming from some perceived essence. Additionally, these ways in which social groups are evaluated are not removed from dominant social values. For instance, when a person's characteristics are evaluated, moral or cultural values are often attached to whether such characteristics are considered "normal" or "deviant"

(Diamond & Rosky, 2016). Similarly, when a person is evaluated as being a "real" member of a social group, such evaluations are not removed from broader dominant discourses that equate naturalness with realness.

In summary, in the case of LGBTIQ+ identities, an essence is sometimes perceived as affording membership to an LGBTIQ+ group. In other instances, characteristics are seen as stemming from some essence. In the former, we propose that a perceived essence (usually some perceived biological origin) affords realness to an identity. In the latter form, we propose that a perceived essence determines (de)valued characteristics. Further, these evaluations occur within dominant social norms; often those that equate naturalness with realness. Subsequently, individuals may draw upon differing belief systems to determine if an identity is real or to defend their own identity.

Beliefs about LGBTIQ+ groups

Essentialist beliefs regarding sexual orientation are multifaceted and not universally agreed upon; however, there is considerable consensus. Generally, researchers have distinguished between beliefs about *naturalness* (whether a group is considered natural) and *entitativity* (whether a group is informative or uniform; Haslam et al., 2000). In relation to sexual orientation beliefs among heterosexual people, Hegarty and Pratto (2001) found two dimensions––*immutability* (the belief that sexual orientation is fixed) and *fundamentality* (the belief that there are distinct differences between lesbian and gay people and heterosexual people). Similarly, Arseneau et al. (2013, Study 2), in their sample of heterosexual people, found four dimensions through exploratory factor analysis: *naturalness* (the belief that sexual orientation is biologically based, innate, ahistorical, immutable [akin to immutability] and universal), *discreteness* (akin to fundamentality), *informativeness* (belief that knowledge about a category's essence can provide predictive information), and *homogeneity* (belief that people with the same sexual orientation are uniform) with the latter two dimensions akin to earlier findings of entitativity. What is more, the factor structure exhibited configural invariance across both LGB and heterosexual participants, suggesting these dimensions are, in part, also held by LGBTIQ+ individuals.

Conversely, when using only a sample of LGB individuals using the same items, Arseneau et al. (2013, Study 1) found four dimensions: naturalness, discreteness, entitativity, and *importance* (the belief that grouping people by sexual orientation is important), which indicated a poor fit among a heterosexual sample indicating sexual identity may influence beliefs about sexual orientation. The change from homogeneity to entitativity amongst only LGBTQ+ individuals indicates a shift from viewing sexual orientation groups as cohesive units to seeing them as groups of individuals with similar traits. Conversely, Morgenroth et al. (2021) found three dimensions in a sample of LGB individuals––naturalness, entitativity, and discreteness using exploratory factor analysis. The absence of the importance factor could be, as the authors note, because some of the importance items loaded on the entitativity factor. Generally, however, there is a consistent distinction between naturalness and other essentialist beliefs.

While there is also extensive literature on *gender essentialism* (e.g., Skewes et al., 2018), it primarily deals with beliefs regarding categories of cisgender women and cisgender men and the belief that gender categories (i.e., usually binary men and women) are defined by biology (i.e., sex) and are mutually exclusive, static, and informative (Fine et al., 2023). However, recent research has distinguished between gender essentialism and *gender identity* essentialism, which refers to the belief that gender identities (e.g., woman, nonbinary) have some form of innate basis and are stable (see also Schudson & van Anders, 2022).

Though social constructionist and essentialist beliefs are positioned as opposing (DeLamater & Hyde, 1998), individuals may hold co-existing essentialist and social constructionist perspectives. For instance, evidence indicates that the terms *male/female* (referring to sex) are typically described using essentialist terms (especially amongst men, Lloyd & Galupo, 2019), while *masculine/feminine* (referring to gender expression) are considered more in social constructionist terms (see also Schudson et al., 2019), as is sexual orientation. However, there may be considerable variation to what extent LGBTIQ+ and non-LGBTIQ+ people use essentialist or social constructionist descriptions (see also Anderson, 2023). The terms *man/woman* (referring to gender) are, however, mostly considered in terms of both essentialist and social constructionist content, though cisgender heterosexual individuals are more likely than LGBTIQ+ individuals to define such terms using essentialist rhetoric (Schudson et al., 2019).

That is, beliefs about social categories are evidenced to not be fully accounted for by essentialism or social constructionism. In addition, in their factor analysis intended to identify essentialist and social constructionist beliefs about race and gender, Schudson and Gelman (2022) identified a distinct, third unexpected factor: Realism. The realism factor regarding gender included items such as (1) "Gender is a real category," (2) "Gender is a natural category," and (3) "'Women' and 'men' are made-up categories" (inversely related to the former two items). Moreover, this factor correlated moderately positively with essentialism but negatively with social constructionism. Though their work did not look at whether such dimensions acted causally to each other, it does suggest that essentialist and social constructionist beliefs are, at least in part, associated with realness evaluations and that perceived naturalness is associated with realness. That is, realness evaluations under essentialism may see naturalness as equating to "objectively" real. However, under social constructionism, realness may represent an acknowledgment as part of social reality. Ultimately, research such as this indicates that beliefs about LGBTIQ+ people are multifaceted and may differentially influence realness evaluations of LGBTIQ+ identities.

NARRATIVES ABOUT LGBTIQ+ PEOPLE AND THEIR IDENTITIES

As we have discussed, there are at least two forms that essentialist beliefs may take in the context of LGBTIQ+ groups. The first is that some perceived essence (usually some perceived "natural" basis) affords membership to a social group, and the second is that some perceived essence determines characteristics. That is, there is a distinction between a category level and a trait level essentialist thinking (Kahn & Fingerhut, 2011). The former can best be explained in terms of immutability beliefs, which are typically conflated with some belief in biological origin (see Diamond & Rosky, 2016 and Stein, 2014 for discussions) and speak to some underlying existence of a social group (Morton & Postmes, 2009). Conversely, the relation between some essences and characteristics speaks to fundamentality and entitativity beliefs.

We distinguish between whether people believe sexual orientation is immutable and whether individuals believe characteristics (i.e., sexual behavior) are immutable. These are subtle yet notable differences. Individuals may recognize that one's sexual orientation is inborn, as suggested in the comments by Solomon Islands Governor General Sir Frank Kabui earlier (Pacific Islands News Association, 2018). However, at the same time, sexual behavior may be considered mutable––that is, there is a "choice" whether to act on it or not (see also Hegarty & Pratto, 2001 for a discussion). When we refer to immutability arguments affording realness, we are referring to the perception that some perceived biological origin determines one's membership to a social group rather than the characteristics of that social group (i.e., whether sexual behavior is

controllable). However, we acknowledge that immutability beliefs are often conflated with some belief in biological origin and, in broader essentialism literature, fall broadly under naturalness dimensions.

Relatedly, though universality has been considered alongside immutability under naturalness dimensions (e.g., Arseneau et al., 2013), conversely to immutability claims, universality beliefs may not necessarily indicate a belief in biological origin. For instance, one might consider that there are LGBTIQ+ people across the globe, but at the same time, believe this is a result of increasing visibility (e.g., influence from "the West," Reid, 2023). Indeed, research regarding beliefs about bisexuality has found that universality and immutability beliefs are unrelated (Hubbard & de Visser, 2015) and are weakly correlated in research with gay men and lesbians (Haslam & Levy, 2006). That is, while universality may fall under broader naturalness dimensions in some essentialism literature, in the context of realness claims, it is conceptually different from those regarding biological origin.

Though research has not investigated the link between immutability beliefs and realness evaluations other than Schudson and Gelman (2022) who examined essentialism more broadly, integrating broader literature on authenticity and essentialism indicates relevance. Authenticity is a socially constructed evaluation of "what is genuine, real, and/or true" (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010, p. 839). Common amongst lay conceptions of authenticity is that it, in some part, requires an evaluation of what is real. For instance, Kovács (2019) asked people to create words associated with authenticity in different domains (brands, organizations, people, restaurants, and paintings). Of a final list of 997 unique words participants generated, the term "real" was the second most generated term in the domain of people and the only term other than "genuine" and "good" to appear in the top-15 most-produced words across all five domains.

Though its definition has been contested in academic literature (see Kovács, 2019 for a review), broadly, it involves (1) an evaluation of whether the expression or characteristics of something is consistent with some perceived "true" nature, (2) whether it conforms to dominant social or cognitive categories, and (3) whether an entity can be connected to its "original" source as claimed. Additionally, these processes closely mirror essentialist thought (Newman, 2016). We argue that (1) most closely aligns with evaluating characteristics stemming from some perceived essence, whereas (3) most closely aligns with the notion that some perceived essence affords membership to a group. That is, whether one's membership to a group can be linked to some "source." Moreover, both (1) and (3) occur within prevailing cisheteronormative discourses that equate naturalness to realness and attach morality claims as in (2).

Societal narratives about LGBTIQ+ people and their identities

As highlighted in authenticity literature, an important component of evaluating whether something is "genuine, real, and/or true" (Beverland & Farrelly, 2010, p. 839) is whether an entity can be linked to some origin (Newman, 2019; see also Kovács, 2019). Newman and Dhar (2014) found that individuals evaluate things as more authentic and, therefore, more socially valued when they are produced in an original manufacturing location in comparison to a newer manufacturing location, even when the appearance of the item, the retail value, and brand are invariant because they were seen as carrying the "original" essence. Though this work investigated nonhuman entities, and to our knowledge, no research has examined this link in human entities, researchers have pointed out that the processes behind reasoning about people and objects have commonalities. Such that individuals believe in "real" versions of entities across a range of domains (Kovács,

2019), that both natural and artifact kinds have a "true essence" (Knobe et al., 2013; Newman & Dhar, 2014), and that the "true version of an entity is normatively good" (Christy et al., 2019, p. 402). Moreover, researchers have highlighted that authenticity evaluations regarding objects (Newman, 2016) and people (Christy et al., 2019) can be explained in terms of psychological essentialism.

Indeed, literature has highlighted the role of authenticity evaluations in valuation processes such that entities evaluated as authentic are valued (Newman & Dhar, 2014) and that people make such evaluations by referring to essentialist tendencies (Newman, 2016). Here we may link to the broader literature on human essentialism, for authors have highlighted how immutability beliefs are often conflated with presumptions of biological origin (Diamond & Rosky, 2016) and are associated with valuation processes. For instance, immutability beliefs or a belief in a biological basis for sexual orientation are associated with better attitudes towards gay men and lesbian women (Haslam & Levy, 2006; Haslam et al., 2002; Hegarty & Pratto, 2001; Huic et al., 2018; Jayaratne et al., 2006; see also Alipour, 2017 for a discussion of essentialism and acceptance in Islam). However, such associations may depend on whether an LGBTIQ+ identity is considered real.

Research has found that bisexuality is perceived as less immutable amongst heterosexual individuals in comparison to LGB individuals and that heterosexuals generally hold more negative beliefs about bisexuality (Hubbard & de Visser, 2015). In addition, a link between immutability beliefs regarding bisexuality and improved attitudes towards bisexuals is not apparent. Scholars have extensively discussed how reliance on immutability claims for gay and lesbian advocacy has simultaneously rendered other identities who may be perceived as "threatening" such claims (i.e., those who experience their identities as fluid), invisible (see Diamond & Rosky, 2016 for a discussion). Relatedly, others have highlighted how bisexual individuals experience invisibility both within and outside LGBTIQ+ spaces (see Yoshino, 2000 for a discussion), possibly indicating that advocacy rooted in immutability claims affords perceived realness to some groups while a lack of immutability claims affords invisibility.

Conversely, other scholars have noted that the links between immutability and improved attitudes have been largely correlational, and in the absence of causal links between immutability and attitudes, individual-based motives may influence whether individuals adopt essentialist rhetoric. Hegarty (2002) found an association between immutability and improved attitudes towards lesbian women and gay men in a sample of heterosexuals from the United States (Study 1) but not in a sample from the United Kingdom (Study 2), and such an association was contingent upon whether individuals consider immutability beliefs as tolerant. Additionally, some experimental work has indicated that pre-existing attitudes influence how people think about the causes of stigmatized traits; that is, prejudiced individuals are more likely to attribute sexual orientation to controllable causes (Hegarty & Golden, 2008). Indeed, the association between immutability beliefs and attitudes may also be a function of motives to maintain distinctiveness between groups. For instance, Falomir-Pichastor and Mugny (2009) found that heterosexual men who were exposed to biological accounts of differences between heterosexual and gay men expressed more positive attitudes than those exposed to biological accounts that indicated there were no differences between gay and heterosexual men or a control condition (Study 5). In addition, this effect was most noticeable for men with high levels of gender self-esteem (pride, positive evaluation of one's gender; i.e., those who tended to feel distinctiveness threat). That is, heterosexual men may be more tolerant towards gay men in response to biological accounts that allow them to maintain distinctiveness from gay men. As Falomir-Pichastor et al. (2017) highlight, it is biological determinist claims framed in the context of group differences rather than mutability of sexual

orientation that improve heterosexual men's attitudes towards gay men among heterosexual men higher in gender self-esteem (but not those low in gender-self esteem or women more generally).

As we pointed out prior, realness evaluations often occur in the context of prevailing social norms that equate naturalness to realness. Because realness may be a prerequisite to valuation processes, individuals may be motivated to perceive LGBTIQ+ people in non-natural terms (e.g., by viewing sexual orientation as controllable). That is, there seems to be some level of understanding that biological determinist claims afford legitimacy to LGBTIQ+ people thus individuals may avoid making naturalness claims when they are seen as "pro-LGBTIQ+." In addition, the contradictory findings further support a distinction between whether sexual orientation itself is immutable and whether individuals believe aspects of it (e.g., sexual behavior) are controllable (i.e., a differentiation between group membership and traits; see Kahn & Fingerhut, 2011). The relationship between beliefs in some biological origin and realness evaluations perhaps becomes clearer when turning to research on gender and gender identity essentialism.

Like research on sexual orientation, gender identity essentialism is associated with less prejudice towards trans people (Glazier et al., 2021; see also Bowers & Whitley, 2020 who measured support for transgender rights; but see Ching & Chen, 2022 who did not find this association and found evidence of biased assimilation). However, gender identity essentialism is not associated with reduced prejudice towards gender nonconforming children (Fine et al., 2023). Conversely, the belief that sex determines gender (sex/gender binary) is both causal to (Ching & Xu, 2018), and predicts more severe antitrans prejudice (Ching et al., 2020; Hatch et al., 2022; see also Gülgöz et al., 2018), and prejudice towards gender nonconforming children (Fine et al., 2023). Given evidence indicates that gender is one of the most essentialized categories (other than race) and is perceived as a highly "natural" category (Haslam et al., 2000), if a belief in the sex/gender binary (i.e., that sex affords membership to a gender category) predicts negative attitudes towards trans people yet a belief that one's gender identity has some biological origin is associated with positive attitudes towards trans people, it lends support to the notion that individuals lean on biological claims to determine the realness of one's identity.

It is important to note here that when we discuss realness beliefs, we largely refer to the role of immutability beliefs and a belief in biological determinism. In contrast, other types of essentialist beliefs are used to determine alignment between one's identity and socially valued characteristics, as previously described. Indeed, a large body of research has examined the role of other dimensions of essentialism on attitudes, sometimes finding inverse relationships between essentialism and attitudes to those often found in immutability research. More generally, discreteness beliefs (Feinstein et al., 2016; Haslam & Levy, 2006; Hegarty, 2002; who measured fundamentality; Hubbard & de Visser, 2015; Huic et al., 2018) and informativeness (measured as inductive potential; Haslam et al., 2002) are associated with negative attitudes towards lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals (see also Roberts et al.,2017).

That is, there seems to be a distinction between (1) whether the expression or characteristic of an entity is consistent with some perceived "true nature" and (2) whether an entity can be connected to its perceived "original source" as outlined in authenticity literature. Authenticity and essentialism have, though briefly, been linked in research on gender identity essentialism. For example, in developing a scale regarding gender/sex diversity beliefs, Schudson and van Anders (2022) identified a factor called "Gender Normativity," which consisted of items related to whether "some gender/sex category members are more real or authentic than others" and items related to the perception that for category membership, certain features (e.g., femininity for women; masculinity for men) needed to be present. This dimension was found to correlate strongly with transphobia (Study 1), negative feelings towards gender nonconforming individuals, and higher gender

essentialism (Study 2). This indicates that essentialist thought is associated with realness evaluations and also valuation processes involving perceived alignment between characteristics and a perceived essence.

Relatedly, researchers have pointed to the importance of considering naturalness beliefs in the context of other dimensions of essentialism (Agadullina et al., 2018; Kiebel et al., 2020). For instance, latent profile analyses indicate moderate-to-high naturalness beliefs co-occur with lower discreteness, homogeneity, and informativeness beliefs, and such a profile is more common among people of diverse sexual orientations (Grzanka et al., 2016). Conversely, a mixed-gender sample of heterosexuals is more likely to belong to a profile higher in discreteness, homogeneity, and informativeness beliefs, which co-occur with moderate-to-high levels of naturalness beliefs (Study 1). Additionally, in a sample of only women, a third unique profile emerged in which high levels of discreteness, informativeness, and homogeneity co-occurred with moderate levels of naturalness (Study 2). In addition, the profile associated with moderate naturalness and high levels of other dimensions was associated with homonegativity. As the authors suggest, given that individuals may generally hold high levels of naturalness beliefs, other dimensions of essentialism may be better predictors of attitudes (devaluation). Indeed, other research also evidences that invoking biological information can trigger other forms of essentialist thinking, such as discreteness beliefs, which ultimately increases trans prejudice, particularly for people who seek to preserve ideological standpoints (e.g., Ching & Chen, 2022). That is, other forms of essentialist thinking seem more important to devaluation processes than realness evaluations.

Individuals may not just rely on essentialist frameworks to determine the realness of LGBTIQ+ identities, however. In social constructionism, what is "real" does not rely on some underlying objective reality (see Haslanger, 2012, 2016) but rather what is socially recognized as a part of a social reality. Rather than relying on naturalness claims, social constructionists might draw on the role of language, political movements, social roles, and contingency of cultural context (Schudson & Gelman, 2022), to determine what is "real." Unlike essentialism rhetoric, social constructionism acknowledges that there are no clearly defined categories. As in research regarding essentialist beliefs, these evaluations likely do not occur separately from dominant social norms. Because individuals are motivated to see others' true selves as morally good (Newman et al., 2014), they may challenge dominant essentialist structures of sex, gender, and sexuality that equate naturalness with morality in ways that align with their own values, for instance, by defining sex, gender, and sexuality in social constructionist terms that allow others to still be considered moral.

Substantially less researched are the potential effects of social constructionist beliefs about LGBTIQ+ identities by non-LGBTIQ+ people. However, on Schudson and van Anders's (2022) Gender/Sex Diversity Beliefs Scale, one factor (affirmation) was comprised of mostly items related to social constructionism, several of which were related affirmations of realness (e.g., "Nonbinary gender identities are valid") and were associated with positive reactions towards trans and gender-diverse individuals.

The appeal of a constructionist view for limiting group-based prejudice is intuitive; the notion that social categories are neither rigid nor particularly informative about the people within those categories underlies many prominent and successful approaches to prejudice reduction (e.g., Hall et al., 2009). Furthermore, a social constructionist lens allows for the legitimization of identities outside both the *straight—gay* and *man—woman* binary than do some essentialist belief systems (e.g., Steinman, 2011). Indeed, such approaches not only reduce prejudice but also the harmful effects of prejudice on its targets, possibly through de-emphasizing differences between social groups. For example, Rosenthal and Crisp (2006) demonstrated experimentally that generating

characteristics that overlapped between men and women reduced preferences for stereotypically feminine and masculine careers and increased performance on math tests for women.

However, evidence indicates that perceived threats to masculinity threaten men in particular (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2021) so de-emphasizing group boundaries may work in different ways for cisgender men in comparison to cisgender women in cultures that prefer masculinity. For instance, in contexts that emphasize group equality as a desired outcome (i.e., egalitarianism) over the value of group differences (i.e., multiculturalism), biological accounts that emphasize group differences may allow individuals to maintain distinctiveness from LGBTIQ+ people amongst individuals motivated to maintain such distinctiveness (Falomir-Pichastor et al., 2017; see also Iacoviello et al., 2020). Specifically, heterosexual men who have narrow views of their gender group endorse biological theories of sexual orientation more when faced with egalitarian notions in comparison to when faced with multiculturalism (Falomir-Pichastor & Hegarty, 2014). That is, it is possible that highlighting social constructionist notions that emphasize the arbitrariness of social categories may subsequently facilitate essentialist beliefs in ways that legitimize LGBTIQ+ identities as real because it allows individuals motivated to maintain distinctiveness to assert their own social group as real.

In summary, the discourse surrounding LGBTIQ+ identities is nuanced, with essentialist and social constructionist viewpoints contributing to the societal perceptions of realness in different ways. Essentialist beliefs that embrace immutability or innateness tend to foster perceived realness while other dimensions seem to be more related to valuation processes. Social constructionist beliefs can intersect with each stage of this evaluation process, though they can also occur independently to validate LGBTIQ+ identities as real. It offers a lens that recognizes identities as legitimized by cultural and social contexts, challenging rigid and binary classifications and potentially reducing group-based prejudices.

Narratives about LGBTIQ+ identities from LGBTIQ+ people

Although a considerable body of research has examined beliefs about LGBTIQ+ identities from the perspective of non-LGBTIQ+ people, considerably less has examined the beliefs LGBTIQ+ people hold about themselves (but see Arseneau et al., 2013; Morandini et al., 2015; Morandini et al., 2023; Morgenroth et al., 2021 for example) or how individuals lean on these beliefs to defend their identities as real. Individuals are sometimes motivated to utilize essentialist beliefs when defending their own identities (see Dar-Nimrod & Heine, 2011; Diamond & Rosky, 2016; for discussions). For instance, some trans and gender-diverse individuals seem to essentialize their own identities, leaning into narratives[1] like 'born in the wrong body' to defend their identities as real (Barcelos, 2019; Missé, 2018; see Hughes, 2018 for a discussion). Additionally, such narratives resonate across the LGBTIQ+ spectrum, with people from sexually diverse communities also voicing similar sentiments, such as "born this way" as a basis for advocacy (Jowett & Barker, 2018). Conversely, others might conceive of gender and sexuality in terms of fluidity, kinship connections, or situational contexts (see also Svensson & Strand, 2024).

Similarly to non-LGBTIQ+ people, LGBTIQ+ people also seem to differentiate between when an essence is perceived as determining membership and when the expression of some characteris-

---

[1] We use the term "narrative" here as it has a rhetorical function. For instance, an individual might endorse a "born this way" narrative because in the context of dominant social systems, it affords legitimacy. However, that same individual may not necessarily believe they were "born this way."

tic is reflective of an essence. Experimental evidence demonstrates that when faced with identity denial (i.e., denial of realness), highly identified lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer individuals lean on immutability rhetoric but do not do so when faced with devaluation (e.g., discrimination; Morton & Postmes, 2009). What is more, individuals who display high levels of ingroup identification endorse such rhetoric because they perceive social change as possible. That is, LGBTIQ+ people may be sensitive to how naturalness rhetoric has historically been used as a basis for realness claims (see Diamond & Rosky, 2016, for a discussion of historical use).

Assertions of realness by LGBTIQ+ people do not occur in ways independent from broader social systems. Research has demonstrated that people perceive "real" selves as moral (Newman et al., 2014), which is evident across cultural contexts such as in samples from the United States, Singapore, Russia, and Columbia and among those who score highly on misanthropy measures (De Freitas et al., 2018). Therefore, individuals may be motivated to explain their own identities in terms of naturalness when it affords reality and is closely linked to morality. For example, Jones (2020) interviewed gay and lesbian youth to determine how they worked to position themselves in the broader context of cisheteronormativity, analyzing the language they used to do so. Participants relied on essentialist rhetoric to describe their identities, for example, stating it was "unnatural" for them to be attracted to other genders or referring to innateness to position themselves as legitimate.

However, the extent to which LGBTIQ+ individuals lean on immutability or biological determinist claims to assert their identities may differ by subgroup and how such beliefs are connected to their own experiences. Generally, gay men hold stronger naturalness beliefs than lesbian or plurisexual individuals (Morandini et al., 2023), which have positive implications for identity certainty (e.g., Morandini et al., 2015). Relatedly, individuals who are not exclusively same-gender attracted report their sexual orientation as less immutable or inborn than exclusively same-gender attracted individuals (Morandini et al., 2023; see also Morandini et al., 2017). In addition, gay and lesbian individuals are more likely than queer, bisexual, or pansexual individuals to perceive sexual orientation as immutable and biologically determined as are bisexual women in comparison to queer and pansexual individuals, though Morgenroth et al. (2021) found that lesbian and bisexual women did not differ.

What is more, these beliefs are associated with the identity labels individuals claim. For instance, Morandini et al. (2023) found that among women, stronger naturalness and discreteness beliefs predicted the adoption of a lesbian over a queer identity label, and among men, a gay over a bisexual, or queer identity label. Further, among women, weaker naturalness beliefs predicted the adoption of a pansexual over bisexual identity and weaker discreteness beliefs predicted the adoption of a bisexual over lesbian identity. That is, those typically lower in naturalness beliefs (plurisexuals) might rely on nonessentialist rhetoric to defend their identity as legitimate in the context of social norms that position naturalness as equating to realness.

As scholars have pointed out, reliance on immutability or biological determinist claims has historically reinforced dominant gay/lesbian–straight binaries and has afforded a reality that acts as a base for advocacy (see Diamond & Rosky, 2016 and Yoshino, 2000 for discussions). That is to say, those who experience their identities as fluid, context-dependent, or in terms of social relations may be more inclined to defend their identities as legitimate by emphasizing the social construction of such categories instead of immutability/biological origin claims.

LGBTIQ+ people define themselves in many different ways. For instance, in 2012, American actress Cynthia Nixon was quoted saying that for her, it was her choice to be gay (see Jowett & Barker, 2018 for a discussion of community reactions). Whisman (1996), in a study of lesbian women and gay men, found that some people drew on determinist views, while others drew on

choice accounts or mixed accounts (the most common). Kitzinger (1987) similarly found that lesbian women described their identity in a range of terms, including essentialist terms (innateness) or rhetoric of choice, connection, or chance. In addition, the way one reasons about the self may vary depending on social contexts. For instance, evidence indicates that individualism is linked to the belief in a true self, where interdependent cultures may use less essentialist attributes for describing the self, instead describing the self and identity in terms of social relations (e.g., Kung et al., 2016; see also Svensson & Strand, 2024).

LGBTIQ+ people may utilize social constructionist frameworks to challenge, for instance, the presumption of naturalness as reality or to emphasize the interrelatedness of their identity to other social identities such as racial, political, or gender identities (Kitzinger, 1987; see also Somerville, 2000), or the fluid nature of their identities (e.g., Diamond, 2008; see also Diamond & Rosky, 2016 for a related discussion). For example, borrowing the framework provided by Haslanger (2016, p. 133), trans, gender-diverse, and intersex people may challenge whether binary sex distinctions are legitimate (i.e., does it consider the continuum nature of sex that see the existence of intersex people), whether the sex/binary is useful (i.e., what purpose does it serve?), whether the criteria of classification of "male" or "female" are sufficient (i.e., how and why was the binary decided), whether it is reliable (i.e., does it capture the diversity of human expression) and whether it is "comprehensive and effective" (i.e., is an arbitrary set of chromosomes or genitalia really the essence of a "woman"?). Indeed, the recording of sex at birth by medical professionals occurs in the context of a lack of consensus over what groupings or sorting of characteristics even constitute a sex categorization (e.g., Fausto-Sterling, 2000, 2019). That is, through highlighting the constructed nature of sex and gender, the notion of any one "natural essence" determining group membership is diminished. Instead, group membership is determined through personal embodiment, social expression (e.g., Le Forestier et al., 2023), and understanding.

Conversely to social constructionist understandings, in the same way, that observers may see an essence as determining characteristics of a social group, individuals themselves may refer to essences to describe the nature of their own identities (e.g., Christy et al., 2024, 2019). Holding essentialist beliefs about the self may provide a structure for self-aspects to be organized around that may be beneficial (see also Schlegel et al., 2009). That is, essentialist beliefs about the self provide a cognitive framework to organize information into a self-concept that provides certainty about the self (see also Morandini et al., 2015, 2017 who examined identity certainty). This framework allows individuals to evaluate the degree to which behavior, expression, or experiences reflect their core self (authentic self-expression) and subsequent self-evaluations, which are favorable when characteristics, goals, and expression are aligned with the core self and not favorable when not aligned (see also De Freitas et al., 2018; Newman et al., 2015). Therefore, self-essentialist beliefs may be useful for explaining one's own behavior or external expressions (e.g., gender expressions) in ways that closely align with identity.

Stronger discreteness beliefs are associated with greater identity certainty but also with internalized stigma among LGB individuals (Morandini et al., 2015; 2017). In addition, stronger discreteness beliefs are associated with greater LGBTIQ+ in-group identification and belonging for monosexual individuals (Morton & Postmes, 2009) but lower perceptions of belonging and ingroup identification for plurisexual individuals (Morgenroth et al., 2021). Similarly, research with LGB people indicates that entitativity beliefs have a direct, positive effect on belonging and ingroup identification, and such beliefs do not differ by sexual orientation (Morgenroth et al., 2021; but see Morandini et al., 2023, who did find some group differences on levels of entitativity beliefs). Other work has indicated that entitativity beliefs are associated with more identity uncertainty but less internalized homonegativity among gay men (Morandini et al., 2015). More broadly,

work with non-LGBTIQ+ groups has found that self-entitativity is associated with greater satisfaction with life, happiness and sensing the meaning of life (Dulaney et al., 2019, Study 1), which may be particularly prominent amongst those high in collectivism or low in individualism (Study 2), possibly indicating that social group differences may play a role in whether essentialist beliefs are beneficial to valuing the self.

In synthesizing understanding related to sex, gender, and sexuality, several critical threads emerge. First, while there is an inherent tension between essentialist and constructionist views in conceptualizing gender and sexual orientation, it is evident that both paradigms play pivotal roles in how LGBTIQ+ identities are constructed, navigated, and evaluated as real. Often influenced by dominant cisnormative and heteronormative views, the external world seeks to affix rigid labels and definitions anchored in biological essentialism. In contrast, many within the LGBTIQ+ community, while sometimes leaning into essentialist narratives, also actively challenge and deconstruct these notions, recognizing the fluidity, spectrum, and socially constructed nature of gender and sexuality. However, this fluidity does not diminish the realness of LGBTIQ+ identities (see Haslanger, 2012 for a discussion of the concept of reality). Whether one subscribes to the idea that they were "born this way" or acknowledges the interplay of societal constructs in shaping their identity, the essence of one's experience remains valid. Narratives of being "born in the wrong body" or feeling an innate attraction resonate deeply with many, serving as a protective mechanism against societal invalidation and demonstrating the profound sense of self-awareness and introspection prevalent in the LGBTIQ+ community. The dialog between LGBTIQ+ narratives and societal constructs, as guided through lenses of naturalness and realness evaluations, sets the stage for examining their broader social implications.

Locating narratives about LGBTIQ+ people and their identities within broader social structures

Realness evaluations are not merely self-contained expressions but interact dynamically with overarching social structures, influencing and being influenced by the systems of power and institutional practices that shape the lived experience of LGBTIQ+ people in positive and negative ways.

A *system* refers to a structured set of interconnected principles, practices, and institutions that produce outcomes shaped by historical and social constructions (Haslanger, 2012). Systems of power are interdependent with social structures that render frames of meaning in which individuals act as social beings. Narratives about LGBTIQ+ identities—rooted in essentialist or social constructionist beliefs—do not exist in isolation; instead, they are engaged in a continual exchange with the systems of power that shape societal norms and expectations (see also Mallon, 2007).

The contribution of healthcare institutions to perceptions of LGBTIQ+ people and their identities

Psychology, psychiatry, and medicine are powerful institutions that have historically shaped cultural definitions of, and responses to LGBTIQ+ identities (Fausto-Sterling, 2000, 2019; see also Leskinen et al., 2024 who briefly discuss this history and Llamas, 1994; Rosario, 1997 for similar discussions). For instance, historical conceptualizations of LGBTIQ+ people as having mental

disorders by psychological institutions (e.g., Conrad & Schneider, 1992; Drescher, 2015) led to the establishment of harmful efforts to "correct" sexual orientation and/or gender identities (sometimes called *conversion practices*; Vider & Byers, 2015; Wright et al., 2018; see also Anderson et al., 2024, Csabs et al., 2020). In addition, the binary conceptualizations of sex (i.e., male or female) within medical institutions historically have and continue to justify medically unnecessary "corrective" surgical procedures on intersex infants (Fausto-Sterling, 2019; Leivas et al., 2023) that are widely considered human rights abuses (de María Arana, 2005).

Ultimately, psychology, psychiatry, and medicine are social institutions in which LGBTIQ+ identities are "constructed, produced, and reified––as well as (potentially) challenged and redefined" (Paine, 2018, p. 353). Medical authority over sex, gender, and sexualities is reproduced in cultural definitions of LGBTIQ+ identities that are used to deny the realness of LGBTIQ+ identities (see Fausto-Sterling, 2000; Roselló-Peñaloza, 2018). For instance, in many countries in the Global North, legislative powers determine that sex can only be listed as male or female. Those with medical authority are the first to determine sex as typically male or female (Paine, 2018), and in instances of intersex infants, subjectively determine which sex a person *should* align with (see also Zeeman & Aranda, 2020). Subsequently, sex, under the authority of medicine (Conrad & Schneider, 1992; Paine, 2018; see also Johnson, 2015), is closely linked to the medicalization of gender and sexuality (see also Springer et al., 2012), which is reproduced in public discourse (e.g., Binary Australia, n.d., Sex Matters, 2022.; see also Jowett & Barker, 2018 for a related discussion).

Relatedly, gender identity has often been conceptualized within a medical model, emphasizing physical characteristics and localized dissonance within the individual (Conrad & Schneider, 1992; Johnson, 2015). Though this medicalization has facilitated access to gender-affirming care in some contexts, this approach has reduced the complexities of gender identity to a series of biological markers, sidelining the multifaceted interplay between social context and personal experience. While recent efforts have acknowledged the roles of internal dissonance and environmental factors (e.g., Schwend, 2020), essentialist conceptions of gender persist within medical discourse, perpetuating a binary understanding of gender. For instance, research with trans masculine individuals has highlighted their experiences of being told by medical providers that they were "not trans enough" (i.e., not "really trans") to access gender-affirming care (Lambrou et al., 2020), often due to perceived failures to reproduce binary gender norms.

Subsequently, "born in the wrong body" narratives and the reproduction of binary gender norms are often required for trans individuals to access medical transitions (Hughes, 2018; see also Schwend, 2020). This narrative can marginalize the diversity of trans experiences by implying there is only one "correct" way to be trans, which often involves medical intervention to align one's body with their gender identity. That is, the "wrong body" narrative has historically been used as a measure by which perceived "real" trans identities can be distinguished from "not real" trans identities. Resultingly, the "price" for accessing gender-affirming treatment requires subscribing to essentialist notions of gender in ways that may not feel legitimate.

We must note that we are not advocating for the restriction of gender-affirming care. A plethora of research has robustly highlighted the critical, life-saving outcomes of such care (e.g., Almazan & Keuroghlian, 2021; Park et al., 2022; Tordoff et al., 2022). Rather, we note that the *criteria* to receive such care has facilitated beliefs in a "real" and "not real" way of being trans or gender-diverse. The "wrong body" narrative, while offering an explanation for dissonance, fails to challenge the deep-seated belief that biological sex should determine gender and, instead, may invalidate trans people who cannot or do not want to adhere to binary genders as real (Hughes, 2018; see also Butler, 1990).

The embedding of medical authority in determining sex, gender, and sexuality has repercussions that reverberate beyond clinical settings, infiltrating legislative and cultural domains

WILEY

worldwide. Statements from organizations that uphold binary definitions underscore the widespread societal impact of these institutional beliefs. It is pivotal to critically assess the persistent influence of these institutions and advocate for an understanding that respects the diversity and nuances of every individual's experience, for as we now indicate, these frameworks have influence over legislation and policy that often reflect the importance of realness evaluations.

The influence on legislation and policy

As highlighted by Sweigart et al. (2024), individual, group, and structural factors interact reciprocally with political contexts. These factors and contexts influence perceived norms and rights of LGBTIQ+ people. Healthcare systems have historically wielded considerable influence in shaping realness perceptions of LGBTIQ+ identities, often equating realness with naturalness. This influence extends to legislative and policy frameworks, where essentialist beliefs, rooted in these medicalized perspectives, have informed laws that recognize or negate the rights of LGBTIQ+ individuals.

The insight that at least some essentialist arguments are associated with less anti-LGBTIQ+ prejudice is reflected in popular approaches to LGBTIQ+ advocacy, including dominant "born this way"-style narratives (Jang & Lee, 2014) that are used to defend LGBTIQ+ identities as real. Advocacy rooted in this tradition has seemingly contributed to LGBTIQ+ people's acceptance as legitimate (e.g., Leslie, 2017). For instance, the notion that discrimination based on innate qualities is unjust has led to landmark legislative changes, such as the decriminalization of homosexuality and the establishment of marriage equality laws (Ortiz, 1993), thereby affirming the realness of LGBTIQ+ identities. However, Diamond and Rosky (2016) have extensively highlighted both the danger of relying on immutability arguments and how immutability alone may not be the sole reason for facilitating change (see also Hegarty, 2002).

Additionally, because most of the research on the effects of essentialist thinking on anti-LGBTIQ+ prejudice concerns gay men and trans people, caution should be applied to conclude that some advocacy approaches rooted in essentialism can advance LGBTIQ+ interests. For instance, beliefs in biological determinism might cultivate invisibility against those who navigate their sexual orientations more fluidly across varying contexts or timeframes (e.g., Diamond & Rosky, 2016). Strong convictions in binary, immutable and discrete categories could harbor prejudice against those resonating with less prevalent identity labels. Thus, while essentialism can validate the realness of particular LGBTIQ+ identities, it simultaneously risks undermining the realness of others within the vast LGBTIQ+ spectrum.

Furthermore, essentialist arguments should be made with caution. In addition to invoking essentialism's complex network of helpful and harmful effects on anti-LGBTIQ+ prejudice, the specifically biological form of essentialism commonly invoked in born-this-way activism can be—and has been—used to justify eugenics and other regressive social policies (Dar-Nimrod & Heine, 2011). When gender is rigidly linked to biological sex, for instance, these beliefs can and have been used to underpin policies that restrict access to gender-affirming care under the guise that gender is immutable, ultimately denying the existence of trans and gender-diverse identities (Trotta, 2023). For instance, legislation such as in Hungary (Knight & Gall, 2020) that requires the use of "sex recorded at birth" or only allows binary classifications of sex on legal documents illustrates how essentialist beliefs can lead to the denial of transgender and intersex identities as real. These essentialist notions fuel debates surrounding who is deemed a "real" man or woman and are frequently used to contest policies supporting transgender rights (e.g., Bettcher, 2007; Currah & Moore, 2009).

These divergent perspectives serve as powerful lenses through which lawmakers and policy-makers view issues related to sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation, ultimately influencing the legal landscape and the rights afforded to these marginalized communities. For instance, research has demonstrated that individuals exposed to biological accounts of gender differences are more likely to endorse gender stereotypes (Brescoll & LaFrance, 2004), and biological accounts are associated with negative racial stereotyping and in-group bias among those holding chronic biological essentialist beliefs (Keller, 2005). Subsequently, essentialist beliefs may be associated with increased support for boundary-enhancing policies (Roberts et al., 2017). This is observable in the various gender essentialist justifications for the recent series of discriminatory so-called "bathroom bills" being increasingly implemented in the United States that ban trans people from using public bathrooms that differ from their sex recorded at birth (e.g., House Bill No. 1525, Indiana General Assembly, 2019). These bills are premised on the concept of a "real" gender anchored in biology. Unsurprisingly, backing for bathroom bills is strongly linked to endorsing gender essentialist beliefs (Roberts et al., 2017).

Conversely, the social constructionist perspective challenges essentialist norms and may some-times offer a pathway to more inclusive legislation. Acknowledging that identities are socially constructed enables policymakers to consider the diverse and complex ways sex, gender, and sexuality are experienced. This recognition is exemplified in Argentina's Senate landmark legis-lation that allows individuals to change their legal gender markers without medical requirements (Arístegui et al., 2017), reflecting a departure from essentialist assumptions and embracing a more holistic understanding of gender identity. Similar legal reforms in countries such as Chile ("Gender Identity Law," 2020) and Spain (Cabrera, 2023) echo this shift, illustrating a growing international recognition that the realness of gender identity extends beyond physical characteristics and are deeply rooted in each person's lived reality.

However, constructionist notions may also serve to limit the expressions of LGBTIQ+ individu-als when they are misapplied. When misapplied, social constructionist notions might undermine legal protections for LGBTIQ+ individuals by portraying their identities as mere societal cre-ations rather than real identities in relation to the "natural" attitude. This perspective can lead to arguments that these identities are changeable or temporary, potentially supporting harmful conversion practices (e.g., Wright et al., 2018). Furthermore, by framing LGBTIQ+ identities as constructs rather than having any innate or biological basis, opponents might contend that they do not warrant the same legal rights typically granted based on natural or biological distinctions. For instance, in June 2013, Russian federal law proposed legislation banning sharing information regarding nontraditional sexual relationships among minors ("Russia: Expanded 'Gay Propa-ganda' Ban," 2022; see also Cherian et al., 2024 for a discussion of LGBTIQ+ rights in Russia). This law implies that being LGBTIQ+ is not a genuine identity but an ideology or choice that can be promoted or adopted. Similar notions are also present in other countries, such as Chile, in which Sexual Education is being pushed to exclude discussions of LGBTIQ+ issues under the guise that children may be "indoctrinated" (Ojeda & Astudillo, 2023; see also Kuhar & Zobec, 2017 for a similar discussion across Western and Eastern Europe).

In summary, the dichotomy between essentialist and social constructionist beliefs is not merely theoretical; it has practical implications that influence the legal and social realities of LGBTIQ+ individuals. Essentialism, with its inherent link between naturalness and legitimacy, has histor-ically both advanced and hindered LGBTIQ+ rights, demonstrating the power of perceptions of "objective" realness in shaping law and policy. On the one hand, essentialist beliefs have propelled positive changes, such as the decriminalization of homosexuality and the recognition of marriage equality, affirming the realness of LGBTIQ+ identities within naturalness discourse. On the other

hand, they have fostered restrictive policies that deny the complex realities of in particular trans, gender-diverse, and plurisexual identities. Conversely, social constructionism has opened the door to more inclusive legislative frameworks that recognize the socially constructed nature of identities and legitimize diverse gender and sexuality experiences. However, when misapplied, it can lead to policies that diminish the realness and permanence of LGBTIQ+ identities. The challenge ahead lies in navigating these competing ideologies and ensuring that policies and laws affirm the realness of all identities in ways that reflect the lived experiences of LGBTIQ+ individuals. The balance between affirming the realness of LGBTIQ+ identities and ensuring the protection of LGBTIQ+ rights remains a central concern in the ongoing discourse on LGBTIQ+ rights.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

In summary, in the context of dominant cisheteronormative systems, "naturalness" is often equated with realness. However, as many have pointed out, "naturalness" only affords realness, which is a subtle yet important distinction. In some cases, characteristics are seen as stemming from some essence, in other cases, an essence is thought to afford membership to a social category. The latter of which is better understood in authenticity literature.

Authenticity, the socially constructed evaluation of what is genuine or real suggests that individuals look for a link between an entity and its origin to determine its legitimacy. In the context of essentialist thinking, identities perceived to have a biological basis are typically regarded as more "real" or legitimate. Conversely, identities not tied to biology are often overlooked or deemed less valid. This distinction reflects the role of immutability in shaping perceptions of authenticity. Unlike immutability, other essentialist concepts like entitativity and fundamentality are more closely related to processes of valuing or devaluing identities.

Though research linking realness to essentialism or social constructionism is scant, broader essentialist literature has highlighted that both are associated with evaluations of whether a category is real (Schudson & Gelman, 2022; Schudson & van Anders, 2022). That is, evaluations of realness, seem to be related to, but separate from both essentialist and social constructionist dimensions. Under essentialist thought, perceptions of naturalness seem to afford the perception of an "objective" reality. While some LGBTIQ+ people may embrace these notions, LGBTIQ+ people may also reject these claims, instead leaning into social constructionist claims that better represent their lived experiences; that is identities as fluid, constructed and context-dependent. Under social constructionist thought, what is "real" is what is socially relevant. However, tension arises when individuals who experience their identities in these ways conflict with broader systems that seem to be rooted in naturalness.

Based on the insights gained from this review, recommendations for future research, policy, and activism could include several approaches. Despite some benefits of immutability/biological determinist claims, these concepts can also reinforce the notion that naturalness equates to realness and limit understanding of the diversity and fluidity within these communities (e.g., Diamond & Rosky, 2016; Yoshino, 2000), ultimately denying their realness. This focus may also fail to address the cultural, social, and individual dynamics that influence gender and sexual identities, potentially ignoring the personal and societal factors that shape these identities over time. By promoting a more nuanced understanding that acknowledges both the potential biological aspects and the socially constructed nature of identities, educational and advocacy efforts can foster a more inclusive and realistic appreciation of LGBTIQ+ experiences.

However, despite the potential utility of realness, our proposal has some limitations. First, while providing a rich narrative and interdisciplinary insight, the reliance on theoretical frameworks may not fully capture the empirical variability of LGBTIQ+ experiences across different cultural contexts. Much essentialist literature concerning LGBTIQ+ people is situated in Western, largely White samples in industrialized nations with relatively stable economies, which may limit the general application of this work. Furthermore, the expansive scope of the paper, aimed at integrating concepts of "realness" within LGBTIQ+ identities, could inadvertently gloss over the specific and nuanced experiences of underrepresented groups within the community in terms of empirical work (e.g., demisexual, pansexual). This broad approach risks diluting the depth needed to explore individual identities and experiences. Lastly, in attempting to define and deconstruct normative assumptions through concepts such as "naturalness" and "realness," there is a risk of reinforcing the very binaries the paper has criticized (see Kitzinger, 1987). Thus, while the paper provides insight into realness evaluations of LGBTIQ+ identities, it also exemplifies the complex challenge of discussing identity without reifying normative frameworks.

Despite these limitations, this paper has navigated the complex interplay between essentialist and social constructionist beliefs and their impact on the perceptions of realness. Throughout, we have indicated these beliefs not only inform personal and societal narratives but also crystallize into the policies and laws that govern LGBTIQ+ lives. Essentialism, with its deep roots in the naturalistic tradition, has both bolstered and barricaded the rights of LGBTIQ+ individuals, thereby illustrating the potent effect of realness perceptions on legal and social structures. The advocacy for LGBTIQ+ rights has often leveraged essentialist arguments to affirm the existence and validity of these identities, thereby securing much-needed recognition and protection under the law. However, the same essentialist notions have, paradoxically, served to exclude and marginalize some LGBTIQ+ individuals when used to rigidly define gender and sexuality within a binary framework. Conversely, social constructionism has offered a counter-narrative that embraces the fluidity and complexity of identities, encouraging legal systems to adopt more inclusive and affirming approaches and departing from equating naturalness with legitimacy. This is evident in progressive legislation across various nations, which aligns legal recognition with individuals' lived realities rather than rigid biological definitions. Yet, the constructionist view is not without its challenges; when misinterpreted, it can inadvertently support narratives that negate the inherent and enduring nature of LGBTIQ+ identities, sometimes contributing to policies that aim to "correct" or "erase" them.

In conclusion, this discourse compels us to continuously re-evaluate the narratives we uphold about what is "real" and how these narratives shape the lived experiences of LGBTIQ+ people. It is a call to a recognition of identities that exist in rich and diverse forms. As we have explored, the journey towards equality and acceptance for LGBTIQ+ individuals is interwoven with our understanding and perceptions of realness—both of which are in a state of ongoing evolution. The task is to ensure that our societal, psychological, and legal frameworks are flexible and robust enough to embrace this diversity, thus fostering a society that recognizes and celebrates the realness and richness of every individual's identity.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

REFERENCES

Agadullina, E. R., Lovakov, A. V., & Malysheva, N. G. (2018). Essentialist beliefs and social distance towards gay men and lesbian women: A latent profile analysis. *Psychology and Sexuality*, 9(4), 288–304. https://doi.org/10.1080/19419899.2018.1488764

Alipour, M. (2017). Essentialism and Islamic theology of homosexuality: A critical reflection on an essentialist epistemology toward same-sex desires and acts in Islam. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 64(14), 1930–1942. https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2017.1289001

Almazan, A. N., & Keuroghlian, A. S. (2021). Association between gender-affirming surgeries and mental health outcomes. *JAMA Surgery*, 156(7), 611–618. https://doi.org/10.1001/jamasurg.2021.0952

Anderson, V. N. (2023). What does transgender mean to you? Transgender definitions and attitudes toward trans people. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, 10(4), 600–612. https://doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000566

Anderson, J. R., Jones, T. W., Power, J., Jones, T. M., Despott, N., Pallotta-Chiarolli, M., & Gurtler, P. (2024). Engaging mental health service providers to recognize and support conversion practice survivors through their journey to recovery. *Cognitive and Behavioral Practice*, 31(1), 20–25. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cbpra.2023.08.005

Arístegui, I., Radusky, P. D., Zalazar, V., Romero, M., Schwartz, J., & Sued, O. (2017). Impact of the Gender Identity Law in Argentinean transgender women. *International Journal of Transgenderism*, 18(4), 446–456. https://doi.org/10.1080/15532739.2017.1314796

Arseneau, J. R., Grzanka, P. R., Miles, J. R., & Fassinger, R. E. (2013). Development and initial validation of the Sexual Orientation Beliefs Scale (SOBS). *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 60(3), 407–420. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0032799

Barcelos, C. A. (2019). 'Bye-bye boobies': Normativity, deservingness and medicalisation in transgender medical crowdfunding. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 21(12), 1394–1408. https://doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2019.1566971

Batelaan, K., & Abdel-Shehid, G. (2021). On the Eurocentric nature of sex testing: The case of Caster Semenya. *Social Identities*, 27(2), 146–165. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630.2020.1816452

Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The social construction of reality*. Penguin Books.

Bettcher, T. M. (2007). Evil deceivers and make-believers: On transphobic violence and the politics of illusion. *Hypatia*, 22(3), 43–65. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2007.tb01090.x

Beverland, M. B., & Farrelly, F. J. (2010). The quest for authenticity in consumption: Consumers' purposive choice of authentic cues to shape experienced outcomes. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 36(5), 838–856. https://doi.org/10.1086/615047

Binary Australia. (n.d.). *Protecting children, supporting parents, defending truth*. About Binary. Binary Australia. https://www.binary.org.au/about

Bowers, M. M., & Whitley, C. T. (2020). What drives support for transgender rights? Assessing the effects of biological attribution on U.S. public opinion of transgender rights. *Sex Roles*, 83(7-8), 399–411. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-019-01118-9

Brescoll, V., & LaFrance, M. (2004). The correlates and consequences of newspaper reports of research on sex differences. *Psychological Science*, 15(8), 515–520. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0956-7976.2004.00712.x

Brescoll, V. L., Uhlmann, E. L., & Newman, G. E. (2013). The effects of system-justifying motives on endorsement of essentialist explanations for gender differences. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 105(6), 891–908. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0034701

Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. Routledge.

Cabrera, C. G. (2023, February 16). *Victory in fight for gender recognition in Spain: Law expands protections for LGBTI people in various areas*. Human Rights Watch. https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/02/16/victory-fight-gender-recognition-spain-0

Cherian, D., Singh, P., Jami, H., Ummak, E., & Osin, E. (2024). From oppressive to affirmative: Situating the health and well-being of LGBTIQ+ people as impacted by systemic and structural transitions in Russia, Turkey, Pakistan and India. *Journal of Social Issues*.

Ching, B. H.-H., & Chen, T. T. (2022). Effects of biological determinism on beliefs and attitudes about transgender people: Psychological essentialism and biased assimilation. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, *51*(4), 1927–1942. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-021-02262-8

Ching, B. H.-H., & Xu, J. T. (2018). The effects of gender neuroessentialism on transprejudice: An experimental study. *Sex Roles*, *78*(3-4), 228–241. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-017-0786-3

Ching, B. H.-H., Xu, J. T., Chen, T. T., & Kong, K. H. C. (2020). Gender essentialism, authoritarianism, social dominance orientation, and filial piety as predictors for transprejudice in Chinese people. *Sex Roles*, *83*(7–8), 426–441. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-020-01123-3

Christy, A. G., Maffly-Kipp, J., Friedman, M., Cimpian, A., & Schlegel, R. J. (2024). Essentialist beliefs about the self predict psychological well-being. *Self and Identity*, *23*(1-2), 127–174. https://doi.org/10.1080/15298868.2024.2336940

Christy, A. G., Schlegel, R. J., & Cimpian, A. (2019). Why do people believe in a "true self"? The role of essentialist reasoning about personal identity and the self. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology: Personality Processes and Individual Differences*, *117*(2), 386–416. https://doi.org/10.1037/pspp0000254

Conrad, P., & Schneider, J. W. (1992). *Deviance and medicalization: From badness to sickness*. Temple University Press.

Criminal Code Act. (1990). https://lawsofnigeria.placng.org/laws/C38.pdf

Csabs, C., Despott, N., Morel, B., Brodel, A., & Johnson, R. (2020). *SOGICE survivor statement: Calling for action on the LGBTQA+ conversion movement*. Brave Network Melbourne, SOGICE Survivors (Vic and NSW), Equal Voices: National Advocacy Taskforce, MGA Counselling.

Currah, P., & Moore, L. J. (2009). "We won't know who you are": Contesting sex designations in New York City birth certificates. *Hypatia*, *24*(3), 113–135. https://www.jstor.org/stable/20618167

Dar-Nimrod, I., & Heine, S. J. (2011). Genetic essentialism: On the deceptive determinism of DNA. *Psychological Bulletin*, *137*(5), 800–818. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0021860

Day, M. (2020). Indigenist origins: Institutionalizing Indigenous queer and trans studies in Australia. *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, *7*(3), 367–373. https://doi.org/10.1215/23289252-8553006

De Freitas, J., Sarkissian, H., Newman, G. E., Grossmann, I., De Brigard, F., Luco, A., & Knobe, J. (2018). Consistent belief in a good true self in misanthropes and three interdependent cultures. *Cognitive Science*, *42*(S1), 134–160. https://doi.org/10.1111/cogs.12505

Dekker v Weida, No. 4:22cv325-RH-MAF. (N.D. Fla. 2023). https://lambdalegal.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/049110589395

DeLamater, J. D., & Hyde, J. S. (1998). Essentialism vs. social constructionism in the study of human sexuality. *Journal of Sex Research*, *35*(1), 10–18. https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499809551913

de María Arana, M. (2005). *A human rights investigation into the medical "normalization" of intersex people*. Human Rights Commission. https://ihra.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2009/03/sfhrc_intersex_report.pdf

Denizet-Lewis, B. (2014, March 20). The scientific quest to prove bisexuality exists. *The New York Times Magazine*. https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/23/magazine/the-scientific-quest-to-prove-bisexuality-exists

Diamond, L. M. (2008). *Sexual fluidity: Understanding women's love and desire*. Harvard University Press.

Diamond, L. M., & Rosky, C. J. (2016). Scrutinizing immutability: Research on sexual orientation and U.S. legal advocacy for sexual minorities. *The Journal of Sex Research*, *53*(4-5), 363–391. https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2016.1139665

Drescher, J. (2015). Out of DSM: Depathologizing homosexuality. *Behavioral Sciences*, *5*(4), 565–575. https://doi.org/10.3390/bs5040565

Dulaney, E. S., Graupmann, V., & Quinn, K. A. (2019). Who am I and how often? Variation in self-essentialism beliefs, cognitive style, and well-being. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *136*, 148–159. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2017.10.011

EqualDex. (2024). *LGBT equality index*. https://www.equaldex.com/equality-index

Erickson-Schroth, L., & Mitchell, J. (2009). Queering queer theory, or why bisexuality matters. *Journal of Bisexuality*, *9*(3-4), 297–315. https://doi.org/10.1080/15299710903316596

Falomir-Pichastor, J. M., & Hegarty, P. (2014). Maintaining distinctions under threat: Heterosexual men endorse the biological theory of sexuality when equality is the norm. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, *53*(4), 731–751. https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12051

Falomir-Pichastor, J. M., & Mugny, G. (2009). "I'm not gay… I'm a real man!": Heterosexual men's gender self-esteem and sexual prejudice. *Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin*, *35*(9), 1233–1243. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167209338072

Falomir-Pichastor, J. M., Mugny, G., & Berent, J. (2017). The side effect of egalitarian norms: Reactive group distinctiveness, biological essentialism, and sexual prejudice. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, *20*(4), 540–558. https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430215613843

Fausto-Sterling, A. (2000). *Sexing the body: Gender politics and the construction of sexuality*. Basic Books.

Fausto-Sterling, A. (2019). Gender/sex, sexual orientation, and identity are in the body: How did they get there? *The Journal of Sex Research*, *56*(4-5), 529–555. https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2019.1581883

Feinstein, B. A., Dyar, C., Bhatia, V., Latack, J. A., & Davila, J. (2016). Conservative beliefs, attitudes toward bisexuality, and willingness to engage in romantic and sexual activities with a bisexual partner. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, *45*(6), 1535–1550. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-015-0642-x

Fine, R. D., Olson, K. R., Gülgöz, S., Horton, R., & Gelman, S. A. (2023). Gender essentialism predicts prejudice against gender nonconformity in two cultural contexts. *Social Development*, *33*(1), e12720. https://doi.org/10.1111/sode.12720

Foucault, M. (1976). *The history of sexuality, volume 1: An introduction*. Pantheon Books.

Garfinkel, H. (2006). Passing and the managed achievement of sex status in an "Intersexed" person. In S. Stryker & S. Whittle (Eds.), *The transgender studies reader* (pp. 58–93). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203955055

Gelman, S. A. (2003). *The essential child: Origins of essentialism in everyday thought*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195154061.001.0001

Gender identity law takes effect in Chile. (2020, January 10). *Gender identity law takes effect in Chile*. Human Rights Campaign. https://www.hrc.org/news/gender-identity-law-takes-effect-in-chile

Glazier, J. J., Gomez, E. M., & Olson, K. R. (2021). The association between prejudice toward and essentialist beliefs about transgender people. *Collabra: Psychology*, *7*(1), e25528. https://doi.org/10.1525/collabra.25528

Grzanka, P. R., Zeiders, K. H., & Miles, J. R. (2016). Beyond "born this way?" Reconsidering sexual orientation beliefs and attitudes. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *63*(1), 67–75. https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000124

Gülgöz, S., Gomez, E. M., DeMeules, M. R., & Olson, K. R. (2018). Children's evaluation and categorization of transgender children. *Journal of Cognition and Development*, *19*(4), 325–344. https://doi.org/10.1080/15248372.2018.1498338

Gutting, G. (1989). *Michel Foucault's archaeology of scientific reason*. Cambridge University Press.

Hall, N. R., Crisp, R. J., & Suen, M.-w. (2009). Reducing implicit prejudice by blurring intergroup boundaries. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, *31*(3), 244–254. https://doi.org/10.1080/01973530903058474

Haslam, N., & Levy, S. R. (2006). Essentialist beliefs about homosexuality: Structure and implications for prejudice. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *32*(4), 471–485. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167205276516

Haslam, N., Rothschild, L., & Ernst, D. (2000). Essentialist beliefs about social categories. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, *39*(1), 113–127. https://doi.org/10.1348/014466600164363

Haslam, N., Rothschild, L., & Ernst, D. (2002). Are essentialist beliefs associated with prejudice? *British Journal of Social Psychology*, *41*(1), 87–100. https://doi.org/10.1348/014466602165072

Haslanger, S. (2012). *Resisting reality: Social construction and social critique*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199892631.001.0001

Haslanger, S. (2016). Theorizing with a purpose: The many kinds of sex. In C. Kendig (Ed.), *Natural kinds and classification in scientific practice* (pp. 129–144). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315619934

Hässler, T., Fogwell, N., Gonzalez, A., Anderson, J., & Atwood, S. (2024). Reimagining LGBTIQ+ research—acknowledging differences across subpopulations, methods, and countries. *Journal of Social Issues*.

Hatch, H. A., Warner, R. H., Broussard, K. A., & Harton, H. C. (2022). Predictors of transgender prejudice: A meta-analysis. *Sex Roles*, *87*, 583–602. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-022-01338-6

Hegarty, P. (2002). 'It's not a choice, it's the way we're built': Symbolic beliefs about sexual orientation in the US and Britain. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, *12*(3), 153–166. https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.669

Hegarty, P., & Golden, A. M. (2008). Attributional beliefs about the controllability of stigmatized traits: Antecedents or justifications of prejudice? *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, *38*(4), 1023–1044. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2008.00337.x

Hegarty, P., & Pratto, F. (2001). Sexual orientation beliefs: Their relationship to anti-gay attitudes and biological determinist arguments. *Journal of Homosexuality*, *41*(1), 121–135. https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v41n01_04

Hodžić, A., & Bijelic´, N. (2014). *Neo-conservative threats to sexual and reproductive health & rights in the European Union*. CESI.

Hubbard, K., & de Visser, R. O. (2015). Not just bi the bi: The relationship between essentialist beliefs and attitudes about bisexuality. *Psychology and Sexuality*, *6*(3), 258–274. https://doi.org/10.1080/19419899.2014.987682

Hughes, L. (2018). Wronging the right-body narrative: On the universality of gender uncertainty. In O. Gozlan (Ed.), *Current critical debates in the field of transsexual studies: In Transition* (pp. 181–193). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351058995

Huic, A., Jelic, M., & Kamenov, Z. (2018). Essentialist beliefs about homosexuality predict positive and negative behavioral intentions toward lesbian women and gay men. *Journal of Homosexuality*, *65*(12), 1631–1655. https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2017.1383104

Iacoviello, V., Valsecchi, G., Berent, J., Anderson, J., & Falomir-Pichastor, J. M. (2020). Heterosexual men's attitudes towards homosexuality and ingroup distinctiveness: The role of perceived men's feminisation. *Psychology and Sexuality*, *11*(1-2), 45–61. https://doi.org/10.1080/19419899.2019.1675749

Indiana General Assembly. (2019). House Bill No. 1525. https://iga.in.gov/legislative/2019/bills/house/1525/details

Intersex Human Rights Australia. (2021, February 24). *What is intersex?* https://ihra.org.au/18106/what-is-intersex/

Jang, S. M., & Lee, H. (2014). When pop music meets a political issue: Examining how "Born This Way" influences attitudes toward gays and gay rights policies. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *58*(1), 114–130. https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2013.875023

Jayaratne, T. E., Ybarra, O., Sheldon, J. P., Brown, T. N., Feldbaum, M., Pfeffer, C. A., & Petty, E. M. (2006). White Americans' genetic lay theories of race differences and sexual orientation: Their relationship with prejudice toward Blacks and gay men and lesbians. *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*, *9*(1), 77–94. https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430206059863

Johnson, A. H. (2015). Normative accountability: How the medical model influences transgender identities and experiences. *Sociology Compass*, *9*(9), 803–813. https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12297

Jones, L. (2020). 'The fact they knew before I did upset me most': Essentialism and normativity in lesbian and gay youths' coming out stories. *Sexualities*, *23*(4), 497–515. https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460719830343

Jowett, A., & Barker, S. (2018). Rhetoric and etiological beliefs about sexuality: Reader responses to Cynthia Nixon's New York Times interview. *Journal of Homosexuality*, *65*(6), 766–783. https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2017.1364544

Kahn, K. B., & Fingerhut, A. W. (2011). Essentialist beliefs and sexual prejudice against gay men: Divergence at the levels of categories versus traits. *Psychology and Sexuality*, *2*(2), 137–146. https://doi.org/10.1080/19419899.2010.536562

Keller, J. (2005). In genes we trust: The biological component of psychological essentialism and its relationship to mechanisms of motivated social cognition. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *88*(4), 686–702. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.88.4.686

Kerekere, E. (2021). *Takatāpui: Part of the Whānau*. Tīwhanawhana Trust, Mental Health Foundation.

Kiebel, E., Bosson, J. K., & Caswell, T. A. (2020). Essentialist beliefs and sexual prejudice toward feminine gay men. *Journal of Homosexuality*, *67*(8), 1097–1117. https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2019.1603492

Kitzinger, C. (1987). *The social construction of lesbianism*. Sage Publications.

Knight, K., & Gall, L. (2020, May 21). Hungary ends legal recognition for transgender and intersex people: President Ader should not sign problematic new law. *Human Rights Watch*. https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/05/21/hungary-ends-legal-recognition-transgender-and-intersex-people

Knobe, J., Prasada, S., & Newman, G. E. (2013). Dual character concepts and the normative dimension of conceptual representation. *Cognition*, *127*(2), 242–257. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cognition.2013.01.005

Kovács, B. (2019). Authenticity is in the eye of the beholder: The exploration of audiences' lay associations to authenticity across five domains. *Review of General Psychology*, *23*(1), 32–59. https://doi.org/10.1177/1089268019829469

Kuhar, R., & Zobec, A. (2017). The anti-gender movement in Europe and the educational process in public schools. *CEPS Journal*, *7*(2), 29–46. https://doi.org/10.25656/01:14594

Klysing, A., Prandelli, M., Roselló-Peñaloza, M., Alonso, D., Gray, M., Glazier, J., Swanson, S., & Wang, Y.-C. (2024). Conducting research within the acronym: Problematizing LGBTIQ+ research in psychology. *Journal of Social Issues*.

Kung, F. Y. H., Eibach, R. P., & Grossmann, I. (2016). Culture, fixed-world beliefs, relationships, and perceptions of identity change. *Social Psychological & Personality Science*, *7*(7), 631–639. https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550616652208

Lambrou, N. H., Cochran, K. M., Everhart, S., Flatt, J. D., Zuelsdorff, M., O'Hara, J. B., Weinhardt, L., Benton, S. F., & Gleason, C. E. (2020). Learning from transmasculine experiences with health care: Tangible inlets for reducing health disparities through patient-provider relationships. *Transgender Health*, *5*(1), 18–32. https://doi.org/10.1089/trgh.2019.0054

Le Forestier, J. M., Page-Gould, E., & Chasteen, A. L. (2023). Which identities are concealable? Individual differences in concealability. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1177/01461672231198162

Leivas, P. G. C., Schiavon, A. D. A., Resadori, A. H., Vanin, A. A., Almeida, A. D. N., & Machado, P. S. (2023). Human rights violations in normalizing procedures on intersex children. *Cadernos de Saúde Pública*, *39*(1), e00066322. https://doi.org/10.1590/0102-311XPT066322

Leskinen, E. A., Horne, S. G., Ryan, W. S., & van der Toorn, J. (2024). The opportunities and limits of open science for LGBTIQ+ research. *Journal of Social Issues*.

Leslie, C. R. (2017). The geography of equal protection. *Minnesota Law Review*, *101*, 1579–1640. https://scholarship.law.umn.edu/mlr/162

Llamas, R. (1994). La reconstrucción del cuerpo homosexual en tiempos del SIDA [The reconstruction of the homosexual body in times of AIDS]. *Revista Española de Investigaciones sociológicas*, *68*, 141–172. https://doi.org/10.2307/40183761

Lloyd, A. E., & Galupo, M. P. (2019). What people with normative identities believe about sex, gender and sexual orientation. *Psychology and Sexuality*, *10*(3), 269–280. https://doi.org/10.1080/19419899.2019.1614088

Mallon, R. (2007). A field guide to social construction. *Philosophy Compass*, *2*(1), 93–108. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-9991.2006.00051.x

Missé, M. (2018). *A la conquista del cuerpo equivocado*. Egales.

Mogotsi, I., Otchere, Y. O., Botchway, I., Muthoni, Y., Gariseb, R., & Ramalepe, L. M. (2024). Psychosocial correlates of LGBTIQ+ experiences in selected African countries: Reimagining LGBTIQ+ Research. *Journal of Social Issues*.

Monaghan, O. (2015). Dual imperatives: Decolonising the queer and queering the decolonial. In D. Hodge (Ed.), *Colouring the rainbow: Blak queer and trans perspectives*. Wakefield Press.

Morandini, J. S., Blaszczynski, A., Costa, D. S. J., Godwin, A., & Dar-Nimrod, I. (2017). Born this way: Sexual orientation beliefs and their correlates in lesbian and bisexual women. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *64*(5), 560–573. https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000209

Morandini, J. S., Blaszczynski, A., Ross, M. W., Costa, D. S. J., & Dar-Nimrod, I. (2015). Essentialist beliefs, sexual identity uncertainty, internalized homonegativity and psychological wellbeing in gay men. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *62*(3), 413–424. https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000072

Morandini, J. S., Menzies, R. E., Moreton, S. G., & Dar-Nimrod, I. (2023). Do beliefs about sexual orientation predict sexual identity labeling among sexual minorities? *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, *52*(3), 1239–1254. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-022-02465-7

Morgenroth, T., Kirby, T. A., Gee, I. A., & Ovett, T. A. (2021). Born this way–or not? The relationship between essentialism and sexual minorities' LGBTQ+ identification and belonging. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, *50*(8), 3447–3458. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-021-02145-y

Morgenroth, T., & Ryan, M. K. (2021). The effects of gender trouble: An integrative theoretical framework of the perpetuation and disruption of the gender/sex binary. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, *16*(6), 1113–1142. https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691620902442

Morgensen, S. L. (2010). Settler homonationalism: Theorizing settler colonialism within queer modernities. *GLQ*, *16*(1-2), 105–131. https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-2009-015

Morton, T. A., & Postmes, T. (2009). When differences become essential: Minority essentialism in response to majority treatment. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *35*(5), 656–668. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167208331254

Newman, G. E. (2016). An essentialist account of authenticity. *Journal of Cognition and Culture*, *16*(3-4), 294–321. https://doi.org/10.1163/15685373-12342181

Newman, G. E. (2019). The psychology of authenticity. *Review of General Psychology*, *23*(1), 8–18. https://doi.org/10.1037/gpr0000158

Newman, G. E., Bloom, P., & Knobe, J. (2014). Value judgments and the true self. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *40*(2), 203–216. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167213508791

Newman, G. E., De Freitas, J., & Knobe, J. (2015). Beliefs about the true self explain asymmetries based on moral judgment. *Cognitive Science*, *39*(1), 96–125. https://doi.org/10.1111/cogs.12134

Newman, G. E., & Dhar, R. (2014). Authenticity is contagious: Brand essence and the original source of production. *Journal of Marketing Research*, *51*(3), 371–386. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmr.11.0022

Nicholls, C. (2023, April 19). Global scientists urge Uganda's president to veto anti-LGBTQ bill. *CNN*. https://edition.cnn.com/2023/04/19/africa/uganda-anti-lgbt-bill-scientists-open-letter-intl/index.html

Ojeda, T., & Astudillo, P. (2023, August 23). Anti-gender ideology in Chile: Sex education is not abuse. *Advancing Learning and Innovation on Gender Norms*. https://www.alignplatform.org/resources/anti-gender-ideology-chile-sex-education-not-abuse

Ortiz, D. R. (1993). Creating controversy: Essentialism and constructivism and the politics of gay identity. *Virginia Law Review*, *79*(7), 1833–1858. https://doi.org/10.2307/1073388

O'Sullivan, S. (2021). The colonial project of gender (and everything else). *Genealogy*, *5*(3), 67. https://doi.org/10.3390/genealogy5030067

Pacific Islands News Association. (2018, June 12). Sir Kabui: Same sex marriage is coming, prepare to deal with it. *The Fiji Times*. https://www.fijitimes.com.fj/sir-kabui-same-sex-marriage-is-coming-prepare-to-deal-with-it/

Paine, E. A. (2018). Embodied disruption: "Sorting out" gender and nonconformity in the doctor's office. *Social Science & Medicine*, *211*, 352–358. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2018.06.039

Park, R. H., Liu, Y.-T., Samuel, A., Gurganus, M., Gampper, T. J., Corbett, S. T., Shahane, A., & Stranix, J. T. (2022). Long-term outcomes after gender-affirming surgery: 40-year follow-up study. *Annals of Plastic Surgery*, *89*(4), 431–436. https://doi.org/10.1097/SAP.0000000000003233

Penal Code Act 574. (2015). https://www.rcrc-resilience-southeastasia.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Penal-Code-Act-574.pdf

Reid, G. (2023, May 17). Russia, homophobia and the battle for 'Traditional values'. *Human Rights Watch*. https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/05/17/russia-homophobia-and-battle-traditional-values

Roberts, S. O., Ho, A. K., Rhodes, M., & Gelman, S. A. (2017). Making boundaries great again: Essentialism and support for boundary-enhancing initiatives. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *43*(12), 1643–1658. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167217724801

Rosario, V. A. (1997). *Science and homosexualities*. Routledge.

Roselló-Peñaloza, M. (2018). *No body: Clinical constructions of gender and transsexuality—pathologisation, violence and deconstruction*. Routledge.

Rosenthal, H. E. S., & Crisp, R. J. (2006). Reducing stereotype threat by blurring intergroup boundaries. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *32*(4), 501–511. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167205281009

Rothbart, M., & Taylor, M. (1992). Category labels and social reality: Do we view social categories as natural kinds? In G. R. Semin & K. Fiedler (Eds.), *Language, interaction and social cognition* (pp. 11–36). Sage Publications Inc.

Rowling, J. K. [@jk_rowling]. (2024, May 11). Astounding how often militant trans activists tell the rest of us 'so what you're saying is, trans girls aren't real girls'. [image attached] [Post]. X. https://twitter.com/jk_rowling/status/1789196543733506215

Russia: expanded 'gay propaganda' ban progresses toward law: Another blow to LGBT rights. (2022, November 25). *Human Rights Watch*. https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/11/25/russia-expanded-gay-propaganda-ban-progresses-toward-law

Schlegel, R. J., Hicks, J. A., Arndt, J., & King, L. A. (2009). Thine own self: True self-concept accessibility and meaning in life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *96*(2), 473–490. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0014060

Schudson, Z. C., Beischel, W. J., & van Anders, S. M. (2019). Individual variation in gender/sex category definitions. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, *6*(4), 448–460. https://doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000346

Schudson, Z. C., & Gelman, S. A. (2022). Social constructionist and essentialist beliefs about gender and race. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, *26*(2), 406–430. https://doi.org/10.1177/13684302211070792

Schudson, Z. C., & van Anders, S. M. (2022). Gender/sex diversity beliefs: Scale construction, validation, and links to prejudice. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, *25*(4), 1011–1036. https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430220987595

Schwend, A. S. (2020). Trans health care from a depathologization and human rights perspective. *Public Health Review*, *41*(3). https://doi.org/10.1186/s40985-020-0118-y

Sex Matters. (2022). *Mission vision and goals*. https://sex-matters.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/SexMattersMissionVisionGoals2022.pdf

Skewes, L., Fine, C., & Haslam, N. (2018). Beyond Mars and Venus: The role of gender essentialism in support for gender inequality and backlash. *PloS One*, *13*(7), e0200921. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0200921

Somerville, S. B. (2000). *Queering the color line: Race and the invention of homosexuality in American culture*. Duke University Press.

Springer, K. W., Hankivsky, O., & Bates, L. M. (2012). Gender and health: Relational, intersectional, and biosocial approaches. *Social Science & Medicine*, *74*(11), 1661–1666. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2012.03.001

Stein, E. (2014). Immutability and innateness arguments about lesbian, gay, and bisexual rights. *Chicago-Kent Law Review*, *89*(2), 597–640.

Steinman, E. (2011). Revisiting the invisibility of (male) bisexuality: Grounding (queer) theory, centering bisexual absences and examining masculinities. *Journal of Bisexuality*, *11*(4), 399–411. https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2011.620460

Svensson, J., & Strand, C. (2024). The promise of double living. Understanding young people with same-sex desires in contemporary Kampala. *Journal of Homosexuality*, *71*(8), 2010–2029. https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2023.2218958

Swarr, A. L. (2023). *Envisioning Africa Intersex: Challenging colonial and racist legacies in South African Medicine*. Duke University Press.

Sweigart, M. M., Hernández, D. G., Hässler, T., Hegarty, P., Kite, M. E., Ofosu, E., Ünsal, B. C., & Eisner, L. (2024). Understanding variations in LGBTIQ+ acceptance across space and time: The importance of norm perceptions and political dynamics. *Journal of Social Issues*.

Tordoff, D. M., Wanta, J. W., Collin, A., Stepney, C., Inwards-Breland, D. J., & Ahrens, K. (2022). Mental health outcomes in transgender and nonbinary youths receiving gender-affirming Care. *JAMA Network Open*, *5*(2), e220978. https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.0978

Trotta, D. (2023, May 18). DeSantis signs Florida ban on transgender treatment for minors. *Reuters*. https://www.reuters.com/world/us/desantis-signs-florida-ban-gender-affirming-treatment-transgender-minors-2023-05-17/

Vider, S., & Byers, D. S. (2015, February 12). A half-century of conflict over attempts to 'cure' gay people. *TIME*. https://time.com/3705745/history-therapy-hadden/

Whisman, V. (1996). *Queer by choice: Lesbians, gay men, and the politics of identity*. Routledge.

Wright, T., Candy, B., & King, M. (2018). Conversion therapies and access to transition-related healthcare in transgender people: A narrative systematic review. *BMJ Open*, *8*, e022425. https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2018-022425

Yoshino, K. (2000). The epistemic contract of bisexual erasure. *Stanford Law Review*, *52*(2), 353–462. https://doi.org/10.2307/1229482

Zaharin, A. A. M. (2022). Reconsidering homosexual unification in Islam: A revisionist analysis of post-colonialism, constructivism and essentialism. *Religions*, *13*(8), 702. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13080702

Zeeman, L., & Aranda, K. (2020). A systematic review of the health and healthcare inequalities for people with intersex variance. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *17*(18), 6533. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17186533

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

Mik S. Bartels is a PhD candidate with the Discipline of Psychology, Faculty of Health at the University of Canberra. Their areas of interest are healthcare equality, and their research focus is on the presence of LGBTIQ+ microaggressions within healthcare settings and how they influence help-seeking behavior.

Joel M. Le Forestier is an Assistant Professor of Social Psychology in the Department of Psychology at the University of Pittsburgh. He studies stigmatized group members' experiences in intergroup contexts and how to improve intergroup relations and minimize group-based disparities through intervention. Specific questions that motivate his research include "how do members of stigmatized groups navigate intergroup contexts and what are the consequences of their navigation strategies?" and "what are the impacts of prejudice on people's behaviors and experiences, and how can we reduce prejudice?" Joel is also a Co-founder of Here and Queer, an organization that builds community for early-career LGBTIQ+ social and personality psychologists.

Anton M. O. Hug is an MA Student in Philosophy at Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. Their work is influenced by ordinary language philosophy, together with continental philosophy accounts. Their research interests are in philosophy of mind and language, especially the relation between introspection, mental states, and their conceptual approaches. They further focus on the influence of social structures on social subjects, especially trans subjects. Critical theory, political, social philosophy, and esthetics (theater, movie) are fields of interest.

Thekla Morgenroth is an Assistant Professor of Social Psychology at Purdue University. Their research examines why and how people maintain and defend social categories and hierarchies with a focus on the gender/sex binary and its effects on women and members of the LGBTIQ+ community.

Miguel Roselló-Peñaloza, PhD, is a Professor at the Faculty of Health and Social Sciences at the Universidad de Las Américas, Chile. His research interests include the construction of difference based on sex, gender, and sexual practices; deconstruction of psychopathology, and power relations in science and public policies. He is the Co-director of the Nucleus on Subjectivities and Equality Policies UDLA-NESP-, and an adjunct researcher of the Millennium Institute for Care Research (MICARE).