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## Who is Woman and Who is Man?

### Normativity at Intersections of Gender and Sexual Orientation

Klysing, Amanda

2023

*Document Version:*

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*

Klysing, A. (2023). *Who is Woman and Who is Man? Normativity at Intersections of Gender and Sexual Orientation*. [Doctoral Thesis (compilation), Department of Psychology]. Lunds universitet, Media-Tryck .

*Total number of authors:*

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Who is Woman and Who is Man?



# Who is Woman and Who is Man?

Normativity at Intersections of  
Gender and Sexual Orientation

Amanda Klysing



**LUND**  
UNIVERSITY

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Doctoral dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) at the Faculty of Psychology at Lund University to be publicly defended on February 10<sup>th</sup> 2023 at 13.00 in Edens hörsal

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<b>Organization</b> LUND UNIVERSITY Department of Psychology, P.O Box 2013 221 00 Lund, Sweden		<b>Document name</b> DOCTORAL DISSERTATION	
Author(s): Amanda Klysing		<b>Date of issue</b> December 16 2022	
		Sponsoring organization	
<b>Title and subtitle:</b> Who is Woman and Who is Man? Normativity at Intersections of Gender and Sexual Orientation			
<b>Abstract</b> Current gender norms predominantly construct gender as an expression of binary sex categories that are different but complementary. A performative view of gender instead analyses gender as an emergent feature of social interactions that is created by the constant repetition of acts in relation to discourses of gender. Within these hegemonic discourses, gender is constructed as fundamentally heterosexual. That is, there is an epistemic model of gender that justifies the existence of binary, complementary genders through appeals to complementarity within the structure of heterosexuality. Using an intersectional approach, this dissertation aims to analyse how gender norms of binarity and heterosexuality are expressed in mental representations at intersections of gender and sexual orientation. Study I examined how explicit and implicit stereotype content for groups at intersections of gender and sexual orientation relate to general gender stereotypes. Study II examined the influence of the social ideologies androcentrism and heterocentrism on cultural prototypes of general gender and sexual orientation categories and their intersecting subgroups. Finally, Study III examined how gender non-normativity in organisation communication and applicant gender expression can influence a recruitment situation. Study I showed that the content of explicit, but not implicit, cultural stereotypes for women and men in general only match the stereotype content for heterosexual women and men. Stereotype content for homosexual and bisexual women and men was incongruent with that of their respective gender groups and instead partially gender inverted. Study II showed that cultural prototypes for 'women' and 'men' are strongly influenced by heterocentrism, as they include an assumption of heterosexuality. The cultural prototype for 'homosexual people' was influenced by androcentrism, such that it was more representative of gay men than of lesbian women, but androcentrism showed no direct influence on cultural prototypes for 'heterosexual people' or 'bisexual people'. Study III showed that organisational communication that explicitly moves beyond binary gender can increase perceptions of organisational attractiveness among gender minority individuals, with no measurable impact on gender majority individuals. Additionally, applicants with a non-normative gender expression did not face the hypothesised discriminatory outcomes when assessed by Swedish HR-professionals. This dissertation used empirical, quantitative methods to analyse how gender is structure within a heterosexual matrix of cultural intelligibility and what the consequences are of becoming unintelligible. The findings support the perspective that gender and sexual orientation categories do not represent natural kinds and are instead constructed in relation to each other. Treating gender and sexual orientation as co-constitutive is a break with dominant disciplinary practices in psychological research but doing so would provide a better possibility of analysing how gender influences the lives of those acting within and outside of gender norms.			
<b>Key words</b> Gender, sexual orientation, normativity, intersectional analysis, stereotype content, group prototypes			
Classification system and/or index terms (if any)			
Supplementary bibliographical information		<b>Language:</b> English	
<b>ISSN</b> and key title		<b>ISBN</b> 978-91-8039-510-6 (print)	
Recipient's notes	<b>Number of pages</b>		Price
	Security classification		

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# Who is Woman and Who is Man?

Normativity at Intersections of  
Gender and Sexual Orientation

Amanda Klysing



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Front cover: Sorrow, 2022

Back cover: Detail from Agony, 2022

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Paper 2 © Amanda Klysing (manuscript unpublished)

Paper 3 © The Authors. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* published by Wiley Periodicals LLC

Faculty of Social Sciences  
Department of Psychology

ISBN 978-91-8039-510-6 (print)

ISBN 978-91-8039-511-3 (digital)

Printed in Sweden by Media-Tryck, Lund University  
Lund 2023



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**MADE IN SWEDEN** 

*To all the lesbians who came before me and whose courage  
and determination have guided me, and for all those who will  
come after me to search out their own path.*



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# Acknowledgements

If this dissertation was a tree, it would be one with roots that have been nourished by a great many people. Some have contributed directly to the work itself and some have contributed to making me the person that could write it, and a lot of the time the two have happened simultaneously. These roots may not be visible but there can be no crown without it. Through your large and small influences, know that I am grateful to all of you whether your name is mentioned here or not.

Firstly, an immense thank you to Anna for taking a chance on an overeager master student and giving me the opportunity to become a researcher. Thank you to Emma and Fredrik for your guidance and for always providing fresh perspectives. Thank you also to Tove for acting as foster supervisor over the kitchen table in house M.

Thank you to my colleagues at the department of psychology for providing a nurturing environment for me to grow in. To Martin for giving generous feedback at the half time seminar. To Una for acting as opponent at both the half time seminar and the final seminar and helping me see the larger context of the dissertation.

Thank you to the members of the Genderfair lab for making me part of a bigger forest. To Marie for helping me keep in mind that research should serve a purpose beyond just my curiosity. To Elli and Sofia for being amazing academic siblings and conference companions.

Thank you to the wonderful people at the department of psychology at Umeå university for giving me a warm and welcoming home during the pandemic, filled with lunchroom chats, Friday fika, and one far-out book circle!

To the members of the Social Science Doctoral Student Council that I have had the privilege of serving with, thank you for giving me the chance to influence our working conditions and for being a space to unwind through our co-working days, writing retreats, and after-works.

To the fantastic psychology PhD students, past and present: Laura G, Benjamin, Gizem, Holly, Kristoffer, Rebecka, Mia, Katarina, Laura C, Martina, Nathaniel, Osa, Linn (listed in order of appearance). Thank you for providing me with a true community. I could not possibly find a way to mention all the ways that you have made this PhD journey easier and, most importantly, more fun. You have provided answers to questions both large (What am I doing with my life?!) and small (Can someone access the printer?) and been just the best group of friends I could have wished for. I am endlessly grateful to and for you all.

Thank you to Sara for making sure that I do not get too stuck in my psychological ways and forget the power structures, and to both Sara and Jessica for keeping the homophobia out of my dissertation.

Thank you to Hellen for being a role model to look up to when I started and a friend to lean on during the times that followed. I learnt a lot of statistics during our month in Ann Arbor but getting to know you better brought lessons that I appreciate far more. We may not have gotten the chance to work together directly yet, but I

will keep searching for both future project ideas, brunch places, and spots for berry picking!

To my parents, thank you for always encouraging my curiosity and providing the space (and books!) for me to explore it. To my siblings, thank you for teaching me perspective taking and for being my constant safety net. To my nieces and nephews, thank you for giving me the joy of getting to see you grow and develop.

Finally, thank you to Josefine for bringing art into my research and magic into my life. Even if every word of this dissertation was “thank you” it still would not be enough: no part of me would be possible without you.

## Abstract

Current gender norms predominantly construct gender as an expression of binary sex categories that are different but complementary. A performative view of gender instead analyses gender as an emergent feature of social interactions that is created by the constant repetition of acts in relation to discourses of gender. Within these hegemonic discourses, gender is constructed as fundamentally heterosexual. That is, there is an epistemic model of gender that justifies the existence of binary, complementary genders through appeals to complementarity within the structure of heterosexuality. Using an intersectional approach, this dissertation aims to analyse how gender norms of binarity and heterosexuality are expressed in mental representations at intersections of gender and sexual orientation. Study I examined how explicit and implicit stereotype content for groups at intersections of gender and sexual orientation relate to general gender stereotypes. Study II examined the influence of the social ideologies androcentrism and heterocentrism on cultural prototypes of general gender and sexual orientation categories and their intersecting subgroups. Finally, Study III examined how gender non-normativity in organisation communication and applicant gender expression can influence a recruitment situation.

Study I showed that the content of explicit, but not implicit, cultural stereotypes for women and men in general only match the stereotype content for heterosexual women and men. Stereotype content for homosexual and bisexual women and men was incongruent with that of their respective gender groups and instead partially gender inverted. Study II showed that cultural prototypes for ‘women’ and ‘men’ are strongly influenced by heterocentrism, as they include an assumption of heterosexuality. The cultural prototype for ‘homosexual people’ was influenced by androcentrism, such that it was more representative of gay men than of lesbian women, but androcentrism showed no direct influence on cultural prototypes for ‘heterosexual people’ or ‘bisexual people’. Study III showed that organisational communication that explicitly moves beyond binary gender can increase perceptions of organisational attractiveness among gender minority individuals, with no measurable impact on gender majority individuals. Additionally, applicants with a non-normative gender expression did not face the hypothesised discriminatory outcomes when assessed by Swedish HR-professionals.

This dissertation used empirical, quantitative methods to analyse how gender is structure within a heterosexual matrix of cultural intelligibility and what the consequences are of becoming unintelligible. The findings support the perspective that gender and sexual orientation categories do not represent natural kinds and are instead constructed in relation to each other. Treating gender and sexual orientation as co-constitutive is a break with dominant disciplinary practices in psychological research but doing so would provide a better possibility of analysing how gender influences the lives of those acting within and outside of gender norms.

## List of Papers

This dissertation is based on the following papers, hereafter referred to as Study I, II, and III.

- I. Klysing, A., Lindqvist, A., & Björklund, F. (2021). Stereotype content at the intersection of gender and sexual orientation. *Frontiers in Psychology*, July, 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.713839>
- II. Klysing, A. (2022). Prototypicality at the intersection of gender and sexual orientation. *Manuscript invited for resubmission following revision, British Journal of Social Psychology*.
- III. Klysing, A., Renström, E. A., Gustafsson-Sendén, M., & Lindqvist, A. (2021). Gender diversity in recruitment: Influence of gender trouble on applicant attraction and evaluation. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 52(8), 781–802. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jasp.12809>



# Introduction

“The refusal to become (or to remain) heterosexual always meant to refuse to become a man or woman, consciously or not. For a lesbian this goes further than the refusal of the role "woman." It is the refusal of the economic, ideological, and political power of a man.“ (Wittig, 1981, p. 13).

What does it mean to belong to the social categories of ‘woman’ or ‘man’? How do people categorise others into these groups and what does this categorisation do? Using social categories, such as gender groups, to make sense of the huge complexity of the world is a foundational aspect of social cognition (Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000). One thing that using social categorisation does is act as a heuristic tool that saves the effort it takes to form expectations and evaluations from scratch each time a new individual is encountered. Certain social categories are so ingrained that mental representations (e.g., stereotypes) of these categories are automatically activated whether intended or not (Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000). Gender is suggested to be one of these primary social categories, and people categorise others into one out of two binary gender groups in mere milliseconds (Kang & Bodenhausen, 2015). Much work has been done on studying how gender categorisation is related to aspects such as language use (Stahlberg et al., 2007), stereotyping (e.g., Ellemers, 2018), prejudice (Rudman & Phelan, 2007), discrimination (e.g., Heilman & Caleo, 2018), and social norms (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2021). However, psychological research often leaves the binary structure of gender categories unquestioned.

Gender categorisation happens in relation to social norms for gender, which are the social rules that circumscribe the acceptable ways gender can be expressed and performed (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2021). Gender norms have been studied extensively within psychology in relation to, for example, how gender norms influence group differences between women and men as well as perceptions of the self (Stewart & McDermott, 2004). However, these norms are more than social rules, they are also the hidden frameworks in which certain phenomena take the place of normality while others are positioned as abnormal (Butler, 2004). Psychological research related to gender norms tend to focus on how marginalised groups deviate from the norms constructed around more powerful groups, rather than looking at how normativity relates to power (Hegarty & Pratto, 2004). This can act to further essentialise gender groups by treating gender as isolated from other



social categories (Magnusson, 2011). In this way, gender norms regarding the neutrality of manhood and the heterosexuality of gender are preserved.

Several analyses of gender as a social system have stated that gender, in its current form, is fundamentally heterosexual (Butler, 1990/2006; Kitzinger, 1987; Rich, 1980; Wittig, 1981), thus making sexuality a key aspect in mental representations of gender. In the seminal work *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler built on theories of the heterosexual contract (Wittig, 1980) and compulsory heterosexuality (Rich, 1980), to introduce the concept of the heterosexual matrix to describe how binary genders are constructed as natural kinds<sup>1</sup> through a heterosexual matrix of cultural intelligibility (Butler, 1990/2006). This matrix asserts that humanity can be divided into two stable and dichotomous sex categories, that these sex categories express themselves through stable genders organised around femininity and masculinity, and that these genders are defined as opposing but complementarity through the practice of heterosexuality (Butler, 1990/2006). Gender practices that are not understandable through this matrix, such as not practicing heterosexuality, leads to individuals becoming culturally unintelligible and treated as either “developmental failures or logical impossibilities” (Butler, 1990/2006, p. 24). Psychological research has not generally engaged empirically with the concept of the heterosexual matrix, but there have been recent calls for this to change (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2018, 2020).

Analyses of the relationship between mental representations of gender categories and other social categories within psychological research is sparse, and when conducted often takes a categorical approach where combinations of social groups are treated as separate, independent variables (Cole, 2009; McCall, 2005). Approaching social categories only as additive in this way (i.e., Woman + Homosexual = Homosexual Woman) ignores how the dynamism of intersecting identities leads to a transformation of constitutive identities into conceptually distinct categories (Crenshaw, 1989; McCall, 2005; Shields, 2008). Intersectional perspectives are on the rise in psychological research (see for instance Else-Quest & Hyde, 2015, 2016; Nicolas et al., 2017), and allows for a more nuanced analysis of how issues of perceptions of normativity contribute to marginalisation at different intersections of categories (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008).

## Aims of the Dissertation

In this dissertation, I will use the framework of gender performativity and the heterosexual matrix to analyse how mental representations of normative gender categories relate to notions of sexual orientation. Through being guided by

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<sup>1</sup> Natural kinds are categories defined as pre-existing classification by humans (Hacking, 1999)

intersectional analysis I aim to show that gender and sexual orientation need to be considered simultaneously to provide a more accurate view of social categorisation and allow for a better understanding of gender normativity and non-normativity in applied settings. By analysing the ways that gender normativity influences both sexual minority groups and heterosexual groups, I aim to show how processes of social power contribute to create a false neutrality of certain positions at the expense of others. In this way, the dissertation contributes to destabilising the structures that act to marginalise sexual and gender minorities. This dissertation also answers calls for integration of intersectional theory in psychological research and works to increase the research representation of sexual minorities (especially sexual minority women). The dissertation therefore contributes to the development of psychological research regarding conceptualisations of gender and sexual orientation, as well as how these conceptualisations contribute to marginalisation of gender non-normative individuals.

## Structure of the Dissertation

This introduction is structured in five major parts. In the first part, I describe theories regarding gender performativity and its reliance on a heterosexual matrix of cultural intelligibility. In the second part, I detail the approach to intersectional analysis that I have made use of. In the third part, I look to history for a description of how the field of psychology has influenced and been influenced by societal discourses in terms of theories regarding gender and sexual orientation. In the fourth part, I relate social norms surrounding gender and sexual orientation to mental representations in the form of category prototypes and group stereotypes, with a particular focus on aspects of structural power. Finally, in the fifth part I present some practical consequences that gender non-normativity can have by using the concepts of gender trouble and intersectional invisibility as focal points. Following the introduction, I summarise the empirical studies included in the dissertation and conduct an extended discussion on how their findings can contribute to understandings of the concepts of gender and sexual orientation as well as their practical implications. The discussion also includes reflection on the strengths and limitations of the dissertation, directions for future research, ethical considerations, and concluding remarks.

## A Note on Language Use

When dealing with intersections of gender and sexual orientation, I would be remiss to not include a reflection on language. There have been many suggestions on how to navigate the respective associations to the terms *sex* contra *gender*. A common practice is to use the term *sex* when describing the physiological characteristics that are used when placing individuals into the sex categories ‘female’ and ‘male’, to use the term *gender* to describe the cultural groups ‘women’ and ‘men’, or the paired form *gender/sex* to draw attention to the ways that biology and culture are interwoven (Hyde et al., 2018). However, the practice of dividing natural and cultural aspects by using two separate terms (*sex/gender*) has been criticised for allowing *gender* to be treated as simply a cultural expression of an essential, prediscursive *sex*, and thus still leaving *sex* as a natural kind (Butler, 1990/2006). Instead, Butler (1990/2006) argues that “[...] perhaps this construct called “sex” is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps it was always already gender, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all” (p. 11). Using a paired form like *gender/sex* can thus run the risk of reifying a false distinction between a natural *sex* and a cultural *gender*. In Swedish the term *kön* obfuscates this division, and simultaneously refers to genitalia, sex categories, and gender groups without giving primacy to either meaning (Widerberg, 1998). Because this dissertation is written in English, I do not have access to the purposeful blurring of the lines between nature and culture that *kön* makes possible. Throughout the dissertation I will therefore use the term *gender* to designate the social system in which humans are split into binary groups based on a construction of natural sex categories, and in this way let *gender* be a placeholder for *kön*. I will use the term *sex* only in those cases when I describe theories or frameworks that explicitly make an appeal to a biological essence of *gender*.

In relation to sexual orientation, this dissertation focuses on the cultural division between a normative and desirable sexuality and a non-normative and undesirable sexuality. Since the 1900s this has taken the form of a heterosexual/homosexual division. More attention has been given in recent decades to bisexuality as a separate sexual identity from homosexuality, and as such it has come to share the place of deviation from heterosexuality (Israel, 2018). According to the American Psychological Association (APA), the terms ‘homosexual’ or ‘homosexuality’ should not be used due to their history of pathologising sexual minorities. Instead, APA suggests using the term ‘gay’, and ‘gay men’ and ‘lesbians’/‘lesbian women’ (American Psychological Association, 2020). However, as may have become clear by now, I have chosen to largely disregard this suggestion. As the purpose of this dissertation is to interrogate how *gender* and sexual orientation interact, this must include referring to a concept of sexual orientation that is seen as having a similar structure across *gender*. Using the terms heterosexual and bisexual people but consistently splitting homosexual people into gay men and lesbian women would construct homosexuality as uniquely *gendered* compared to heterosexuality and

bisexuality. However, when referring to the way that lesbians and gay men have been, or are still, treated as specific and unique genders, I will instead use these terms. As a final note, being a homosexual researcher myself I reserve the right to make a context-sensitive choice regarding the group label 'homosexual' in an act of reclamation from the discipline that has a fundamental responsibility for pathologising homosexuality in the first place.

## Structure of Gender: Performativity and the Heterosexual Matrix

In the gender system that is currently hegemonic, gender is conceptualised as a binary structure where the existence of two dichotomous sex categories gives rise to two dichotomous genders: woman and man (Hyde et al., 2018; Lindqvist et al., 2020; Morgenroth & Ryan, 2021). A prevalent view among both laypeople and psychological researchers is that women and men have different roles in sexual reproduction which leads to different physiologies that in turn cause meaningful psychological differences (Fine, 2010, 2017). Appeals to biological factors of reproduction as explanations for psychological attributes tend to be seen as especially convincing (Hopkins et al., 2016). This conceptualisation of gender inexorably connects it to aspects of sexuality through its supposed basis in reproduction.

However, using reproductive function as the basis for gender categorisation does not explain why gender functions as an organising principle in contexts that are vastly divorced from reproduction, such as competitive sport or military organisations (Connell, 2002, p. 68). Importantly, viewing gender as simply a visible extension of sex does not explain why the current gender system (and many before that) is organised hierarchically with one gender group (men) having a higher status than the other (women). Analysing gender from a historic and cultural perspective also reveal that gender as an organising category can be abandoned when the purpose is to maintain a higher status for a specific ethnic or national group, or for the purpose of creating solidarity for progressive change. It is therefore important to be aware that gender as a concept cannot be separated from its cultural context (Talpade Mohanty, 1988). The existence of cultural and historic variation in the ways that gender structures social relations thus throw further doubt onto the conceptualisation of gender as a natural kind. In this introduction, I will present frameworks that allows for such an analysis of gender and sexual orientation and can expand the way that psychological research has traditionally approached these categories.

## Gender Performativity

If gender is not a natural kind but rather a part of our cultural context, how can it have such a pervasive, and often harmful, influence on people's lives and personal identities? From a social constructionist perspective this question is answered through viewing gender not as a noun, but as a verb: gender is what gender does (Butler, 1988, 1990/2006; Magnusson & Marecek, 2012c; Morgenroth & Ryan, 2018; West & Zimmerman, 1987). *Doing Gender* by West and Zimmerman (1987) was one of the first formulations of a performative theory of gender within the social sciences and can be summarised as "Rather than as a property of individuals, we conceive of gender as an emergent feature of social situations: both as an outcome of and a rationale for various social arrangements and as a means of legitimating one of the most fundamental divisions in our society" (p. 126). One way that it becomes visible that gender acts as an emergent feature rather than as an internal property of individuals is through its lack of an inherent meaning across time and space. That is, 'being' a woman or a man has meant very different things throughout history and across cultures (and based on other intersecting categories). Stability in the meaning of 'woman' or 'man' can only be found in difference: being a 'woman' means being different from a 'man' and vice versa (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988; Magnusson, 2011). Instead of an internal feature, an emergent perspective suggests that gender is better viewed as a constantly ongoing action that in itself creates the illusion of a stable identity. That is, "There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results." (Butler, 1990/2006, p. 34). Gender is therefore *performative*, in the sense that gendered acts create the thing they express (Butler, 1988). In other words, gender is not an expression of sex, but rather something that is being created by the stylised repetitions of gendered acts (Butler, 1988). This perspective is diametrically opposed to the viewpoint that gender is a cultural expression of sex categories, and instead puts forth that "[...] gender is not to culture as sex is to nature; gender is also the discursive/cultural means by which "sexed nature" or "a natural sex" is produced and established as "prediscursive," prior to culture, a politically neutral surface on which culture acts." (Butler, 1990/2006, p. 11). According to this perspective, gender is a system of societal discourse whose structure is determined by relations of social power, and this system determines the way that biological factors are understood (Butler, 1990/2006; Connell, 1987). Because gender is a fundamental discourse in society, individuals can only become intelligible subjects in relation to gender (Butler, 1990/2006, p. 24). Relating to gender norms does not necessarily mean that one follows gender norms, but rather that even acts that break gender norms are likely to be interpreted through a lens of gender normativity (Magnusson & Marecek, 2012c). A performative gender theory thus treats gender norms as more than a way to organise the relations between two sex categories. Rather, gender norms become the script that provides understandable meaning to gender performances.

## The Heterosexual Matrix

The term 'heterosexual matrix' describes how heterosexuality acts as the key organising norm that provides gender with its current cultural meaning as a binary, natural categorisation (Butler, 1990/2006). Specifically, the heterosexual matrix describes a "hegemonic discursive/epistemic model of gender intelligibility that assumes that for bodies to cohere and make sense there must be a stable sex expressed through a stable gender [...] that is oppositionally and hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality." (Butler, 1990/2006, p. 208). In other words, when 'doing' gender one must also 'do' heterosexuality, as heterosexuality is the cultural discourse through which gender performance becomes intelligible. This represents a reversal of a gender essentialist standpoint where heterosexuality is motivated by the existence of complementary genders. Instead, the existence of binary and complementary genders is seen as motivated by the concept of heterosexuality. Sandra Bem summarized this radical reversal as: "for there to be a system of exclusive and compulsory heterosexuality, two such bipolar groups had to come into existence and so, voila, the system produces them" (Bem, 1995).

Why then would there be a need for a system of exclusive and compulsory heterosexuality? Materialist analyses of heterosexuality as a social system has identified heterosexuality as a way of justifying hierarchical gender inequality in which men exploit women's reproductive labour (Wittig, 1982). Lives lead outside of (normative) heterosexuality thus pose a real and present danger to the justification of this patriarchal power. The conflation of heterosexual gender with 'civilisation' is also an integral part in colonial legacies of racial oppression, where descriptions of the colonised as inadequately gendered and sexually underdeveloped was/is used as justification for gendered and sexual violence (Lugones, 2007; Shields, 2007). A materialist analysis of gender and heterosexuality, such as this, is sometimes placed at odds with a poststructuralist analysis of gender as performative and heterosexuality as a matrix of cultural intelligibility (Butler, 1997; Mackinnon, 2000). However, combinations of materialist and symbolic accounts are possible through engaging in analysis of a phenomenon on different levels while being mindful of the relations between these levels (Fraser, 1998; Sims Schouten et al., 2007). Importantly, it entails recognising that the material cannot be placed as primary to the discursive as the material is in itself understood through reference to the symbolic (Butler, 1992, 1993). Heterosexuality is both a discourse that delimits processes of subjectification and a material practice related to distribution of labour and resources. Neither aspect can be understood as wholly determined by the other.

The reliance on a heterosexual matrix for cultural intelligibility of gender performance also means that any display of gender non-normativity can be interpreted as a signal of non-heterosexuality. This is, for instance, shown by the cultural concept of 'gaydar' where gender atypical individuals are seen as more likely to not be heterosexual (Cox et al., 2016). The pervasiveness of the

heterosexual matrix as a cultural discourse is shown through beliefs that heterosexuality is historically invariant and biologically justified; beliefs that are found among both heterosexual and non-heterosexual individuals (Hubbard & Hegarty, 2014). The influence of the heterosexual matrix is also visible in early psychological understandings of non-heterosexual individuals conceptualising homosexuality as a gender identity in itself, where the relationship between sex category and gender role was described as ‘inverted’ (Ellis, 1925). This inversion left in place norms of heterosexuality as the interpretative frame through which sex is understood and presented sexual minority individuals as having a failed sexual development. The concept of inversion thus shut down questioning of the supposedly natural connection between sex category, gender role, and desire by constructing non-heterosexual individuals as those whose healthy development of alignment between body, mind, and sexual desire had failed. The pathologisation of gender non-normativity and non-heterosexuality led to the practice of using gender non-normative responses to psychological tests as a diagnostic criterion for homosexuality through the better part of the 1900s (see Hubbard, 2020). In modern times, so called conversion therapies are a global phenomenon aimed at ‘curing’ sexual minority individuals through forced conformity to gender norms (Bishop, 2019). Heterosexuality thus still plays a crucial role in naturalising the existence of two different and complementary gender groups.

Perspectives that do not treat gender groups as natural kinds are frequently criticised through claims that heterosexual reproduction requires two sexual categories, and that any claims of gender similarity ignore that human reproduction is essentially heterosexual<sup>2</sup> (Martin & Slepian, 2021). Despite this supposedly natural basis for heterosexuality, heterosexual individuals report feeling a need to perform an exaggerated version of gender typicality to communicate their sexuality (Bosson et al., 2012; Davis-Delano et al., 2018). Because members of sexual minority groups disregard the need for *complementary* gender differences that heterosexuality suggests, a part of being a ‘real’ man or woman becomes to not be like members of sexual minority groups (Morgan & Davis-Delano, 2016a, 2016b). The perceived threat to gender norms that lives lived outside of heterosexuality poses is that they show that being human does not require a normatively gendered sense of self. This by extension questions a foundational part of how personhood is currently understood (Butler, 2004, p. 35). This threat to the gender system is frequently met with direct or indirect deadly violence, as seen in the denial of funding for early AIDS treatment or the high rate of murders of those who are identified as too gender non-normative, such as transgender women. The question of how gender is understood within psychological research is therefore not merely a theoretical exercise but speaks to how we understand what it means to seek to create knowledge about humans as gendered beings. Psychological research has

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<sup>2</sup> See the section The Construction of Sexual Orientation in Psychological Research for an analysis of heterosexuality as historically variant.

throughout its history shown that it has the potential to act as either an oppressive or liberating force (Cherry, 1995; Gergen, 1973), and in this dissertation I aim to contribute to the development of a psychological understanding of social categories that questions the structures that designate some lives as more natural than others.

There are extensive theoretical formulations of performative theories of gender and heterosexuality as a matrix of gender intelligibility in fields outside of psychology (e.g., Butler, 1988, 1990/2006, 1993, 2004; Katz, 1995; Rich, 1980; West & Zimmerman, 1987; Wittig, 1981, 1982) as well as from some researchers located within psychology (e.g., Bem, 1993, 1995; Kitzinger, 1987; Magnusson, 2011). In a recent attempt to translate performative theories of gender for a psychological audience, Morgenroth and Ryan (2021) presented a framework for understanding processes related to upholding or disturbing gender binarity. This framework includes interpreting empirical findings from social psychological research through theories of gender performativity with the aim of strengthening psychological research. While Morgenroth and Ryan (2021) show that there is a great deal of findings from psychological research that can be interpreted as supporting a performative theory of gender, there is very little empirical psychological research conducted with performativity as a starting point. This is perhaps not surprising given the common view that empirical and postmodern epistemologies represent incompatible positions (Leavy, 2011). However, it has been suggested that empirical research can still provide insights into gender as a process by shifting our view from ‘gender as explanation’ to ‘gender as result’ (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2018). In this dissertation I provide empirical, quantitative research on how gender gains meaning in relation to heterosexuality, as well as what the practical consequences are of falling outside of the sphere of gender intelligibility. This research can thus contribute to developing both psychological theories of gender related phenomenon as well as provide an empirical test of theoretical predictions from performative theories of gender.

## Intersectionality

In addition to performative theories of gender related phenomenon, an intersectional perspective can further develop psychological understandings of gender and sexual orientation. Kimberly Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality to describe the experiences of Black women as women, as Black, and as the qualitatively different position of Black women (Crenshaw, 1989). Similar analyses of the interactive nature of multiple categorisations had been theorised before, both inside and outside of academia, but had lacked common terminology (Cole, 2009; Collins, 2015; Moradi et al., 2020; The Combahee River Collective, 1978). Intersectionality can today be conceptualised either as a field of study, an analytical strategy, or a praxis to inform social justice projects (Collins, 2015). The key assumptions underlying



intersectionality as an analytical strategy can be summarised as: 1) every person inhabits multiple social identities, 2) these identities exist in relation to each other rather than independently, 3) social categories are both a result of social power structures and part of the construction of these social power structures (Cole, 2009; Collins, 2015; Warner & Shields, 2013). Intersectional theory has spread to psychology (Moradi et al., 2020) and there are now several guides describing how to conduct intersectional analysis within psychological research (e.g., Cole, 2009; Else-Quest & Hyde, 2015, 2016; Magnusson, 2011; McCall, 2005; Warner & Shields, 2018). However, psychological research that includes social groups at the intersection of social categories has been criticised for treating social categories as natural kinds rather than socially influenced, for analysing social categories as independent from each other rather than as transformative of each other, and for ignoring how issues of social structure and power contribute to what it means to inhabit a specific intersection of identities (Cole, 2009; Magnusson, 2011). Specifically, Shields (2008) argues that the common practice of using factorial designs in quantitative psychological research reifies social categories as variables that have independence from each other. While their independence may be a statistical truth, there is no independence in terms of how intersecting social identities influence lived experiences. This dissertation adds to efforts made to address critiques against quantitative intersectional analysis (Else-Quest & Hyde, 2015, 2016) and explores how this approach can provide meaningful analyses of intersectional social categorisation.

## **Types of Intersectional Approaches**

McCall (2015) delineated three different approaches to intersectional analysis, all of which can be conducted using quantitative material as long as the analysis includes interpretations that relate the empirical material to aspects of structure and power. Within the anticategorical complexity approach, all social categories are viewed as simplified descriptions of societal complexity that serve the role of upholding structural hierarchies through naturalising group difference. This approach is related to poststructuralist epistemologies, where the construction of social categories is treated as a form of power and deconstructing the ways that construction hides as nature is a part of creating social justice. Within the intercategorical complexity approach, social categories are still not seen as naturally given, but are treated as a useful level of analysis given the substantial impact that categorisation has on lived experience. To this end, research within an intercategorical complexity approach often use multi-group, factorial designs to look for differences between groups with different intersecting social identities. However, differences between groups are not treated as explanations in themselves, but rather as points for further analysis of the social structures that have created these categories and differences. Finally, an intracategorical complexity approach is somewhat opposite to the intercategorical approach and instead takes the

experiences of a single social group as its starting point. That is, by examining specifically the lived experiences of, for instance, Black lesbians, knowledge can be produced regarding the social structures of race, gender, and sexual orientation which can also be related to other social groups (McCall, 2005). In this dissertation, I have used intercategory methods to conduct an anticategorical analysis. In other words, I look to differences between how social categories at intersections of gender and sexual orientation are conceptualised and treated which in turn leads to an analysis of the lack of fixed meaning of gender and sexual orientation categories. In this way, I aim to conduct quantitative, intersectional research that does not conflate the measured variables with the constructs under study.

## Historical analysis of gender and sexuality norms in psychology

Psychological theories of gender and sexual orientation have been strongly influenced by their historical and societal context and has in turn influenced cultural perceptions of gender as a social category (Cherry, 1995; Gergen, 1973). This is because psychological research is a recursive endeavour; it changes the very thing it seeks to explain (Magnusson & Marecek, 2012c). That is, psychological theory influences the way that people understand themselves, which then influences what psychological research finds in its study of how people understand themselves (Magnusson & Marecek, 2012c). Psychological research can therefore provide a record of societal gender norms as well as be a contributor to the construction of said norms. Within this section, I will describe how some predominant psychological theories understand gender and sexual orientation as a way of showing how psychology has been influenced by and has influenced conceptualisations of the concepts. Note that I do not present these theories as a way of describing what members of different gender and sexual orientation groups are like, but as a way of understanding how psychology has understood these groups.

### **The Construction of Gender in Psychological Research**

The history of psychological theories of gender largely consists of a paradigm of using theories of biological essences to determine how women and men differ in terms of psychological aspects (Magnusson & Marecek, 2012b, 2018; Stewart & McDermott, 2004). Starting in the earliest years of psychology as a discipline, researchers conducted sex difference research with the aim of understanding how women's nature caused them to be different from men (men were not viewed as having a shared gendered nature; Hare-Mustin & Maracek, 2019). Despite early criticism (Wolley, 1910), sex difference research proliferated throughout the 1900s,

and is still receiving similar criticisms today as it did then (Hyde, 2014; Hyde et al., 2018). Sex difference research was driven by the replacement in the mid-1800s of the view that women were generally inferior to men with the belief that evolutionary processes caused complementary differences among women and men. Gender complementarity was thus created and presented women as being especially emotionally driven and men as rational and competent (Shields, 2007). Despite its focus on complementarity, early writings on gender and psychology clearly saw the emotional and intellectual capabilities of men as being of higher value than those of women (Shields, 2007): maintaining the status hierarchy of gender under the guise of science (Bem, 1993). Psychological research has developed greatly since then, but the assumption of the pre-cultural existence of two binary and complementary genders has remained (Kay et al., 2007; Morgenroth & Ryan, 2021).

The currently most influential theories of gender within psychology can be divided into evolutionary approaches, socialisation approaches, social structural approaches, and social identity approaches (Bem, 1993; Magnusson, 2011; Magnusson & Marecek, 2018; Morgenroth & Ryan, 2018). Within an evolutionary approach, gender is understood as a biological concept that results from reproductive roles leading to different environmental pressures and causing differing psychological adaptations (Buss, 1995; Kuhle, 2012). Specifically, sex differences in reproductive labour and sexual behaviour are believed to be caused by a sex difference in parental investment (Hyde, 2014). Within a socialisation approach, gender is understood as a consequence of childhood socialisation, where socialisation agents (such as parents or teachers) teach children to be boys or girls based on how their biology is classified at birth (Bem, 1993; Connell, 1987). Through their exposure to agents of socialisation, children then receive instruction in which gender role they should perform and how to do so (Parsons & Bales, 1955). Within a social structural approach, gender is understood as a result of how the societal roles we fulfil influences our view of ourselves and others based on which social roles are performed (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Beliefs about gender are formed through observing the behaviour of women and men, and inferring that members of each group behave in similar ways due to having similar dispositions (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Within a social identity approach, gender is understood as one of many social identities that people possess that make them prone to structure the world in terms of group members and non-group members (Hornsey, 2008; Wood & Eagly, 2015). Gender identity refers to which specific gender group (if any) has been integrated into a person's concept of self, and the strength by which the gender group has been integrated influences the extent to which the self is shaped into gendered patterns (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2018).

What do these theories around gender reveal about current conceptualisations of gender within psychological research? There is a general tendency within psychological theories to view gender as a natural kind based on pre-cultural sex categories, which represents an assumption of gender essentialism (Butler, 1990/2006; Magnusson & Marecek, 2012d). This is especially noticeable within

evolutionary, socialisation, and social structural approaches that start from the assumption that humanity consists of two dichotomous sex categories (Connell, 1987)<sup>3</sup>. Within a gender identity approach, there is no ontological need to view gender as a natural kind, given that such social identity perspectives see the formation and content of social identities as malleable and dependent on social structures of power (Hornsey, 2008; Morgenroth & Ryan, 2018). However, social identity perspectives have faced similar criticism as evolutionary, socialisation, and social structural approaches for hiding a sex difference focus behind a gender lens (Butler, 1990/2006, p. 30; Connell, 1987). Research that includes gender essentialist assumptions sees its role as merely describing pre-existing gender categories (Magnusson & Marecek, 2018). Instead, gender should be thought of as an interactive kind, where the classified subject is aware of their classification and will in some way be influenced by it; creating a looping effect (Hacking, 1999). A common postmodern criticism of research that treats gender categories as pre-discursive is that through such a looping effect actively *creates* different categories in its search for intra-unifying and inter-differentiating attributes (Bem, 1993; Magnusson, 2011). In this dissertation, I take a social constructionist approach to examine parts of this looping effect between gender and sexual orientation.

## **The Construction of Sexual Orientation in Psychological Research**

Psychological theories of sexual orientation have historically largely been focused on finding treatments to ‘cure’ homosexual individuals (Kitzinger & Coyle, 2002) or on finding a cause of homosexuality (Hubbard & Hegarty, 2014; Vanderlaan et al., 2022). During the 1970s, protests from sexual minority groups lead to a shift in focus from homosexuality as a pathology to a stigma paradigm. In this stigma paradigm, difficulties associated with homosexuality were seen as result of societal oppression rather than symptoms of an illness (Pettit & Hegarty, 2013). Homosexuality was removed as a diagnosis from the DSM-II in 1973<sup>4</sup> while ‘homosexuality’ remained a psychiatric diagnosis until the introduction of ICD-10 in 1990 (Drescher, 2015). To showcase the ways that a heterosexual matrix of cultural understanding act to contrive heterosexuality as a natural kind, I will briefly present two of the most influential psychological theories on the development of homosexuality, the psychoanalytic and the biological (Hegarty, 2017; Rosario & Schrimshaw, 2013).

The traditional psychoanalytic theory of sexual development state that children use their parents as the first targets of their sexual drives. Boys desire their mother,

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<sup>3</sup> Even though it is common, evolutionary perspectives do not need be based on a gender essentialist ideology, see Gowaty (2018) for a non-essentialist example.

<sup>4</sup> The diagnosis of ego-dystonic homosexuality was not removed until the publication of the DSM-III in 1987.

but because of the fear of being punished by paternal castration they transfer this desire onto other women. Girls also start their life desiring their mother, but then turn to the father (and later other men) after blaming the mother when the girl discovers that she lacks a penis (Bell, 2018). This healthy development can be disturbed in different ways, causing a child to overidentify with the different-sex parent while desiring the same-sex parent, leading to the child developing homo- or bisexual desires (Bell, 2018).

Biologically focused aetiologies of homosexuality seek to find biological factors that cause a deviation from a natural, heterosexual development. One of the most influential candidates for such a biological factor is androgen levels in foetal development (Rosario & Schrimshaw, 2013). Such hormonal accounts claim that high levels of foetal androgens increase the possibility of lesbianism by making a female foetus more male-typed, while low levels of foetal androgens contribute to male homosexuality by making a male foetus more female-typed (Berenbaum & Beltz, 2021; Rosario & Schrimshaw, 2013; Vanderlaan et al., 2022).

Instead of presuming that heterosexuality is a natural consequence of sexual reproduction, it is possible to look to how heterosexuality has been viewed throughout history and how it became part of upholding a gender-based power hierarchy (e.g., Butler, 1990/2006; Foucault, 1978/1990; Katz, 1995). One of the earliest uses of the term ‘heterosexual’ in English appears in a medical article from 1892<sup>5</sup>, in which heterosexuality was described as a sexual perversion that included patients showing an abnormal interest in non-reproductive sexual gratification (Katz, 1995, p. 20). European and US society of the late 1800s was a place of medicalised reclassification of sexuality, from a system of actions (e.g., sodomite) to a system of identities (e.g., homosexual; Ambjörnsson, 2016, p.49). This reclassification replaced the dichotomy of reproductive/non-reproductive sexual acts with a dichotomy of same-sex/different-sex sexual desires (Ambjörnsson, 2016; Katz, 1995; Pettit & Hegarty, 2013). The heterosexual person remained a figure of perversion until Freudian theories of psychoanalysis introduced the ‘pleasure principle’ and normalised having erotic desires beyond reproduction. Instead of a perversion, heterosexuality then became the outcome of a normal relation between child and parents (Katz, 1995, ch. 4). Even when examining the historical development of sexual orientation only in the context of psychological research and within a short time span, it becomes clear that sexuality has not always been viewed through the same lens as today. This troubles the assumptions that heterosexuality is a natural outcome of normal gender development that is made by both psychoanalytic and biological perspectives, where sexual minorities are conceived of as gender inverted variants of ‘normal’ heterosexual women and men.

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<sup>5</sup> The first recorded use of the term heterosexuality occurred in German in 1869 as a paired term to homosexuality in a letter from writer Károly Mária Kertbeny. The first printed use was in 1871 by writer Daniel von Kászony (Jansen, 2021).

### *Summary*

In summary, the social constructionist perspective on gender and sexual orientation that this dissertation uses differs from mainstream psychological perspectives in three main ways: gender is treated as a doing rather than a being, the framework within which gender can be done is seen as based on social power structures, and the meaning ascribed to sex, gender, and sexuality cannot be separated from each other. This approach leads to research on how gender is understood to gain meaning within different social contexts and how actions that follow or do not follow the rules for acceptable gender performance are interpreted (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2018). Importantly, Butler's poststructuralist theory of gender as performatively constituted through heterosexuality invites a focus on the intersections of gender and sexual orientation to deconstruct the relations of meaning between the two. When performing this intersectional analysis, it is key to explain both normative and non-normative positions in order not to leave a normative group a privileged position of neutrality.

## Normativity in Mental Representations of Gender and Sexual Orientation

Social norms are the common rules shared by members of the same group, society, or culture (Legros & Cislighi, 2020). These norms create a relation between the behavioural frames of individuals and the structural expectations of a society. They can take the shape of outlining what is common among group members (descriptive norms) or regulate what is desirable or appropriate among group members (injunctive norms; Cialdini et al., 1990; Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). Social norms exert influence on individuals because following social norms usually comes with rewards, either in the form of direct access to resources or more indirectly in the form of feelings of belonging and approval (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Spears, 2021). Group norms can become internalised as personal values and preferences through processes of internalisation making social identities at the group level indistinguishable from other levels of the self (Turner et al., 1987). As a highly culturally salient grouping, gender norms can become especially hard to separate from personal identity (Bem, 1981) and can influence individuals in both descriptive and injunctive ways (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2021). Norms are more than social rules though, they are also the hidden frameworks that make certain phenomena normal while others become abnormal (Butler, 2004). Going even further, a performative theory of gender states that gender *is in itself* the constant repetition of gendered acts in relation to discourse surrounding gender norms (Butler, 1990/2006). Gender norms act as the limits of intelligibility, and breaking gender norms can lead to a subject becoming unintelligible within a gendered discourse; a discourse that is necessary to achieve personhood (Butler, 1990/2006). This unintelligibility of

practices outside of gender norms leads, among other things, to inadequate understandings of sexual minority experiences. For instance, the view that same-sex sexual encounters always consist of one active and one passive partner (Henry & Stelger, 2022) or that lesbian butch-femme relationships are an expression of patriarchal relationship dynamics (Levitt, 2019).

Given that identities outside of the boundaries of gender discourse become unintelligible as subjects, how are these individuals mentally represented? What is lost when a gender lens is applied outside of the realm of heterosexuality? What price do these gender troublemakers pay? In this dissertation, I will focus on gender prototypes and gender stereotypes as two aspects of mental representations of gender. In doing so I will describe how they are structured, how they are commonly represented, and how they are intimately connected with representations of (hetero)sexuality. Finally, I will describe some of the theoretical frameworks to understand practical implications of gender normativity and non-normativity in relation to experiences of discrimination. Through this I will be using gender as an analytical tool in order to unpack how we give gender categories meaning and deconstruct the hidden assumptions relating to other social categories that reside within that meaning (Stewart & McDermott, 2004). That is, which attributes are strongly related to binary gender groups, how do these attributes shift in relation to sexual orientation, and what does this tell us about the underlying representation of social groups at the intersection of gender and sexual orientation?

## **Gender Prototypicality and Normativity**

Prototype theories of mental representation suggest that individuals conceive of social categories as organised around category prototypes, which are typical or ideal members of a social category that stand in for the entire group (Hampton, 2019; Rosch, 1975). Category prototypes have a family-resemblance structure, which means that there is no universal set of necessary and sufficient features that determines category membership. Because of this, prototypes also display a graded relationship to the category where exemplars are seen as better or worse examples of the category based on their proximity to the prototype (Rosch & Mervis, 1975). This structure fits well with the cultural representation of gender, where necessary and sufficient features differ between times and places (Henry & Stelger, 2022; Shields, 2007) and members can be more or less typical compared to the normative prototype (Chrisler, 2013; Vandello & Bosson, 2013).

Prototypes for social groups are influenced by system-justifying ideologies such as androcentrism, heterocentrism, and ethnocentrism (Bem, 1993; Hegarty et al., 2014; Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). Androcentrism is the social ideology that designates men and manhood as the norm for humanity, which leads to a cognitive bias where only women are seen as having a gender while men are seen as a non-gendered neutral (Bailey et al., 2018, 2020). Heterocentrism is the social ideology that designates heterosexuality as the standard way that romantic attraction, sexual

desire, and non-platonic relationships are directed (van der Toorn et al., 2020). Ethnocentrism is the social ideology that designates the dominant ethnic group in a pluralistic society as the group whose cultural norms are seen as the standard that other ethnic groups should adhere to (Bizumic, 2014; Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). As social norms regulate expectations of how individuals *should* behave, these hegemonic social ideologies act to determine which group's norms will be seen as those also members of other groups need to adhere to (Connell, 1987). In other words, dominant groups decide what the rules are for everybody. As part of this process, dominant groups also hide their position as the cultural norm (Hegarty & Pratto, 2004) which in itself is an exertion of social power that requires the creation of non-normative individuals in order to properly delimitate the normative (Bem, 2004; Butler, 1990/2006; Hegarty & Pratto, 2004b; Morgenroth & Ryan, 2018). These non-normative individuals must be carefully kept in check to keep existing as a distant 'other' rather than threaten the privileged status of the norm (Bem, 1995). Non-normativity is thus used as a way of upholding gender norms, where the spectre of being removed from the sphere of intelligibility and designated not a "real" man or woman always looms (Chrisler, 2013; Vandello & Bosson, 2013).

### *Intersectional prototypes*

The prototypical member of a group acts as the norm against which less typical members are evaluated (Hegarty & Pratto, 2004) and gender prototypicality is determined in large part by membership in other social categories; creating an intersecting web of normativity and non-normativity (Lei et al., 2022; Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). This is because there is no pure category prototype that does not interact with prototypes for other categories. As Spellman (1988) put it: "All women are women, but there is no being who is only a woman" (p. 102). Intersectional prototypes are influenced by androcentrism, heterocentrism, and ethnocentrism in concert, which act to designate the default human as a heterosexual man of majority ethnicity in a specific culture (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). This interaction between ideologies leads to a situation where men are seen as more typical humans than women (Bailey et al., 2022), White women are seen as more typical women than Black women (Ghavami & Peplau, 2013), and gay Black men are seen as less typical Black men than heterosexual Black men (Petsko & Bodenhausen, 2019). In this way, groups that are marginalised in multiple intersecting ways become intersectionally invisible where they are not seen as prototypical for either of their constitutive categories (e.g., Black women; Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008).

The influence of androcentrism on mental representations of a prototypical human has been primarily studied through language use. First named by Silveira (1980), the people = male bias in English is visible through the practice of using masculine terms as generic terms in relation to all humans (Merritt & Kok, 1995; Silveira, 1980). The people = male bias is also bidirectional, with a male = people



bias visible in the tendency to use more gender-neutral terms to refer to a man but more gendered terms to refer to a woman (Hamilton, 1991). Men are seen as more prototypical humans also when measured through categorisation tasks: men are recognized as a member of the category ‘humans’ faster than women are and attributes associated with men are seen as more generalisable to humanity as a whole than attributes associated with women (Bailey et al., 2018). The male bias connected to neutral terms can be reduced through the use of paired forms (e.g., man/woman, he/she; Bailey & LaFrance, 2017; Lindqvist et al., 2019), but analyses of current language use show no sign of a decrease in the people = male bias (Bailey et al., 2022). Showing the joint influence of androcentrism and ethnocentrism, when asked to select a ‘typical member of mankind’ or a ‘typical human’ from an array of images of Black and White women and men, individuals display not only a people = male bias, but also a people = White bias (US context; Bailey & LaFrance, 2017).

The influence of ethnocentrism on gender prototypes has mainly been studied in a US context where there is a clear influence of racial prototypes on gendered cognition: the typical man and women are most often thought of as White (Lei et al., 2022; Leshin et al., 2022). The relationship between gender and race prototypes also shows a clear pattern of intersectional invisibility where Black women, Latina women, and Middle Eastern women are not just less prototypical for the category of ‘women’ compared to White women, they are also seen as less prototypical for their ethnic group than corresponding men (Ghavami & Peplau, 2013; Thomas et al., 2014). Ethnic prototypes are not just gendered, they can also include a heterocentric bias. That is, gay men of different ethnicities (Black Americans, White Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Asian Americans) are seen as less prototypical for their ethnic group compared to heterosexual men of the same ethnic group (Petsko & Bodenhausen, 2019). However, other findings indicate that both gay and heterosexual Black men are seen as more prototypical for the category ‘men’ than gay and heterosexual White men (Preddie & Biernat, 2021), showing the complex nature of the gendered nature of race prototypes as they intersect with representations of sexuality-based groups. The current dissertation adds to the existing literature on intersectional group prototypes by examining the simultaneous influence of androcentrism and heterocentrism on group prototypes at the intersection of gender and sexual orientation.

Recent cognitive accounts of intersectional categorisation use a lens-based approach in which different social categories are represented as separate schemas used for categorisation and evaluation. In this lens-based theory, prototypes based on gender are likely to be used when a gender lens is activated but prototypes based on ethnicity are likely to be used when an ethnicity lens is activated (Petsko et al., 2022). Only one lens can be active at a time, and a variety of cultural, situational, and individual factors determine which lens is activated in any given instance of social evaluation (Petsko et al., 2022). Besides lenses for overarching social categories, intersections of social categories may be represented as separate schemas so that, for instance, individuals can either evaluate a lesbian woman through the

lens of *woman*, the lens of *homosexual* or the specific lens of *lesbian woman* (Petsko et al., 2022). When either one of these lenses are activated, other applicable lenses will no longer be used (Petsko et al., 2022). Prototypes for general gender groups would then be represented in general gender schemas that are independent of schemas for other social categories, while intersecting identities would be represented in separate schemas. In conflict with this theory is that sexual orientation is not generally seen by researchers or laypeople as a separate concept that is modified by gender information, it is still largely seen *as* gender information (Henry & Stelger, 2022). Instead of treating gender and sexual orientation as separate schemas and thus preserve gender as something existing outside of sexual orientation, this dissertation asks what intersectional categorisations can tell us about the way that mental representations of gender relate to a heterosexual matrix of cultural intelligibility.

In summary, social cognition research into group prototypes for social categories show that it is not just societal structures that are organised around hegemonic social ideologies (Bem, 1993), but also the structure of mental representations of social groups. These ideologies work together to form a complex pattern of intersectional categorisation and representation where different groups can end up being invisible (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). This dissertation will incorporate a norm critical analysis where gender norms are interrogated in relation to how they gain meaning through the influence of power structures and provide a more (compared to a group difference perspective) complete picture of mental representations of groups at intersections of gender and sexual orientation.

## **Gender Stereotype Content**

Stereotypes are internalisations of culturally shared representations of social groups, and influence what members of social groups are expected to be like (Dovidio et al., 2010). Stereotypes about social groups can be activated automatically and can influence cognitive processes in subtle ways (Yzerbyt, 2016). Stereotype content can either form expectations about what members of a social group are like (descriptive stereotypes) or what they should be like (prescriptive stereotypes; Heilman, 2001). Stereotype content is also used as an aid in inferring group membership: the more an individual displays traits that are consistent with the stereotype content of a specific group, the more likely they are to be categorised as a member of said group (Cox & Devine, 2015). Stereotype content is connected to group prototypes through providing the content of the prototype through the types of attributes associated with group membership (Ghavami & Peplau, 2013). Because category prototypes are commonly organised in a family-semblance structure, the attributes associated with group members do not conform to a strict set of necessary and sufficient features (Rosch & Mervis, 1975). Instead, more typical category members are those that share a greater degree of attributes with the prototype, while simultaneously sharing as few attributes as possible with members

of other categories (Rosch & Mervis, 1975). For mental representations of gender categories, this means that a specific group within the category ‘woman’ or ‘man’ is seen as more prototypical the more attributes it shares with its own gender prototype, but it is also seen as more prototypical the fewer attributes it shares with the ‘other’ gender prototype. What attributes are included in a category prototype can be studied through looking at how the stereotype content for a specific social group relate to that of a general social category (e.g., Ghavami et al., 2013). Examining how the stereotype content associated with general gender groups fluctuates for different sexual orientation subgroups therefore shows which attributes remain shared based on gender and which attributes move subgroups around in the space between gender prototypes.

### *The structure of stereotype content*

Stereotype content is arranged along the two dimensions of communion (attributes related to management and functioning of social relationships) and agency (attributes related to goal achievement and task functioning; Abele & Wojciszke, 2014). One explanatory model for why stereotype content can include high levels of one dimension and low levels of the other, rather than being uniformly positive or negative, is the Stereotype Content Model (SCM; Fiske et al., 2002). According to the SCM, stereotype content is determined by the fundamental need to determine if a member of a social group is likely to be friendly (high in communion) or unfriendly (low in communion) and able to carry out their intentions towards you or your ingroup (high in agency) or not (low in agency; Caprariello et al., 2009; Cuddy et al., 2007; Fiske et al., 2002). The general stereotype content associated with the gender groups women and men has a complementary structure where women are stereotyped as high in communion but low in agency, while men are stereotyped as low in communion but high in agency (Ellemers, 2018; Haines et al., 2016; Wood & Eagly, 2010). This pattern has been found in a multitude of cultural contexts (e.g., Asbrock, 2010; Bye et al., 2014; Cuddy et al., 2009, 2015). However, available data on current gender stereotypes in Sweden indicate that gender stereotype content may no longer follow this ambivalent (i.e., high-low) structure. While stereotypes about men still show a high agency-low communion pattern, stereotypes about women have been measured as containing similar degrees of agency as the stereotype of men (Gustafsson Sendén et al., 2019). So, while gender stereotype content has been shown to be remarkably stable overall, the levels of agency and communion associated with specifically women and men can differ based on societal factors.

### *Stereotype content for homosexual groups*

One of the most direct ways that gender stereotypes can be altered is by introducing information about a person belonging to a minority sexual orientation group. Within an SCM paradigm, stereotype content for sexual minority groups has mainly consisted of measurement of stereotype content for gay men and has shown varied

stereotype content: high agency-high communion and low agency-high communion in Norway (Bye et al., 2014, 2022), low agency-low communion in Mexico (Durante et al., 2013), medium agency-medium communion in Australia (Durante et al., 2013), Germany (Asbrock, 2010), Italy (Brambilla et al., 2011), and the US (Fiske et al., 2002). The stereotype for lesbian women has been measured as containing medium agency-medium communion in both Norway (Bye et al., 2022) and Germany (Asbrock, 2010). It has been suggested that the reason stereotype content for lesbians and gay men tend to not fall into an ambivalent pattern is because both groups consist of subgroups with differing stereotype content. For gay men, the stereotype content for certain salient subgroups shows vastly different patterns with, for instance, leather gays stereotyped as low agency-low communion while artistic gays are stereotyped as high-agency-high communion (Clausell & Fiske, 2005). Similarly, measures of stereotype content for subgroups of lesbian women show that, for instance, butches are stereotyped as high agency-low communion, while lipstick lesbians are stereotyped as low agency-high communion (Brambilla et al., 2011).

However, when looking at specifically the intersection of gender and homosexuality, rather than at societal groups in general, a different pattern emerges. Kite and Deaux (1987) found that attributes included in the stereotypes for heterosexual men and women correlated strongly with those mentioned for homosexual women and men respectively in a so called “gender inversion” pattern. In addition, homosexual men were seen as more likely to possess communal traits compared to the likelihood of homosexual women possessing agentic traits, showing an asymmetry in perceptions of the gender non-normativity of gay men and lesbian women (Kite & Deaux, 1987). This study was replicated decades later by Blashill and Powlishta (2009), who demonstrated that both the perceived gender inversion of homosexual women and men and the view that gay men are more gender atypical than lesbian women remained. Further showing the pervasiveness of gender inversion beliefs about homosexual groups, the same pattern of gender inversion in stereotype content was again reported in recent years by Mize and Manago (2018), including the greater similarity between the stereotypes for heterosexual women and gay men compared to heterosexual men and homosexual women.

### *Stereotype content for bisexual groups*

Stereotype content for bisexual women and men show a more androgynous structure than that of either their hetero- or homosexual counterparts. Among middle school students, stereotypes about the gender typicality of bisexual girls and boys show neither a gender typical nor a gender atypical pattern, with bisexual groups instead forming an androgynous cluster in between heterosexual and homosexual groups (Ghavami & Peplau, 2018). Among adults, stereotype content for bisexual men includes high communion-low agency, but a lower degree of communion than the stereotype for gay men. while bisexual women are stereotyped as low communion-

high agency, but with a higher degree of communion than the stereotype for lesbian woman (Burke & LaFrance, 2016; Vaughn et al., 2017). There are also findings showing that stereotype content related to bisexual women and men is androgynous only in terms of communion, while containing a generally lower degree of agency compared to both heterosexual and homosexual women and men (Mize & Manago, 2018). These findings are connected to the prejudiced, but common, belief that bisexuality is an instable sexual orientation (Burke & LaFrance, 2016) and that a large number of bisexual men are ‘actually’ closeted gay men while a large number of bisexual women are ‘actually’ closeted heterosexual women (Mize & Manago, 2018; Zivony & Lobel, 2014; Zivony & Saguy, 2018). However, there are also indications that this pattern only holds true for bisexual men, with bisexual women being seen as genuinely attracted to both women and men (Morgenroth et al., 2022). As such, it is possible that stereotype content about bisexual women and men cannot be ordered into any form of complementary framework such as the gender stereotypes about heterosexual women and men (and the inverted gender complementarity of homosexual women and men). This lack of intelligibility within a framework of binary gender can make bisexual women and men particularly vulnerable to processes of identity denial (Burke & LaFrance, 2018; Morgenroth & Ryan, 2021). For instance, despite being the numerically largest sexual minority group in multiple countries (Gates, 2011; Ipsos, 2021), there is a perception that bisexuality is rare and temporally instable (Barker & Langdrige, 2008; Israel, 2018).

The current dissertation aims to examine how heterocentrism act to make sexual minority groups invisible, and how use of a structure of normativity/non-normativity make groups that move between binaries especially vulnerable to such processes.

## Practical Implications of Mental Representations of Gender and Sexual Orientation

The influence of gender norms on mental representations of groups at intersections of gender and sexual orientation also has a vast array of practical implications through positioning people as gender normative or non-normative. Breaking gender norms is often met with a high degree of societal prejudice and can negatively influence the physical and mental health of sexual and gender minority individuals (Thoma et al., 2021; van der Toorn et al., 2020). However, sexual and gender minorities consistently resist the division of normative/good and non-normative/bad expressed through heteronormative ideology, with the Gay Pride Movement being a well-known example (Gorton, 2010). Acts that challenge the value of gender norms create so called *gender trouble* by calling into question the pre-discursive nature of sex categories, and by extension the naturalness of the structures upholding

a hierarchical gender system (Butler, 1990/2006). Morgenroth and Ryan (2021) further made a distinction between *performance-based* gender trouble and *context-based* gender trouble. Performance-based gender trouble consists of acts that trouble the supposedly natural relation between sex characteristics and gender expression. It can take the form of having a gender non-conforming appearance, engaging in non-normative social roles, or inhabiting a gender identity different from that assigned at birth. Context-based gender trouble consists of acts that trouble structure of gender polarisation which underlie a binary gender system. It can take the form of decreasing the salience of gender altogether through de-gendering practices (making gender less salient) or by constructing gender as consisting of more than two categories through multi-gendering practices (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2021).

Gender trouble can thus be caused in multiple ways: through non-heterosexuality, through blurring gender polarisation in structural aspects, or by embracing physical attributes commonly associated with a different gender. Engaging in gender trouble brings individuals outside of the sphere of intelligibility, which brings with it the potential for negative repercussions. Butler (1990/2006) described the consequences of gender trouble thusly: “[...] as a strategy of survival within compulsory systems, gender is a performance with clearly punitive consequences. Discrete genders are part of what “humanizes” individuals within contemporary culture; indeed, we regularly punish those who fail to do their gender right.” (p. 178). According to the intersectional invisibility hypothesis, groups belonging to intersecting marginalised categories will face such a denial of subjectivity by becoming intersectionally invisible, even when direct hostility may be saved for those more clearly designated as enemies (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). In this section I will describe a few of the consequences of causing performance-based and context-based gender trouble, as well as some consequences of being intersectionally invisible.

## **Consequences of Creating Gender Trouble**

### *Performance-based gender trouble*

Sexual minority individuals engage in performance-based gender trouble in different ways, ranging from having a gender non-normative appearance (Levitt, 2019) to working in cross-gender typed professions (Finnigan, 2020). Members of sexual minority groups are also more likely than heterosexual individuals to have a non-normative gender expression (Levitt, 2019). As gender non-normativity in physical appearance is a driving factor behind the expression of prejudice directed towards sexual minority groups (Anderson, 2020; Cramwinckel et al., 2018; D’Augelli et al., 2006; Valsecchi et al., 2022) this contributes to the high degree of workplace discrimination that sexual minority groups face (FRA, 2014a). Furthermore, gender non-normativity is associated with increased amounts of minority stress, which can worsen both mental and physical health (Thoma et al.,

2021). At the same time, gender non-normativity in physical appearance has an important cultural role within sexual and gender minority communities in that it can act as a way of finding other sexual and gender minority individuals (Levitt, 2019; Thoma et al., 2021). Engaging in performance-based gender trouble through gender non-normativity can be a way of finding a supportive social network as well as potential romantic partners (Levitt, 2019); all of which contribute to increases in mental health and well-being among sexual and gender minority individuals throughout the lifespan (Berghe et al., 2010; Detrie & Lease, 2008; Hoppe et al., 2014; Masini & Barrett, 2008). The effects of creating performance-based gender trouble are therefore not easily fit into a negative/positive framework, as it can both contribute to and alleviate everyday stressors.

Within this dissertation, I examined the extent to which a gender non-normative gender expression contributed to recruitment discrimination in an initial recruitment evaluation. This is a context where sexual minorities have reported feeling especially fearful of showing an authentic, non-normative gender expression because of the perceived high risk of discriminatory reprisals (Dozier, 2017). It is therefore important to study the conditions when non-normativity is or is not met with negative consequences within a recruitment situation.

### *Context-based gender trouble*

One way to create a more supportive environment for those who engage in gender trouble is to decrease the amount of gender polarisation present within external structures (Bem, 1993). Context-based gender trouble can do this by seeking to ‘turn the volume down’ on gender by making it less salient (de-gendering) or ‘turn the volume up’ on gender by increasing the salience of non-binary gender options (multi-gendering; Morgenroth & Ryan, 2021). An example of de-gendering is using gender-neutral third-person pronouns to replace paired forms (he/she; Gustafsson Sendén et al., 2015) while an example of multi-gendering is using non-binary neopronouns that allow for explicit reference to people who identify outside of gender binary groups (Hekanaho, 2020; Lindqvist et al., 2018).

In this dissertation, I explore when and how context-based gender trouble contributes to signalling an identity supportive work environment through organisational communication. Using either form of context-based gender trouble represents a form of social identity contingency signalling, in that it sends a message regarding how individuals with different relations to gender norms are likely to be treated in a specific context (Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008). In relation to organisational communication, marginalised minority groups can see identity-blind approaches as threatening due to a lack of positive social identity contingencies (Dover et al., 2020) while majority groups members can view identity-inclusive approaches as threatening (Cundiff et al., 2018). Experiences of such gender identity threat can in turn lead to an increase in negative attitudes towards gender non-normative individuals (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2021).

## Consequences of Intersectional Invisibility

The way that intersecting identities influence experiences of discrimination is a hotly debated topic. Some explanations emphasise the additive effects of membership in multiple marginalised groups (Beal, 2008) while others claim that men within marginalised groups face the most severe discrimination (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Yet others critique both these views for pitting marginalised groups against each other and leading to an “oppression Olympics” (Hancock, 2011). Arising from this debate, the intersectional invisibility hypothesis suggests that being seen as a prototypical or a non-prototypical member of a marginalised group will lead to either hypervisibility or invisibility. This difference in visibility will influence the forms, rather than amount, of discrimination that individuals belonging to multiply marginalised groups are likely to face (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). For example, looking to the intersection of gender and homosexuality, the influence of androcentrism causes gay men to become prototypical for the group “homosexual people” despite being seen as non-prototypical for the group “men”. In contrast, the joint influence of androcentrism and heterocentrism causes lesbian women to be seen as non-prototypical for both the group “homosexual people” *and* the group “women” (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). Prototypical members of marginalised groups are likely to be met with more direct prejudice and discrimination compared to non-prototypical members, as they become more salient representatives of the group (Petsko & Bodenhausen, 2022; Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). To some extent, non-prototypical members or marginalised groups can therefore avoid being targets of direct discrimination; but being intersectionally invisible brings its own set of disadvantages. For instance, statements made by non-prototypical individuals (Black women, Asian men) are remembered less well (Schug et al., 2015; Sesko & Biernat, 2018), non-prototypical individuals are less likely to be given influential positions within a social group (Hogg, 2001; Spears, 2021), and diversity initiatives within organisations are often poorly suited to the needs of members of multiply marginalised groups (Wong et al., 2022). Taking a meta-perspective shows this process also within psychological research, as the prevalence of psychological research related to gay men is significantly higher than for research on lesbian women (Lee & Crawford, 2012) and when sexual minority women are included in psychological research, this research is highly likely to be published in lower impact journals (Lee & Crawford, 2007).





# Summary of Studies

For this dissertation, I conducted three empirical studies. Study I and II examine who is seen as typical for gender and sexual orientation categories and how activation of multiple social categories influence perception of each constitutive group. Study III has an applied focus and tests aspects of poststructuralist theories of gender in a recruitment setting. Specifically, how norms regarding gender binarity and gender expression influence evaluations of non-normative individuals.

## Study I: Stereotype Content at the Intersection of Gender and Sexual Orientation

### **Background and Aim**

The aim of this research was to conduct an intersectional analysis of the stereotype content for groups at the intersection of gender and sexual orientation. Stereotypes are beliefs regarding culturally shared representations of social groups (Dovidio et al., 2010). Gender stereotypes generally have an ambivalent structure where women are seen as high in communion but low in agency, while men are seen as low in communion but high in agency (Ellemers, 2018). However, stereotypes regarding general gender groups do not apply equally to all groups of women and men, and this is especially the case for sexual minority groups (Clarke & Arnold, 2017; Ghavami & Peplau, 2018; Kite & Deaux, 1987; Mize & Manago, 2018; Vaughn et al., 2017).

Despite findings showing a complex relationship between general gender stereotype content and that of sexual minority groups, research on stereotype content has not generally included an intersectional framework that examines how heterosexuality acts to justify gender complementarity. The current research enabled an investigation of how mental representations of general gender groups relate to sexual orientation through including direct measures of general gender stereotype content as well as stereotype content for heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual women and men in the same studies.

## Method

### *Participants and procedure*

**Study 1.** 824 participants were recruited through advertisement in various user groups on the social media site Facebook. Participants were randomly assigned to provide cultural stereotype content for one out of the following eight social groups: women, men, heterosexual women/men, homosexual women/men, bisexual women/men. Stereotype content measurement was done through explicit rating scales of the group's communion and agency.

**Study 2.** 424 participants were recruited through the web panel Enkätfabriken. Participants were recruited to be representative of the Swedish population in terms of age, binary gender, and regional location. Participants were again randomly assigned to provide stereotype content for one of the eight target groups. They completed two Single-Category Implicit Association Tests and gave explicit ratings of the group's communion and agency.

### *Measures*

**Trait rating scales.** Degree of communion and agency included in the stereotype of the target group was measured using trait ratings scales (Abele et al., 2016; Fiske et al., 2002). Participants were asked to rate how likely society in general believes it is that the target groups possess each trait on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*a great deal*).

**Single-Category Implicit Association Test (SC-IAT).** The SC-IAT is a modified version of the Implicit Association Test, in which implicit associations between a target category and an attribute category is tested without the use of a comparison target category (Karpinski & Steinman, 2006). Implicit stereotype content was measured using two online SC-IATs, one with the attribute categories warmth/cold and one with the attribute categories competence/incompetence. The SC-IATs consisted of participants sorting words relating to either the target group (e.g., 'bisexual men') or the attribute category (e.g., 'warmth' or 'cold') as fast and as correctly as they could.

### *Analysis methods*

Differences in explicit stereotype content were analysed through 2 (gender: women, men)  $\times$  4 (sexual orientation: none listed, heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual) ANOVAs for the communion and agency scales. To describe the two-dimensional stereotype content for each group, communion and agency means for each group was plotted against each other and a 95% bivariate confidence interval was drawn to showcase two-dimensional group overlaps.

Implicit stereotype content was calculated as SC-IAT D-scores (Karpinski & Steinman, 2006). For associations to warmth, participants' average response times for the block Group + Warmth was subtracted from the average response time for

the block Group + Cold and divided by the pooled *SD* for all blocks, creating a score where positive values indicate a stronger association between the target group and warmth relative to cold. The same procedure was followed for associations to competence, and an additional general stereotype content *D*-score was calculated by subtracting the Warmth-Cold *D*-score from the Competence-Incompetence *D*-score.

### *Results and discussion*

In both Study 1 and 2, we found significant interactions between target group gender and target group sexual orientation for ratings of communion and agency. Results from Study 1 showed that gender stereotype content was indeed ambivalent and complementary, in that ‘women’ were seen as more communal but less agentic than ‘men’. However, only the heterosexual subgroups displayed this general gender stereotype pattern, while the sexual minority subgroups instead showed a partial gender inversion. Sexual minority groups received lower ratings for the gender congruent dimension (communion for women groups and agency for men groups) compared to their general gender group, while receiving higher ratings on the gender incongruent dimension. Ratings on the gender incongruent dimension was, however, still lower than those given for the incongruent gender group.

Study 2 showed similar results in terms of general gender stereotype content and overlap between general gender groups and heterosexual subgroups. However, the partial gender inversion of sexual minority groups found in Study 1 was of a smaller magnitude, due to the general gender groups and the heterosexual subgroups being rated higher on their depreciated dimension. Regarding implicit stereotype content, ‘women’ and ‘bisexual men’ were more strongly associated with warmth relative to cold than ‘men’ were, and only ‘bisexual men’ and ‘men’ differed from each other in terms of general implicit stereotype content. This was due to ‘bisexual men’ being more strongly associated with warmth relative to competence, while ‘men’ were more strongly associated with competence relative to warmth.

The current research nuances previous findings from a Swedish context (Gustafsson Sendén et al., 2019) by showing that cultural stereotype content in Sweden is still organised according to a complementary model in line with what SCM research in other cultures has shown (e.g., Cuddy et al., 2009). Sexual minority women and men also displayed somewhat ambivalent stereotype content, but with opposite high and low dimensions compared to women and men in general. We did not find the previously discovered pattern of bisexual women being stereotyped as hidden heterosexuals and bisexual men being stereotyped as hidden homosexuals (Morgenroth et al., 2022). Instead, we found that a sexual minority orientation was a stronger organising factor than gender in that homosexual and bisexual women showed similar stereotype content, as did homosexual and bisexual men.

### *Conclusions*

We showed in two studies that the content of general gender stereotypes is only comparable to stereotype content for heterosexual women and men but not to that

of sexual minority women and men. This indicates that much of the research conducted on the content and implications of gender stereotyping is only applicable to heterosexual women and men. Furthermore, while sexual minority groups are stereotyped in a way that is gender incongruent, we did not find that stereotype content was completely gender inverted. Instead, gender and sexual orientation had a dynamic relationship where sexual minority groups formed their own distinct clusters.

## Study II: Prototypicality at the Intersection of Gender and Sexual Orientation

### Background and Aim

When people mentally represent social categories, they do not simultaneously think of every member of that category, instead they make use of a category prototype (Kang & Bodenhausen, 2015). Category prototypes are members of a category that are perceived to have the highest number of attributes shared with other group members while having the lowest number of characteristics shared with non-group members (Rosch, 1975). The intersectional invisibility hypothesis suggests that the hegemonic societal ideologies of androcentrism, heterocentrism, and ethnocentrism determine which members of a social group are seen as prototypical members of that group (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). Since members of multiply marginalised groups are not highly valued within either of these ideologies, they will experience intersectional invisibility where they are not seen as typical for any of the constitutive groups they belong to (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). The current research evaluated the intersectional invisibility hypothesis at the intersection of gender and sexual orientation in two online experiments, which compared the degrees of overlap and uniqueness in the prototype content for the two genders women and men, the three sexual orientations heterosexuality, homosexuality, and bisexuality, and the intersections thereof.

### Method

#### *Participants and procedure*

**Experiment 1.** The first experiment is based on the same data collection as Klysing et al. (2021), but included a free-response attribute generation task and similarity ratings that had not previously been reported. Group prototype content and perceived similarity to general gender prototypes was measured for the following eight social groups: women, men, heterosexual women/men, homosexual

women/men, bisexual women/men in a between-groups design including 824 Swedish speaking participants.

**Experiment 2.** Experiment 2 partly replicated experiment 1 but added measurement of group prototypes for the general sexual orientation groups heterosexual people, homosexual people, and bisexual people. Participants consisted of 1099 British national recruited using the web panel Prolific.co.

### *Measures*

**Free-response attribute generation.** The content of the group prototype for each target group was measured using a free-response attribute generation task. Participants reported which attributes they believed that society associated with the target group in free-text format. For experiment 1, participants reported a voluntary number of attributes and in experiment 2 each participant reported a minimum of 10 and maximum of 20 attributes.

**Similarity ratings.** Participants reported societal similarity between the target group and the general gender groups women and men (experiment 1 and 2) and the general sexual orientation groups heterosexual people, homosexual people, and bisexual people (experiment 2) on 5-point Likert-scales ranging from 1 (*not at all similar*) to 5 (*very similar*).

### *Analysis methods*

For experiment 1, the content of group prototypes was analysed using manual content coding guided by the method used in Ghavami and Peplau (2013). In Experiment 2, a natural language processing approach was used where responses to the free-response attribute generation task were analysed using a structural topic model with experimental condition as a prevalence covariate (Roberts et al., 2016).

Ratings of similarity to general gender groups (experiment 1 and 2) and similarity to general sexual orientation groups (experiment 2) were analysed using 2 (target gender group: women, men)  $\times$  3 (target group orientation: heterosexual, homosexual bisexual)  $\times$  2 (participant gender: woman, man) ANOVAs.

### *Results and discussion*

Experiment 1 and 2 found strong support for the influence of heterocentrism on general gender prototypes: prototype content related to women and men was significantly more similar to prototypes for heterosexual women and men respectively than prototypes for sexual minority women and men. The groups heterosexual women and men were also rated as significantly more similar to women and men in general compared to gender congruent sexual minority groups.

Experiment 2 found an influence of androcentrism on the prototype content for homosexual people in general, where the prototype content for homosexual men was more similar to that of homosexual people compared to the prototype for homosexual women. In contrast, the prototype content for bisexual people was

somewhat more similar to that of bisexual women compared to bisexual men, in opposition to what was hypothesised. Direct similarity ratings showed no effect of androcentrism, with no significant intra-gender differences in similarity to each respective sexual orientation group.

These results support claims from the intersection invisibility hypothesis regarding the influence of heterocentrism on group prototypes (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008) as well as previous research on the perceived ‘gender inversion’ of sexual minorities (Klysing et al., 2021). However, lesbian women were the only multiply marginalised group that was found to be intersectionally invisible. This suggests that hegemonic social ideologies are not the only influential factor in terms of prototypicality for groups at the intersection of gender and sexual orientation. Because cultural notions of ‘manhood’ and ‘womanhood’ are closely linked to heterosexuality (Butler, 1990/2006; Morgenroth & Ryan, 2021), prototypes for sexual minority groups may not be influenced by androcentrism in the same way that prototypes for ethnic groups are (Petsko et al., 2022).

### *Conclusions*

The cultural prototypes for women and men in general are strongly influenced by heterocentrism, making it so that when speaking about women and men without specifying a sexual orientation, it is likely to be the same as speaking only about heterosexual women and men. This has consequences both for psychological research into gender related phenomena, and for the design of interventions against gender-based inequality. Particular attention should be paid to ensuring that lesbian women are not further excluded from research and interventions given the position of the group as intersectionally invisible.

## Study III: Gender Diversity in Recruitment: Influence of Gender Trouble on Applicant Attraction and Evaluation

### **Background and Aim**

Gender and sexual minorities face a high level of workplace discrimination (Ozeren, 2014), including discrimination in recruitment processes (Ahmed et al., 2013; FRA, 2014a, 2014b; Granberg et al., 2020). One contributing cause of this discrimination can be a negative response to the gender trouble that sexual and gender minorities represent through non-normative gender expressions and/or identities (Butler, 1990/2006; Morgenroth & Ryan, 2018). Discrimination of gender and sexual minorities can take place in different phases of the recruitment process. In the applicant attraction phase organisational communication can signal that having a minority identity can be more or less welcomed (Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008) and

in the applicant evaluation phase recruiter bias can negatively influence evaluations of non-normative applicants (Fasoli et al., 2017; Moss-Racusin et al., 2010). We explored how gender trouble in both phases can help or hinder gender and sexual minority individuals in recruitment processes through two online experiments.

Experiment 1 investigated context-based gender trouble in the applicant attraction stage through looking at Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) statements in organisation descriptions. EEO statements can increase organisation attractiveness among underrepresented groups (McNab & Johnston, 2002) but can also be seen as threatening by majority groups (Dover et al., 2016, 2020). EEO statements can either decentre gender in their framing (de-gendering; Cundiff et al., 2018) or explicitly mention gender to increase representation of underrepresented groups (multi-gendering; Morgenroth & Ryan, 2021). In this study we tested the effect of four different types of EEO framings (no mention of gender, binary gender, multi-gendered, and de-gendered) in an organisation description on organisational attractiveness among gender majority (in Sweden and the US) and gender minority (in the US) individuals.

Experiment 2 investigated performance-based gender trouble in the applicant evaluation stage through altering the gender expression of the applicant. Gender and sexual minorities frequently have non-normative gender expressions (Levitt, 2019) which could lead to negative consequences in recruitment situations. In this study we tested the extent to which normativity in gender expression influenced applicant evaluations for a non-gender typed profession among future and current HR-specialists.

## Experiment 1

### *Method*

#### ***Participants and procedure***

**Experiment 1a.** Using the Qualtrics.com online panel, we recruited 404 Swedish participants. Participants were randomly assigned to read one out of four texts describing a fictive, de-identified organisation. Among more general descriptions of the organisation, we included EEO statements with different framings. The *control condition* EEO spoke of improving the workplace with no explicit mention of gender, the *binary gender condition* mentioned striving for equality between women and men, the *multi-gendered condition* mentioned equal opportunities for women, men, and non-binary individuals, and the *de-gendered condition* mentioned striving for equality regardless of gender. Participants then evaluated the organisation on a number of factors, including attractiveness as an employer and perceived diversity among the staff body.

**Experiment 1b.** Using the web panel Prolific.co, we recruited 743 US participants belonging either to a gender majority group (women/men,  $n = 399$ ) or



a gender minority group (groups with trans experience,  $n = 384$ ). Participants read translated versions of the organisation descriptions from Experiment 1, and evaluated the organisation as a potential employer.

### ***Measures***

Organisational attractiveness was measured through a series of self-report indicators related to perceptions of the organisation as an employer. The indicators consisted of *organisation appeal* as an employer, *perceived fit* within the organisation, *expected trust and comfort* within the organisation, and perceptions of *organisational discrimination*.

*Perceived gender diversity* of the staff body was measured through a picture selection task. Participants were presented with eight photos of people with different types of gender expression (four with a normative gender expression and four with a non-normative gender expression) and asked to choose two that they believed worked within the organisation.

In Experiment 2, we also measured *potential identity threat* in terms of the extent to which participants worried that their gender would put them at a disadvantage within the organisation.

### ***Analysis methods***

In Experiment 1a, effects of EEO statements on organisational attractiveness was analysed through a series of 4 (condition: control, binary gender, de-gendered, multi-gendered)  $\times$  2 (participant gender: man, women) ANOVAs. In Experiment 1b, effects of participant gender group rather than gender identity were examined in a series of 4 (condition: control, binary gender, de-gendered, multi-gendered)  $\times$  2 (gender group: majority, minority) ANOVAs. Differences in perceived gender diversity based on EEO statements were tested with multinomial logistic regressions.

### ***Results and discussion***

Experiment 1a did not show any significant differences in the organisation attractiveness indicators based on type of EEO statement or participant gender, but organisations with a de-gendered or multi-gendered EEO statement were seen as more gender diverse than the remaining conditions. Experiment 1b did not show any significant differences for gender majority individuals in organisational attractiveness based on EEO statement but found that gender minority individuals preferred an organisation using a multi-gendered or a de-gendered EEO statement. Following a multi-gendered or a de-gendered EEO statement, gender minority participants reported similar levels of organisational attractiveness as gender majority participants did, indicating that no mention of gender or mention only of binary gender lowered their estimation of the organisation as an employer. In support of this interpretation, the positive effect of multi-gendered or de-gendered EEO statements on organisational attractiveness among gender minority individuals

was mediated by lower perceived identity threat. Similar to the results from Experiment 1a, an organisation with a multi-gendered or a de-gendered EEO statement was seen as being more gender diverse than an organisation with a binary gender EEO statement (or no gender mentioned).

We showed in two experiments that introducing context-based gender trouble in organisation descriptions increased the attractiveness of an organisation for gender minority individuals, without being experienced as threatening by gender majority individuals.

## **Experiment 2**

### *Method*

#### ***Participants and procedure***

Future and current HR-specialists were recruited through mailing lists for HR-related university programs and a social media group for HR staff. In total, the sample consisted of 291 participants that completed a simulated recruitment task for a position as train attendant. Participants first read a job description describing the requirements for the position and then a person description of a job applicant. The experimental manipulation consisted of changing the photograph attached to the person description to be of an individual with either a normative (two women, two men) or a non-normative gender expression (two women, two men).

#### ***Measures and analysis methods***

Participants used ratings scales to evaluate the applicant on how suitable they were for the job and how likely they believed it was that the applicant would be hired. They also reported their recommended starting salary for the applicant within a pre-set range. The three outcome variables were tested with 2 (applicant gender expression: normative, non-normative)  $\times$  2 (applicant gender identity: women, man) ANOVAs.

### *Results and discussion*

In contrast to our hypotheses, we found that applicants with a non-normative gender expression were rated as more suitable for the position and recommended a higher starting salary than applicants with a normative gender expression. In addition, regardless of gender expression, women were rated as more likely to be hired for the position. This difference was especially large between women and men with a non-normative gender expression.

The findings that individuals with a non-normative gender expression, and especially women with a non-normative gender expression, received more positive evaluations in a recruitment situation than individuals with a normative gender expression is in opposition to previous research on the topic (Fasoli & Hegarty,

2019; Weichselbaumer, 2004). This may be because the position in question was for a gender-neutral profession, where gender and gender normativity may not be salient factors for recruiters (Koch et al., 2015). It is thus possible that performance-based gender trouble does not influence evaluations in the same way when there is no clear gendered script to trouble and/or when the evaluators are not strongly invested in upholding the current binary gender system.

## **Conclusions**

We found that gender trouble can influence recruitment situations in nuanced ways. In the applicant attraction phase, introducing context-based gender trouble in organisational communication can help attract gender minority individuals and broaden the applicant pool. In the applicant evaluation phase, causing performance-based gender trouble through displaying a non-normative gender expression is not necessarily met with the theorised punitive consequences. Having a non-normative gender expression can instead be seen as an asset, at least when gender is a less salient factor. While there is a need for further investigation of boundary conditions, these results indicate that moving outside of prescriptions of the current gender system and causing a bit of gender trouble can be a good thing for both organisations and applicants.

# Extended Discussion

The overarching aim of this dissertation was to analyse the ways that a heterosexual matrix of cultural intelligibility contributes to the construction of mental representations of gender and sexual orientation categories, and how gender norms can contribute to inequality based on positioning of groups as normative or non-normative. The theoretical framework used in this dissertation is a social constructionist, intersectional analysis of gender that uses the poststructuralist concept of the heterosexual matrix. This perspective questions the assertion that sex is a natural category, that gender is a cultural expression of that sex category, and that heterosexuality is the natural organisation of relations between two genders. Instead, gender *and* sex are both constructed as social categories, and the justification for the policing of their boundaries comes from heterosexuality. Morgenroth and Ryan (2018;2020) suggest that using such social constructionist theories regarding gender as performative and organised through a heterosexual matrix are a fruitful way forward for empirical research within social psychology.

In this dissertation, I have used the empirical, quantitative methods preferred within social psychology together with a deconstructive focus taken from the postmodern tradition. Through this (somewhat reluctant) marriage of thought styles, this dissertation shows that individuals make use of a heterosexual matrix of intelligibility when reporting their mental representations of the cultural concepts of gender (Study I and II) and sexual orientation (Study II). The dissertation also indicates that within the framework of simulated recruitment situations, the unintelligibility of gender non-normativity is not met with punitive consequences. That is, neither context-based nor performance-based gender trouble seems to be perceived as threatening in this context. Instead, context-based gender trouble can increase identity safety for gender minority individuals (Study III).

Based on these findings, what does this dissertation bring to continued understanding of gender and sexual orientation within social psychology? I have built the extended discussion around this question and will address it in relation to both the specific studies and the combined knowledge they produce. I will also briefly present my view on if and what including a social constructionist perspective into the realm of empiricism contributes to theory building regarding gender and sexual orientation. Finally, I will discuss the contributions and limitations of the dissertation, the practical implications of its findings, and the suggested directions for future research.

# Understanding Gender and Sexual Orientation as Interacting, Constructed Mental Representations

Within the currently most influential psychological theories on gender and sexual orientation, gender is largely treated as an extension of sex, and sex is treated as a categorisation with the status of natural kind (Connell, 1987; Magnusson & Marecek, 2012d; Mehta, 2015; Morgenroth & Ryan, 2018; Shields, 2007). There are also approaches within psychology that look at how social norms regarding gender organise and structure our views of others and ourselves as gendered beings, with an understanding that the concept of sex is also dependent on normative processes (Bem, 1981; Hegarty & Pratto, 2004; Magnusson, 2011; Morgenroth & Ryan, 2021; Vandello & Bosson, 2013). There are two aspects of these approaches that have been criticised, the assumption of the first approach that sex is a natural kind and the assumption of the second approach that normative influences are internalised into a stable gendered subject (Butler, 1990/2006; Connell, 1987). As two aspects of these critiques, I will discuss the way that this dissertation contributes to the deconstruction of gender as an expression of a natural sex, and its contributions to analyses of heterosexuality as a cause of binarity in mental representations of gender rather than as an effect of dichotomous sex categories. Finally, I will discuss how this dissertation contributes to the inclusion of intersectional analysis within psychological research.

## Gender as Expression of Sex

The instability of sex as a basis for the mental representation of gender groups was shown in this dissertation through the clear pattern of ‘gender inversion’ in Study I and II. Stereotype content and prototypicality for groups at intersections of gender and sexual orientation were not organised by sex, but instead through a heterosexual matrix of intelligibility: The relation of the social groups to heterosexuality had a greater explanatory role than their gender classification. In other words, the relation between mental representations of women and men were changed by the addition of a homosexual or bisexual sexual orientation despite no change in gender group taking place, and representations of ‘women’ and ‘men’ only matched representations of heterosexual women and men. Non-heterosexual women and men were unintelligible through this heterosexual matrix, and as such were constructed as (somewhat) inverted heterosexual women and men.

The view of non-heterosexual individuals as inverted heterosexual women and men is hegemonic in psychological theories of sexual orientation (Rosario & Schrimshaw, 2013) and in lay beliefs about sexual minority groups in a US context in both older (Kite & Deaux, 1987; Taylor, 1983) and more recent research (Blashill & Powlisha, 2009; Burke & LaFrance, 2016; Mize & Manago, 2018; Vaughn et al., 2017). Psychology as a discipline has played a crucial role in the pathologisation

of non-heterosexuality as gender non-normativity (Hubbard, 2020; Katz, 1995; Kitzinger, 1987), and should therefore take a larger responsibility in ensuring that current psychological research does not continue this legacy by only understanding sexual minorities through the lens of gender inversion. Moving to a Swedish context, sociological research shows that Swedish teenagers do construct their gender identity largely with reference to ideas of homosexuality as gender inversion (Ambjörnsson, 2008). This is hardly surprising given that Swedish cultural understandings of gender viewed homosexuality as a third gender until as late as approximately the 1970s (Rydström & Tjeder, 2009). By including participants from both a Swedish and a UK context, this dissertation adds to knowledge about how heterosexuality is used as a cultural matrix of intelligibility for gender today in cultures outside of the US. It also provides some of the first quantitative data on the matter, which shows that detection of the phenomenon of the heterosexual matrix is not dependent on a specific type of methodology.

In summary, Study I and II trouble the assumption that gender is an expression of sex, and instead position gender *and* sex as constructed to justify a structure of compulsory heterosexuality.

## **Binary Gender as Justified by Heterosexuality**

Gender is most commonly treated as primary to sexual orientation within psychological research on sexual orientation (e.g., Rosario & Schrimshaw, 2013) which has had far reaching influence on cultural representations of gender and sexual orientation (Henry & Stelger, 2022). In this dissertation, I instead examined mental representations of gender and sexual orientation within a social constructionist framework where neither gender nor sexual orientation was presumed to have a primary status to the other. Study I examined the extent to which gender categories are organised around heterosexuality through the stereotype content reported for general gender categories and sexual orientation subgroups. Study II went further by also including a focus on how sexual orientation categories are represented when they are not explicitly connected to gender. In these two studies, I found support for heterosexuality acting as a matrix of intelligibility in which gender is constructed as binary and complementary. This was shown through the presence of gender complementarity in mental representations of general gender categories as well as heterosexual categories and the absence of this complementarity for non-heterosexual categories.

### *Gender complementarity and heterosexuality*

A fundamental part of how the heterosexual matrix acts to organise gender is through constructing gender groups as different in ways that complement each other within heterosexuality (Bem, 1995; Butler, 2004, 2006; Morgenroth & Ryan, 2021). There are some indications that complementarity is becoming a smaller part of

representations of gender, with stereotype content for women increasing in agency and/or competence (Eagly et al., 2020; Gustafsson Sendén et al., 2019; Hentschel et al., 2019). However, in this dissertation both stereotype content (Study I) and prototype structure (Study II) for general gender categories showed a very clear pattern of complementarity. For instance, where women were seen as high in communion, men were seen as low in communion. Where normative masculinity included perceptions of being powerful, normative femininity included perceptions of being weak. It thus appears that complementarity is still a prevalent framework for the organisation of mental representations of gender categories, at least among Swedish and British individuals. This dissertation contributes to knowledge about mental representations of gender and sexual orientation by showing that this complementarity is not a result of the existence of two naturally binary gender categories, and instead it is part of how these two gender categories are given meaning through a heterosexual matrix.

Study I and II showed that gender complementarity was present in stereotype content and prototype structure for women and men with an unspecified sexual orientation as well as for heterosexual women and men. However, for groups outside of heterosexuality, gender complementarity was not applied in the same way. When using fixed trait rating scales in Study I, a pattern of gender complementarity was present within sexual minority groups. Representations of sexual minority women and men were centred around gender non-normativity such that sexual minority women were treated as somewhat complementary to sexual minority men. However, this inverted gender complementarity shown in numerically measured stereotype content for sexual minority women and men was significantly less marked than the gender complementarity reported for heterosexual women and men and for women and men in general. When using a free-response format in Study II, the content of this supposed gender complementarity of sexual minority groups was shown to differ from the complementarity present in prototypes of heterosexual women and men.

In terms of prototype structure, representations of homosexual women and men and bisexual women and men were not so much complementary to each other as organised around their difference from heterosexuality. The femininity associated with sexual minority men was not complementary to the masculinity associated with sexual minority women, and instead the non-normative femininity and masculinity associated with sexual minority groups was more similar to each other. For example, the feminine theme associated with sexual minority men, “effeminate hedonism”, included more agentic terms than the theme “normative femininity”. In contrast, the masculine theme associated with sexual minority women, “butch and kind”, included more communal terms than the theme “normative masculinity”. The results from Study I and II thus show that there is a more complex pattern of similarity and difference between gender groups when moving outside of a heterosexual context, and that complementarity as such ceases to be a meaningful framework of understanding. From the perspective of the heterosexual matrix, this can be

explained by gender difference not being a necessary aspect of constructing gender groups outside of heterosexuality; sexual minority women and men were not understood in terms of existing in relation to a complementary object of desire (Butler, 1990/2006).

It has been suggested that gender complementarity is expressed differently in relation to sexual minority groups compared to heterosexual groups because representations of sexual minority women and men are complementary within the sexual orientation group rather than between gender groups (Brambilla et al., 2011; Clausell & Fiske, 2005). If mental representations of sexual minority women and men would contain their own complementary pairs (e.g., butches/femmes, leather gays/artistic gays), the stereotype content for the superordinate group (lesbians/gay men) should have androgynous rather than gender inverted stereotype content. This non-ambivalent stereotype content has indeed been found previously for stereotype content associated with homosexual women and men (Asbrock, 2010; Brambilla et al., 2011; Bye et al., 2014, 2022; Durante et al., 2013; Fiske et al., 2002) and bisexual women and men (Mize & Manago, 2018; Vaughn et al., 2017).

However, this androgynous pattern was not shown in Study I or II. The existence of salient subgroups within sexual minority groups had little impact on representations of the general group, and instead the most gender non-normative subgroups of each homosexual group appear to have been most used to create a general representation. That is, the general representation of sexual minority groups does not appear to have been influenced by groups such as lipstick lesbians or leather gays but rather by butches and camp gay men. This follows the historic pattern of homosexuality being constructed as gender inversion, where only gender non-normative homosexual individuals are treated as actually homosexual while outwardly gender normative homosexual individuals are not represented as actually homosexual (Henry & Stelger, 2022). This phenomenon shows that gender complementarity is an understanding of gender that is culturally intelligible only within the framework of heterosexuality. Sexual minority practices of sometimes embodying a specific type of gender complementarity therefore becomes in itself a form of gender norm subversion (Levitt et al., 2003; Levitt & Hiestand, 2004). Disconnecting the concepts of masculinity and femininity from specific sexed bodies, as done in for instance butch/femme relationships, reveals that gender binarity is not an expression of dichotomous sex groups. Instead, gender binarity is a way of constructing a hierarchy in which heterosexuality is treated as more natural than other sexual orientations (Butler, 2004; Morgenroth & Ryan, 2021).

### *Bisexuality as neither and both heterosexuality nor/and homosexuality*

Psychological research regarding the relation between gender and sexual orientation has primarily focused on homosexual men (Kitzinger & Coyle, 2002; Pettit & Hegarty, 2013). When lesbian women have been included in this research, it is often as a special case of homosexual with gay men acting as the norm (Lee & Crawford, 2007, 2012). Bisexual individuals have largely been completely excluded from this



field of research (Barker, 2007; Barker & Langdrige, 2008). Existing psychological knowledge about mental representations beyond the dichotomy of homosexuality-heterosexuality is therefore uncommon but examining mental representations of bisexuality has the potential to provide valuable knowledge about the construction of gender through a heterosexual matrix.

The material in Study I and II shows that participants from both Sweden and the UK view bisexuality as a somewhat less gender non-normative version of homosexuality. This view matches the way that bisexuality is commonly included in psychological research: either as a form of gender non-normative heterosexuality or as a form of more gender normative homosexuality. Bisexuality is rarely seen as its own unique way of relating to gender and sexuality performativity (Barker, 2007; Callis, 2009). However, on closer examination of the qualitative material gathered in Study II, a complex relationship between bisexuality and gender normativity is shown. Mental representations of bisexual groups do share themes of gender non-normativity with homosexual groups, but also displayed its own themes relating to being both alluring and unreliable. Representations of bisexuality thus share with homosexuality that any deviation from heterosexuality is viewed as a threat towards the role of the heterosexual matrix in naturalising binary gender (Butler, 1990/2006; Morgenroth & Ryan, 2021), but in a different way than homosexuality.

Representations of bisexuality also include a perception of an ambiguous lack of stability. While heterosexuality is seen as a natural kind and homosexuality as an inverted version of that kind, bisexuality is predominantly associated with instability in a negative sense; it is often seen as an identity based in confusion (Israel & Mohr, 2004; Mize & Manago, 2018; Zivony & Lobel, 2014). So, while homosexuality can be contorted into a more culturally intelligible frame when viewed as an inversion of heterosexual genders, bisexuality reveals the fragility of the very structure of organising gender around sexuality. In representations of bisexuality, an ongoing inversion is instead conducted that uses the gender of current romantic/sexual interests/partners to construct a sexual orientation that is either ‘actually’ heterosexual or homosexual orientation (Burke & LaFrance, 2016; Flanders & Hatfield, 2013; Morgenroth et al., 2022). While homosexuality can play the role of providing meaning to the ‘normal’ state of heterosexuality by providing a distinguishing position of ‘abnormality’ (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988), bisexuality cannot be constructed as an opposite to neither heterosexuality nor homosexuality. That is, when there is no available information about any vector of desire, as was the case in Study I and II, representations of bisexuality occupy a liminal space in relation to heterosexuality. Through this ability to exist both within and outside of heterosexuality, bisexuality comes to represent a different type of threat to the heterosexual matrix than homosexuality does (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2021). This dissertation expands the limited research that exists regarding mental representations of bisexual individuals and shows that bisexuality is represented in ways that construct it as simultaneous heterosexuality *and* homosexuality, and in this process also making it its own type of gender trouble.

## Reactions to Gender Non-Normativity as Gender Trouble

There is a longstanding discussion regarding which type of gender trouble most effectively reduces the restricting influence of gender on people's lives. A de-gendering perspective suggests that reducing the salience of gender all together is the best way to move away from a gender hierarchy (Bem, 1993). In contrast, a multi-gender perspective states that gender is currently such a fundamental categorisation that it cannot be made less salient in its current form, and that expanding the number of genders that are culturally recognised is the best way to show that gender is not a natural kind (Hegarty et al., 2018). Study III, experiment 1 contributes to this discussion by examining how de-gendering and multi-gendering context-based gender trouble are perceived in a simulated recruitment context. Unlike predictions from Morgenroth and Ryan (2021), multi-gender context-based gender trouble was not experienced as an identity threat by participants with a binary gender identity, nor did de-gendering act as a threat to those with a minority gender identity. However, when there was no gender trouble at all included in the organisation description, those with a minority gender identity did experience identity threat. In this specific context, it thus appears that any gender trouble is good trouble as far as gender minorities are concerned, and that gender majorities are not that easily threatened. The experiments in Study III show that creating some gender trouble in a recruitment context could assist in attracting a more diverse applicant pool, and that different types of gender trouble can be effective for this purpose. Context-based gender trouble that works by explicitly including minority gender identities (multi-gendering) has the added benefit of also advancing social justice by providing representation to individuals marginalised through their gender identification (Hegarty et al., 2018) and can therefore be preferable to a de-gendering approach.

Because sexual orientation is seen as a concealable group identity (Herek & McLemore, 2012), experimental research on workplace discrimination of sexual and gender minorities commonly includes a text-based sexual orientation disclosure within stimuli materials (Granberg et al., 2020; Steffens et al., 2016). However, using a text-based disclosure does not account for the fact that sexual and gender minority groups often face stigma specifically due to the use of gender non-conformity in appearance as a signal of non-heterosexuality (Anderson, 2020; Henry & Stelger, 2022). It has been suggested that experimental research into hiring discrimination of sexual and gender minorities should further study the contributions of gender typicality of applicant appearance (Steffens et al., 2016), and Study III experiment 2 consisted of just such a study. Unlike what was hypothesised, engaging in performance-based gender trouble did not result in a negative evaluation bias towards gender non-normative applicants. Rather, gender non-normative applicants received significantly more positive evaluations than gender normative applicants in certain metrics.

This dissertation thus contributes to the emerging field of experimental research on sexual and gender recruitment discrimination by showing that performance-based gender trouble, as perceived only in terms of appearance rather than through an explicit disclosure of a non-heterosexual sexual orientation or trans experiences, need not always have negative effects for applicants. Sexual and gender minority individuals to report concerns of being met with discrimination due to having a gender non-normative appearance (Croteau, 1996; McFadden, 2015; Woodruffe-Burton & Bairstow, 2013) but this dissertation indicates that in certain situations this fear can be ameliorated; which in turn has the potential to lessen experiences of minority stress (Thoma et al., 2021). However, sexual and gender minorities do report frequent experiences of informal discrimination, ranging from inappropriate questions in the workplace to direct harassment (Croteau, 1996; Steffens et al., 2016). These processes of informal discrimination cannot be captured in experimental research on simulated situations which focus on formal discrimination only, which limits the direct applicability of these results.

### **Developing Intersectional Analysis within Psychological Research**

This dissertation is part of an increasing focus on intersecting social categories within psychological research (Cole, 2009; Else-Quest & Hyde, 2015). A common methodological choice when conducting quantitative studies on representations of intersecting categories has been to either take a pure multiplicative approach for some specific combinations of social categories, creating for instance a 2 (gender: women, men)  $\times$  3 (sexual orientation: heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual) framework (see Mize & Manago, 2018 for this example). Alternatively, studies have examined how mental representations of a specific social group changes at intersections with other social categories. This was, for instance, done by Preddie and Biernat (2021) who studied representations of men at different points in a 2 (ethnicity: Black, White)  $\times$  2 (sexual orientation: heterosexual, homosexual) framework. Factorial designs have been criticised for not taking into account that different social identities are not experienced separately, and that separating the influence of social categories from each other contributes to the essentialisation of each social group (Shields, 2008). However, while a factorial approach may be vulnerable to processes of reification of social categories, it can also include the potential for meaningful intercategorical and/or intracategorical intersectional analysis (McCall, 2005). Cole (2009) suggests that the way that intersectional analysis can be incorporated into psychological research is not necessarily through the adoption of new methods, but through re-conceptualising what social categories represent. To this end, she provided three questions about social categories that researchers wishing to conduct intersectional analysis should use as a starting point: 1) Who is included within this category? 2) What role does inequality play? 3) Where are there similarities? (Cole, 2009).

Study I and II addressed these questions using a factorial framework, which was made possible by the design choice to include superordinate, single axis categories in addition to specific locations at the intersection of gender and sexual orientation. By including general gender and sexual orientation categories, I could conduct analyses of who is included in these general categories and who is excluded, how distance from category norms can contribute to experiences of inequality, how normative processes relate to systems of power, and how intersecting categories can create similarity between groups with different intersectional locations (e.g., heterosexual women and homosexual men). By including both general and intersecting categories in the designs, Study I and II were able to directly show the instability of these general categories in relation to intersecting dimensions, and thereby deconstruct the ways that gender is essentialised through the naturalisation of heterosexuality. Including the general categories that constitute gender and sexual orientation subgroups allows for an analysis of how the meaning of the normative requires a comparison group that is constructed as lower status (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988; Hegarty & Pratto, 2004). This dissertation thus shows the value for future intersectional research in investigating not just intersecting categories, but also including the constitutive categories themselves within the research design.

## Practical Implications

Study III showed that the way language constructs gender categories in an organisation description can influence who feels safe within an organisation. Experiment 1 provides a valuable extension of previous research on gender-fair language in organisational communication by being the first experimental study to examine responses to equal employment opportunity statements that explicitly include gender minority identities. This represents a first step towards providing recommendations to practitioners regarding the use of gender-fair language that acknowledges identities beyond the gender binary. These results can also be used to further investigate which factors in organisational communication attracts gender minority individuals. Additionally, Study III showed that having a gender non-normative appearance need not always lead to negative consequences when it comes to recruitment evaluations, at least outside of a distinctly gendered work environment. While a majority of the Swedish labour market is gender segregated, approximately 18% of employed individuals in Sweden work in so called gender balanced profession (40-60/60-40 split of women and men employees; Statistiska centralbyrån, 2022). For gender non-normative individuals currently looking for employment within these professions (e.g., customer service staff) the findings of this dissertation show that displaying an authentic gender expression need not be met with (direct) discrimination. Experiment 2 answered the call for additional experimental research into hiring discrimination of sexual and gender minorities

that examines the contribution of gender typicality of applicant appearance (Steffens et al., 2016b). Membership in a sexual or gender minority is often not explicitly communicated in recruitment situations, but gender atypicality in appearance is commonly seen as an indication of non-heterosexuality (Cox et al., 2016). This makes studying the effect of gender non-normativity in appearance in the absence of identity disclosure relevant for all individuals with a gender non-normative appearance; regardless of actual identification with a sexual or gender minority identity (Anderson, 2020). For organisations that do not currently have a gender diverse staff body but still wish to be seen as an appealing and safe workplace for gender minorities, including some form of context-based gender trouble in organisation communication can help, as shown in Study III experiment 1.

According to the intersectional invisibility hypothesis, the consequences of groups being invisible or hypervisible can be either positive or negative depending on the context (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). When diversity initiatives do not take into account that the relation to the overarching marginalised group differs based on other intersecting categories, they can end up being perceived as either not helpful or even as directly harmful (Wong et al., 2022). By using the insights of this dissertation regarding the different stereotype content and prototypicality of groups at intersections of gender and sexual orientation, more contextually sensitive anti-discrimination initiatives that consider the heterogeneity of marginalised groups can be developed. Specifically, the results of Study II stands in contrast to predictions from the intersectional invisibility hypothesis, in that that androcentrism was not a determining factor of visibility across all included sexual minority groups. When designing equity initiatives for sexual minority groups, it is therefore important to be mindful that each group can have a unique relation to androcentrism. In other words, be aware that initiatives aimed at assisting homosexual and bisexual groups need to consider the needs of lesbian women and bisexual men in addition to those of gay men and bisexual women.

There is a vast amount of psychological research conducted on general gender stereotypes (see Ellemers, 2018 for a review), and the content of these stereotypes has been connected to gendered divisions of labour (e.g., Wood & Eagly, 2012), the societal status of gender groups (e.g., Cuddy et al., 2009), and mechanisms underlying workplace discrimination (e.g., Heilman, 2012; Rudman & Phelan, 2008). However, this dissertation showed in both Study I and II that the attributes society ascribes to women and men include an implicit assumption of heterosexuality. That is, when asked about women and men in general, participants report attributes that match those ascribed to heterosexual women and men, but that do not match those ascribed to sexual minority women and men. Perhaps the clearest practical implication of this dissertation is therefore that it reveals that large corpus of existing psychological research on gender stereotype content is likely to only be applicable to heterosexual women and men. When using the general gender categories of women and men in future research or interventions, researchers and practitioners should be aware of this limitation in generalisability.

## Ethical Considerations

The Swedish ethical review act stipulates that research handling sensitive personal data need to be subject to formal ethical review (Ethical review act, 2003:460). Personal data is defined as data that “relate to an identified or identifiable living individual” (General Data Protection Regulation, 2016, art. 4, para. 1). Study II included the collection of personal data (Prolific ID) along with sensitive information (sexual orientation). The handling of this data therefore required ethical review and ethical approval was granted by the Swedish ethical review authority (Dnr 2021-04856). While information regarding participant sexual orientation was collected also in Study I and III, no sensitive *personal* data was included as both data collections were completely anonymous. These studies therefore did not meet any of the criteria for research requiring ethical approval and was not submitted for formal review. Study I and III were both carried out in accordance with the Swedish national guidelines on ethical research (Swedish Research Council, 2017).

Conducting research on marginalised groups requires more than complying with legal frameworks, it should include ethical reflection regarding the researcher’s own relationship to the group and whether or not the research advances social justice (Hailes et al., 2020). The ways that the researcher’s lived experience has influenced the research is not often addressed in quantitative psychological research (Ryan & Golden, 2006; Tafreshi et al., 2016), but is a common practice within qualitative psychological research (Lazard & Mcavoy, 2017). Because marginalised groups are the focus of this dissertation, I find it important to include a brief positionality statement and reflection regarding some of the ways that my subjectivity has influenced the research as well as how this research advances social justice.

In relation to gender and sexual orientation as psychological concepts, I have found the concept of *double consciousness* (Brooks, 2011) to be a useful framework through which to reflect on the relationship of my subjectivity to my topic of study. Double consciousness describes the phenomenon where members of a marginalised group are forced to have insight into both their own group and into the workings of dominant groups because they need to anticipate the workings of the dominant group. By contrast, members of a dominant group have the privilege to not concern themselves with the inner workings of marginalised groups as their behaviour is unlikely to affect the dominant group on a large scale (Brooks, 2011). Through my lived experience as a sexual minority woman, I have been made acutely aware of ways that systems of dominance relate to both my experiences of gender and sexuality. This has contributed to the development of a form of double consciousness that I believe has been of great use to analyse the ways that binary gender and heterosexuality relate to each other. However, I also acknowledge that I have little insight into the subjective experience of belonging to a marginalised group other than lesbian women (e.g., gay men, bisexual women, bisexual men), or to the subjectivity that comes with belonging to a sexual minority group that is marginalised along additional dimensions (e.g., ethnicity, ability, class, nationality).

Future work in this field should be mindful that while sexual minority researchers can have access to double consciousness relating to understandings of heterosexuality, this does not necessarily extend to understandings of all sexual minority groups (Hegarty & Rutherford, 2019).

The three studies in this dissertation aim to contribute to the advancement of social justice by raising awareness of the connection between mental representations at the intersection of gender and sexual orientation and the experience of invisibility, discrimination, and exclusion. While Study III is the only one with a directly applied focus, Study I and II achieve this by showing the hidden influence of hegemonic social ideologies in constructing category norms. Throughout the studies, I have sought to deviate from the common practice within psychology of examining non-normative individuals as different from an unspecified norm (Hegarty & Pratto, 2004), and instead purposefully included an examination of how this supposedly normal position is created.

The US social movement of Black feminism has had a fundamental role in the development of the concept of intersectional analysis (e.g., Cole, 2009, 2020; Collins, 2015; Crenshaw, 1989), and has at all levels included strong influence from Black lesbian feminist movements (e.g., The Combahee River Collective, 1978). However, the fundamental role of experiences of Black women as both researchers and the targets of research in the development of intersectional theory is often ignored within psychology (Cole, 2020; Moradi et al., 2020). I would therefore like to take particular care to acknowledge the intellectual debt that this dissertation owes to the academic and social movements connected to Black feminism.

## Strengths and Limitations

This dissertation includes three studies that aimed to examine how gender normativity influences mental representations and evaluation of groups that are seen as following or breaking said gender norms. Because gender normativity is a wide concept that permeates a wide range of aspects related to our understanding of ourselves and others, this dissertation does not represent a complete investigation of the topic. Instead, I have examined stereotype content, prototype structure, and gender normativity to illustrate how a heterosexual matrix of cultural intelligibility influences mental representations of gender. The three studies included in the dissertation have both methodological strengths and limitations and I will discuss a selection of these. I will also engage in a reflection regarding if the use of quantitative methods to analyse a social constructionist theory represents a strength or a limitation of the dissertation.

## Strengths

### *Representation of sexual and gender minority groups*

A strength of this dissertation is that it is expanded on previous psychological research on gender norms by conducting an intersectional analysis that does not make an a priori assumption that either gender or sexual orientation is primary to the other, or independent from each other. By using an intersectional approach, this dissertation increases the research representation of sexual minority groups which have been largely excluded from psychological research, unless included as a pathological group to cure (Hegarty, 2017; Kitzinger & Coyle, 2002). This is particularly true for sexual minority women that are rarely included at all in psychological research, and when included studies often focus on how a minority sexual orientation contribute to adverse outcomes such as poor mental health (Lee & Crawford, 2007, 2012). The move away from psychological research on sexual and gender minorities being research on psychopathology into being research on the restrictive nature of gender and sexuality norms has been a long struggle fraught with opposition (Hegarty, 2017). This dissertation continues this struggle by destabilising heterosexuality rather than examining representation of sexual minority groups as an ‘effect to be explained’ (Hegarty & Pratto, 2004). Finally, Study III, Experiment 1a included gender minority individuals as participants, which is rare within psychological research that does not directly deal with gender identity as a topic (Hegarty et al., 2018).

### *Measurement diversity*

Study I and II made use of multiple measurement types to operationalise mental representations of gender normativity. Study I used both direct and indirect measures of mental representations of gender normativity and therefore speaks to the extent to which heterocentrism influences controlled and automatic representation of groups at the intersection of sexual orientation. Using both explicit and implicit measures of stereotype content indicated that mental representations of gender and sexual orientation may not have a strong automatic component and instead mainly rely on more or less purposeful comparisons between groups. That is, activation of stereotype content may rely on the use of shifting standards where a group is seen as communal or agentic only in relation to another group (Biernat & Manis, 1994). The implicit test used in Study I (SC-IAT) includes only one target group with no comparison group and measures associations that are intended to be too fast for participants to activate an individual reference group to evaluate the target group against. The between-groups design of course meant that there was also no explicit comparison group for the explicit measure, but participants were not restricted in time when responding to the trait scales and could therefore have made use of a shifting standards judgement (Biernat & Manis, 1994). When deprived of the possibility of relating the attributes associated with one target group to those of another, the results indicated that very little meaning was given to gender and sexual



orientation category as independent groups, beyond a positive valence association and a general association between women and warmth. This matches assertions from a postmodern framework that the meaning of a social category lives in its difference from something Other (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988). In other words, the concept of *man* is not meaningful unless contrasted with the concept of *woman* and the concept of *heterosexuality* is not meaningful unless contrasted with the concept of *homosexual*. The use of both explicit and implicit measures of the same construct thus strengthened the knowledge production in this dissertation.

Study II used numeric measurement of perceptions of similarity between general gender and sexual orientation categories to estimate the perceived similarity between cultural prototypes for each subgroup to the prototype for the superordinate groups. This provided a direct measure of the relative closeness between cultural prototypes and is a common approach within psychological research for determining the perceived similarity of groups without pre-determining the basis for that similarity (e.g., Koch et al., 2016). A strength of Study II was that it complemented these ratings of similarity with a free-response measure that allowed participants to report their own understandings of the cultural representations of the target groups. Using a natural language approach that quantified this qualitative material allowed for the collection of a larger corpus of attributes than I would otherwise have been able to analyse. It made it possible to conduct an interpretative analysis of the dynamic ways in which intersectional subgroups related to the general gender and sexual orientation categories and vice versa. Together the two forms of measurement informed each other, and the inclusion of qualitative data nuanced the conclusions drawn from quantitative ratings.

## **Limitations**

One limitation to the analyses of mental representations of gender and sexual orientation in this dissertation is that the three studies did not include representation of sexual minority groups belonging to additional marginalised groups. Specifically, the research included in the dissertation has not included analysis of how gender normativity and representations of sexual orientation change and are changed by representations of ethnicity/race (e.g., Lei et al., 2020; Leshin et al., 2022; Petsko & Bodenhausen, 2019; Preddie & Biernat, 2021). Gender normativity has also been identified as a way of justifying differences based on socio-economic class (Shields, 2007), a dimension that this dissertation excluded. Because neither ethnicity nor class were explicitly included in the description of the target groups in either Study I or II, it is likely that the stereotypes and prototypes described are relevant only for members of the majority ethnicity in Sweden and the UK and may not be relevant for groups belonging to a lower socio-economic status. Additionally, no demographic information regarding ethnicity was collected for participants in any of the samples. Information regarding ethnic origin is classified as sensitive data by the Swedish ethical review act (Ethical review act, 2003:460) that recommends only

gathering this information when absolutely necessary to inform the research question. As ethnic origin of participants was not deemed directly necessary information to inform the research questions it was not collected, but this choice has the drawback of limiting evaluations of sample representativity.

One limitation of the types of conclusions that can be drawn from this dissertation is that it only includes quantitative analyses. Qualitative material was collected in Study II but was quantified rather than subjected to a any form of qualitative analysis method. The use of quantitative analysis has been described as potentially inappropriate for intersectional analysis, partly due to the assumption thereof that social categories can be isolated as independent variables (Shields, 2008), partly due to the inability of quantitative data to accurately represent the way that individuals assign meaning through reflection (Griffin & Phoenix, 1994), and partly due to the reductionism inherent in reifying social categories as fixed across individuals and contexts (Lindqvist et al., 2020; Westbrook, 2015). A different way of conducting empirical research regarding the way that gender normativity is constructed in relation to heterosexuality would have been to use a qualitative methodology. This would have created more space for nuanced understanding of how individuals understand themselves and others in relation to the social categories of gender and sexual orientation. Specifically, an interpretative approach that uses the way that people describe the ways they make meaning in relation to gender and sexual orientation in different contexts would have allowed for an understanding of gender normativity that was less influenced by my preconceptions as a researcher and more informed by the lived experience of the participants (see Magnusson & Marecek, 2012a for description of interpretative research).

To answer a call for more implicit measures of stereotype content (Fiske, 2019), Study I included two SC-IATs. IATs in general have received criticism regarding internal reliability, construct validity, discriminant validity, susceptibility to participant faking, and predictive power (Corneille & Hütter, 2020; Dessel et al., 2020; Fiedler et al., 2006; Schimmack, 2021), and the SC-IAT in particular has a record of low internal reliability (Stieger et al., 2011). Despite this, there is research using an IAT paradigm that shows implicit differentiation of social groups in terms of communion and agency (Carlsson & Björklund, 2010; Ebert et al., 214; Lindqvist et al., 2017). However, these studies used inperson testing while Study I administered SC-IATs online. So far, online IATs have shown comparable psychometric properties and results to inperson IATs (Carpenter et al., 2019). Still, online data collection does mean that there is a lack of control over the participants' surroundings (Weigold et al., 2022) and this could have had particularly negative effects for completion of SC-IATs where concentration is key.

All data included in this dissertation was collected through different online methods. This has the benefit of facilitating recruitment of larger samples from different national contexts with a higher degree of diversity (Casler et al., 2013; Hays et al., 2015; King et al., 2014; Roulin, 2015; Thornton et al., 2016) but can also mean a higher risk (compared to inperson data collection) of participants

seeking to complete the study as fast as possible rather than as genuinely as possibly (Hays et al., 2015). There were no indications in the data that participant carelessness was a large concern in either of the included samples, but careless respondents can be difficult to detect in relation to self-report measures (Stieger & Reips, 2010). While more direct measures of carelessness could have been added, I chose to use time spent as the main indicator as this has shown better performance than more active approaches (e.g., so called “attention checks”; Leiner, 2019). A second concern of online data collection is that the same participant can participate more than once, either by being a member in multiple web panels or by repeatedly accessing social media links (Hays et al., 2016). However, I deem it unlikely that participants recruited through social media completed the study more than once as no compensation for participation was given and the study was rather lengthy. The use of diverse web panels and targeted sampling of participants with different nationalities also make it unlikely that participants were recruited twice in the web panel samples.

Finally, the practical applications of findings from Study III are limited by the fact that only simulated recruitment contexts were used and that no manipulation of the gender-typing of the organisation or profession was performed. It is possible that the use of a gender-neutral organisation and profession used did not activate identity threat among gender majority individuals in Experiment 1 or recruiters in Experiment 2 because gender did not become salient (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2021). In addition, within a simulated situation, social desirability is high but material consequences are low which is very different from actual recruitment situations. Additional research in more directly applied settings that include gender typed professions and focus on multiple types of discrimination is therefore needed.

## **What is the Point of Social Constructionist Research Using Quantitative Methods?**

Part of the aim of this dissertation was to provide empirical testing of the poststructuralist concept of the heterosexual matrix using quantitative methods, which has been suggested as a fruitful way to develop psychological understandings of the processes underlying gender normativity (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2018, 2020). However, using methods grounded in positivist epistemology to create knowledge about marginalised groups is not an uncontroversial practice, and it is possible that the concept of the heterosexual matrix cannot or should not be tested using such a methodology (Kitzinger, 1987). The use of quantitative methodology within this dissertation can therefore be thought of both as a strength and as a limitation, which I believe warrants some reflection on the topic.

Kitzinger (1987) argues that conducting studies related to sexual minorities within a positivist framework has historically only acted to assimilate research on sexual minorities into existing psychological theories, with no accommodation of

psychological theories based on insights found through these studies. In this way, studying gender and sexuality through empiricist methods continues to construct minorities as deviations from the normative functioning of the majority (Kitzinger, 1987). Do the three quantitative studies included in the dissertation represent another way of constructing sexual and gender minorities as deviations from a normative heterosexuality or do they question existing psychological theories that do so? I would like to argue that I have used empirical methods in the service of postmodern deconstruction by largely using them without a positivist epistemology. To this end, I have viewed all parts of the research process in terms of how and what type of knowledge is being produced and for whom. Rather than presenting this dissertation as a discovery of knowledge through empirical means, I have treated it as a construction of knowledge performed in relation to the disciplinary norms of psychological research. In this way I have used the methodological tools of quantitative social psychological research to engage in disciplinary reflexivity. That is, I have seen the meaning of the included variables as “objects of negotiation” within the social situation of the research process (see Magnusson, 2011 for a discussion). The findings of the three included studies give indications of how gender and sexual orientation are understood at this point in time, but do not aspiring to the status of objective fact. A social constructionist approach allows for deconstruction of the norms that are taken for granted and an opening up of unforeseen potential for different futures, and by using quantitative methodology to do so this dissertation also acts to deconstruct the methods themselves. In this sense, the use of empirical, quantitative methods to examine gender as understood through a heterosexual matrix of intelligibility represents a strength of this dissertation. However, the use of quantitative methodology also makes the results of the dissertation liable to interpreted as objective facts about the nature of groups at the intersection of gender and sexual orientation by the wider research field (Magnusson, 2011; Shields, 2008). In this sense, the use of empirical, quantitative methodology can also limit the impact of the knowledge production of this dissertation.

This limitation was directly manifested by the publishing norms for the mainstream psychology journals that Study I and II were submitted to. Requests for brevity from editors along with requests for more details on data analysis from reviewers left little to no space for explicit inclusion of social constructionist frameworks. Without the contextualisation provided by the complete dissertation, Study I and II can be read as a continuation of the reification of gender and sexual orientation as mental objects rather than an analysis of them as emergent concepts. However, I made the decision that submitting to general social psychological journals would still be a good contribution to the development of intersectional analysis in mainstream psychology. Through this reflection, I would like to join my voice to those emphasising that researchers within psychology need to view their knowledge production as an act of social power (e.g., Cherry, 1995). Through the performance of objectivity present in research, the author(s) of research articles may

die even more completely compared to those in literary publishing<sup>6</sup> – making it crucial to reflect over which of researchers’ intentions different types of readers will extract from the text, and for what purposes they may do so.

## Directions for future research

Further exploring the ways that gender and sexual orientation relate to each other through intersectional analyses of mental representations will contribute to providing knowledge regarding people as individuals existing in relation to social structures such as gender, rather than continuing to restrict psychological research only to internal processes and thereby limiting understanding of humans as social beings (Magnusson & Marecek, 2012c). The studies included in this dissertation opens up several potential research questions regarding how societal structures relate to understanding of gender categories as social concepts and how these understandings are applied in a practical sense.

It has been suggested that binary gender categories are conceptualised as different and complementary due to the pervasive gender division of both formal and informal labour (Eagly & Wood, 2012), rather than due to the influence of a heterosexual matrix of cultural intelligibility. When it comes to the general gender categories of women and men, there is support that beliefs about a gender division of social roles correlate with beliefs about the stereotype content for each gender group (Bosak et al., 2017; Diekman et al., 2005; Diekman & Eagly, 2000; Wilde & Diekman, 2005). This dissertation showed that mental representations of gender groups are likely to be strongly influenced by heterocentrism, indicating that research on the connection between social roles and gender stereotypes may only be applicable to beliefs about heterosexual women and men. Research on how changes or differences in beliefs about social role occupation relate to stereotype content for sexual minority groups could inform discussions regarding the basis used for attributions of communion and agency to social groups. This being because sexual minority groups cut across the sex categories that are presumed to be pre-exist gender categories and can therefore provide information on which attributions are likely to follow from perceptions of role division and which are likely to follow from biological essentialism.

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, understandings of homosexuality as a “third gender” within the field of psychology became less prominent and have largely been replaced by a view that gender identity and sexual orientation are separate concepts (Hegarty, 2017; Kitzinger & Coyle, 2002; Pettit & Hegarty, 2013). Even so, sexual orientation is still viewed outside of research contexts as a form of gender identity (Henry & Stelger, 2022). According to the view that binary gender is made

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<sup>6</sup> Referring to Barthes 1967 essay “Death of the Author”, not the literal hazards of publishing.

intelligible only through a matrix of heterosexuality, non-heterosexuality troubles the perceived naturalness of the binary of gender and reveals sex categories as constructed (Butler, 1990/2006). Treating gender and sexual orientation as separate constructs could therefore be considered an act of gender trouble, while the continued gendering of sexuality represents an influence of the heterosexual matrix. As of yet, psychological research has not directly studied the influence that personal beliefs about gender and sexual orientation as distinct or connected can have on mental representations of groups at the intersection of gender and sexual orientation. It is possible that the ‘gender inversion’ of sexual minorities identified in Study I and II is less prominent for those who view gender and sexual orientation as separate constructs, but this remains to be empirically examined. This direction of research could also fruitfully include the influence of contextual factors on the salience of gender and sexual orientation as connected or distinct, as suggested by a cognitive, lens-based account of intersectional categorisation (Petsko et al., 2022).

Another societal development in how gender is understood as a personal identity is the increasing prevalence of individuals who identify as having a nonbinary gender identity; a heterogeneous group of people that reject understandings of themselves based on a binary gender structure (Hegarty et al., 2018). Psychological research on individuals with a nonbinary gender identity is sparse and has so far mainly focused on the experience of mental health difficulties within the group (Hegarty et al., 2018). Nonbinary gender identities can take the form of completely rejecting identification based on gender or be an identification with a third (or fourth, fifth, etc.) gender identity, and can therefore represent gender trouble through either de-gendering or multi-gendering. However, the way that individuals with a nonbinary gender identity understand themselves in relation to, or not in relation to, gender as a system has not been the focus of psychological research (see Vincent, 2016 for a sociological perspective). Conducting psychological research into how individuals with a nonbinary gender identity relate to a binary gender system could provide much needed input to the discussion on whether systematic change to gender structures is best achieved through turning the volume of gender up or down (Bem, 1995).

Treating gender as an emergent feature of social situations opens up possibilities for research that analyses how gender is “done” within different contexts, rather than only using it as an explanatory group factor (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2018, 2020). Continued research on the influence of gender trouble in applied settings could therefore be developed by including gender performance as a dependent variable. This could, for instance, be done through discursive analyses expressions of gender norms in language use in organisational communication and applicant evaluations. Combining gender as both an outcome and as a predictor in the same research program would also make it possible to study how the gender distribution of employees within an organisation/profession influences how norms regarding gender performance are constructed and enforced in different workplace settings.

## Summary and Conclusions

This dissertation used a social constructionist theoretical framework and intersectional analysis to study the conceptual interrelatedness of gender and sexual orientation by examining aspects of gender performativity and heterosexuality as a matrix of cultural intelligibility. This was conducted through two empirical studies on the ways that gender normativity is expressed in mental representations of social groups at intersections of gender and sexual orientation, and one experimental study on the practical consequences of troubling the supposed naturalness of binary gender. Psychological research on gender has predominantly been conducted within a paradigm of gender difference where gender categories are seen as the expression of naturally occurring, binary sex categories (Magnusson & Marecek, 2012b; Morgenroth & Ryan, 2021). The view of binary sex categories as a natural kind is commonly justified through the different biological contributions needed for sexual reproduction (Connell, 1987). Within this framework, heterosexuality therefore also assumes the status of natural kind as an emergent feature of sexual reproduction (Hubbard & Hegarty, 2014). Social constructionist and poststructuralist perspectives offer a contrasting perspective of gender by viewing it as performative (Butler, 1990/2006; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Within this perspective, gender is not an expression of sex. Instead, sex and gender are both constantly created as seemingly stable categories through the ritualised repetition of acts that are seen as expressive of gender (Butler, 1988, 1990/2006). Heterosexuality acts as a matrix of intelligibility through which this performative gender becomes culturally intelligible by providing a motivation for the existence of a binary gender system (Butler, 1990/2006).

The findings of this dissertation support the perspective that representations of groups at the intersection of gender and sexual orientation are organised within a matrix of heterosexuality rather than based on sex categories. This indicates that heterosexuality is a primary category to gender, and that it acts to create the very gender complementarity that allows it to be seen as naturally occurring. In contrast to predictions regarding gender non-normativity being met with punitive consequences, making gender less salient or including explicit mention of gender minorities in organisational communication made gender minorities see the organisation as a more likely to be a safe place to work and performing gender in a non-normative way was met with positive evaluations from recruiters. Creating gender trouble can thus also have beneficial effects within certain contexts.

In conclusion, this dissertation argues that psychological research that views gender and sexual orientation as separate and natural kinds contribute to positioning sexual and gender minorities as culturally unintelligible. Studying gender related aspects of psychological functioning through a performative framework represents a better option for examining the meanings that gender have in the lives of both those that live within and those that live outside the bounds of gender norms. This dissertation contributes to developing psychological research by including an

intersectional perspective that analyses both normative and non-normative positions, thus exemplifying how the study of individuals can contribute to understanding gender as a social phenomenon. Importantly, future inclusion of intersectional analysis of social categories in psychology should consist of more than simply including several social groups in research designs and analyses, it requires questioning of why and how these groups have been constructed as meaningful. Only when abandoning the assumption that gender and sexual orientation groups are natural kinds can psychological research continue to move away from its historical contributions to group inequality and further contribute to the empowerment of marginalised groups.





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