so, you want me to be fake?
authencity as cultural symptom
TODAY'S AGENDA

Queer Pedagogy: Identity
- As Paradox
- As Trauma (Informed)

Authenticity
- As Cultural Symptom
- Today's "patient": Dylan Mulvany and Trans authenticy
- Authenticity as Psychological Essentialism

Queer Pedagogy: Authentic Praxis
- Theory: The Essentialism issue
- Ethics: Shared Horizons of Self
- Practices: Non-violent Communication
queer pedagogy
as paradox
Queer pedagogy seeks to both uncover and disrupt hidden curricula of heteronormativity as well as to develop classroom landscapes and experiences that create safety for queer participants.

Thomas-Reid, 2018
In praxis, queer pedagogy... involves three primary foci:

(1) *safety for* queer students and teachers;

(2) *engagement by* queer students; and finally,

(3) *understanding of* queer issues, culture, and history.

Thomas-Reid, 2018
queer pedagogy
as
trauma (informed)
**ESSENCE**
(seen as)
'being different'

**EMOTION**
(experienced as)
'feeling strange'

**BEHAVIOUR**
(judged as)
'acting wrongly'
We elicit from the world, what we project into the world, but what you project is what happened to you as a child.

Bruce Perry, Child Trauma Academy

Trauma-informed educators recognize students’ actions are a direct result of their life experiences. When their students act out or disengage, they don’t ask them, “What is wrong with you?” but rather, “What happened to you?”

Basha Krasnoff, A Practitioner's Guide to Educating Traumatized Children
authenticity
Evaluating authenticity is the process of verifying what is genuine, real, and/or true.

Beverland and Farrelly, 2010
Dutton (2003) refers to authenticity as a “dimension word” – a word whose meaning remains uncertain until we know what dimension of authenticity is being discussed.
authenticity as cultural symptom
Žižek and the Symptom

For Žižek, trauma is the Real. The symptom, the specter of the Real, “perturbs the smooth engine of symbolization and throws it off balance.” (Žižek 2005 b: 31).

In this sense, traumatic symptoms (such as nightmares, flashbacks, and obsessions) mark the unassimilated trauma, which haunts the individuals through such symptoms.
today's "patient"
Dylan Mulvaney posted her custom Bud Light can on Instagram. Credit: Dylan Mulvaney via Instagram
The posts drew a fevered reaction, including from musicians Kid Rock, John Rich and Travis Tritt. Tritt said he was deleting Anheuser-Busch InBev items from his hospitality rider; Rich asked Twitter users to weigh in on the “replacement” for Bud Light at his Redneck Riviera bar; and a Kid Rock video showed him shooting Bud Light packages with an automatic rifle and using expletives for Bud Light and Anheuser-Busch.

But others came to Bud Light’s defense.
Center of culture

"Bud Light is America’s best-selling beer by a large margin and it [is] also one of the world’s biggest advertisers, so it’s a brand that is always at the center of culture,” said Lisa Weser, a former Anheuser-Busch InBev communications executive who today is CEO of Trailblaze, a cannabis communications company. “When you’re at the center of culture then you are always going to be a target for this type of controversy. This is not the first controversy and it’s not going to be the last for this brand.”

Bud Light parent AB InBev has declined comment beyond a statement that said the partnership with Mulvaney was one way it was connecting with diverse audiences. It also emphasized that the custom can was presented as a commemorative gift and not, as some evidently believed, a product in wide production.

"Anheuser-Busch works with hundreds of influencers across our brands as one of many ways to authentically connect with audiences across various demographics,” the statement said. From time to time we produce unique commemorative cans for fans and for brand influencers, like Dylan Mulvaney. This commemorative can was a gift to celebrate a personal milestone and is not for sale to the general public.”

Modest comeback

The controversy comes while Bud Light was showing signals of a modest comeback. Although Bud Light has lost share for 13 years, executives are hopeful new marketing can slow its decline. A report last week from Alliance Bernstein said that Bud Light had slowed its rate of decline over the last three months, although it slipped along with the beer industry in the most recent four weeks, according to Nielsen.

It’s still too soon to tell how the controversy will play out at the cash register. A Bud Light distributor contacted by Ad Age said it would be weeks until he would know how the event impacts sales. But according to Beer Marketer’s Insights, “many distributors expect there to be an immediate impact on sales, perhaps a lasting one,” as a result of the blowback.

The partnership with Mulvaney at one time would have been jarring for a brand such as Bud Light, that at one time was more likely to draw criticism for sexism for ads that deployed frat-boy style humor and women in bikinis.
Our Responsibility to America

As the CEO of a company founded in America's heartland more than 165 years ago, I am responsible for ensuring every consumer feels proud of the beer we brew.

We're honored to be part of the fabric of this country. Anheuser-Busch employs more than 18,000 people and our independent distributors employ an additional 47,000 valued colleagues. We have thousands of partners, millions of fans and a proud history supporting our communities, military, first responders, sports fans and hard-working Americans everywhere.

We never intended to be part of a discussion that divides people. We are in the business of bringing people together over a beer.

My time serving this country taught me the importance of accountability and the values upon which America was founded: freedom, hard work and respect for one another. As CEO of Anheuser-Busch, I am focused on building and protecting our remarkable history and heritage.

I care deeply about this country, this company, our brands and our partners. I spend much of my time traveling across America, listening to and learning from our customers, distributors and others.

Moving forward, I will continue to work tirelessly to bring great beers to consumers across our nation.

B.W. Whitworth
CEO, ANHEUSER-BUSCH
35+ New York Post stories about Dylan Mulvaney just in the last week over a single TikTok promotion. This is absolutely insane.
authenticity as psychological essentialism
Psychological essentialism is the view that certain categories are thought to have a deeper underlying reality, called an “essence.”

Van Gerven et al 2019
When people evaluate an item’s authenticity, they are evaluating the extent to which that object embodies or reflects a particular essence.

Newman, 2016, p. 297
Beliefs about what makes some objects one-of-a-kind have some striking similarities with people’s reasoning about their “true selves” as both display all the telltale signs of essentialism.

Are both types of authenticity driven by the same psychological phenomenon?

Van Gerven et al 2019 pg. 8
"true self" as psychological essentialism
The Need for a Steady Self

• We have a fundamental need to be reasonably steady in our basic characteristics because some general human practices, in particular long-term cooperation and prediction of behavior, only work if we are steady.

• The developments of modernity facilitated changing oneself and made it harder to remain steady.

• This leads to a predicament given the need for continuity.

• The ideal of essentialist authenticity can support the steadiness of the self and thereby be a helpful tool to deal with this predicament.

Leuenberger, 2021, p. 411
Essentialist authenticity is referred to as something to be considered in neuroethical assessments (e.g., if a psychopharmaceutical threatens authenticity we have a reason to choose a different form of treatment); patients often seem to refer to essentialist authenticity.

Essentialist authenticity is an important issue for them and whether or not they feel authentic may influence how they assess the success of the treatment; and it has been argued that in particular individuals with mental disorders refer to essentialist authenticity to provide a form of guidance which cannot be provided by existentialist accounts.
queer pedagogy: authentic praxix
engaging essentialism:
Opposed to gender essentialism, queer theorists see sexuality as a discursive social construction, fluid, plural, and continually negotiated rather than a natural, fixed, core identity.

Essentialism: Metaphysical v. Psychological

There is an important distinction between metaphysical essentialism, which posits the actual existence of essences, and psychological essentialism, which simply makes claims about people’s tendency to represent concepts in this way.

Newman, 2016, p. 295
Strategic Essentialism

Strategic essentialism is a political tactic in which minority groups, nationalities, or ethnic groups mobilize on the basis of shared gendered, cultural, or political identity to represent themselves.

While strong differences may exist between members of these groups, and amongst themselves they engage in continuous debates, it is sometimes advantageous for them to temporarily "essentialize" themselves, despite it being based on erroneous logic, and to bring forward their group identity in a simplified way to achieve certain goals, such as equal rights or antiglobalization.

Wikipedia, "Strategic Essentialism."  
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strategic_essentialism
The essentialist approach to authenticity maintains that every person has an individual, unchanging core – one’s true self. To be authentic means to find the true self and live by it. Essentialist authenticity can be understood as one end of the spectrum of views on authenticity.

At the other end of the spectrum, existentialist approaches deny the existence of an essential true self and see the authentic self as freely created.
engaging ethics:
from me to we
"True to Myself"

For Rousseau, to be your true self is an ideal we should strive for. This ideal does not necessarily lead to the morally good or to what makes us happy. Instead, to be authentic means to have a fulfilled life. We can understand a fulfilled life broadly as a life deemed meaningful.
"Only For Myself"

For philosopher Charles Taylor, authenticity encompasses self-discovery, understanding and fulfillment, individuality, autonomy, and freedom.

However, when authenticity is viewed through an instrumental lens, it encourages a type of individualism that utilizes relationships exclusively as a self-serving means to advance one’s own agenda.

Nosek, 1993
"Limits for Myself"

"The limit on anyone’s self-fulfillment must be the safeguarding of an equal chance at this fulfillment for others”

Charles Taylor
"Shared Horizons as Self"

Taylor argued that it is “in dialogue” with others that we enhance not only self-identities but also those of others. Through this recognition, as well as the need for the acknowledgment of a shared horizon, the moral imperative to authenticity can be retrieved.

Nosek, 1993
engaging trauma:
NVC
Nonviolent communication affords the skillful dialogue with others cradled in a shared sense of significance and supports the development of a meaningful identity-one that is formed through the realization of what exists beyond the self.

Nonviolent communication facilitates the retrieval of the ethic of authenticity.

Nosek, 1993
Feelings & Needs Over Evaluations

In NVC, it is suggested to avoid making evaluative statements, and focus instead on:

- **Emotion** that was sparked by the experience/interaction
- **Need(s)** that may not have been met during the experience/interaction

Nosek, 1993
Example: “I feel disrespected”:

- Disrespect is an evaluative concept. It is suggested to state the emotion that was sparked, e.g. “I feel frustrated.”

- Next consider the unmet need: “I feel frustrated, because my need for acknowledgment was not met.”

Nosek, 1993
Sources mentioned in this talk


features of psychological essentialism
In essentialized categories, unobservable properties take precedence over perceptual ones.

In other words, there is a difference between looking and being the same.
Authentic objects are objects believed to have an underlying reality that cannot be observed directly and which sets them apart (boundary intensification) from other similar-looking objects.

This underlying reality can be viewed as a conceptual placeholder, allowing for inductive inferences and causal effects.
A second characteristic which follows from the attention on invisible features is that essences are highly informative and therefore enable us to make novel inductive inferences (Gelman & Markman, 1987).

When you know two animals belong to the same category (e.g., terriers and golden retrievers are both dogs) you can extend one property (such as food preferences) from one dog to another on the assumption that they share the same essence (Tarlowski, 2018).

Van Gerven et al 2019 pg. 5
A third aspect of essentialism is that its categories are treated as being relatively discrete. Something either does or does not belong inside a category and is not somewhere halfway in between.

This is called boundary intensification because of our tendency to intensify category boundaries and draw them closer than they really are (Gelman, 2003, p. 67).

Van Gerven et al 2019 pg. 5
advantages and drawbacks
An essentialist view of authenticity does not require that individuals know what the essence is before evaluating authenticity; it simply requires that they believe that there is some unobservable essence and that the essence, rather than observable properties, is the primary source of value.

In this way, an essentialist account of authenticity allows for authenticity to be socially constructed (Belk and Costa, 1988; Peterson, 1997; 2005) as individuals may debate what the ‘true’ essence is as well as the relevant criteria for determining whether or not the item possesses that characteristic.
3 Types of Essence

**Sortal**

Sortal essence involves finite and necessary features needed for category membership. Example: A child under eighteen years of age is a "minor"

**Casual**

Casual essence involves underlying surface qualities or powers for category membership. Example: If you mix hydrogen and oxygen in a particular combination, you get "water"

**Ideal**

(Authenticity judgments most closely related to this type)

Ideal essence involves achievement of a Platonic ideal
Example: The "essence" of rock music; the "essence" of being a scientist

paraphrased from Newman, 2016, p. 299
Although essentialism in its full form does not apply to artifact categories (e.g., spoons in general), there is evidence that individually (e.g., the Queen’s spoon), authentic objects are prone to the essentialist bias (Gelman, 2013).

Two authentic objects can therefore look the same (such as Hitler’s sweater and an ordinary sweater), but this does not mean that people believe that they are the same as the two sweaters do not share the same “essence.”.
(1) People value essentialized objects for their unobservable properties. Example: a dress worn by Marilyn Monroe. (Frazier et al., 2009).

(2) People tend to believe essentialized objects from the same source share an inherent novel property, even when the objects appear perceptually dissimilar. Example: two paintings produced by the same painter. (Newman, 2016).

(3) People perceive the authenticity of essentialized objects as being highly discrete. Hence, any change in the essence of an authentic object leads to a disproportionately large reduction of its authenticity, whereas structural alterations have little effect (Newman, 2016; van Gerven et al., 2018).

(4) People believe in the power of essentialized objects to transmit causal consequences. Example: belief in carrying a "lucky coin," or a fear that a house where someone was killed will carry "negative energy."
As we have noted, essentialism works well for objects, but it is less clear how it relates to things that are not clearly objects, such as food or performance art.

For instance, does a certain dish embody the essence of its cuisine? Or does some rendering of Shakespeare embody the essence of the play? It is doubtful people think the same way about these as they do about objects.