The Social Ontology of Sexuality

Matthew Salett Andler

Introduction

House-ballroom emcees often use the phrase "the category is …" in order to communicate the parameters of a competition. For example, saying "the category is vogue femme" indicates that individuals will vogue in a feminine style, using dance elements such as catwalk, duckwalk, floorwork, hands, as well as dips and spins. As I'll emphasize below, house categories figure into normatively significant practices. For example, regarding the category *vogue*, Jelani from the House of Mizrahi claims: "Voguing is a form of self-expression. It's like a way for gay people to overcome the oppression that they go through on a daily basis—and express it."[1]

For the purpose of introduction, I'm especially intrigued by realness categories. On the topic, here's the legendary Dorian Corey discussing the category *executive realness* in the controversial documentary *Paris Is Burning*:

> In real life, you can't get a job as an executive unless you have the educational background and the opportunity. Now, the fact that you are not an executive is merely because of the social standing of life […] Black people have a hard time getting anywhere, and those that do are usually straight. In a ballroom, you can be anything you want. You're not really an executive, but you're looking like an executive. And, therefore, you're showing the straight world that "I can be an executive. If I had the opportunity, I could be one. Because I can look like one." And that is like a fulfillment. Your peers, your friends are telling you, "Oh you'd make a wonderful executive."[2]

There's an interpretation in which Corey is collapsing the distinction between looking like an executive and being an executive. But I doubt that's what Corey is saying. Being an executive isn't *only* a matter of playing dress up. Instead, it seems that Corey is noting how successful performance in the category *executive realness* explicates the structural basis of inequality. That is, house culture uses realness categories in practices that unmask racist cisheteronormative ideologies. Here it's evident that, as bell hooks stresses in her critique of *Paris Is Burning*, house-

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[1] *My House*, season 1, aired 2018 on Viceland.
[2] *Paris Is Burning*. Directed by Jennie Livingston. Off-White Productions, 1990.

ballroom performances aren't merely spectacles; to the contrary, house culture is a site of empowerment, resistance, and exploration.[3]

In some contexts, success in the house category *executive realness* might not involve a simple reproduction of presentations characteristic to members of the mainstream category *executive*. For example, *Paris Is Burning* includes a depiction of a competitor modeling a business suit by raising his hands above his head with a flourish, spinning, and strutting towards the judges—before rigidly adjusting his jacket, securing his briefcase, and turning away with stiff hips. As far as I can tell, performances that invoke these contrasting elements are now understood as exemplifications of realness with a twist categories, such that successful competitors in contemporary realness categories are "unclockable" as queer. For example, individuals who "walk" the category *pretty boy realness* are judged on how well they present as attractive, heterosexual men.

Crucially, realness categories figure into normatively significant house-ballroom practices. Again, here's Jelani from the House of Mizrahi: "Realness is basically where I just display how I blend in with other heterosexual people […] I just try to be real, try to avoid it […] I don't want to be getting clocked all the time, getting glass bottles thrown at me […] You can do that, you real."[4] The ability to pass is often important to the safety and well-being of queer individuals who experience compounding forms of oppression, such as racism and classism. Theorizing the relation between everyday life as a queer person of color and house-ballroom realness categories, Marlon Bailey claims: "[B]allroom community members understand that they are seen through a racist and homophobic lens propagated and internalized by various sectors of society. Therefore, members seek greater agency in shaping how they are viewed by altering and performing their bodies in ways that disguise their gender and sexual nonconformity."[5] That is, house cultures use realness categories to provide a sort of education in passing.

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[3] bell hooks, "Is Paris Burning?" in *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1992).
[4] *My House*, season 1.
[5] Marlon M. Bailey, "Gender/Racial Realness: Theorizing the Gender System in Ballroom Culture," *Feminist Studies* (2011), 380.

Above, I aim to have explicated the following genealogical, political, and normative points. Genealogically, house-ballroom categories tend to form in response to mainstream categories, e.g., the origin of the category *executive realness* is in the category *executive*. Politically, the nature of house categories isn't straightforwardly determined by mainstream culture, such that an individual might walk a house category quite differently than they'd enact membership in an associated mainstream category. That is, genealogy notwithstanding, house culture has authority over its categories. Normatively, this authority is significant because house categories figure into valuable practices. As noted above, realness categories are used in practices that creatively redirect the experience of oppression, critique ideology, and hone the strategic art of passing.

Here, I'd like to highlight an analogy between house categories and categories related to sexual orientation and identity. Genealogically, there's a mainstream origin to categories such as *queer*. Yet, politically, LGBTQ+ cultures aren't beholden to the mainstream interpretation of such categories. This authority is normatively significant, on account of the fact that LGBTQ+ cultures use categories such as *queer* to engage in valuable practices. For example, as I'll discuss in the course of this dissertation, LGBTQ+ cultural practices curate resources that mitigate the effects of stigma, make possible life-affirming gender explorations, and strengthen bonds of solidarity.

In light of the normative significance of categories related to sexual orientation and identity, LGBTQ+ cultures face the following questions. What do we want categories such as *queer* to be? And what can we use categories such as *queer* to do? These questions are characteristic to a recently-sprouted field of inquiry, the social ontology of sexuality. While I don't claim to provide any definitive answers, this dissertation marks an early—and, I hope, foundational—contribution to the philosophical sub-discipline. Here's what's to follow.

The first chapter argues that we ought to endorse the sexual orientation/identity distinction. In slogan form: sexual orientation is "natural," while sexual identity is the "social meaning" of sexual orientation. (Note that, on my usage, sexual identity is distinct from sexual self-identity, in which an individual's sexual self-identity is determined by their beliefs about their sexuality.) While I'll complicate the aforementioned slogan over the course of the dissertation, I argue that we need to appeal to the orientation/identity distinction in order to explain certain instances of LGBTQ+

oppression. As a case study, I consider the oppression constituted by sanctions against historic gayborhoods and other queer spaces.

With the orientation/identity distinction at hand, I turn to consider the following questions. What is sexual orientation? And what is sexual identity? The second chapter develops a theory of sexual identity. On my view, an individual's sexual identity is a matter of their standing in certain relations of inclusion and exclusion to queer and straight cultures. These sexuality cultures are differentiated by their characteristic social meanings and practices (explicated in the course of the chapter) related to reproduction. In addition to generally capturing intuitions about the extensions of the categories *queer* and *straight*, I hold that the cultural analysis of sexual identity is especially conducive to explaining some individual actions and instances of LGBTQ+ oppression. On the latter point, I argue that the cultural analysis of sexual identity partly explains the oppression of the closet, as well as the oppression constituted by directives to "stop flaunting it" and "tone it down."

The remaining chapters turn to the other side of the orientation/identity distinction. In the third chapter, I consider the epistemic relation between facts about the nature of sexual orientation and facts about the taxonomy of orientation categories. Current work on the social ontology of sexuality tends to give epistemic priority to facts about the nature of orientation. On this treatment, facts about the taxonomy of orientation categories are to be learned by considering the implications of previously discovered facts about the nature of sexual orientation. Yet, I argue for a sort of epistemic reversal. In particular, I hold that we ought to work out the taxonomy of orientation categories without relying on a robust theory of the nature of sexual orientation.

I appeal to this epistemic strategy in the fourth chapter, where I develop a taxonomy of sexual orientation categories. In particular, I reject the socially dominant taxonomy and raise some concerns for taxonomies that exhaustively include categories such as *female-oriented* and *man-oriented*. Instead, I argue that we ought to endorse a taxonomy that exhaustively includes the categories *asexual*, *heterosexual*, *homosexual*, *bisexual*, and *queer*, distinguishes between attractions related to sexual biology and attractions related to gender, as well as provides individuals authority over whether their orientations are determined by their attractions related to

sexual biology and/or attractions related to gender. In addition to ascribing orientations to individuals with marginalized sexualities, I argue that such a taxonomy promotes the normatively important aims of LGBTQ+ social movements.

So, that's the plan. Here, I'd like to spend a moment reflecting on the support I've received while working on this project. To begin, I'm overwhelmingly grateful to the Department of Philosophy at the University of Virginia. Upon entering the department in 2015, I'm not sure that I could have anticipated the interest that the faculty would take in my intellectual and professional development.

I'm also grateful to dozens and dozens of friends and colleagues for their feedback on my work. At the risk of leaving anyone out, I regret that I can't provide a comprehensive list. Still, I'd like to note that philosophers working in areas all across the discipline contributed to this project. And I'm so happy to have received this breadth of support.

Special thanks to Sukaina Hirji and Daniel Wodak (and Nala) for the invigorating conversations and inimitable fluffiness. To Esa Díaz-León for sustained discussion and, especially, for showing me that it's possible to thrive as a queer philosopher. And to Peter Tan for keeping it real.

Special thanks to Robin Dembroff. In addition to providing crucial feedback on several chapters, Robin's groundbreaking "What is Sexual Orientation?" is foundational to this project. My theories of sexual orientation and identity are deeply influenced by Robin's commitment to producing philosophy that speaks to the lived experiences of queer people and the very real stakes of queer politics.

Special thanks to Sally Haslanger, whose research on social categories, structural explanation, philosophical methodology, cultural practices, and so much more is absolutely essential to my research. I'm especially grateful to Sally for hosting me at MIT in the spring of 2019. I learn so much during our exploratory, sparkled conversations. And I'm inspired by the ways in which Sally's philosophical work is enriched by her lived commitment the values of radical politics.

The Sexual Orientation/Identity Distinction

The sex/gender distinction is a staple of feminist philosophy. In slogan form, sex is "natural," while gender is the "social meaning" of sex. While the interpretation of the distinction is highly contested, its widespread endorsement is likely due to its remarkable theoretical power. By separating gender from sex, we're equipped to explain the structure of patriarchy, validate trans identities, and imagine just alternative societies. Happily, social metaphysicians have recently turned their attention to the social significance of sexuality. Considering the importance of the sex/gender distinction, it's interesting to ask if we might make use of an analogous distinction. In this paper, I argue that we ought to endorse the sexual orientation/identity distinction.

This paper proceeds as follows. In the first section, I explicate the difference between sexual orientation and sexual identity by providing analytical expression to the following slogan: sexual orientation is "natural," while sexual identity is the "social meaning" of sexual orientation. In the second section, I argue that we ought to endorse the sexual orientation/identity distinction, as the concepts of sexual identity and sexual orientation play distinct theoretical roles in the explanation of LGBTQ+ oppression. As a case study, I consider the oppression constituted by sanctions against queer spaces.

1. Sexual Orientation and Sexual Identity

Here's the slogan: sexual orientation is "natural" while sexual identity is the "social meaning" of sexual orientation. In what follows, I'll provide some traction on the phenomena of sexual orientation and sexual identity. To begin, a terminological note: here, I'll use terms such as 'homosexual' and 'heterosexual' to refer to sexual orientations, and I'll use terms such as 'lesbian', 'gay', and 'straight' to pick out sexual identities. Also, I'll let the phrase 'queer sexual identity' pick out any non-straight sexual identity. Unfortunately, the natural language term 'bisexual' is ambiguous between orientation and identity. So, I'll distinguish between bisexual orientation and bisexual identity. The same holds, *mutatis mutandis*, for the term 'asexual'.

1.1 Sexual Orientation is "Natural"

In this sub-section, I'll theorize sexual orientation via an analogy with sex. Is sex socially constructed? Or do sex categories such as *female*, *male,* and *intersex* carve nature at the joints? Here, I follow Anne Fausto-Sterling and endorse a moderate non-constructionist analysis of sex (outlined below). On this point, it's important to provide a couple of disclaimers. In part, I'm considering a non-constructionist account of sex and developing a non-constructionist analysis of sexual orientation for dialectical purposes. Just as many of us initially made sense of the sex/gender distinction with the slogan that sex is natural, while gender is the social meaning of sex, I'm curious if we can likewise gain traction on the orientation/identity distinction. That said, here it's imperative to be sensitive to the role that certain theories of sex have played in various forms of gender oppression. Accordingly, I stress that we ought to reject accounts which hold that sex is binary (such that individuals are either female or male), as well as accounts which hold that gender is determined by sexual characteristics (such that, e.g., women are necessary female). To the contrary, here I follow Robin Dembroff, who claims that the sex/gender distinction, "provides a helpful framework through which to understand the gender identity or anatomical transition of *(e.g.)* gender-nonconforming, androgynous, and transgender individuals. That is, because it separates sex as an anatomical category from gender as a category of social situatedness, it creates the possibility for understanding how the two can be combined in a variety of ways."[1]

Next, unless noted otherwise, I'll use the phrase 'social construction' to refer to *constitutive* social construction, as opposed to *causal* social construction. The distinction between constitutive and causal construction is due to Sally Haslanger, who claims that "[s]omething is causally constructed iff social factors play a causal role in bringing it into existence or, to some substantial extent, in its being the way it is."[2] Paradigmatically, entities are causally constructed. In contrast, Haslanger claims that "[s]omething is constitutively constructed iff in defining it we must make reference to social factors."[3] Paradigmatically, properties are constitutively constructed. For example, naturally

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[1] Dembroff, "What is Sexual Orientation?" *Philosophers' Imprint* 16 (2016), 9-10.
[2] Haslanger, "Ontology and Social Construction" in *Resisting Reality: Social Construction and Social Critique* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 87.
[3] Ibid.

occurring chemical elements are neither causally nor constitutively constructed. In contrast, synthetic chemical elements are causally but not constitutively constructed. That is, although social practices are responsible for the existence of synthetic chemical elements, we don't need to refer to social phenomena in order to define the property of being gold. Next, printed dollars are both causally and constitutively constructed. In contrast, cowry shell money is constitutively but not causally constructed. That is, although cowry shells can only instantiate the property of being money in virtue their relation to certain social practices, they are naturally occurring.

With these disclaimers out the way, I begin the analogy between sex and sexual orientation. As I'll discuss below, Fausto-Sterling endorses a moderate non-constructionist analysis of sex. However, she stresses that we're shaped—from our skin to our brains—by interrelated biological processes and cultural practices.[4] Here, consider the following passage from Fausto-Sterling's widely-cited, "The Five Sexes, Revisited."

> [M]ale and female, masculine and feminine, cannot be parsed as some kind of continuum. Rather, sex and gender are best conceptualized as points in a multidimensional space. For some time, experts on gender development have distinguished between sex at the genetic level and at the cellular level (sex-specific gene expression, X and Y chromosomes); at the hormonal level (in the fetus, during childhood and after puberty); and at the anatomical level (genitals and secondary sexual characteristics) […] What has become increasingly clear is that one can find levels of masculinity and femininity in almost every possible permutation […] The medical and scientific communities have yet to adopt a language that is capable of describing such diversity.[5]

With this material at hand, I'll explicate four central elements of Fausto-Sterling's account. As Fausto-Sterling notes that the relevant authorities haven't yet accurately described the sexual features of human bodies, we can infer that Fausto-Sterling holds that (i) there are mind-independent facts about sex. Next, Fausto-Sterling holds that (ii) an individual's sex is determined

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[4] Anne Fausto-Sterling, "Against Dichotomy," *Evolutionary Studies in Imaginative Culture* 1 (2017), 65.
[5] Anne Fausto-Sterling, "The Five Sexes, Revisited," *The Sciences* (2000), 22.

by their intrinsic features, including genetic, hormonal and anatomical features. That said, as noted above, Fausto-Sterling stresses that (iii) an individual's intrinsic features are shaped by interrelated biological processes and cultural practices. For example, social norms of attractiveness promote gendered exercise and dietary practices that amplify natural sex differences in the distribution of adipose and muscle tissue, many medical institutions promote "genital normalizing" surgeries that reduce the incidence of some intersex conditions, and transgender access to gender affirming hormones and procedures is politically mediated. Additionally, (iv) Fausto-Sterling's account calls into question the dominant conception of the taxonomy and membership conditions of sex categories. I'll return to this thread below. At this point, note that Fausto-Sterling's account of sex can be used to model a moderate non-constructionist analysis of sexual orientation.

Using Fausto-Sterling's analysis as a guide, we get the following results:

(i)   There are mind-independent facts about sexual orientation.

(ii)   An individual's sexual orientation is determined by their intrinsic features,

(iii)   Which are shaped by interrelated biological processes and cultural practices.

(iv)   The aforementioned points call into question the dominant conception of the taxonomy and membership conditions of sexual orientation categories.

To begin, (i) there are mind-independent facts about sexual orientation, which can be accurately or inaccurately represented. For example, the gender inversion theory of homosexuality misrepresents the facts. Contrary to the leading psychiatric theories of the 19th century, homosexuality isn't caused by gender dysphoria: homosexual individuals aren't psychological females/males trapped in male/female bodies.[6]

Next, (ii) an individual's sexual orientation is determined by their intrinsic features. These intrinsic features plausibly include dispositions to sexual behavior, dispositions to sexual desire or arousal,

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[6] For discussion of the gender inversion theory of homosexuality, see esp. David M. Halperin, "How to Do the History of Male Homosexuality," *Gay and Lesbian Quarterly* 6 (2000), 102-9.

and/or dispositions to sexual fantasy.[7] We can add further detail to an account of the membership conditions of orientation categories by considering the range of stimulus conditions under which sexual dispositions are likely to manifest.

Continuing the parallel with Fausto-Sterling's account of sex, (iii) the aforementioned intrinsic features are shaped by interrelated biological processes and cultural practices. Indeed, Fausto-Sterling speaks to this point directly, claiming that individuals have "diverse capacities for sexual desire and expression," such that the manifestation of certain desires (as opposed to others) is due to a "developmental dynamic that allows a set of feelings and desires to stabilize under a certain set of conditions."[8] While the developmental dynamic centrally includes "a neurophysiological component," Fausto-Sterling emphasizes that this "physiology develops over time [...] in response to specific experiences."[9] These experiences include the "training of our bodies" (presumably, in heteropatriarchal social milieus, to react positively/negatively to heterosexual/homosexual desire) as well as the experiences associated with "situations and relationships that might mediate erotic feelings."[10] To the extent that these experiences are socially influenced, the intrinsic features that determine sexual orientation are causally constructed.

Next, (iv) the aforementioned points call into question the dominant conception of the membership conditions and taxonomy of sexual orientation categories, which includes the categories *homosexual*, *heterosexual*, and *bisexual*. Here, let's briefly return to the analogy with sex. Ought the taxonomy of sex categories exhaustively include the categories *female*, *male*, and *intersex*? Or should we endorse a multi-dimensional taxonomy that includes categories such as—and maybe even finer-grained than—*genetically female*, *genetically male, genetically intersex, hormonally intersex*, and *anatomically female*? Here, I won't rule on the question, except to note that a multi-dimensional taxonomy of sex categories is a plausible theoretical option. In part, the attraction of

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[7] For discussion of the features that determine an individual's sexual orientation, see esp. Robin Dembroff, "What is Sexual Orientation?" and Esa Díaz-León, "Sexual Orientations: The Desire View," forthcoming in *Feminist Philosophy of Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
[8] Fausto-Sterling, *Sex/Gender: Biology in a Social World* (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), 95.
[9] Ibid. 93.
[10] Ibid., 93-8.

a multi-dimensional taxonomy is due to the fact that there might not be a "translation scheme" by which we can accurately redescribe an individual's genetic sexual features, hormonal sexual features, and anatomical sexual features as a point on a unidimensional scale that ranges from female to male. In order to draw this out, consider the following questions. Where on the aforementioned unidimensional scale should we represent the sexual biology of an individual with congenital adrenal hyperplasia (CAH), such that they have XX chromosomes, high levels of "virilizing" hormones (specifically, of an androgen precursor), a female internal reproductive anatomy, and masculine anatomical features?[11] Relative to the aforementioned individual with CAH, where on the unidimensional scale should we represent the sexual biology of an individual with ambiguous external genitalia, as well as both ovarian and testicular tissue?[12] These questions at least suggest that we cannot accurately represent sexual biology on a unidimensional scale. Arguably, the same might hold in the case of sexual orientation—inasmuch as it's plausible that there's not a "translation scheme" by which an individual's dispositions to sexual desire, behavior, and/or fantasy can be represented as a point on a unidimensional axis ranging from exclusive homosexuality to exclusive heterosexuality. In that case, we would have reason to reimagine the taxonomy and membership conditions of sexual orientation categories.

In sum, a moderate non-constructionist analysis of sexual orientation respects the empirical fact that sexual behaviors, desires, and fantasies are socially influenced, while holding that an individual's orientation is determined by their intrinsic features, which plausibly include dispositions to sexual behavior, desire, arousal, and fantasy. At this point, I turn to the other half of the slogan.

1.2 Sexual Identity is the Social Meaning of Sexual Orientation

Here, I'll distinguish sexual identity from sexual self-identity (1.2.1) as well as provide a general gloss of the idea that sexual identity is the social meaning of sexual orientation (1.2.2). And while

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[11] See "Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia (CAH)," Intersex Society of North America, www.isna.org, accessed June 2019.

[12] For a discussion, see "ovo-testes (formerly called 'true hermaphroditism')," Intersex Society of North America, www.isna.org, accessed June 2019. See also Anne Fausto-Sterling, "The Five Sexes," *The Sciences* (1993), 22.

defending a particular analysis of sexual identity is, at minimum, a task for another paper, I'll consider *social position* (1.2.3) and *constitution-based* analyses of sexual identity (1.2.4).

1.2.1 Sexual Self-Identity

This paper is primarily interested in the distinction between sexual orientation and sexual identity, as opposed to sexual *self*-identity. Notably, there's been some philosophical discussion of (what I'm calling) sexual self-identity under the label of 'sexual identity'. For example, consider the following passages from Robin Dembroff and, separately, William S. Wilkerson:

> [Sexual identity refers] to an individual's self-identification with regard to sexual orientation. Because sexual identity concerns sexual orientation in this way, the concept of sexual identity is sensitive to the concept of sexual orientation. But we also acknowledge that someone can be self-deceived or in denial about their sexual orientation (or even lack the concepts necessary for self-identification), while still being truly said to have the sexual orientation that they fail to recognize.[13]

> [Sexual orientation] is an enduring, fairly stable desire oriented toward a particular gender. Such a desire is enduring, rather than merely recurring, because orientation is thought to be a constant and underlying feature of a person's make up. The identity, meanwhile, is a self-consciously directed project that a person develops around this orientation. Many gays and lesbians report that they "always felt that way"—that is, that they always felt a sexual desire for people of their own gender, and hence that they always had a sexual orientation. They did not, however, have a gay and lesbian identity until they came out, accepted their sexual orientation and began to live accordingly. This distinction between identity and desire surfaces when people say things like, "He's gay, but he doesn't know it yet." This statement typically means that somebody has a particular sexual orientation, an enduring desire for sex with another man, but that he has not accepted this fact about himself, called

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[13] Robin A. Dembroff, "What is Sexual Orientation?," *Philosophers' Imprint* 16 (2016), 6.

himself "gay," self-consciously sought such sex, and understood himself as a person who does seek such sex. He has a sexual orientation but not yet the identity.[14]

These passages highlight the distinction between sexual orientation and (what I'm calling) sexual self-identity. Independently, Dembroff and Wilkerson highlight the fact that the distinction is needed in order to make sense of the fact that individuals can be mistaken about their sexual orientations. While the difference between sexual orientation and sexual self-identity is significant, it's not the only difference that matters. As I argue in the following section, in order to explain LGBTQ+ oppression, we need to appeal to the social meaning of sexual orientation.

1.2.2 Sexual Identity and Social Meaning

Appealing to Haslanger's work on the topic, social meanings, "consist in clusters of culturally shared concepts, beliefs, and other attitudes that enable us to interpret and organize information and coordinate action, thought, and affect."[15] For example, consider the action of giving a "thumbs-up," in which a certain hand gesture is collectively represented as approval. That is, the representational schema *gesture = approval* is shared among individuals who participate in the social practice in which the gesture communicates approval. We can express this point by noting that approval is the social meaning of the hand gesture.

While the slogan holds that sexual identity is the social meaning of sexual orientation, that formulation is a bit imprecise. (So it goes with slogans.) In the following section, I'll consider the stigmatization and the celebration of non-heterosexuality. That is, I'll describe the social meanings of the *property of non-heterosexuality*. Additionally, I'll discuss the social meanings of the *property of an associated category of persons*. To gain some traction on this distinction, consider the property of being tan. While the property of being tan has social meanings (e.g., fashionable or passé), tan individuals aren't systematically treated as members of an associated category of persons. In contrast, for better or worse, non-heterosexuality is socially significant in that non-

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[14] William S. Wilkerson, "Is It a Choice? Sexual Orientation as Interpretation," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 40 (2009), 97.
[15] Haslanger, "What is a (Social) Structural Explanation?," *Philos Stud* (2016), 126.

heterosexual individuals are systematically treated as members of an associated category of persons.[16] How should we explicate this difference between the social meaning of a property and the social meaning of an associated category of persons? Here, I find instructive Ron Mallon idea of "category-typical features."[17] In contrast to tan individuals, non-heterosexual individuals are systematically represented as having category-typical features. These representations range from the relatively innocuous, e.g., "people like that are fantastic interior decorators" to the pernicious, e.g., "people like that can't control themselves." Quite generally, then: *an individual's sexual identity is determined by their relation to collective representations of categories of persons associated with sexual orientations*. What relation, precisely? I'll outline some options in the following sub-sections.

1.2.3 Social Position Analyses of Sexual Identity

The influence of social position analyses is due to Sally Haslanger's work on gender and race. Tailoring Haslanger's framework to the phenomenon of sexual identity produces the following results:

S is queer if and only if:

(i)   S is regularly and for the most part observed or imagined to [be non-heterosexual];

(ii)   that S has [this feature] marks S within the dominant ideology of S's society as someone who ought to occupy certain kinds of social position that are in fact subordinate (and so motivates and justifies S's occupying such a position); and

(iii)   the fact that S satisfies (i) and (ii) plays a role in S's systematic subordination, that is, along some dimension, S's social position is oppressive, and S's satisfying (i) and (ii) plays a role in that dimension of subordination.[18]

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[16] On this point, describing the social effects of nineteenth-century psychiatric practices, Michel Foucault famously claims, "[t]he sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species," *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 43.

[17] Ron Mallon, *The Construction of Human Kinds* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 59.

[18] Haslanger, "Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be?," in *Resisting Reality*: *Social Construction and Social Critique*, 234.

And S is straight if any only if:

    (i)   S is regularly and for the most part observed or imagined to [be heterosexual];

    (ii)   that S has [this feature] marks S within the dominant ideology of S's society as someone who ought to occupy certain kinds of social position that are in fact privileged (and so motivates and justifies S's occupying such a position); and

    (iii)   the fact that S satisfies (i) and (ii) plays a role in S's systematic privilege, that is, along some dimension, S's social position is privileged, and S's satisfying (i) and (ii) plays a role in that dimension of privilege.[19]

Here's the idea: on the social position analysis of sexual identity, an individual is queer (or straight) in virtue of systematically experiencing subordinating (or privileging) treatments on the basis of their perceived sexual orientation in an associated ideological context. The aforementioned ideological contexts are structured by social meanings which hold that non-heterosexual individuals ought to be treated in ways that are (as a matter of fact) subordinating and that heterosexual individuals ought to be treated in ways that are (as a matter of fact) privileging.

Alongside Haslanger's analyses of gender and race, it's likely that a social position analysis of sexual identity would have significant explanatory power, shedding light on a variety of connected phenomena, such as symbols, self-conceptions, and behaviors.[20] For example, homophobic stereotypes might, in part, be explained via their role in the subordination of non-heterosexual individuals. [21] Likewise, patterns of unsafe sexual behaviors in the LGBTQ+ community might, in part, be explained as effects of subordination.[22]

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[19] Ibid.

[20] Haslanger discusses this "focal" style of explanation in "Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be?," in *Resisting Reality*: *Social Construction and Social Critique*, 228.

[21] For discussion, see esp. Cheshire Calhoun, *Feminism, The Family, and the Politics of the Closet: Lesbian and Gay Displacement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 140-154.

[22] For example, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) notes that LGBTQ+ individuals who experience "strong rejection from their families [are approximately] 3 times more

Explanatory power notwithstanding, social position analyses of *queer* and *straight* might face issues of extensional adequacy (that is, theoretically problematic inclusion or exclusion).[23] Given the significance of passing in the everyday lives of many queer individuals, it's important to ask if social position analyses of sexual identity can accommodate the intuition that it's possible for queer individuals to pass as straight.[24] For example, consider Jane. In addition to being non-heterosexual, Jane self-identifies as a lesbian, as well as participates in local queer culture and politics. In her town of residence, Jane systematically experiences subordinating treatments on the basis of her perceived non-heterosexuality. That is, in her hometown, Jane is socially positioned as queer. However, Jane works in a nearby town that's especially homophobic. Accordingly, Jane decides to present herself as heterosexual at work, and she successfully passes. While there are many interesting questions about the ethics of passing,[25] my point here is descriptive. Most of the time, Jane is privileged on the basis of her perceived heterosexuality. Along these lines, a social position analysis of sexual identity might not have the resources to accommodate the intuition that Jane is a queer individual passing as straight—instead, the social position framework might have the result that Jane is straight.

In response to this case, a defender of the social position analysis of sexual identity might hold that Jane experiences *ontological oppression*, a phenomenon in which "the boundaries around a social kind are set up such that groups who ought to have access to kind membership (or to exit membership) do not or rarely have such access."[26] Distinguishing between the *membership conditions* and *ascription conditions* of a category, the reply might continue: as Jane is unjustly denied access to queer sexual identity, there are many contexts in which it would be entirely

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likely to have risky sex," compared to "their peers [with] more supportive families." See "Stigma and Discrimination," www.CDC.gov, accessed June 2019.

[23] Here, I draw from Katharine Jenkins' work on extensional adequacy in analyses of gender identity categories, Jenkins, "Amelioration and Inclusion: Gender Identity and the Concept of *Woman*," *Ethics* 126 (2016), 394-402.

[24] On this point more generally, see Ron Mallon's discussion of the "passing constraint," in Mallon, "Passing, Traveling, and Reality: Social Constructionism and the Metaphysics of Race," *Noûs* 38 (2004), 648-656.

[25] See esp. Daniel Silvermint, "Passing as Privileged," *Ergo* 5 (2018).

[26] Robin Dembroff, "Real Talk on the Metaphysics of Gender," *Philosophical Topics* (forthcoming).

impermissible to ascribe to Jane a straight sexual identity.[27] Here, I won't rule on whether this reply is satisfactory.

1.2.4 Constitution-Based Analyses of Sexual Identity

Constitution-based analyses hold that an individual instantiates a certain social property just in case they satisfy the relevant *constitution conditions*. For an example of a constitution condition, consider Ásta's explication of the constitution condition regarding strikes in baseball: "the ball's traveling trajectory T in context C counts as a strike."[28] Reflecting on the baseball case, Ásta notes, "on a constitution account of being a strike, a pitch is a strike even if the umpire does not recognize it as such. The activity of the baseball players on the field thus generates a lot of baseball properties and facts, and it's the umpire's job to try to detect these properties and facts that come into being independently of him and his judgment."[29]

Importantly, constitution-based theories of social properties can allow that constitution conditions aren't always so explicit and determinate as those of baseball properties. For example, the constitution conditions of gender properties are implicit and perhaps indeterminate. This difference between the constitution conditions of baseball properties and those of gender properties is due to the fact that the constitution conditions of properties such a being a strike are generated by associated institutions, while those of gender properties are arguably generated by a variety of social practices, e.g., social practices related to kinship and sexuality. Inasmuch as social practices are structured by social meanings—recall: the social meaning *gesture = approval* figures into the

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[27] For discussion of the distinction between the membership conditions and ascription conditions of social categories, see esp. Dembroff, "Real Talk on the Metaphysics of Gender," (forthcoming), see also Elizabeth Barnes, "Gender and Gender Terms," *Noûs* (2019), esp. 8-10.

[28] Ásta, *Categories We Live By: The Construction of Sex, Gender, Race, and Other Social Categories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 10. For a defense of constitution-based analysis of social properties, see esp. Brian Epstein, *The Ant Trap: Rebuilding the Foundations of the Social Sciences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 74-87.

[29] Ibid.

practice of giving a thumbs-up—social meanings play a role in determining the constitution conditions of social properties.[30]

While the social position analysis holds that being regularly observed or imagined to be non-heterosexual is a necessary condition of having a queer sexual identity, this isn't the case on the constitution-based account—which holds that an individual has a queer sexual identity just in case they satisfy the relevant constitution conditions. Suppose that there's a constitution condition which holds that non-heterosexual individuals in (let's say) social contexts influenced by the historical medicalization of non-heterosexual orientations count as having a queer sexual identity; in that case, on the constitution-based account of queer sexual identity, S has a queer sexual identity if and only if S is non-heterosexual in a social context influenced by the historical medicalization of non-heterosexual orientations.

As the constitution-based account denies that being perceived to have a non-heterosexual orientation is a necessary condition of having a queer sexual identity, it can vindicate the intuition that queer individuals sometimes pass as straight. However, the constitution-based analysis of sexual identity inherits some general problems associated with constitution-based account of social properties. For example, continuing the baseball thread, Ásta raises the following worry for constitution-based accounts: "[t]he result of the judgment of the umpire plays a fundamental role in the game of baseball, including how the game progresses as well as the explanations people give of what happens on the field. It seems odd to say that there are baseball facts out there that play no role in the game, namely those baseball facts not detected by the umpire."[31] Along these lines, the constitution-based account of sexual identity might have the result that some instantiations of sexual identity properties are explanatorily inert. That is, on the constitution-based account, an

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[30] On the relation between social meanings and social practices, Haslanger claims, "[t]o identify something as an instance of a [social] practice is to situate it within a web of social meanings that function, in the primary instance, to coordinate our behavior around resources," Haslanger, "What is a Social Practice," *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 82 (2018), 237. In addition to the thumbs-up case, consider the social practice of driving. When individuals get behind the wheel, they're responsive to social meanings. For example, the social meaning that codes divided traffic via yellow lines figures into the social practice of driving, coordinating individuals around the resource of the road.

[31] Ásta, *Categories We Live By*, 10.

individual's sexual identity doesn't necessarily make a difference to their social experience. As in the previous sub-section, I won't rule on whether this issue is decisive.

Social position and constitution-based analyses of sexual identity are serious theoretical contenders. Yet, we have many more constructionist frameworks to explore. Here, I'll need to truncate discussion in the interest of space. Future inquiry into the metaphysics of sexual identity might also consider conferralist, entrenched social role, and political kind analyses.[32]

2. The Distinct Theoretical Roles of Sexual Orientation and Identity: Explaining LGBTQ+ Oppression

Since the mid-to-late 1990s, neighborhoods across the United States have become less sexually segregated, and the number of LGBTQ+ establishments has diminished. On this point, Amin Ghaziani, a renowned sociologist of sexuality and urban culture, reports that, "[u]nique commercial spaces such as bars and bookstores are closing, more straight people are moving in [to gayborhoods], and gays and lesbians are choosing to live in other parts of the city. Demographers […] have analyzed the US census and have confirmed that zip codes associated with traditional gay neighborhoods are thinning out."[33]

These facts are more than apparent to many LGBTQ+ individuals. For example, Charlie Brown, a fixture of drag culture in the American South, responded to these trends by launching a performance at Atlanta Pride in the late 2000s by shouting (to a crowd of a few thousand): "Keep *them* out of Midtown!" Midtown is Atlanta's historic gayborhood, and it's not uncommon for the area's LGBTQ+ residents to express similar—although, usually, more tempered—separatist ideals. Straight people often find these expressions surprising, even offensive or harmful. In this section, I aim to make sense of these separatist sentiments by explicating the normative significance of queer spaces. In particular, I argue that we need to appeal to sexual orientation (2.1)

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[32] See, respectively, Ásta, *Categories We Live By: The Construction of Sex, Gender, Race, and Other Social Categories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 7-53, Ron Mallon, *The Construction of Human Kinds* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 48-93, and Dembroff, "Beyond Binary: Genderqueer as a Political Kind," (manuscript).

[33] Amin Ghaziani, *Sex Cultures* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2017), 40.

as well as sexual identity (2.2) in order to explain the oppression constituted by sanctions against queer spaces.

Here, I use the phrase 'queer spaces' to refer broadly to gayborhoods, as well as LGBTQ+ bars, bookstores, and community centers. And I use the phrase 'sanctions against queer spaces' to refer to practices that contribute to the dissolution of extant queer spaces, or make implausible the formation of new queer spaces. In my usage, sanctions against queer spaces aren't necessarily deliberate. For example, many municipal governments promote gayborhoods as attractions for visitors, where progressive urban tourists will want to spend their money. Although it's probably not the aim of these municipal governments, this advertising has had the effect of sanctioning against queer spaces—after all, it's difficult for a space to remain queer with an influx of visibly straight individuals.[34]

2.1 Queer Spaces and Sexual Orientation

In this sub-section, I demonstrate an important theoretical role that sexual orientation plays in the explanation of LGBTQ+ oppression. In part, sanctions against queer spaces are oppressive because they deny sexual minorities access to environments in which non-heterosexual orientations are celebrated, instead of stigmatized. While it's probably evident that we need to appeal to sexual orientation in order to explain LGBTQ+ oppression, the following discussion will provide an instrumental contrast for the next sub-section's argument about the distinct theoretical role of sexual identity.

To begin, consider Ghaziani's description of the lives of sexual minorities in what he calls the "closet era," which lasted from the medicalization of homosexuality in the mid-to-late nineteenth century until gayborhoods began to develop during the Second World War:

> The heyday of the closet […] was characterized by concealment (you cloaked who you
> were from your family and friends), isolation (you felt disconnected from networks of other

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[34] For discussion, see Amin Ghaziani, *There Goes the Gayborhood?* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014), 25-6.

gays and lesbians), feelings of shame, guilt, and fear (which you endured because you internalized negative societal views about homosexuality), and duplicity (you lived a double life). Gayborhoods, as we think of them today, did not exist at this time. People who desired others of their own sex found each other in places that were scattered across the city: a bar here or there, a cabaret, a public park, a restroom.[35]

Notwithstanding the political gains made since the closet era, e.g., approximately a quarter of the contemporary United States' population believes that "homosexuality should be discouraged by society."[36] On account of continued stigmatization of non-heterosexuality, sexual minorities often experience a measure of the aforementioned isolation, shame, guilt, and fear.

Of course, we should strive to realize a society that doesn't stigmatize non-heterosexual orientations. At least in the meantime, queer spaces are important to the well-being of sexual minorities. For example, consider sexual expression at the beginning of what Ghaziani calls the "coming out era," which lasted from World War II until the (previously described) wave of gentrification and "straightification" in the mid-to-late 1990s:

> As gays and lesbians fled to gayborhoods across the country, they discovered a treasure trove of […] possibilities. Sex and love were perhaps the most immediate […] For example, a resident of Greenwich Village reminisced that gay men] "carried the sidewalks as late as 1990, turning the street into a genuine carnival day and night. The waterfront, once a desolate truck yard, was a 24-hour playground of sexual trysts and flamboyant acts. By day, nude sunbathers staked out an urban beach on disfigured docks." Gay men have often depended on gayborhoods for such carnal pleasures—absent moralizing straight surveillance.[37]

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[35] Ghaziani, *There Goes the Gayborhood?*, 8.
[36] Pew Research Center, "The Partisan Divide on Political Values Grows Even Wider," (2017), 41.
[37] Ghaziani, *There Goes the Gayborhood?*, 20.

Perhaps these stories are exaggerated, but they're not mere apocrypha. Moreover, it's not only sex that's important. Let's consider how queer spaces facilitate simple, human acts of intimacy. For example, in a recently conducted interview, Carolyn, a pseudonymous lesbian in her thirties, describes the spatial politics of holding hands with her partner:

> There's always a constant worry in the back of our minds when we're not in a gay neighborhood […] If I'm holding Katie's hand [a pseudonym], is there going to be a comment? Is there going to be a look? In gay neighborhoods, I don't even think about that. So many little things like that. When we're not in Andersonville [the Chicago gayborhood where Carolyn and Katie reside], Katie and I don't hold hands. We're very conscious of it. I think it's so important to have these places where we can peel off that armor for a little bit and just relax and just be.[38]

Of course, hand-holding among heterosexual individuals isn't limited by comparable geographic constraints. In the context of an ongoing history of stigmatization, queer spaces facilitate non-heterosexual intimacy, such as holding hands with a loved one.

In short, queer spaces provide environments in which *non-heterosexual orientations* are celebrated, instead of stigmatized. Given the significance of these environments to the well-being of sexual minorities, sanction against queer spaces are oppressive. Here, sexual orientation plays an important theoretical role in the explanation of LGBTQ+ oppression.

2.2 Queer Spaces and Sexual Identity

While access to milieus that celebrate non-heterosexual orientations is crucial to the well-being of sexual minorities, there's more to the normative story. Here, I demonstrate an important theoretical role that sexual identity plays in the explanation of LGBTQ+ oppression. In part, sanctions against queer spaces are oppressive for the following reasons:

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[38] Ibid. 185-6.

(1) The social meanings of sexual identities such as *lesbian* and *gay* differ significantly across queer and mainstream spaces, and it's normatively important that sexual minorities have access to the social meanings (of the aforementioned sexual identities) that are operative in queer spaces.

(2) Queer spaces create and maintain distinctive sub-cultural sexual identities, such as *dyke*, *bear*, and *twink*, and it's normatively important that sexual minorities have access to these sub-cultural sexual identities.

Regarding (1), consider the impact of mainstream social meanings on the lives of sexual minorities. For example, there's a mainstream social meaning that systematically represents lesbians as having the category-typical feature of gender inversion: "People like that aren't real women. They're kind of like men, which explains why they're attracted to members of the same-sex." That is, in mainstream milieus, lacking femininity is a social meaning of being lesbian.[39] This social meaning creates a normatively problematic "choice architecture,"[40] which requires sexual minorities to choose among the following options: repress their sexual desires in order to maintain a self-conception as a "real woman," accept their sexual desires and develop a self-conception as "kind of like a man," or attempt to avoid milieus in which the mainstream social meaning is operative. The choice architecture created by the aforementioned mainstream social meaning negatively impacts the well-being of sexual minorities, e.g., playing a role in sexual repression or estrangement from certain communities.

Crucially, queer spaces sustain milieus in which normatively preferable social meanings are operative. For example, the social meanings operative in many queer spaces generate a choice architecture that allows lesbians to explore their sexuality without being typecast as masculine, as well as allows gay men to explore their sexuality without being typecast as feminine. (Below, I'll discuss queer gender embodiments and performances.) To be clear, I don't claim that queer spaces sustain milieus in which the sexual identities *lesbian* and *gay* aren't associated with any gendered

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[39] For discussion, see esp. Cheshire Calhoun, *Feminism, The Family, and the Politics of the Closet: Lesbian and Gay Displacement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 29-39, 63-72.
[40] See Haslanger, "What is a (Social) Structural Explanation?," *Phil Stud* (2016), 127.

social meanings. This notwithstanding, I hold that queer cultural social meanings of sexual identities are normatively preferable to the meanings operative in mainstream spaces. In part, sanctions against queer spaces are oppressive because sexual minorities ought to have access to these alternative social meanings of sexual identities such as *lesbian* and *gay*.

Admittedly, the above description of the gendered dimensions of sub-cultural social meanings of queer sexual identities is a bit rough. In order to flesh out the account, I move to the sub-cultural social meanings of identities such as *butch*, *femme*, and *twink*. Here, we arrive at (2). In what follows, I'll consider the normative significance of the following sub-cultural identity: *bear*. Specifically, I argue that sexual minorities ought to have access to bear identity for the following reason: the sub-cultural social meanings of bear identity are (a) flexible, (b) politically resistant, and (c) contribute to the well-being of bears. As I assume that it's uncontroversial that sexual minorities ought to have access to flexible sub-cultural identities that are politically and personally significant, I'll move to consider each feature in turn.

Above, I critiqued mainstream social meanings of sexual identities such as *lesbian* and *gay* for including an element of gender inversion. But let me be clear. I love seeing butches and femmes strutting down gayborhood streets. What I think is normatively problematic is that mainstream social meanings typecast lesbians as masculine and gay men as feminine, especially since these typecasting rely on associated mainstream conceptions of masculinity and femininity. While sub-cultural social meanings of lesbian and gay identity offer significant relief from mainstream social meanings, it's not the case that the sub-cultural social meanings of the identities are immune from normative critique. For example, in some sub-cultural milieus, the social meanings of gay identity are somewhat rigid. That is, in order to enact gay identity in accordance with sub-cultural social meanings—especially the social meanings dominant within the sub-culture—individuals must conform to a rigid archetype (or, at least, to one of an unduly limited selection of rigid archetypes). Compared to dominant sub-cultural social meanings of gay identity—and especially compared to dominant mainstream social meanings of gay identity—the sub-cultural social meanings of bear identity tend to be flexible. For example, consider the following description of (what I'll refer to as) *bear-gender* from the LGBTQ+ activist Eric Rhofes:

"One feature that distinguishes Bears from other self-reflective subcultures is that the Bear is a counter-image to the dominant mainstream gay image […] Bears as a group are simultaneously both gender-conforming and gender-nonconforming, or gender radicals. At any big gathering of Bears, there are men who are very comfortable looking like big gruff hairy bearded lumberjacks, all while being total queens."[41]

While the sub-cultural social meanings of bear identity aren't infinitely flexible, the identity can be enacted by individuals with a broad range of gender identities, gender embodiments, and gender expressions.

Crucially, the flexibility of sub-cultural social meanings of bear identity are especially conducive to *political resistance*. Specifically, sub-cultural social meanings of bear identity facilitate the enactment of a range of gender identities, gender embodiments, and gender expressions that challenge mainstream conceptions of masculinity. That is, bear-gender is a politically resistant reinterpretation and reimagination of masculinity. On this point, Rhofes observes that "[b]ears defy traditional gender norms even as they affirm aspects of traditional masculinities. We are nurturing and macho at the same time. This is what I find to be the radical potential of the bear movement."[42] Rhofes continues: "[Bear subculture] does such interesting, subversive things with masculinity. There's a combination of traditional macho images that are subverted into gentleness, kindness, camaraderie, and loving brotherhood."[43] From the outside, it's easy to project onto bears the desire to establish themselves as traditionally masculine (even hypermasculine), perhaps in reaction to the emasculating mainstream social meanings of male homosexuality. But that projection is a distortion, as bear-masculinity isn't a replication of mainstream masculinity. More poetically: "[w]e do homo-gender even when we pretend to do hetero-gender."[44]

Finally, having access to bear-gender—i.e., having access to sub-cultural milieus that sustain the aforementioned social meanings of bear identity—*contributes to the well-being of bears*. That is,

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[41] Ron Jackson Suresha, "Bears as Subcultural Subversives: An Interview with Eric Rofes" in *Bears on Bears: Interviews and Discussions* (New Milford, Connecticut: Bear Bones Books), 23.
[42] Ibid., 16.
[43] Ibid., 23.
[44] Ibid.

the value of the sexual identity *bear* exceeds its political potential. It's personally significant: "Bear subculture presents masculinities very differently. We twist gender in new ways, which create men's social worlds that are fulfilling, loving, sexy, and fun."[45] Bear identity can be "life affirming" inasmuch as it creates opportunities in which men can experience the values of intimacy, emotion, and friendship,[46] opportunities which aren't straightforwardly available to individuals who enact mainstream masculinity.

In sum, sanctions against queer spaces are oppressive because they deny sexual minorities access to normatively significant sub-cultural social meanings. The oppression constituted by sanctions against queer spaces isn't limited to the suppression of non-heterosexual orientations (or to the denial of social and epistemic resources that would facilitate the development of veridical sexual self-identities among sexual minorities). In part, sanctions against queer spaces are instances of identity-based sexuality oppression. Compared to mainstream social meanings, queer social meanings of sexual identities such as *lesbian* and *gay* generate normatively preferable choice architectures for sexual minorities. Furthermore, queer social meanings give rise to distinct— politically resistant and personally significant—sexual identities such as *bear*. That is, sanctions against queer spaces are oppressive, in part, because they negatively impact the nature and availability of queer sexual identities. In order to explain LGBTQ+ oppression, we need a concept of sexual identity.

3. Conclusion

To sum up, explaining LGBTQ+ oppression requires distinguishing between sexual orientation and sexual identity. In addition to orientation-based discrimination, sexual minorities are oppressed on account of being denied access to social meanings created and sustained in queer milieus. In light of the theoretical role of sexual identity, I hold that we ought to endorse the orientation/identity distinction. And I recommend future philosophical research on the normative significance and metaphysics of sexual identity.

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[45] Ibid., 24.
[46] Ibid., 21.

What is Sexual Identity?

Research on the social ontology of sexuality has focused almost exclusively on sexual orientation. Significant recent progress notwithstanding, we've yet to theorize sexual *identity*. In this paper, I develop a cultural analysis of queer and straight sexual identity.

This paper proceeds as follows. In the first section, I explicate the notion of sexual identity as well as provide some desiderata for analyses of sexual identity. In the second section, I distinguish between sexual orientation and sexual identity, and I argue that sexual orientation doesn't determine sexual identity. In the third section, I provide reason to reject hierarchical social position analyses of sexual identity. In the fourth and fifth sections, I develop and defend my cultural analyses of sexual identity.

1. Analyzing Sexual Identity

Here, I'll explicate the notion of sexual identity and provide some desiderata for analyses of queer and straight sexual identity (1.1). Additionally, I'll highlight a few paradigm cases of queer and straight sexual identities (1.2) as well as defend the project of analyzing queer sexual identity against the charge of impossibility (1.3).

1.1 Target Phenomena and Desiderata

Sexual identity is a type of *social identity.* Drawing from Ásta, I distinguish between *subjective social identity* and *objective social identity*.[1] An objective social identity is "a place in a system of social relations," such that an individual has a particular objective social identity just in case they occupy the relevant place in a system of social relations.[2] For examples of objective social

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[1] Ásta, *Categories We Live By: The Construction of Sex, Gender, Race, and Other Social Categories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 122.

[2] Ibid., 118. I'll also use 'position' to refer to a place in a system of social relations and 'social structure' to refer to a system of social relations. I draw this terminology, as well as the distinction between positions and occupiers of positions, from Haslanger: "considering a family structure with places for parent and child, we can consider the places as offices for individuals—I occupy the

identities, consider the positions *professor* and *student*. These positions are constituted relationally, such that an individual has an objective social identity as a professor in virtue of standing in certain relations to other professors, postdocs, students, and administrators. In contrast, an individual's subjective social identity is the place that they—accurately or otherwise—take themselves to occupy. An individual's objective and subjective social identities need not correspond; individuals can be mistaken about their objective social identities.

Here, I'll analyze sexual identities as objective social identities—as positions in a social structure. In the context of this paper, I'm concerned to analyze the sexual identity categories *queer* and *straight*.[3] (Note that the term 'queer' can also refer to features of gender identity.[4] Here, I'm primarily concerned with queer sexual identity.)

Presumably, there are myriad sexuality-related places in systems of social relations. Accordingly, an analysis of queer sexual identity needs to pinpoint a particular position in a social structure, as does an analysis of straight sexual identity. To begin the narrowing process, I'll outline some desiderata of analyses of queer and straight sexual identity. In particular, I hold that analyses of queer and straight sexual identity ought to:

(1) Generate the correct results with respect to paradigm cases,

(2) Figure into explanations of individual action, and

(3) Figure into explanations of LGBTQ+ oppression.

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position of parent—or we can treat the nodes or positions in the structure as objects themselves— parents are responsible for their children. Considering places as objects, we ignore the individuals that occupy the place, and focus on the relationships that hold between the places," Haslanger, "What is a (Social) Structural Explanation?," *Philos Stud* (2016), 119.

[3] In the context of this paper, I use 'analysis' to refer to descriptive analysis, as opposed to conceptual analysis. That is, instead of explicating the internalist content of the concept of queer sexual identity, I aim to discover what unifies the sexual identity category *queer*. The same holds, *mutatis mutandis*, for straight sexual identity. For discussion of the distinction between conceptual and descriptive analyses in social ontology see esp. Sally Haslanger, "What Are We Talking About: The Semantics and Politics of Social Kinds" in *Resisting Reality: Social Construction and Social Critique* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 375-9.

[4] For discussion, see esp. Dembroff, "Beyond Binary: Genderqueer as a Political Kind," (manuscript).

The first desideratum speaks to the fact that we're interested in sexual identity because we're interested in the categories *queer* and *straight*. And an analysis that consistently turned up results at odds with our judgments about paradigm cases of queer and straight sexual identity would risk changing the subject, undermining a motivation of the analytical project.

The second desideratum is informed by Ásta's proposal that a theory of social identity ought to "[b]e compatible with a plausible account of agency in which identity can be a source of reason for action."[5] Along these lines, I think that analyses of sexual identity ought to shed light on why individuals engage in certain actions. I'll return to this point below. For now, note that the second and third desiderata are motivated by the more general theoretical desideratum of explanatory power. In part, we need analyses of queer and straight sexual identity because we need to put the analyses to work in explanations. And, as a matter of theoretical interest and political importance, I think that we ought to explain how the social significance of sexuality informs individual action as well as figures into LGBTQ+ oppression.

1.2 Paradigm Cases

Here, I'll highlight a few paradigm instances of the sexual identity categories *queer* and *straight*. The following are paradigm cases of individuals with queer sexual identities:

> Janelle Monáe, who launched her musical career with a performance of an android coming to life, is attracted to individuals irrespective of gender. Monáe subjectively identifies as queer.

> Jovan Bridges, better known as Yvie Oddly, is a quirky drag queen from Denver, Colorado. Bridges is sexually attracted to other men.

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[5] Ásta, *Categories We Live By*, 116.

> Severine Bordeaux, a chilly astrobiologist from the campy, sci-fi TV show "Now Apocalypse" is bisexual oriented. Recently, she was in a polyamorous relationship with a heterosexual man, Ford Halsted.

> Elaine, a closeted teenager living a few hours outside of Atlanta, is attracted to genderqueer individuals and other women. In the future, Elaine will move to the city, join an indie rock band, and fall in love.

And here's a paradigm case of an individual with a straight sexual identity:

> Ford Halsted, an aspiring screenwriter living in Los Angeles, is heterosexual. Recently, he was in a polyamorous relationship with a bisexual woman, Severine Bordeaux. Halsted subjectively identifies as straight.

Admittedly, I'm reporting my intuitions about membership in the sexual identity categories *queer* and *straight*. However, most of the cases aren't particularly controversial. That said, I'll take the opportunity to stress that individuals in heterosexual relationships can be queer. While bisexual oriented individuals in heterosexual relationships might avoid some of the oppressive treatments faced by individuals in homosexual relationships, bisexual oriented individuals experience the following form of sexuality oppression: *bisexual erasure*. For example, a bisexual woman experiences bisexual erasure in social milieus in which her sexual desires for other women are exhaustively represented as the desires of a homosexual woman who is exclusively attracted to other women, as a "phase" which ends upon maturation, often marked by finding a husband, or as largely extrinsic, performed for the satisfaction of men. Moreover, not every queer individual is oppressed on the basis of perceived sexual orientation. For example, a masculine gay man that's only out to a few close friends avoids some of the oppressive treatments experienced by his out and proud counterpart. I'll return to this thread in the third section.

1.3 But It's Not Possible to Analyze Queerness!

At this point, I'd like to reflect on the very project of analyzing queer sexual identity. In much LGBTQ+ thought and practice, queerness is taken to be precisely that which escapes analysis. On this point, Maggie Nelson provides the following discussion of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's understanding of queerness: "Sedgwick wanted to make way for 'queer' to hold all kinds of resistances and fracturings and mismatches […] 'Queer is a continuing moment, movement, motive—recurrent, eddying, *troublant*' she wrote. 'Keenly, it is relational, and strange.' She wanted the term to be a perpetual excitement."[6] On this view, the project of analyzing queerness is impossible—such that to analyze queerness would be to distort or erase that which we aim to explicate.

Personally, I find few things more compelling than this queerness. But this isn't the queerness that I aim to analyze. Here, I don't seek to explicate necessary and sufficient conditions of (what might be called) *queer ways of being*. Of course, there's an interesting relation between queer ways of being and queer sexual identity. For example, I find it plausible that individuals are only able to sustain queer ways of being in virtue of the existence of certain sexuality-based positions in systems of social relations. At the same time, I think that it's important to remain vigilant of (what queer theorists refer to as) *homonormativity*, i.e., the tendency of sexuality-based social positions to constrain how individuals enact queer ways of being. In any case, the reason for rejecting the attempt to analyze queer ways of being doesn't carry over to the project of analyzing queer sexual identity. Positions in systems of social relations are analyzable, even if queer ways of being are not.

2. Sexual Orientation Doesn't Determine Sexual Identity

In this section, I argue that an individual's sexual identity isn't determined by their sexual orientation. I acknowledge that some readers will find unintuitive the distinction between sexual

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[6] Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Graywolf Press), 28-9.

orientation and identity. If that's you, stay tuned: the following discussion will serve to highlight the distinction.

2.1 Terminology: 'Straight' ≠ 'Heterosexual'

Here, I'll use terms such as 'homosexual' and 'heterosexual' to refer to sexual orientations, and I'll let 'queer', 'straight', 'lesbian' and 'gay' pick out sexual identities. Additionally, when using terms such as 'bisexual' and 'asexual', I'll disambiguate between orientation and identity. (Of course, this terminological distinction doesn't necessitate a metaphysical distinction between orientation and identity.)

2.2 Sexual Orientation

As noted above, the metaphysics of sexual orientation has recently received some philosophical attention. Robin Dembroff's work is a touchstone, and the following components of their account are largely uncontroversial: (i) the distinction between sexual attractions relevant to orientation and sexual druthers as well as (ii) the dispositional nature of sexual orientation properties.[7]

On these points, consider Rie, a female woman who is disposed sexually to desire and engage with male men that have green eyes. On the dominant taxonomy of orientation categories, Rie is heterosexual. On an alternative taxonomy, Rie might be male-oriented and/or man-oriented.[8] In

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[7] Robin Dembroff, "What is Sexual Orientation?," *Philosopher's Imprint* 16 (2016). The use of the term 'druthers' is from ibid., 7. For purposes of presentation, I'll follow Dembroff in appealing to the sex/gender distinction. Accordingly, I'll use terms such as 'female', 'male', and 'intersex' to refer to sexes, and I'll let terms such as 'genderqueer', 'woman' and 'man' refer to genders. That said, as Dembroff acknowledges, the sex/gender distinction isn't universally accepted, ibid., 9. Furthermore, it's an open question how sex categories ought to be analyzed. Dembroff seems to endorse a biological account of sex—undoubtedly of a sophisticated stipe, in which sex isn't binary and includes chromosomal, hormonal, and genital features. For such an account, see esp. Anne Fausto-Sterling, "The Five Sexes, Revisited," *The Sciences* (2000), 22. However, even sophisticated biological accounts of sex imply that, e.g., some trans women are male (or have male sexual features). This (controversial) result might be avoided by some (controversial) constructionist accounts of sex; see esp. Saray Ayala and Nadya Vasilyeva, "Extended Sex: An Account of Sex for a More Just Society," *Hypatia* (2015).
[8] Dembroff, "What is Sexual Orientation?," 22-3.

any case, Rie isn't "green eye-oriented." This is the case because Rie's sexual orientation is determined by her dispositions sexually to desire and engage with male men.[9]

To see that sexual orientation is dispositional, consider cases of problematically adaptive sexual desires and behaviors. For example, suppose that Carson, a male man, exclusively sexually desires and engages with female women. Yet, suppose that this is explained by the fact that Carson lives in a society with strict prohibitions against homosexuality; in a less oppressive milieu, Carson would sexually desire and engage with individuals irrespective of gender. Actual sexual desires and behaviors notwithstanding, Carson isn't heterosexual.

2.3 Sexual Orientation Doesn't Determine Sexual Identity

Here, I'll argue that an individual's sexual identity isn't determined by their sexual orientation. To begin, consider the sexual orientation category *homosexual*. While many homosexual individuals are queer, this isn't always the case. For example, consider so-called "str8 dudes," here described in Jane Ward's widely-cited sociological study:

> Str8 dudes often describe sex between dudes as a less desirable, but 'easy', alternative to sex with women, or suggest that dude-sex is a means of getting the kind of sex that all straight men want from women, but can only get from men—uncomplicated, emotionless, and guaranteed. Str8 dudes get drunk, watch heterosexual porn […] and maintain a clear emotional boundary between each other […] References to being 'chill bros' and 'male bonding' help to reframe dude-sex as a kind of sex that bolsters, rather than threatens, the

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[9] I follow Dembroff on this point, who claims: "[h]eight, hair color, body structure, and voice quality are all examples of traits about which people may have sexual druthers. In order to generally preserve the extension of our everyday concept of sexual orientation, I do not include sexual druthers in my account of sexual orientation, and instead focus upon preferences of sexual partners with regard to sex and gender categories" ibid., 7. Also, note that Dembroff analyzes sexual orientation in terms of dispositions to sexual behavior, ibid., 15-18. For a desire-based analysis of orientation, see esp. Esa Díaz-León, "Sexual Orientations: The Desire View," forthcoming in *Feminist Philosophy of Mind* (Oxford, Oxford University Press). Here, I remain neutral between behavior-based and desire-based analysis of orientation.

heterosexual masculinity of the participants. Only those who are 'man enough' and 'chill enough' will want dude-sex or be able to handle it.[10]

While some str8 dudes are homosexual, I agree with Ward that their "disavowal of gay identity and culture" plausibly denies them membership in the sexual identity category *queer*.[11] In that case, sexual identity isn't determined by sexual orientation.

For another example, consider the category *heteroflexible*. Individuals with heteroflexible orientations are disposed predominately—although not exclusively—sexually to desire and engage with individuals of the opposite sex and/or gender. For purposes of simplicity, suppose that heteroflexibility is a distinct sexual orientation on the scale between heterosexuality and bisexuality.[12]

Maria and Stephanie are heteroflexible, female women. Maria lives in a LGBTQ+ friendly neighborhood and has a few queer friends and colleagues. While Maria occasionally feels attracted to female women, she sexually engages exclusively with male men. Maria subjectively identifies as straight, and her social experience is more or less identical to the social experiences of heterosexual individuals. Accordingly, there's reason to believe that Maria is straight. In contrast, Stephanie is in an open relationship with her partner, a homosexual female woman. In most nearby possible worlds, Stephanie doesn't have the fortune of meeting her partner. And in a large subset of those worlds, Stephanie sexually engages exclusively with male men. Yet, in the actual world, Stephanie sexually engages with her partner and with male men. Stephanie subjectively identifies as queer, and her social experience is similar to that of her partner. Accordingly, I'm inclined to believe that Stephanie is queer.

In short, individuals with the same orientation might differ significantly with respect to their manifested sexual desires and behaviors. On this point, Anne Fausto-Sterling reports some of Lisa

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[10] Jane Ward, "Dude-Sex: White Masculinities and 'Authentic' Heterosexuality Among Dudes Who Have Sex with Dudes," *Sexualities* 11 (2008), 420-1.

[11] For further discussion of this point, see ibid., esp. 415-6.

[12] Alternatively, heteroflexibility might be glossed as way of being bisexual or heterosexual. The following discussion is compatible with any of the above interpretations.

Diamond's work on female sexuality: "Diamond suggests that in addition to a general sexual orientation […] women are sensitive to situations and relationships that might mediate erotic feelings. She calls this 'sexual fluidity' and offers as examples intense emotional relationships or greater positive exposure to same-sex relationships [… Fluidity] can trigger sexual attractions that may be short or long-lived."[13] On account of the dispositional nature of sexual orientation, Maria and Stephanie differ with respect to manifested sexual desires and behaviors. As a result, they also differ with respect to subjective identification, social experience, and—I think—sexual identity. In that case, sexual orientation doesn't determine sexual identity.

3. Critique of Hierarchical Social Position Analyses of Sexual Identity

An analysis of a social identity would feel incomplete without discussion of how it relates to Sally Haslanger's hierarchical social position analyses of gender and race. Although Haslanger doesn't claim that her framework can be applied to any social identity, here I'll argue that we ought to reject hierarchical social position analyses of sexual identity.

Haslanger developed the hierarchical social position framework in order to give analytical expression to the insights of materialist feminism and critical race theory.[14] As far as I'm aware, Haslanger doesn't provide a generalized account. So, I'll provide her analysis of the gender category *woman* before generating a corresponding analysis of queer sexual identity.

Haslanger holds that an individual, S, is a woman if and only if:

(i) S is regularly and for the most part observed or imagined to have certain bodily features presumed to be evidence of a female's biological role in reproduction;

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[13] Fausto-Sterling, *Sex/Gender: Biology in a Social World* (New York and London: Routledge, 2012), 97.
[14] See especially Haslanger, "Future Genders? Future Races?," "A Social Constructionist Analysis of Race," and "Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be?" in *Resisting Reality*.

(ii) that S has these features marks S within the dominant ideology of S's society as someone who ought to occupy certain kinds of social position that are in fact subordinate (and so motivates and justifies S's occupying such a position); and

(iii) the fact that S satisfies (i) and (ii) plays a role in S's systematic subordination, that is, *along some dimension*, S's social position is oppressive, and S's satisfying (i) and (ii) plays a role in that dimension of subordination.[15]

Proceeding by analogy, here's a hierarchical social position analysis of the sexual identity *queer*. An individual, Q, has a queer sexual identity if and only if:

(i) Q is regularly and for the most part observed or imagined to have certain bodily features (broadly construed), viz., dispositions to non-heterosexual desire or behavior;

(ii) that Q has these features marks Q within the dominant ideology of Q's society as someone who ought to occupy certain kinds of social position that are in fact subordinate (and so motivates and justifies Q's occupying such a position); and

(iii) the fact that Q satisfies (i) and (ii) plays a role in Q's systematic subordination, that is, *along some dimension*, Q's social position is oppressive, and Q's satisfying (i) and (ii) plays a role in that dimension of subordination.

In short, the hierarchical social position analysis holds that an individual has a queer sexual identity just in case they're oppressed on account of being perceived (accurately or otherwise) to have dispositions to non-heterosexual desire or behavior. More specifically, the analysis holds that individuals with queer sexual identities are oppressed in virtue of their perceived dispositions to non-heterosexual desire or behavior in contexts in which persons with those sexual dispositions ought to be—from the perspective of the dominant ideology—subject to treatments that are subordinating.

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[15] Ibid., 234.

I argue that we ought to reject the hierarchical social position analysis of queer sexual identity on account of considerations of extensional adequacy. In particular, I hold that the analysis fails to satisfy the first desideratum from section 1.1. This is the case because closeted queer individuals—who might experience privileging treatments on account of being imagined to have dispositions to non-heterosexual desire or behavior—aren't straight. Instead, they're passing as straight.

Perhaps this is too quick. Why not revise our beliefs about the extensions of sexual identity categories in light of the hierarchical social position analysis? Indeed, we often learn—or, at least, change—the extension of a category after observation or analysis. For example, fungi aren't plants, and Pluto isn't a planet.

That said, revising the extension of the sexual identity category *queer* to align with the hierarchical social position analysis isn't a viable option. Why do we need an analysis of queer sexual identity? What theoretical role do we need the category to play? As discussed above, I think that the sexual identity category *queer*—as opposed to the category *non-heterosexual*—plays an important theoretical role in the explanation of LGBTQ+ oppression. Here, I argue that the hierarchical social position analysis of queer sexual identity isn't conducive to explaining a central aspect of LGBTQ+ oppression: the closet.

In part, the oppression of the closet can be explained via the category of non-heterosexuality: social forces impel non-heterosexual individuals into sexual secrecy, negatively affecting their wellbeing. However, that's not the entire story. Closeted individuals are also unjustly denied access to normatively significant queer cultural resources that would help them to navigate experiences of isolation and stigmatization. Yet, I deny that individuals have a special right to queer cultural resources in virtue of their sexual orientations. This is evident by considering the fact that heteroflexible individuals differ with respect to whether they have a special right to queer cultural resources. For example, consider Maria and Stephanie from section 2.3. Some heteroflexible individuals, such as Maria, don't have a special right to queer cultural resources. Yet, it would be distinctively wrong to deny other heteroflexible individuals, such as Stephanie, access to queer cultural practices. Accordingly, I think that explaining the oppression of the closet

requires appealing to the sexual identity category *queer*. To put the point bluntly, the issue isn't that the bouncer decided against selecting members of a straight bachelorette party to enter a crowded LGBTQ+ club (even if they're heteroflexible). Neither is the issue that queer persons don't warmly welcome straight "tech bros" in gentrifying gayborhoods (even if they're heteroflexible).[16] Instead, what matters is that it's distinctively wrong to deny queer persons—as opposed to straight persons—access to queer culture.

As discussed above, an analysis of sexual identity ought to facilitate explanations of LGBTQ+ oppression. However, the hierarchical social position analysis of queer sexual identity doesn't adequately capture the oppression of the closet. It's distinctively wrong to deny closeted queer individuals access to queer culture, even if they aren't observed or imagined to have dispositions to non-heterosexual desire or behavior.

4. The Cultural Analysis of Sexual Identity

I endorse the following analyses of queer and straight sexual identity:

> A person is queer if and only if they are excluded from straight culture and, according to the constitutive norms of queer culture, they ought to be included in queer culture.

> A person is straight if and only if they are included in straight culture, or they aren't included in straight culture, but it's not the case that, according to the constitutive norms of queer culture, they ought to be included in queer culture.

In what follows, I'll unpack these analyses. I'll begin with the central component of my account: queer and straight cultures.[17]

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[16] On this point, the work of Seattle-based graffiti artist John Criscitello is instructive; see Scott James, "There Goes the Gayborhood," nytimes.com, accessed June 2019.

[17] I'd like to note that my analysis of sexual identity is influenced by Chike Jeffers' analysis of race, which includes political as well as cultural elements: "What it means to be a black person, for many of us, including myself, can never be exhausted through reference to problems of stigmatization, discrimination, marginalization, and disadvantage, as real and as large-looming as

4.1 Sexuality Cultures

Straight culture is a dominant culture, characterized by its centralization of heterosexual reproductive relationships. In contrast, queer cultures form in response to the dominance of straight culture. Some queer cultures are politically subdued, yet provide contexts in which sexual minorities can freely interact. Other queer cultures promote anti-oppression politics. The latter class of queer cultures tends to champion drag, rainbow iconography, pride parades, and deviant gender norms.[18]

Here, I won't attempt to explicate necessary and sufficient conditions for queer and straight cultures. Instead, I hope that the—in some contexts, vague—distinction between the sexuality cultures is apparent. Otherwise, I suggest strapping on some boots and heading to the nearest LGBTQ+ establishment.

That said, it's important to describe some characteristic features of queer and straight cultures. Here, I'll appeal to Sally Haslanger's recent work on culture (which, perhaps, marks the initial treatment of the topic in the field of social ontology). For Haslanger, "culture is a network of social meanings, tools, scripts, schemas, heuristics, principles, and the like, which we draw on in action, and which gives shape to our [social] practices."[19] In what follows, I'll briefly discuss *social meanings* and *social practices* in general, before describing some social meanings and practices characteristic of queer and straight cultures.

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these factors are in the racial landscape as we know it. There is also joy in blackness, a joy shaped by culturally distinctive situations, expressions, and interactions, by stylizations of the distinctive features of the black body, by forms of linguistic and extralinguistic communication, by artistic traditions, by religious and secular rituals, and by any number of other modes of cultural existence," Jeffers, "The Cultural Theory of Race: Yet Another Look at Du Bois's 'The Conservation of Races'," *Ethics* (2013), 422.

[18] For discussion of the relation between queer culture and queer politics, see esp. Amin Ghaziani, *Sex Cultures* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2017), 22-55.

[19] Haslanger, "Culture and Critique" *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume XCI* (2017), 155.

Haslanger holds that social meanings "consist in clusters of culturally shared concepts, beliefs, and other attitudes that enable us to interpret and organize information and coordinate action, thought, and affect."[20] Social meanings include "informational content" about how to evaluate and interact with various parts of the world, such as material objects, mental states, bodies, and other individuals.[21] To gain some traction here, consider how social meanings figure into the practice of cooking.[22] There are some hibiscus plants growing nearby; why do I deny myself the satisfaction of consuming their edible and nutritious flowers? An informative answer to this question appeals to the social meaning of hibiscus flowers. In my cultural milieu, hibiscus flowers aren't culturally coded as food (with the exception of tea). If hibiscus flowers were culturally coded as food, I'd be more likely to eat them.

This explanation of my culinary choices highlights the relation between social meanings and social practices. Haslanger defines the latter as follows: "[s]ocial practices are patterns of learned behavior that enable us (in the primary instances) to coordinate as members of a group in creating, distributing, managing, maintaining, and eliminating a resource (or multiple resources), due to mutual responsiveness to each other's behavior and the resource(s) in question, as interpreted through shared [social] meanings."[23] Continuing the culinary thread, consider social practices that curate the resource of food. Notwithstanding any innate drives to obtain a certain array of nutrients, we've learned how to act with respect to "the timing of meals, the cuisine, the ways of gathering and preparing to eat, the method of getting food from plate (or bowl, or banana leaf) to mouth."[24] In many cases, individuals act in accordance with the social practices carried out in their milieus. Yet, there's often opportunity for resistance. To an extent, individuals can choose the cultural practices in which they participate, revise extant practices, as well as create new ones.[25]

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[20] Haslanger, "What is a (Social) Structural Explanation?," *Philos Stud* (2016), 126.
[21] Haslanger, "What is a Social Practice," *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 82 (2018), 239.
[22] Haslanger appeals to the example of cooking throughout much of her work on culture and ideology, e.g., ibid.
[23] Ibid., 245. In what follows, I'll appeal to Haslanger's list of the ways in which we curate resources: creation, distribution, management, maintenance, and elimination.
[24] Ibid., 232.
[25] Ibid., 241-3.

With this general account of culture at hand, I'll consider queer cultures in particular. On my view, queer cultures are characterized by distinct social meanings and practices—which are often in tension with straight cultural social meanings and practices. For example, the following social meanings of the body circulate in many queer cultures: for women, unshaven legs are culturally coded as clean; for women, muscular bodies (among other forms) are coded as attractive; for men, painted fingernails are culturally coded as fashionable. Additionally, close intergenerational friendships and voluntary childlessness are coded as valuable. Of course, the aforementioned social meanings are neither universal nor exclusive to queer cultures. This notwithstanding, in any local context, queer and straight social meanings are distinct.

Queer cultural social meanings figure into queer cultural social practices. For example, consider how queer cultural practices create, distribute, manage and maintain the resource of sexual wellbeing. The cultural coding of various body shapes as attractive proliferates desire. Likewise, the social meaning that allows non-reproductive body parts to be coded as sexual creates erotic possibilities. As straight culture tends to limit the potential for sexual wellbeing among sexual minorities, it's unsurprising that many queer cultural practices are directed towards sex. That said, queer culture isn't all about sex. Queer cultural practices curate a variety of resources. For example, queer cultures create, distribute, manage and maintain resources that are used to communicate (e.g., slang), navigate stigmatization and convey important historical and practical knowledge (e.g., intergenerational friendships), and engage in artistic expression (e.g., drag).

4.2 Queer Exclusion from Straight Culture

Given the near-ubiquity of the culture, it can be difficult to notice straight cultural social meanings and practices. Yet, like queer culture, straight culture is characterized by distinct social meanings and practices. For example, the following straight cultural social meanings of the body stand in tension with the queer cultural social meanings discussed above: for women, unshaven legs are culturally coded as unhygienic; for women, muscular bodies are coded as unattractive; for men,

painted fingernails are coded as unprofessional. Additionally, intergenerational friendships and voluntary childlessness are viewed with suspicion or distaste.[26]

I hold that straight cultural social meanings figure into straight cultural social practices that characteristically create, distribute, manage, and maintain and the following social resource: children. This is a materialist feminist interpretation of straight cultural practices. In addition to the historical pedigree of materialist feminism,[27] I think that materialist feminist theories of straight cultural practices are explanatorily powerful. For example, why is straight culture so prevalent? The following—I think, compelling—materialist feminist explanation is available. While there's a need to reproduce the species, this need isn't met by biology alone. Straight culture is widespread because it successfully—although, I think, unjustly—creates, distributes, manages, and maintains the important resource of children.

Now, this section aims to describe queer exclusion from straight culture. Appealing to Haslanger's account of culture, we can gloss cultural exclusion in terms of social meanings and practices. Broadly, an individual is excluded from a culture just in case they're restricted from accessing the culture's characteristic social meanings or from participating in the culture's characteristic social practices.

So, how are queer individuals excluded from straight culture? Here, I hold that queer individuals are systematically excluded from participating in characteristic straight cultural social practices that curate the resource of children. In addition to discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals who wish to adopt children,[28] it's interesting to note that LGBTQ+ individuals are sometimes stereotypically represented as child predators. Indeed, the "displacement" of queer individuals

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[26] To clarify: a person can individually treat unshaven legs on women as clean, painted fingernails on men as fashionable, and voluntarily childlessness as valuable. However, the individual does so in spite of social meanings circulating in many straight cultural milieus.

[27] See esp. Catharine A. MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1989), Monique Wittig, *The Straight Mind and Other Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), and Sally Haslanger, *Resisting Reality* (2012).

[28] For example, in many jurisdictions in the United States, LGBTQ+ individuals are not protected against discrimination by adoption agencies. See Elizabeth A. Harris, "Same-Sex Parents Still Face Legal Complications," nytimes.com, accessed June 2019.

from social practices that shape members of the future generation is central to Cheshire Calhoun's theory of lesbian and gay oppression. For example, Calhoun claims, "an important aspect of the construction of lesbians and gays as outlaws to the family is the idea that lesbians and gay men are bad for children. They are incapable of socializing children into proper gender roles and a heterosexual orientation; they cannot be trusted not to molest or seduce the young; and they cannot offer children more than a pretended family relationship. Laws and policies built on these ideologies reduce gays' and lesbians' contact with children."[29] If Calhoun's description is accurate, queer individuals satisfy the first conjunct of my cultural analysis of queer sexual identity: queer individuals are excluded from straight culture.

4.3 Queer Inclusion in Queer Culture

At this point, it might be tempting to leave queer culture out of the analysis of queer sexual identity and hold that an individual is queer just in case they're excluded from straight culture. Yet, drawing from Jeffers,[30] I think that there can be a joy in having a queer sexual identity—a joy that exceeds the value of having some distance from an oppressive culture. Additionally, the first desideratum from section 1.1 (which holds that analyses of sexual identity ought to generate the correct results with respect to paradigm cases) provides reason to include queer culture in the analysis of queer sexual identity. This is the case because some straight individuals are excluded from straight culture. (On this point, in the following sub-section, I'll consider the exclusion of some straight disabled individuals from characteristic straight cultural practices.)

To complicate matters, it's not the case that an individual is queer just in case they're excluded from straight culture and actually included in queer culture; many queer persons are unjustly excluded from queer culture on account of racism, ableism, and transphobia. Instead of actual inclusion, my analysis of queer sexual identity appeals to possible inclusion in queer culture. So, what possible queer cultural inclusions are relevant to an individual's sexual identity? Here, I argue that we ought to restrict the modal space via the *constitutive norms of queer cultures*.

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[29] Cheshire Calhoun, *Feminism, The Family, and the Politics of the Closet: Lesbian and Gay Displacement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 160.
[30] See fn. 16.

A constitutive norm of the game of Go is that it's played with black and white stones. Another constitutive norm is that it's played on a square grid. On a strict conception of the game, it's impossible to play Go with copper coins. Even on a more flexible conception, it's impossible to play on anything but a square grid. Using the constitutive sense of 'ought', it's true that the game of Go ought to be played with black and white stones on a square grid. Here, I stress the difference between the ethical and the constitutive senses of 'ought'.[31] According to the constitutive norms of dog fighting, spectators ought not to step in to protect the dogs (as doing so would violate a constitutive norm of the practice). This notwithstanding, it's ethically permissible to intervene.

As noted above, queer cultures form in response to the dominance of straight culture. From here, it's a short step to the idea that the *norm of solidarity* is a constitutive norm of queer culture:

> The Norm of Solidarity: If a person is excluded from straight culture on the basis of their sexuality (specified below), then they ought to have access to queer cultural practices that curate important resources (specified below).

Some specification is in order. The norm of solidarity applies to individuals who are excluded from straight culture on the basis of their sexuality—more specifically, on the basis of their sexuality with respect to sex and/or gender. An individual who is exclusively attracted to some sort of inanimate object might be excluded from straight culture on the basis of their sexuality, but the norm of solidarity does not apply to them. Next, the norm of solidarity holds that individuals to which the norm applies ought to have access to queer cultural practices that curate important resources. As described above, these resources include sexual wellbeing as well as resources that mitigate the effects of stigmatization. In order to create, distribute, manage, and maintain these important resources, queer cultures curate a variety of subsidiary resources, including community centers, bars and clubs, sexual health materials, positive media representations, and gayborhoods.

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[31] It's easy to hear 'ought' univocally, but there are many senses of the term. In addition to the ethical and constitutive senses, consider the practical 'ought' as well as the teleological/functional 'ought'. For example, "given that they want to go to the concert, they ought to buy a ticket soon" and "the heart ought to pump blood."

According to the constitutive norm of solidarity, individuals who are excluded from straight culture on the basis of their sexuality with respect to sex and/or gender ought to be included in queer culture—race, disability, and transgender status notwithstanding. At this point, I can provide a specified analysis of queer sexual identity. A person Q is queer if and only if:

    (i)   Q is excluded from straight culture, and

    (ii)   According to the constitutive norms of queer culture, especially the norm of solidarity, Q ought to be included in queer culture, that is, they ought to have access to queer cultural practices, especially those that curate important resources such as sexual wellbeing and resources that mitigate the effects of stigmatization.

With this analysis at hand, we're equipped to theorize the relation between queer sexual identity, individual action, and LGBTQ+ oppression. Before taking up that project in the fifth section, I'll explicate the cultural analysis of straight sexual identity.

4.4 Who's Straight, Anyway?

Above, I endorsed the following analysis of straight sexual identity:

A person is straight if and only if they are included in straight culture, or they aren't included in straight culture, but it's not the case that, according to the constitutive norms of queer culture, they ought to be included in queer culture.

This analysis is disjunctive. Corresponding to each disjunct, we can distinguish between *straight-as-in-straight* (*straight$_s$*) and *straight-as-in-not-queer* (*straight$_{nq}$*) sexual identity. Here, I'll explicate each type of straight sexual identity.

Beginning with the first disjunct, an individual is straight$_s$ just in case they're included in straight culture. On this point, consider a familiar example of inclusion in characteristic straight cultural practices. A happy heterosexual couple has been living together for a few years. In straight culture,

there's a social meaning which holds that such couples ought to get married. That social meaning plays a role in the couple getting married. A few years later, there's a married, cohabiting heterosexual couple. In straight culture, there's a social meaning which holds that such couples ought to have children, and that social meaning plays a role in the couple having a child. Here, the members of the heterosexual couple are included in characteristic straight cultural practices that curate the resource of children. Accordingly, they satisfy the first disjunct of the cultural analysis of straight sexual identity; they're straight-as-in-straight.

Admittedly, this is a highly simplified case.[32] However, note that homosexual couples aren't similarly integrated into this network of social practices. In addition to queer individuals, some straight individuals are excluded from characteristic straight cultural social practices. While I think that some members of kink and polyamorous communities satisfy the second disjunct of the cultural analysis of straight sexual identity, here I'll focus on the exclusion of some disabled individuals from straight culture. For example, consider the following testimony from Jennifer Bartlett, a writer who has cerebral palsy: "In my 20s, I was neutral about parenthood partly because, as a woman with cerebral palsy, I was spared the usual intrusive questioning and expectations about having children that most women are subject to. People never pressured me to have children; they just assumed that I could not. In fact, it became clear very fast that women like me are expected *not* to reproduce."[33] This notwithstanding, Bartlett decided to have a child. Describing her experience, Bartlett notes that she was put through "constant questioning […about her] capacity to give birth and be a mother."[34] Bartlett is excluded from characteristic straight cultural practices; she's a mother in spite of straight cultural social meanings. That said, assuming that she's not also excluded from straight culture on the basis of her sexuality with respect to sex and/or gender, Bartlett isn't covered by the norm of solidarity. And she's straight-as-in-not-queer.[35]

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[32] For a detailed discussion and critique of associated straight cultural social meanings, see esp. Esa Díaz-León, "Amatonormativity and Hermeneutical Injustice," (manuscript).

[33] Jennifer Bartlett, "Disability and the Right to Choose," nytimes.com, accessed June 2019.

[34] Ibid.

[35] While *disabled* and *queer* are distinct social identities, I stress the importance of coalition. Queer and disabled individuals are systematically excluded from characteristic straight cultural social practices, and shared oppression provides opportunity for political action. See esp. Tommie

5. The Cultural Analysis of Sexual Identity Satisfies the Desiderata

With the analyses of queer and straight sexual identity at hand, I turn to consider how the cultural account fares with respect to the desiderata from section 1.1. In the following three sub-sections, I'll consider each desideratum in turn.

5.1 The Analyses Ought to Generate the Correct Results with Respect to Paradigm Cases

In section 1.2, I outlined some paradigm instances of the sexual identity categories *queer* and *straight*. While I think that the cultural analysis of sexual identity satisfies the first desideratum, it would be quite unwieldly to discuss each paradigm case. Instead, I'll take the opportunity to say a bit about vagueness in sexual identity as well as the conditions of cultural inclusion and exclusion—with the hope that the discussion will allay concerns related to extensional adequacy.

To begin, I think that the sexual identity categories *queer* and *straight* admit of vague cases. And sexual identity categories aren't unique in this respect.[36] Accordingly, an analysis of sexual identity shouldn't always generate clean-cut answers to the question: Are they queer or straight?

Furthermore, on the cultural analysis, sexual identity categories are vague (at least) to the extent that cultural inclusion and exclusion are vague phenomena. Above, I glossed cultural inclusion and exclusion in terms of social meanings and practices. On my view, cultural inclusion requires more than going through the motions of a culture's characteristic practices. Instead, an individual

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Shelby, "Foundations of Black Solidarity: Collective Identity or Common Oppression?," *Ethics* 112 (2002), 259-265.

[36] For example, see Elizabeth Barnes' analysis of disability in *The Minority Body: A Theory of Disability* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 45. Also, rejecting the inference from vagueness to metaphysical nonsubstantivity, Barnes claims: "[t]here's sometimes a suggestion that areas where there is a lot of vagueness or indeterminacy are areas we should treat with less metaphysical seriousness—the important questions, for example, are just a matter of how we use our words. But I don't think the inference from 'is vague' to 'isn't metaphysically robust or interesting' is a good one, and I think it's especially one that should be rejected by those interested in social ontology," ibid., 50.

is included in a culture only if they participate in the characteristic practices of the culture—in which participation in a practice requires acting in accordance with the social meanings that structure the practice. For example, considering section 4.2's discussion of queer exclusion from straight culture, I deny that there's a straight cultural social meaning which holds that homosexual couples ought to have children. For this reason, queer parents aren't included in characteristic straight cultural social practices; queer parents raise children in spite of straight cultural social meanings which hold that only heterosexual individuals ought to engage in social practices that shape the future generation.

5.2 The Analyses Ought to Figure into Explanations of Individual Action

I'll begin with the assumption that individual action is partly explained by social phenomena.[37] Broadly, I think that membership in sexual identity categories figures into explanations of individual action in (at least) two ways: (i) members of a sexual identity category might act in order to meet the standards or ideals of their sexuality culture, and (ii) members of a sexual identity category might act in such a way that their sexual identity is made more salient in a context. I expect that the first point is obvious. We're included in cultures, and individuals have reason to act in accordance with cultural meanings and practices. This point applies to sexuality cultures (as highlighted in section four and as will become important in the following sub-section).

Here, I'll focus on the second way that membership in a sexual identity category figures into explanations of individual action. In some cases, individuals have reason to make their sexual identities more salient. Jovan Bridges speaks to this point, claiming: "It's how if I didn't read as gay before I read as black, people would be like, 'Oh, my God. Let's cross the street. Let's lock the door.' And I made the visual choice to be like, 'I'm a homosexual.' I'd rather be flamboyant than a skin color."[38] Bridges highlights the intersectionality of the social identities *queer* and *black*:

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[37] See esp. Haslanger, What is a (Social) Structural Explanation?," *Philos Stud* (2016), 120-8.

[38] *Untucked*, season 11, episode 1, aired February 28, 2019 on VH1. Importantly, Bridges' testimony tracks a broader pattern of social experience: "we report robust evidence that people stereotype gay men, compared with men whose orientation is unmentioned, in ways that are de-racialized. This is true whether these men are Asian, Black, Hispanic, or White," Christopher D.

Bridges' social experience as queer isn't independent from his social experience as black. The cultural analysis of sexual identity captures this intersectional phenomenon inasmuch as it's likely that Bridges' "flamboyant" presentations amplify his exclusion from straight culture. Bridges' testimony captures the fact that it's prudent to enact such presentations in milieus in which the social costs of being primarily coded as black exceed those of being primarily read as queer. In certain contexts of racial oppression, Bridges is incentivized to act in such a way that he's further excluded from straight culture—that is, in certain contexts of racial oppression, it makes sense for Bridges to act in such a way that his sexual identity is made more salient.

5.3 The Analyses Ought to Figure into Explanations of LGBTQ+ Oppression

Many cases of LGBTQ+ oppression, such as prohibitions against homosexual sex, target individuals on the basis of their sexual orientation. However, individuals are also oppressed on the basis their sexual identity. As a case study, here I'll argue that sexual identity plays an important theoretical role in the explanation of the oppression constituted by directives to "tone it down" and "stop flaunting it."[39]

Directives to "stop flaunting it" and "tone it down" are remarkably common. In case you're skeptical, just ask a few butch lesbians or femme gay men. To begin, consider these sorts of directives in the context of employment. Even if a workplace is generally tolerant of non-heterosexual orientations, individuals might experience pressure to "tone it down." For example, here's a statement from Cathy, who works in academic administration: "I don't have to be in the closet. It's unspoken and unwritten—but there's no flaunting it."[40] The climate of Cathy's workplace is not unique in this respect. For example, Steven provides the following explanation

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Petsko and Bodenhausen, Galen V., "Racial Stereotyping of Gay Men: Can a Minority Sexual Orientation Erase Race?," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* (2019), 51.

[39] This isn't the most normatively pressing instance of identity-based LGBTQ+ oppression. That said, its simplicity makes it a useful example. On my view, other instances of identity-based LGBTQ+ oppression include the gentrification of gayborhoods, as well as sanctions against GSAs (Gender and Sexualities Alliances) in secondary schools.

[40] Christine L. Williams, Giuffre, Patti A., and Dellinger, Kristen, "The Gay-Friendly Closet" in *Sexualities: Identities, Behaviors, and Society*, eds. Michael Kimmel and The Stony Brook Sexualities Research Group (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 315.

of why he maintains a congenial professional relationship with his boss: "I work out, I work on my truck, I like sports […] There were some [gay men that my boss] couldn't deal with because they were just too out there."[41]

For a particularly striking example, consider Adam Rippon, a world-class figure skater and medalist in the 2018 Winter Olympics. Speaking about his experience at the Olympics, Rippon notes, "I've heard a lot of people say, 'Adam Rippon should tone it down'."[42] What is Rippon being pressured to tone down? Presumably, it's not that Rippon spent too much time talking about homosexual sex. Instead, Rippon is being targeted on the basis of his mannerisms, speech characteristics (often referred to as a "lisp"), and aesthetic presentations (such as waxed and dyed eyebrows).

What unifies these traits? It's not that they naturally co-occur with homosexuality. And it's not even that they're gender deviant.[43] Instead, the traits are unified by their normalization or idealization in many queer cultural milieus. Individuals who are connected to certain queer cultures are likely to value these mannerisms, speech characteristics, and aesthetic presentations. There's nothing suspiciously "essentialist" about this point. Different cultures have different practices.

I expect that directives to "tone it down" are often uttered naïvely, with speakers believing that the targeted practices are unprofessional or otherwise distasteful. However, with the relation between queer culture and the aforementioned traits in mind, directives to "tone it down" and "stop

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[41] Ibid., 315.

[42] "Adam Rippon opens up about emotional letters from gay teens," pinknews.co.uk, accessed June 2019.

[43] For example, there's evidence that "GLB speech variants are not imitations of the speech patterns of the opposite sex, but are likely to be learned, culturally specific ways of speaking, much like other aspects of sociolinguistic variation," Benjamin Munson and Babel, Molly, "Loose Lips and Silver Tongues, or, Projecting Sexual Orientation Through Speech," *Language and Linguistics Compass* (2007), 443.

flaunting it" can be unmasked.[44] Notwithstanding what speakers have in their heads, these directives disincentivize individuals from participating in queer culture.[45]

As discussed above, queer cultures curate normatively important resources. And—recalling the cases of straight heteroflexible individuals and str8 dudes—it's not the case that individuals have a special right to participate in queer cultural practices in virtue of their sexual orientations. Instead, it's distinctively wrong to disincentive queer individuals from participating in queer cultural practices that curate the aforementioned resources. Here, we can appeal to sexual identity in order to explain the oppression queer individuals experience in being disincentivized from participating in queer cultural practices via directives to "stop flaunting it" and "tone it down."

6. Conclusion

In contemporary philosophical discussion, sexual identity is underexplored territory. As social metaphysicians, we aim to limn the structure of the social world. Here's reason to analyze sexual identity. That said, in addition to participating in the enterprise of social metaphysics, I aim to have produced a work of LGBTQ+ philosophy. A central task of this field of inquiry is to translate queer folk wisdom into philosophical theory. To this end, I hope to have made some progress in understanding what it means to shout, "We're here! And we're queer!"

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[44] For discussion of unmasking in social constructionist projects, see esp. Haslanger "What Are We Talking About: The Semantics and Politics of Social Kinds" in *Resisting Reality*, 371-5.

[45] Here, I follow Kate Manne's methodology in focusing on the oppressive effects of practices, as opposed to the mental states of individuals engaged in oppressive practices, Manne, *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 59.

Sexual Orientation: The Taxonomy-First View

What is sexual orientation? This important question about the nature of sexual orientation has been of central interest to philosophers working on the social ontology of sexuality. We're also interested in the taxonomy of sexual orientation categories. What are the sexual orientation categories? Perhaps the socially dominant taxonomy is correct. Or, maybe we ought to endorse an alternative taxonomy.

In the social ontology of sexuality, beliefs about the nature of sexual orientation are generally given epistemic priority relative to beliefs about the taxonomy of orientation categories.[1] I refer to this treatment of the epistemic relation between beliefs about the nature of sexual orientation and beliefs about the taxonomy of orientation categories as the *orientation-first view*. In this paper, I argue that we ought to reject the orientation-first view in favor of the *taxonomy-first view*, which gives beliefs about the taxonomy of orientation categories epistemic priority relative to beliefs about the nature of sexual orientation. In effect, I aim to reverse the epistemic order of a recently sprouted sub-field of philosophical inquiry.

My argument for the taxonomy-first view proceeds as follows. In the first section, I explicate the distinction between the orientation-first and taxonomy-first views. In the second section, I provide a dialectical reason to endorse the taxonomy-first view. In particular, I discuss a recent debate between Robin Dembroff and Esa Díaz-León about the nature of sexual orientation.[2] And I argue that while Dembroff and Díaz-León's endorsement of the orientation-first view generates an impasse, the taxonomy-first view allows the dialectic to move forward.

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[1] Below, I discuss the notion of epistemic priority in more detail. For now, note that for any theory represented by a web of belief, a belief has epistemic priority relative to another belief just in case it's closer to the center of the web.

[2] See Robin A. Dembroff, "What is Sexual Orientation?," *Philosophers' Imprint* 16 (2016) and Esa Díaz-León, "Sexual Orientations: The Desire View," forthcoming in *Feminist Philosophy of Mind* (Oxford, Oxford University Press).

1. The Orientation-First v. Taxonomy-First Views of Sexual Orientation

In this section, I'll explicate the orientation-first and taxonomy-first views of sexual orientation by distinguishing *orientation facts* from *taxonomy facts* (1.1), before describing how each view understands the epistemic relation between these two types of facts (1.2). And I'll note that the orientation-first view is endorsed in recent work on the metaphysics of sexual orientation (1.3).

1.1 Orientation Facts and Taxonomy Facts

Orientation facts are facts about the nature of sexual orientation. With Díaz-León, let's suppose that sexual orientation is a property.[3] The property of sexual orientation is instantiated in many persons, but it's not instantiated in sedimentary rocks, ferns, or prime numbers. Now, what's the nature of the property of sexual orientation? Answering this question will yield the orientation facts.

For example, if either Dembroff or Díaz-León's theory of sexual orientation is correct, it's an orientation fact that orientation is a dispositional property. As I'll discuss below, if Díaz-León's analysis is correct, it's an orientation fact that individuals instantiate the property of sexual orientation in virtue of being disposed to have certain sexual desires.[4] In contrast, if Dembroff's analysis is correct, it's an orientation fact that individuals instantiate the property of sexual orientation in virtue of being disposed to engage in particular sexual behaviors.[5]

In order to gain additional traction on the concept of orientation facts, let's consider facts about the nature of race. Many persons have a race, unlike metamorphic rocks, seaweed, and composite numbers. Here, I'll highlight two competing theories about the nature of race. On Quayshawn Spencer's view, individuals have a race in virtue of being a member of a "human population partition," i.e., a genetically significant division in the species *homo sapiens*.[6] In contrast, Sally

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[3] Díaz-León, "Sexual Orientations: The Desire View," 2-3. Alternatively, we might characterize sexual orientation as a genus of properties. In what follows, nothing turns on this distinction.
[4] Díaz-León, "Sexual Orientations: The Desire View," 21.
[5] Dembroff, "What is Sexual Orientation," 18.
[6] Spencer, "A Radical Solution to the Race Problem," *Philosophy of Science* 81 (2014), 1029-32.

Haslanger holds that individuals have a race in virtue of occupying a particular type of social position, more specifically: in virtue of being socially subordinated or privileged on the basis of perceived geographical ancestry.[7]

In contrast to orientation facts, taxonomy facts are facts about the taxonomy of sexual orientation categories. Taxonomy facts include facts about what categories are orientation categories, as well as facts about the membership conditions of orientation categories. For example, it's a taxonomy fact that *woman* isn't an orientation category. My enduring admiration notwithstanding, I'll even hazard to claim that there's no orientation category with membership conditions that require being exclusively attracted to Madonna. As will become important below, Díaz-León holds that *homosexual*, *heterosexual*, and *bisexual* are orientation categories, while Dembroff endorses a revisionary taxonomy that includes categories such as *woman-oriented* and *female-oriented*.

Here, it will be useful to continue the analogy with race. In addition to facts about the nature of race, there are facts about the taxonomy of race category. It's evident that *lawyer* and *U.S. Citizen* aren't race categories. So, what are the race categories? Haslanger holds that taxonomies of race categories vary across social milieus.[8] For example, on Haslanger's view, the taxonomy of race categories in early twentieth-century London is distinct from the mid-century taxonomy in Germany. Haslanger holds that, in the contemporary United States, the taxonomy includes (at least) the categories of *White*, *Black*, *Asian*, and *Latinx*.[9] In contrast, Spencer holds that the taxonomy of race categories has remained constant across recent evolutionary history, and the taxonomy exhaustively includes the following categories: *African*, *Caucasian*, *East Asian*, *American Indian*, and *Oceanian*.[10] Note that Spencer's categories are (more than lexically) distinct from Haslanger's categories. For example, Spencer categorizes Middle Eastern and South Asian individuals as Caucasian. But for Haslanger, the category *White* doesn't (at least straightforwardly) include Middle Eastern and South Asian individuals.

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[7] See esp. Haslanger, "Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be?" and "A Social Constructionist Analysis of Race" in *Resisting Reality*: *Social Construction and Social Critique* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 235-8 and 306-9.

[8] Haslanger, "A Social Constructionist Analysis of Race," 308.

[9] Ibid., 306.

[10] Spencer, "A Radical Solution to the Race Problem," 1030.

1.2 The Epistemic Relation Between Orientation Facts and Taxonomy Facts

The orientation-first and taxonomy-first views are distinguished by their answers to the following question: what's the epistemic relation between orientation facts and taxonomy facts? The orientation-first view holds that beliefs about the nature of sexual orientation should have epistemic priority relative to beliefs about the taxonomy of orientation categories. And the taxonomy-first view holds the reverse.

In order to cash out the notion of epistemic priority, let's consider a case in which a rational individual must revise their web of belief. Suppose that, at T1, I believed that Doggo was a dog. And I also believed that it's impossible for me to hallucinate. At T2, I had a perceptual experience in which Doggo's ear was damaged, revealing part of a computer chip and some sleek mechanisms. After this disturbing perceptual experience, it's plausible that reason compels me to revise my web of belief. At T3, it would be rational for me to believe that Doggo is a robot (and that it's impossible for me to hallucinate). Or, it would be rational for me to believe that Doggo is a dog (and that it's possible for me to hallucinate). Rationality doesn't compel either revision over the other. If my belief that Doggo is a dog has epistemic priority relative to my belief that it's not possible for me to hallucinate, then I'll go on believing that Doggo is a dog. If my belief that it's impossible for me to hallucinate has epistemic priority relative to my belief that Doggo is a dog, then I'll decide that Doggo is an android. The point of this toy (poodle) example can be expressed as follows. We can represent a theory as a web of belief, such that a belief has epistemic priority relative to another belief just in case it's closer to the center of the web.

To further clarify the distinction between the orientation-first and taxonomy-first views, it will be useful to continue the analogy with race. Above, I noted that Haslanger and Spencer endorse significantly different theories about the nature of race and the taxonomy of race categories. Importantly, Haslanger and Spencer also have significantly different views about the epistemic relation between beliefs about the nature of race and beliefs about the taxonomy of race categories.

Haslanger's analysis of race starts with the belief that the taxonomy of race categories in the contemporary United States includes the categories of *Black*, *White*, *Asian*, and *Latinx*. On this point, she claims:

> We can all confidently identify members of different races. Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, Malcolm X, Toni Morrison, Oprah Winfrey, W. E. B. DuBois, Kofi Annan, Thabo Mbeki (insert here your choice of various friends and relatives) are Black. George Bush, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Margaret Thatcher, Golda Meir, Bertrand Russell, Vincent Van Gogh (insert here your choice of various friends and relatives) are White. Similar lists can be constructed for Asians, Latino/as, and other groups usually considered races. But if this is the case, then the terms 'Black' and 'White' pick out the best fitting and most unified objective type of which the members of the list are paradigms—even if I can't describe the type or my beliefs about what the paradigms have in common are false.[11]

The idea that *Black*, *White*, *Asian*, and *Latinx* are race categories is bedrock in Haslanger's analysis: "[cases such as those described above] function to us as paradigms and ground our meanings."[12] From here, Haslanger's task is to analyze the categories. Haslanger argues that—notwithstanding any appearance to the contrary—the categories *Black*, *White*, *Asian*, and *Latinx* don't correspond to natural kinds.[13] Instead, she argues that the race categories correspond to certain social positions.

In the context of this paper, it's not important to dive into the details of Haslanger's social position analysis of race. Here, my point is that Haslanger holds that beliefs about the taxonomy of race categories ought to have epistemic priority relative to beliefs about the nature of race. For Haslanger, if an otherwise plausible theory of the nature of race had the result that *Latinx* isn't a

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[11] Haslanger, "A Social Constructionist Analysis of Race" in *Resisting Reality*, 306.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid., 306-7. See also Haslanger, "Gender and Race" and "Future Genders? Future Races?" in *Resisting Reality*, 235, 256-60.

race category, that's sufficient reason to reject the theory of the nature of race—it's not reason to jettison the belief that *Latinx* is a race category.[14]

In contrast, Spencer gives beliefs about the nature of race epistemic priority relative to beliefs about the taxonomy of race categories. As noted above, Spencer holds that race is a feature of human population genetics. More precisely, Spencer holds that 'race' refers to a set containing the five most genetically significant human population partitions.[15] This theory of the nature of race is bedrock for Spencer.

With his genetic theory of race at hand, Spencer asks: what are the five most genetically significant human population partitions? Considering the empirical data, Spencer concludes that we ought to endorse "the Blumenbach partition," which exhaustively includes the categories discussed in the previous sub-section: *African*, *Caucasian*, *East Asian*, *American Indian*, and *Oceanian*.[16]

Although Spencer is interested in correlations between the Blumenbach categories and our ordinary categories, he allows that there are significant differences between the taxonomies. For example, Spencer notes that *Latinx* doesn't neatly correspond to any of the Blumenbach categories.[17] Although Spencer doesn't say precisely how he handles this "mismatch" between the Blumenbach categories and our ordinary categories, he denies that *Latinx* is a race category.[18]

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[14] As *Latinx* might be interpreted as an ethnicity, perhaps this interpretation of Haslanger is too strong. In that case, here's a less controversial (although, more complex) statement of the point: for Haslanger, if an otherwise plausible theory of the nature of race has the result that *Black* isn't a race category, that's sufficient reason to reject the theory of the nature of race—it's not reason to jettison the belief that *Black* is a race category. Notice, however, that Spencer denies that *Black* is a race category. Instead, for Spencer, *African* is a race category. This isn't merely a linguistic difference. *Black* and *African* are different categories, with different membership conditions. On Haslanger's taxonomy, Michelle Obama and Malia Obama are both Black. In contrast, Spencer's taxonomy plausibly has the result that Michelle Obama is African, while Malia Obama is mixed race (African and Caucasian).

[15] Spencer, "A Radical Solution to the Race Problem," 1026-9.

[16] Ibid., 1030.

[17] Ibid., 1033.

[18] It seems that Spencer must hold that Latinx individuals are members of a single Blumenbach category or that Latinx individuals are "mixed race" (across Blumenbach categories). Spencer responds to an objection that holds that Blumenbach categories and ordinary categories are "mismatched," ibid.

Here, my point is that Spencer gives beliefs about the nature of race epistemic priority relative to beliefs about the taxonomy of race categories. For Spencer, if an otherwise plausible theory of the taxonomy of race categories leads to the result that race isn't a feature of human population genetics, that's sufficient reason to reject the theory of the taxonomy of race categories—it's not reason to jettison the belief that race can be analyzed in terms of human population genetics.

By analogy with the epistemologies of Haslanger and Spencer's theories of race, we can explicate the difference between the orientation-first and taxonomy-first views. On the orientation-first view, if an otherwise plausible theory of the taxonomy of orientation categories has a result contrary to an antecedent theory of the nature of sexual orientation, that's sufficient reason to reject the theory of the taxonomy of orientation categories—it's not reason to jettison the antecedent theory of the nature of orientation. In contrast, on the taxonomy-first view, if an otherwise plausible theory of the nature of sexual orientation has a result contrary to an antecedent theory of the taxonomy of orientation categories, that's sufficient reason to reject the theory of the nature of orientation—it's not reason to jettison the antecedent theory of the taxonomy of orientation categories. Of course, that's all quite schematic. In order to flesh out this outline, we'll need an example of inconsistent beliefs about the nature of sexual orientation and the taxonomy of orientation categories. (That is, we'll need an example analogous to the following inconsistent beliefs about the nature of race and the taxonomy of race categories: race is a feature of human population genetics, and *Latinx* is a race category.) In section two, I'll provide further traction on the orientation-first and taxonomy-first views by explicating how Dembroff and Díaz-León's theories of the nature of sexual orientation are inconsistent with (different) beliefs about the taxonomy of orientation categories, before considering how the orientation-first and taxonomy-first views recommend handling these inconsistencies.

With the distinction between the orientation-first and taxonomy-first views of sexual orientation at hand, I move to consider Dembroff and Díaz-León's treatment of the epistemic relation between orientation-facts and taxonomy-facts.

1.3 Dembroff and Díaz-León's Endorsement of the Orientation-First View

The work of Dembroff and Díaz-León is a touchstone in the social ontology of sexuality. Here, I note that both philosophers endorse the orientation-first view.

For example, Díaz-León holds that analyzing the concept of sexual orientation might require changing "the specific groups that fall under the concept."[19] However, Díaz-León does not mention the reverse, viz., that our concept of sexual orientation might need to be revised in light of changes to our beliefs about the taxonomy of orientation categories.

Similarly, Dembroff describes their analysis as follows:

> [This paper's] target is twofold: (i) the everyday concept of sexual orientation, and (ii) the corresponding concepts associated with the taxonomy of sexual orientation (*e.g.*, gay, straight). These concepts are highly interwoven, since the concept of sexual orientation constrains the taxonomy […] My project sets out to engineer a revised concept of sexual orientation that implies a new taxonomical schema of sexual orientation.[20]

Here, Dembroff holds that the analysis of sexual orientation constrains the analysis of the taxonomy, but they do not mention the reverse. Additionally, Dembroff claims that the concept of sexual orientation "implies" a taxonomy of orientation categories.[21]

In sum, Díaz-León and Dembroff endorse unidirectional—orientation facts to taxonomy facts—relations of conceptual revision, constraint, and implication. That is, Díaz-León and Dembroff give beliefs about the nature of sexual orientation epistemic priority relative to beliefs about the taxonomy of orientation categories, i.e., they endorse the orientation-first view.

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[19] Díaz-León, "Sexual Orientations: The Desire View," 3.
[20] Dembroff, "What is Sexual Orientation?," 2.
[21] Ibid., 2, 4.

2. The Dialectical Consequences of the Orientation-First and Taxonomy-First Views

In this section, I outline a recent debate between Dembroff and Díaz-León about the nature of sexual orientation (2.1), argue that Dembroff and Díaz-León's endorsement of the orientation-first view generates an impasse (2.2), and describe how the taxonomy-first view can resolve the impasse in the debate (2.3). Additionally, I answer an objection to this argument for the taxonomy-first view (2.4).

Here, note that the dialectical force of the taxonomy-first view provides reason to endorse it. This is the case for the following two reasons. First, although some dialectics close with an impasse, that would be a strange result at this point in the debate between Dembroff and Díaz-León. Social metaphysicians have just begun discussing the nature of sexual orientation. Moreover, Dembroff and Díaz-León share a queer perspective on the topic of orientation. Accordingly, it seems unlikely that the debate would have already reached an irresolvable impasse. Second, I join Dembroff and Díaz-León's *ameliorative project*, which aims to produce an analysis of sexual orientation that— if deployed in our social milieu—would have beneficial social and political effects.[22] And the impasse between Dembroff and Díaz-León is an obstacle to our shared ameliorative aims. For these reasons, we should search for ways to advance the dialectic.

2.1 The Debate between Dembroff and Díaz-León

In their groundbreaking work on sexual orientation, Dembroff argues for the following analysis of sexual orientation, which they refer to as *bidimensional dispositionalism*:

> A person S's sexual orientation is grounded in S's dispositions to engage in sexual behaviors under the ordinary condition[s] for these dispositions, and which sexual

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[22] For an account of ameliorative projects in the context of social ontology, see esp. Haslanger, "What Are We Talking About: The Semantics and Politics of Social Kinds" in *Resisting Reality*, 376-9.

orientation S has is grounded in what sex[es] and gender[s] of persons S is disposed to sexually engage under these conditions.[23]

Dembroff's analysis holds that the property of sexual orientation is dispositional, behavior-based, relative to both sex and gender, and thinly-relational. In turn, I'll work through these aspects of bidimensional dispositionalism. (Also, I aim for the discussion to highlight and clarify some of the theoretical choice points in the sub-field.)

First, let's distinguish between behavior-based and desire-based analyses of orientation. Behavior-based views hold that individuals instantiate the property of sexual orientation in virtue of features of their sexual behaviors, not their desires. In contrast, desire-based views hold that individuals instantiate the property of sexual orientation in virtue of features of their sexual desires, not their behaviors. Dembroff endorses a behavior-based analysis of orientation.

Second, we can distinguish between dispositional and categorical analyses of orientation.[24] On categorical analyses, individuals instantiate the property of sexual orientation in virtue of their sexual desires or behaviors. In contrast, dispositional analyses hold that individuals instantiate the property of sexual orientation in virtue of their dispositions to sexual desires or behavior. We can combine desire-based and behavior-based views with either dispositional or categorical analyses.[25] For example, Dembroff endorses a behavior-based dispositional analysis, holding that individuals instantiate the property of sexual orientation in virtue of their dispositions to sexual behavior.

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[23] Dembroff, "What is Sexual Orientation?," 18.

[24] This distinction is sometimes glossed as a distinction between dispositional and behavioral analyses. However, because we also need to distinguish between desire-based and behavior-based analyses, I find it useful to characterize the former distinction in terms of dispositional and categorical properties.

[25] At this point, it's important to address the following complication: if we endorsed a dispositional analysis of sexual desire, categorical desire-based accounts of orientation wouldn't deserve the label 'categorical'. Unfortunately, alternative terminology faces similar complications. For example, we might instead distinguish between 'first-order dispositional' and 'second-order dispositional' analyses of orientation. However, that terminology doesn't accurately describe categorical behavioral analyses of orientation. While it would be ideal to find terminology that speaks to all of the conceptual space, here I'll distinguish between categorical and dispositional analyses. In part, I've made this terminological choice because, as I'll discuss below, Díaz-León's account of sexual desire doesn't admit of a dispositional analysis.

Third, analyses of sexual orientation must answer the following question: on the basis of attractions to which type(s) of features do individuals instantiate the property of sexual orientation? For example, suppose that an individual is exclusively attracted to short female women. Does the individual instantiate the property of sexual orientation in virtue of their attractions to sex-features, gender-features, and/or height-features? Dembroff argues that individuals instantiate the property of sexual orientation in virtue of their attractions to sex-features and/or gender-features, but not other types of features.[26]

Fourth, analyses of orientation are either (what I'll call) *thickly-relational* or *thinly-relational*. On thickly-relational analyses of orientation, individuals instantiate the property of sexual orientation in virtue of being attracted to individuals with particular sex-features, gender-features, or other features, *and* themselves having particular sex-features, gender-features, or other features. In contrast, thinly-relational analyses of orientation hold that individuals instantiate the property of sexual orientation in virtue of being attracted to individuals with particular sex-features, gender-features, or other features, irrespective of their own sex, gender, etc. Dembroff endorses a thinly-relational analysis of orientation.

With Dembroff's account at hand, I move to provide Díaz-León's analysis of sexual orientation, as well as her argument against bidimensional dispositionalism. Motivated by the idea that "we could understand sexual orientations in terms of *sexual preferences*,"[27] Díaz-León develops the following analysis of orientation, which she refers to as *the desire view*:

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[26] Accordingly, Dembroff distinguishes between sex and gender. Although many feminist philosophers endorse the sex/gender distinction, its formulation is contested. So I'll simply note that sex categories include *intersex*, *female*, and *male*. In contrast, gender categories include *woman*, *man*, and *genderqueer* (among others). See also Dembroff's distinction between sexual orientation and "sexual druthers," Dembroff, "What is Sexual Orientation?," 7-8.

[27] Díaz-León, "Sexual Orientations: The Desire View," 15.

A person S's sexual orientation is determined by the sex[es] and/or the gender[s] of persons for whom S is disposed to have sexual desires, under the relevant manifesting conditions (and S's own sex and/or gender).[28]

And Díaz-León provides the following analysis of sexual desire:

A sexual desire (for men and/or women) involves the combination of a propositional attitude (of the form "S bears the relation of desiring towards proposition p") plus a disposition to be sexually aroused by, or sexually attracted to, men and/or women.[29]

With Dembroff, Díaz-León endorses a dispositional analysis of sexual orientation. Also with Dembroff, Díaz-León holds that individuals instantiate the property of sexual orientation in virtue of being attracted to individuals with particular sex-features and/or gender-features, but not other types of features. Contra Dembroff, Díaz-León's analysis of orientation is thickly-relational and desire-based.

Note that on Díaz-León's view, sexual desire isn't (merely) a disposition to sexual behavior. This is the case because Díaz-León's account of sexual desire includes a phenomenological element of arousal. For example, suppose that Simone desires to have sex with Dominique. For Díaz-León, this requires that Simone is disposed to experience sexual arousal related to Dominique. That is, Simone's desire to have sex with Dominique includes a disposition to have a certain phenomenological experience. As phenomenological experiences such as arousal aren't dispositions to behavior,[30] Díaz-León would deny that sexual desires are (mere) dispositions to behavior.

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[28] Ibid., 24.

[29] Ibid.

[30] While mental states such as desires and beliefs are often analyzed as dispositions to behaviors, I take it to be fairly uncontroversial that phenomenological experiences don't admit of a similar treatment. Here, a "zombie" argument will be a useful way to show that phenomenological experiences cannot be analyzed as dispositions to behavior. Although heavily-debated, zombie arguments are quite straightforward, so consider: it's metaphysically possible that I have a zombie duplicate (such that my zombie duplicate and I have identical behavioral dispositions but differ with respect to phenomenology, as my zombie duplicate is never the subject of a

I highlight the phenomenological element of Díaz-León's account of desire in order to make sense of the substantivity of the disagreement between Dembroff and Díaz-León. If Díaz-León were to analyze sexual desires as dispositions to sexual behavior, then the disagreement between Dembroff and Díaz-León could be glossed as follows: while Dembroff holds that orientation is a matter of first-order dispositions to sexual behavior, Díaz-León holds that orientation is a matter of second-order dispositions to sexual behavior (that is, dispositions to dispositions to sexual behavior). In that case, there wouldn't be much of a disagreement. However, as Díaz-León holds that sexual desire includes a phenomenological element of sexual arousal, the deflationary gloss of the disagreement between Dembroff and Díaz-León isn't available.[31]

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phenomenological experience); so it's metaphysically possible that two individuals are identical with respect to behavioral dispositions while differing with respect to phenomenology; so phenomenological experiences aren't behavioral dispositions. In case zombies are too exotic, I hope that the reader shares the intuition that individuals can be identical with respect to behavioral dispositions, while differing with respect to phenomenological experience (even if this isn't the case for other mental states, such as desires and beliefs).

[31] Although desires are often analyzed as dispositions to behavior, Díaz-León explicitly rejects such accounts. On this point, Díaz-León appeals to a classical regress argument against the analysis of desires (and other mental states) as dispositions to behavior, claiming, "behaviorism about the mental attempted to define mental states in terms of a subject's *actual* behavior, or a bit more sophisticatedly, in terms of our *dispositions* to behave in certain ways, given certain inputs. But […] we cannot define a mental state M in terms of certain behavior B given circumstances C, because there is no determinate behavior that a subject undergoing M would manifest, given circumstances C, *independently of other mental states*. That is, we cannot explicate a mental state in terms of the connection of that mental state with some inputs (perceptual inputs, for example) and some outputs (behavioral outputs), in the absence of other mental states. We can only formulate conditionals like the following: 'If subject S is in mental state M, and mental states m1, m2, m3... m_n, and there is input X, then S will do A.' The additional mental states are ineliminable," Díaz-León, "Sexual Orientations: The Desire View," 12-3. For another argument against the analysis of desires (and other mental states) as dispositions to behavior, see Galen Strawson's "weather watchers" thought experiment in *Mental Reality, Second Edition* (MIT Press, Hong Kong and United States, 2010), 251-289. Critiques of the analysis of desires as dispositions to behavior notwithstanding, we don't need to stake out a theory of desire in order to make sense of the substantivity of the debate between Dembroff and Díaz-León. Regardless of whether the concept of desire is apt to Díaz-León's theory, what's important is that—contra Dembroff—Díaz-León holds that sexual orientation includes a phenomenological element of arousal. And as discussed in the previous footnote, phenomenological experiences aren't dispositions to behavior.

For the purposes of this paper, I'll focus on Díaz-León's critique of Dembroff's bidimensional dispositionalist analysis of orientation. In particular, Díaz-León argues that—unlike the desire view—bidimensional dispositionalism cannot accurately ascribe heterosexuality and bisexuality to individuals, i.e., bidimensional dispositionalism cannot capture the membership conditions of categories such as *heterosexual* and *bisexual*.

Díaz-León begins her critique by considering Alicia, a female woman, who is sexually aroused by both women and men. Given this feature of Alicia's sexuality, Díaz-León holds that Alicia is bisexual. Díaz-León constructs the case of Alicia such that in the actual world, as well as in nearby possible worlds, Alicia is disposed to have sex exclusively with men. However, Alicia is disposed to have sex with both women and men in distant possible worlds. (In nearby possible worlds, Alicia is in a monogamous relationship with a particular man.) In order to capture the fact that Alicia is bisexual, Díaz-León claims that bidimensional dispositionalism must hold that individuals instantiate the property of sexual orientation in virtue of their dispositions to behavior in both nearby and distant possible worlds.

Next, Díaz-León considers Cary, a male man, who is predominately—indeed, almost exclusively—sexually aroused by women. Given this feature of Cary's sexuality, Díaz-León holds that Cary is heterosexual.[32] Díaz-León imagines the case such that in the actual world, as well as in nearby possible worlds, Cary is disposed to engage in sexual activity exclusively with women. However, in some distant possible worlds, Cary is disposed to have sex with women and men. (In some distant possible worlds, Cary has a more experimental personality.) In order to capture the fact that Cary is heterosexual, Díaz-León claims that bidimensional dispositionalism must hold that individuals instantiate the property of sexual orientation in virtue of their dispositions to behavior in nearby possible worlds, but not in distant possible worlds.

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[32] As will become evident below, Díaz-León's critique of bidimensional dispositionalism relies on intuitions about Alicia and Cary's sexual orientations. That said, Díaz-León defends these intuitions, holding that the ascription of bisexuality to Alicia and heterosexuality to Cary is in accordance with the ordinary usage of the terms 'bisexual' and 'heterosexual'. See Díaz-León, "Sexual Orientations: The Desire View," 10-2.

With these cases at hand, Díaz-León presents the following critique of bidimensional dispositionalism:

> The main worry for bidimensional dispositionalism can be put in the form of a dilemma: If we understand the account loosely enough, then we can count possible worlds where Alicia is not monogamous and has sex with women as being relevant for determining someone's sexual orientation, and then the account would rightly capture the intuition that she is bisexual. But if we take this approach, then there seems to be no way of ruling out possible worlds where Cary feels like experimenting and has sex with some men, so the account could not capture the intuition that Cary is heterosexual. On the other hand, if we understand the relevant manifesting conditions more narrowly, and restrict the possible worlds to those where Cary doesn't feel like experimenting with men, then we should also restrict the possible worlds to those where Alicia is in a monogamous relationship with her male partner, but then Alicia would count as heterosexual, not bisexual. In conclusion, I don't see any way of modifying the account so that it can solve both counterexamples at the same time.[33]

In short, there's no interpretation of bidimensional dispositionalism that ascribes bisexuality to Alicia and heterosexuality to Cary. For this reason, Díaz-León argues that we ought to reject bidimensional dispositionalism.

2.2 The Orientation-First View Generates an Impasse between Dembroff and Díaz-León

I think that Díaz-León has demonstrated that bidimensional dispositionalism cannot capture the membership conditions of categories such as *heterosexual* and *bisexual*. However, Díaz-León's critique of bidimensional dispositionalism is only successful if categories such as *heterosexual* and *bisexual* are orientation categories. Dembroff can reply to Díaz-León by holding that bidimensional dispositionalism captures the membership conditions of real orientation categories

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[33] Ibid., 12.

such as *female-oriented* and *woman-oriented*, notwithstanding its treatment of categories such as *bisexual*.

So, in order to advance the dialectic, we need to know the taxonomy of orientation categories. However, as I demonstrate below, Dembroff and Díaz-León's endorsement of the orientation-first view generates an impasse in their debate. By 'impasse', I refer to a dialectical situation in which (i) thinkers are rational to endorse their own arguments, (ii) which provide at least one thinker reason to deny premises in the argument of their interlocutor, and (iii) in which there's no mutually acceptable way to assess the truth or falsity of the disputed premise(s) in each argument.

As I hope is clear from the discussion in the previous sub-section, both Dembroff and Díaz-León are rational to endorse their own arguments. So, their dialectic has the first feature of an impasse. (Of course, lots of dialectics have this feature.)

Next, Dembroff's endorsement of bidimensional dispositionalism provides them reason to deny the following premise in Díaz-León's critique: *heterosexual* and *bisexual* are orientation categories. This is the case because bidimensional dispositionalism holds that sexual orientation is thinly-relational, such that individuals instantiate the property of sexual orientation in virtue of being attracted to individuals with certain features (irrespective of their own features). So, the dialectic has the second feature of an impasse.

Let's take stock. Díaz-León's critique of bidimensional dispositionalism turns on the truth of the aforementioned premise (that *heterosexual* and *bisexual* are orientation categories), while Dembroff's view requires its denial. (I'll consider this point in more detail in section 2.4.) In order to advance the dialectic, we need a mutually acceptable way to assess the premise.

Here's where Dembroff and Díaz-León's endorsement of the orientation-first view generates an impasse. To begin, notice that the success of an argument for a taxonomy of orientation categories can be *dependent* or *independent* with respect to the truth of disputed beliefs about the nature of sexual orientation. For example, consider the following ways in which I might argue for a taxonomy that includes the category *homosexual*. Here's a very rough argument, the success of

which depends on the truth of a disputed belief about the nature of sexual orientation: the property of sexual orientation is thickly-relational, and individuals instantiate the property of sexual orientation in virtue of their sex-attractions and gender-attractions (but not height-attractions, etc.); the category *homosexual* is consistent with these features of the property of sexual orientation; so we have reason to believe that *homosexual* is an orientation category. The success of this argument depends on the truth of disputed beliefs about the nature of sexual orientation, e.g., that the property of sexual orientation is thickly-relational. In contrast, here's a very rough argument, the success of which doesn't depend on the truth of disputed beliefs about the nature of orientation: we ought to endorse a taxonomy of orientation categories that can be used to explain the oppression of sexual minorities; the category *homosexual* can be used to explain the oppression of sexual minorities; so we have reason include *homosexual* in the taxonomy of orientation categories.

With this difference in mind, suppose that Dembroff were provided with a powerful independent argument (that is, independent with respect to the disputed orientation facts) for a taxonomy that includes the category of homosexuality. Because Dembroff gives beliefs about the nature of orientation epistemic priority relative to beliefs about the taxonomy of orientation categories, if an otherwise compelling argument for a taxonomy fact has the result that orientation isn't thinly-relational, that's sufficient reason for Dembroff to reject the argument. It's not a reason for Dembroff to jettison the belief that sexual orientation is thinly-relational. Likewise, if Díaz-León were provided with a powerful independent argument for a taxonomy that included categories such as *woman-orientated* and *female-orientated*, the orientation-first view would provide Díaz-León with sufficient reason to reject the argument. This is the case because thinly-relational categories (such as *woman-oriented*) are inconsistent with her version of the desire view, and the orientation-first view holds that beliefs about the nature of sexual orientation should have epistemic priority relative to beliefs about the taxonomy of orientation categories. In short, on the orientation-first view, there's no independent argument for a taxonomy fact that supersedes the implications of a theory about the nature of sexual orientation. For this reason, the dialectic between Dembroff and Díaz-León has the third and final feature of an impasse.

2.3 The Taxonomy-First View Can Resolve the Impasse

Above, I argued that the orientation-first view generates an impasse in the debate between Dembroff and Díaz-León. Here, I'll explain how the impasse can be avoided by endorsing the taxonomy-first view.

Recall that the taxonomy-first view holds that beliefs about the taxonomy of orientation categories should have epistemic priority relative to beliefs about the nature of sexual orientation. In dialectical terms, this amounts to the following: an independent argument (that is, independent with respect to the disputed orientation facts) for a taxonomy fact can supersede the implications of a previously accepted theory about the nature of sexual orientation.

With that in mind, let's again suppose that Dembroff were provided with a powerful independent argument for a taxonomy that includes the category of homosexuality. Contra the orientation-first view, on the taxonomy-first view, this argument could provide Dembroff with sufficient reason to revise their belief that sexual orientation is thinly-relational. Likewise, suppose that Díaz-León were provided with a powerful independent argument for a taxonomy that includes categories such as *woman-orientated* and *female-orientated*. On the taxonomy-first view, this argument could provide Díaz-León with sufficient reason to revise her belief that sexual orientation is thickly-relational. Accordingly, the taxonomy-first view has the potential to resolve the impasse between Dembroff and Díaz-León.

2.4 Objection and Reply

Above, I held that Díaz-León's critique of Dembroff's bidimensional dispositionalism turns on the truth of the claim that *heterosexual* and *bisexual* are orientation categories, while Dembroff's account requires its denial. But—the objection holds—Díaz-León can simply run her critique of bidimensional dispositionalism by demonstrating that categories such as *woman-oriented* and *female-oriented* can't be analyzed as dispositions to sexual behavior. That is, if Díaz-León's argument is successful, it more generally demonstrates that sexual orientation categories can't be analyzed as dispositions to sexual behavior.

To begin my response, I'd like to consider the following question: on the behavior-based view, why does it seem that a larger set of possible worlds is relevant to Alicia's orientation than to Cary's orientation? The answer, I think, has to do with the membership conditions of categories such as *heterosexual* and *bisexual*. In many heteropatriarchal milieus, ascribing homosexuality to men is socially significant in ways that differ from the ascription of bisexuality to women. For example, in many heteropatriarchal milieus, bisexuality in women is culturally coded as attractive, while homosexuality in men is stigmatized. I think that this sociological fact explains the asymmetry in the possible worlds that dispositional behavior-based analyses must hold are relevant to ascribing bisexuality to Alicia and heterosexuality to Cary. Given that Dembroff's categories are explicitly engineered to avoid the sorts of heteropatriarchal trappings that generated the aforementioned asymmetry,[34] behavior-based analyses of categories such as *woman-oriented* and *female-oriented* don't seem to run up against similar issues of asymmetrical membership conditions. In that case, Díaz-León's critique of behavior-based analyses of categories such as *heterosexual* and *bisexual* wouldn't apply to behavior-based analyses of engineered categories such as *woman-oriented* and *female-oriented*.

3. Conclusion

Above, I argued for the taxonomy-first view of sexual orientation. That is, I argued that beliefs about the taxonomy of orientation categories ought to have epistemic priority relative to beliefs about the nature of sexual orientation.

Specifically, I hold that the dialectical force of the taxonomy-first view provides reason to endorse the epistemic position. In light of Díaz-León's critique of behavior-based analyses of categories such as *heterosexual* and *bisexual*, the debate between Dembroff and Díaz-León results in an impasse in case there's no mutually acceptable way to assess the truth or falsity of the following claim: the taxonomy of orientation categories includes categories such as *heterosexual* and *bisexual*. Yet, Dembroff and Díaz-León endorse competing accounts of the nature of sexual

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[34] Dembroff, "What is Sexual Orientation?," 3-6.

orientation, which imply different taxonomy facts—namely, Díaz-León's theory implies a taxonomy that includes categories such as *heterosexual* and *bisexual*, while Dembroff's theory implies a taxonomy that includes categories such as *woman-oriented* and *female-oriented*. On the orientation-first view, there's no independent argument (that is, independent with respect to the disputed orientation facts) for a taxonomy of orientation categories that could supersede the implications of a theory of the nature of sexual orientation. Accordingly, on the orientation-first view, the debate between Dembroff and Díaz-León results in an impasse.

Crucially, the impasse can be avoided by finding a mutually acceptable way to assess the truth or falsity of the claim that the taxonomy of orientation categories includes categories such as *heterosexual* and *bisexual*. In contrast to the orientation-first view, on the taxonomy-first view, an independent argument for a taxonomy fact can supersede the implications of a theory of the nature of sexual orientation. If a compelling independent argument for a taxonomy of orientation categories can be produced, then the taxonomy-first view can avoid the impasse—providing a mutually acceptable way to assess the truth or falsity of the aforementioned claim re the inclusion of categories such as *homosexual* and *bisexual* in the taxonomy. Here's opportunity for future research. Without appeal to disputed facts about the nature of sexual orientation, we can work to explicate the taxonomy of sexual orientation categories.

Sexual Orientation Categories

Getting ready for a date, Fran Varian added some lavender to a bath while her partner decided on a packer to wear. Returning home after dinner, rattled by labels that marginalized the couple in straight and not-queer-enough spaces alike, Varian notes: "Behind closed doors we don't need to use their graceless words to make ourselves known."[1] I find something beautiful about this sort of intimacy, enacted around the creation of a private, shared world.

Still, as Varian is undoubtedly aware, certain sexual orientations are publicly approved and normalized, while others are stigmatized. And on account of the social significance of sexual orientation, we have reason to ask: what sexual orientation categories ought we to use? It might be the case, as Esa Díaz-León argues, that gay and lesbian politics ought to use of categories such as *homosexual*, *heterosexual*, and *bisexual*.[2] Or perhaps, as Robin Dembroff argues, in order to avoid trans-exclusion, we ought to use alternative categories such as *female-oriented*, *male-oriented*, *woman-oriented*, and *genderqueer-oriented*.[3]

In this paper, I argue that the normatively important aims of LGBTQ+ social movements provide reason to endorse (what I call) the *TRQ taxonomy* (*thickly-relational queer taxonomy*). I'll spell out the details of the taxonomy in what follows, but—very quickly—the TRQ taxonomy (i) exhaustively includes the categories *asexual*, *heterosexual*, *homosexual*, *bisexual*, and *queer*, (ii) distinguishes between sex attractions and gender attractions, and (iii) provides individuals with authority over whether their orientations are determined by their sex attractions and/or gender attractions.

This paper proceeds as follows. In the first section, I explicate this paper's motivating question, and I provide some desiderata that a taxonomy of orientation categories ought to satisfy. In the second section, I argue that we ought to reject the socially dominant taxonomy of orientation

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[1] Fran Varian, "Daddy Gets the Big Piece of Chicken," in *Gender Outlaws: The Next Generation* eds. Kate Bornstein and S. Bear Bergman (Berkeley, California: Seal Press, 2010), 137-8 and 141.
[2] Esa Díaz-León, "Sexual Orientations: The Desire View," forthcoming in *Feminist Philosophy of Mind* (Oxford, Oxford University Press).
[3] Robin A. Dembroff, "What is Sexual Orientation?," *Philosophers' Imprint* 16 (2016), 22-3.

categories (including a minimally revised version of the taxonomy). In the third section, I outline Dembroff's alterative taxonomy, as well as raise some concerns for their account. And in the fourth section, I explicate and defend the TRQ taxonomy.

1. Taxonomies of Orientation Categories

There are a variety of ways in which a society might distinguish individuals with respect to sexuality: queer or straight, polyamorous or monogamous, kinky or vanilla, submissive or dominant. On my usage, a *taxonomy of orientation categories* marks the fundamental divisions that a society makes with respect to sexuality. For example, a society might primarily distinguish individuals on the basis of whether or not they're attracted to Madonna. Such a society has a taxonomy of orientation categories that exhaustively includes the categories *Madonna-oriented* and *not-Madonna-oriented*. Closer to home, consider a society that primarily distinguishes individuals on the basis of their sex attractions and/or gender attractions as related to an individual's own sex and/or gender. In that case, a society might have the following taxonomy of orientation categories: *heterosexual*, *homosexual*, and *bisexual*. Or, consider a society that primarily distinguishes individuals on the basis of their sex attractions and gender attractions independently of an individual's own sex and gender. In that case, a society might have a taxonomy that includes categories such as *female-oriented*, *male-oriented*, *woman-oriented*, and *genderqueer-oriented*.

As briefly noted in the introduction, it's plausible that certain taxonomies can advance or frustrate the aims of LGBTQ+ social movements. For example, consider the socially dominant taxonomy of orientation categories, which (let's say) exhaustively includes the categories *homosexual* and *heterosexual*. Notice that such a taxonomy doesn't have a place for women or men who are attracted to both women and men. That is, the socially dominant taxonomy contributes to *bisexual erasure*, such that bisexual experience is systematically ignored or misrepresented. On this point, Kristin Esterberg describes the manifestation of bisexual erasure in false beliefs to the effect that bisexual individuals are "fence-sitters: unable to make up their minds" as to whether they're

homosexual or heterosexual.[4] With this example, I aim to call attention to the fact that *a society's taxonomy of sexual orientation categories is normatively significant*. This idea motivates the central question of this paper. What taxonomy of sexual orientation categories ought we to use?

More precisely, what *concepts* of sexual orientation *categories* ought we to use? Following Ásta, I understand categories as *de re* phenomena; in particular, a category is a collection of individuals instantiating a common property.[5] For example, the category *water* is a collection of individuals that instantiate the property of (let's say) H_2O. And, following Haslanger, I understand concepts as "dispositions to be responsive to differences in a particular region of possible worlds."[6] In particular, Haslanger claims:

> [T]he *informational content* of a concept (and/or the meaning of a word) is a partition of logical space that divides possibilities. To *possess* a concept (and/or to grasp a meaning) is to have some cluster of capacities and mechanisms for using that grid of possibilities at some level of resolution, i.e., for making distinction(s), processing and storing the relevant information, answering questions.[7]

For example, an individual possesses a concept of water if and only if they're disposed differently to interact with members and non-members of the category *water*. In this way, individuals that possess a concept of water are disposed to give thirsty terriers H_2O (as opposed to salmon) and to be surprised upon seeing it raining salmon (as opposed to H_2O).

Importantly, as Haslanger claims, concepts can be assessed with respect to the role that they play in coordinated activity: "what we track with our language and our concepts can make life easier by shifting terms of coordination, e.g., 'lunch' once picked out a light meal at any time of day or

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[4] Kristin Esterberg, "The Bisexual Menace Revisited: Or, Shaking Up Social Categories is Hard to Do," in *Introducing the New Sexuality Studies*, eds. Nancy Fischer and Steven Seidman (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 208.

[5] See Ásta, *Categories We Live By: The Construction of Sex, Gender, Race, and Other Social Categories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 1-2.

[6] Haslanger, "How Not to Change the Subject" (forthcoming).

[7] Ibid.

night. Now when we invite a friend for lunch, we convey, with our term [and updated concept], information about the time of the day when we might meet."[8] Broadly, Haslanger's idea is that the updated concept of lunch is preferable inasmuch as it facilitates coordinated activity. In addition to this pragmatic axis of assessment, Haslanger stresses the normative dimension of concept choice: "because what we mean can affect what we do and what there is, [concept choice] can also be (broadly) *moral*, e.g., if the informational content of (legal) 'marriage' excludes same-sex couples, this is morally wrong."[9] The updated concept of marriage is preferable to the earlier concept; it makes viable a normatively improved form of coordinated activity.[10]

Now, there are a variety of categories associated with sexual desire and behavior. For example, as noted above, there's a category that includes all and only individuals who are attracted to Madonna. Yet, there wouldn't be much of an improvement with respect to coordinated activity if individuals came to possess a concept such that they were disposed to differentiate between individuals who are attracted to Madonna and individuals who aren't. In contrast, consider the category that includes all and only women who are attracted to women, or the category that includes all and only individuals who are attracted to women. It's plausible that coordinated activity is well-served by concepts of these categories.

Along these lines, here I endorse an explicitly *ameliorative* approach to concept choice; in particular, I hold that we ought to use concepts of sexual orientation categories that serve the normatively important aims of LGBTQ+ social movements.[11] More precisely, I hold that we ought to use concepts of sexual orientation categories that satisfy the following *ameliorative desiderata*:

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[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Of course, the arrival of gay and lesbian marriage doesn't signal that we've reached an ideal form of coordinated activity with respect to the regulation of relationships. For example, it's plausible that we ought to work to realize a society in which the state isn't involved in marriage. See esp. Clare Chambers, *Against Marriage: An Egalitarian Defence of the Marriage-Free State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 142-170.

[11] For discussion of the ameliorative project, see esp. Haslanger "What Are We Talking About: The Semantics and Politics of Social Kinds" in *Resisting Reality: Social Construction and Social Critique* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 376-9.

(i)   Ascribe sexual orientations to non-cisheterosexual individuals, and

(ii)   Be conducive to the aims of LGBTQ+ social movements.[12]

Regarding ameliorative desideratum (i), an individual is cisheterosexual just in case they're cisgender and more-or-less exclusively attracted to individuals of the "opposite" sex and gender. With Dembroff, let's say that cisgender individuals are individuals whose "genders are the ones assigned to them at birth on the basis of their anatomy."[13] Likewise, transgender individuals are individuals whose genders are different from the ones assigned to them at birth on the basis of their anatomy. (Accordingly, genderqueer and nonbinary individuals are transgender, along with transwomen and transmen.) Next, with the Intersex Society of North America, let's say that intersex individuals are persons "born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male."[14] Non-cisheterosexual individuals, then, include transgender, genderqueer, and intersex individuals, as well as individuals who are attracted to transgender, genderqueer, or intersex individuals. Additionally, asexual individuals, cisgender homosexual individuals, and cisgender bisexual individuals are non-cisheterosexual.

Ameliorative desideratum (ii) holds that we ought to use concepts of sexual orientation categories that are conducive to the aims of LGBTQ+ social movements, which aim legally to protect non-cisheterosexual individuals against discrimination. Additionally, LGBTQ+ social movements make progress by way of interventions in culture and society.[15] For example, consider the

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[12] While desideratum (i) is implied by (ii), I've separated them for dialectical purposes. Also note that these ameliorative desiderata are closely related to those provided by Dembroff, who holds that sexual orientation concepts ought to work against "the presumption that cisheterosexuality is the normatively standard sexual orientation and all queer sexual orientations are normatively deviant" as well as be "conducive for establishing legal and social protections for persons who have queer sexual orientations," Dembroff, "What is Sexual Orientation?," 5. See also Díaz-León, "Sexual Orientations: The Desire View."

[13] Dembroff, "What is Sexual Orientation?," 2. For another definition along these lines, see Talia Mae Bettcher, "Intersexuality, Transgender, and Transsexuality," in The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 2016), 408.

[14] "What is Intersex," Intersex Society of North America, www.isna.org, accessed June 2019.

[15] For discussion of politically motivated cultural change, see esp. Haslanger, "Culture and Critique" *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume XCI* (2017), 153-9, 168-9.

(ongoing) destigmatization of non-cisheterosexualities as well as the (ongoing) establishment and protection of spaces in which non-cisheterosexual individuals can flourish.

Above, I glossed the motivating question of this paper in terms of a normatively-driven choice among competing concepts of sexual orientation categories. And I provided ameliorative desiderata for making such a choice. In the following sections, I'll consider how various taxonomies fare with respect to the desiderata.

2. The Socially Dominant Taxonomy of Sexual Orientation Categories

The dominant taxonomy exhaustively includes the categories *homosexual* and *heterosexual*. As discussed above, this taxonomy contributes to bisexual erasure. And it ought to be rejected. In what follows, I'll consider a minimally revised version of the socially dominant taxonomy, which exhaustively incudes the categories *heterosexual, homosexual*, *bisexual*, and *asexual*.

Beginning with ameliorative desideratum (ii), note that a central aim of LGBTQ+ social movements is to establish legal protections against orientation-based discrimination.[16] Inasmuch as concepts of categories such as *homosexual*, *bisexual*, and *asexual* are useful for tracking orientation-based discrimination, the minimally revised version of the socially dominant is conducive to the aforementioned aim of LGBTQ+ social movements.[17]

In addition to tracking orientation-based discrimination, Díaz-León holds that there's broader political utility in differentiating between members and non-members of categories such as *asexual*, *heterosexual*, *homosexual*, and *bisexual*:

> "[There is a] similarity between those people who identify as male/men and are attracted to other males/men, and those who identify as female/women and are attracted to

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[16] For example, presently, organizations such as the Human Rights Campaign are working to pass the Equality Act, which would establish federal protections against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in the United States.

[17] That said, in the next section, it'll become clear that concepts of categories such as *homosexual* aren't needed to track orientation-based discrimination.

females/women. And I believe that it is politically useful to have concepts that make this similarity salient since this is an important dimension of discrimination that is politically useful to emphasize, to wit, these two communities occupy similar social positions regarding many factors such as cultural representations, access to marriage benefits, housing, healthcare, and so on […] And those who are either male/men and are (only) attracted to female/women, or female/women who are (only) attracted to males/men have some similar privileges."[18]

Along these lines, I think that it's politically important to have concepts such that—in some contexts and for some purposes—we're disposed differently to interact with members and non-members of the category *heterosexual*. In particular, LGBTQ+ social movements have reason to use concepts that enable non-heterosexual individuals to recognize—and organize around—their shared oppression. In part, this is the case because—among other social experiences—the shared oppression of non-heterosexual individuals provides a basis of LGBTQ+ solidarity.[19]

Additionally, consider the role that concepts of asexuality, homosexuality, and bisexuality play in LGBTQ+ social movements. For example, at the risk of sounding like a nostalgic queen, notice that the Mattachine Society's founding document (1951) holds that a central aim of the organization is to advocate for homosexual individuals; in particular:

> While there are undoubtedly individual homosexuals who number many of their own people among their friends, thousands of homosexuals live out their lives bewildered, unhappy, alone—isolated from their own kind and unable to adjust to the dominant culture [… The Mattachine Society will supply] the means for the assistance of our people who are victimized daily as a result of our oppression [… and will] take the actions necessary to elevate [homosexual individuals] from the social ostracism an unsympathetic culture has perpetuated upon them.[20]

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[18] Díaz-León, "Sexual Orientations: The Desire View."

[19] I follow Tommie Shelby on this point regarding the bases of solidarity, see Shelby "Foundations of Black Solidarity: Collective Identity or Common Oppression?," *Ethics* 112 (2002), 259-265.

[20] Mattachine Society, "Mattachine Society Missions and Purposes" in *Radically Gay: Gay Liberation in the Words of its Founder* ed. Will Roscoe (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 131-2.

Surely, *a lot* has changed since the above document was written. Yet, it's still the case that homosexual individuals have distinctive social experiences and political interests. For example, homosexual individuals are disproportionately affected by adoption discrimination, suicide risk, as well as injustices related to the treatment and prevention of HIV and AIDS. Accordingly—like the Mattachine Society—contemporary LGBTQ+ social movements have reason to make use of a concept of homosexuality.

For another example, consider the political utility of the concept of asexuality. Like members of other minority orientations, asexual individuals tend to have common social experiences; on this point, Mark Carrigan claims:

> Although the specific biographical details differ significantly with different individuals […
> there are features] typical of asexual experience: adolescent experience gives rise to a sense
> of difference from a peer group, provoking self-questioning and the assumption of
> pathology (i.e., "I thought there might be something wrong with me") before self-
> clarification is attained through the acquisition of a communal identity.[21]

In the case of asexual individuals, the assumption of pathology is often due to a particular feature of the dominant ideology, referred to as *the sexual assumption*, "which sees sex as a culmination of and perquisite for human flourishing."[22] On account of these sorts of common social experiences, asexual individuals have distinctive political interests, which include the establishment of asexual communities and the elimination of the sexual assumption. LGBTQ+ social movements—which encompass groups working for the benefit of all non-cisheterosexual individuals as well as more specific asexual rights organizations—are in the business of advocating for asexual individuals, and that requires differentiating between members and non-members of the category *asexual*.

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[21] Mark Carrigan, "There's More to Life than Sex? Difference and Commonality within the Asexual Community" in *Sexualities: Identities, Behaviors, and Society*, eds. Michael Kimmel and The Stony Brook Sexualities Research Group (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 342.
[22] Ibid., 345.

In short, LGBTQ+ social movements have reason to differentiate among asexual, homosexual, and bisexual individuals because *the social experiences and political interests of non-cisheterosexual individuals vary along the axes of these orientations*. Accordingly, there's—I think, significant—political utility in concepts of asexuality, homosexuality, and bisexuality.

The above notwithstanding, the minimally revised version of the socially dominant taxonomy fails to satisfy the demands of ameliorative desideratum (i). On this point, Dembroff claims:

> Confusions between sex and gender—especially with regard to sexual orientation—regularly create difficulties for queer, gender-nonconforming, and intersex persons, as well as their partners. How should gender-nonconforming, transgender, or intersex persons (or their partners) describe their sexual orientations? […] The current categories of sexual orientation offer little to no flexibility or clarity for these individuals. For these reasons, the current categories reinforce cisnormativity as well as heteronormativity. That is, because the current categories […] have no place at all for many transgender or intersex individuals (or persons attracted to these individuals), they perpetuate prejudices that sexual orientations and gender identities that do not meet standard binaries of homosexual/heterosexual and cisgender man/cisgender woman are somehow deviant, dysfunctional, or even nonexistent.[23]

Here, Dembroff provides a powerful argument that *thickly-relational* taxonomies fail to ascribe orientations to many non-cisheterosexual individuals—in which thickly-relational taxonomies exhaustively include categories such as *homosexual*, while *thinly-relational* taxonomies exhaustively include categories such as *male-oriented*. With this distinction at hand, I understand Dembroff's argument as follows:

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[23] Dembroff, "What is Sexual Orientation?," 5.

(1) We only ought to endorse a taxonomy if it ascribes orientations to transgender, genderqueer, and intersex individuals, as well as to individuals attracted to transgender, genderqueer, or intersex individuals.[24]

(2) A taxonomy that exhaustively includes thickly-relational categories cannot ascribe orientations to many transgender, genderqueer, and intersex individuals, as well as to many individuals who are attracted to transgender, genderqueer, or intersex individuals.[25]

(3) Therefore, we ought to reject a taxonomy that exhaustively includes thickly-relational categories.[26] (1,2)

And here's Dembroff's reason for endorsing the second premise.

(i) Thickly-relational orientation categories conflate sex attractions and gender attractions, only ascribing orientations to members of the following *attenuated set* of individuals: female women and male men who are exclusively attracted to female women and/or male man.[27]

(ii) Many transgender, genderqueer, and intersex individuals are, e.g., female men, male women, female genderqueer individuals, or intersex men.

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[24] Dembroff, "What is Sexual Orientation?," 5, 19, 24-5.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid. Also, note that outside of contexts in which a strict "one-act rule of homosexuality" is operative, I'll use 'exclusively attracted' to mean more-or-less exclusively attracted. For discussion of the one-act rule of homosexuality, see Kristen Schilt and Laurel Westbrook, "Doing Gender, Doing Heteronormativity: 'Gender Normals', Transgender People, and the Social Maintenance of Heterosexuality," *Gender and Society* (2009), 456-7. Of course, using the notion of *more-or-less exclusively attracted* introduces some vagueness into the membership conditions of orientation categories. I think that this result accurately reflects the nature of sexual orientations. Relatedly, with Elizabeth Barnes, I reject the link between vagueness and metaphysical non-substantivity, see Barnes, *The Minority Body: A Theory of Disability* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 45.

(iii)   Many individuals who are attracted to transgender, genderqueer, or intersex individuals are attracted to, e.g., female men, male women, female genderqueer individuals, or intersex men.

(iv)   A taxonomy that exhaustively includes thickly-relational categories cannot ascribe orientations to some transgender, genderqueer, and intersex individuals (as some transgender, genderqueer, and intersex individuals are not female women or male men). (i, ii)

(v)   A taxonomy that exhaustively includes thickly-relational categories cannot ascribe orientations to some individuals who are attracted to transgender, genderqueer, or intersex individuals (as some individuals who are attracted to transgender, genderqueer, or intersex individuals aren't exclusively attracted to female women or male men). (i, iii)

If we interpret (i) as describing categories of the minimally revised version of the socially dominant taxonomy, then we ought to endorse the premise. For example, consider Josephine, a female woman who is exclusively attracted to female men. Described in thickly-relational terms, Josephine has female-to-female sex attractions and woman-to-man gender attractions. On the minimally revised version of the socially dominant taxonomy, Josephine's orientation isn't heterosexual (as she's not exclusively attracted to male men), homosexual (as she's not exclusively attracted to female women), or bisexual (as she's not exclusively attracted to female women and male men). Instead, as Dembroff explains, such a taxonomy only ascribes orientations to individuals whose sex attractions and gender attractions "line up" according to the standards of cisheterosexuality—i.e., it only ascribes orientations to members of the attenuated set of individuals described in premise (i).[28]

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[28] A defender of the minimally revised version of the socially dominant taxonomy might object to Dembroff's argument by holding either that orientation is entirely determined by sex attractions or that orientation is entirely determined by gender attractions. Dembroff provides a compelling reply each of these objections, "What is Sexual Orientation?," 10-1.

In section four, I'll return to Dembroff's argument against thickly-relational taxonomies. At this point, however, it's clear that the minimally revised version of the socially dominant taxonomy fails to satisfy ameliorative desideratum (i). Accordingly, I reject the taxonomy.

3. Dembroff's Alternative Taxonomy of Sexual Orientation Categories

As noted above, Dembroff endorses a thinly-relational taxonomy of orientation categories. On this point, Dembroff claims that they understand sexual orientation, "*solely in terms of the sex[es] and gender[s] of the persons one is disposed to sexually engage, without reference to the sex or gender of the person so disposed.*"[29] As taxonomies differ with respect to the sex and gender categories that figure into orientation categories, Dembroff makes clear that they endorse theories of sex that include categories such as *intersex*, as well as theories of gender that include categories such as *genderqueer*, *genderfluid*, *agender, non-binary, transfeminine,* and *transmasculine*.[30] Along these lines, Dembroff endorses a taxonomy that includes categories such as *female-oriented, male-oriented, intersex-oriented, woman-oriented, genderqueer-oriented, and man-oriented*. With their account at hand, I move to consider Dembroff's taxonomy with respect to the ameliorative desiderata.

Regarding desideratum (i), Dembroff's taxonomy can ascribe orientations to non-cisheterosexual individuals. For example, from the previous section, consider Josephine, a female woman who is exclusively attracted to female men. On Dembroff's account, Josephine is a member of the sexual orientation categories *female-oriented* and *man-oriented.* Likewise, Josephine's partners are members of the categories *female-oriented* and/or *woman-oriented* (perhaps among others). For

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[29] "What is Sexual Orientation?," 19.

[30] For discussion of non-binary gender, see esp. Dembroff, "Beyond Binary: Genderqueer as Political Gender Kind" (manuscript). With Dembroff, I understand *genderqueer* to include sub-categories such as *genderfluid* and *agender*. The above notwithstanding, Dembroff stresses that their "project does not take a precise stance on which features are the basis of sex and gender categories," and they argue that this is methodologically appropriate, claiming: "more specific theories of sex and gender can be filled into the forthcoming schematic understanding of sexual orientation (and its taxonomy). I purposively build this flexibility into my account in order to construct a concept of sexual orientation (and of its taxonomy) that can be structurally preserved even when the number or understanding of recognized sex and gender categories undergoes shift," "What is Sexual Orientation?," 11.

another example, consider Dylan, an intersex man who is exclusively attracted to female women. On Dembroff's taxonomy, Dylan is *female-oriented* and *woman-oriented*. Here, I agree with Dembroff that their taxonomy is "*capable of recognizing persons outside the gender or sex binary*."[31] That is, Dembroff's taxonomy satisfies ameliorative desideratum (i).

Moving to ameliorative desideratum (ii), Dembroff argues that their alternative taxonomy can be used to establish legal protections for non-cisheterosexual individuals who experience discrimination related to their sexuality. It might seem that we need concepts of categories such as *homosexual* and *bisexual* in order to establish such protections. However, Dembroff provides a compelling argument to the contrary. In particular, Dembroff claims:

> [Categories such as *female-oriented* and *man-oriented* can provide] conceptual tools for lawmakers to secure protections for sexual orientation under pre-existing protections against gender- and sex-discrimination [… Sexual] orientation discrimination can be easily re-described in terms of gender or sex discrimination by holding fixed that multiple individuals share the same sex- or gender attractions, and yet some are discriminated against simply because they have a particular sex or gender in addition to those attractions."[32]

For example, consider Chris, a female man who is exclusively attracted to female women. Using Dembroff's strategy of re-description, Chris is discriminated against as a female man; to be sure, male men aren't discriminated against for being *female-oriented* and *woman-oriented*.

Dembroff's alternative taxonomy ascribes orientations to non-cisheterosexual individuals, and the taxonomy can be used to secure legal protections for individuals who experience discrimination related to their sexuality. That said, I'd like to return to a theme from the previous section: LGBTQ+ social movements have reason to differentiate between members and non-members of categories such as *asexual*, *heterosexual*, *homosexual*, and *bisexual*. While Dembroff explicitly

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[31] Dembroff, "What is Sexual Orientation?," 19.
[32] Ibid., 19-20.

includes the category *asexual* in their taxonomy,[33] they recommend that we eliminate concepts of categories such as *heterosexual*, *homosexual*, and *bisexual*.

At this point, it might seem that individuals who possess concepts of categories such as *female-oriented*, *woman-oriented*, *female*, and *woman* would more-or-less automatically come to possess concepts of categories such as *homosexual*. Yet, if that were the case, Dembroff's claim that we ought to eliminate concepts of categories such as *homosexual* while using concepts of categories such as *female-oriented*, *woman-oriented*, *female*, and *woman* would be self-undermining. But Dembroff's position isn't self-undermining. It makes sense to claim that individuals ought to differentiate between members and non-members of categories such as *female-oriented*, *woman-oriented*, *female*, and *woman* without differentiating between members and non-members of categories such as *heterosexual*, *homosexual*, and *bisexual*.[34]

Indeed, this is precisely what Dembroff recommends. On their alternative taxonomy, "there is no distinction in the sexual orientations of (*e.g.*) a cisgender man and a transgender woman who both are exclusively attracted to women."[35] Dembroff continues: "[t]he statistical divide between cisheterosexuality and queer sexual orientations simply disappears, because these categories disappear, and their members are reorganized into new categories."[36] Additionally, Dembroff embraces the result that a society that uses their taxonomy will see a "dismantling" of the separation between queer and straight communities.[37] On this point, Dembroff and I have a substantive political disagreement. Dembroff holds that the social significance of same-sex and same-gender attractions ought to be dissolved. However—considering the political utility of differentiating between members and non-members of the categories *heterosexual*, *homosexual*, and *bisexual*—I reject such a strategy. At least at this historical moment.

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[33] Ibid., 3 and 19.
[34] Note that this result is implied by Haslanger's account of concepts—in which concepts are individuated by the role they play in our practices, see Haslanger, "How Not to Change the Subject."
[35] Dembroff, "What is Sexual Orientation?," 19.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.

In short, LGBTQ+ social movements have reason to differentiate between members and non-members of the categories *heterosexual*, *homosexual*, and *bisexual*. And this requires concepts of heterosexuality, homosexuality, and bisexuality. Yet, these concepts aren't available on Dembroff's account. So, their alternative taxonomy runs into some issues with respect to ameliorative desideratum (ii).

4. The TRQ Taxonomy of Orientation Categories

At this point, I've provided reason to reject the socially dominant taxonomy as well as Dembroff's alternative taxonomy. So, what taxonomy of orientation categories ought we to use? Here, I argue that we have reason to endorse the *TRQ taxonomy* (*thickly-relational queer taxonomy*), which has the following features:

(a) Exhaustively includes the categories *asexual*, *homosexual*, *heterosexual*, *bisexual*, and *queer*,

(b) Distinguishes between sex attractions and gender attractions, and

(c) Includes an element of interpretation, such that individuals have authority over whether their orientations are determined by their sex attractions and/or gender attractions.

Here, I turn to explicate these features of the TRQ taxonomy. That said, in the interest of space, I'll save some clarificatory work for the examples provided during the discussion of ameliorative desideratum (i).

Regarding (a), the TRQ taxonomy exhaustively includes the orientation categories *asexual*, *homosexual*, *heterosexual*, *bisexual*, and *queer*, which are individuated by their membership conditions. (Note that here I use the term 'queer' to refer to a particular sexual orientation, as opposed to queer sexual identity.)

To begin, on the TRQ taxonomy, asexuality is a distinct sexual orientation.[38] An individual is a member of the category *asexual* just in case their orientation is determined by the absence of significant sexual attractions. To be clear, some asexual individuals have *romantic attractions*, which are often felt in relation to individuals of particular sexes or genders.[39]

Next, an individual is a member of the TRQ category *homosexual* just in case their orientation is determined by male-to-male attractions, man-to-man attractions, male-to-male attractions in combination with man-to-man attractions, female-to-female attractions, woman-to-woman attractions, or female-to-female attractions in combination with woman-to-woman attractions. While I hope that the unity of the TRQ category *homosexual* is evident, the source of its unity can be explicated with the notions of *binary attractions* and *cissexual combinations of attractions*. Binary attractions exclusively involve the binary sex categories *male* and *female* or the binary gender categories *man* and *woman*. For example, female-to-male attractions are binary, as are female-to-female attractions. Next, cissexual combinations of attractions are characterized by their relation to sexuality between cisgender individuals. For example, male-to-male attractions in combination with man-to-man attractions are cissexual, as are male-to-female attractions in combination with man-to-woman attractions. With this theoretical terminology at hand, an individual is a member of the category *homosexual* just in case their orientation is determined by binary same-sex attractions, binary same-gender attractions, or a cissexual combination of same-sex attractions and same-gender attractions.

To a universal being, the TRQ category *homosexual* might seem gerrymandered. And from such a perspective, it is! Yet, binary same-sex attractions, binary same-gender attractions, as well as the cissexual combination of same-sex attractions and same-gender attractions are unified in virtue of the *social meaning* of such attractions. Considering the widespread conflation of sex attractions and gender attractions, it's plausible that the dominant ideology hardly registers a difference between males attracted to males, men attracted to men, and male men attracted to male men. With this sociological point in mind, here I borrow from Dembroff's methodology: "rather than

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[38] On this point, I follow asexual advocacy organizations such as the Asexuality Visibility and Education Network; see the AVEN, asexuality.org, accessed June 2019.
[39] Ibid.

rebuilding the concept of sexual orientation from scratch, I restrict myself to engineering a concept that clarifies and improves upon the *pre-existing* structure of our everyday concept and—on the basis of this clarification and improvement—rebuilds and expands the sexual-orientation taxonomy."[40]

At this point, notice feature (b) of the TRQ taxonomy; that is, the TRQ taxonomy distinguishes between sex attractions and gender attractions. For example, the membership conditions of the category *homosexual* include male-to-male attractions as well as man-to-man attractions, instead of male-man-to-male-man attractions. Additionally, as will become important during discussion of the category *queer*, the TRQ taxonomy also registers non-binary attractions, such as genderfluid-to-man attractions.

Next, an individual is a member of the category *heterosexual* just in case their orientation is determined by binary other-sex attractions, binary other-gender attractions, or a cissexual combination of other-sex attractions and other-gender attractions. For example, if an individual's orientation is determined by female-to-male attractions, they're heterosexual. For another example, an individual is heterosexual if their orientation is determined by male-to-female attractions in combination with man-to-woman attractions.

Moving forward, an individual is a member of the TRQ category *bisexual* just in case their orientation is determined by binary same-sex and other-sex attractions, binary same-gender and other-gender attractions, or a cissexual combination of same-sex and other-sex attractions with same-gender and other-gender attractions. For example, if an individual's orientation is determined by male-to-male and male-to-female attractions, then they're bisexual. For another example, an individual is bisexual if their orientation is determined by female-to-female and female-to-male attractions in combination with woman-to-woman and woman-to-man attractions. Note that the membership conditions of the TRQ category *bisexual* diverge to an extent from those endorsed by some bisexual rights organizations. I'll return to address this point below.

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[40] Dembroff, "What is Sexual Orientation?," 5.

Next, an individual is a member of the TRQ category *queer* just in case their orientation is determined by non-binary sex attractions, non-binary gender attractions, or a non-cissexual combination of sex attractions and gender attractions. For example, if an individual's orientation is determined by woman-to-genderfluid attractions, then she's queer. For another example, an individual is queer if their orientation is determined by female-to-female attractions in combination with man-to-woman attractions.

At this point, I turn to feature (c) of the TRQ taxonomy, which provides individuals with authority over whether their orientations are determined by their sex attractions and/or gender attractions. To be clear, the TRQ taxonomy doesn't endorse the implausible claim that individuals can simply decide what sorts of attractions they have. Neither does the TRQ taxonomy hold that an individual's orientation is determined by mere self-ascription. For example, consider Lea, a female woman who is exclusively attracted to female women. While the TRQ taxonomy provides Lea authority over whether her female-to-female attractions and/or woman-to-woman attractions determine her orientation, she's homosexual in any case. For clarity, this point might be expressed as follows. TRQ homosexuality is a determinable with determines including, e.g., female-to-female attractions in cases in which sex-attractions determine orientation, or woman-to-woman attractions in cases in which gender-attractions determine orientation; within the constraints of Lea's sexual attractions, it's not possible for Lea to instantiate a determinate property such that she's not homosexual.

Regarding feature (c) of the TRQ taxonomy, I'm influenced by Saray Ayala's account of the relation between sexual orientation and interpretation. On Ayala's view, there's "a core affect module consisting of some sort of neurophysiological state of the individual in relation to sexual-affective affects."[41] Yet, the properties at this "raw layer" don't fully determine sexual orientation: "while desires/affects are themselves constituted independently of any interpretation, the selection of some of those desires/affects and their conceptualization as related to the sex and/or gender of someone is an interpretative process necessary for sexual orientation."[42] Along these lines, on the TRQ taxonomy, an individual's sexual orientation is determined either by their sex attractions, or

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[41] Saray Ayala, "Sexual Orientation and Choice," *Journal of Social Ontology* (2016), 6.
[42] Ibid., 5 and 7.

gender attractions, or sex attractions in combination with their gender attractions—depending on how the individual interprets their attractions. (I'll further explicate this feature of the TRQ taxonomy during discussion of some examples below.)

At this point, I turn to consider how the taxonomy fares with respect to the ameliorative desiderata. To begin, I argue that the TRQ taxonomy satisfies desideratum (i). On this point, it's important to return to Dembroff's argument that thickly-relational taxonomies fail to ascribe orientations to non-cisheterosexual individuals. In defense of the TRQ taxonomy, I deny premise (i) in Dembroff's argument, which holds that thickly-relational orientation categories only ascribe orientations to members of the following attenuated set: female women and male men who are exclusively attracted to female women and/or male man.

As discussed above, the socially dominant versions of the categories *heterosexual*, *homosexual*, and *bisexual* cannot ascribe orientations to members of the aforementioned attenuated set. However, the success of Dembroff's critique requires that premise (i) remain true even when it's interpreted as describing the TRQ categories. In what follows, I'll demonstrate that the TRQ taxonomy ascribes orientations to transgender, genderqueer, and intersex individuals, as well as to individuals attracted to transgender, genderqueer, or intersex individuals.

Here, things get complicated. Part of the appeal of the TRQ taxonomy is that it provides individuals some authority over their orientations. And individuals—especially transgender, genderqueer, and intersex individuals, as well as their partners—navigate sex, gender, and sexuality in ways that aren't always (ahem) straightforward.

To begin, the TRQ taxonomy can ascribe orientations to genderqueer individuals and their partners. For example, consider Elaine, a female woman who's been exclusively attracted to female women for most of her life. In the past few years, Elaine developed enduring attractions to some genderqueer females. Reflecting on this change in her sexual attractions, Elaine might reason as follows: "My interest in females is more important to my sexual orientation than any of my gender hang-ups. After all, I might have been attracted to some female men if I hadn't been raised in a culture that places so much significance on gender." Or, Elaine might reason: "While I enjoy

certain features of female bodies, I'm also attracted to some features of genderqueer gender presentation. That said, homosexuality is important to my self-conception, and I don't want to give it up." In either case, Elaine's interpreted her attractions in such a way that her orientation is determined by her female-to-female attractions, and she's homosexual.

But these aren't the only interpretative options available to Elaine. For example, Elaine might reason as follows: "I'm attracted to individuals on account of their gender features. Being a lesbian is really important to me, but I don't need to be homosexual in order to be a lesbian. After all, I know some heterosexual trans men who are part of the lesbian community.[43] So, I'd like my orientation to reflect my sexual phenomenology." Here, Elaine interprets her attractions in such a way that her woman-to-woman and woman-to-genderqueer attractions play a role in determining her orientation. In this case, her orientation is queer.

The TRQ taxonomy can also ascribe orientations to transwomen, transmen, intersex individuals, as well as their partners. For example, recall Chris, a female man who is exclusively attracted to female women. On the TRQ Taxonomy, Chris might be heterosexual, homosexual, or queer—depending on how he interprets his attractions. Specifically, Chris is heterosexual in case he engages in an interpretation such that his orientation is determined by his gender attractions. Or, Chris is homosexual if it's the case that his orientation is determined by his sex attractions. Alternatively, Chris might interpret his attractions such that his female-to-female and man-to-woman attractions matter to his orientation; in that case, his orientation is queer.

Next, recall Dylan, an intersex man who is exclusively attracted to female women. On the TRQ taxonomy, if Dylan engages in an interpretation such that his man-to-woman attractions determine his orientation, then he's heterosexual. Alternatively, it might be the case that Dylan's sex attractions matter to his orientation; in that case, Dylan has a queer orientation.

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[43] Continue inner dialogue: "Plus, I read that interesting paper on the topic by Gayle Rubin, "Of Catamites and Kings: Reflections on Butch, Gender, and Boundaries" in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, 476-8.

Importantly, orientation ascriptions are sensitive to the more general concept of sexual orientation as well as features of the contexts in which orientation ascriptions take place. On this point, I'm inclined to think that the concept of sexual orientation ought to allow that orientation isn't a "deep" feature of the self that necessarily remains constant across contexts and personal histories.[44] For example, in contexts in which Elaine is attempting to make her experiences intelligible to some straight relatives, Elaine might claim homosexuality. Yet, in communicating her sexual desires to members of a local queer community, Elaine might engage in an interpretation such that her orientation is queer. There's a wealth of complexity to be explored here. And while the above discussion isn't meant to be comprehensive, I aim to have demonstrated that the TRQ taxonomy ascribes orientations to transgender, genderqueer, and intersex individuals, as well as to individuals attracted to transgender, genderqueer, or intersex individuals. Accordingly, I hold that the TRQ taxonomy satisfies ameliorative constraint (i).

Regarding ameliorative constraint (ii), I hold that the TRQ taxonomy is conducive to the aims of LGBTQ+ social movements. Alongside the previously considered taxonomies, the TRQ taxonomy can be used—perhaps in concert with concepts of sex and gender categories—to establish protections against discrimination related to sexuality. Additionally, I hold that the TRQ taxonomy has political utility inasmuch as the social experiences and political interests of non-cisheterosexual individuals vary along the axes of its categories.

On this point, I'll return to the TRQ taxonomy's interpretation of the category *bisexual*. As noted above, the membership conditions of TRQ bisexuality diverge to an extent from those endorsed by some bisexual rights groups. For example, the Bisexual Resource Center holds that an individual is bisexual just in case they have *non-monosexual* attractions, i.e., attractions to more than a single sex and/or gender.[45] While I acknowledge the significance of disagreeing with organizations such as the Bisexual Resource Center, it's also important to highlight the fact that the non-monosexual interpretation of bisexuality isn't universally accepted within LGBTQ+

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[44] Here, I'm influenced by Gayle Rubin's discussion of "sexual essentialism" in their canonical "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality" in *Deviations: A Gayle Rubin Reader* (Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2011), 147-8.

[45] "Bisexuality101: Labels," Bisexual Resource Center, biresource.org, accessed June 2019.

cultures, and—more to the point—it faces some issues. Drawing from personal experience in LGBTQ+ communities, I'll note that some non-monosexual individuals (such as individuals attracted to women and non-binary individuals) aren't self-identified bisexuals. Indeed, the Bisexual Resource Center acknowledges that the non-monosexual interpretation of the category includes some individuals who don't identify as bisexual, and the organization addresses this issue by distinguishing between "personal labels" and "political labels."[46] While I agree with the Bisexual Resource Center that we don't have complete authority over our inclusion in sexual orientation categories, their defense of the non-monosexual interpretation of bisexuality pushes the question back. Why endorse some particular membership conditions over others?

Earlier, I argued in favor of the political utility of orientation concepts that track normatively significant divisions in the social experiences and political interests of non-cisheterosexual individuals. Along these lines, LGBTQ+ social movements have reason to avoid treating all non-monosexual individuals as members of a single orientation category. This is the case because there's a normatively significant division—cutting across the division between monosexual and non-monosexual individuals—in the social experiences and political interests of members and non-members of the orientation category *queer*.

Members of the orientation category *queer* are systematically, negatively affected by *cisnormativity*. Broadly, cisnormativity is an aspect of the dominant ideology which holds that an individual's gender, as either a man or a woman, is determined by their sex assigned at birth, as either male or female. On this point, Susan Stryker describes how cisnormativity "tries to reduce the wide range of livable body types to two and *only* two genders […] with both genders being based on our beliefs about the meaning of biological sex."[47] For example, cisnormativity partly explains the prevalence of medically unnecessary "genital normalizing" surgeries on intersex children, as well as patterns of violence that target transgender individuals.[48] In short, cisnormativity is fundamental to oppressive gender structures.

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[46] Ibid.

[47] Susan Stryker, *Transgender History: The Roots of Today's Revolution* (New York, NY: Seal Press, 2017), 17.

[48] Note that the cisnormative assumption that an individual's sex ought to "line up" with their gender is rejected by intersex rights organizations claiming that intersex children can be assigned

Regarding the relation between cisnormativity and the well-being of members of the category *queer*, consider the *stigmatization of the sexuality of transgender individuals as well as individuals who are attracted to transgender individuals*.[49] On this point, Julia Serano describes the stigmatization of the sexuality of trans-attracted individuals:

[T]rans people and bodies are highly stigmatized throughout society. This stigmatization inflicts shame on those of us who are trans—a shame that many of us work hard to overcome. But this shame also affects people who find us attractive—not in the same way, nor to the same extent, but it does affect them. Rather than seeing their attraction toward us as "normal" and "healthy," society teaches them to view it as a "fetish." This shame encourages them to keep their attraction secret—this applies to both cis people who self-identify as "admirers," "fetishists," or "chasers" and purposefully seek out trans partners, as well as to those cis people who are surprised to find out that the person they are attracted to, or dating, or have fallen in love with, is trans and who subsequently hides that info (and sometimes even their partner's existence) from friends and family.[50]

Here, Serano describes how stigma unjustly renders (what are often) normatively unproblematic sexual attractions a source of distress.[51] In turn, this unjustly affects the well-being of transgender

a gender without undergoing "genital normalizing" surgeries. For example, see "What Does ISNA Recommend for Children with Intersex?," Intersex Society of North America, www.isna.org, accessed June 2019. For information on the prevalence of transphobic violence, see esp. James, S. E., Herman, J. L., Rankin, S., Keisling, M., Mottet, L., and Anafi, M., *Executive Summary of the Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey* (Washington, DC: National Center for Transgender Equality, 2016).

[49] Of course, homosexual and bisexual sexualities are also stigmatized. Yet, this is due to heteronormativity, as opposed to cisnormativity. On account of this etiological difference, the political interests of homosexual and bisexual individuals diverge from those of queer oriented individuals. Additionally, while homosexual, bisexual, and queer sexuality are all stigmatized, the manner and degree of stigmatization varies across these orientations. This will become more apparent in light of the discussion below.

[50] Julia Serano, *Outspoken: A Decade of Transgender Activism and Trans Feminism* (Oakland, CA: Switch Hitter Press, 2016)*,* 207-8.

[51] I add the parenthetical qualification because some individuals fetishize transgender individuals. And, drawing from Robin Zheng's work on racial fetishes, it's normatively problematic to fetishize transgender individuals in case it has the effect of making transgender individuals feel

individuals, adding undue difficulty to the process of developing and sustaining healthy sexual and romantic relationships.[52]

An especially problematic aspect of the relation between cisnormativity and the well-being of members of the orientation category *queer* is the stigmatization of the sexuality of transgender individuals. In particular, cisnormative ideology represents transgender identity as resulting from a normatively deviant sexuality. On this point, Talia Mae Bettcher notes that it's common for cisnormative ideology to "construe transsexuality in terms of sexual desire [… and] to reduce cross-gender identification to a kind of sexual fetish."[53] This aspect of cisnormativity partly explains oppressive phenomena including accusations that transwomen are sexually deceptive homosexual men, as well as testimonial injustices in medical contexts, especially those related to "autogynephilic" diagnoses of gender dysphoria.[54]

Perhaps it seems that the stigmatization of the sexuality of transgender individuals ought to be explained as gender-based oppression, as opposed to sexuality-based oppression. While I acknowledge that it's often politically important to prioritize certain axes of oppression over others, we ought to reject the aforementioned explanatory strategy. In order to demonstrate this point, consider the fact that police brutality can't be explained as either exclusively racist or exclusively classist, that is, unless—quite implausibly—racism could be reduced to classism. By analogy, the stigmatization of transgender sexuality can't satisfactorily be explained through the single frame of gender. Here, we also need to talk about sexuality-based oppression.

"*depersonalized,*" "*homogenized,*" or "*otherized.*" See Robin Zheng, "Why Yellow Fever Isn't Flattering: A Case Against Racial Fetishes," *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* (2016), 407-8.

[52] See Dembroff, "What is Sexual Orientation?," 11. Also, for information on the prevalence of discriminatory dating preferences, see Karen L. Blair and Rhea Ashley Hoskin, "Transgender Exclusion from the World of Dating: Patterns of Acceptance and Rejection of Hypothetical Trans Dating Partners as a Function of Sexual and Gender Identity," *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* (2019).

[53] Talia Mae Bettcher, "Feminist Perspectives on Trans Issues," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 2014).

[54] On these points, see respectively Talia Mae Bettcher, "Evil Deceivers and Make-Believers: On Transphobic Violence and the Politics of Illusion," *Hypatia* (2007), 46-50, and Charles Moser, "Autogynephilia in Women," *Journal of Homosexuality* (2009), 544-5.

Because individuals with queer orientations share social experiences and political interests—especially relating to the cisnormative stigmatization of their sexuality—LGBTQ+ social movements have reason to differentiate between members and non-members of the orientation category *queer*. With this point at hand, I hold that the TRQ taxonomy provides concepts that are conducive to the aims of LGBTQ+ social movements. Additionally, as argued above, the TRQ taxonomy ascribes orientations to transgender, genderqueer, and intersex individuals, as well as to individuals attracted to transgender, genderqueer, or intersex individuals. For these ameliorative reasons, I endorse the TRQ taxonomy.

5. Conclusion

Normatively speaking, a society's taxonomy of orientation categories is significant. The socially dominant taxonomy is somewhat conducive to queer politics, but it unjustly excludes many non-cisheterosexual individuals. In contrast, taxonomies with categories such as *female-oriented* and *man-oriented* avoid unjust exclusion, but I worry about the political upshots of such categories.

Ultimately, I hope to have developed an inclusive taxonomy that is conducive to the aims of LGBTQ+ social movements. That said, I stress that I do not aim to legislate, only to explicate conceptual resources. Like other social categories, sexual orientation categories are essentially negotiable. Still, this much is fixed: "Our categories are important. We cannot organize a social life, a political movement, or our individual identities and desires without them."[55]

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[55] Rubin, "Of Catamites and Kings: Reflections on Butch, Gender, and Boundaries," 479.

Conclusion: "Yas Kween?"

Although categories related to sexual orientation and identity have mainstream, straight cultural origins, it's crucial that LGBTQ+ cultures exercise authority over these categories. This dissertation joins the long-stranding project of queer people collectively shaping categories that matter to our self-expression, political standing, well-being, and existence.

With this in mind, I conclude by noting a risk to such LGBTQ+ cultural authority. The more traditional evils are cisnormativity and heteronormativity, ideologies that sustain structures oppressive to LGBTQ+ individuals. Yet, there's a more recent culprit. It greets us with charm, often bedecked in rainbows. This is the threat of *pinkwashing*: the capitalist expropriation of LGBTQ+ culture and identity.

An especially conspicuous instance of pinkwashing is the corporatization of LGBTQ+ pride. For example, NYC Pride 2019 found a wealth of corporate interest. Reaching out to potential sponsors, the organization notes that "sponsorship's [sic] are a great way to support NYC Pride while building a strong LGBTQIA+ presence for your brand."[1] In total, one-hundred and sixty corporations purchased entry into the parade. Their plastic branded merchandise littered the streets. And their "support" pushed grassroots advocacy groups towards the back of the parade.[2]

I acknowledge that the issues here are complicated. Corporate representations are powerful, and it isn't cheap hosting millions of people at an event such as NYC Pride 2019. Still, it's evident that the radical potential of pride is frustrated by capitalist influence, which some factions of the LGBTQ+ social movement resist. For example, with the Reclaim Pride Coalition, over 45,000 queers and allies marched in support of values that—I believe—represent the spirit of queer liberation. Here's an excerpt from the Reclaim Pride Coalition's strikingly concise and unapologetic manifesto:

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[1] See "2019 Partners," nycpride.org, accessed July 2019.
[2] Corey Kilgannon, "'Clash of Values': Why a Boycott is Brewing Over Pride Celebrations," nytimes.com, accessed July 2019.

We March in our communities' tradition of resistance against police, state, and societal oppression, a tradition that is epitomized and symbolized by the 1969 Stonewall Rebellion.

We March against the exploitation of our communities for profit and against corporate and state pinkwashing, as displayed in Pride celebrations worldwide, including the NYC Pride Parade […]

We March for an end to individual and institutional expressions of hate and violence as well as government policies that deny us our rights and our very lives, from the NYPD to ICE, from the prison industrial complex to state repression worldwide […]

We March against domestic and global neoliberalism and the ascendance of the far right, against poverty and economic inequality, against U.S. military aggression, and against the threat that is climate change […]

We March to celebrate our communities and history, in solidarity with other oppressed groups, and to demand social and economic justice worldwide—we March for Liberation!

Nothing nearly as radical is invoked by NYC Pride 2019. And it's remarkably unlikely that an organization could gain the level of corporate sponsorship secured by NYC Pride 2019 while unapologetically resisting the intersecting oppressions cited by the Reclaim Pride Coalition.

In short, capitalist expropriation threatens to *trivialize* queer identity. Capitalism is in the business of selling stuff. And what better way to market rainbow trimmed tank tops, rainbow packaged vodka, and rainbow embellished unicorn pool floats than inculcating the idea that purchasing these commodities is an indication of queerness. While it might be fun to discuss American Apparel's characteristically post-ironic "Everyone's Gay" t-shirts, it'll be more instructive to return to some of our roots. Queer identity has origins in a straight cultural slur, but it was reclaimed in the wave of LGBTQ+ activism occasioned by public (non-)response at the height of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. A pamphlet distributed at NYC Pride in 1990, "Queers Read This," defends the reappropriation of queerness:

[W]e've chosen to call ourselves queer. Using 'queer' is a way of reminding us how we are perceived by the rest of the world. It's a way of telling ourselves we don't have to be witty and charming people who keep our lives discreet and marginalized in the straight world […] And when spoken to other gays and lesbians it's a way of suggesting we close ranks, and forget (temporarily) our individual differences because we face a more insidious common enemy. Yeah, QUEER can be a rough word but it is also a sly and ironic weapon we can steal from the homophobe's hands and use against him.[3]

With the anonymous queers who wrote this passage, I hold that queerness—in the broadest sense of the identity—is about resisting the dominance of straight culture: "It means everyday fighting oppression."[4] Queer identity isn't all about delightfully catty rejoinders. It isn't all about dazzle. It isn't all about "yas kween." But these are precisely the elements of queerness centralized in the capitalist expropriation of the identity!

In order to understand why pinkwashing highlights these particular facets of queerness, bell hooks' critique of *Paris Is Burning* is as relevant as ever. bell hooks demonstrates that the documentary glosses the house-ballroom *practices* of marginalized queer persons of color as mere *spectacles* in order to pander to a straight, white consumerist standpoint:

[T]he film's focus on pageantry takes the ritual of the black drag ball and makes it spectacle. Ritual is that ceremonial act that carries with it meaning and significance beyond what appears, while spectacle functions primarily as entertaining dramatic display […] But it is this current trend in producing colorful ethnicity for the white consumer appetite that makes it possible for blackness to be commodified in unprecedented ways.[5]

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[3] "Queers Read This," available at the Queer Zine Archive Project, www.qzap.org, accessed July 2019.
[4] Ibid.
[5] bell hooks, "Is Paris Burning?" in *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1992), 150, 153-4.

Of course, I recognize that queer people engage in spectacular displays. And, speaking personally, I take delight in flourishes of glitter nail polish and fierce vogue femme performances. Yet, capitalist expropriation threatens to trivialize queerness by emptying LGBTQ+ cultural practices of their normative significance. Queerness figures into practices that strengthen bonds of solidarity, mitigate the effects of stigma, and explore gender and sexuality. Queerness matters to queer people. It matters in so many compelling, life-affirming ways. Queer people created queerness, and we continue to sustain its radical potential. Queerness belongs to us.