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CONSTRUCTING DEFININTIONS OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION IN RESEARCH AND THEORY

by

DALEANA PHILLIPS

Under the Direction of Denise Donnelly, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

Definitions of sexual orientation are reflections of theoretical positions within the essentialist vs. social constructionist debate. A cognitive sociological approach to analyzing the positions within this debate allows theorists and researchers to be aware of three distinct theoretical positions or thought communities: natural kinds thought community, social kinds thought community, and empty kinds thought community. Standard content analysis and grounded theory methods are used to analyze the principles, strategies, and practices each thought community uses to mark group membership into various sexual categories. The analysis reveals that each theoretical perspective is marking group membership differently.

INDEX WORDS: Sexual orientation, Sexual politics, Social construction, Essentialism, Cognitive sociology, Queer theory, Post-structuralism, Natural kinds, Social kinds, Empty kinds

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DALEANA PHILLIPS

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Sociological Problem

Definitions and classifications of sexual orientation in research and theory are widely debated sociological issues with roots in the branch of philosophy known as metaphysics. Harry Kienzle (1970) argues "…to begin at the beginning, metaphysics is the 'inquiry in the nature of ultimate reality' (Castell, 1943:1-2); it involves both a theory of being, ontology, and a theory of knowledge, epistemology" (414). Ontological inquiry examines basic categories and relationships of being and what types of entities exist. Epistemological inquiry examines the nature and origin of knowledge. Epistemologists are concerned with the justification processes for what we take to be knowledge. Epistemological classifications in sexual orientation (such as heterosexual, homosexual and bisexual) are often taken for granted and assumed to have people that fit into them[1]. The epistemological question regarding sexual orientation is: how can we determine which people fit into each of these categories? Edward Stein (1999) argues, "the metaphysical question is concerned with whether these assumptions are right: are these categories natural human kinds, in other words, are there scientific laws that explain how people are sorted into these categories" (207)? These issues are central to untangling or clarifying the deep rooted problems surrounding definitions of sexual orientation.

Examining what types of entities exist and their characteristic features is an ontological problem that is encompassed by the philosophical study of metaphysics. The metaphysical arguments between social constructionists/essentialists and nominalists/realists, in particular, have been important to how researchers and academic writers define and classify sexual orientation. The debate between social constructionism

[1] These epistemological classifications are assumed to have people to fit the categories in a natural or biological way and in a social or human labeling way.

and essentialism seeks to discover if sexual orientations are of a social nature (socially constructed) or whether they are governed by the laws of nature (essential). The debate between realism and nominalism regarding sexual orientation is concerned with whether sexual orientations are "real" categories (realism) or not "real"/empty categories (nominalism). Debates over the definitions and classifications of sexual orientations are unsettled matters. Judith Butler (2004) argues "…for practical and political reasons, there is no value to be derived in silencing disputes. The questions are: how best to have them… [and] how most productively to stage them…" (176)? The application of a cognitive sociological perspective provides a useful framework for analyzing the various types of definitions and classifications of sexual orientation without seeking out an epistemic truth or resolution to the debates (Karl Mannheim 1921: 84).

Cognitive sociology provides a theoretical approach that is neither culturally individualistic nor culturally universalistic in its scope. Eviatar Zerubavel (1997) explains that when approaching cognition people think on three different levels: as individuals, as social beings, and as human beings (5). Cultural individualism is concerned with the first level of analysis or how people think individually, whereas cultural universalism is concerned with how people think as human beings. Zerubavel argues,

> Each, therefore, is limited in its scope. In addressing the middle level, which covers the entire range between thinking as an individual and as a human being (thereby including, for example, thinking as a lawyer, as a German, as a baby boomer, as a Catholic, and as a radical feminist), cognitive sociology thus helps avoid the reductionistic tendencies often associated with either of those two extremes (6).

A cognitive sociological framework for analyzing the definitions and classifications of sexual orientation is useful because it emphasizes the collective and social nature of each theoretical perspective.

Analyzing definitions of sexual orientation are necessary because they are often used to position the theorist/researcher on a particular side of the social constructionist/essentialist and realist/nominalist debates. These two debates are concerned with whether or not sexual orientations are metaphysically: natural, social, or empty kinds. The debate about kinds[2] is fundamental to research because the definitions of sexual orientation being used are largely defined by the researcher's "membership" within a particular thought community or the world view the researcher is promoting. Zerubavel points out that our society is characterized by cognitive diversity or "cognitive pluralism." This is a reason why people sometimes perceive things differently from others within a particular thought community.

Zerubavel explains that thought communities represent mental communities that influence the thoughts and experiences of groups of individuals. Mannheim (1921) argues that individuals largely think in the same terms as the members inside of their groups. "He speaks the language of his group; he thinks in the manner in which his group thinks. He finds at his disposal only certain words and their meaning" (3). Appropriation of the collective nature of these thought communities are allowable because, as Mannheim

[2] Kinds, meaning a way of being sorted into a group that is either natural: governed by the laws of nature, social: labeled only by the virtue of human intention, or empty: meaning that there is no such object (person/place/ or thing) that could fit into this category. This will be discussed in depth later in the paper. This brief definition is sufficient for understanding its use in this context.

suggests, these groups have developed particular "styles of thought" and "series of responses" to the stance of their positions (3).

Organizing theoretical positions or perspectives of sexuality theorists and researchers into the framework of thought communities, is a cognitive sociological move that emphasizes the social nature of group thought. There are three distinct thought communities that appear to be debating the classifications and definitions of the same thing, sexual orientations; however they are participating in three separate debates. The natural kinds thought community shares the idea that sexual orientations are inherent or biologically innate. Stein states that Plato and Aristotle explained the significance of natural kinds with the metaphor that they "are the groups that enable us to 'cut nature at its joints.' Here the idea is that natural kinds divide nature into the groups that provide its underlying structure, the way bones give bodies their underlying structure" (78). If definitions for sexual orientation are organized with the assumption that they are natural kinds, then they assume that there is something deep or 'biological' about the origin of sexuality.[3]

The social and empty kinds thought communities are often "lumped" together to form, "the social constructionist position." This is problematic because essentialists or members from the natural kinds thought communities are debating against a perceived monolithic social constructionist entity, when they are really debating against two different socially based perspectives. The social kinds thought community argues that

---

[3] Natural kinds do not need to be biological i.e. gold atomic #79, but in the context of sexual orientation biological is appropriate. Gold is a natural kind in virtue of essence because 'all' things with the atomic #79 are gold. Sexual orientation could possibly be a natural kind in a biological sense and not necessarily in the sense of being an essence. In fact, many essentialists do not think sexual orientation is essential based on essence, but rather on a biological basis, which will be discussed later in the paper in the social constructionist argument from the simplicity of essentialism.

sexual orientations organize people into categorizations by virtue of human labeling and/or social forces; whereas the empty kinds thought community contests the very existence of people who fit into these sexual categories.

It is important to acknowledge the epistemological and metaphysical currents underlying the study of sexual orientation because these debates often result in a thought community talking amongst itself or thought communities talking past each other. Mannheim points out that "intellectual antagonisms" often result from people operating under completely different outlooks with completely different mental structures (280). Mannheim argues,

> The sociology of knowledge seeks to overcome the 'talking past one another' of the various antagonists by taking as its explicit theme of investigation the uncovering of the sources of the partial disagreements which would never come to the attention of the disputants because of their preoccupation with the subject-matter that is the immediate issue of the debate (281).

Mannheim's analysis of how people overlook underlying issues is important because sociologists are often accused of "side stepping" or avoiding real arguments. Mannheim argues that when there is a "fundamental misunderstanding" it is necessary to address the differences in the thought communities' perspectives (281). Addressing the differences in the thought communities means setting aside the direct subject matter and looking at the framework or underlying points of contention.

The objective of this research is to conceptually and descriptively analyze current definitions and classifications of sexual orientation in academic journal articles pertaining to the natural and social sciences from a cognitive sociological perspective. The purpose of this research project is to identify how natural, social, and empty kinds thought communities are classifying/defining sexual orientations in their work and to investigate

how these definitions/classifications are functioning within these debates. This project is sociologically important because the definitions in research currently published reveal the ways in which people are conceptualizing sexual orientation and structuring the world. The implications of these structures are tied to politics, social policies, legal issues, and ethics. Conceptual and descriptive analysis of these definitions is relevant to many debates occurring in the field of sexuality.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Introduction

The debates over how to define and classify sexual orientation is largely being represented as the debate between essentialists and social constructionists. Viewing the debate from this general position is problematic because it fails to capture the underlying debate between realism/nominalism and often lacks a common ground or compatible definition from which to argue. Mannheim urges researchers to untangle debates in order to get to the primary issues. "Going behind the assertions of the opponents and disregarding the actual arguments is legitimate in certain cases, namely, wherever, because of the absence of a common basis of thought, there is no common problem" (281). A comprehensive discussion of past debates in these areas of philosophy and sociology are necessary to understand all the complexities and implications that various theoretical definitions entail. The discussion of this debate is intended to help clarify some of the issues surrounding sexual orientation, locate productive fields for debate, and discuss how these issues effect social policy. The theoretical analysis is divided into six sections:

- Arguments for Essentialism
- Social Construction
- Arguments for Social Construction
- Nature vs. Nurture
- The Essentialist vs. Social Constructionist Debate
- Thought Communities

Arguments for Essentialism

In the essentialist vs. constructionist debate, the essentialist position holds that sexual orientations are natural kinds, whereas the social constructionist position claims that they are either social or empty kinds. Essentialists and social constructionists are predominantly arguing over whether or not sexual orientations function according to scientific laws and explanations. Stein argues that "understanding this debate is a necessary precondition for answering metaphysical, scientific, and ethical questions about sexual orientation" (114). In order to clarify the debate between essentialism and social construction, as well as other internal debates, Stein breaks the two sides down and individually analyzes the arguments that are being posed. Breaking down these arguments is important because it provides information and criteria for how each thought community is conceptualizing and/or classifying people based on sexual characteristics.

In Stein's analysis of essentialist arguments, he points out that there are three main arguments that essentialists use to claim that something is a natural kind: argument from involuntariness, argument from cultural universality, and the argument from ubiquity of sex drive. The argument from involuntariness tries to establish the proof of essentialism by showing that all people across different cultures view their sexual orientation as not being a choice or determined. This argument refers to people that say they were born hetero/homosexual and that it was not a choice and will not change. Stein

argues that if there were some genetic factor found in these people then sexual orientation would be a natural kind, but not by them simply stating that this is the case. Stein argues, "People are not reliable at discovering the source of something as complex as their own sexual disposition simply through introspection. Just because you think that your sexual orientation was not a choice…does not mean that it is so" (111). Stein says that it is a mistake to make generalizations about what some people say in one culture and to apply it to another culture. Whether or not sexual orientation is determined or a choice is not a settled matter in the United States, as it is probably not in various other cultures. The argument from involuntariness is not a good argument because it makes such broad generalizations about a limited amount of human introspections and does not prove that sexual orientations are natural kinds.

The argument from cultural universality says that if sexual orientations are not natural kinds, then it must just be a coincidence that there have been such a limited amount of sexual expressions in various cultures. Essentialists argue that the odds of various past and present cultures with people that desire the same-sex being a coincidence are too enormous. Steven Epstein (1987) argues, "Each society seems to have a limited range of potential storylines for its sexual scripts—and constructionists have surprisingly little to say about how that limiting process takes place" (260). Stein argues that the reason people are able to group people so broadly in this way is because they are using the behavioralist perspectives and definitions of sexual orientation.

Behavioralist definitions tend to either incorrectly group people into a category of sexual orientation or to leave them out completely, which is why definitions become so important to theories of sexuality and sexual orientation. Behavioralist definitions focus

on a particular behavior and categorize a person into a group based on that behavior. In this instance, a person is a homosexual if he or she engages in sexual acts with somebody else of the same-sex. This definition could be problematic because it defines people, such as male prisoners, as homosexuals even though they may desire women and only be engaging in same-sex behavior out of availability. This definition also categorizes lesbians as heterosexual, when they may be having sex with men for procreative purposes. It also makes it necessary for a person to have had sex in order to have a sexual orientation and does not include people who may desire the same-sex but who engage in sexual activity with the opposite sex. Stein argues that showing sexual orientation in behavioralist terms does not prove that sexual orientations are natural kinds.

The final argument is the argument from the ubiquity of sex drive. This argument attempts to place the 'drive' to have sex with the 'drive' to eat, sleep, or any other biological based activity. Stein argues that even if the drive to have sex does turn out to be biological, this does not entail that sexual orientations are natural kinds. "This does not in anyway establish that sexual orientation is a natural human kind anymore than it establishes that being attracted primarily to people with red hair is a natural kind" (114). Stein argues that scientists who claim that biologically based sex drives results in sexual orientations being essential are missing the point. Stein argues that the important point being overlooked is that the issue is not about whether or not the sex drive is biological, rather, the question is whether or not natural human kinds have something to do with a person's preference to have sex with a particular sex/gender. Similarly, the question is

not about whether or not the drive to eat is biological, rather, it is about a person's preference for a particular type of food to satisfy this need.

Social Construction

Social construction is difficult to define because of the many internal debates amongst social constructionist researchers. John Boswell (1992) argues, "There are probably as many ways to define 'constructionism' as there are 'constructionists" (135). A basic platform that constructionists share is that at least some social constructs (games, money, language, and government) are the result of human social interaction and not a result of the laws of nature. Haslanger (1995) argues, "Something is a social construction in the generic sense just in case it is an intended or unintended product of social practice" (96). Haslanger says that if one adopts this broad definition of social construction; nearly (if not) everything in the physical/social world is socially constructed. Haslanger references washing machines and power drills as being some of the intended social products and natural language as an unintended product of social practices.

Haslanger refers to social construction as a "debunking project" because the goal for constructionists is "to distinguish social kinds from physical kinds" (20). Haslanger argues that a first step for constructionists is to point out that a particular category is "social" as opposed to "physical" (21). Haslanger points out that this is an important step because social kinds are not always obviously social. She argues that social

constructionists often strive for the surprising thesis that something most people assume to be a natural kind is actually a social kind (19).

Hacking offers an explanation as to what social constructionist projects are attempting to do and why there is some confusion within these projects. Hacking argues that social constructionists tend to hold that:

> (1) X need not have existed, or need not be at all as it is. X, or X as it is at present, is not determined by the nature of things; it is not inevitable.
> Very often they go further, and urge that:
> (2) X is quite bad as it is.
> (3) We would be much better off if X were done away with, or at least radically transformed (6).

Hacking points out that social constructionist projects attempt to show how social forces are in some way making X appear to be natural and permanent. Once they have accomplished this, he argues that they often go further to point out that X is bad and should be changed because it is not an inevitable entity.

Berger and Luckman's (1966) explanation of social construction provides a critical analysis of the process occurring in Hacking's first proposition of the social constructionist process. Berger and Luckman explain that the social construction of X is a dialectical process that is characterized by three components: externalization, objectivation, and internalization. Berger and Luckman argue that humans produce the social world or that the social world is the intended/unintended product of humans. Externalization refers to the objects and institutions that are external to humans. Objectivation occurs when humans begin to regard society and objects in society as "objective realities" (61). Berger and Luckman argue that reification is a crucial step in the process of objectivation. "Reification is the apprehension of the products of human activity *as if* they were something else than human products—such as facts of nature,

results of cosmic laws, or manifestations of divine will" (89). Berger and Luckman explain that the process of reification results in people forgetting their authorship or producer position in the world and regarding the world as a "strange facticity" that they have no control over (89). Internalization occurs when humans internalize these objectified or reified objects, thus becoming human products of the society they created.

Hacking notes that there are two different projects going on in social construction, "idea construction" and "object construction." These two projects, Hacking says, are often confused in social constructionist work. Haslanger points out that the construction of ideas is only possible within a social context. Hacking makes the distinction that objects are actually in the world whereas ideas are not. Haslanger points out that the construction of ideas is only possible within a social context. Hacking uses the example of paying rent to explain this. Borrowing some terms from John Searle, Hacking argues that "some of these items are ontologically subjective but epistemologically objective items. The rent you have to pay is all too objective…but requires human practices in order to exist" (22). He explains that paying rent is ontologically subjective because it would not exist without human social practices, although rent is epistemologically objective because a certain amount of money is due every month. In regards to sexual orientation, some may argue that heterosexuals and homosexuals are ontologically subjective because certain social historical situations have encouraged people to classify and consider one's sex/gender and his or her partner's sex/gender important. It is epistemologically objective because these are people who can be counted and classified.

Haslanger and Hacking both agree that social constructionists need to clarify this point when doing research projects.

Haslanger critiques Hacking for discussing and basing social construction as only being a causal process. Haslanger (2003) warns that, "we should be careful to distinguish different ways in which things are constructed, in particular, different ways things might 'depend for their existence' on a social context" (316). Haslanger suggests that there are four ways for something to be socially constructed. Haslanger uses the example of gender to show how something can be socially constructed in these different ways. The way that Hacking focuses on, is causal construction. Haslanger argues that "X is socially constructed causally as an F iff[4] social factors (i.e., X's participation in a social matrix) play a significant role in causing X to have those features by virtue of which it counts as an F" (317). She explains that X's gender traits (men/masculine and women/feminine) are socially constructed if and only if social factors such as childhood upbringing, popular fashions, and family values (for example) play a significant role in causing gender traits to have those features by which it counts as a gender trait.

The second way for something to be socially constructed is through what Haslanger (1995) calls constitutive construction. "Something is constitutively constructed iff in defining it we must make reference to social factors" (98). By something being constitutively constructed, the X in question is defined by referring to other social X's. Keeping with the example of gender traits, this means that gender traits are constitutively

[4] Iff: if and only if.

constructed if and only if in our definition of gender traits we make reference to social factors such as beauty rituals, division of labor, education, and other various factors.

Haslanger argues that the purpose of discussing these two different ways of being constructed is "to note…that our classificatory schemes, at least in social contexts, may do more than just map preexisting groups of individuals; rather our attributions have the power to both establish and reinforce groupings which may eventually come to fit the classifications" (99).[5] Haslanger calls this third type discursive construction because of the potential of X being the way it is, at least to some extent, due to what has been attributed to it. Discursive construction is closely related to Hacking's explanation of interactive kinds and many of the labeling theorist's interpretation of construction.

The fourth type of construction that Haslanger (1995) identifies is pragmatic construction. She argues that pragmatic construction is "a classificatory apparatus (be it a full-blown classification scheme or just a conceptual distinction or descriptive term) is socially constructed just in case its use is determined, at least in part, by social forces" (100). Haslanger argues that there is a weak and strong type of pragmatic construction. In the weak sense, something is pragmatically constructed if its use is only partly determined by social forces, whereas something is constructed pragmatically in the strong sense if its use is completely determined by social forces[6].

Haslanger (1995) argues that weak pragmatic constructions are compatible with "those terms' and classifications' capturing real facts and distinctions" (100). She argues that there are many facts about the world to be discovered. People discover different facts due, in large part, to their interests. These interests are to some degree conditioned by

[5] Note the implications this has for Hirschfeld's study of the physical difference between homosexual men and women vs. heterosexual men and women.
[6] This is another example of the distinction in social constructionist projects.

social facts. Haslanger argues that in the weak pragmatic sense our classificatory schemes are able to pick out facts about the world even though our interest has conditioned what facts we decide to investigate. In the strong pragmatic sense, our classificatory schemes are not picking out real facts about the world. "In cases of strong pragmatic construction, however, the attributions are, by hypothesis, not accurately capturing facts, though there is the illusion that they are" (100). Analyzing whether or not our classificatory schemes are weakly or strongly pragmatically constructed is important because it impacts what we take to be knowledge of the world. The difference between the weak and strong pragmatic construction are related to the difference between the social kinds thought community and the empty kinds thought community. The weak pragmatic constructionist position is used by the social kinds thought community, whereas; the strong pragmatic constructionist position is used by the empty kinds thought community.

In the debate between social constructionists and essentialists, the social constructionists analyze social factors that may be 'naturalized'[7] in society and point out that something need not be the way it is and could be otherwise. Haslanger identifies three different ways that something can be socially constructed and the significance of the context in which something is socially constructed. Hacking argues that social constructionist projects tend to identify something that has been thought to be innate or inevitable and show that it is not determined by any scientific causal laws. Some social

[7] Naturalized, in this instance, refers to X appearing to be inevitable or governed by the laws of nature.

constructionists, as Hacking argues, go further and say that something is bad as it is in its current state and from there explains why it should be done a way with or transformed.

Arguments for Social Construction

In Stein's (1999) analysis of social constructionist arguments, he argues that there are four different types of arguments that are being debated: argument from cultural variation, argument from different forms of desire, argument from anti-realism and argument from the simplicity of essentialism. These four arguments are tied together throughout social constructionists' arguments in varying degrees. For the purposes of clarification, it is beneficial to examine each argument individually. Once each argument is understood separately, it is easier to recognize the problems that exist in the debates between social constructionists vs. essentialists and within social constructionists themselves. Each of the four arguments presents a different twist on the definition of sexual orientation.

In the argument from cultural variation, Stein argues that some social constructionists "think that all they need to do to establish constructionism is to demonstrate that other cultures conceptualize human sexual desires in ways different from ours" (106). Stein also calls this argument the 'no concept' argument because what it comes down to is whether or not a culture has the same/different concept for X or no concept for X. Social constructionists often argue that if a culture does not have a concept for X, then they do not categorize or conceptualize things in the same way we do. This means that they have different ways or possibly no ways of thinking, speaking, and responding to X. In the instance of sexuality, some social constructionists may argue that

because no cultures before the nineteenth century had concepts for sexual orientation that there were no homo/hetero/bisexuals during that time and therefore sexual orientation is socially constructed (ergo, not a natural kind).

Stein argues that just because there were no exact matches for contemporary concepts of sexual orientation in other cultures, it does not prove, therefore, that sexual orientation is a social kind and socially constructed. Stein uses the example of color blindness (physiological disorder) to establish this point. Colorblindness has only relatively recently been discovered and conceptualized. Stein argues that there were colorblind people or people that could not distinguish various colors before the nineteenth century, even though there were no concepts for this sort of person. Stein argues that "just showing that many other cultures did not have categories for a certain sort of person (a colorblind person or a homosexual) does not show that these concepts fail to pick out intrinsic properties, that they cannot be applied transculturally or that such concepts are not objective and about the world" (38). The argument fails, according to Stein, because many of our medical/biological concepts and categorizations do apply to people of the past even though the cultures did not have these concepts.

The argument from different forms of life often is closely tied to the argument from cultural variation. This argument goes further than saying that different cultures have different ways of conceptualizing sex and sexual orientation. "Foucault-type social constructionists…argue that different cultures produce different forms of sexual desire and different types of people and this difference shows that essentialism is false" (Stein 347). This argument is more compelling than the first argument because it appeals to other social sciences for proof of the drastic differences in sexual expression, behavior,

relationships, and experiences across various cultures. Boswell argues that most people, including essentialist would agree that different societies produce different people (135).

Stein uses the example of epilepsy to illustrate the details of this argument. The constructions of epileptics and epilepsy have been conceptualized and treated differently in various cultures. Stein explains that societies in the Middle Ages thought that epilepsy was a form of demon possession. Some Native American cultures thought epileptics had special powers. Other cultures treat it as a medical disorder. Each of these different cultures constructs attitudes and institutions around the various views of epilepsy. In some of the cultures mentioned, it is regarded as divine and special and in others it is regarded as evil and treated as such. In a culture like ours, it is medicalized and treated as an illness. In each of these instances the person with epilepsy is reacting with the label that is being given. Stein argues, "even if societies conceive and construct epilepsy in quite different ways and, as a result, epileptics in different cultures conceptualize and experience epilepsy in different ways, an epileptic is still a natural kind. The different forms of life argument for construction fails" (107). Stein's point in this argument is that constructionists cannot prove that X is a social kind and not a natural kind by showing that something's meaning varies in different cultures.

The argument from Anti-realism follows closely with where the last argument left off because of its relation to social or subjective meanings. Antirealists or nominalists world views are in opposition to realist's world perspectives. Realists or as Hacking calls them, inherent structuralists, view the world as being structured in such a way that there are knowable and describable facts in nature. Hacking argues that in a realist perspective, "the facts are there, arranged as they are, no matter how we describe them" (83). Hacking

expresses his level of discomfort with the idea that facts can just come into being and cease being. He argues that facts exist 'timelessly' and are out there to be discovered[8].

Anti-realists or nominalists believe that there is no independent or objective reality. Hacking refers to nominalism as name-ism because the names of things are arbitrary and are only considered that way through social context or human intention. Some social constructionists are anti-realist and do believe that the only reality that we can perceive is our own reality composed of unique individual experiences. James Weinrich (1987) illustrates the nominalist perspective through geography. "They argue, geographically speaking, that 'Nevada' is a social construction; it exists only because our culture says it exists" (176). He places this in opposition to realists, who would say there is a reality that transcends the name given to it.

When talking about the world, Hacking argues that the nominalists believe that the world has no underlying structure. The structure that we perceive to exist is merely a cultural representation. Poststructuralists are an example of theorists who fall on the antirealist side of the debate because they do not believe that there is a reality independent of cultural practices and, as their name suggests; there is no structure to the world. Sullivan argues, "Poststructuralist theorists like Foucault argue that there are no objective and universal truths, but that particular forms of knowledge, and the ways of being they engender, become 'naturalized', in culturally and historically specific ways" (39). Sullivan further explains that these theorists believe that subjects are not autonomous, unified, and/or "self-knowing" (41). These groups of theorists also reject

[8] Although there are many different aspects and degrees of realists, for purposes of this argument they believe that the world is structured and that facts exist in nature to be discovered.

identity politics on the grounds that they become naturalized through culture producing oppressive and restrictive systems of power.

Queer theorists also argue that sexual orientations are empty kinds. Much of queer theorists work tends to reject the idea of classifying people as heterosexual or homosexual because there are no such types of people. The second hallmark of Arlene Stein and Kenneth Plummer's (1996) description of queer theory indicate the rejection of identity politics and classifications. "Identities are always on uncertain ground, entailing displacements of identification and knowing" (134). Queer theorists, like post-structuralists, hold that nothing exists outside of cultural practices and meanings. This means that queer theorist believe that 'queer' self-concepts are different for everyone. Because everyone has a different 'reference point' or different experiences and cultural meanings, nobody will be able to fully identify with anybody else; making a shared identity (by definition) impossible. In short, they believe that a personal self-concept is a subjective construction.

Haslanger, Stein, and Hacking all tend to agree that extreme nominalism is problematic. Haslanger (1995) argues that "once we come to the claim that everything is socially constructed, it appears a short step to the conclusion that there is no reality independent of our practices or of our language and that 'truth' and 'reality' are only fictions employed by the dominant to mask their power" (96). Stein equates extreme nominalism or the argument from antirealism to trying to kill a fly with an atomic bomb. He argues that antirealist arguments lead to the radical conclusion that we cannot believe anything. "Belief that all assumptions are undefended, leads antirealist to the conclusion that nothing can be proven, that no one can justifiably believe anything, and further that

there are no objective truths" (108). Stein also argues that the anti-realist claim is self-refuting because "anyone who claims that there are no absolute truths is open to a question about what sort of claim she is making" (109). If a person claims that there are no absolute truths, then he/she is making an absolute truth statement; which is self-refuting. Haslanger and Stein both support social construction and believe that it is possible for social constructionists to believe that things are socially constructed without believing that there is no reality independent of cultural practice. Stein argues that social construction is only an interesting position if there is limited relativism involved (108).

The final argument, the argument from the simplicity of essentialism, is the claim some social constructionists use because they believe that essentialists must be committed to essenceism. Stein states that essenceism is "the claim that the particular category has an essence and that having this essence constitutes a necessary and sufficient condition for membership in that category" (110). Stein argues that some essentialists do not believe in essenceism. Essentialists can believe that sexual orientation is a natural kind but that there is no 'essence' for sexual orientation. The example that Stein uses for essenceism is LeVay's study of the size of INAH-3 region of the hypothalamus. In LeVay's research, the size of this region of the hypothalamus is a necessary and sufficient condition for being either a homosexual or a heterosexual. The point that Stein stresses is that something (i.e. sexual orientation) can still be a natural kind because essentialist need not be committed to essenceism. The argument from

simplicity of essentialism is not valid because it assumes that sexual orientation is a social kind without considering other possible theories for sexual orientation.

Nature vs. Nurture Debate

An underlying argument present in some essentialist and social constructionist work is the debate between nature and nurture. Stein argues that the debate between essentialists and social constructionists is not the same thing as the Nature vs. Nurture debate. Stein argues that Nature vs. Nurture is a false dichotomy because no human trait is solely the result of genetics or solely the result of social forces. The main argument seems to be over the variance in degree to which something is influenced by genetic or social factors. Stein argues, "The simple connections commonly thought to hold between the nature of the categories of sexual orientation and the cause of sexual orientation do not in fact hold; *essentialism does not entail nativism and environmentalism does not entail constructionism* (103)." Stein explains that biological mothers are a natural kind by virtue of their genes allowing them to get pregnant, however; having these genes do not determine that a person will become a member of this group. Another example Stein uses to show that these debates are separate is to suppose that sexual orientations do have a social origin. Stein argues that if after the effects of the social forces, "a person has a naturalistically determinate sexual orientation and his or her brain instantiates a particular psychological state in virtue of which he or she is a heterosexual or a homosexual, then

certain scientific laws apply to this person" (102). Stein's counterexamples demonstrate the difference between the two debates.

Stein points out that both social constructionism and essentialism are empirical theses regarding the innateness of sexual orientation that must be addressed through empirical methods such as experiments and observations. Stein argues that "if nativism is true, then constructionism is false and essentialism is true…[and]…the truth of constructionism entails that nativism about sexual orientation is false; if sexual orientation is not a natural human kind, then it cannot be innate" (103). Stein points out that the empirical nature of these theses should not be surprising because in order for something to be labeled a natural kind it must have empirical evidence or scientific laws that make it a natural kind. Separating these two debates is important because as Stein points out something can be a natural kind without being innate, but something innate cannot be other than a natural kind[9].

The Essentialist and Social Constructionist Debate

Stein uses the debate over the interpretation of Aristophanes' speech in Plato's Symposium as an example of what is going on in both social constructionist/essentialist and realist/nominalist arguments. Examining the different ways these debates have occurred and are occurring are important to the ways we are currently thinking about and defining sexual orientation today. Analyzing these past arguments also helps to explain

[9] This discussion is being highlighted because some social constructionist arguments against essentialists are aimed solely at the innateness of sexual orientation. Although many essentialist project deal with isolating a gene or attempting to "prove" biological determinism, essentialist projects need not focus solely on this issue. Essentialist can argue that sexual orientation is not innate, but formed through psychological development. For example, brain structures are developed in various ways largely due to our environment Stein points out that if a brain becomes structured a certain way and is related to sexual preference, then it is being governed by the scientific laws; and therefore a natural kind.

the several complexities in defining sexual orientation. In the myth, there are three human sexes; male, female, and hermaphrodite (half female and half male). Each of the humans has two heads, four arms, and four legs. The gods thought that these creatures were too powerful, so Zeus split them apart. After having been split apart they desired to be with the separated half.

> Now all who are the men's slice of the common genus…are lovers of women…all women of this genus prove to be lovers of men…And all women who are sliced off from woman hardly pay attention to men but are rather turned toward women…but all who are male slices pursue the males (Plato:253).

The debate over Aristophanes' speech addresses what Boswell calls the basic puzzle of human epistemology, which questions to what extent our abstractions of human thought and speech correspond to an objective reality and questions the accuracy of particular concepts and abstractions, such as gender and sexuality (139). The universal interpretation of Aristophanes' speech follows a similar line of argumentation as the essentialist argument from cultural universality. The universalized interpretation holds that classifications such as heterosexual and homosexual can be applied to people in other cultures and to people trans-historically. The localized interpretation follows the lines of thought from the argument from cultural variation, argument from forms of life, and the argument from antirealism. It holds that our contemporary concepts (hetero/homo/bisexual) should not be applied to people in other cultures; past or present.

Localizers argue that same-sex acts in Ancient Greece were trans-generational and that an age difference does not play an important role in contemporary homosexuality, therefore the two conceptions are not the same. Those from the universalized perspective argue that just because different social structures were

surrounding people in the past and not people in the present does not mean that they are two totally different things. Stein states that those arguing from the universalizing interpretation can argue that there were different theories surrounding pregnancy (i.e. how to get pregnant, what was happening inside the body, active and passive roles of eggs and sperm, etc) than there are in the present, but this does not mean that our category pregnant could not be applied to people in the past.

Boswell argues that this debate between essentialists and social constructionists over the trans-historical application of sexual taxonomies captures many of the semantic problems that make up the entire controversy. Social constructionists use as evidence for their position, the lack of concepts for sexual orientation and the trans-generational aspect of same-sex acts. Boswell argues that there are three problems with this line of thought:

1) there may be reasons for the structure of a language other than its reflection of 'objective reality;
2) modern terms for sexuality are not necessarily any more comprehensive or accurate about the present than ancient ones are for the past;
3) Application of modern categories to the past, even if they do not match precisely, may be a useful strategy for determining the relationship between the two.

Boswell and Stein both argue that simply by pointing out that a concept did not exist during a certain time does not mean that the phenomena did not exist. There were people in the past who were pregnant and/or colorblind even though there were no exact matches for these concepts during this time.

Boswell points out that there is no word in the French language for the concept 'shallow' and no word in Latin for 'religion.' In the first instance, he argues that just because there is no word for shallow, it does not mean that there is nothing shallow in France or that the French do not recognize the concept of shallow. Shallow is understood

by the negation of deep, which Boswell argues is a semantic accident. Boswell points out that the lack of a word for religion in Latin may be partly a semantic accident, but that it is also an issue regarding social reality.

Boswell argues that there was no concept of religion in Rome like the concept of religion in contemporary use. He questions whether this means that there was no religion in Rome and whether or not historians have been misleading people by speaking of a Roman religion. Boswell argues, "Should some new word, free of the contaminants of modern concepts, be coined to characterize the veneration of Roman deities and the cult of Cybel? No. There was obviously religion. That Romans view it somewhat differently does not demonstrate that it was, in fact, a different entity" (143). In terms of sexual orientation, he argues that just because there was not a concept for the categorization of sexual interest that it does not follow that they did not notice these distinctions.

That past societies have similar divisions of sexual interests is quite convincing evidence that these terms can be applied cross culturally and trans-historically. However, as Stein argued earlier, this does not prove that sexual orientations are natural kinds. Even stronger evidence for the similar division of sexual interests is in an example that Boswell uses to illustrate these categories of sexual interests. Boswell states that the sister-in-law of Louis XIV describes the men in the French courtyard in categories similar to our contemporary ones: "some prefer women, some like both men and women, some prefer men, some prefer children, and some have little interest in sex at all" (169). The argument over these categorizations is important not because it proves essentialism or social

construction, but because it emphasizes the importance of the definitions and theories from which each side is operating.

The essentialist arguing from the perspective of trans-historical application or cultural universality are generally operating from a behavioralist definition. The essentialist are pointing out as evidence that people in the past, across cultures and presently have had or are having sex with people of the same sex/gender. Social constructionists recognize that people have had and continue to have sex with people of the same-sex/gender, but some would argue that it does not mean the same thing for people in the past as it does for people in contemporary society. Robert Padgug (1979) argues, "Homosexual' and 'heterosexual' *behavior* may be universal; homosexual and heterosexual *identity and consciousness* are modern realities" (58). He argues that there are different social factors occurring in our contemporary society that is unique from cultures in the past and some cultures in the present.

This type of social constructionist reasoning originated in the writings of Foucault. Foucault argues that in the nineteenth century the homosexual became a type of person. "The nineteenth century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, type of life, a life form, nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality" (17). In the past, the people who had sex with people without the intent of reproduction were called sodomites, which meant that both homosexuality and sex as pleasure were thought to be unnatural. Around the nineteenth century, there was a shift in ideology from viewing sex as just an act, to a person being defined as a type of person

based on the sex/gender of the person/people with which a person generally has sex or desires to have sex.

The Foucauldian constructionists argue that it is not appropriate to apply our categories of sexual orientation to the past because cultures in the past did not think it possible to 'have' an orientation for sexual behavior. Arnold Davidson argues that sexual orientation or sexual identity was not possible for early Christians and people in Ancient Greece because sexual identity is a product of psychiatric style reasoning, which emerged in the later half of the nineteenth century. "Sexuality only became a possible object of psychological investigation, theorizing, and speculation because of a distinctive form of reasoning that had a historically specific origin" (98). Psychiatric style reasoning is an example of this shift of thinking that occurred in the nineteenth century.

Constructionists who argue that sexual orientation emerged in the nineteenth century often point out the general changes that were occurring during this time. Jonathan Ned Katz states, "The transformation of the family from producer to consumer unit resulted in a change in family members' relation to their own bodies; from being an instrument primarily of work, the human body was integrated into a new economy, and began more commonly to be perceived as a means of consumption and pleasure" (69). During this time period, medical doctors and scientists gained more prestige and began to pose new theories of sexuality and as Davidson mentions a new psychiatric style of reasoning about sexuality.

Mary McIntosh (1968) argues that the shift from a sexual act having little influence on a person's character to a sexual act defining one's character, lead to negative stigmatizations of people who did not adhere to sexual norms. McIntosh explains that

there are two ways that labeling a person as deviant operates. “In the first place it helps to provide a clear-cut, publicized and recognized threshold between permissible and impermissible behavior…Second, the labeling serves to segregate the deviants from others” (27). In this theory, the person labeled as a homosexual is stigmatized and this stigma separates the person from the “normal/heterosexual” society. The labeled person interacts with the label, which is what many social constructionists argue makes the contemporary homosexual so different from people engaging in same-sex acts in pre-capitalist societies. The argument goes, that in pre-capitalist societies people responded negatively to the act of someone having sex with someone of the same-sex and not the person. In the nineteenth century, due to economic shifts and religious/scientific shifts, same-sex acts/desire became innate and biological. People in the past who may have desired the same-sex and did not act on it were considered acceptable, but after the nineteenth century this type of person received the innate label of being a “deviant” type of person. Through interacting with a label, this type of person emerged as a type of individual who could have never existed prior to the bourgeois society (Padgug 59).

Boswell argues that the social constructionists who are arguing that homosexual identities did not exist before the nineteenth century are not giving a fair representation of their perspectives in a larger context. Boswell explains that if social constructionists arguing against the trans-historical application of homosexuality “would make clear that they also do not believe there is any such thing as a historical heterosexuality, family, kinship, state, government, or other such familiar abstractions, their audience would have a more realistic perception of their position” (139). Wayne Dynes (1988) also argues that the readers of this perspective are often left with the message that the abstraction of

sexuality is much different from that of other abstractions. Dynes argues that social constructionists are "selectively nominalistic" (231). He also argues that social constructionists mislead readers by making it seem as though there is a clear, accurate, and agreed upon contemporary concepts of homo/heterosexuality.

Boswell argues that social constructionists are selectively choosing which things to deconstruct while leaving other things of a similar nature untouched. Boswell explains that there are other such labels, such as being Catholic, that are socially constructed, yet we continue to call people Catholic throughout history and in the present. "Being a Catholic in Rome in the 4th century, when choosing to join the majority religion incurred the threat of death, was obviously fundamentally different from being a Catholic in the 15th century, when failing to observe the official Catholic religion incurred the threat of death, and…being a Catholic in present day, where it is an ethnic heritage of little moment to many Italians" (145). Boswell argues that in each of these cases the stigmatized label is acting differently (negatively, positively, and indifferent) for many Catholics, which means that in each case the person is responding differently. Boswell points out that there is not much difference between the Catholic and the Homosexual as far as labeling theory is concerned, but questions why people find it problematic not to call people who engaged in same-sex activity in the past homosexual since we have no problem calling Catholics in the past Catholic.

The claim that people did or did not experience sexuality in similar or different ways has conflicting evidence for both sides. Stein and Boswell both argue that if essentialists are saying that there were similar desires in Ancient Greece or the Middle Ages, then they are 'proceeding on faith.' They also point out that constructionists are

doing the same thing by claiming that there were not similar desires. Boswell argues, "Since it is perfectly unclear what factors—social, psychological, genetic, etc produce varieties of sexual interest, no one can claim to 'know' that there were or were not such interests in the past" (148). Boswell argues that even from the forms of life argument it cannot be guaranteed that people back then did not feel desire in the same way as people do now.

Hacking argues in a similar manner as Boswell, but along the lines of the argument from antirealism. Hacking calls the social constructionists claim that there were no homosexuals before the nineteenth century "making up people." Hacking argues, "If there were some truth in the descriptions that I and others have furnished, then making up people would bear on one of the greatest traditional questions of philosophy, namely, the debate between nominalists and realists" (76). Hacking argues that there does seem to be some significance between what he calls two different vectors: expert's labeling and the autonomous behavior of the person being labeled. He argues that concepts such as homosexuality and multiple personalities came into being hand in hand with the invention of their category. He argues that dynamic nominalism is the only form of nominalism that can account for this type of reification without ascribing to the claim that the only thing objects have in common is that we agree to call them by certain name.

Hacking (1986) argues that 'making up' people is similar to the labeling theory because those people that are 'made up' are identifying with a particular identity. In this sense, we are all made up in some way or another. Hacking, as mentioned in a previous section, is a realist who expresses discomfort with facts coming into and out of existence. In this situation, he finds it a curious idea that types of people can come in and out of

existence. He makes the point that the homosexual of the nineteenth century may not even be accurate of what is out there right now.

Hacking, earlier, organizes things under the categories epistemologically objective and ontologically subjective. In this instance it seems as though there is a tension between what exactly an epistemologically objective fact is and what exactly is ontologically subjective. An epistemologically objective fact is something that we can 'know' about the world. Capturing some fact or description about the world, implies that some degree of realist thinking is involved. That people have had sex and continue to have sex with people of the same/different/both sexes is an epistemologically objective claim because we can point to empirical evidence to support it. This epistemologically objective fact is used as the basis for the behavioralist perspective of human sexuality. The behavioralist definition of a homosexual/heterosexual is based on the sex/gender of the people with whom a person has sex. This definition is what people who are arguing for the trans-historical application of sexual orientation are referring to when they say that people demonstrated and categorized others into similar taxonomies as we presently do, but did not have use of the exact language that we do. If the acts of having sex with a certain sex/gender is all that is required to have a sexual orientation, then this perspective would be right in arguing that we should apply our uses of sexual orientation onto other cultures of the past and present.

Another definition of sexual orientation that is used by both essentialists and social constructionists is the self-identification view. In this view, the existence of an epistemologically objective fact becomes less clear. The self-identification view allows research subjects to self-identify their sexual identity. Problems with this theoretical

perspective is that the researcher can take sexual orientation (classification of what is a homo/hetero/bisexual) to be something different than the subject. For example, a biologist may want to study heterosexual men to measure chemicals in the brain. If the biologist uses the self-identification model, it is likely that the biologist may end up with a variety of different people: men who are married to women but desire to be with men, men who have sex frequently with men but claim to be heterosexual, and men who have sex with men and women and who identify as heterosexual.[10] In this instance, the results that the biologist obtains are going to be skewed because his/her subjects are operating from a definition that is different from that of the biologists' behavioral assumptions about the definition of heterosexuality. Similarly, if a behavioral based researcher is studying self-identified homosexuals, it is likely that the results here will be skewed for the same reasons. Judith Lorber (1994) argues, "Assuming that all self-identified gay and lesbians have exclusively same-sex partners not only renders invisible the complexities of sexuality but can also have disastrous health outcomes" (432). The disparity in meaning between the researcher and the subjects makes using this method of research and definition highly problematic for obtaining accuracy.

The self-identification view lacks an agreed upon definition of what a homo/heterosexual actually is. Being a homosexual seems to have something to do with attraction/desire/and/or sexual acts to or with a person of the same-sex/gender. Being a heterosexual seems to follow the same aspects as a homosexual but toward the opposite or other sex. The epistemologically objective aspect of sexual orientation only exists if either the researcher or the subject defines sexual orientation in behavioral act-based

[10] See book by J.L. King, Down Low. This book focuses on African-American men who have sex with other men and still self-identify as heterosexual and often have wives or girlfriends.

terms. If neither the researcher nor the subject is defining sexual orientation in this way, then there are no epistemologically objective facts.

The dispositional perspective is another way of studying sexuality. This perspective combines the behavioralist and the self-identificationist aspects. Stein states, "According to this view, a person's sexual orientation is based on his or her sexual desires and fantasies and the sexual behaviors he or she is disposed to engage in under ideal conditions" (45). This perspective emphasizes the distinction between the sex/gender a person is currently involved with and the sex/gender a person would be involved with under ideal circumstances. For example, someone in a rural area may be married to someone of the opposite/other-sex due to availability options or fear of exclusion from people in a community, but desire to be with someone of the same-sex under ideal circumstances. This theory also accounts for the counter example of men in prison. For example, men in prison may be having sex with other men and still call themselves heterosexual, because under ideal circumstances they would desire to have sex with women (Stein 210).

The dispositional view does not have an epistemologically objective aspect because it dismisses acts as being a solely defining characteristic. This debate emphasizes the distinction of sex as an act from desire. That sex acts do not equal desire is a fundamental element in the debate over the trans-historical and cross-cultural application of sexual orientations between the essentialists and the social constructionists. It appears to come down to whether or not people in the past and in other cultures experience desire in the same ways and forms that people do in this society. As Stein and Boswell noted earlier, it is impossible for either side to claim that they 'know' that other societies

experience desire in the same ways as ours. Desire based definitions do not necessarily lead to nominalism; however they do restrict sexual orientations to being time and culturally bound. Desire based definitions present sexual orientation as being social kinds because it is impossible to know if other cultures have thought and continue to think in the ways that this particular society does. In this sense, as Hacking says, people are 'made up.'

There is no epistemologically objective fact in the dispositional perspective because desire cannot be effectively measured. Because there is no epistemologically objective fact, homo/heterosexuals can go in and out of being. Hacking argues that facts are timeless and that the categories for sexual orientation are not defined in epistemologically object terms. This means that they are ontologically subjective. Hacking argues that because there is nothing epistemologically objective in this definition; sexual orientations cannot be anything other than socially constructed[11].

Thought Communities

An analysis of the essentialist vs. social constructionist debate reveals that there are more than two dominant standpoints. There are three dominant positions within this debate that become overlooked and are responsible for misguided debates. The natural, social and empty kinds thought communities are all active positions within this debate. The empty kinds thought community or nominalist social constructionist perspective is the less hidden standpoint within this debate. Stein and Haslanger both point out that this is a position being argued by social constructionists. Essentialists who try to argue against

[11] This is assuming that no biological component for desire has been found. There is no concrete scientific evidence at this time that a biological component for desiring a particular sex/gender has been found.

social construction based on nominalism and social constructionists arguing essentialist from a nominalistic perspective are unable to debate because they do not share a common problem. The natural kinds thought community is able to debate with the social kinds thought community over the structure of sexual orientation because they both agree that classifications of sexual orientation exist in society, but disagree about the epistemic criteria for classifying a person into a particular category. The empty kinds thought community is unable to debate with the other two thought communities because they deny the structural grounds for the debate.

The cognitive sociological acts of attending, perceiving and categorizing are related to the underlying problems the natural and social kinds' thought communities have with defining distinct sexual categories such as heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual[12]. The empty kinds thought community is not being discussed with the natural and social kinds thought communities because it does not adhere to an objective reality or structural foundation. A discussion on empty kinds will occur after the cognitive sociological analysis of the social and natural kinds thought communities.

Both the natural and social kinds thought communities are influenced by what is considered to be relevant/irrelevant or marked/unmarked. Zerubavel argues, "In helping separate the relevant from the irrelevant, it is essentially our mental horizons that enable us to ignore certain parts of reality as mere background and thereby grasp (visually as well as mentally) any 'thing' at all" (36). In the natural sciences as well as the social

[12] Zerubavel identifies six cognitive acts: attending, perceiving, classifying, assigning meaning, remembering and reckoning time (1997:21). I have chosen only to focus on the first three because they all directly deal with aspects related to the process of creating definitions. For example, it is necessary that the researcher focus on some things as relevant vs. irrelevant and perceive characteristics in a certain way in order to classify things into definitions. The other three cognitive acts are relevant, but not in the same direct way as the first three.

sciences, the sex-gender that an individual engages, or desires to engage, in a relationship with is considered relevant.

Society tends to focus on the relevant or "marked" groups of individuals, such as homosexuals. Wayne Brekhus (1998) argues that marked people are the objects of focus. He further argues, "…the marking process exaggerates the importance and distinctiveness of the marked" (36). Brekhus argues that distinctions made among the marked are often ignored, while characteristics of particularly marked individuals are generalized to other marked individuals. This aspect of being marked by sexual orientation has epistemological and methodological implications for the specific or vague sexual characteristics by which people are organized.

Brekhus argues that even the decision to limit sexual orientation to a particular sex/gender does not capture the full range of what a sexual orientation could be. "Although present use of the term 'sexual orientation' implies that gender is the sole criterion upon which people's sexual preferences rest, many people also select or exclude sexual partners based on their weight, race, age, species, and other traits" (1996: 498). Stein also argues that sexual orientations are arbitrary classifications for marking or leaving individuals unmarked and that there are several other ways in which sexual orientations could be classified. However, as Stein points out, society finds these attributes irrelevant when defining a sexual orientation and considers the sex-gender of individuals as being relevant. Stein critically asks, "Why include only a narrow range of sexual interests? Why focus on this feature of a person's sexual desire as the crucial one" (66)? For the social kinds thought community, these questions represent the debunking of the reification of sexual orientations and helps problematize the ways in which people are

focusing on sexual orientation. The natural kinds thought community tends to agree that the focus on a person's sexual orientation is largely social, however; they still maintain that a person's sexual orientation is a biological matter. It is compatible for the natural kinds thought communities to maintain that social forces shape people's focus and perception of sexual orientation without believing that sexual orientations are social constructions themselves.

Zerubavel argues that the ways in which people perceive the world are largely influenced by the people around them in their social environment. Zerubavel argues, "Our social environment plays a major role in how we actually interpret things. The way we mentally process what we perceive through our senses is to a large extent socially mediated" (24). Zerubavel goes on to explain that when people experience something for the first time, they try to fit the new object into a pre-existing cognitive schema. The social and natural kinds thought communities are both influenced by the social environment. In the general society, heterosexuals are considered to be normal, legal, and good citizens. Homosexuals are often perceived to be abnormal or sick, in some cases illegal, and deviant citizens. In other words, heterosexuals are perceived positively, whereas homosexuals are perceived negatively.

The perception of the social kinds thought community is clearly and directly influenced by the surrounding social environments. The perception of the natural kinds thought community, although not as clearly, is also heavily influenced by the social environment. Zerubavel argues, "Even seemingly objective scientific 'facts,' in other words, are affected by the particular mental filters through which scientists process what they observe in their heads" (25). Zerubavel argues that shifts in perceptions or shifts in

"mental gazes" are responsible for many scientific discoveries. The natural kinds thought community agrees that social factors influence the subjects being researched, while still maintaining that 'seemingly objective scientific facts' operate or are governed by the laws of nature. The positive or negative perceptions of people considered to be heterosexual/bisexual/homosexual are important because it influences the type of research being done within the thought communities.

The cognitive sociological act of classifying is a primary focus for sexuality scholars because definitions pertaining to sexual orientation often vary among researchers and their particular thought communities. Mannheim argues that in order to be considered knowledge, "every perception is and must be ordered and organized into categories" (86). Nippert-Eng (1995) argues that classificatory boundaries are the "most essential element of culture" because they shape thoughts and actions. Nippert-Eng also points out that classificatory boundaries "are the girders supporting all interpretation, all experience. By internalizing certain combinations of specific borders, we perpetuate a distinct, cultured way of thinking…the definitive aspect of social group membership" (xi). In other words, society not only influences how individuals attend/focus and perceive sexual orientation, but also how these perceptions are then mentally organized or categorized.

Zerubavel (1991) points out that people create islands of meaning through the processes of lumping and splitting information within existing cognitive schemas. These existing cognitive schemas are shaped and reshaped through interactions with people in the same thought communities as well as through other factors in the social environment. Zerubavel argues that the process of lumping specifically downplays the differences

between two entities, whereas the splitting process widens the perceived gap between two entities or islands of meaning (27).

Zerubavel (1991) explains that in order to categorize distinct information it is important to separate "meaningful entities" from one another. "Separating one island of meaning from another entails the introduction of some mental void between them. As we carve discrete mental chunks out of continuous streams of experience, we normally visualize substantial gaps separating them from one another" (21). Large voids between two islands of meaning are perceived to be even greater in depth and magnitude. Zerubavel explains that the ability to cognitively perceive the magnitude between two islands of meaning allows individuals to organize people into an "us" versus "them" dichotomy (27). Both social and natural kinds thought communities would agree that society, in general, categorizes homosexuals and heterosexuals into islands of meaning separated by a perceptually large void. Both would also agree that society in general perceives and categorizes sexual orientation in the terms of the "us" versus "them" dichotomy.

The difference between the social and natural kinds thought communities arises within the mental processes of "lumping" and "splitting" various characteristics regarded as being important for the classification of people into certain sexual categories. Zerubavel argues (1997) that different cultures and thought communities "carve different archipelagos of meaning out of the same reality; they very often also promote altogether different 'styles' of cutting up the world" (56). Zerubavel further explains that some

cultures and thought communities' classifications are considered rigid, while other thought communities' classifications are considered to be more fluid.

Zerubavel explains that rigid boundaries are often viewed in terms of either/or and are largely based on Western logic. Natural kinds thought communities operate largely from an either/or perspective, arguing that sexual orientations are either governed by the laws of nature or they are not governed by the laws of nature. Natural kinds thought communities classify sexual orientation in rigid behavioral terms because these communities are concerned with epistemic justification and truth. Behavioralist definitions, as the title implies, focus on a behavior and categorize a person into a group based on that behavior. The natural kinds thought community organizes its classifications according to the behavioralist perspective's framework because this thought community seeks to discover whether or not action-based sexual classifications are guided by biologically innate traits. The natural kinds thought community classifies people according to the sex-gender a person is sexually active with the majority of the time. Although some behavioral definitions are more complex, this is a general model used within natural kinds thought communities.

Fluid boundaries are characterized as being blurry lines between two entities. Most social kinds thought communities operate with fluid boundaries because they are concerned primarily with sexual orientations being classified as relevant categories based on human intention or appropriation, instead of being concerned with the underlying structure in nature. The social kinds thought communities are able to incorporate a more detailed and fluid categorization of sexual orientation because this thought community operates from the perspective that sexual orientation is a human made product that has

been reified to appear natural. The social kinds thought community can go beyond behavioral definitions to include desire, attraction, and use the loose term 'relationship' because they perceive sexual orientations to be islands of meaning with wide bridges going back and forth between the islands. The natural kinds thought communities cement categories of sexual orientation and provide no bridges between the heterosexual and homosexual islands of meaning. Most social kinds thought communities allow fluidity between the islands to occur and for them to be in a constant state of change.

The natural and social kinds thought communities are both attempting to classify sexual orientations within a structured objective reality, however; they are unable to formulate an agreement on the classification of sexual orientations within the structural framework. The definition or classification of sexual orientation preferred by each thought community is not neutral. Stein argues that scientific research programs cannot make a good case for the biological determinism of sexual orientation when they are defining sexual orientation in essentialist terms. Stein argues that for a study to establish its claim, it needs to be able to produce results other than the intended results of the thesis (203). Ian Hacking (1999) argues that social constructionist projects do a similar thing when they define concepts in terms of their socially constructed properties.

The empty kinds thought community conceptualizes sexuality in a different way than both natural and social kinds thought communities. The empty kinds thought community does not adhere to structure or identity, which means that they refuse to label people according to sexually based characteristics. Lynn Carr (1999) describes the empty kinds thought community as having a "fuzzy world view [because] categorization itself is the enemy …These…non-classifiers not only defy but claim to have transcended both

sexual categorization and the gender constructions that provide its foundation" (8-9). The empty kinds thought community lacks a common ground with the other two thought communities because it is against the perspective of the thought community to provide a definition or classification as a starting point for debate.

Queer theorists, in particular, argue that there are no fundamental characteristics or definitive qualities for marking these individuals as a collective group. Shannon Winnubst (2005) explains, "If queer is that which dare not be defined, we are immediately on some strange terrain in the very attempts to speak of it. We need to attune ourselves to the meanings and implications of this 'aggressive impulse of generalization" (135). The empty kinds' thought community does not have a clear starting point because it appears to be unable to have a unified focus or way of perceiving and classifying information.

Literature Review

Analyzing definitions of sexual orientation is important for sociology in two ways; definitions shape methodologies for both empirical and non-empirical research programs and these various definitions are embedded in political ideologies. Kienzle argues, "In brief, the definition of a sociological problem and the methodology used to study it involve philosophical assumptions, making philosophy relevant to the working scientist (413)." The definitions of sexual orientation from each of the thought

communities are sociologically important because they are relevant to understanding the social/political origin, history, and current applications of sexual orientation.

Scientific research on sexuality originated in the nineteenth century. Sex researchers during this time period classified sexual human acts and attributed medical pathologies to people who behaved in sexually "deviant" ways. Foucault (1978) argues that the nineteenth century Victorians were not sexually repressed; rather they were obsessed with classifying and labeling different types of deviance. Foucault argues that medicine began to change the ways people conceptualized sexuality, "…it carefully classified all forms of related pleasures; it incorporated them into the notions of 'development' and instinctual 'disturbances'; and it undertook to manage them (15)." Sexuality became more scrutinized during this time period because sexual acts became equated with a person's innate individual character, rather than just merely being an action. Whereas people who engaged in same-sex activity before this era were only viewed as committing a sexual sin, people who engaged in same-sex activity during the Victorian era were viewed as sinners; their sin being an innate character flaw. Because of this ideological shift, many people who engaged in same-sex activity were criminalized along with other people labeled sexually "deviant" during the Victorian era.

In the early studies of sexual orientation, scientists took a natural kinds approach and defined sexual orientations as something found in nature. The agenda for some of these early scientists was to argue that people who engaged in same-sex behavior should not be criminalized or punished for their behavior. They believed that if homosexuality was a result of nature and not a choice, then it could not be deemed unnatural and therefore not punishable by the law. The early sex research is largely based on

homosexual males. Early laws regarding same-sex relationships were geared specifically towards men because they were viewed to be sexual and active, whereas women's sexuality was originally tied to reproduction and viewed as passive. The definition regarding sex during this time implied a "spilling of seed," which is characterized as a male function (Emilio & Freedman 1997; 120-130).

Magnus Hirschfeld was a medical doctor and early gay rights activist. He believed that doing research on homosexuality could combat the negative stereotypes being promoted by various religious groups. Hirschfeld argued for sexual pluralism or a variability of sex. He organized social and gay rights groups to educate the public in hope that his theories regarding homosexuality would change some of these deep rooted prejudices. Because of Hirschfeld's strong medical and scientific background, he searched for a biological component to sexuality.

Hirschfeld's study on the physical difference between heterosexuals and homosexuals indicates a biologically determined definition of what it is to be a homosexual or a heterosexual. Hirschfeld's definition of homosexual or his conception of what it is to be a homosexual creates a problem in the methods section of his project. Hirschfeld's definition of sexual orientation is strongly influenced by the popular inversion theory, which leads him to obtain subjects who may have only been thought to be homosexual based on a preconceived idea of what homosexual men and women look like. Stein argues, "Women with facial hair, deep voices, and muscular builds were more likely to be suspected of being a lesbian than women who lacked these attributes due to early thoughts about sexual inversion (128)." Stein continues to argue that the scrutiny over the sexual orientation of masculine women and feminine men may have lead some

of these people to doubt their sexuality because of their physical attributes and to consult doctors about it. Stein points out that during this time period most research subjects for these types of projects were people in clinical care, or were convicted criminals. Many people in the general population were not openly gay, therefore forcing sex researchers to analyze an unrepresentative sample.

Richard von Krafft-Ebbing was an early sex scholar whose work influenced the medical domain. Krafft-Ebbing also argued that homosexuality was innate, but not in the same way as Ulrichs. He argued that homosexuality was congenital through heredity and degeneration. "Krafft-Ebbing believed that homosexuals were less developed, in an evolutionary sense, than heterosexuals; that, in short, they exemplified a more primitive state of being (Sullivan 7). Krafft-Ebbing published *Psychopathia Sexualis*, which is a book of his attempts to classify and label all the forms of non-procreative sexual activity. The book was intended as a reference for doctors, but was used in court to counter the claim that homosexuality is a crime against nature. Krafft-Ebbing depicted homosexuality as not being a sin or a crime, but instead a disease. Although intended as a medical project, Krafft-Ebbing's book also contributed to legal reform. Ruth Hubbard (1990) argues, "The definition served the purpose of the reformers (although the laws have been slow to change), but it turned same-sex love into a medical problem to be treated by doctors rather than punished by judges—an improvement, perhaps, but not acceptance or liberation (66)."

Past researchers largely operated from the natural kinds thought community. Theories of the past researchers were predominantly biologically based and promoted the idea that heterosexuals and homosexuals were certain types of people due to the laws of

nature and not through social structures or institutions. The motivations of these particular sexologists seemed to challenge the claim that homosexual sex is 'unnatural,' by arguing from a theoretical standpoint that situates the origin of sexuality into the biological realm. Although these biological theories were a legal success in arguing for the decriminalization of homosexuality, they lend themselves to political and ethical interpretations regarding the elimination of homosexuality and the perception that homosexuals are defective or abnormal individuals. In regards to definitions of sexual orientation, the political significance is reflected in the ways that homosexuals are labeled as abnormal and treated as such.

The ways in which we define and conceptualize sexual orientation is still important today because of the continuing social consequences these definitions have for socially marked groups, such as gays and lesbians. The government has been funding large research projects that seek to find a biological component for sexual orientations. "The human genome project, which started in 1990, is a multibillion-dollar, fifteen-year research project to identify which traits each piece of our genetic material codes for (Stein 141)." The amount of money being used to fund research projects that seek to discover a genetic component for sexual orientation is a political statement in that it emphasizes the value that the government is placing on the outcomes of these projects. The money used to fund this research has been evaluated and has been purposely allocated to programs studying sexual orientation. Stein argues that the history of science in regards to sexual orientation has not been positive. Stein argues, "Scientific research on sexual orientation has a gruesome history of being used to harm lesbians, gay men, and other sexual minorities (329)." Stein explains that many early scientific research

programs were aimed at eliminating homosexuality and involved electroshock therapy and several other dangerous methods.

The research being done on sexual orientation in the scientific fields has been largely unsuccessful. Stein argues that these studies have not been successful because "studies in the emerging scientific program—embrace explicitly or implicitly—a problematic account of what sexual orientation is; have problems finding an appropriate subject pool to study…and make a variety of implicit, widely varied and unjustified assumptions about homosexuality (226)." Stein makes the point that definitions within the scientific field of research vary depending on the research being done. Stein argues that research programs cannot make a good case for the biological determinism of sexual orientation when they are defining sexual orientation in essentialist terms. Stein argues that for a study to establish its claim, it needs to be able to produce results other than the intended results of the thesis (203).

Scientific research does not always explain what definition of sexual orientation is operating in a particular study. Stein argues,

> It is crucial for scientific research on sexual orientation to carefully define its object of study in order to divide people into sexual orientations in a reasonable fashion and in ways that do not skew the results. A study of sexual orientation must start with some (at least implicit) definition of sexual orientation: who will count as a homosexual/heterosexual? (195)

Stein suggests that when a biological research project does not provide a definition of sexual orientation, to look at the methods section and see how the researcher is assigning people as heterosexuals and homosexuals. Research projects on sexuality have the capability of providing both positive and negative effects for homosexuals. Stein argues that science has had a negative record for producing positive political policies. Stein

explains that even well intentioned research can have negative effects. An example that Stein provides to explain this is Hirschfeld's regret that he promoted a biological view for sexual orientation. As mentioned before, Hirshfeld was originally a proponent of sexual orientations being innate in order to decriminalize homosexuality and prove that homosexuality was natural. Stein states that when Hirschfled was on his death bed said that he had unintentionally contributed to the persecution of homosexuals by giving them a biological stigma. Stein argues that one of the Germans' reasons for killing the homosexuals was to get rid of the homosexual disease so that the German youth would not be exposed to it.

Social constructionist definitions of sexual orientation have often been used to show that sexual orientation is a product of our social environment. Although people may equate social construction with choosing one's sexual orientation, this need not be the case. Social construction, by definition, implies a structuring and shaping of something, X, by social forces. A person's social class, for example, is socially constructed and yet often thought not to be chosen. Social construction does not reduce to a choice. In fact, the definition seems to suggest that social structures and institutions are shaping concepts such as gender, sexual orientation, race, and class, rather than people choosing classifications within these concepts out of nowhere. For example, it is unlikely that I will wake up tomorrow and decide not to be my usual race, gender, sexual orientation, or class. It seems more likely that social structures shape each of these concepts making sudden choices like changing one's sexuality more than a fleeting overnight thought. Another reason it seems more likely that social forces are constructing sexual orientation

is because of the fact that concepts like class, gender and sexual orientation are not necessarily permanent.

The two types of social construction have different political agendas and implications. The post-structuralists and queer theorists argue for the deconstruction and abandonment of classifications of sexual orientations. Adam Green (2002) argues, "In this vein, queer theorists object to the use of sexual classifications as a unit of analysis on epistemological and political grounds, and call for…a deconstruction of unified concepts of sexual identity and subjectivity (525)." Post-structuralists and queer theorists argue that sexological categories are too monolithic and fail to capture the complex relationships with gender, race, and class (Green 525).

The social constructionists who do use the sexological classifications argue that these classifications help to organize gays and lesbians to come together as political groups and help to create shared communities and support groups. They also argue that gays and lesbians often respond to these classifications because regardless of how they may envision themselves, these categories are what the general population use for classification. Green argues that sexological classifications have served and continue to serve/influence self-concepts for heterosexuals and homosexuals. He argues that these sexological definitions are important because people in our society recognize and respond to these classifications in both positive and negative ways. Green argues that regardless of how gays and lesbians self-identify, they know intuitively that they are part of a classification and that deconstructing these classifications are more harmful than helpful.

The sociological importance of conducting a theoretical analysis of definitions of sexual orientation in the context of the debates between essentialism/social construction

and realism/nominalism is demonstrated through the many provided examples that relate theoretical definitions to social policies. Stein argues, "Metaphysical and scientific matters connect, albeit in complex and contested ways, to ethical, political, and legal matters. An understanding of human nature is (in some way) relevant to what we ought to do (ethics), how society ought to be structured (politics), and what our laws should be (legal) (6)." Kienzle argues, "Philosophical awareness may help us to see that existing controversies over the nature, scope and subject matter of sociology are fundamentally philosophical controversies (422)." Kienzle goes on to say that if more sociologists make themselves aware to the philosophical controversies that lie behind sociological subject matter; sociologists will 'not only be less dogmatic' but also more 'cognizant of the course of the sociological future (422).' Understanding the significance of the philosophical debates underlying the study of sexual orientation provides valuable insight into the way definitions and classifications function methodologically and politically.

In summary, throughout the various discussions of social constructionism, it becomes apparent that there are two incongruent views of sexuality operating under the rubric of one perspective. As Haslanger mentioned before, one group of social constructionists operate from a weak pragmatic epistemological standpoint and the other from a strong pragmatic epistemological standpoint. This distinction is important because the weak pragmatic epistemological or social kinds thought community's standpoint holds that there are certain things we can 'know' about the world, whereas the strong pragmatic or empty kinds thought community's epistemological standpoint holds that we cannot 'capture facts' or know about the real world. This buried debate within the social constructionist's position has resulted in misguided debates. In order to be productively

arguing the social construction vs. essential debate it is important that all the people debating it be talking about the same thing. Hacking argues, "Since neither scientists nor constructionists dare to use the word metaphysics, it is not surprising that they talk past each other, since each is standing on metaphysical ground (61)." The lack of a well identified distinction between the two types of social construction has resulted in realist vs. anti-realist argument being argued in the background of the social constructionist position.

These debates over the definitions and classifications of sexual orientation are important because they shape research projects in academia and the general public's social attitudes. Stein urges that researchers in both the social and natural sciences develop definitions that do not automatically lend themselves to their intended theses. When the definitions for are "stacked" to inevitably result in an intended thesis, it results in a thought community talking amongst itself. The social constructionists need to be clearer about their exact positions, such as being a member of the social or empty kinds thought communities. As the analysis suggests, there are several occasions where essentialists critiqued the whole social constructionist position when they were really addressing the nominalist or empty kinds thought community's stance. Essentialist or those operating from the natural kinds thought community also need to be aware that there is more than one position for social construction. Emphasizing these particular conflicts between the thought communities is intended to help resolve the "intellectual antagonisms" that Mannheim discusses.

A cognitive sociological perspective is not without bias; however it allows researchers to gain insight into the thought communities being studied. By analyzing how

the different thought communities attended, perceived, and classified aspects of sexual orientation; it became clear that each position had its own unique picture of the world. Each of these three perspectives (natural/social/empty) functions as narratives describing sexual orientation from different points of view. All three of the perspectives are asserting narratives about sexual orientation, but they are also asserting images of the how the world works. Natural kinds present the image that sexual orientations are governed by the laws of nature. Social kinds present the image that sexual orientations are shaped by social forces. Empty kinds present the image that everything is subjective with the illusion that there is an objective reality. As Zerubavel points out, cognitive sociology is not about finding which point of view is the right view or truth; rather it is about analyzing the different narratives regarding "crucial" personal aspects that people are using to define and categorize sexual orientations.

Research Design

The objectives of this research project are to descriptively and conceptually analyze natural/social/empty thought communities' definitions and classifications of sexual orientation in peer-reviewed academic journals in the natural and social sciences. This research design is qualitative; using a combination of standard content analysis and grounded theory methods. The cognitive sociological acts of attending, perceiving, and classifying will serve as guidelines for discovering the various authors' definitions of sexual orientation in the articles. The definitions will be organized according to the thought community it is representing. For example, if a biologist is defining sexual orientation from an essentialist point of view; then I will point out what specific item of

sexual orientation the member of the natural kinds thought community is focusing on as relevant. I will also examine how rigid or fluid the categorizations of sexual orientation are in the definitions. Haslanger's theoretical questions concerning concept analysis will also be used to analyze the definitions of sexual orientation. The research design is divided into four sections: research questions, data collection, data analysis, and time/limitations.

Research Questions

The research questions that I am going to be asking are centered on the descriptive nature of this project. "In descriptive research, the researcher begins with a well-defined subject and conducts research to describe it accurately. The outcome of a descriptive study is a detailed picture of the subject (Neuman 2003: 30)." The first set of questions is designed to center the focus of the open and axial coding on the definitions of sexual orientation in the research articles. In the first set, there are three general questions or group of questions applying to the definitions themselves that are going to be analyzed in the journal article data: what concept of sexual orientation is given, what (natural) kind (if any) does the epistemic vocabulary track, and what is the point of having a concept of sexual orientation? A second set of questions suggested by Nippert-Eng (1995) are aimed at the uncovering the processes and techniques that the researchers are using in their definitions. Nippert-Eng suggests that it is important to ask what

'strategies, principles/assumptions, and practices' the researchers are using to 'create, maintain, and modify cultural categories' (7).

The purpose of the first question is to make the definition of sexual orientation as clear as possible in each journal article. "What concept of sexual orientation is being used?" This research question draws upon the methodological use of concept analysis. Stein argues that the idea behind concept analysis is that people in a society may have an intuitive sense of what a word means, but not have a definition of the actual word. Sexual orientation in past research has not been defined in a clear manner. Stein argues that the process of conceptual analysis "aims at making the meaning of a concept explicit. This involves trying to tease out a concept's meaning by considering candidate definitions of it and seeing how they fit with our intuitive sense of the concept's application (23)." Haslanger explains that this aspect of conceptual analysis is introspective.

The cognitive sociological approach is important when analyzing the conceptual nature of definitions. When analyzing the definition provided, I will be looking at each researcher's perception of what a sexual orientation actually is. Although it seems that the perceptions of sexuality would be quite similar, Zerubavel explains that different thought communities might also have different "optical lenses." "In other words, there is always more than only one cognitive standpoint from which something can be mentally approached. As a result, there is also more than just a single way in it can be 'correctly' perceived" (30).[13] Another aspect important to the general definitions provided is to note and classify what each thought community regards as relevant and irrelevant. The most

[13] Zerubavel argues that this does not rule out the existence of an objective reality. "It does, however, tie the validity of the different 'views' of that reality to particular standpoints rather than to some absolute Truth" (30).

important element of analyzing the concepts provided in the articles is to evaluate the rigid or fluid categorizations being made in the categorizations of sexual orientations.

The second question focuses on the extension of the concept. “What kind if any does our epistemic vocabulary track?” Haslanger argues that this question does not necessarily have to be talking about biological or natural kinds, but can also be talking about social kinds. She argues that a descriptive project can inquire into social aspects such as what it is to be an American or a democracy. Haslanger (2000) explains that a project like this may begin “by considering the full range of what has counted as such to determine whether there is an underlying (possibly) social kind that explains the temptation to group the cases together (33).” The descriptive analysis in this research project is used to identify any possible kinds (natural/social/empty) that our definitions may be tracking.

Haslanger emphasizes the importance of looking at a large social matrix to see what things have been included into a group and what has not been included into a group. Haslanger argues, “The first task is to collect cases that emerge in different (and perhaps competing practices; then, as before, one should consider if the cases constitute a genuine type, and if so, what unifies the type” (17). In this instance, I will be looking at the recent journal definitions and tracking how they classify sexual orientation. I will be looking at the aspects of sexual orientation that are included into the group (hetero/homo/bisexual) and what aspects are not included within recent definitions of sexual orientation.

The third question type deals with a more political aspect of the definitions. “What is the point of having a concept of sexual orientation?” A follow up question that Haslanger suggests is, “What concept (if any) would do that work best (32)? Haslanger

calls this analysis an analytic or ameliorative analysis. In her most recent work, she uses the term ameliorative instead of analytic. "I've cast my inquiry as an analytical—or what I here call an ameliorative—project that seeks to identify what legitimate purposes we might have (if any) in categorizing people…and to develop concepts that would help us to achieve these ends" (11). The ameliorative project provides a way for me to analyze the political implications (if any) the definitions in the journal articles may have. Haslanger argues, "How we classify bodies can and does matter politically, for our laws, social institutions, and personal identities are profoundly linked to understandings of the body and its possibilities" (52). This question focuses on any definitions used directly for political purposes.

The set of question pertaining to the strategic processes of the researchers is useful not only for deconstructing the definitions or concepts, but also to see the importance of items deemed as relevant and irrelevant by the researchers. The first part of the question deals with the strategies, principles/assumptions, and practices the researchers are using in their conceptual categories. Strategies refer to the plan of action by the researcher to achieve their general definition. Principles or assumptions refer to beliefs that are guiding a particular researcher's actions during the creation, maintenance, and modifications of their definition. Practice refers to the actual moment of defining the category by 'lumping' and 'splitting' different criteria from relevant to irrelevant. The second part of the question emphasizes the creation, maintenance, and modification of the researchers' definitions. Creation refers to the actual definition or concept being provided in the article. Maintenance refers to how the researcher is trying or not trying to make this definition or concept concrete or fluid. Modification refers to the definitions

ability to change either by being fundamentally altered or strengthened in its original form.

Data Collection

The data that are being used in this research project are definitions of sexual orientation found in peer-reviewed academic journals. I obtained thirty-four articles from scholarly journals in the social and natural sciences.[14] I used a variety of articles from different disciplines and journals for variety and theoretical saturation. I used the most recent articles available on Google Scholar's advanced search in the Georgia State University electronic article database. Thirty-four articles are used in order to stay within a two year time period. The natural, social, and empty kinds thought communities are all influenced by time restrictions because the focal interests on various aspects for classifying sexual orientation are influenced by a variety of structures and/or social factors such as; political and/or religious climate, research funding and past research. The social and empty kinds thought communities maybe more influenced by the social structures or political climate of a particular society in their definitions. The natural kinds thought community must have recent definitions because politics and funding may shape focal biological and/or psychological criteria for inclusion into a particular sexual orientation. Another reason that the natural kinds thought community is more accurately

[14] See Appendix C for a list of the articles.

represented by the most recent articles is that current research is often based on duplications and finding from past research; thereby possibly changing definitions within a period of a few years.

For example on Google Scholar, I have included articles only found electronically in the Georgia State University databases. An advanced search on Google Scholar was performed in order to narrow the amount of articles by setting parameters around the years of inclusion, disciplines, and word phrasing. Each article used in this study was published between the years of 2006 to 2007, in order to get the most recent definitions available. The disciplines of the academic journal articles are in biology, life sciences, environmental sciences, social sciences, arts, and humanities. The word-phrasing was used to narrow the articles by their titles. Each article has one or more of the following phrases in the title: homosexuality, heterosexuality, bisexuality, sexuality, gay, lesbian, and/or queer. The articles were presented in an apparently random order and were included into the study based on the above criteria and placement on the Google Scholar search results. The first articles to appear on the search results pages were the first included into the study, providing they had a Georgia State University electronic link with an available article attachment.

Data Analysis

A standard content analysis and grounded theory are the methods of data analysis. A standard content analysis is used as an aid for providing some basic percentages for certain aspects of the articles. The percentages refer to the articles discipline and theoretical kind represented. These aspects of the research article helped aid in theoretical

saturation by revealing basic information regarding their position into one of the three thought communities. Although more basic article information was initially thought to be relevant, these three items provide the information needed for accumulating theoretical saturation in the grounded theory method analysis.[15]

Procedures in grounded theory analysis can sometimes be ambiguous. Ralph LaRossa (2005) explains, "Given that details of the procedures can vary, it is imperative that GTM researchers be very specific about how they go about doing their analyses" (840). In this project, the data are analyzed in three stages: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. In the beginning of the open coding phase, I conducted a micro-analysis of the definitions/conceptions regarding sexual orientation in the articles. I recorded memos indicating possible concepts, variables/categories, contexts and actions/interactions. The point of this process is to emphasize the importance of the authors' choice of words and expressions. This is a lengthy task, but the results of a diligent word for word and line by line analysis proves to be beneficial at later points in the coding process (Corbin and Strauss 1998).

Corbin and Strauss state that "open coding is an analytic process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in data (101)." The open coding process requires that the researcher find common concepts so that the analysis can narrow in on these main areas. Corbin and Strauss say that when researchers are conceptualizing "we classify like with like and separate out that which we perceive as

[15] See Appendix A for the coding sheet. See Appendix B for the rules to the coding sheet.

dissimilar" (105). Next in the open coding process, I created variables/categories from my concepts.

The second stage of analysis is axial coding. The axial coding process functions to bring the focus back to the whole data that has been dissected in the open coding stage (Corbin and Strauss). Axial coding also seeks to relate the categories with their subcategories in order to gain more precise explanations. Corbin and Strauss state that subcategories "answer questions about the phenomenon such as when, where, why, who, how, and with what consequences, thus giving the concept greater explanatory power (125)." Barney Glaser (1978) presents another method for axial coding by introducing the six C's: "causes, contexts, contingencies, consequences, covariances, and conditions" (74). The focal category or variable is once again placed in the center as the focus for the theoretically coding of the six C's method. Glaser also suggests that in addition to the six C's, the researcher also code for process and pay attention to the strategies being used by individuals. (LaRossa 2005:847).

Coding for process is where the theory is taken from its form as simply a structure and is applied to an action or a process. Corbin and Strauss state that "one is purposely looking at action/interaction and noting movement, sequence, and change as well as how it evolves (changes or remains the same) in response to changes in context or conditions (167)." The structure found in the research acts as the context in which the action takes place. In this stage, I am focusing on the action or how researchers are defining sexual

orientation and noting changes in how it is evolving (or remaining the same) in different contexts such as subject fields and past social matrixes.

The selective coding process is where the theory becomes clear and concise. This is the stage when a central category is chosen on the basis of its centrality and importance in the research. Corbin and Strauss suggest that diagrams be made of the categories in order to see more clearly the most central category (153). LaRossa argues that the grounded theory method is "designed to facilitate the crafting of stories" that are theoretical. Theoretical stories are "accounts of how a complex of variables are interrelated" (850). This research project uses this coding format to create a theoretical story or account of how researchers are classifying/defining sexual orientation.

Results and Discussion

Content Analysis

The research consists of thirty-four journal articles focusing on sexuality and/or sexual orientation. The articles were published between the years 2006 (26.47%) and 2007 (73.53%). There were eight dominant disciplines represented in the articles: philosophy (8.82%), education (5.88%), social work (5.88%), law/criminal justice (5.88%), psychiatry (11.76%), psychology (26.47%), sociology (5.88%), geography (8.82%), and other (17.65%). The theoretical kinds are not equally represented in the data[16]. The reason for this is that the social kinds thought community had more diversity in their approach and ways of defining sexual orientation than the natural kinds or the empty kinds thought communities. The social kinds thought community has the highest

[16] See Table 1.

representation of articles (52.94% or n=18), while the natural kinds and empty kinds thought communities are equally represented (23.53% or n=8/23.53% or n=8). The natural kinds thought community relies heavily on the scientific method, which made theoretical saturation occur quickly. Similarly, the empty kinds thought community relies on a lack of definitions and categorizations; making theoretical saturation occur more quickly. The gender of the researchers in comparison to thought communities did not appear to be significant. A point of interest is that no exclusively female author presented research from a natural kinds' standpoint.[17] This may be a limitation of this research project.

Constitutive and operational definitions are also analyzed for the purpose of identifying the theory of sexuality being presented in each type of definition. Tables 3 and 4 depict the variations between the natural, social, and empty kinds' classifications of sexual orientation between the two types of definitions. The natural kinds thought community has the largest variation of theories of sexual orientation between the two definitions. In the constitutive definitions, the natural kinds thought community primarily use a behavioral theory of sexual orientation (20.59%). In the operational definitions, they shift to a primarily self-identification theory of sexual orientation (17.65%). For the operational definition, the natural kinds thought community do not use a solely behavioralist definition. The social kinds thought community uses a variety of theories of sexual orientation in both types of definitions. The self-identification theory of sexual orientation is most consistently used in both definitions by the social kinds thought community: constitutive definition (26.47%) and operational definition (41.18%). The empty kinds thought community uses queer theory primarily in their constitutive

[17] See Table 2.

definition (20.59%). The empty kinds thought community relies more on "other" theories of sexuality (5.88%) and non-applicable (8.82%).[18]

The content analysis of the focal groups chosen by the natural, social and empty kinds' researchers revealed that in only one combination of focal groups was there an overlap between thought communities. The natural and social thought communities both used the focal group combination of bisexuals/gays/heterosexuals/lesbians. The natural kinds thought community used this combination once, whereas the social kinds thought community used this combination twice. The other focal groups or combination of focal groups were used solely by each particular thought community.[19]

Grounded Theory Analysis

Principles for marking group membership, is the core variable that emerged during the axial coding stage of the data analysis. Corbin and Strauss identify the core variable as having "analytic power." "What gives it that power is its ability to pull the other categories together to form an explanatory whole…and [it] should be able to account for considerable variation within categories" (146). *Principles for marking group membership,* is the core variable because it is interrelated to categories on two levels of analysis. The first level of analysis is the overarching theoretical account of what is happening on a macro-level regarding the various types of principles that mark group membership across all three thought communities. The second level of analysis takes into account the process occurring within each type of principle for marking group membership within each individual thought community. The macro-level analysis

[18] See Tables 3 and 4.
[19] See Table 5.

focuses specifically on the three types of principles (natural/social/empty), strategies, and practices for creating, maintaining, and modifying group membership.[20] The location of the micro-level of analysis takes place within the "strategy" section of the macro-level of analysis.

Table 1: Gender and Discipline

Gender	**Male**	**Female**	**Both**	**Total**	**N**
Discipline					
Anthropology	2.94%	-----	-----	2.94%	1
Behavioral	------	2.94%	-----	2.94%	1
Comparative	2.94%	------	-----	2.94%	1
Criminal Justice	-----	------	2.94%	2.94%	1
Education	-----	2.94%	2.94%	5.88%	2
Gender Develop	-----	-----	2.94%	2.94%	1
Geography	-----	8.82%	-----	8.82%	3
History	2.94%	-----	-----	2.94%	1
Law	-----	-----	2.94%	2.94%	1
Nursing	2.94%	-----	-----	2.94%	1
Philosophy	-----	5.88%	-----	5.88%	2
Psychiatry	5.88%	-----	5.88%	11.76%	4
Psychology	8.82%	5.88%	11.76%	26.47%	9
Social Work	2.94%	2.94%	-----	5.88%	2
Sociology	-----	-----	5.88%	5.88%	2
Religious Studies	-----	2.94%	-----	2.94%	1
Totals	29.40%	32.34%	35.28%	100.00%	34

[20] See Table 6.

Table 2: Kinds and Gender

Kinds	**NK**	**SK**	**EK**	**Total**	**N**
Gender					
Male	11.76%	8.82%	5.88%	26.46%	9
Female	-----	17.65%	14.71%	32.36%	11
Both	11.76%	26.47%	2.94%	35.29%	12
Total	23.52%	52.93%	23.53%	100.00%	34

Table 3: Kinds and Constitutive Definitions

Kinds	**NK**	**SK**	**EK**	**Total**	**N**
Constitutive Definition					
Behavioral	20.59%	8.82%	-----	29.41%	10
Dispositional	2.94%	2.94%	-----	5.88%	2
Self-ID	-----	26.47%	-----	26.47%	9
Queer Theory	-----	-----	20.59%	20.59%	7
Self-ID/ Behavioral	-----	14.71%	-----	14.71%	5
Self-ID/ Queer Theory	-----	-----	2.94%	2.94%	1
Totals	23.53%	52.94%	23.59%	100.00%	34

Table 4: Kinds and Operational Definitions

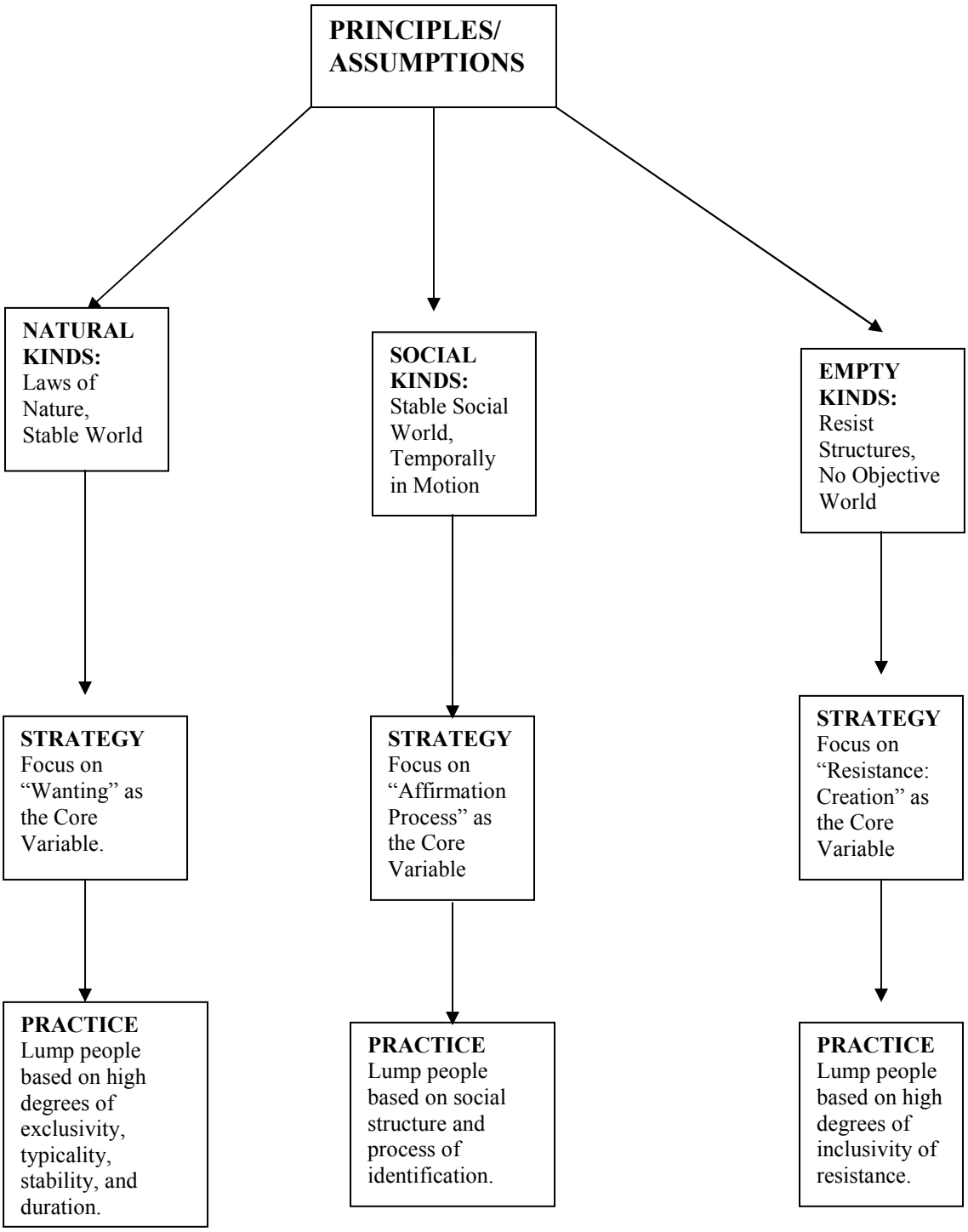
Kinds	**NK**	**SK**	**EK**	**Total**	**N**
Operational Definition					
Behavioral	-----	2.94%	-----	2.94%	1
Dispositional	-----	-----	-----	-----	0
Self-ID	17.65%	41.18%	-----	58.83%	20
Queer Theory	-----	-----	5.88%	5.88%	2
Self-ID/ Behavioral	5.88%	-----	-----	5.88%	2
Self-ID/ Queer Theory	-----	-----	2.94%	2.94%	1
N/A	-----	8.82%	5.88%	14.70%	5
Other	-----	-----	8.82%	8.82%	3
Totals	23.53%	52.94%	23.52%	100.00%	34

Table 5: Kinds and Focal Groups

Kinds	**NK**	**SK**	**EK**	**Total**	**N**
Focal Groups					
Bisexual Male/Female	-----	-----	-----	-----	0
Gay	-----	11.76%	-----	11.76%	4
Heterosexual Male/Female	-----	2.94%	-----	2.94%	1
Lesbian	-----	5.88%	-----	5.88%	2
Queer	-----	-----	11.76%	11.76%	4
B(M)G*[21]	-----	5.88%	-----	5.88%	2
B(M)GH(M)*	2.94%	-----	-----	2.94%	1
BGHL*	2.94%	5.88%	-----	8.82%	3
BGHLQ*	-----	2.94%	-----	2.94%	1
BGL*	-----	2.94%	-----	2.94%	1
BGLQ*	-----	-----	5.88%	5.88%	2
BH*	-----	2.94%	-----	2.94%	1
GH(M)*	2.94%	-----	-----	2.94%	1
GHL*	14.71%	-----	-----	14.71%	5
GL*	-----	11.76%	-----	11.76%	4
GQ*	-----	-----	2.94%	2.94%	1
LQ*	-----	-----	2.94%	2.94%	1
Totals	23.53%	52.92%	23.52%	100.00%	34

[21] B(M)G: Bisexual and Gay Males, B(M)GH(M): Bisexual, Gay, and Heterosexual Males. BGHL: Bisexuals, Gays, Heterosexuals, and Lesbians. BGHLQ: Bisexuals, Gays, Heterosexuals, Lesbians, Queers. BGL: Bisexuals, Gays and Lesbians. BGLQ: Bisexuals, Gays, Lesbians and Queers. BH: Bisexuals and Heterosexuals. GH(M): Gay and Heterosexual Males. GHL: Gays, Heterosexuals and Lesbians. GL: Gays and Lesbians. GQ: Gays and Queers. LQ: Lesbians and Queers.

Table 6: GTM Macro-Analysis



Principles for Marking Group Membership: Natural, Social and Empty

The principles or assumptions for marking group membership relate to the researchers' perceptions or "mental lenses" through which they view the world. Zerubavel argues, "…there is always more than only one cognitive 'standpoint' from which something can be mentally approached. As a result, there is also more than just a single way in which it can be 'correctly' perceived" (30). The principles or assumptions of the researchers often contribute to how the researchers perceive and process information. Zerubavel explains that there are "schematic mental structures" in place before perception (24). These mental structures refer to the principles and assumptions of the researchers. The natural, social and empty kinds thought communities each hold a set of different principles/assumptions that influence thought processes for encountering new information.

Natural Kinds Principles

The natural kinds' researchers perceive sexual orientation from the standpoint that they are real empirical objects in the world that can be analyzed. The principles/assumptions regarding the nature of the physical world are the "cognitive mental schemas" that researchers in the natural kinds thought communities are using to create definitions for sexual orientation. The scientific method has its roots in Greek philosophy, which emphasizes the notion that "the world is fundamentally static and unchanging" (Richard Nisbett 2003: 10). The assumption that the world is stable allows researchers the structure to examine physical objects in the world. Although few natural kinds' researchers believe that sexual orientation has an essence, they do believe that

sexual orientation has biological origins. Nisbett continues to explain, “The central, basic, sine qua non properties of an object constituted its ‘essence’ [origin], which was unchanging by definition, since if the essence of an object changed it was no longer the object but something else” (9). An indicator of these “cognitive tools” in the natural kinds’ principles/assumptions is the existence of origins in their work. Origins function as the “first cause” or “starting point” in the articles. The function of an origin in this research emphasizes the assumption within the natural kinds’ cognitive standpoint that there is a real, measurable, and largely stable nature for sexual orientations.

Each of the natural kinds’ researchers indicated a potential origin for sexual orientation. During the micro-level analysis of the natural kinds’ standpoint, origins emerged as a theoretically saturated variable that included the concepts: marking a form as fundamental or essential, originating (in vivo code), inheriting, and marking predisposition. For example, one set of researchers explain that sexual orientation has a prenatal or biological origin. “Evidence that handedness is related to sexual orientation suggests a biological (e.g. prenatal) basis to sexual orientation, because handedness is a marker of early neurodevelopment” (Article 4: 141). This same set of researchers goes on to say, “This immune response may eventually affect later male pregnancies, causing an alteration in brain development (e.g. hypothalamus) that affects sexual orientation” (141). Another set of researchers echo these results, saying, “Recent data have further shown that biological brothers increase the odds of homosexuality in later-born males” (Article 6: 1). Natural kinds’ researchers use origins, based on their principles/assumptions regarding the structure of the world, in order to create and maintain their definitions in research projects. The maintenance of natural kinds’ principles/assumptions for creating

definitions in research articles, results in strengthening/solidifying or reifying these definitions of sexual orientation.

Social Kinds Principles

The principles/assumptions for marking group membership for sexual orientation in the social kinds thought community relate to their perception of reality or the world. The social kinds' thought community perceives the world as being comprised of both ideas and objects. Ideas are perceived as entities existing only within particular social contexts or as being ontologically subjective. The idea of a person being marked for group membership is only possible within a social context. Sexual orientations are perceived, by the social kinds thought community, to be an idea construction because it relies on the intersection of social structures throughout temporal space for its social existence.

Berger and Luckman (1966) explain that through the process of objectivation human products "attain the character of objectivity." The process of object construction enables researchers in the social kinds' thought community to empirically measure epistemologically objective entities without naturalizing them. Avoiding the reification of these human products is a principle concern for social kinds' theorists and researchers. Berger and Luckman warn that once objectivation has occurred, reification is dangerously close. "In other words, despite the objectivity that marks the social world in human experience, it does not thereby acquire an ontological status apart from the human activity that produced it" (61). When social kinds' theorists internalize or adopt the

objective properties and attributes of these objects/products, it is necessary that they do so with awareness that the objects are still, ultimately, a human product.

The main principle/assumption underlying the social kinds' theoretical position is that social reality is relatively stable, yet in constant temporal motion. In other words, the social kinds thought community assumes that there are stable structures but through temporal motion there is not a "fixed" reality. Because, the social kinds' researchers perceive the social world to be relatively stable, it enables them to analyze the social structures upholding these definitions. Social structures reinforce the stability of the social world, while also being constantly in motion.

The influence that temporal movement has on social structures is a contextual variable that emerged in the social kinds' research articles. The structure of "temporal movement" can be "carved" into discrete entities with various degrees of mental voids among them. Zerubavel explains (1991) "The meaning of social acts and situations is largely dependent on their temporal context…In other words, time seems to constitute one of the major parameters of the context on which the meaning of social acts and situations depend" (101). Two examples of temporal shifts are indicated in articles 9 and 10. Article 9 indicates that "…people we *now* call 'gays' and 'lesbians' have been traveling to various places around the globe for hundreds of years" (49). Article 10 echoes a similar temporal cognitive social structure. "Although the social construction of the homosexual-heterosexual binary is a fairly recent phenomenon, it is likely that men who would now define themselves as gay have fathered children since ancient times"

(367). The researchers in these articles are making discrete temporal distinctions between the past and present conceptions of sexual orientation.

During the micro-level grounded theory analysis, social contexts emerged as the structures or foundations from which the actual definitions or characteristics for group membership were formed. The emergence of social structures in the social kinds' articles is an indicator of their idea that the world is both stable and temporally in motion. When social kinds' theorists analyze the social world, they must capture a "still frame" of the social world in motion. Because marking group membership for sexual orientation is an idea construction, the social context surrounding possible characteristics are always changing. The variable, "social structure," sets parameters around these social contexts within their respective times of occurrence in hopes of retaining the original meanings. The social kinds thought community use the variable "social structure" as a context from which to configure or define various aspects of group membership. Maintenance of these definitions is only possible within the same social parameters used to define them in the first place. The maintenance of group membership can occur only in the society from which it originated, the time period of origination, and under similar circumstances. Modifications of criteria for group membership can occur by changing the "social structure."

Empty Kinds Principles

The empty kinds thought community is characterized by their rejection of absolute truths or facts about the world. The principles/assumptions of the empty kinds thought community are that the world is not stable and that our classificatory schemes do

not discover real facts about the world. The empty kinds thought community rejects classificatory schemes based on their perception that there is no singular "general' meaning" or "point of reference" for any type of classification. The empty kinds thought community rejects all types of classificatory structures including space and time. Shannon Winnubst (2006) argues, "Spatially, this setting of boundaries and limits around defined units of property introduces an order of finitude into what was understood to be an infinite, boundless abundance" (33). The spatiality is rejected because it "contains" people/objects into classes unnecessarily. Temporality also is perceived to be a structure that constricts people. "It carves power into our bodies and into the world, telling where we came from and where we are placed in this world and its social map of power" (152). The principles/assumptions of the empty kinds thought community is that categorization and demarcation, especially when applied to group membership is a misguided endeavor because there is no singular meaning that can be shared by any of its members.

The principles/assumptions of the empty kinds' thought community that no two people can share the experience of a singular classification and that there are no "significant" or "real" characteristics for classifying people into group membership seem to be in conflict by the existence of their own shared thought "community." There are theoretically saturated indicators that the empty kinds thought communities have similar assumptions about the nature of their group and criteria for inclusion into group membership. The variable criteria that emerged for group membership into the empty kinds thought community are: resistance of normative structures, resistance through creation, and possible types of creation. The covariances influencing these variables

include inclusivity, fluidity, ambiguity, and playfulness.[22] The empty kinds thought community may perceive itself to be outside the realm of structure because their methods for acceptance into group membership is highly inclusive, fluid, ambiguous, and playful in regards to the possible ways of being and doing by their group members. While their criteria for inclusion may be "capturing" a multiplicity of subjective identities, their cognitive existence as a collective knowledge structure is firmly intact.

Nippert-Eng's (2005) concepts of "boundary play" and "boundary work" emphasize the empty kinds' thought process for inclusion into group membership. "Boundary play' is the visible, imaginative manipulation of shared cultural cognitive categories for the purpose of amusement" (302). Nippert-Eng argues that in order for "boundary play" to occur, players must share knowledge of normative structures. The first part of the thought process for the empty kinds' thought community is based on the "resistance of social structures" variable, indicating that there is a shared knowledge of cognitive structures. The next point that Nippert-Eng argues must be in place is "categorical imagination" or having a flexible or fluid mental cognitive scheme. This cognitive mental scheme is a principle characteristic of the empty kinds' thought community. The third characteristic of boundary play is the ability to "effectively translate cognitive flexibility" (305). This cognitive ability is captured in the data through the variable, "resistance through creation."

The empty kinds' thought process found to be operating in the micro-level analysis is specified in article 34.

> The *activity* of queer is the "queering" of culture, ranging from …reinterpretation…to…deconstruction. As activity, we have seen the assertion of "queer" identity, notably held as lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual, and

[22] See Table 7.

> transsexual, as variants of human behavior that have rights on their own terms. As *theory,* queer's derivation from postmodernism and poststructuralism leads to the rejection of all categorization as necessarily produced by dominant "regulatory regimes" (28).

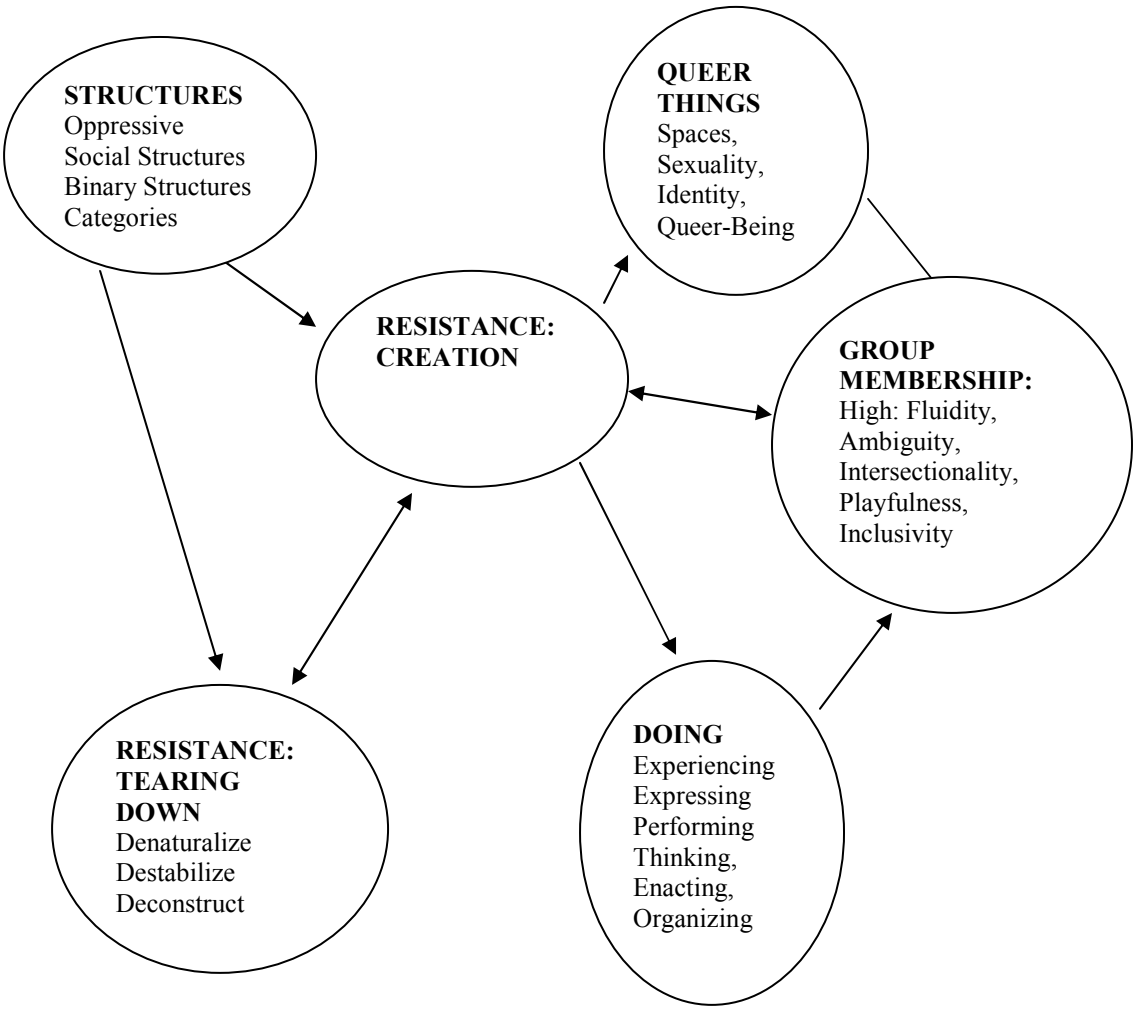
This passage further indicates that there is a reason for inconsistent tendency for some researchers to "lump" lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender together under the umbrella term "queer." The difference between actually queering something and the principles/assumptions of this thought communities are viewed inconsistently, which is what this passage seems to suggest.

Article 34 is the only article that notes or marks empty kinds' researchers using queer as an umbrella term for a variation of sexual identities. It may be an outlier in this particular research or may simply be a theoretically unsaturated variable due research restrictions. Sullivan (2003) notes that some queer theorists do place these types of identities under an umbrella term due to the lengthy amount of identities needing to be listed. Although this umbrella term does not deconstruct old categories, it is perceived to be needed to create "solidarity." Sullivan argues, "In effect then, the term queer can at times be used in such a way as to imply the existence of some sort of queer solidarity…[but]…the use of queer as an umbrella term can…have the effect of (mis)representing us as one big happy (queer) family" (45). Although this variable was not theoretically saturated in this research project, past literature suggests that this is occurring in other research and theoretical projects.

The empty kinds thought community's principles/assumptions for "queer" group membership is based on their perception of instability and multiplicity within identity categories. Nippert-Eng's "boundary play" model reflects the empty kinds' cognitive thought process for marking "queer" group membership. The principles/assumptions of

this thought community create criteria for group membership by perceiving its possible members as being those who resist structures and resist through creation of new ways of being and doing. The principles/assumptions of the empty kinds thought community maintain classifications for group membership by remaining in opposition to social structure. These classifications are subject to becoming stable if they are continued to be maintained, which could lead to “queer” becoming a social kind.

Table 7: Empty Kinds GTM Analysis



Strategies for Marking Group Membership: Natural, Social, and Empty

Strategies for marking group membership involve mental focusing or separating the relevant from the irrelevant and framing. Zerubavel (1991) points out that the first process involved in focusing is separating the figures from the background (6). Certain characteristics of sexuality are considered relevant and irrelevant to each of the three

theoretical standpoints. What is considered worth focusing on or ignoring is related to the principles or assumptions from which each researcher is operating. The act of framing refers to placing a "mental bracket" around characteristics considered relevant. In this project, the social and natural kinds' theoretical standpoints use two different types of frames. Zerubavel (1991) defines a frame as being "…characterized not by its contents but rather by the distinctive way in which it transforms the content's meaning" (11). The definitions for sexual orientation cognitively can be regarded as frames because the meaning of the content is changed depending upon what type of definition (constitutive or operational) is being used.

The natural kinds, social kinds, and empty kinds all have a large frame. Only the natural and social kinds have a small frame. The large frame refers to the constitutive definitions they use in their research articles. "A constitutive definition defines a construct with other constructs. For instance, we can define 'weight by saying that it is the 'heaviness' of objects. Or we can define 'anxiety' as 'subjectified fear' (Kerlinger and Lee 200: 28). The constitutive definition allows greater explanatory power on a theoretical level. The small frame refers to the operational definition. The operational definitions tend to be more basic than the constitutive definitions. "The operational definition assigns meaning to a construct or variable by specifying the activities or 'operations' necessary to measure it. In short, it defines or gives meaning to a variable by spelling out what the investigator must do to measure it" (Kerlinger and Lee 28). The empty kinds do not have operational definitions because their principles and assumptions

regarding sexuality focus on the resistance of an empirical structure for measurement and organization.

Natural Kinds Strategies

The strategies being used to create a definition for sexual orientation refer to specific styles of mental focusing by researchers operating from the natural kinds' principles/assumptions. The close relationship between Greek philosophy and the scientific method combine to form the natural kinds' principles/assumptions, resulting in a unique natural kinds' style of mental focusing. Nisbett argues, "But still more basic to Greek philosophy is its background scheme, which regarded the object in isolation as the proper focus of attention and analysis" (10). The natural kinds' researchers often isolate sexual orientation from surrounding (primarily social) contexts in order to examine its attributes or properties. The properties and attributes of sexual orientation for natural kinds are highly influenced by their guiding principles/assumptions or ways of perceiving information regarding sexuality.

The relevant properties and attributes that emerged in the micro-level of analysis for the natural kinds' large frames or constitutive definitions involves one or more of the following criteria: claiming a particular identity, engaging in sexual acts with a person of a particular sex/gender, having sexual preferences, and/or sharing similar (sometimes sex-specific) origins.[23] The process that emerged among these properties and attributes is largely a causal process. The focus of these researchers' inclusion into group membership is the core variable: "wanting". Wanting refers to marking sexual preference, interest, thoughts, feelings, attraction, and arousal. The "wanting" variable was not able to be

[23] See table 8.

captured within the standard content analysis, but is significantly referenced as the core variable within the grounded theory analysis. The "wanting" variable in this research appears to be more influential than the "doing" variable, which is often not the case in past literature.

The process begins with "origins" because they are the emergent causes that influence the conditional "doing" variable, and then ultimately influence the "wanting" variable. "Doing" refers to performing and engaging in sexual activities. The condition leading from the focal variable to the consequence variable is "identification;" this variable refers to self-identification or self-reporting of sexual identity by the research subjects. The consequence variable is "group membership" because it is the goal that the researchers are working towards defining.

"Origin" is the variable that gives this definition theoretical power. Without the inclusion of origins within the natural kinds' constitutive definition, it would merely be an operational definition. The other variables can be measured empirically. For example, the "identification" variable was measured in all the natural kinds' research articles by asking the subjects their sexual orientations. "The first item asked: What is your sexual orientation? Participants answered from a drop-down menu, the choice being Heterosexual (straight), homosexual (gay/lesbian), and bisexual" (Article 6: 3). Similar questions were asked regarding the variables "doing" and "wanting." "We determined sexual orientation by using two questions: one concerning the participant's sexual attraction toward men and women (i.e. sexual thoughts and feelings)…and the other concerning his sexual behaviors (i.e. actual experiences) (Article 4: 142). The operational definition is more heavily focused on by the natural kinds' perspective because it is used

to measure the variables' properties for inclusion into the "group membership" variable often for the purpose of uncovering some natural or biological basis or origin for sexual orientation.

The strategy that the natural kinds' thought community is using to maintain its definitions for group membership is by continuing to perceive and promote the perception that homosexuals and heterosexuals are two virtually discrete entities. Zerubavel (1991) argues,

> In order to maintain our experience of the world as made up of discrete islands of meaning, we must perceive the insular character of mental entities—that is, carefully insulate them from one another. The stretches of void we visualize among them clearly enhance our perception of their separateness. The existence of such gaps must therefore be constantly reaffirmed (33).

The mental space perceived by natural kinds in regards to homosexuals and heterosexuals is vast because the natural kinds' assume that these two entities have different origins. The maintenance of these ways of perceiving sexual orientation also results in a reified modification of the natural kinds' definitions.

Social Kinds Strategies

The strategies being used to create definitions for sexual orientation in the social kinds' thought community is by sharing a similar "optical socialization" or mental focus. Social kinds' researchers share similar ways of focusing on the existence of social structures, yet they attend to different types of social structures. Zerubavel (1997) explains, "Such 'optical' socialization takes place at the level of entire professions as well as particular 'schools' or 'paradigms' within professions…As a result, one finds considerable differences in mental focusing (49). A wide range of disciplines emerged in

the social kinds' research articles, yielding different social contexts for "mental focus." The various disciplines representing the social kinds' thought community include: women studies, social work, criminal justice, sociology, psychology, philosophy, anthropology, nursing, law, psychiatry and education.

Four contexts for social structure emerged during the grounded theory micro-level analysis of the social kinds' articles: structure of physical health, institutional structure, structure of discrimination and cultural structure. The structure of physical health is the context from which the social kinds' researchers evaluate relevant characteristics for group membership. The "structure of physical health" context indicates an emphasis on sexual behavior (doing) and identity (identification) within the gay male 'community.' In these articles, the operational definition for inclusion into group membership reflects this context of physical health. Article 15 defines group membership for gay men as follows:

> Men aged 18 and older who reported sex of any kind with a man since age 14 or who self-identified as gay or bisexual were considered eligible to participate…A broad definition of gay and other MSM helped ensure enrollment of men who might not otherwise be included on the basis of self-labels for sexual orientation or infrequent same gender sexual activity (272).

This definition focuses on the conditional variable "age" to be important under the context of sexual health. Possibilities for restricting the age of past experience may be because the researcher does not considers sexual identification to occur by this age or the researcher does not think fourteen year olds are old enough to be engaging in particular sexual health situations. The variable "doing" is the ultimate focus in this article because the "identification" variable is negated by the inclusion of people who do not have to

identify. The "identification" variable is simply used to track instances of "doing." Due to the sexual health context of this article, behavior is the primary focus for the definition.

Another indicator of focus for the social kinds' thought community on the behavioral or "doing" variable occurs in article 17. "All men were asked to indicate their relationship status and also provide behavioral information about any sexual partners (i.e. number of partners, type of sexual behaviors)" (1). The purpose of creating a group membership in this physical health context is to track people in 'communities' that may be having a shared experience of something potentially harmful to this social groups' health. The purpose for article 17 was to track gay men on the basis of AIDS prevention due to 'condom fatigue' in order to learn more about this phenomenon.

Article 19 also tracks men for the purpose of learning more about a phenomenon: the combination of drug and sexual identity. The primary focus in this article is the variable "identification." In this article, the constitutive definition emphasizes a focus on the combination of two separately perceived identities merging into a single inseparable entity. "Stimulant drugs, such as methamphetamine, are appealing to gay men because the drug counteracts pre-existing anxieties about sex. For some gay men and bisexual men, methamphetamine becomes part of their sexual identity" (76). The operative definition simply specifies that one must self-identify as gay or bisexual and report more that six instances of 'club drug' use within the timeframe of a year. The physical health structures in these articles represent the purpose or causes for needing a group

membership and also influence how researchers think about what should be included for group membership to be relevant within this context.

The institutional structure refers to the researchers' focus on organizations that are perceived to influence members of a community. The specific institutional structure is high school and college environments. The constitutive definition in article 29 emphasizes the relationship between context and possible empirical or operational definitive characteristics. "The importance of connecting the environment to identity is particularly relevant with the LGB student population, given that the college environment is often the context for the coming out process" (216). The operational definition tracks group membership through the variable "identification," requiring the participants to self-identify their sexual identity. This article also indicates the reflexivity of the classification processes by arguing that these LGB identities reflect back upon the social context, thereby changing the context in various positive or negative ways. This article, as well as others based on "institutional structure" indicated that the amount of people who self-identified in a particular environment resulted in a change in the environment, ultimately affecting the amount of people who self-identified in the future. Haslanger identifies this type of construction as a discursive construction.

"Structures of discrimination" influence the social kinds' definitions for group membership because the researcher must specify the type of group. For example, homosexuals are considered 'sexual minorities,' thus making their social position in society different than heterosexuals. Heterosexism and homophobia are "structures of discrimination" that influence the inclusion of criteria for group membership in an 'oppressed' group versus the inclusion of criteria for group membership in a 'dominant'

group. Strategies the social kinds' thought community use to achieve equality or to dismantle the "structure of discrimination" is to focus on the similarities and needs for similarity between the dominant and marginal group.

Social kinds' researchers often use the strategy of focusing on the similarities of characteristics between marginal and dominant group membership in order to change/end the context or "structure of discrimination." For example, article 16 focuses on the similarity between two different groups by using a concept of shared "personhood." "If it is accepted that persons regard their sexual attraction to persons of the same sex as integral to their personality, it would follow that an encroachment of that aspect of their person would constitute a violation of their integrity as a person and to their inherent human dignity" (90). This researcher is focusing on the concept of a shared humanity. Martha Nussbaum (1995) argues, that this theoretical position "…instructs us to focus on what all human beings share, rather than on the privileges and achievements of a dominant group, and on needs and basic functions, rather than power or status" (124). Nussbaum suggests that this approach is the best "starting point" for "reflection" and "claims for justice" (125).

Article 18 provides an example of how social kinds' researchers are emphasizing the differences in the form of domination/subordination between heterosexuals and homosexuals in order to obtain equality or sameness. In this social context, the definition of sexual orientation is based on the combination of sexual identification and identification as a victim of intimate violence. "Existing biases against gay and lesbian lifestyles and the dominance of heterosexual attitudes within the police department and the courtroom have not created the same atmosphere of legal support and resolution that

is offered to heterosexual victims of violence" (381). The focus in this definition is the need for similar treatment.

"Cultural structures" are the final set of social structures that influences definitions for sexual orientations. "Cultural structures" refer to the ways in which different societies produce distinct ways of perceiving and focusing information within the context of a particular culture/society. Zerubavel (1997) argues, "Society, in short, plays a major role in organizing our 'optical' predisposition…many of the mental lenses through which we come to 'see' the world are actually *socio*mental lenses grounded in particular social environments" (31). The principle/assumption that criteria for group membership are social products is focused on by social kinds' attention to cultural differences.

Article 13 indicates, "If a masculine Latino male engages in homosexual behavior, his masculinity will not be called into question as long as he remains the dominant partner. Many Latino men who have sex with men will label themselves heterosexual and, in many instances, marry and raise a family" (13). The criterion for "heterosexual" identification in this culture is not based on exclusive same-sex behavior. This cultural context also places a focus on the dominant partner in male same-sex behavior as criterion for a particular sexual identification. Article 9 also indicates the culturally bounded nature of group membership. The researcher notes that a Barbadian male interviewee "revealed how homosexuality was not uniformly organized around the world and that one should not expect to find a scene in Barbados that duplicated London, Toronto, or Amsterdam" (58). "Cultural structure" is a social context that focuses on the 'mental fences' between societies. Characteristics for group membership cannot be

generalized to all societies because "cultural structures" for organizing information are not always similar. In other words, societies do not perceive individuals to be organized into sexual based categories in the same ways or some times not at all; making a generalized group membership impossible or an irrelevant endeavor.

The social kinds thought community is using mental focusing strategies based on principles/assumptions that reflect their social world view for creating definitions within various social contexts. These types of definitions are maintained by continued focus on the world as a social product. The focal criteria for group membership need to be focused on as social products that occur within particular contexts. Focal criteria for group membership are modified only when there are shifts in the social contexts from which they are derived.

Empty Kinds Strategies

The empty kinds thought community strategically focuses on the resistance of social structures and the creation of new possibilities for being and doing as ways of resisting structure. Empty kinds' researchers focus on social structures they perceive to be sites for resistance or dismantling. Nippert-Eng suggests that this is the first criteria for "boundary play." "Boundary play centers on the classificatory boundary between two related, cultural-cognitive categories" (304). In article 11, the empty kinds theorist is focusing on "…heterosexuality's normative status and attempts to denaturalize and destabilize existing categories of sexual orientation and of gender…and opposes the use of labels to describe sex, gender, and desire" (22). Article 30 echoes these results by suggesting that sexual categories should be suspended. Article 31 suggests that the empty

kinds' perspective is to resist or deconstruct "authoritative knowledge." The empty kinds' theorist in article 32 points out that some structures being deconstructed that are not popularly discussed are: ethics, methodology and disciple. Article 34 indicates that definitions are also elements needing to be deconstructed, which is why empty kinds' theorists attempt to not define characteristics for group membership. Article 12 indicates that "an understanding of identity as being linguistically and ontologically incapable of expressing complex human behaviors" is the focus of resistance underlying the need to create new possibilities. The empty kinds' theorists are focusing on these sites of resistance for the purpose of creating new ways of resisting.

The core variable, "resisting through creation" is the most important method of resistance and the main criteria for "queer" group membership by the empty kinds thought community. There are three theoretically saturated types of creative resistance that emerged in the data: space, doing, and being. Nippert-Eng's model of "boundary play" reveals how resistance of normative structures or boundaries and the creation of new boundaries relate in process. Nippert-Eng suggests that "players" need to share a normative understanding of how two or more categorical "boundaries" are related and then whether or not they wish to use this as a focal point for "playing." Nipper-Eng explains, "A boundary player's skill includes the ability to sustain play by cleverly inferring or referencing the 'normal' ways in which one draws the categorical line while proposing and helping oneself and others to consider the world implied by the alternate cognitive configurations" (305). Article 11 indicates that a popular focus for queer members is gender and sexuality. "To be queer, is 'to be as visible as possible' and 'to reveal the twists of gender and sexuality (of whatever sexual orientation)" (23). The

empty kinds members "play" with the boundaries between gender and sexuality, while the 'normal' is being referenced by those who are upholding traditional structures and not engaging in their "boundary play."

Space is a "resistance through creation" because it has been designed as a place of "boundary play." Nippert-Eng argues, "Space is experienced, not merely imagined. It is especially good at letting us understand, viscerally, the results of our more heady play, fusing mind-body distinctions into forceful, all-encompassing engagements. Here, then, in the realm of the spatial, we find the perfect place for a play date…" (319). Spatial entities the data focused specifically on are bathhouses and clubs. Article 31 indicates, "The central objective…is the 'queering' of identities through the creation of a space where alternative cultural practices could be performed, denaturalizing and confounding normalized ways of doing and being" (105). The researchers in this empty kinds' article continue to emphasize that these 'queered' spaces are sites for challenging their own singular lesbian identities. The particular spaces being created in some of these articles are "bathhouses." Bathhouses are considered creations that support "casual, kinky, and public sex" (100). These types of spaces ultimately provide an environment for playing with the typical norms surrounding gender and sexuality.

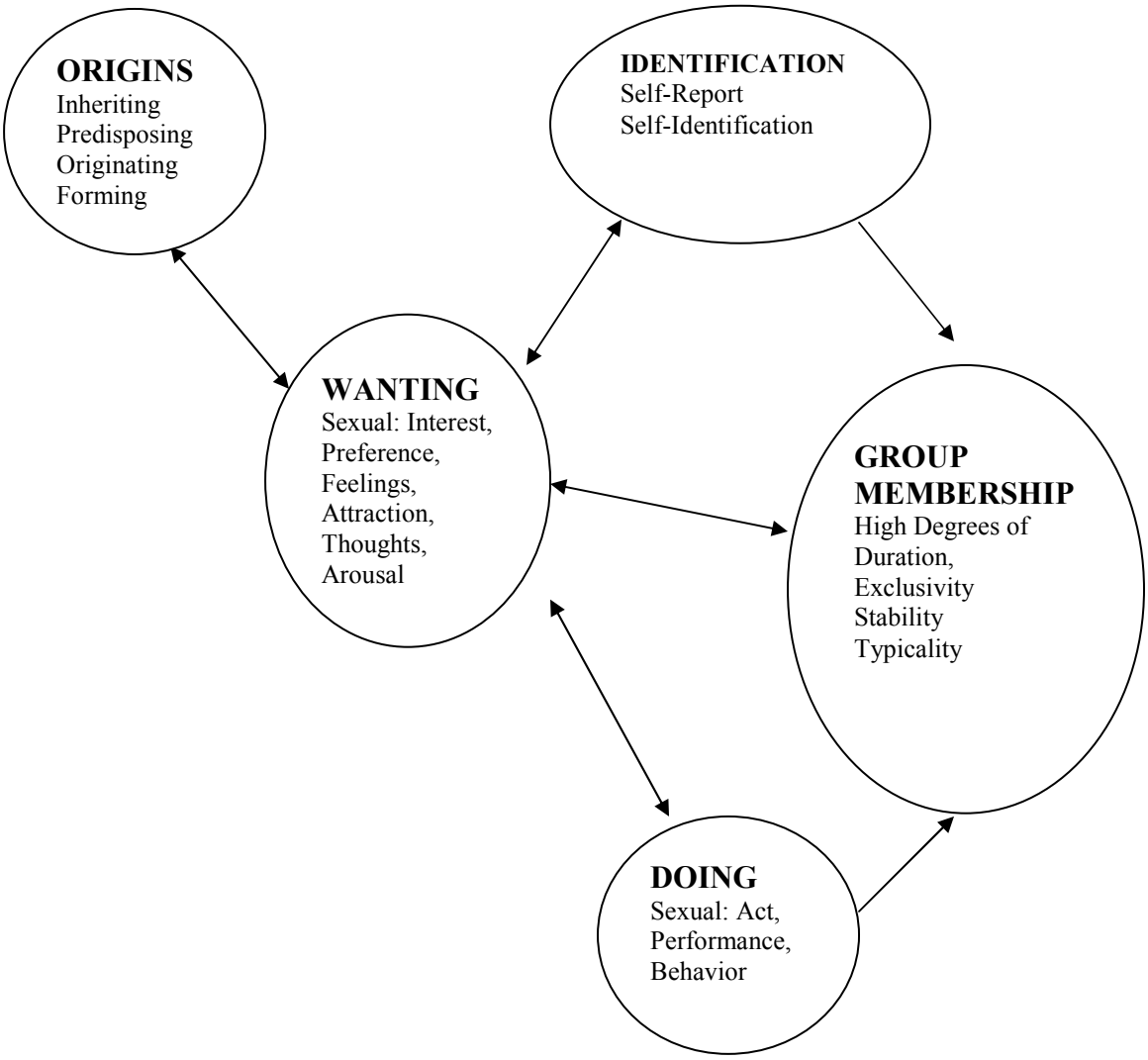
The "doing" and "being" variables being created through resistance are also focused on by the empty kinds' thought community. They also represent "boundary play" because the participants are actively redrawing boundary lines to engage in their play. Article 11 indicates some new ways of "doing" that are created through resistance. These new 'queer' ways of doing are: engaging in gender play, sling rooms, cross dressing, and "guiltless friendly sex" (27). Article 31 indicates sexual activity or "doing" that occurred

at a bathhouse event. “Several informants asked us directly whether we had participated in any of the sexual activities that had been planned by the organizers of the event (e.g. erotic massage, g-spot discovery, sexual counseling, lap dances)” (104). The idea of “being” queer is represented in the articles as a way of being resistant to structural forces. Article 11 indicates that “being” a queer subject is remaining in a state of resistance. “We maintained that the state renders invisible any attempt by the TWBC to open up a space for queer subjects to flourish” (19). Empty kinds’ primary focus is on resistance through both deconstructionist projects and the creation of new possibilities for “space,” “doing” and “being.”

The strategies for the empty kinds thought community is their focus on both the ways of resistance and the products of resistance. The primary focus is on the thought process for “creating through resistance” because this is the underlying story regarding their principles and methods for inclusion into group membership. These focusing strategies are being maintained by their thought community through their exposure in journals and books. These strategies of mental focusing are modified either by the thought community shifting the mental focus in an act of resistance or by strengthening their strategy of mental focusing; making it more concrete and less abstract.

Table 8: Natural Kinds GTM Analysis

Causes: Origins **Core Variable: Wanting** **Consequences: Group Membership**



Practices for Marking Group Membership: Natural, Social, and Empty

The practices for marking group membership are how the natural, social and empty kinds' thought communities are classifying or drawing boundaries around what is included their definitions. The process of classifying is related to what each thought

community perceives as relevant or irrelevant. The thought communities' lump together characteristics they perceive to be similar and split characteristics perceived to be different. Each of the thought communities has different ways for lumping and splitting criteria for group membership. While some thought communities perceive large mental voids between two entities, others view these differences as minor and not worth mentioning. Zerubavel (1991) explains, "Classifying presupposes an ability to ignore 'trivial' differences among variants of the same mental entity, and what often looks like an inability to differentiate may very well be a deliberate disregard for negligible differences that 'make no difference" (63). Classification relies on the thought communities' principles/perceptions and strategies/focusing in order to separate or combine variables for group membership, therefore; each group draws the lines of classification differently.

Natural Kinds Practices

The thought processes for categorizing people into group membership are based on the principles/assumptions of the natural kinds thought community (i.e. the scientific method). Nisbett explains, "Once the object is taken as the starting point, then many things follow automatically: The attributes of the object are salient; the attributes become the basis of categorization of the object; the categories become the basis of rule construction; and events are then understood as the result of objects behaving in accordance with rules" (10). The strategy of focusing, for the natural kinds thought community, results in the following variable attributes being discovered: "origins,"

"doing," "wanting," "identification" and "group membership." The practice stage of the natural kinds' thought process of classification involves rule construction.

The natural kinds' practices for classifying people into groups are based on a strict matter of degree for the covariances: exclusivity, typicality, duration and stability. These covariances indicate that the natural kinds' style of classification is rigid; defined by sharp demarcations among islands of meanings. Zerubavel (1997) describes a rigid-minded thought community as having,

> …an inflexible mind-set distinctively characterized by strict adherence to a purist, "either/or" logic. [And]…typically cherish razor sharp, clear-cut distinctions and are generally averse to ambiguous hybrids and in-betweens that might challenge the perceived mutual exclusivity of their categories…[T]hey are highly preoccupied with boundaries and extremely obsessed with preserving mental purity and avoiding mental contamination (56).

The natural kinds' categorization of people into group membership is precise, containing only limited degrees of variation.

The characteristic of rigid classifications for natural kinds' researchers emerged during the micro-analysis of their definitions. The "identification" variable in some articles was a rigid distinction between one discrete group and another discrete group. For example, "Participants' partners were divided into four groups based on sex and whether the relationship context was homosexual or heterosexual" (3). The classifications for inclusion into the category homosexual or heterosexual in many of these research articles involves the degree to which the subjects fit their prototypical expectations. An example of this emphasis on clear rigid definitions is article 3. "Bisexual participants were removed because the major aim of the experiments was to predict heterosexual versus homosexual orientation and those without a clear category could not be used…" (3).

Article 3 also indicates that an emphasis on the degree of exclusivity is a common practice for researchers in the natural kinds thought community. “For the sake of simplicity in this study, only participants who described themselves as mainly heterosexual or homosexual on this measure were included in the data analysis” (4). Article 1 also indicates the exclusive nature of covariance on the “identification” variable. “Only participants reporting as ‘exclusively heterosexual’ or ‘exclusively homosexual’ took part” (3). Article 2 described a need to examine self-identified homosexuals for the reason that it “should provide dramatic insight into male sexuality and female sexuality in their undiluted states” (2). These articles focus on a need for high degrees of exclusivity to be reported by their subjects in order to fit their classifications for group membership.

Degrees of exclusivity also seem to influence other variables besides “identification.” Article 4 indicates that the “wanting” and “doing” variables are also categorized by the natural kinds researchers based on degree of exclusivity, although not nearly as rigidly as the “identification” variable. They determined sexual orientation based on the degrees of attraction toward men and women “ranging from 1 (exclusively homosexual/gay) to 7 (exclusively heterosexual/straight).” They also determined sexual orientation based on the degrees of sexual behaviors “ranging from 1 (exclusively homosexual/gay) to 4 (equally heterosexual/homosexual) formed the gay and bisexual group, whereas those averaging greater than 4 up to 7 (exclusively heterosexual) formed

the heterosexual group" (142). The variables "wanting" and "doing" have more allowable variance than the "identification" variable.

Zerubavel (1991) argues, "Human behavior can vary over an enormous range, but each community draws a symbolic set of parentheses around a certain segment of that range and limits its own activities within that narrower zone" (16). In regards to the "wanting" and "doing" variables, the natural kinds thought community is generally looking for the clear prototypical cases, but do allow for cases with some degrees of variance. Article 6 is and indicator of this tendency to allow variance based on the "wanting" variable. "The second and third items asked: How sexually attracted are you to men, and How sexually attracted are you to women. The response options for each item represented seven degrees of preference with the end-points labeled 'not at all' and 'very" (3). Although this particular case does allow for variance, the natural kinds thought community only allows for a small range of variance for the "wanting" and "doing" variables.

The narrow parameters for identification and slightly less narrow parameters for "wanting" and "doing" indicate that these researchers are looking for typicality as a characteristic of group membership. The focus that the natural kinds thought community places on the "clear cases" or "undiluted cases" indicates the importance of typicality for their definitions. The principles/assumptions of the natural thoughts community guide this type of focus because they believe that sexual orientation has a biological origin. In order for natural kinds' researchers to discover or provide convincing evidence for a particular origin, they must have clear or unquestionable cases for group membership inclusion. The small frame or operational definition is needed to be more specific than

the large frame or constitutive definition in order to capture 'mostly discrete' instances of group membership. The subjects marked for inclusion into group membership in the small frame are then able to produce various results regarding origins in the large frame.

Typicality or consistency in the "wanting," "doing" and "identification" variables is important for natural kinds thought communities. Article 6 is an example of the importance of typicality or consistency for group membership inclusion.

> Participants were screened according to the consistency of their responses to the three sexual orientation items. Consistency was determined as follows: If a male participant described himself as "Heterosexual (straight)" on the first item, then he had to report more attraction to women than to men on the other items. Conversely, if a male described himself as "Homosexual (gay)" on the first item, then he had to report more attraction to men than to women on the other items. If a male participant described himself as "Bisexual" on the first item, then he had to report at least some attraction (i.e. more than "Not at all") both to men and to women. The same rules were applied, *mutatis mutandis,* to the female participants (164).

The ideal case for natural kinds researchers are high degrees of typicality among these three variables. For example, an ideal case for this thought community would be high in exclusivity for the "identification" variable, high in frequency for the "doing" variable, and high in exclusivity of attraction/preference/interest toward a particular sex/gender in the "wanting" variable. Although membership does allow for slightly more variance, this represents the natural kinds' ideal member. Variance is tolerated for the natural kinds thought community in the "wanting" and "doing" variables, but not the "identification" variable. The variance for "wanting" and "doing" is only a short "mental distance" from their "core essence" (Zerubavel 1991: 74).

Stability and duration are also covariances that influence group membership for natural kinds' researchers. Stability and duration refer to the degrees in which a variable

remains the same for a certain duration or *length* of time. Article 3 is an example of how these two covariances are interrelated in regards to the "wanting" variable. "Sexual orientation is a multi-faceted construct and can vary over time and circumstances. However, most individuals possess a relatively stable tendency to seek sexual partners of the same gender, other gender, or both genders. This tendency is what we define as sexual orientation" (4). In this example, the researchers emphasize a "relatively" stable tendency for inclusion. This means that the researchers are lumping those who express more stability into a group and splitting those who express little stability on the "wanting" variable. The duration refers to the length of stability. If a subject expresses a stable tendency to be attracted to a particular sex/gender, then the duration can be inferred to be acceptable for inclusion. This is because stability requires an X amount of time to become meaningful. If the researchers are satisfied by the degree of stability, it follows that they must also be satisfied by the length of duration.

In many cases, high degrees of stability and duration are assumed in the variables. The principles/assumptions of the natural kinds' thought community indicate that they believe the world is structured and that certain phenomenon operates under the laws of nature. This 'fixed' or 'unchanging' principle/assumption carries over into the assumed high levels of the "stability" and "duration" covariances. The "identification" variable, for example, is often assumed to be "stable" vs. "unstable" and to exist in the individual "over a somewhat substantial length of time" vs. "a short unsubstantial length of time." The "identification" variable is assumed by this thought community to remain largely stable over time. High degrees of "stability" and "duration" provide structure for this variable, as well as other variables. The assumption that these variables are highly

"stable" and exist over a substantial length of time is imbedded in their assumptions about the world being a "stable" place.

The natural kinds thought community is creating a definition for sexual orientation by classifying sexual orientation according to variables perceived as relevant and indicating that within these variables only moderately high to high degrees of variance are acceptable. The practice of classifying to create a definition of sexual orientation is maintained by its continued use as both a reliable and valid tool for measurement and theory. The wide use of a definition has a tendency to become modified as 'naturalized' or 'reified' over time; making the definition more concrete or 'common sense' among researchers and also the general population.

Social Kinds Practices

The social kinds thought communities' process for classifying people into sexual orientations reflects their perceptions of the social world as being relatively stable and in temporal motion. The micro-level of analysis of the social kinds' articles suggests that "social structures" combined with "temporal structures" create the context for classifications of group membership. The "social structures" that emerged in the data analysis are: structures of physical health, institutional structures, structures for discrimination, and cultural structures. Classifications for sexual orientation must occur within these social structures. The combination of social structures produces a large mental field. Each social structure and combination of social structure presents a myriad of possibilities for classification. The social kinds' researcher must first extract a "still frame" from the within the mental field in order for classification to occur. Although

there are many different possibilities for classification, one classificatory model emerged as the most theoretically saturated.

The "still frame" with the most theoretical saturation occurs within a combination of social structures, but places an emphasis on the "structure of discrimination." The focusing strategies used by social kinds' researchers involve the separation of the relevant from the irrelevant and "marked" from the "unmarked". The "marked" group within this still frame is homosexuals. The discriminatory social structures (heterosexism/homophobia) mark homosexuals as being sexual minorities in a largely heterosexual world. Heterosexuals are regarded as being the sexual norm or standard. Heterosexual identification is often assumed and when revealed is largely regarded as insignificant. The "structures of discrimination" mark homosexual identity as unnatural and at odds with the heterosexual world. Identifying as a homosexual has real consequences within this social structure.

The social kinds thought community uses the following variables in their classification of homosexual group membership: wanting, doing, coming out, homosexual identity, affirmation, yes-saying and lifestyle. The "wanting" variable indicates attraction. "Doing" indicates performing sexual acts, doing sexual acts, having sexual experiences, marking sexual practices and marking sexual expression. "Coming out" refers to the social process of making an identity visible to others. "Homosexual identity" refers to a sex-based social identity that has been granted "affirmation" within a social process. The core variable is "affirmation" and it refers to the social process of "yes-saying" or self-identifying as a particular sexual orientation. The consequence of the affirmation process is represented by the variable, "lifestyle." This variable represents the

end result of the actions/interactions among the other variables within a social structural context[24].

The social structures underlying the classification of homosexual identity require that the initial identity or starting point be heterosexual. This is because heterosexuality is assumed to be the normative or presumed sexual identity of individuals in our society. Article 21 indicates, "In the majority of high schools in the United States, the prevailing norm regarding sexuality is heterosexuality and adolescents are socialized, both informally and formally toward heterosexual behaviors and relationships" (364). From the heterosexual standpoint, the variables "wanting" and "doing" interact with the initial heterosexual identity. If the initial identity interacts in a positive or "yes-saying" fashion, then the individual acknowledges an attraction towards the same-sex and/or an engagement in a sexual act with someone of the same-sex.

The second stage of this process involves making the "wanting" and/or "doing" variable/s known. The social structural contexts of time, age, and location may influence the "coming out" variable in a positive or negative way. If it is negatively influenced, the person may conceal their identity or "pass" as a heterosexual. Article 26 indicates, "Because sexual orientation is not necessarily publicly identifiable some lesbians may choose to hide their sexual orientation in order to pass as heterosexual. The choice to pass as heterosexual maintains nondisclosure of sexual orientation under the guise of heterosexuality" (166). If it is positively influenced, then the "coming out" process will occur until the individual reaches the point of "affirmation" or the acceptance of this new homosexual identity. Article 27 indicates, "The act of accepting one's own queerness—saying yes to it somewhere in one's experience or consciousness—is quite necessary for

[24] See Table 9.

'being' gay or lesbian" (83). The final stage or site of "affirmation" for a new identity is also where the set variables continue to reflect back and forth upon each other emphasizing the dialectical process of social construction. This dialectical process is marked by the "lifestyle" variable.

The "coming out" process is focused upon as being relevant because the individuals involved in the process are perceived to be crossing a vast mental void from a presumed heterosexual identity to a homosexual identity. Zerubavel (1991) calls the perceived mental separation between heterosexual and homosexual identities, the" rites of separation." Zerubavel argues, "Rites of separation are often designed to dramatize the mental gap between the old and new selves of people whose social identity is radically transformed as a result of crossing some critical mental partition" (23). Zerubavel argues that the process of crossing this culturally perceived mental gap requires "mental effort" and "giant mental leaps" (24). Becoming a homosexual appears to be less about checking off culturally relevant criteria and more about how these criteria operate within existing social structures producing a homosexual identity. For the social kinds thought community, attention to the social process of becoming or being a homosexual is more of a focal emphasis for classification than any combination of its static variables.

The social kinds' thought community uses the process of lumping and splitting to divide the world based on their perceptions of it. These divisions are maintained through their inclusion in the "social construction" process. As long as social structures remain relatively stable, classifications for group membership will also remain relatively stable.

Modifications in the classifications for group membership can be made by focusing on particular social structures and also through changes within the social structures.

Empty Kinds Practices

The empty kinds' thought community uses the practice of "lumping" or including a multiplicity of resistant identities together, while "splitting" or excluding those identities that are non-resistant. Inclusivity is a focal characteristic for the empty kinds thought community because it indicates their fundamental principle, which is to resist the exclusivity of binary structures. Inclusivity is a covariance for the variables "doing" and "being." High degrees of inclusivity ultimately indicate that all types of resistant "doing" and ways of "being" are eligible for inclusion as a member. Members of the empty kinds thought communities are included on the basis of their mental levels of flexibility or fluidity. Having mental flexibility refers to being able to cognitively imagine ways of "being" or "doing/playing" outside the realm of structure. The high levels of ambiguity also characterize members of the empty kinds thought community because ambiguity resists structural elements through its characteristic of being neither one thing nor another. Playfulness is a characteristic of group membership because it emphasizes a high degree of cognitive imagination for ways of "being," "doing" and "occupying space." Inclusivity, flexibility, ambiguity, and playfulness are covariances that influence the variables "doing" and "being," as well as "spaces" or sites of resistance.

These covariances also reflect Nippert-Eng's model of "boundary play" and "boundary work" because their criteria for play are rearranging structural lines that make up dichotomies. Nippert-Eng argues,

> …dichotomous categories, such as real-pretend, are equally good opportunities for both boundary play *and* boundary work. There is something about an either-or occasion that provides a great opportunity for those who have a vested interest in maintaining the dichotomy as a staunch reality (rather than a tool for interpreting and manipulating reality) as well as for those who like to use the occasion to have a little fun.

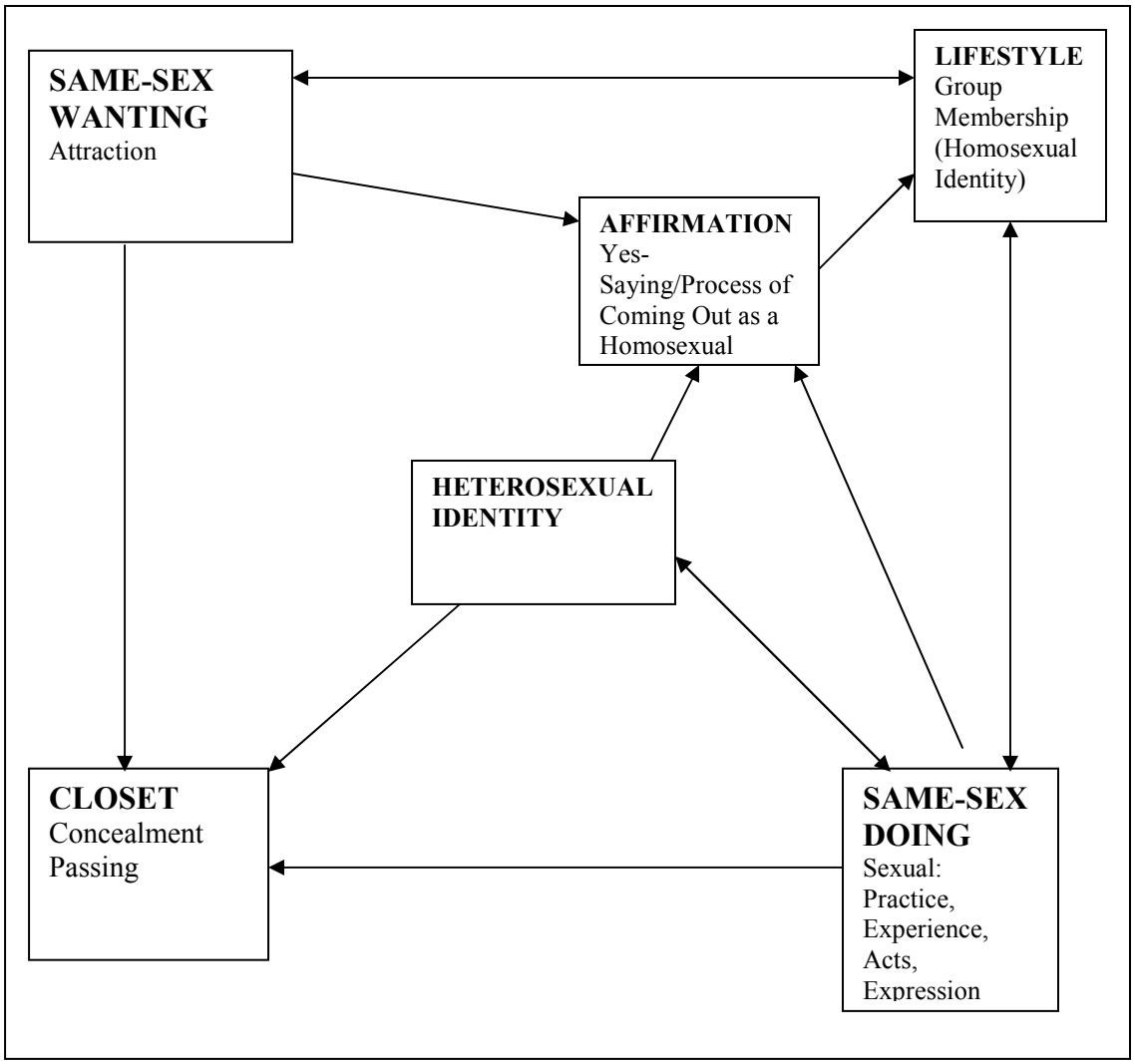
The empty kinds' thought community has a fuzzy or flexible world view that encourages "play" within dichotomous boundaries. A focus on inclusiveness, fluidity, ambiguity, and playfulness indicate this type of "boundary play." Nippert-Eng argues that this type of boundary play can become boundary work if it is challenged or attempted to be maintained. It becomes "boundary work" when the empty kinds theorists use this as a political platform or an organized group.

The practices that the empty kinds thought community uses to classify group membership is by being highly inclusive in regards to the members ways of "doing" and "being." In order to be inclusive, the research reveals that the empty kinds thought community relies on fluid, ambiguous, and playful ways of "doing" and "being" to resist normative structures. These classifications are being maintained through "boundary play" and "boundary work." "Boundary play" is the reason for inclusion, whereas "boundary work" is the result of maintaining "boundary play." This modifies the classification for group inclusion by making it appear to be a structure in and of itself, which is an unwanted consequence of the empty kinds' theorists because they want their focus to remain on "boundary play."

Table 9: Social Kinds GTM Analysis

Causes: Social Structures **Core Variable: Process of ID** **Consequence: Group Membership**

Social Structures (Structure of Discrimination)



Conclusion

Studying journal articles provides a way of viewing how different theoretical positions organize the world. LaRossa (1995) argues, "Lest researchers think that they are excluded from the cognitive processes…there is the important question of how the stories scholars tell in their books and articles are related to *their* efforts to lump and split the

universe" (557). The processes for lumping and splitting the world are directly related to the principles/assumptions the researchers had about the nature of the world and how it is organized. Ultimately, the definitions or classifications for marking people for group membership relied on these principles/assumptions of particular thought communities being put forth in these academic articles. These definitions and classifications of group membership reflect major points of contention in the essentialist vs. social constructionist debates.

The essentialism vs. social construction debate cannot become a healthy debate until all three thought communities' theoretical positions are revealed and clarified. There is a misunderstanding among the different groups over who or what type of people are being granted group membership into each thought community. The three thought communities perceive themselves to be talking about the same "people," when in fact the people being classified are grouped based on different criteria. The results of this research indicate how researchers/theorists perceive one another to be talking about and identifying the same things, but are using different requirements or restrictions for group membership. The similarity for inclusion into group membership need to be similar because the dissimilar criteria may be tracking people into one thought community's research and not into another thought community's research. If the types of people being tracked by the epistemic criteria are different, then the thought communities cannot participate in a debate because they have no "common problem."

Essentialists or the natural kinds thought community perceives itself to be debating a unified social constructionist perspective. These two social constructionist perspectives' each present a different picture of the world and have different criteria used

for group membership. The social kinds thought community's criteria for inclusion appears to be similar to the natural kinds thought community in a "still frame." The social kinds thought community looks quite different from the natural kinds thought community when the "still frame" is put back into its dialectical process. The natural kinds thought community is focusing on a high degree of exclusivity on the variable identification and some-what high degrees of exclusivity on the variables "doing" and "wanting." This high exclusivity severely limits the range of people who are being regarded as homosexual or heterosexual. The natural kinds thought community's criteria for group membership is different than the social kinds thought community because the social kinds thought community does not focus on exclusivity; but rather allows for a range of identity to be possible through the process of "coming out."

The social kinds thought community is not consistent in its definition or classifications for sexual orientation. The definitions or classifications for sexual orientation are employed based on the contextual situation. In most cases, the definition or classification of homosexual and heterosexual was mostly a matter of self-identification. The constitutive definitions focused on the process of people "coming out," or affirming a homosexual identity in a dominant heterosexual environment as being the most important aspect of group membership. In the "structures of physical health" context, the focal variable was "doing." The focus on "doing" vs. the "coming out" process has quite different implications for who is counting as a homosexual or heterosexual. In one case, the individual self-reports and in another the researcher determines sexual orientation based on behavior. The social kinds thought community needs to have a unified definition among its members if it is to participate in a debate

with the natural kinds thought community. In order for the natural kinds and social kinds thought communities to debate they must compromise on epistemological criteria and not focus solely on their practical need for a definition.

The natural kinds thought community also appears to be arguing against the empty kinds thought community. This debate occurs because the empty kinds thought community, in some cases, uses the term queer as an umbrella term for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and various other sexual identities. The gay and lesbian identities in particular are being reacted against by the natural kinds thought community as empty kinds. The empty kinds thought community regards sexual orientations according to Hacking's model of social construction. First, they regard sexual orientations not to be innate or to be social constructions. Then, they specify the negative implications of this social construction. Finally, they emphasize ways to change this construction, which results in ultimately dismantling a structural reality.

The empty kinds thought community emphasizes the first aspect of criteria in their thought process as the resistance of normative social structures. Gay, lesbian, and bisexual identities are allowed to be placed in this phase because they defy the normative heterosexual structures. The next step in the resistance process focuses on the creation of new possibilities for "being" and "doing." At this point gay, lesbian, and bisexual identities become negative remains of a hetero-normative system that must be abandoned. The new emphasis is to create ways of being that include everyone who resists the dichotomous structure. The reason that empty kinds is being perceived to be part of the

social kinds thought community appears to be because they include sexual identities in their first phase of resistance.

The principles/assumptions for marking group membership explain the most about each thought communities strategies and practices for creating, maintaining, and modifying group membership. Each thought community has reasons for identifying sexual orientations differently. There are political implications, as specifically mentioned in both the social and empty kinds thought community and also within the natural kinds thought community. The perception that the scientific method is purely objective is a strategy that the natural kinds thought community relies on to potentially mask any political implications such as questionably ethical funding or possible personal biases. Social policy implications are not the only thing at stake in claiming criteria for group membership, the promotion and/or maintenance of a world view/theoretical perspective is also central to this issue.

Limitations and Future Research

The limitations for this research project were time constraints and limited articles for analysis. More criteria for group membership may have emerged as theoretically saturated if more articles could have been analyzed. More articles may also have contributed to a more precise list of criteria or a more precise thought process for inclusion. A historical analysis of definitions of sexual orientation from the cognitive sociological perspective is possibility of future research. Another suggestion for a possible research project would be to concentrate on the direct relationship between the definitions and the political implications. Due to the lengthy nature of this project, the

political implications were glossed over as part of the structural context for the social kinds thought community's definitions and the reasons for resistance in the empty kinds thought community. Expanding upon the guidelines for this research project by including more data may also be an interesting possibility for future research in this area.

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Appendix A
Definitions of Sexual Orientation

Coding Sheet for Definitions of Sexual Orientation/Sexuality in Research Articles

Article_____ Journal_____ Date_____

Title_____

Gender_____ Discipline_____

Focal Group(s)

Homosexual/Gay Males_____ Homosexual/Lesbian Females_____

Heterosexual Males_____ Heterosexual Females_____

Bisexual Males_____ Bisexual Females_____

Trans_____ Queers_____

Kinds

Natural Kinds_____ Social Kinds_____ Empty Kinds_____

Constitutive Definition of Sexual Orientation

Behavioral Theory_____ Self-Identification Theory_____

Dispositional Theory_____ Queer Theory_____

Other_____

Operational Definition of Sexual Orientation

Behavioral Theory_____ Self-Identification Theory_____

Dispositional Theory_____ Queer Theory_____

Other_____

Appendix B
Rules for Standard Content Analysis Coding

Article

This refers to the article number which is manually written at the top of each article for the purpose of ordinal organization of the articles.

Journal

This refers to the academic journal from which the article has been extracted.

Date

This refers to the date that the article was published in the academic journal.

Title

This refers to the title of the article in the academic journal.

Gender

This refers to the gender/s of the author/s. It is F for female and M for male author. If there is more than one gender than B is used for both. If the gender of the author is not identifiable, a 'Google' search will be used to acquire this information.

Discipline

This refers to the author/s' area of academic interest. If there is more than one author, the discipline in the majority will be recorded. In the event that there is not a discipline in the majority, the first author's discipline will be recorded. If there is not a discipline represented for the author/s, then a 'Google' search will be used to acquire and record this information.

Focal Groups

In this section, a check mark is to be applied to each category that is under investigation by the author/s of each article. In some cases, more that one category may be checked as applicable. The focal groups must be referenced by the author specifically. For example the author must state their focus on gays, lesbians, bisexual males and/or females, heterosexual males and/or females, queers, and trans (referring to members of the transgender/transsexual community).

Kinds

Natural Kinds: includes labels such as hetero/homo/bisexual, uses keywords such as sexual orientation, and it emphasizes a natural or biological origin to a person's sexual desire and/or behavior.

Social Kinds: includes labels such as hetero/homo/bisexual, uses keywords such as sexual orientation, social construction, fluid definitions, emphasize attraction, fantasies, social preference, lifestyle choice, self-identification, public identity, structure, and stigma.

Empty Kinds: includes no labels or identities and uses key words such as queer, sexualities, sexual practices, desires not limited to gender, resistance of binaries, and focuses on sexual desire having more to do other factors than a person's gender.

Constitutive Definition of Sexual Orientation

This category depicts the definition's theoretical framework. This usually occurs in the first part of the article. This definition often depicts the author's view of sexual orientation. It is not to be confused with the operational theory of sexual orientation found in the methods section.

Operational Definition of Sexual Orientation

This category depicts the rules of inclusion for subjects to be a particular member of one of the focal groups. This theoretical framework functions as a criteria check list for how the researchers screen their focal group in order to provide a reliable group of a certain "type" of person.

Theories of Sexual Orientation

Behavioral: One's sexual orientation is determined by the sex/gender of the people that he or she has sex with in regards to one's own sex/gender: if one has sex with people of the same sex-gender, then one is homosexual; if one has sex with the people of not the same sex-gender, then one is heterosexual; if one has sex with both people who are of the

similar and opposite sex-gender, then one is bisexual. The focus is on a person's behavior as being determinate of his or her sex-gender.

Self-identification: One's sexual orientation is based on one's sense of what his or her sexual orientation is. The self-identification view emphasizes the reporting of one's own sexual orientation. For example, if someone says or really believes he or she is a heterosexual or a homosexual, then he or she is.

Dispositional: According to this view, a person's sexual orientation is based on his or her sexual desires and fantasies and the sexual behaviors he or she is disposed to engage in under ideal conditions.

Queer: According to this view, a person does not have a sexual orientation or categorizing identity related to sexual preference, desire, behavior, activity, etc.

Other: This represents other possible theories of sexual orientation not included in the previous theories.

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