

# GROUNDING SEXUAL IDENTITY

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In this paper, I argue that facts about an individual's sexual identity are partially or fully grounded in facts about their sexual orientation, where an individual's sexual identity (e.g. *being queer*, *being straight*) has to do with the social position they occupy, and their sexual orientation (e.g. *being homosexual*, *being heterosexual*) has to do with the sexual dispositions they have. The main argument for this orientation-based theory is that it gets the right results in cases in which an individual hasn't come out yet to themselves or others. I reply to Matthew Andler's argument against the orientation-based theory, which is that it gets the wrong results in cases having to do with (a) intergenerational gay friendship and (b) "str8 dudes," men who have sex with men but who present themselves online as straight. I also argue that, at least in the case of *being queer*, Andler's own cultural theory is consistent with sexual identity facts being partially grounded in sexual orientation facts.

## 1. Introduction

In this paper, I argue that facts about an individual's sexual identity are partially or fully grounded in facts about their sexual orientation, where an individual's sexual identity (e.g. *being queer*, *being straight*) has to do with the social position they occupy, and their sexual orientation (e.g. *being homosexual*, *being heterosexual*) has to do with the sexual dispositions they have. In Section 2, I present some background about sexual orientation, sexual identity, and grounding. (Readers already familiar with the literature on the metaphysics of sexual orientation and sexual identity can skip or skim Sections 2.1 and 2.2; readers already familiar with the literature on grounding can skip or skim Section 2.3.) In Section 3, I present the orientation-based theory, on which sexual identity facts are at least partially grounded in sexual orientation facts. In Section 4, I argue that the orientation-based theory gets the right results in cases in which an individual hasn't come out yet to themselves or others. In Section 5, I reply to Matthew Andler's (2022a) argument that the orientation-based theory gets the wrong results in cases having to do with (a) intergenerational gay friendship and (b) "str8 dudes," men who have sex with men but who present themselves online as straight. Finally, in Section 6, I argue that, at least in the case of *being queer*, Andler's own cultural theory is consistent with sexual identity facts being partially grounded in sexual orientation facts.

## 2. Sexual Orientation, Sexual Identity, and Grounding

### 2.1. Sexual Orientation

I take sexual orientations to include properties like *being homosexual*, *being heterosexual*, *being bisexual*, and *being asexual*.<sup>1</sup> I assume that, at any given time, each individual has at least one sexual orientation. Although sexual orientations are relatively stable, the same individual can have different sexual orientations at different times.<sup>2</sup> And, although sexual orientations are more or less determinate, the same individual could, in principle, have more than one sexual orientation at the same time.<sup>3</sup>

As I understand them, sexual orientations have to do with an individual's sexual dispositions (either to have sex or to have sexual desires) and are connected to both (i) the individual's sex or gender and (ii) the sex or gender of the individual or individuals they're into. For example, a man who's disposed to have sex with or sexually desire men (and only men) is homosexual, as is a woman who's disposed to have sex with or sexually desire women (and only women).

In understanding sexual orientations in this way, I'm taking sides on two disagreements in the growing literature on the metaphysics of sexual orientation. First, I take sexual orientations to be dispositional properties (like *being fragile*) rather than categorical ones (like *being made of glass*).<sup>4</sup> I think that an individual can have an allosexual (or non-asexual) sexual orientation without having sex or having sexual desires, provided that they would have sex or have sexual desires under the right circumstances. And, second, I take the sex or gender of the individual who has the sexual orientation, and not just the sex or gender of the individual or individuals they're into, to be relevant in some cases.<sup>5</sup> I think that sexual orientations include familiar properties like *being homosexual* and *being heterosexual* rather than less familiar properties like *being woman-oriented* (which homosexual women and heterosexual men share) and *being man-oriented*

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<sup>1</sup> On the assumption that *being asexual* is a sexual orientation, see Section 3.2.

<sup>2</sup> But some question the universality and stability of sexual orientations. See [Wilkerson 2013](#).

<sup>3</sup> This depends in part on which sexual orientations there are (and which sexual preferences are sexual orientations; see note 10). I don't think that an individual can be both homo- and heterosexual at the same time. (Here I disagree with [Stock 2019: 299–300](#).) But an individual can both be homosexual and have a sexual preference for brown-eyed individuals at the same time.

<sup>4</sup> See [Stein 1999: 45–46](#); [Dembroff 2016: 18](#); [Stock 2019: 296–300](#); [Anderl 2021: 261, 2022a: 118–119](#); [Díaz-León 2022a: 104, 2022b: 302](#); [Halwani 2023c: 467](#). For a contrary view, see [Whitlow and Laskowski 2023](#).

<sup>5</sup> See [Anderl 2019, 2021: 261, 2022a: 118–119, 2022b](#); [Stock 2019: 307–313](#); [Díaz-León 2022a: 104, 2022b: 305](#); [Halwani 2023a: 4 n. 5, 2023c: 464](#). And see [Stein 1999: 33–34, 45](#). On the connection between an individual's sexual orientation and their gender identity, see also [Bettcher 2014](#). For a contrary view, see [Dembroff 2016: 18–19](#).

(which homosexual men and heterosexual women share). There are political advantages to retaining the more familiar properties.<sup>6</sup>

But I remain neutral on four other disagreements in the literature. First, I'm neutral about whether the relevant sexual dispositions are to have sex, to have sexual desires, or both.<sup>7</sup> Second, I'm neutral about whether the relevant circumstances in which the sexual dispositions would be manifested are ordinary circumstances or ideal ones.<sup>8</sup> Third, I'm neutral about whether what's relevant is an individual's sex, gender, or both.<sup>9</sup> And, fourth, I'm neutral about what distinguishes sexual orientations (like *being homosexual*) from mere sexual preferences (like *preferring brown-eyed individuals*).<sup>10</sup>

## 2.2. Sexual Identity

I assume that, in addition to having sexual orientations, individuals have sexual identities like *being queer*, *being straight*, *being lesbian*, *being gay*, *being bi*, and *being ace*.<sup>11</sup> I assume that, at any given time, each individual has at least one sexual identity. Although sexual identities are relatively stable, the same individual can have different sexual identities at different times. And, although sexual identities are more or less determinate, the same individual can have more than one sexual identity at the same time.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See [Anderl 2019: 110–112](#). For related considerations in the case of gender and race categories, see [Saul 2006: 135–140](#).

<sup>7</sup> For the desire view, see [Díaz-León 2022a: 104](#), [2022b: 302](#); [Halwani 2023c: 468](#). For the behavior view, see [Dembroff 2016: 18](#). For the desire and behavior view, see [Stock 2019: 296–297](#); [Anderl 2021: 261–262](#), [2022a: 118](#). See also [Stein 1999: 45–49](#).

<sup>8</sup> For the ordinary circumstances view, see [Dembroff 2016: 18](#). (See also [Anderl 2022a: 129 n. 3](#); [Díaz-León 2022a: 114 n. 8](#).) For the ideal circumstances view, see [Stein 1999: 45](#).

<sup>9</sup> For the sex and gender view, see [Dembroff 2016: 18](#); [Anderl 2022a: 118](#), [2022b](#); [Díaz-León 2022a: 104](#), [2022b: 302](#). (See also [Stein 1999: 34](#).) For the sex only view, see [Stock 2019: 300–307](#); [Halwani 2023a](#). For a careful—and, to my mind, persuasive—critique of Stock's view, see [Anderl 2025: Ch. 4](#).

<sup>10</sup> On the distinction between sexual orientations and mere sexual preferences, see [Stein 1999: 64–66](#); [Dembroff 2016: 7](#); [Stock 2019: 313–315](#). [Halwani \(2023c\)](#) ties the distinction to wellbeing. [Anderl \(2025: Ch. 2\)](#) ties it to heteropatriarchal kinship structures.

<sup>11</sup> On the distinction between sexual orientation and sexual identity, see [Halwani 2006](#), [2023b: Sections 1.4 and 1.5](#); [Wilkerson 2007: 132–133, 153](#); [Wilkerson 2013: 205](#); [Anderl 2021, 2022a](#). 'Queer' is an umbrella term sometimes used for a gender identity (as in 'genderqueer'; see e.g. [Dembroff 2020](#)), a sexual orientation (e.g. [Anderl 2022b: 101, 114](#)), or a sexual identity (e.g. [Anderl 2021: 259–260, 2022a: 118](#)). In the text, I use 'queer' as a sexual identity term. I also follow [Anderl \(2022a: 118\)](#) in using 'bi' and 'ace' as terms for sexual identities, and 'bisexual' and 'asexual' as terms for sexual orientations. This use is a bit stipulative, but it's helpful to be able to mark the distinction.

<sup>12</sup> This depends in part on which sexual identities there are. I don't think that an individual can be both queer and straight at the same time. But an individual can be both queer and bi at the same time.

Although there's a growing literature on the metaphysics of sexual orientation, relatively little has been written about the metaphysics of sexual identity.<sup>13</sup> Identity in general is, as Raja Halwani (2023b: Section 1.5) says, a "philosophical minefield."<sup>14</sup> Here I follow Andler (2022a: 117–118) in taking a sexual identity to be a social identity; and, like Andler (2022a: 117), I follow Ásta (2018: 118) in taking a social identity to be a social position—a "place in a system of social relations"—that individuals can occupy.<sup>15</sup> Sexual identities, in this sense, are distinguished from the identities that individuals ascribe to themselves (since an individual can ascribe an identity to themselves without occupying the relevant social position).<sup>16</sup>

I'm (tentatively) assuming that there are a number of sexual identities that it can be useful to theorize about together.<sup>17</sup> Although I'm not committed to any particular view about what a complete list of all the sexual identities would look like, I think that it's a virtue of a theory of sexual identity that it allow for a wide range of sexual identities that are used in various queer subcultures and are mentioned in the literature: not just *being queer*, *being straight*, *being lesbian*, *being gay*, *being bi*, and *being ace*, but also *being butch*, *being femme*, *being a bear*, and *being a twink*.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> But see note 11.

<sup>14</sup> Elsewhere, Halwani (2006: 221) says, "Identity is a concept difficult to define (hence my sagacious avoidance of offering a definition)."

<sup>15</sup> See also Ásta 2018: 114–126. I'm here not distinguishing between a social position *P* and the property *occupying P*. On the public or political dimensions of sexual identity, see also Halwani 2006: 221, 2023b: Section 1.5.

<sup>16</sup> See Section 4. Along these lines, Andler (2021: 262–263) distinguishes sexual identity from *sexual self-identity*. Sexual identity is also distinguished from further kinds of identity discussed in the literature, including what Dembroff and Saint-Croix (2019) call *agential identity*, a self-identity that an individual discloses to others to change their social position; what Jenkins (2023: 161) calls *identity as identification*, an identity that an individual lives through their actions and decisions; and what Jenkins (2023: 161) calls *identity as norm-relevancy*, an identity based on which norms an individual experiences as relevant to themselves, whether they conform to those norms or not.

<sup>17</sup> A form of pluralism about sexual identities might turn out to be correct. Sexual identities are human social kinds in Jenkins's (2023: 78–83) sense; and, on her pluralist view, human social kinds are distinguished along a number of dimensions, having to do with what contexts certain constraints and enablements apply in, what kinds of constraints and enablements apply, and how general those constraints and enablements are. (See Jenkins 2023: 88–89.) Sexual identities might differ along these dimensions. Still, I think we can theorize about sexual identities in general, but how we fill out the details in any particular case might depend on where we find the "sliders on a sound mixing board" for that case. (See Jenkins 2023: 89.) See note 46.

<sup>18</sup> See Andler 2021: 266, 2022a: 117.

### 2.3. Full and Partial Grounding

I assume that there's such a relation as grounding. I take it to be a relation among facts that's transitive and explanatory.

Grounding is a relation among facts.<sup>19</sup> For example, the fact that some wallpaper is periwinkle grounds the fact that it's blue.<sup>20</sup> Relatedly, grounding is factive.<sup>21</sup> If the fact that the wallpaper is periwinkle grounds the fact that it's blue, then those facts obtain: the wallpaper is, in fact, periwinkle, and it's also, in fact, blue.

Grounding is explanatory.<sup>22</sup> If the fact that the wallpaper is periwinkle grounds the fact that it's blue, then it's blue *because* it's periwinkle or *in virtue of* being periwinkle.

Grounding is transitive.<sup>23</sup> If the fact that the wallpaper is periwinkle grounds the fact that it's blue, which grounds the fact that it's either blue or purple, then the fact that it's periwinkle grounds the fact that it's either blue or purple.

I'm sympathetic to the claim that grounding is necessitating, in the sense that, if the fact that the wallpaper is periwinkle grounds the fact that it's blue, then it's necessary that, if it's periwinkle, then it's blue.<sup>24</sup> But I don't rely on this claim in what follows.

Sometimes several facts collectively ground a further fact.<sup>25</sup> The fact that the wallpaper is periwinkle and the fact that it's paisley together ground the fact that it's both periwinkle and paisley.

A fact *partially* grounds some further fact if and only if it's among some facts that collectively ground that further fact.<sup>26</sup> The fact that the wallpaper is periwinkle partially grounds the fact that it's both periwinkle and paisley, as does the fact that it's paisley. By contrast, some facts that collectively ground a further fact *fully* ground it. The fact that the wallpaper is periwinkle and the fact that it's paisley together fully ground the fact that it's both periwinkle and paisley.

Like (full) grounding, partial grounding is transitive.<sup>27</sup> If (a) the fact that the wallpaper is periwinkle partially grounds (b) the fact that it's both periwinkle and paisley, which partially grounds (c) the fact that it's both periwinkle and paisley and the

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<sup>19</sup> See Rosen 2010: 114–115, 2015: 198. For a contrary view, see Fine 2012: 46–48.

<sup>20</sup> On facts about determinate shades grounding facts about determinable colors, see Rosen 2010: 126–128.

<sup>21</sup> See Fine 2012: 48–49.

<sup>22</sup> See Rosen 2010: 117; Fine 2012: 37, 39.

<sup>23</sup> See Rosen 2010: 116.

<sup>24</sup> See Rosen 2010: 118; Fine 2012: 38. For a contrary view, see Skiles 2015.

<sup>25</sup> See Rosen 2010: 115; Fine 2012: 47.

<sup>26</sup> See Rosen 2010: 115, 2015; Fine 2012: 50.

<sup>27</sup> See Rosen 2015: 198. See also Fine 2012: 56.

ceiling is textured, then (a) the fact that the wallpaper is periwinkle partially grounds (c) the fact that it's both periwinkle and paisley and the ceiling is textured.

Full grounding entails partial grounding. If the fact that the wallpaper is periwinkle fully grounds the fact that it's blue, then it trivially follows that the fact that it's periwinkle is among a collection of (one or more) facts—namely, itself!—that grounds the fact that it's blue.

### 3. The Orientation-Based Theory

#### 3.1. *Queer, Straight*

The main thesis of this paper is that facts about an individual's sexual identity are partially or fully grounded in facts about their sexual orientation. Following Andler (2022a: 118), let's call this *The Orientation-Based Theory*. The idea behind The Orientation-Based Theory is that at least part of the explanation of why an individual has the sexual identity that they do is that they have the sexual orientation that they do: that is, that they have the sexual dispositions—the dispositions to have sex or to have sexual desires—that they do. In slogan form: don't forget about the 'sex' in 'sexual identity'.<sup>28</sup>

I think that The Orientation-Based Theory holds for a wide range of sexual identities, but I start with *being queer* and *being straight*. There are several ways in which the theory could be developed, particularly in the case of sexual identities other than *being queer* and *being straight*. What I present in this section is a sketch of some of those ways. This sketch is enough to see (in Sections 4 and 5) how we can argue for the theory and respond to an argument against it.

On The Orientation-Based Theory, facts about *being queer* and *being straight* are fully grounded in sexual orientation facts. Let's say that an individual is *non-heterosexual* if and only if they have a sexual orientation other than *being heterosexual*. And let's use '[ ... ]' to name facts.<sup>29</sup> For example, '[*x* is queer]' is short for 'the fact that *x* is queer'. We can now state The Orientation-Based Theory in the case of *being queer* and *being straight*.

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<sup>28</sup> What I say in the text is consistent with both a weaker thesis and a stronger thesis.

(Weaker) For any sexual identity *I* and any individual *x*, if *x* has *I*, then there's a sexual orientation fact *F* and there are *some* facts *FF* such that (a) *F* is among *FF* and (b) *FF* together ground the fact that *x* has *I*.

(Stronger) For any sexual identity *I* and any individual *x*, if *x* has *I*, then for *any* facts *FF* that together ground the fact that *x* has *I* there's a sexual orientation fact *F* among *FF*.

Although I don't directly argue for it in the text, I find the stronger thesis plausible, and I think it better fits both the slogan and the idea behind The Orientation-Based Theory. Thanks to Matthew Andler for drawing my attention to the stronger thesis.

<sup>29</sup> The notation comes from Rosen 2010: 115.

## The Orientation-Based Theory

- (O1) For any individual  $x$ , if  $x$  is non-heterosexual, then [ $x$  is non-heterosexual] grounds [ $x$  is queer].
- (O2) For any individual  $x$ , if  $x$  is heterosexual and  $x$  has no other sexual orientation, then [ $x$  is heterosexual and  $x$  has no other sexual orientation] grounds [ $x$  is straight].<sup>30</sup>

By (O1), if an individual is non-heterosexual, then they're queer; and it's because they're non-heterosexual that they're queer. Similarly, by (O2), if an individual is heterosexual and has no other sexual orientation, then they're straight; and it's because they're heterosexual and have no other sexual orientation that they're straight.

As stated, The Orientation-Based Theory entails that the fact that an individual is queer is grounded in the quasi-negative fact that they're non-heterosexual.<sup>31</sup> This reflects the oppositional nature of queerness (at least in the actual world). Alternatively, we could take the fact that an individual is queer to be grounded in the disjunctive fact that they're homosexual, bisexual, or asexual. This would reflect the use of 'queer' as an umbrella term. Disjunctive facts are grounded in their disjuncts.<sup>32</sup> So we could also take the fact that an individual is queer to be grounded in the fact that they're homosexual, or the fact that they're bisexual, or the fact that they're asexual, as the case may be. I take all of these facts to be sexual orientation facts, even if *being non-heterosexual* and *being homosexual, bisexual, or asexual* aren't themselves sexual orientations. So, whichever way we go, the sexual identity fact that an individual is queer will be grounded in a sexual orientation fact or some kind. (Likewise, even if *being heterosexual and not having any other sexual orientation* isn't itself a sexual orientation, I take the fact that an individual is heterosexual and has no other sexual orientation to be a sexual orientation fact.)

I'm neutral on whether grounding is necessitating (see Section 2.3). If it is, then (O1) entails that, if an individual is non-heterosexual, then they're queer in every possible world in which they're non-heterosexual, including possible worlds in which there's no such thing as queer or straight culture or queer oppression. Some take this to be a welcome consequence.<sup>33</sup> But I'm not committed to it here.

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<sup>30</sup> 'O' is for 'Orientation-Based'. Andler (2022a: 118–121) discusses, but doesn't endorse, The Orientation-Based Theory in the case of *being queer* and *being straight*.

<sup>31</sup> I call the fact that  $x$  is non-heterosexual *quasi-negative* to distinguish it from the (entirely) negative fact that it's not the case that  $x$  is heterosexual. If  $x$  lacks a sexual orientation, then it's not the case that  $x$  is heterosexual, and it's not the case that  $x$  is non-heterosexual either.

<sup>32</sup> See Rosen 2010: 117; Fine 2012: 58–59.

<sup>33</sup> See Halwani 2023b: Section 1.5.

I'm assuming that some sexual identities, including *being queer* and *being straight*, "travel" across cultures and times. (O1) entails that any individual who's non-heterosexual—no matter when or where they exist—is queer. I'm inclined to think that *being straight* travels and that *being queer* travels with it, so to speak. But I won't be defending that assumption here.<sup>34</sup> If sexual identities don't travel, then (O1) and (O2) would need to be revised. It would still be true that sexual identity facts are partially or fully grounded in sexual orientation facts, but only because sexual identity facts would be partially (but not fully) grounded in sexual orientation facts. Instead, sexual identity facts would also be partially grounded in facts about historical and cultural context.

It might seem that, for related reasons, The Orientation-Based Theory is misguided. By (O1) and (O2), facts about *being queer* and *being straight* are fully grounded in sexual orientation facts. But *being queer* and *being straight* are sexual identities, which are social identities. And sexual orientation facts are, in some sense, non-social facts. So, by (O1) and (O2), facts about some social identities are fully grounded in non-social facts. And that might seem problematic.<sup>35</sup> But I don't think it's any more problematic to take facts about some social identities to be fully grounded in non-social facts than it is to take moral facts to be fully grounded in non-moral (or "natural") facts, or mental facts to be fully grounded in physical facts.<sup>36</sup>

### 3.2. *Bi, Ace*

Some other sexual identities—including *being bi* and *being ace*—are like *being queer* and *being straight* in that facts about them are fully grounded in sexual orientation facts.<sup>37</sup> For

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<sup>34</sup> But see, for example, [Finocchiaro 2021](#). (Finocchiaro's defense applies equally to sexual orientation and sexual identity.)

<sup>35</sup> Thanks to Joyce Jenkins, Rob Shaver, and Elizabeth Stewart for discussion here.

<sup>36</sup> One can hold that facts about a moral property (e.g. *being good* or *being right*) are fully grounded in facts about a non-moral (or "natural") property (e.g. *being an action that maximizes happiness*) without being committed to the claim that it lies in the nature or essence of the moral property to be such that facts about it are fully grounded in facts about the non-moral property, just as one can hold that facts about a mental property (e.g. *being in pain*) are fully grounded in facts about a physical property (e.g. *having C-fibers that are firing*) without being committed to the claim that it lies in the nature or essence of the mental property to be such that facts about it are fully grounded in facts about the physical property. (For discussion, see [Rosen 2010: 132–133](#); [Fine 2012: 77–78](#).) Similarly, one can accept The Orientation-Based Theory and hold that facts about some sexual identities (e.g. *being queer* and *being straight*) are fully grounded in sexual orientation facts (e.g. about *being non-heterosexual* and *being heterosexual*) without being committed to the claim that it lies in the nature or essence of the sexual identities to be such that facts about them are fully grounded in the sexual orientation facts. By itself, The Orientation-Based Theory is neutral about the nature or essence of sexual identities.

<sup>37</sup> Or at least sexual orientation facts together with facts about historical and cultural context. But, as alluded to in the previous subsection, I ignore this complication in the text.



example, the fact that an individual is bi, or ace, is fully grounded in the fact that they're bisexual, or asexual.

The claim that facts about *being ace* are fully grounded in sexual orientation facts assumes that *being asexual* is a sexual orientation. Having the sexual orientation *being asexual* isn't the same thing as lacking a sexual orientation.<sup>38</sup> Sexual orientation has to do with an individual's sexual dispositions, and an individual who's asexual has a negative disposition: they're disposed *not* to have sex or have sexual desires. (Not everything that lacks the positive disposition to have sex or have sexual desires has this negative disposition. My laptop, for example, is *not* disposed to have sex or have sexual desires; but it isn't the case that it's disposed *not* to have sex or have sexual desires.)

If I'm wrong about this and *being asexual* isn't a sexual orientation, then the fact that an individual is ace will instead be partially grounded in the fact that they lack a sexual orientation. (The fact that they're ace won't be fully grounded in the fact that they lack a sexual orientation, since some things that don't have a sexual orientation don't have a sexual identity either: my laptop, for example.) I take the fact that an individual lacks a sexual orientation to be a sexual orientation fact. So, if the fact that an individual is ace is partially grounded in the fact that they lack a sexual orientation, then the fact that they're ace will be partially grounded in a sexual orientation fact. And it's consistent with The Orientation-Based Theory that facts about *being ace* are partially, but not fully, grounded in sexual orientation facts.<sup>39</sup>

### 3.3. Lesbian, Gay

Some sexual identities—including *being lesbian* and *being gay*—are such that facts about them aren't fully grounded in sexual orientation facts and, instead, are partially grounded in gender facts. For example, the fact that an individual is lesbian, or gay, is partially grounded in the fact that they're a woman, or a man.<sup>40</sup> But, on The Orientation-Based Theory, the fact that an individual is lesbian, or gay, is still partially grounded in a sexual orientation fact.

There's a question about how broad or narrow the relevant sexual orientation fact should be. Narrowly, if only individuals who are homosexual can be lesbian or gay, then the fact that an individual is lesbian, or gay, would be partially grounded in the fact that

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<sup>38</sup> See Stein 1999: 56–57; Dembroff 2016: 3 n. 10; Andler 2021: 259, 2022a: 118, 2022b; Eaton and Szustak 2022. Stock (2019: 300) denies that *being asexual* is a sexual orientation. Halwani is open to the possibility that *being asexual* isn't a sexual orientation. See Halwani 2023a: 10–11, 2023b: Sections 1.4 and 1.5, 2023c: 484–485.

<sup>39</sup> Thanks to an anonymous referee for raising the issue of how The Orientation-Based Theory applies to *being ace* if asexuality isn't a sexual orientation.

<sup>40</sup> 'Gay' sometimes includes women. There might be several distinct sexual identities called '*being gay*', one of which—*being gay<sub>m</sub>*—is had by men but not women. In the text, I assume that *being gay* is *being gay<sub>m</sub>*.

they're homosexual, but not in the disjunctive fact that they're homosexual or bisexual (and not in the disjunctive fact that they're homosexual, bisexual, or asexual either). More broadly, if individuals who are homosexual, bisexual, or asexual can be lesbian or gay, then the fact that an individual is lesbian, or gay, would be partially grounded in the quasi-negative fact that they're non-heterosexual (or in the disjunctive fact that they're homosexual, bisexual, or asexual—or in the relevant disjunct).<sup>41</sup> But, either way, sexual identity facts are still partially grounded in sexual orientation facts.

If the fact that Ziggy is gay is partially grounded in the fact that he's bisexual and the fact that he's a man, that doesn't mean that all bisexual men are gay. (Likewise if Ziggy is asexual and gay.) The fact that Ziggy is gay might be partially grounded in other facts, in addition to sexual orientation and gender facts. I don't take a stand here on what these other facts are. They could be facts about how Ziggy self-identifies.<sup>42</sup> Or they could be facts about the way of life that Ziggy participates in.<sup>43</sup>

Some sexual identity facts end up being partially grounded in gender facts twice over, as it were. Suppose that Quentin is a man who's disposed to have sex with or sexually desire men (and only men). Quentin is homosexual. And he's gay.

Gender Fact: [Quentin is a man]

Sexual Orientation Fact: [Quentin is homosexual]

Sexual Identity Fact: [Quentin is gay]

[Quentin is gay] is grounded in [Quentin is homosexual] and [Quentin is a man]. (Given that Quentin is homosexual, if Quentin were a woman rather than a man, then Quentin would be lesbian rather than gay.) So [Quentin is gay] is partially grounded in [Quentin is a man]. In this way, [Quentin is gay] is *immediately* partially grounded in [Quentin is a man]. But [Quentin is gay] is also partially grounded in [Quentin is homosexual], which is itself partially grounded in [Quentin is a man]. (Given that Quentin is disposed to have sex with or sexually desire men, and only men, if Quentin were a woman rather than a man, then Quentin would be heterosexual rather than homosexual.) So, by the transitivity of partial grounding, [Quentin is gay] is partially grounded in [Quentin is a

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<sup>41</sup> See Andler's (2021: 266) suggestion for treating *being lesbian* and *being gay* in Ásta's (2018) framework.

<sup>42</sup> On some permissive views about the semantics of gender terms, self-ascription facts play a determining role. (See Barnes 2020: 721.) One could hold a parallel view about the semantics of sexual identity terms. But I don't think that self-ascription facts fully ground sexual identity facts. (See Section 4.) Thanks to an anonymous referee here.

<sup>43</sup> On some views, cultural facts fully ground sexual identity facts. See Sections 5.1 and 6 on Andler's (2022a) view.

man] again. In this way, [Quentin is gay] is also *mediately* partially grounded in [Quentin is a man].<sup>44</sup>

### 3.4. *Butch, Femme, Bear, Twink*

Some sexual identities—including *being butch*, *being femme*, *being a bear*, and *being a twink*—are such that facts about them aren't fully grounded in sexual orientation facts and gender facts; instead, facts about them are partially grounded in gender presentation facts. For example, the fact that an individual is butch, or femme, is partially grounded in the gender presentation fact that they're masculine, or feminine.<sup>45</sup>

In the case of some sexual identities, the partial grounding path back to sexual orientation facts is indirect. The fact that an individual is butch, or femme, is partially grounded in the fact that they're lesbian; and, similarly, the fact that an individual is a bear, or a twink, is partially grounded in the fact that they're gay. The fact that an individual is lesbian, or gay, is a sexual identity fact rather than a sexual orientation fact. Still, the fact that an individual is lesbian, or gay, is partially grounded in a sexual orientation fact; so, by the transitivity of partial grounding, the fact that an individual is butch, or femme, or a bear, or a twink is partially grounded in a sexual orientation fact, too. In this case, the sexual identity fact that an individual is butch, or femme, or a bear, or a twink is immediately partially grounded in another sexual identity fact and mediately partially grounded in a sexual orientation fact.

On The Orientation-Based Theory, what all of these sexual identities—*being queer*, *being straight*, *being bi*, *being ace*, *being lesbian*, *being gay*, *being butch*, *being femme*, *being a bear*, and *being a twink*—have in common is that facts about them are at least partially grounded in sexual orientation facts. But the sexual identities differ in whether facts about them are grounded in additional facts and, if so, what these additional facts are about. In some cases, these additional facts are about (a) gender or (b) gender presentation; in other cases, they might be about (c) historical context, (d) cultural context, (e) something that distinguishes individuals with sexual identities from entities that lack sexual identities altogether, (f) self-ascription, or (g) participation in a way of life. Facts about different sexual identities might be partially grounded in different kinds of additional facts, depending on the nature of the sexual identity in question.<sup>46</sup> Still, on The

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<sup>44</sup> On the distinction between mediate and immediate ground, see [Fine 2012: 50–51](#). Thanks to an anonymous referee for drawing my attention to the mediate–immediate distinction and its application to some of the cases discussed in the text.

<sup>45</sup> See Andler's (2021: 266) suggestion for treating *being butch* in Ásta's (2018) framework. Andler allows that the gender fact in the case of *being butch* might be that the individual is nonbinary.

<sup>46</sup> The nature of the sexual identity in question might have to do with what Jenkins (2023: 89) calls the *breadth* of a social kind, which has to do with the kind of constraints and enablements that are relevant. Jenkins (2023: 91–105) discusses interpersonal, psychological, bodily, and environmental kinds of

Orientation-Based Theory, facts about all of these sexual identities are partially grounded in sexual orientation facts.

## 4. An Argument for The Orientation-Based Theory

### 4.1. *Quentin and The Self-Ascription Theory*

The main argument for The Orientation-Based Theory is that it fares better than alternative theories in accounting for cases.

One alternative theory takes facts about an individual's sexual identity to be grounded in facts about what sexual identity they ascribe to themselves.

#### The Self-Ascription Theory

- (S1) For any individual  $x$ , if  $x$  sincerely believes that they're queer, then [ $x$  sincerely believes that they're queer] grounds [ $x$  is queer].
- (S2) For any individual  $x$ , if  $x$  sincerely believes that they're straight, then [ $x$  sincerely believes that they're straight] grounds [ $x$  is straight].<sup>47</sup>

The Self-Ascription Theory might get the right results in some cases. But here's a case that's a problem for The Self-Ascription Theory. Suppose that Quentin is disposed to have sex with or sexually desire men, although he doesn't have sex with anyone and doesn't recognize his desires yet. Later, he moves to London, goes to art school, cultivates a flamboyantly feminine appearance, and is a proud queer person. But, now, he sincerely believes that he's straight. By The Self-Ascription Theory, the fact that Quentin sincerely believes that he's straight grounds the fact that he's straight, so (by the factivity of grounding) he's now straight. But, contrary to The Self-Ascription Theory, Quentin isn't straight now.<sup>48</sup>

Like other social identities, sexual identities aren't always transparent to the individuals who have them. An individual can be wrong about their sexual identity, just as they can be wrong about their other social identities. In arguing against The Self-Ascription Theory, Andler (2022a: 118) says, "many proud queer people once believed that they were straight" due to "heteronormative ideology," which presents *being straight*

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constraints and enablements, which might be accompanied by corresponding kinds of additional grounding facts. Thanks to an anonymous referee for raising these issues.

<sup>47</sup> 'S' is for 'Self-Ascription'. Andler (2022a: 117–118) discusses, but doesn't endorse, The Self-Ascription Theory.

<sup>48</sup> See Stein 1999: 44–45; Andler 2022a: 118.

as “standard, inevitable, or universal.” After he moves to London, Quentin is such a proud queer person. Before he moves to London, he’s still queer, even if he hasn’t realized it and come out to himself yet.

Unlike The Self-Ascription Theory, The Orientation-Based Theory gets the right result in Quentin’s case. Although Quentin sincerely believes that he’s straight, he’s non-heterosexual, since he’s disposed to have sex with or sexually desire men. By The Orientation-Based Theory, the fact that Quentin is non-heterosexual grounds the fact that he’s queer. So he’s queer.

Those who accept The Orientation-Based Theory can say something similar about the following case. Suppose that Samuel is a homosexual man who, after much reflection and personal growth, recognizes and accepts his sexual orientation. But, for deeply held religious and cultural reasons, he rejects a queer identity and instead decides to marry a woman and raise a family. Samuel is non-heterosexual. So, by The Orientation-Based Theory, the fact that he’s non-heterosexual grounds the fact that he’s queer. And I think this result is correct: he’s queer, even if he rejects that identity for himself and participates in straight culture.<sup>49</sup> In effect, The Orientation-Based Theory says that, in addition to sharing a sexual orientation (they’re both disposed to have sex with or sexually desire men), Samuel and Quentin share a sexual identity or social position. This might be reflected in the fact that, before Quentin comes out to himself, they’re both leading lives that are in some sense at odds with their sexual orientation.<sup>50</sup>

## ***4.2. Mary and The Hierarchical Social Position Theory***

Another alternative theory of sexual identity is modeled on Sally Haslanger’s theory of gender. On Haslanger’s (2000) theory, an individual is a man or a woman in virtue of occupying a social position that’s privileged or subordinated in ways that are connected to their perceived biological role in reproduction. A parallel theory of sexual identity takes facts about an individual’s sexual identity to be grounded in facts about how they’re privileged or subordinated in ways that are connected to their perceived sexual orientation.

### **The Hierarchical Social Position Theory**

- (H1) For any individual  $x$ , if  $x$  is taken by other social agents to be non-heterosexual in contexts in which individuals taken to be non-heterosexual are subordinated, then [ $x$  is taken to be non-heterosexual in such contexts] grounds [ $x$  is queer].

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<sup>49</sup> On queer individuals participating in straight culture, see [Andler 2022a: 126–127](#). And see Section 5.1.

<sup>50</sup> Thanks to an anonymous referee for raising this kind of case.

- (H2) For any individual  $x$ , if  $x$  is taken by other social agents to be heterosexual in contexts in which individuals taken to be heterosexual are privileged, then [ $x$  is taken to be heterosexual in such contexts] grounds [ $x$  is straight].<sup>51</sup>

Andler (2022a: 123) presents a case that's a problem for The Hierarchical Social Position Theory:

consider Mary, a high school student living in Emerald City, which is presently governed by the Wizard. Mary is attracted to genderqueer individuals and women, but she's closeted on account of the severe anti-queer prejudice and homophobia in Emerald City. Eventually, Mary will move to Gillikin Country, join an indie rock band, and work with an LGBTQIA+ activist organization to resist the heteronormative policies of the Wizard. But not yet. Right now, as a closeted high school student, Mary is taken to be straight.

Mary is taken to be heterosexual in a context in which individuals taken to be heterosexual are privileged. So, by The Hierarchical Social Position Theory, she's straight. But she's not; she's merely passing as straight. The Hierarchical Social Position Theory, Andler (2022a: 123) says, yields the bad result that "closeted individuals cannot be queer."

By contrast, The Orientation-Based Theory gets the right result in Mary's case. Mary is non-heterosexual, since she's disposed to have sex with or sexually desire genderqueer individuals and women. By The Orientation-Based Theory, the fact that she's non-heterosexual grounds the fact that she's queer, so she's queer. And she is.

Unlike The Self-Ascription Theory and The Hierarchical Social Position Theory, then, The Orientation-Based Theory gets the right results in both Quentin's and Mary's cases. On The Hierarchical Social Position Theory, an individual can't be queer before they come out to others. On The Self-Ascription Theory, an individual can be queer before they come out to others, but only if they come out to themselves first. On The Orientation-Based Theory, by contrast, an individual can be queer before they come out to themselves and others. This is, I think, the correct result; and it provides reason to accept The Orientation-Based Theory over The Self-Ascription Theory and The Hierarchical Social Position Theory.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> 'H' is for 'Hierarchical'. Andler (2022a: 122–123) discusses, but doesn't endorse, The Hierarchical Social Position Theory.

<sup>52</sup> There's a parallel argument for The Orientation-Based Theory over The Conferralist Theory, which is based on Ásta's (2018) framework. On The Conferralist Theory, an "individual has a queer sexual identity in virtue of other social agents (accurately or inaccurately) taking the individual to be non-heterosexual in contexts in which being taken to be non-heterosexual is socially significant," and an "individual has a straight sexual identity in virtue of other social agents (accurately or inaccurately) taking the individual to

## 5. Str8 Dudes and Gay Friends

### 5.1. Str8 Dudes

In the previous section, I argued that The Orientation-Based Theory gets the right results in Quentin's and Mary's cases, so we should accept it. By contrast, Andler (2022a: 119–121) argues that The Orientation-Based Theory gets the wrong results in two other cases, so we should reject it.

The first case has to do with “str8 dudes,” men who have sex with men but who present themselves online (particularly in ads on Craigslist) as straight. In “Dude-Sex,” Jane Ward (2008: 420–421) describes str8 dudes as follows:

str8 dudes often describe sex between dudes as a less desirable, but ‘easy’, alternative to sex with women, or suggest that dude-sex is a means of getting the kind of sex that all straight men want from women, but can only get from men – uncomplicated, emotionless, and guaranteed. Str8 dudes get drunk, watch heterosexual porn, ... and maintain a clear emotional boundary between each other ... . References to being ‘chill bros’ and ‘male bonding’ help to reframe dude-sex as a kind of sex that bolsters, rather than threatens, the heterosexual masculinity of the participants. Only those who are ‘man enough’ and ‘chill enough’ will want dude-sex or be able to handle it.<sup>53</sup>

Consider a str8 dude, Chad. Chad is non-heterosexual, since he's disposed to have sex with or sexually desire men.<sup>54</sup> By The Orientation-Based Theory, the fact that he's non-heterosexual grounds the fact that he's queer, so he's queer. But, Andler (2022a: 120) says, Chad is straight rather than queer. So, contrary to The Orientation-Based Theory, the fact that Chad is non-heterosexual doesn't ground the fact that he's queer, even if the fact that Quentin or Mary is non-heterosexual grounds the fact that they're queer.<sup>55</sup>

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be heterosexual in contexts in which being taken to be heterosexual is socially significant.” See Andler 2022a: 122. (See also Ásta 2018: 88–89.) For Andler's rejection of The Conferralist Theory, see Andler 2022a: 123. For their earlier acceptance of The Conferralist Theory, see Andler 2021: 264–266.

<sup>53</sup> See also Ward 2015: 127–152, esp. 130–131.

<sup>54</sup> See Andler 2022a: 120. I'm granting for the sake of argument that Chad is non-heterosexual. (If he's heterosexual and straight, then his case isn't a problem for The Orientation-Based Theory.) But, if he's disposed to have sex with men but not disposed to sexually desire men, or if he's disposed to have sex with or sexually desire men only in non-ideal circumstances in which women aren't interested in him, then on some views he could still be heterosexual. See Andler 2022a: 129 n. 3. See also Díaz-León 2022a: 105–106, 2022b: 299–300. And see note 8.

<sup>55</sup> As Andler (2022a: 119, 120) presents it, the argument against The Orientation-Based Theory relies on the claim that grounding is necessitating (see Section 2.3). As presented in the text, the argument instead relies

Andler's argument against The Orientation-Based Theory here relies on the claim that Chad is straight rather than queer. But why accept that claim? Chad might *say* that he's straight. He might even sincerely believe it. But, as we saw in the previous section, there are reasons to reject The Self-Ascription Theory. So, even if Chad sincerely believes that he's straight, we don't need to accept the claim that he is. And he might be wrong about his sexual identity.

In general, it's probably not a good idea for theorists to go around telling people that they're wrong about their sexual identities, just as it's probably not a good idea for theorists to go around telling people that they're wrong about their other social identities either. But there might be good reasons in particular cases to set aside an individual's beliefs about one or more of their social identities. For example, on Elizabeth Barnes's (2016) theory of disability, some Deaf people are disabled even if they sincerely believe that they're not. Barnes (2016: 34) argues that, if an individual's reason for thinking that they're not disabled relies on prejudice against disabled people (e.g. thinking that disability is something "bad, sad, and tragic"), then we have reason to take seriously the possibility that they're disabled even if they sincerely believe that they're not. Likewise, if Chad's claim that he's not at all queer and is in fact very, very straight is the result of internalized homophobia or is otherwise due to heteronormative ideology, then we have reason to take seriously the possibility that he's not straight even if he sincerely believes that he is.<sup>56</sup> And, if Chad isn't straight, then his case isn't a problem for The Orientation-Based Theory.

In supposing that Chad is straight, Andler (2022a: 120) takes it that they're following Ward's (2008) view in "Dude-Sex." This might be her view in her later book, *Not Gay: Sex between Straight White Men*.<sup>57</sup> But, in "Dude-Sex," Ward doesn't take herself to be arguing for a claim about what *sexual identity* str8 dudes have. She says,

In this article I do not make claims about the 'actual' sexual and racial identities of men who place advertisements for sex online.<sup>58</sup>

it is important to note that the study at hand reveals how 'str8 dudes' represent themselves in their Craigslist ads, but does not reveal how they identify, what they actually do, or how they think about what they do 'in real life'.<sup>59</sup>

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on the claim that some actual individual is non-heterosexual and straight. The presentation in the text is more—ahem—straightforward.

<sup>56</sup> But Ward (2008) has a different take on the homophobia of str8 dudes. See below in the text.

<sup>57</sup> See Ward 2015: 132–134.

<sup>58</sup> Ward 2008: 417.

<sup>59</sup> Ward 2008: 418.



Rather, Ward takes herself to be arguing for a claim about what *sexuality culture* str8 dudes belong to. She says,

instead I am interested in the sexualized and racialized *cultures* these advertisements draw upon and reproduce.<sup>60</sup>

this study demonstrates how a heterosexual [or straight] *culture* is constructed online without making any claims about the ‘true’ heterosexuality [or straight sexual identity] of the men who post ads on Craigslist.<sup>61</sup>

On Ward’s (2008: 430–431) view, the homophobia evinced by str8 dudes isn’t something that prevents them from acknowledging their true queer identity; rather, it’s part of their participation in straight culture.

Andler takes there to be a close connection between sexuality culture and sexual identity. They endorse the following theory.

### **The Cultural Theory**

- (C1) For any individual  $x$ , if  $x$  is excluded from straight culture and (according to the constitutive norms of queer culture)  $x$  ought to be included in queer culture, then [ $x$  is excluded from straight culture] and [ $x$  ought to be included in queer culture] together ground [ $x$  is queer].
- (C2) For any individual  $x$ , if  $x$  is included in straight culture, then [ $x$  is included in straight culture] grounds [ $x$  is straight]; and, if it’s not the case that (according to the constitutive norms of queer culture)  $x$  ought to be included in queer culture, then [it’s not the case that  $x$  ought to be included in queer culture] grounds [ $x$  is straight].<sup>62</sup>

In effect, The Cultural Theory uses a prior understanding of queer and straight cultures to define *being queer* and *being straight*. Andler (2022a: 124) says, “I hope that the distinction between queer and straight cultures is apparent. If not, I’d suggest strapping on some boots and heading to the nearest LGBTQIA+ establishment.” (Since The Cultural

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<sup>60</sup> Ward 2008: 417; italics in original.

<sup>61</sup> Ward 2008: 418–419; italics in original. Ward doesn’t distinguish ‘heterosexual’ and ‘straight’. In *Not Gay*, Ward (2015: 134) still takes her claims to be at least partly cultural: “the primary litmus for what counts as heterosexuality versus queerness should be the cultural and relational investments of the participants: That is, are their same-sex sex practices anchored within heterosexual culture and conceptualized through the logics of heterosexuality?”

<sup>62</sup> ‘C’ is for ‘Cultural’. Andler (2022a: 124–129) discusses, and endorses, The Cultural Theory.

Theory appeals to queer and straight cultures to define *being queer* and *being straight*, it can't appeal to *being queer* and *being straight* to define queer and straight cultures. There's an analogy here with Barnes's (2016) theory of disability: since it appeals to the disability rights movement to define *being disabled*, it can't appeal to *being disabled* to define the disability rights movement.<sup>63</sup>)

Given The Cultural Theory, it makes sense to read Ward's claim that str8 dudes disavow queer culture and participate in straight culture as supporting the claim that str8 dudes are in fact straight rather than queer. But, in arguing for The Cultural Theory or against The Orientation-Based Theory, it would be question-begging to assume that The Cultural Theory is true or that claims about sexuality cultures should be read as supporting claims about sexual identities. So someone who holds The Orientation-Based Theory can grant that Chad participates in straight culture without granting that he is in fact straight.

## 5.2. *Gay Friends*

Here's the second case that Andler (2022a: 120) uses against The Orientation-Based Theory:

Mark, a thirty-year-old academic, was riding his bike downtown when he noticed a storefront adorned with rainbow flags. Mark jumped off his bike to check out the shop, meeting and eventually becoming close friends with the owners of the shop, Keith and Roy, who have been married since 2015. Keith is a fifty-year-old sculptor who produces much of the artwork sold in the shop, and Roy is a sixty-year-old community organizer who manages operations. Mark, Roy, and Keith's friendship is set against a collection of shared experiences. For example, Mark, Roy, and Keith each know what it's like to experience homophobia, lose a friend to HIV/AIDS, come out of the closet, visit a gay club for the first time, etc. etc. Regarding the aforementioned collection of shared experiences, Roy and Keith are often playfully distraught when Mark confesses to being unfamiliar with certain cultural items, e.g., *Priscilla Queen of the Desert*, such that Roy and Keith have taken on the project of introducing Mark to various films in (what they call) the gay [canon].

Andler (2022a: 121) argues as follows:

Mark, Roy, and Keith participate in a shared way of life. ... Mark, Roy, and Keith need not have the same sexual orientation in order to participate in the

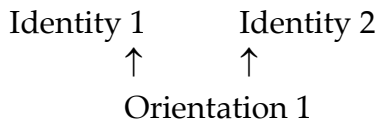
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<sup>63</sup> See Barnes 2016: 46, 48–49.

aforementioned way of life. ... under some descriptions, Mark, Roy, and Keith each have a different sexual orientation. More specifically, Mark, Roy, and Keith are (in no particular order) sexually attracted to (i) men, (ii) men and women, and (iii) men and nonbinary individuals. These differences with respect to sexual orientation, however, are compatible with Mark, Roy, and Keith participating in the same way of life. In short, while there's an interesting relation between sexual orientation and sexual identity, that relation is not the relation of grounding.

But, as presented, the gay friends case isn't a problem for The Orientation-Based Theory.

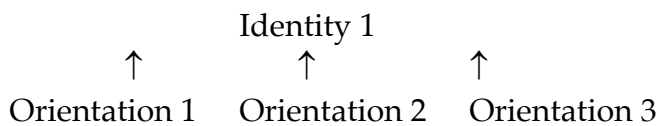
Let's go back to the str8 dudes case. It's supposed to be a *Same-Orientation/Different-Identity case*: individuals are said to have the *same sexual orientation* (Chad and Quentin are both non-heterosexual) but *different sexual identities* (Quentin is queer, but Chad is supposed to be straight).



**Figure 1.** Same-Orientation/Different-Identity

Andler (2022a: 120) says, “given that many non-heterosexual individuals are queer, individuals who are identical (or, at least, substantively similar) with respect to sexual orientation can differ with respect to sexual identity.”

By contrast, Andler presents the gay friends case as a *Different-Orientation/Same-Identity case*.



**Figure 2.** Different-Orientation/Same-Identity

In the gay friends case, individuals are said to have *different sexual orientations* (“under some descriptions, Mark, Roy, and Keith each have a different sexual orientation”) but the *same sexual identity* (they all “participate in a shared way of life”).

Although a Same-Orientation/Different-Identity case like the str8 dudes case has the right structure to raise a problem for The Orientation-Based Theory, a Different-Orientation/Same-Identity case like the gay friends case doesn't. By way of comparison, if we wanted to raise a problem for the theory that facts about an object's color are grounded in facts about its specific shade, we would need a Same-Shade/Different-Color

case, not a Different-Shade/Same-Color case. For example, some periwinkle wallpaper and a cerulean scarf are both blue. The fact that the wallpaper is periwinkle grounds the fact that it's blue, and the fact that the scarf is cerulean grounds the fact that it's blue, too. Similarly, the fact that Mark has one sexual orientation might ground the fact that he has a certain sexual identity, and the fact that Roy has a different sexual orientation might ground the fact that he has that sexual identity, too.<sup>64</sup>

## 6. The Cultural Theory and Partial Grounding

I've been arguing that sexual identity facts are at least partially grounded in sexual orientation facts. Andler can accept this claim in the case of *being queer*. Indeed, they might be committed to it.

Andler accepts The Cultural Theory. On The Cultural Theory, the fact that—according to the constitutive norms of queer culture—an individual ought to be included in queer culture partially grounds the fact that they're queer. Andler mentions two such constitutive norms. First, according to *The Norm of Solidarity*, an individual ought to be included in queer culture (that is, “ought to have special access to queer cultural practices that curate normatively important resources”) if they're “excluded from straight culture on the basis of their sexual orientation.”<sup>65</sup> And, second, according to *The Norm of Self-Constitution*, an individual ought to be included in queer culture if their inclusion “would sustain queer culture against the dominance of straight culture.”<sup>66</sup>

There's a road from either norm to the claim that facts about *being queer* are partially grounded in sexual orientation facts.

Consider Quentin after he comes out. He's non-heterosexual, and he's excluded from straight culture on the basis of his sexual orientation.<sup>67</sup> The fact that he's non-heterosexual partially grounds the fact that he's excluded from straight culture on the basis of his sexual orientation; in keeping with The Norm of Solidarity, that fact grounds (and hence partially grounds) the fact that he ought to be included in queer culture; and, by The

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<sup>64</sup> Although Andler doesn't say what sexual identity Mark, Roy, and Keith are supposed to share, the sexual identity that Andler has in mind is presumably *being gay* rather than *being queer*. (The case occurs in a section of their paper entitled “*Gay Identity*” and follows their discussion of D'Emilio's (1983) claim that gay identity emerged in a specific 20th-century historical context. See [Andler 2022a: 120](#).) On The Orientation-Based Theory, the fact that an individual is gay is only partially grounded in a sexual orientation fact. (It's also partially grounded in a gender fact. See Section 3.3.) The fact that Mark has one sexual orientation might partially ground the fact that he's gay, and the fact that Roy has a different sexual orientation might partially ground the fact that he's gay, too.

<sup>65</sup> [Andler 2022a: 126](#).

<sup>66</sup> [Andler 2022a: 126](#).

<sup>67</sup> Quentin might also be excluded from straight culture before he comes out. See [Andler 2022a: 127](#).

Cultural Theory, *that* fact partially grounds the fact that he's queer.<sup>68</sup> So, by the transitivity of partial grounding, the fact that he's non-heterosexual partially grounds the fact that he's queer.

Alternatively, the fact that Quentin is non-heterosexual partially grounds the fact that his inclusion in queer culture would help sustain it; in keeping with The Norm of Self-Constitution, that fact grounds (and hence partially grounds) the fact that he ought to be included in queer culture; and, by The Cultural Theory, *that* fact partially grounds the fact that he's queer. So, by transitivity again, the fact that he's non-heterosexual partially grounds the fact that he's queer.

In presenting the gay friends case, Andler (2022a: 121) says (as quoted above, in Section 5.2), "while there's an interesting relation between sexual orientation and sexual identity, that relation is not the relation of grounding." I agree that there's an interesting relation between sexual orientation and sexual identity. What I've been arguing in this paper is that, although that relation isn't always *full* grounding, it's still at least *partial* grounding.

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<sup>68</sup> As stated, The Norm of Solidarity isn't a claim about grounding. All it entails is that, if Quentin is excluded from straight culture on the basis of his sexual orientation, then he ought to be included in queer culture. But I take the corresponding grounding claim—that, if Quentin is excluded from straight culture on the basis of his sexual orientation, then that fact grounds the fact that he ought to be included in queer culture—to be suggested by, and in keeping with, The Norm of Solidarity. Likewise for The Norm of Self-Constitution.

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