



Jenkins, K. (2022) How To Be A Pluralist About Gender Categories. In: Halwani, R., Held, J. M., McKeever, N. and Soble, A. (eds.) *The Philosophy of Sex: Contemporary Readings*. 8th Edition. Rowman & Littlefield: Lanham, Maryland, pp. 233-259. ISBN 9781538155363.

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Deposited on: 11 March 2022

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## How to be a Pluralist about Gender Categories

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### Introduction

To investigate the *metaphysics* of gender categories—categories like “woman,” “genderqueer,” and “man”—is to ask questions about what gender categories are and how they exist. This chapter offers a pluralist account of the metaphysics of gender categories, according to which there are several different varieties of gender categories.

I begin (Section I) by giving a brief overview of some feminist accounts of the metaphysics of gender categories and illustrating how certain moral and political considerations have been in play in these discussions as constraints on acceptable accounts of gender categories. I then (Section II) present my pluralist account of gender categories and highlight some of its virtues. Finally (Section III), I assess how my pluralist account fares relative to the moral and political considerations identified in Section I. I argue that although the account does not fare well, we should in fact revise our understanding of what those considerations are and how they should constrain our accounts of gender categories. I then show that, on this revised understanding, my pluralist account emerges as a viable position.

### **I. Feminist Approaches to the Metaphysics of Gender Categories**

#### **I. A. Categories, Concepts, and Kinds**

There are various ways to understand the notion of a “category” (and so of “gender categories”). One way to think about what categories are is to associate them with the concepts that we use to engage in acts of categorization. So, suppose I take a walk in the

woods, passing various flowers such as bluebells, wild garlic, and wood anemones, and suppose I think to myself, “There’s a *pleasant-scented flower*, there’s a *strong-scented flower*, there’s an *unscented flower*.” I am using concepts (the italicized phrases) to sort the things I find into categories. We might then just claim that the categories *are* the concepts.. Note that different people may use different concepts to sort the same items into categories. A botanist who takes the same walk as I do would very likely categorize the same flowers differently, perhaps into species (*hyacinthoides non-scripta*, *allium ursinum*, and *anemone nemorosa*). Both the botanist and I are engaging in acts of categorization, but we do so using different concepts. If we think of categories as concepts, then both my concepts and the botanist’s concepts count as categories.

Another way of thinking about what categories are is to focus more on the world itself. Here we encounter the notion of a “kind,” or, sometimes, a “real kind” or an “explanatory kind” (I use them interchangeably, mostly using “kind”). These are groupings of things in the world that share certain features *in virtue of which* the grouping, i.e. the kind, can be used in the formulation and explanation of true generalizations.<sup>1</sup> So, for example, *hyacinthoides non-scripta* is a (real, explanatory) kind because we can use it to make true generalizations. If I ask, “I wonder why *these* flowers are growing *here*,” the botanist might answer, “That’s because *hyacinthoides non-scripta* flourish in dappled shade,” which is a good explanation that includes a true generalization. By contrast, if I were to say to myself, “I suppose it’s because pleasant-smelling flowers flourish in dappled shade,” this is not a true generalization, because plenty of pleasant-smelling flowers grow better in full sunlight, such as roses. So the plant species *hyacinthoides non-scripta* is a (real, explanatory) kind, whereas *pleasant-smelling flowers* is not. The second way of thinking of categories, then, its to equate them with kinds.

These two senses of “category” have not always been sharply distinguished in the literature on gender categories (to which we will turn in a moment), which gives rise to unclarity. To avoid this problem, in what follows I take it that to investigate the *metaphysics* of gender categories is to investigate gender categories-as-kinds (hereafter: kinds). However, metaphysicians of gender cannot simply ignore gender categories-as-concepts (hereafter: concepts), because the two senses of categories can interact, in that the ways in which we categorize things can affect which generalizations are true. Suppose that a wine expert and I are standing on a hillside in the Chablis region of Burgundy, France, looking out over slopes covered in grape vines of the Chardonnay variety. I say, “I wonder why *these* grape vines are growing *here*,” and my knowledgeable companion replies, “Well, Chardonnay is the only variety of grape that is permitted to be included in wine that’s labelled as Chablis *Appellation d’Origine Contrôlée* (AOC), which fetches much higher prices than non-AOC wine, so no one here plants any other grape varieties.” This is a good explanation: it’s a true generalization that pretty much all grapes grown in Chablis are of the Chardonnay variety. But it’s our social practices as human beings—what is legal, what is profitable—that makes this generalisation true. So the way that we categorize things—sorting wines into different AOC designations, for instance—can make a difference to how kinds behave in the world.

With the example of the Chardonnay grapes, our social practices may make a difference to *how* and *where* the grapes grow, but there would still be differences between Chardonnay grapes and other grape varieties even if we completely stopped differentiating them in our social practices (for example, Chardonnay grapes would still have thinner skins than many other grape varieties). In other words, our social practices may affect which generalizations about the kind are true, but they do not seem to *create* the kind. Other kinds, however, *are* brought into existence by our social practices. Consider the kind *refugee*. According to the United Nations—specifically, the 1951 Refugee Convention—a refugee is:

“someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.” Notice that we cannot explain what it *is* to be a refugee without talking about social practices—practices such as marking and controlling borders between countries, for example. Unlike with Chardonnay grapes, if we were to take our social practices out of the equation, the kind *refugee* would not exist at all. Accordingly, we can say the kind *refugee* is a “social kind.”<sup>2</sup>

This section has introduced some key ideas in metaphysics: the notion of a kind in general, and the notion of a *social* kind in particular. We are now in a position to turn to gender.

## **I. B. Sex and Gender**

There are many social practices that involve sorting or categorizing human beings by gender, and they seem to have significant impacts on the trajectories of our lives. It might be systematically difficult, however, for people to identify the sources of these impacts correctly. Feminists have observed that regimes of gender oppression have sought to justify themselves by claiming that their preferred gender categories and practices are “natural,” resulting in various spurious explanations and unfounded prescriptive conclusions.<sup>3</sup> Consider, for example, the claim that women are naturally bad at maths and so should not work in professions such as engineering; or the claim that women are naturally gentle and so unsuited to political life. These ideas grossly over-state differences between men and women, and offer false explanations of what differences there are as stemming from supposed bodily properties. A direct link can be traced between poor-quality contemporary research on supposed gender differences in brain structure, to discredited theories which were taken seriously by many 19<sup>th</sup> Century scientists, including that women have smaller brains or more

delicate bodily tissues.<sup>4</sup> This is all a bit like looking out over the vineyards full of Chardonnay grapes in Chablis and concluding that other grape varieties cannot grow in that soil, so we should never plant them there. We're picking up on a genuine pattern in the world, but we're ignoring the role of social factors in creating and maintaining it, and we're drawing unlicensed conclusions about what we should and should not do in the future.

What this shows is that there may be patterns in the world that partially support some of these claims about women and men (for example, women *are* under-represented in engineering and politics, and over-represented in caring professions and unpaid care work roles), but the explanations for these patterns are to do with differential access to education and opportunities, differential socialization, and so on, and not with women having smaller brains, or whatever other theory is in vogue. As feminists have argued, our response should be to change those unjust social factors, not to protect and uphold the differences they create.

This insight constitutes a point of departure for feminist claims about and accounts of gender kinds. Whatever we say about what gender kinds are, it must be sensitive to the ways in which gendered social arrangements, often based on mistaken ideas about biological difference, have shaped people's lives. One feminist response to this insight is to distinguish between sex kinds and gender kinds. On this view, roughly, sex is understood to be the anatomical and biological differences between males and females, and gender is understood to be the social differences between men and women produced by a society that attaches significance to sex difference and uses it as a basis for organizing social practices.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, on this view gender is a *social* kind, even though this is not always how people think about it. On this view, we can argue that to think that women are innately worse at maths or more nurturing than men is to make a mistake by appealing to *sex* kinds when it is really *gender* kinds that explain the differences in question.

Other feminists argue that conceiving of sex and gender as distinct in this way is not straightforward, because social factors shape the manifestation and interpretation of bodily differences.<sup>6</sup> On this view, *all* differences between men and women are permeated by social factors to the extent that distinguishing sex from gender is theoretically unhelpful.<sup>7</sup> According to these theorists, we have just one sort of kind on our hands, and it is a *social* kind: gender.

Pursuing this debate about sex and gender is beyond the scope of this paper. The important point is that both of the accounts that I have sketched agree that gender kinds are social kinds, which is to say, kinds produced by social practices of categorizing people using gender concepts. In other words, on both views, what people who share a gender have in common is a certain *social position*, understood as the fact of being similarly impacted by the way society is organised. The task of giving an account of the metaphysics of gender is therefore generally understood as investigating these social positions.

### **I. C. The Inclusion Problem**

In investigating the metaphysics of gender, feminists have focused particularly on the gender kind *woman*. The thought was that giving an account of the gender kind *woman* meant giving an account of the social position that women share. In other words, we need to know what women have in common with each other on a social level, so as to know what the kind *woman* is and how it exists. Here, however, we encounter a complication. Women differ from one another in terms of their race, class, sexual orientation, disability status and religion, to name a few dimensions of difference. These differences make it difficult to say very much about women's social position that would apply to all women.

This difficulty is captured by the concept of *intersectionality*, which is, roughly speaking, the idea that different axes or dimensions of oppression and privilege interact in

complex ways to make up an individual's social position. The term "intersectionality" was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), although the concept has a longer history in Black feminist thought.<sup>8</sup> Attending to intersectionality means recognizing that the oppression experienced by a woman of color, for example, cannot be neatly separated into the oppression she experiences "as a woman" and the oppression she experiences "as a person of color." Rather, to understand her social position, including the way she experiences oppression, we need to attend holistically to her experiences as *a woman of color*, specifically, recognizing that those experiences may differ from those of white women and from those of men of color.

In general, if feminists don't attend to intersectionality, we are likely to make various sorts of costly political mistakes. As bell hooks has argued, feminism has often focused on white women to the exclusion of women of color (and, correspondingly, anti-racist movements have often focused on men of color, also to the exclusion of women of colour).<sup>9</sup> With specific regard to the metaphysics of gender, intersectionality makes it difficult to identify a single social position that all women have in common.<sup>10</sup>

These considerations about intersectionality give rise to what has become known as "the inclusion problem."<sup>11</sup> The thought is that if feminism is conceived of as a movement to end the oppression of women, then feminists need a definition of "woman", understood as a social kind, that enables us to make sense of this goal: our account of gender kinds should capture a commonality between women that justifies the formation of a social movement. However, the differences among women are so many and so significant that it is difficult to identify a suitable definition of "woman" that does not exclude some people that we think it should include, usually those who are least privileged in other respects. In other words, the strategy under consideration was to give an account of the metaphysics of gender kinds by giving an account of women's shared social position; but doubt has been cast over whether we can indeed identify any social position that all women really share.



The inclusion problem might pose a foundational challenge for feminism. If we do not have a good understanding of who and what women are, then it might be unclear what feminism is or what feminists should be doing. Worse, if women cannot be shown to have something significant in common—such as a shared social position—then it might make no sense to have a social movement on behalf of women. Accordingly, feminist metaphysicians have sought to give accounts of the metaphysics of gender categories that can solve the inclusion problem. Since the problem is driven by moral and political considerations—namely, the wrongfulness of excluding some women from the gender kind *woman*, and the desire to justify feminist political action—this is one way in which moral and political considerations can shape metaphysical inquiries.

Feminist approaches to the metaphysics of gender categories can be roughly grouped by how they respond to the inclusion problem. One response is “gender scepticism,” which holds that the variation among those we consider to be women is too great to be able to delineate a category of women that can play a guiding role in feminism.<sup>12</sup> Gender sceptics advocate moving away from thinking of feminism as a movement centred on women, in favour of thinking more broadly about a movement to end all oppressive gender norms and practices, whoever they impact.

A second response is gender nominalism, which joins with gender scepticism in acknowledging that there is no single property that all women have in common but differs in thinking that gender is still a useful category of analysis.<sup>13</sup> Accordingly, the nominalist aims to show that gender categories exist even though there is nothing that all women have in common, and even though gender categories may not have sharp boundaries. On this view, genders do not amount to (real, explanatory) kinds, and we cannot give necessary and sufficient conditions for being a woman, but we can still usefully talk about people being women and say some true things when we do so, such as that women are underpaid. This is a

true generalisation even if we are not completely clear which people are women because there are some borderline cases.

Finally, gender realists respond to the inclusion problem by taking up the challenge of defining the category of women in a more cohesive way than the nominalist, but without denying the differences that exist between those whom we think of as women.<sup>14</sup> They aim to show that the category of women can, after all, feature in true, non-accidental generalizations in the way that a kind needs to be able to in order to count as real or explanatory. And they aim to show that it can do this *even though* women are very different from one another in lots of ways.

We can roughly distinguish gender scepticism, gender nominalism, and gender realism from each other by making use of the ideas of categories-as-concepts and categories-as-kinds outlined above. Gender sceptics think that there are no gender kinds: the world just doesn't contain the sorts of regularities that would be needed in order for gender to be able to feature in true generalizations to the degree that would be needed in order for it to count as real or explanatory in the relevant sense. They also think that, as a result, gender concepts are in trouble: we shouldn't go around categorizing by gender because it leads to mistakes and problems. Gender nominalists agree with the sceptics that there are no gender kinds, but they think that our practices of categorizing by gender are nevertheless in good standing: we can operate with gender concepts even though there are no gender kinds. Finally, gender realists hold that there *are* gender kinds, in that gender can and does feature in true generalizations to the degree needed in order for it to count as a (real, explanatory) kind. They also hold that, for this reason, gender concepts are in good order: the reason that we can conceptually categorize by gender is that concepts reflect real kinds in the world. This three-way split is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1

	<b>Gender Concepts</b>	<b>Gender Kinds</b>
<b>Gender Scepticism</b>	To be abandoned	Do not exist
<b>Gender Nominalism</b>	To be retained	Do not exist
<b>Gender Realism</b>	To be retained	Exist

Various feminists, including Iris Marion Young, have suggested that gender scepticism is an undesirable position for feminists. Young describes the “exclusively critical orientation” of gender scepticism as problematically limiting, arguing that it offers no discernible resources for considering “what sort of positive claims feminists can make about the way social life is and ought to be.”<sup>15</sup> In other words, Young holds that gender scepticism focuses too much on saying what is wrong with feminism, more traditionally conceived, and not enough on giving workable, concrete proposals about how to change society for the better.

Although these concerns prompted Young herself to develop a nominalist account that preserves a more traditional conception of feminism, these considerations are actually the basis for an argument for gender realism rather than gender nominalism. To preserve our ability to use gender concepts in articulating the sort of positive vision that Young is after, the most straightforward and robust way would be to show that the corresponding gender kinds do exist, and only gender realism can give us this. Accordingly, I see gender realism as the most attractive option for feminist accounts of the metaphysics of gender categories, with nominalism and scepticism, respectively, as successive fall-back options. In other words, we should only be gender nominalists if we cannot manage to be gender realists, and we should only be gender sceptics if we cannot manage to be gender nominalists. With this (admittedly

controversial) approach in mind, I turn now to the task of offering my own version of gender realism.

## **II. A Pluralist Account of Gender Kinds**

### **II. A. Kinds as Interest-Relative**

Having briefly outlined some feminist debates on the metaphysics of gender, I offer in this section a realist account of gender kinds that is pluralist in nature. Now, all accounts of gender are pluralist in the weak sense that there are more than one gender kind (at minimum, they may hold that there are two gender kinds, “man” and “woman,” though many accounts of gender hold that there are more than two genders). The sense of “pluralist” that I have in mind is stronger, in that it holds that there are several different *varieties* of gender kind (where *each variety* includes multiple gender kinds, as in the weak sense of pluralism). I’ll first offer a way of thinking about kinds that opens the door for a pluralist account. Then I’ll survey three different accounts of gender kinds and argue that each of them deserves to be included in the pluralist account as one variety of gender kinds among several. Finally, I’ll offer a conceptual apparatus to keep the pluralist picture tidy. I discuss all this without reference to the inclusion problem; once I’ve presented my pluralist account, I’ll turn, in the next section, to consider how it fares relative to the inclusion problem.

Recall that we defined kinds as groupings of things in the world that share certain features in virtue of which the grouping (the kind) can be used in the formulation and explanation of true generalizations. In other words, kinds are groupings of things that have explanatory value: they help us explain the world that we encounter. Now, one way to think about the explanatory value of kinds is as relative to our purposes:<sup>16</sup> whether or not a grouping plays a role in good explanations (and hence whether or not it amounts to a kind) depends on what sort of thing that we are looking to explain.

For example, the fact that some object is a member of the social kind *holy statue* is important to explain how people interact with it (e.g., why they place incense in front of it). However, this fact is irrelevant to whether it will tarnish if left unpolished for a while. Conversely, whether the material from which the statue is made belongs to the kind *bronze* or the kind *gold* might be irrelevant to how worshippers engage with it, but highly relevant to why it does or does not tarnish. An anthropologist and a materials scientist investigating the same object would each need to use different kinds (*holy statue*; *bronze*) in order to conduct their respective investigations.

To view kinds as interest-relative is to believe that whether a grouping of things is a kind depends on who is proposing to use the grouping to construct explanations, and what kinds of things they are trying to explain. [is the discussion here at odds with that earlier in the essay with the botanist example? There, the claim was that the botanist makes true generalizations compared to the one you make. Is the claim now that anyone can make a true generalization as long as it is tied to some interest? Or was the botanists's generalization also interest-dependent?]. Relative to the anthropologist's purposes, *bronze* is not a kind, but *holy statue* is, and vice versa for the materials scientist's purposes. This is by no means a universally accepted way of thinking about kinds, but it is the way I shall think about them here.

If kinds are interest-relative, then we need to identify some purposes in order to investigate gender kinds: who is proposing to use gender kinds to construct explanations, and what kinds of things are they trying to explain? The answer I shall work with is that *feminists* are proposing to use gender kinds and trying to explain the social mechanisms that support gendered oppression, with a view to disrupting them so as to bring about a non-oppressive state of affairs. My contention is that, to satisfy these explanatory purposes, we need several

different varieties of gender kinds. In the next three subsections, I survey three of these varieties and argue that each does different, and important, explanatory work for feminists.

## **II. B. Gender as Structural Role**

Let us begin with an account of gender that has been offered by Sally Haslanger, which conceptualizes gender kinds as roles or positions within a social structure—specifically, within a hierarchical social structure.<sup>17</sup> In simplified terms, a woman is someone who is regularly and for the most part subordinated in virtue of being observed or imagined to have bodily features presumed to be evidence of a female role in biological reproduction. A counterpart definition is given of men as individuals who are *privileged* on the basis of observed or imagined bodily features presumed to be evidence of a *male* role in biological reproduction. On these definitions, the ways in which different women are subordinated (and different men are privileged) can vary; for example, one woman may be subordinated by being expected to work in low-paying jobs, and another woman may be subordinated by being expected not to do paid work of any kind. The point is that being subordinated *in some way or another* on the basis of being presumed to have bodily features linked to female reproductive capabilities is what the members of the kind *woman* have in common.<sup>18</sup>

This “structural role” account of gender kinds does not include definitions of non-binary genders, though there are ways in which it could be adapted to include them. For example, Elizabeth Barnes offers a way of adapting and expanding the account to include the functional position of “gender confounder,” understood in terms of being subordinated on the basis of one’s bodily features not being easily classifiable as either male or female.<sup>19</sup>

Thinking of gender as a structural role helps us understand many large-scale patterns and trends, such as the gender pay gap and rates of sexual violence, which matter to feminists. This is because feminists aim to end gender-based oppression, which can be

understood as a structural phenomenon that involves different social barriers and restrictions interlocking to systematically limit members of certain social groups.

The structural role account of gender does not, however, explain everything that we want to explain as feminists. For one thing, it paints the contours of gender categories with such a broad brush that they are ill-suited to capture the micro-textures of our everyday gender interactions—the way the social meaning of our bodily and other features shift as we move between different social spaces.

For another thing, the structural role account doesn't illuminate the ways in which gender oppression can operate via psychological mechanisms. This is especially important given that someone could occupy a gender structural role different from how they psychologically experience their own gender. Imagine Cara, a trans woman—someone with a sense of herself as a woman who was assigned a male gender at birth—who is unable to present herself as a woman due to a hostile social context. Given her gender presentation, Cara is likely to be perceived by those around her as having bodily features linked to a male role in biological reproduction, so she will count as occupying the structural gender role of a man, according to the structural role account. Now suppose that Cara works in a male-dominated line of work and suffers from anxieties such as impostor syndrome. These anxieties are the sort of social dynamic feminists should care about, and they might have a subordinating effect on Cara. However, the structural role categories do not explain this case well because they position Cara as a member of the gender kind *man*, which is understood to be defined by privilege.<sup>20</sup>

There are, however, other accounts of gender kinds that can help us explain these social dynamics where the structural role account seems not to be very illuminating. Let's consider two.

## II. C. Gender as Social Status

Ásta argues that gender should be understood as a social status, consisting of constraints and enablements, and which is conferred upon on an individual by the actions and attitudes of other agents in the context, typically in response to some perceived feature or features of the individual.<sup>21</sup> The thought is that an individual has various features—for example, their bodily features, their presentation in terms of things like clothing and hairstyle, and their history. These features, or “base properties,” prompt responses from other people that affect what the agent is or is unable to in the context. This amounts to having a certain social status in that context, and having a certain sort of social status is what makes you a member of a gender kind.

So, what is the relevant social status? Ásta thinks that gender is a radically context-dependent social status, so it gets conferred in different ways in different contexts. Consider Ásta’s example:

You work as a coder in San Francisco. You go into your office where you are one of the guys. After work, you tag along with friends at work to a bar. It is a very heteronormative space, and you are neither a guy nor a gal. You are an other. You walk up the street to another bar where you are a butch and expected to buy drinks for the femmes. Then you head home to your grandmother’s eightieth birthday party, where you help out in the kitchen with the other women while the men smoke cigars.<sup>22</sup>

As this example highlights, gender as a social status varies radically between different social contexts in many respects, including the categories that are available (“gal,” “butch,” “woman”), the base property that conferrals are supposed to track (social role, sexual role, body type), and the constraints and enablements that constitute the status. The example also



highlights the possibility of a person being made into a gender “other” when they don’t fit into any of the gender categories that are available to the conferrers in that context.

This “social status” account of gender explains well the shifting ways in which people get gendered in different contexts. If we want to explain people’s gendered behaviors—why did *that* person buy *this* person a drink? Why is *that* person but not *this* person preparing food?—then a social status account is what we need. Moreover, feminists should be able to supply such explanations. We need to capture the micro-textures of our gendered social lives, in addition to large-scale patterns of oppression, in order to expose how gendered social divisions impact us as individuals. Gender oppression does not float above us as an abstract phenomenon but worms its way into the most personal corners of our experience. Ásta’s social status account of gender captures the mechanics of this process extremely well.

That said, because the social status account focuses on specific contexts, it’s not well suited to capture what the structural role account captures, which is the accumulated effects of how people behave to one another across different social contexts. We cannot simply replace the structural role account with the social status account; each of them explains different things. Moreover, neither the social status nor the structural role account captures well the ways in which a person’s own sense of their gendered self may depart from the ways in which they are being gendered by others in a social context. For that, we need to look to accounts of gender as identity.

## **II. D. Gender as Identity**

In the sense that concerns me here, identity is a matter of one’s own sense of one’s location in a social structure. Gender identity kinds, then, are kinds where what the members have in common is a similar sense of their location in a social structure of gender. Because what matters is a person’s *sense* of social location, not their *actual* social location, a person can

have a gender identity different from how they are in fact situated relative to social structures of gender *and* from how they are perceived and treated by others in relation to gender in a particular context. So, gender as identity is different from both gender as structural role and as social status.

I have given an account of gender identity based on the idea that a person's gender identity is determined by which gender norms they experience as relevant to them.<sup>23</sup> For example, a person has a female gender identity, or a gender identity of "woman," if she experiences predominantly norms of femininity as relevant to her. While this account has various limitations, it serves as a useful illustration of an "identity" account of gender.<sup>24</sup>

Crucial to the "norm-relevancy" account of gender identity is the distinction between experiencing a norm as relevant to you, on the one hand, and endorsing or following the norm, on the other. A woman who feels a pleasurable sense of transgression and rebellion when she bares her hairy legs in public experiences the norm, "women should have hairless legs" as relevant to her, even though she neither endorses nor follows it. By contrast, a man who has never considered removing the hair from his legs and feels nothing in particular when he heads out for the day wearing shorts, does *not* experience the norm "women should have hairless legs" as relevant to him (though he may experience other norms, such as "men should not shave their legs," as relevant). This distinction allows that we can have gender identities without being committed to endorsing or following current (highly sexist) gender norms, which is good news for feminists seeking to use the account.

Understanding gender as an identity highlights how oppression operates through our own sense of our social location, since this shapes which courses of action we experience as possible and desirable, transgressive or compliant. Since gender oppression does operate partly through these psychological factors and the ways in which people limit themselves, it is important for feminist purposes. For example, return to the example of Cara, the trans

woman working in a male-dominated environment. On an account of gender identity kinds, we can understand Cara's anxieties, such as impostor syndrome, as related to her female gender identity. Even though others around her perceive her as a man, she has a sense of her own social location as a woman, and accordingly she is doing something transgressive in working in a male dominated environment. We can make sense of Cara's experiencing anxieties by appealing to her female gender identity.

People's sense of their own social location is also crucial for thinking about *resistance* to oppression. Plausibly, we may need to resist gender oppression by finding new ways to interpret and inhabit the identities of men, women, genderqueer, agender, and so on.<sup>25</sup> At the very least, we should be able to consider this as a political strategy. The gender identity account of gender enables us to do this.

Despite its usefulness, gender as identity cannot fully account for either gender as structural role or as social status. Oppression is often imposed without reference to people's self-conceptions, creating categories that depart from these self-conceptions, both on a large, structural scale and on a small, localized scale. So we cannot *replace* the other accounts of gender with an account of gender as identity, but we can add it to them.

## **II. E. The Constraints and Enablements Framework**

The three accounts of gender that I have surveyed complement each other when it comes to giving explanations of gender oppression. Each account picks out a different variety of kind, and each of these varieties of kinds does different, and important, explanatory work that advances feminist purposes. Based on the interest-relative understanding of kinds set out at the start of this section, we can conclude that each account identifies different, yet real, explanatory kinds, relative to feminist explanatory purposes. This is a pluralist position about gender kinds.

A worry that may arise here is that pluralism might be metaphysically messy: the three accounts I have surveyed here identify very different kinds that seem to depend on different things (social structure, interpersonal attitudes, inner feelings) for their existence, which seems untidy. In response, I now offer an overarching framework of how the different sorts of gender kinds are related to one another in a manageable way.

The framework is based on the central idea that to be a member of a certain gender kind is to be socially constrained and enabled in characteristic ways, and on the claim that each of the three varieties of kind surveyed in this section can be understood this way. Let's start with the easiest case: gender as social status is explicitly defined in terms of constraints and enablements—being constrained and enabled is just *what it is* to have a social status, according to Ásta. Regarding gender as structural role, these kinds are defined in terms of subordination and privilege, which can intuitively be understood in terms of how someone is constrained or enabled. Gender as identity is perhaps the least obvious fit, but the idea of what *feels* permissible and impermissible can be understood in terms of constraints and enablements, with the caveat that these operate through an individual's own psychological features rather than being purely imposed from the outside. If I experience feminine norms regarding body hair as relevant to me, I can choose not to shave my legs, but I cannot choose to show my leg-hair *and not feel some friction in relation to the norm*. This, then, amounts to a constraint.

Moving from the central role of constraints and enablements to a framework for pluralism, which I call “the Constraints and Enablements Framework” (CEF), to be a member of a gender kind is to be constrained and/or enabled in the ways characteristic of that kind. This is an umbrella characterization that covers all three of the above varieties of gender kinds. But to have a satisfying picture, we need a way to impose conceptual order on the

bundles of constraints and enablements that characterize a gender kind. I suggest that we identify three dimensions along which these bundles might differ from one another.

The first is the *context* in which the constraints and enablements apply. We might consider how individuals are constrained and enabled in the context of a certain social space or institution, such as family, workplace, or university. Alternatively, we might consider how individuals are constrained and enabled across the whole range of social spaces that they traverse as part of their lives. Or we might consider something in between. Deciding which context is relevant for our purposes determines what I term the “scope” of the constraints and enablements that unify the kind.

The second dimension of variance concerns the *types* of constraints and enablements included in the bundle that characterizes the kind. Social constraints and enablements come in different forms; for example, some relate to how others treat us, others to our own psychological capabilities, and still others to the impact of social factors on our bodies and our material environments. Including different combinations of these varieties of constraints and enablements helps specify different social kinds. I refer to this as the “breadth” of the constraints and enablements that unify the kind, because it concerns how broad or narrow a focus we take in considering the sorts of constraints and enablements that are candidates for including in our specification of the kind.

Finally, we need to decide how general or specific we should be in our understanding of what the relevant constraints or enablements are. This determines the “granularity” of the constraints and enablements because it relates to how fine-grained or coarse-grained our understanding of the constraints or enablements is. Are we describing the constraints and enablements at a highly specific level of detail? Or are we painting with broader brushstrokes? More complexly intersectional kinds—*Black lesbian woman*, for example—

will result from specifying the constraints and enablements in a more fine-grained way, while specifying them in coarse-grained ways will lead to kinds such as *woman*.

Scope, breadth, and granularity provide the basic shape of the CEF. Think of these three variables as sliders on a sound-mixing board: different combinations of settings will give us different outputs. A given gender kind is to be understood as an explanatory kind where what the members have in common is that they fall under a particular bundle of constraints and enablements that has a certain scope, breadth, and granularity.

Let's now see how each of the three accounts, as summarized so far, fits into the CEF. Gender *structural role* kinds are the kinds we arrive at if we adopt a wide scope (the context is a far-reaching one), and a high degree of breadth (all different kinds of constraints and enablements are included). That is, when we look at all the constraints and enablements—interpersonal, psychological, bodily, and environmental—that are relevant to all social contexts on a global scale, the pattern that emerges is one in which those whose bodies are perceived as female are pushed towards subordinating social positions and those whose bodies are perceived as male are pushed towards privileged social positions.

Gender *social status* kinds are at the other end of the scale from gender structural role kinds in terms of both scope and breadth. Gender social status kinds also have a very narrow scope: to specify a gender social status kind, following Ásta's account, we confine our attention to limited social contexts, such as a specific bar. In terms of breadth, only interpersonal constraints are in the picture: your gender social status is determined solely by how other people are disposed to treat you, and the cumulative effects of this treatment on your psychological features, bodily features, and the material features of your built environment are not taken into account.

Finally, while gender *identity* kinds resemble gender social status kinds in that they also dial down the breadth, they favor a different variety of constraints and enablements,

namely, psychological constraints and enablements. On the account of gender identity that I sketched above, gender identity kinds occupy an intermediate position in terms of scope. A person's gender identity *can* alter over time and as they spend time in different contexts; but gender identity is understood as something that persists across different social contexts—by and large, a person's gender identity does not change as they go from their home, to work, to a bar. The thought is that although social norms vary from place to place, many gender norms pervade enough social contexts that our felt relation to them provides a common thread in our experience even as we move through different social spaces that we often (though not always) retain the same gender identity through these transitions.<sup>26</sup>

All three accounts operate at a coarse level of granularity, giving us kinds such as *woman* rather than more overtly intersectional kinds such as *Black woman*. However, there is no reason why we could not construct more fine-grained versions of them. For example, if we were to re-visit structural role kinds and break down “subordination” into more detailed descriptions, such as women differently situated with regard to sexuality, race or class, we can then specify the constraints and enablements at a finer level of granularity. We would then have structural role kinds such as *Black lesbian woman*. Indeed, it is instructive to do this, given the intertwined histories of hetero-patriarchy, colonialism and capitalism; but I cannot follow this thought further here.<sup>27</sup>

As we saw, each account—gender as structural role, as identity, and as social status—does different and important explanatory work from a feminist perspective. Thus, each account identifies real, explanatory gender kinds. On this view, there is no single variety of gender kinds that has overriding explanatory value relative to feminist aims. Rather, feminists need to operate with a suite of different kinds that enable us to offer different sorts of explanations. The CEF allows us to keep this toolkit in good order by explaining each kind in terms of common denominators—social constraints and enablements—and by offering

resources to keep the pluralist picture in good conceptual order—the three “sliders” of scope, breadth, and granularity.

### **III. Beyond the Inclusion Problem**

#### **III. A. Deflating the Inclusion Problem**

I now consider how the pluralist account of Section II fares relative to the inclusion problem. On first glance, things do not seem promising. Various of the gender kinds included in the account seem to exclude people we would usually think of as women. For instance, the structural role kind *woman* excludes anyone who is not oppressed, even if they are perceived as having bodily features linked to a female role in biological reproduction.<sup>28</sup> And, as we saw, it also excludes some people who have a female gender identity but are not perceived as having the relevant bodily features.

There is room on several fronts to argue that the account still meets the inclusion problem. Perhaps most promisingly, we might lean on the pluralist nature of the account to secure inclusion. For example, non-oppressed people who we would usually think of as women probably count as members of the gender social status kind *woman* in many contexts. People with a female gender identity will always count as members of the gender identity kind *woman* even where they do not count as members of the gender structural kind *woman*. So long as everyone we would hope to include in the kind *woman* is included in *one of the varieties* of kinds, then we might think we are in the clear with regard to the inclusion problem.

However, this line of response suggests that some people count as members of all the gender kinds *woman* while others count as a member of some of the gender kinds *woman* but not others. This is a situation in which we have varying levels of inclusion that is likely to generate problematic forms of marginalization: all women are included, but some are more



included than others.<sup>29</sup> This worry is political in that the above response does not secure the kind of inclusion needed to place feminist political action on a firm footing. This highlights something important: since the inclusion problem rests on an understanding of what is needed for feminist political projects to be justified and to avoid moral pitfalls, judgements about whether or not it has successfully been solved are inherently moral and political judgements.

Rather than dive deeper into how we should make these judgements and argue that we should make them in a way that vindicates my pluralist account, I consider whether we need to make such judgements at all. A challenge to the inclusion problem raised by Mari Mikkola targets precisely the link to the justification of feminist projects that animates the problem. According to Mikkola, the inclusion problem is confused and rests on a mistake, such that there is no need to try to *solve* it, only to *deflate* it by revealing its confused nature and loosening its grip on our thinking.<sup>30</sup>

Mikkola argues that rather than starting from the idea that feminist action must be justified by some sort of significant commonality between women (that we urgently need to locate), we should think of feminist action as justified by the recognition that people are wronged by sexism. We should look to justify feminism as a political project, not by developing an account of the metaphysics of the kind *woman*, but by spelling out the nature of the wrongs involved in sexism. This latter endeavour will be a significant philosophical task, and I cannot explore it in this essay; the important point for our purposes is that it will be quite separate from the task of investigating the kind *woman*.<sup>31</sup>

Mikkola's argument for deflating the inclusion problem, rather than trying to solve it, is convincing. Asking the kind *woman* to do the heavy lifting of normatively justifying feminist action is a tall order. We should be able to *use* the kind *woman* as part of our feminist efforts; for example, we need to be able to make claims like, "women are at high risk of suffering sexual violence," and "women are systematically underpaid." But none of this

means that we have to rely on the kind to *justify* a feminist social movement. For that, pointing out the many wrongs of sexist societies—wrongs that affect people who are *not* women as well as many who *are* women—will do just fine. Put differently, it is easier to define feminism by saying *what it is against* than by saying *whom it is for*. This is not to advocate a sharp separation between metaphysics, on the one hand, and ethical and political considerations, on the other; rather, it is to say that we should not require our metaphysical account of gender kind to do a *certain specific sort* of ethical and political work, namely, normatively justifying feminist action.

Once we adopt Mikkola's suggestion, our investigation into gender categories can proceed without having to bear so much normative weight. We can look for an account of the kind *woman* that supports the kinds of claims that, as feminists, we need to make. The pluralist account, I contend, does exactly this. Each of the kinds can be used to highlight patterns and regularities that need to be disrupted in order to end gender oppression, and between them the different varieties of kinds seem to do all the explanatory work that feminists need. (Even if they do not, the CEF allows us to slot in more varieties of kinds as needed). The pluralist account might not "solve" the inclusion problem; but since we can *deflate* the problem instead, this is no longer a worry.

### **III. B. First Person Authority**

Once the inclusion problem has been deflated in the way Mikkola suggests, is the pluralist account in the clear regarding moral and political considerations? Perhaps not. Recall the way that gender structural role kind *woman* turned out to not include all trans women. Now, one way to build from this observation to an objection to the account is to lean on the inclusion problem. This objection loses its force when the inclusion problem is deflated, and the concept of *woman* is decoupled from the project of justifying feminism as a

political movement. A different objection, however, is to question the ethical status of a theory that claims that some trans women are not women. The thought is that there are ethical problems with an account of the kind *woman* that excludes trans women, *even if* one does not propose to use this account to justify feminist political projects.

An account of these problems starts from the observation that misgendering—failing to treat people as members of the gender with which they identify—causes psychological harms such as shame, anxiety, and depression; moral harms such as the undermining of self-respect; and political harms, such as oppression and domination.<sup>32</sup> In particular, Talia Mae Bettcher has argued that there are widespread social attitudes that position trans people as deluded or deceptive with regard to their genders; she terms this the “Basic Denial of Authenticity” (“BDA” for short).<sup>33</sup> Bettcher further compellingly argues that the BDA is a major factor in the oppression of trans people, including in acts of overtly transphobic extreme violence against them.

In response to the BDA, Bettcher argues that we should adopt a norm of “first person authority” (“FPA”) with regard to claims about gender, in the sense of how someone conceptualises their own identity.<sup>34</sup> This norm directs us to accept people’s claims about their *own* gender without second-guessing them. Bettcher distinguishes between an *epistemic* norm of FPA and an *ethical* norm of FPA. Epistemic FPA claims that the person who declares their own gender is the person who is best placed to know about it, so challenging them would be epistemically unfounded. Ethical FPA claims that it is morally bad to question people’s declaration of their own gender identity. Bettcher argues for the ethical version of FPA, based on the need to counter the BDA given its prevalence and its significant role in maintaining the oppression of trans people.

Bettcher articulates FPA with regard to gender as what she calls “existential self-identity,” which is the way that we make sense of our own selves.<sup>35</sup> She does not advocate it

with regard to people's membership in metaphysical kinds. However, some claim that (ethical) FPA, if true, implies that accounts of gender kinds should include trans people as members of the kinds with which they identify (so, all trans women would have to count as members of the gender kind *woman*, e.g.). Stephanie Kapusta puts this point as follows: "Many trans\* women, for example, claim that they are women. As a trans\*feminist, *I think it is important to make sense of these claims metaphysically*. Only then, can one fully validate those claims, and the people who make them."<sup>36</sup>

If Kapusta is right, then deflating the inclusion problem does not remove moral and political considerations from the picture when it comes to metaphysical accounts of gender kinds, since considerations relating to FPA still remain. Given this, I think it is helpful to distinguish FPA-based considerations from the inclusion problem, even though they have often been discussed under the banner of the inclusion problem, bringing them into focus as an independent issue. The worry now is that I might still need to show that the pluralist account complies with FPA, even though I've shown that we need not be concerned about the inclusion problem, and it's not clear that this would be straightforward. For one thing, the account of gender identity kinds that I have given might not classify everyone as a member of the gender identity kind with which they identify, since it is possible for a person to be mistaken about what their gender identity is (because they may be mistaken about their felt relationship to gender norms).<sup>38</sup> Moreover, there might be concerns that the pluralist nature of the account gives rise to an unsatisfactorily partial compliance with FPA; these concerns would parallel the concerns encountered above about the inclusion problem and marginalization.

However, as with the inclusion problem, rather than trying to show that my pluralist account secures FPA, I show that we ought not to think that securing FPA imposes a constraint on metaphysical accounts of gender kinds. The reason for this is that such an

approach overlooks an important type of injustice: “ontic injustice.”<sup>39</sup> The key idea is that social kinds—kinds that are brought into existence through our social practices—can be wrongful in and of themselves. Specifically, I have argued that social kinds can be such that individuals who are socially constructed as members of those kinds can be wronged *by the very fact* of being socially constructed in that way. I term this form of wrong “ontic injustice”: *ontic* because the wrong operates through social ontology, and *injustice* because the wrong is a consequence of our collective social arrangements.

Ontic injustice is a wrong at the level of being that affects individuals simply in virtue of their having been made into members of the social kind in question, regardless of their specific experiences. Consider, for example, the kind *slave* in British-colonized Jamaica in 1800. For an individual to be a member of this social kind involved being subjected to extremely wrongful social constraints, including drastic abridgment of their freedom and a total absence of protection against extreme violence, abuse, and murder. Although it was a social fact in Jamaica in 1800 that some people were slaves, my claim is that anyone who *was* made into a member of that kind was thereby wronged, regardless of what else happened to them as consequence. Even if there was an individual who was made into a member of the social kind *slave* but who, through some miraculous chance, did not actually suffer the further wrongs of violence, abuse, and so on, they would still have suffered a wrong—an ontic injustice—in being made into a member of that social kind in the first place, given the constraints and enablements that characterize that kind.<sup>40</sup>

Recognizing that social kinds can be ontically unjust undercuts the case that FPA should apply to descriptive inquiries into gender categories. Put simply, even if we accept that FPA is an ethical requirement on how we treat each other, if the aim is to explain how social kinds exist in the world as it currently is, then *they might not meet ethical requirements*. We should accept that social kinds can be unjust, including by being at odds

with people's own sense of who they are, and by making it harder for the legitimate social needs that may arise from this sense of self to be met. Thus, when a social kind is ontically unjust, the way it exists may well fail to vindicate people's lived experiences. Therefore, we should not try to secure FPA in our metaphysical accounts of gender kinds. If the pluralist account turns out not to meet FPA—as is likely—this would not be a problem with the account.

This is not to say that there is no role whatsoever for FPA in thinking about gender categories. My account leaves it open that FPA may come into the picture when we think about gender *concepts*—the representational devices that we use to categorize people with regard to gender. Given certain explanatory purposes, there are objective facts about what explanatory kinds there are in the world; by default, the concepts we use should be those that correspond to these kinds. But, as we saw, concepts are used in our acts of categorization, which affects the way that we treat people. Given this, we might want to think twice before simply categorizing people in accordance with their actual kind membership. As Robin Dembroff has argued, our treatment of people should not track their kind membership when the kinds in question are (what I have called) ontically unjust.<sup>41</sup> So perhaps our gender *concepts* ought to comply with FPA.

This suggestion positions my view alongside Bettcher's, but in contrast to Kapusta's, in thinking about the role of FPA. FPA, I suggest, should not function as a constraint on our metaphysical investigations into the nature of gender kinds, even though it might well be that, in our day-to-day lives, we should aim to use gender concepts that comply with FPA, in order to facilitate ethically appropriate interactions with others. I say "might" because, although I am sympathetic to this claim, I have not fully defended it here due to lack of space. The important point is that we ought *not* to accept FPA as a constraint on metaphysical

investigations into gender kinds, and this puts the pluralist account I have offered in the clear.<sup>42</sup>

#### **IV. Conclusion**

I have argued for a pluralist account of gender kinds that includes gender structural role kinds, gender social status kinds, and gender identity kinds. I have also offered a framework—the Constraints and Enablements Framework—to make sense of these different varieties of kinds in relation to one another, and which uses social constraints and enablements as a common denominator for theorizing about these kinds. The Constraints and Enablements Framework even permits us to slot in further varieties of gender kinds if they are required to do the explanatory work necessary for opposing gendered oppression. I have argued that neither the inclusion problem nor First Person Authority poses a constraint on accounts of gender kinds. The inclusion problem can be deflated, and while First Person Authority might ethically constrain our use of gender *concepts*, it does not constrain our account of gender *kinds* because as social kinds they can be ontically unjust. Provided we understand gender categories as *kinds* rather than as *concepts*, then, we can be pluralists about them without running into ethical or political difficulties.

#### **NOTES**

1. It is also usually stipulated that the generalizations that kinds support must be “non-accidental,” which is to say that they have not come about by mere coincidence (as if, for example, some eccentric person were to go around uprooting all the bluebells that were growing in full sun); but this is not very important for our purposes here.

2. For more on social kinds, see Muhammad Ali Khalidi, “Three Kinds of Social Kinds,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 90: 1 (2015), 96–112.

3. For discussion, see Mari Mikkola, *The Wrong of Injustice: Dehumanization and Its Role in Feminist Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), ch. 2.

4. See Cordelia Fine, *Delusions of Gender: The Real Science Behind Sex Differences* (London: Icon Books, 2011).

5. See Gayle Rubin, “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the ‘Political Economy’ of Sex.” In *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, edited by Rayna Reiter (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 157–210.

6. See Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

7. On this, see Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

8. See Kimberle Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics,” *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989: 1 (1989), 139–167; and Combahee River Collective, “A Black Feminist Statement.” In *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism*, edited by Zillah R. Eisenstein (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1978), 362–372.

9. See bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (Boston: South End Press, 1982).

10. Elizabeth V. Spelman, *Inessential Woman* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990), ch. 6.

11. See Katharine Jenkins, “Amelioration and Inclusion: Gender Identity and the Concept of Woman,” *Ethics* 126: 2 (2015), 394–421.

12. See Spelman, *Inessential Woman*. Judith Butler’s work is often understood as an example of gender scepticism, although she does not use the term “gender scepticism” and her stance develops across different works. See Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the*



*Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), and *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

13. See Iris Marion Young, “Gender as Seriality: Thinking about Women as a Social Collective,” *Signs* 19: 3 (1994), 713–718.

14. See Sally Haslanger, “Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be?” *Noûs* 34: 1 (2000), 31–55.

15. Young, “Gender as Seriality,” 717.

16. See, for example, Sally Haslanger, “Theorizing with a Purpose: The Many Kinds of Sex.” In *Natural Kinds and Classification in Scientific Practice*, edited by Catherine Kendig (London: Routledge, 2016), 129–144.

17. Haslanger, “Gender and Race.”

18. Haslanger first proposed this as an account of gender concepts, but in subsequent work (“What Are We Talking About? The Semantics and Politics of Gender Kinds,” *Hypatia* 20: 4 [2005], 10–26) she has suggested that the account might also capture gender kinds. I am here considering the account as an account of gender kinds.

19. Elizabeth Barnes, “Gender and Gender Terms,” *Noûs* 54: 3 (2020), 704–730, at 716.

20. See Jenkins, “Amelioration and Inclusion,” 414–415.

21. Ásta, *Categories We Live By: The Construction of Sex, Gender, Race, and Other Social Categories* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

22. Ásta, *Categories We Live By*, 73.] [SQ about this example.

23. Jenkins, “Amelioration and Inclusion”; Jenkins, “Toward an Account of Gender Identity,” *Ergo* 5: 27 (2018), 713–744.

24. For criticisms, see Matthew Andler, “Gender Identity and Inclusion: A Reply to Jenkins,” *Ethics* 127: 4 (2017), 883–895.

25. See Robin Zheng, “What Is My Role in Changing the System? A New Model of Responsibility for Structural Injustice,” *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 21: 4 (2018), 869–885.

26. Of course, there might be other accounts of gender identity on which it does vary from context to context. These can neatly be slotted into the Constraints and Enablements Framework by adjusting the “scope” slider to a narrower setting, thereby illustrating the flexibility of the framework to accommodate different kinds beyond those described here.

27. See for example María Lugones, “Heterosexuality and the Colonial / Modern Gender System,” *Hypatia* 22: 1 (2007), 186–209.

28. Haslanger, “Gender and Race,” 45–46.

29. I explore this thought more fully in my review of Mikkola’s *The Wrong of Injustice*, *Mind* 127: 506 (2018), 618–627. See also Naomi Scheman, *Queering the Center by Centering the Queer: Reflections on Transsexuals and Secular Jews* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

30. Mikkola, *Wrong of Injustice*, ch. 5.

31. For Mikkola’s proposal, see *Wrong of Injustice*, Part II.

32. See Talia Mae Bettcher, “Evil Deceivers and Make-Believers: On Transphobic Violence and the Politics of Illusion,” *Hypatia* 22: 3 (2007), 43–65; Bettcher, “Trans Identities and First-Person Authority.” In “*You’ve Changed*”: *Sex Reassignment and Personal Identity*, edited by Laurie Shrage (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 98–120; Louis Baily, Sonja J. Ellis, and Jay McNeil, “Suicide Risk in the UK Trans Population and the Role of Gender Transition in Decreasing Suicidal Ideation and Suicide Attempts,” *Mental Health Review Journal* 19: 4 (2014), 209–220; and Stephanie Kapusta, “Misgendering and Its Moral Contestability,” *Hypatia* 31: 3 (2016), 502–519.

33. Bettcher, “Evil Deceivers and Make-Believers.”

34. Bettcher, “Trans Identities and First Person Authority.” (See Burkay Ozturk, “The Negotiative Theory of Gender Identity and the Limits of First-Person Authority,” this volume, **XX-XX**, for criticisms of the first person authority account—eds.)

35. Bettcher, “Trans Identities and First-Person Authority,” 110.

36. Stephanie Kapusta, interviewed in Nathan Eckstrand, “Trans\*feminism: How Trans Issues and Feminism Overlap,” *Blog of the APA*, 9 August, 2018; <https://blog.apaonline.org/2018/08/09/transfeminism-how-trans-issues-and-feminism-overlap/>; italics added.

38. For more on this, see Jenkins, “Toward an Account of Gender Identity.”

39. See Katharine Jenkins, “Ontic Injustice,” *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 6: 2 (2020), 188–205. For a similar account, see Robin Dembroff, “Real Talk on the Metaphysics of Gender,” *Philosophical Topics* 46: 2 (2018), 21–50.

40. With the category *slave*, it’s easy to see that *no one* should be made into a member of that category, but this is not the case for all ontically unjust categories; some categories might be such that the constraints and enablements that constitute membership in the category are oppressive to some individuals but not for others. For instance, being a member of the category *legal minor* might not be oppressive for young children, but it is oppressive for adult women.

41. Dembroff, “Real Talk on the Metaphysics of Gender.”

42. I explore the concept of ontic injustice and the implications of limiting the role of FPA in much more detail in my book *Ontology and Oppression: Race, Gender and Social Reality* (manuscript).