

## “Hillary Clinton is the only man in the Obama administration”:

### Dual Character Concepts, Generics, and Gender

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An acquaintance of mine once remarked, “Hillary Clinton is the only man in the Obama administration”. This acquaintance was not *confused* about basic descriptive facts concerning the Obama administration, but rather was offering a colorful, negative evaluation of the members of the administration. With this comment, the speaker managed to derogate both the male members of the administration by deeming them not to be men, and Hillary Clinton by deeming her to be a man, and thus not really a woman. The comment is primarily insulting to the male members of the administration – implying that they are weak, passive, and ineffectual -- but is also insulting to Hillary Clinton, suggesting that she has taken on mannish characteristics to the point where she is no longer a woman. The comment further demeans women in general, associating them with undesirable features such as passivity and weakness -- yet at the same time, it cautions women against *rejecting* these features, lest they end up like the mannish Hillary Clinton.

Sally McConnell-Ginet (2002) draws our attention to this type of utterance, citing a remark made by Lord Baden-Powell, the founder of the boy scouts, following a meeting with African political leaders: “the only man in the room was that woman”. Other examples are easily found. One political commentator writes: “After all, we do need a real man in the White House. Unfortunately, that would mean Hillary Clinton who, like it or not, is a person of great personal strength and political power” (Andrew T. Durham, writing for Web Commentary <http://www.webcommentary.com/php/ShowArticle.php?id=durhama&date=120120>). Turning to the other side of the Atlantic, Matthew Norman recently wrote an article for *The Independent* entitled, “Ed Miliband is the Only Real Man in the Labour Race”, with the following as a subtitle: “With the exception of Diane Abbott, whose parlaying of a minor TV career into D-list celebrity has been admirably opportunistic, this has been the Castrati Election” (*The Independent*, April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012). The main title denies the status of *real man* to the other men in the race, and most interestingly, the subtitle explicitly excepts Diane Abbott from the generalization, implying that she is at least a candidate “real man”. (Correspondingly, we might note that one could challenge the assertion that Hillary Clinton is the only man in the Obama administration by asking “what about Janet Napolitano?”<sup>2</sup>)

As another example, though this time with a critical and distancing flavor, consider the following remark by Alex Pareene on Gawker. Pareene criticizes Maureen Dowd as being “someone who repeatedly called Obama “oBambi,” and also *butterfly*, in columns dedicated to the argument that Hillary Clinton was *the real man* in the party, even if she pretended to have a vagina and ladylike tendencies (like those tears)” (Gawker, <http://gawker.com/5391937/dowd-just-let-girly-obama-be-a-manly-man>).

Finally, to borrow an example from a wholly different arena, several exchanges in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* have the same character. For example, in Act I scene vii, Macbeth expresses his reluctance to

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<sup>1</sup> A special thanks to Mark Johnston, Josh Knobe, Barry Lam, Rachel Leslie, Sally McConnell-Ginet, Sandeep Prasada, and David Sosa for their very helpful comments and suggestions concerning this paper.

<sup>2</sup> I am grateful to David Sosa for this example.

murder king Duncan, and Lady Macbeth calls him a coward. Macbeth responds: "Prithee, peace: / I dare do all that may become a man; / Who dares do more is none." Lady Macbeth rebuts him: "What beast was't, then, / That made you break this enterprise to me? / When you durst do it, then you were a man". Later in the play, Macbeth becomes distraught at the vision of the ghost of Banquo, and Lady Macbeth again rebukes him: "Are you a man?" (Act III scene iv).

How are these comments, insults, and rebukes to be understood? In all of the above examples, the speakers were well aware of the descriptive facts about gender membership, and were not genuinely questioning these facts. Rather they seemed to have another conception of gender categories in mind. We might note further that in some (though not all) of the examples the speakers did not directly speak of "being a man", but rather of "being a *real* man". At first glance, it might seem that "real" here is simply acting as an intensifier – there is the set of men, and a proper subset of men are real men. Such a thought does not seem sufficient to explain all the above examples, however: the set of 'real men' apparently need not even overlap with the ordinary set of men, as the remarks about Hillary Clinton would suggest. It is also very important to note that the use of the qualifier "real" appears to be optional – a number of the examples above express what would seem to be the same sentiments without this qualifier.

One might wonder whether there is anything especially systematic to be said at this point – that is, perhaps there is no general phenomenon to analyze here, beyond the observation that it is possible to insult people by using gender terms in non-standard ways. For example, McConnell-Ginet (2002) interprets such utterances as simply being non-literal and metaphorical. Perhaps this is all that is to be said about these utterances – that they exploit sexist tropes and stereotypes in our culture via the familiar process of metaphor. If so, there would be nothing more systematic to say about the likes of "Hillary Clinton is the only man in the Obama administration" than about "Juliet is the sun".

There is, however, a long-standing puzzle in the generics literature that would seem to be interestingly connected to the phenomenon at hand. It has long been noted that some generics such as "boys don't cry" or "a woman puts family before career" do not seem to express any kind of inductive generalization about the empirical world, but instead have a certain kind of normative force (e.g., Burton-Roberts, 1977; Carlson, 1995; Cohen, 2001; Greenberg, 2003; Lawler, 1973; McConnell-Ginet, in press). Utterances of these generics, though they would not seem to be metaphorical in any straightforward sense, seem to be unresponsive to the actual distribution of the property among the members of the kind. "Boys don't cry" on the relevant interpretation is not challenged by the empirical fact that boys most certainly do cry, or even that boys in fact cry just as much as girls. It thus seems that there is a sense in which one can coherently hold both that *boys don't cry* and that *boys do cry*. Similarly, "a woman puts family before career" need not be a descriptive statement about women's actual practice – someone could still accept this generic while believing that, descriptively speaking, women overwhelmingly or universally put their careers first.

Further, such generics are the most natural vehicles for expressing the sentiments behind claims like "Hillary Clinton is the only man in the Obama administration". The underlying, causally relevant beliefs would seem to be something to the effect of "men take charge and are assertive; women are gentle, passive and accommodating". The remark about the Obama administration arises because the speaker believes that Hillary Clinton is someone who takes charge and is assertive, while other members of the administration are passive and accommodating. But again, these underlying generics are not

simply descriptive generalizations – rather, someone who holds this view might also believe that the feminist movement has made them descriptively false, and that this “tragedy” is to be lamented.

The so called ‘Christian’ blogosphere<sup>3</sup> contains several examples in which such generics are used to construct peans to ‘real women’. Consider, for example, the following stanzas:

A Real Woman ...  
Understands chastity  
Values her sexuality  
Appreciates her fertility  
Controls her passions and desires  
Knows her body is a temple of  
the Holy Spirit  
Never uses other people.

A Real Woman ...  
Loves babies  
Nurtures her family  
Is the heart of her home  
Finds Strength in her husband  
Understands sacrificial love  
Is happy and content. (“A Real Woman”, <http://www.chastitycall.org/realwoman.html>)

A distinct, though very similar, encomium includes the following:

A real woman does not compete for equality with men or chafe at God’s design for male and female, but delights in and understand [sic] the importance of her calling to complement man’s role ...

A real woman is not boisterous or loud in her actions but is characterized by a gentle and quiet spirit. (“A Real Woman”, <http://www.therebelution.com/A%20Real%20Woman.pdf>)

It is very natural to think that someone who accepts these sentiments would have no problem counting Hillary Clinton and any number of other women as not real women, or more directly, as not women at all. It should also be noted that the generics expressed in these peans to real womanhood are not intended as descriptive generalizations about an actual subset of women; the authors of the pieces would, I imagine, still take them to express truths even in a world populated entirely by loud, unchaste, boisterous, atheist feminists.

Interestingly, normative generics are not limited to gender categories, but rather seem to comprise a broad class. Consider, for example, “friends don’t let friends drive drunk”, which was introduced as a slogan specifically because friends do, in fact, allow their friends to drive home drunk. The slogan is effective in part because it insinuates that an (apparent) friend who allows such a thing to happen is not in fact a friend, much as Lady Macbeth insinuates that Macbeth is not a man. Or consider a world in which scientists routinely fake their data and do not care about the truth; one could still

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<sup>3</sup> Here I am indulging in one version of the phenomenon that this paper attempts to illuminate.

correctly assert in such a world “scientists care about the truth”, and further maintain that *there are no (real) scientists* in that world.<sup>4</sup> These examples suggest that there is a systematic phenomenon in play, which encompasses the insulting remarks that we began by considering, and further that understanding the phenomenon is important for the study of generics, even though such generics are often overlooked. As Sally McConnell-Ginet (in press) points out, these generics have not received extensive treatments in the literature, and are often set aside as aberrant cases – or even deemed to be “not real generics” (quoting Cohen, 1999)!

## Dual Character Concepts

A promising approach to the phenomenon at hand is to be found in recent work by Josh Knobe and Sandeep Prasada, who present empirical evidence that supports the idea that some concepts have what they call a “dual character”. As an illustration, they consider the concept *scientist*:

Imagine a physics professor who spends her days writing out equations but who clings dogmatically to a certain theoretical perspective against all empirical evidence. Does this person genuinely count as a *scientist*? In a case like this, one might feel that both answers are in some sense correct. It might therefore seem right to say:

(1) There is a sense in which she is clearly a scientist, but ultimately, if you think about what it really means to be a scientist, you would have to say that she is not a scientist at all.

Now suppose we come upon a person who has never been trained in formal experimental methods but who approaches everything in life by systematically revising her beliefs in light of empirical evidence. In a case of this latter type, it might seem appropriate to make the converse sort of statement:

(2) There is a sense in which she is clearly not a scientist, but ultimately, if you think about what it really means to be a scientist, you would have to say that she truly is a scientist (Knobe & Prasada, 2011, p.1).

By way of contrast, Knobe and Prasada suggest that other concepts, e.g., *bartender*, *bus driver*, do not tend to exhibit this dual character – it is far more difficult to construct scenarios like those above for these concepts. In a series of experiments, they found that adults treat some, but not all, concepts as having this sort of dual character, whereby an individual may count as a member of the kind in one sense, but not another.

It is important to note that, as was the case with the gender examples, these are not just cases of standard-raising – constructing a context in which the standards for being a scientist are higher than usual – but rather would seem to reflect a full dissociation, as is shown by the latter example above, in

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<sup>4</sup> It is sometimes claimed that only indefinite singular generics (e.g. “a boy doesn’t cry” or “a friend doesn’t let a friend drive drunk”) can have normative force, however as these examples – and others given throughout the paper suggest – this is not an accurate characterization of the phenomenon. (However it does seem that the converse holds – these indefinite singular generics have only the normative, not the descriptive, interpretation. This is discussed further in footnote 8.)

which a person with no experimental training or academic position can still be judged to be scientist in one sense. (And correspondingly, Hillary Clinton can be judged to be a man.) The notion of a true scientist or real scientist is not simply an intensification of the normal criteria for counting as a scientist. If it were simply a matter of standard-raising, then the *true scientists* would comprise a subset of the *scientists* (in the normal, descriptive sense) – instead, the set of *true scientists* may even fail to overlap the set of *scientists* (e.g., if one thinks that the scientific professions have become irredeemably corrupt and self-serving, and no longer concerned with truth and discovery).

There are uses of “real”, and to some extent “true”, as modifiers in which they do function straightforwardly as intensifiers or standard-raisers, and so do not exhibit the phenomenon under discussion here. For example, returning to the gender case, suppose someone is wondering whether a given woman is transgendered; he or she might articulate this by asking “but is she a *real* woman?” Similarly, in the case of scientists, a person might believe that only the natural sciences *really* count as sciences, and so, upon hearing a psychologist described as a scientist, object: “she’s not a *real* scientist!” These uses of “real” – which are offensive in their own right – function more straightforwardly to raise or tighten the standards for counting as a member of the kind. Crucially, however, on this usage, their extensions can only be subsets of the ordinary extension of the kind term.

Further, the notion of a *true* or *real scientist* – in the sense we are concerned with – is not reducible to the notion of a *good scientist*: it is considerably more difficult to maintain that the (non-empty) set of *good scientists* might be non-overlapping with the set of *scientists*, even though this is possible for the set of *true scientists*. Moreover, many concepts that do not seem to exhibit this sort of dual character can nonetheless be modified with “good” -- e.g., we can deem someone a *good bartender* or a *good bus driver* without taking these kinds to exhibit a dual character. (Similarly, if “real” is being used to tighten or raise standards, then there is no obstacle to applying it to a non-dual character kind: e.g., “he’s not a real bartender, he just mixes drinks for his friends at parties”.)

Knobe and Prasada’s cases, then, are not just familiar examples of praising or standard-raising. Further, while “true” or “real” can serve to focus attention on the relevant notions, they are optional. Recall that Lady Macbeth does not ask Macbeth if he is a *real* man, but simply if he is a man. Similarly, we can say “*true* friends don’t let friends drive drunk”, but we need not. This raises the question of how precisely to model the phenomenon lexically. The most natural model would seem to involve positing polysemy – that dual character concepts give rise to lexical entries that have distinct, though related, senses – in this case a descriptive sense and a normative sense. Roughly and as a first pass, we can understand the normative sense of “man” in terms of the predicate “one who exemplifies the ideals of manhood”; more generally for the limited purposes of this paper, the normative sense of “K” can be understood as: exemplifier of the ideals associated with being a K.<sup>5</sup> Examples of polysemy abound, and

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<sup>5</sup> One reason for the qualifications is that the gloss “exemplifier of the ideals associated with being a K” does not itself explain the difficulty with finding a normative reading for “most boys don’t cry” and “some boys don’t cry”. On the other hand, you *can* get the normative reading in the negative existential case, consider “there are no men (anymore)”. Likewise with “the only man in the room said we should go to war with Iran” (referring to Hillary Clinton) and “these girls that run the State Department think we should capitulate”, or even “most of the ladies who run the state department think we should capitulate”, which also support the straightforward gloss in terms of “exemplifier of the ideals associated with being a K”. I enter into more detail on these purely semantic questions in Leslie (forthcoming a).

take many different forms. Perhaps the most familiar example is the adverb “healthy”, which means different but related things when applied to a person, a diet, and to urine. Many nouns also exhibit polysemy. Consider, for example, the noun “sodium”, which applies to an explosive and toxic metal, as well as to the atoms that compose it. These atoms are most frequently found in ionic form, however, as components of ionic compounds. Table salt is such a compound: it is composed of ions of sodium and chlorine. Sodium ions are typically ingested in the form of table salt, and play a number of extremely important roles in human physiology; for example, sodium ions – in conjunction with potassium ions -- help maintain blood pressure. The term “sodium” is again used without qualification in everyday discourse to pick out these ions.

Consider, then, a doctor’s injunction to increase one’s sodium intake, as a means of combating low blood pressure. The doctor here is not encouraging her patient to consume a highly reactive and toxic metal, though of course there is a perfectly standard use of “sodium” that applies exactly to such a substance. Of course, the doctor is rather suggesting that her patient consume more *sodium ions*, probably in the form of table salt. (Note that for some elements, the two senses are phonologically distinguished, e.g., “chlorine” vs. “chloride”, where the latter refers only to ions.) If someone interpreted his doctor’s advice on increasing his sodium intake as the injunction to ingest a lump of sodium metal, one would not fancy the chances of a malpractice lawsuit pursued on the grounds that “sodium” is univocal.<sup>6</sup>

As this example shows, it may take some scientific knowledge to understand the various but related meanings of a polysemous term like “sodium”. So too, it takes some social knowledge to understand the descriptive and normative senses of a term like “man” or “woman”. Perhaps that knowledge is no more than this: in order to use the terms “man” and “woman” to mean respectively “one who exemplifies the ideals of manhood” and “one who exemplifies the ideals of womanhood”, we need to know there are certain ideals associated with being a man and being a woman.

On the hypothesis that there are terms which are polysemous in that they have both a normative and a descriptive sense, it is natural to suppose that the adjectives “true” and “real” tend to select the normative sense (though they can also be used to simply raise the standards of the ordinary descriptive sense). However, these modifiers are not needed for the normative sense to predominate, though in most contexts it would seem that the descriptive sense is preferred. That there genuinely are two different senses here is supported by the fact that there can be considerable difference in their extensions, to the point of being potentially non-overlapping. If something along the lines of polysemy is not at play here, it is difficult to understand how people are willing to judge that someone can be a scientist, yet not a scientist, as Knobe and Prasada’s work reflects.

“True” and “real” aside, there are other English constructions which might be taken to select the normative sense, a sense crucially having to do with living up to an ideal. Living up to an ideal -- of manhood, of philosophy, of scientific practice -- admits of degrees in a different way that being a man, being a philosopher or being a scientist admit of degrees. We sometimes hear remarks like “he is twice the man you are” even when there is no question of the true gender of either of the men in question. Similarly with an utterance of “Kant was ten times the philosopher that Berkeley was”, in a context where it is obvious that Berkeley is not being regarded as anything but a paradigm case of a philosopher.

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<sup>6</sup> For more discussion of polysemy in the scientific context, see Leslie (forthcoming b).

As far as I can tell however, remarks like “he is twice the third cousin you are” or “he is ten times the runner-up in a local bridge competition that you are” invariably sound absurd. One natural hypothesis is the “twice the K” (or “ten times the K”, etc) constructions in English select for the normative sense of a dual character concept and its associated kind term, and thereby allow for a (loose) numerical comparison of the degree to which two individuals approximate to the ideal. We do in fact find this interesting utterance, intended as concessive toward Margaret Thatcher, by the writer Linda Grant in a broadly feminist blog attached to the Guardian newspaper:

I can't think of anyone who, like Thatcher, is twice the man and twice the woman of any other MP. (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/the-womens-blog-with-janmartinson/2012/jan/05/margaret-thatcher-feminist-icon>)

So also with the construction “more of a K than” used in a context in which those being compared are regarded as paradigmatically Ks. I take it that Linda Grant’s remark as she intended it would imply that

Thatcher is more of a woman than Diane Abbot (the current member for Hackney North and Stoke Newington).

even though there is no question of Diane Abbot’s gender.

Returning now specifically to generics, the empirically very rich work of Knobe and Prasada suggests a way of understanding generics such as “boys don’t cry”, and in particular, it offers a ready explanation of why one can endorse *boys don’t cry*, without denying the obvious claim that *boys cry*. The natural extension of their work would be to hypothesize that such pairs of generics can arise only if the concept in question has a dual character.<sup>7</sup> The seemingly contradictory pair of generics is consistent because one picks up the normative sense of the term, and the other picks up the descriptive sense of the term. To return to their example of *scientists*, suppose that someone believes that all the people who are scientists in the descriptive sense are thoroughly corrupt sell-outs, who no longer pursue truth

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<sup>7</sup> A possible counterexample to this claim might seem to be found in a case described by Cohen (2001), building on and adapting a discussion in Carlson (1995): suppose that a store manager sets the price of bananas to \$2/lb, but incompetent cashiers only charge the customers \$1/lb. We might consider the pair of generics “bananas sell for \$2/lb” and “bananas sell for \$1/lb”. This would seem to have a similar character to the cases we are considering, yet “bananas” does not have a dual character in the Knobe/Prasada sense. However, this case is only superficially parallel, which can be brought out by replacing the generic subjects with specific noun phrases in the two cases. If we are considering a particular group of boys and we say “these boys don’t cry”, this statement has only a descriptive character, and is straightforwardly incompatible with “these boys cry”. However, if we are considering a particular bunch of bananas, we get the same duality as we did at the generic level: “these bananas sell for \$2/lb” and “these bananas sell for \$1/lb”. To the extent that the two generics are both acceptable, the two specific statements are equally acceptable. This suggests that the duality is not due to the generic noun phrase, but rather should be located elsewhere, and a natural thought is that the verbs “sells for” may itself be polysemous. (Some support for this idea is found by considering close paraphrases of the predicate, and noting that the dual reading need not be preserved: e.g. “bananas/these bananas are priced at \$1/lb” seems not to be an accurate description of the situation – “priced at” seems to select only the manager’s official price, and so the bananas can only be said to be priced at \$2/lb.)

and understanding, but rather seek only their own advancement and routinely falsify data as a result. That person might describe this situation by saying “scientists do not care about truth, only about their own vanity”. However, such a person might also chastise the scientific establishment by saying “you call yourselves scientists? Scientists care about truth, not their own vanity!”

Conversely, it is very difficult to construct such pairs of generics in the case of, e.g., *bartenders* – at least without coercing *bartender* to take on a dual character. It seems we would have to try something like the following: imagine a case in which someone holds that a true bartender listens to his/her customers’ life problems, then laments that there are no true bartenders anymore, since bartenders no longer lend an ear to their customers. This person might hold that *bartenders listen to their customers’* woes while also bemoaning the fact that *bartenders don’t listen to their customers’* woes. Such an example takes some stage-setting, since *bartender* is not normally understood to have a dual character, and further it should be clear that the possibility of constructing such a pair of generics is parasitic on constructing a dual character interpretation of *bartender*.

The polysemy suggested by a natural interpretation of Knobe and Prasada’s work offers an elegant means of dealing with such generics. It is sometimes claimed in the literature that normative generics such as “boys don’t cry” or “a gentleman opens doors for ladies” require a semantic treatment that is entirely different treatment from that demanded by the standard inductive generics such as “tigers are striped” or “ravens are black” – or indeed “boys cry”. While ordinary inductive generics can be treated as involving some sort of generalization concerning individual tigers, ravens, boys and the like, normative generics are said to express the idea that a particular rule is in effect. That is, a popular approach to these generics involves locating the descriptive/normative duality in the structure of the generic sentence– even to the point of suggesting that they require entirely different logical forms than those assigned to “tigers have stripes” and the like.

As an illustration, Cohen (2001) treats generics such as “tigers are striped” as having a logical form like the following (suppressing some complications that are irrelevant to our purposes here):

$$\text{Gen } x [Tigers(x)] [Striped(x)]$$

where “Gen” is a generic operator or quantifier, whose analysis is given in terms of complex probabilistic functions (see Cohen, 1996). These sorts of generics are thus treated as involving generalizations over individuals, and have a logical form similar to that of a quantified statement (e.g., “all tigers are striped” would have as its logical form  $All x [Tigers(x)][Striped(x)]$ ). However, Cohen (2001) gives normative generics an entirely different analysis at the level of logical form – the ‘generic’ itself denotes a rule and constitutes only the *subject* of the sentence at logical form, and the real predicate of the sentence is an unpronounced one that means *is in effect*. Cohen considers “a gentleman opens doors for ladies”, and proposes that its logical form is as follows:

$$\text{In-effect}(!(\text{gentleman}(x) \rightarrow \text{opens-doors-for-ladies}(x)))$$

where “!” is an operator that maps a formula to a rule. An assertion of “a gentleman opens doors for ladies” thus in fact predicates “is in effect” of a particular rule – namely one involving gentlemen opening doors for ladies. On such a view it is easy to reconcile the compatibility of “boys don’t cry” and



“boys cry” since they have wholly different logical forms, but this comes at the cost of providing a radically different treatment of the two generics, and at the cost of making the logical form of the one look almost nothing like its surface form.

Crucially, Knobe and Prasada’s findings do not make any reference to generics; instead they identify a general phenomenon, one which suggests that the descriptive/normative duality should not be located in different logical forms for generics with the same surface structure, but rather in the *noun* itself – most naturally, I would claim, by way of lexical polysemy. Rather than positing that “boys cry” and “boys don’t cry” involve different logical forms, or different generic operators, we can simply extend Knobe and Prasada’s findings and hold that the underlying forms are the same, yet the first generic involves the descriptive sense of “boys” while the second involves the normative sense.

As noted above, “sodium” is polysemous. This observation is all that is needed to account for the truth of both “sodium is toxic” (here, using the sense on which “sodium” denotes a metallic solid) and “sodium is not toxic” (here, using the sense on which “sodium” denotes ions). One does not need to suppose that there are radically different underlying logical forms here; one need only note that the subject term is polysemous.<sup>8</sup> The notion of a dual-character concept finding expression in polysemous lexical items likewise allows us to make sense of normative generics without introducing a wholly new logical form.

### Understanding the Normative Sense

Knobe and Prasada’s findings suggest that some of our concepts have a dual character, and when they do, we are willing to suppose that a person can belong to the kind in the descriptive sense but not in the normative sense, and vice-versa. This would seem to be precisely the phenomenon at play in the

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<sup>8</sup> More details about how to understand these generics can be found in Leslie (forthcoming a). Very briefly, in previous work (Leslie, 2007, 2008), I argue that some generics involve predicating *characteristic* properties of the kind – for examples the generic “ducks lay eggs” is made true by the fact that laying eggs is the characteristic means by which ducks reproduce. These generics are not particularly responsive to *how many* members of the kind have the property, as “ducks lay eggs” illustrates (since most ducks (i.e., male, immature, or infertile ducks) do not lay eggs). Other generics, e.g. “cars have radios”, are made true by the majority of cars having radios (for more discussion, see also Prasada & Dillingham, 2006, 2009; Prasada, Khemlani, Leslie & Glucksberg, submitted). (This distinction does not amount to an ambiguity in the generics, however, but rather simply to different ways that the world can make a generic true.) “Boys cry” is the latter sort of generic – “boys” here functions descriptively, and the generic is made true by the fact that the majority of boys cry. “Boys don’t cry” is a generic of the former sort – “boys” here has its normative, ideal sense, and *not crying* is a characteristic property of this ideal notion of a boy. What constitutes a characteristic property of an ideal is discussed at length in the following sections.

More generally, generics that involve characteristic properties can occur with either *bare plural subjects* (e.g., “boys don’t cry” or “ducks lay eggs”) or with *indefinite singular subjects* (e.g. “a boy doesn’t cry” or “a duck lays eggs”). However, generics that involve non-characteristic majority properties can only be formulated with bare plural subjects: “a car has a radio” or “a boy cries” are decidedly strange (or else take on a different meaning altogether). Similar remarks apply to the seemingly contrary pairs of generics discussed here – e.g., consider the pair “scientists care about truth” and “scientists do not care about truth”; only the former can be properly reformulated as an indefinite singular: “a scientist cares about truth”. Analyzing these ‘normative’ generics as involving characteristic properties of an ideal kind, and their descriptive contraries as involving majority properties of a descriptive kind, allows us to explain this difference as being part of the more general difference between characteristic and majority generics. For more details, see Leslie (forthcoming a).

examples with which we began: “Hillary Clinton is the only man in the Obama administration”, and so on. Further, if a concept has such a dual character, then the relevant normative generics are licensed even if their descriptive counterparts are clearly false. More specifically, we might say that such generics are licensed if they characterize what we might call the *ideal of the kind*. This proposal raises a question, however: what sorts of kinds have associated ideals? And what is it for something to count as the ideal of a kind?<sup>9</sup> Answering these questions will allow us to better understand the underlying sentiments behind the gender slurs we are considering.

One interesting observation that we might make about these dual character concepts is that all the examples thus far in this paper, and all the examples considered in Knobe & Prasada (2011, submitted), involve social kinds, broadly construed. It is an interesting question whether some other sorts of kinds ever exhibit this dual character, and an initially tempting answer to the question is *no*. Knobe and Prasada ran their tests on natural kind categories, specifically animal kinds, and found no evidence of dual character concepts here. What would it be for something to be a skunk in one sense, but upon reflection not a *true* skunk (where, again, we are not focusing on standard-raising)?

The closest example of an (apparent) natural kind with a dual character might be *dog* – I once had a dog who did not exhibit the typical behavior that we prize in dogs (e.g., loyalty, coming when called, wanting to go for walks, or play with a ball), and would sometimes jokingly admonish her, saying “why can’t you be a dog?” But the correct analysis here would seem to be that this sort of utterance is comprehensible to the extent that we are treating *dog* as a social category. That is, it is only by thinking of *dog* as characterized by a pattern of specific, desirable interactions with humans that we are able to even approximate to a dual character concept here. It would thus seem plausible to suppose that only social categories, or categories analogous to them in certain ways, exhibit a dual character.<sup>10</sup>

Returning to the question of what it is to count as the ideal of a kind, an initial thought may be something like the following: since dual character concepts seem to arise in the case of social categories or kinds, perhaps the ideal of the kind is determined by widespread social agreement. That is, the ideal is whatever is widely taken to be the ideal, and normative generics are licensed just in case they involve properties that are widely taken to be properties of this ideal.

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<sup>9</sup> The notion of *ideal* here is being used in a technical sense, on which it is kind-relative. The ideal of a kind may involve properties that are otherwise considered undesirable, as is discussed at length in the section entitled *Normative Force*. Further, the notion of an ideal of a kind K may be distinct from what is picked out by the phrase “the ideal K”, which is a phrase that can be used even if Ks do not have a dual character conception. For example, we might say “Chris is the ideal bartender” without having a dual conception of bartenders.

<sup>10</sup> Some might be tempted by an extension of the idea of dual character polysemy to artifact kind terms, along the dimension of their intended or proper function. So we can say “An orange crusher 2000 crushes oranges” even if none has yet, indeed, even if none ever do. The basis of this utterance is a belief about the intended function of the orange crusher 2000. Elsewhere, I argue that this sort of example is best understood as a “characteristic generic”, one attributing a characteristic feature to the kind, where one of the characteristic features of an artifact kind is its intended function. Notice that we might say that an orange crusher 2000 which cannot crush oranges is *defective*. We are less inclined to say that it is not a *real* orange crusher 2000, unless we mean to raise the standards for being an orange crusher 2000.

Contrast the extension of the dual character idea to chess terms like “bishop” and “knight”. There is something to be made of the idea that in a variant on chess in which the horse-shaped piece is supposed to move diagonally, the knight (identified in terms of the familiar horse-shape) is not really a knight.

One potential difficulty with such an account involves what we might call transgressive cases. While normative generics about gender *usually* enforce widespread gender roles, a person could just as well use such a generic to encourage transgression of these norms. For example, a parent might just as well rebuke a girl for backing down in the face of adversity, or for crying, by saying “girls don’t back down”, or “girls don’t cry”. Such a parent need not be *confused* about the fact that these are not part of the widely held ideal of girlhood – this parent simply rejects the widespread ideal, and instead wishes to encourage her own ideal.

Perhaps it could be argued that such a parent is deliberately saying something *false*, but with the intention of *changing* the widely held ideal concerning girls – for example, by hoping that other parents will also say such false but effective things to their children, resulting in the change of the widespread ideal. On this diagnosis, the parent recognizes what the widely held ideal is, rejects the ideal, but nonetheless regards the widely held ideal as controlling the truth value of his claim. He then intends to say something he believes to be false, in order to erode the widely held ideal. Clearly that sort of diagnosis will not handle other sorts of cases: suppose a philosopher believes that analytic philosophy has gone in a wholly misguided direction. This philosopher judges that the widely held ideal of a philosopher involves working on tedious problems with no greater significance, and applying unnecessary technorama to the solving of them. This philosopher rejects the ideal, and concludes instead that there are almost no true philosophers. Such a philosopher would quite obviously reject -- regard as false -- generics such as “a true philosopher is concerned with tedious, insignificant problems” and would instead endorse generics such as “a true philosopher is concerned with the larger questions”. This would seem to be a perfectly natural and reasonable response to the situation, but this suggests two things; first that utterances of “transgressive” generics cannot in general be analyzed as knowingly false utterances, and second that disagreement about an ideal and the corresponding generics is not disagreement about which ideal is widely held. The underlying disagreement seems straightforwardly normative; it seems to concern just which ideal or ideals *should* be associated with the kind.

It is also possible to introduce an ideal, even if the kind in question is generally taken to lack a dual character. Knobe and Prasada offer *bus driver* as an example of such a non-dual character concept, and of course they are correct in supposing that it is hard to find a context in which the term or concept manifests its dual character. However, their discussion brought to mind an incident that I recall vividly, because I was so struck by it at the time. At my undergraduate institution, Rutgers University, classes are held on four different campuses, which are fairly distant from one another. There is thus a bus system that shuttles students between campuses for their classes. In rush hour traffic, it was very difficult to get between classes on time, and I remember being on a bus in heavy traffic. At the time, there was a terrible intersection where the buses had to wait at a stop sign to make a right turn, and waiting for a gap in the traffic could take a very long time. (This intersection no longer exists, but has been replaced by a far more sensible highway system.) There was a bus in front that was patiently waiting for a break in the traffic to make its turn, and the bus driver on my bus launched into an extended tirade – which I recall well -- against the driver of the bus in front, specifically proclaiming that he was “no bus driver”: “You call yourself a bus driver? That’s not what a bus driver does! You’re no bus driver! Students need to get to class – bus drivers do what they gotta do to get students to class on time!” and so on. Eventually

the bus in front made the turn, at which point the driver of my bus swung out in front of the oncoming traffic, proudly proclaiming “now *that’s* what a bus driver does!”

I would propose that the bus driver in question quite clearly had a dual character concept of bus drivers – even though the driver of the bus in front was obviously (descriptively) a bus driver, he declared that he was no bus driver. More speculatively, I would venture that, had a student in the bus in front grabbed the wheel from the defective bus driver and swung the bus out into the traffic, the driver on my bus would have declared the student in question to be “a true bus driver”.

The possibility of such an occurrence might lead one to think that the only relevant issue is whether a given ideal is salient in the context, and further that endorsing and articulating a dual character conception of a kind suffices to make an ideal salient in the relevant way. That is, we might think that the bus driver’s assertions were true in the context of utterance because they made salient a particular ideal of bus driverhood – one that is bound up with the idea of getting students to class on time at any cost. The bus driver’s tirade made this ideal salient, and so his generic utterances were true in the context.

Such an analysis, however, cannot account for reasoned disagreement. A student might have challenged the bus driver: “The driver in front is a true bus driver, because he is putting the safety of the students first. A bus driver protects students from possible harm, even if it means inconveniencing them. By pulling out into the on-coming traffic, you, sir, have shown yourself not to be a bus driver!” The student would be acknowledging the *salient* ideal, but disagreeing that it is the *correct* ideal.

Further, there are many possible characterizations of an ideal that are non-starters. Suppose that someone insists that, say, a true philosopher likes hot dogs, and then proceeds to chastise ‘so-called philosophers’ who dislike hot dogs, saying that they are not really philosophers. Unlike the bus driver case – in which a heretofore un contemplated ideal was also made salient – this case lacks a certain plausibility. There is a feeling here that this person does not understand what a philosopher *is*. There is much room for substantive disagreement about ideals, but this does not seem to be such a scenario – rather it would seem that the person making this assertion is just confused. But why is this? What are the constraints on being an ideal that allow for genuine, substantive disagreement, but not for just anything whatsoever?

It should also be noted that, implicit in the discussion so far, is the idea that these ideals have at least a *prima facie* normative force. If a parent utters “boys don’t cry” to her weeping son, she is chastising him – suggesting that he not a real boy, but also assuming that he *should* be a real boy, and therefore should stop crying. The bus driver’s assertion that “a bus driver does what it takes to get students to class on time” was intended to impugn the other driver’s behavior. An assertion of “a woman puts her family before her career” directed at a mother who works long hours outside the home carries an offensively sexist rebuke – the mother ought to sacrifice her ambitions, or she will not count as a real woman. The normative force does not arise from the properties themselves -- there is no standing obligation to put family before career, or to refrain from crying, nor to aid students in getting to class on time. Further the normative force only applies if one is a putative member of the kind in question, and otherwise gains no traction. But what is the source of this *prima facie* normative force?

I believe we can begin to see how to answer these questions when we reflect on *which* kinds admit of dual character conceptions. As suggested above, it would seem that social kinds are the best, perhaps only, candidates, but not all social kinds readily admit of dual character conceptions, as Knobe

and Prasada's work reflects. One possible thought is just that any social category that is sufficiently salient, culturally important, and charged will admit of a dual conception – indeed Knobe and Prasada's items leave open this possibility (e.g. their dual items include *mother* and *friend*, while their non-dual items include *acquaintance* and *second cousin* – the latter two being less culturally important categories than the former two). Consider, however, categories of human sexuality – certainly these categories are salient, culturally important, and charged. Yet it would seem to be rather difficult to even *coerce* some of these categories into having a dual character – for example, to construct a scenario in which it makes sense to say that although a woman is a bisexual in the descriptive sense, she is not a true bisexual because she falls short of some ideal. This can be done in the case of *woman*, but not so clearly in the case of *bisexual*. Of course, there can be standard-raising in the case of “bisexual”. Someone might use “real bisexual” in a context in such a way that, e.g., only someone who routinely sleeps with both men and women counts as a real bisexual. But this is, as noted above, a different phenomenon. It can be accounted for without recourse to an ideal of bisexuality. As things stand, there are no social ideals for bisexuals as such, at least not my knowledge.

Why are some social kinds like *woman* associated with ideals, while others such as *bisexual* are not? I suggest that a key difference is that there is believed to be a some or other social role or function that one is supposed to play in virtue of being a woman, but there is no such corresponding role or function that one is supposed to occupy in virtue of being a bisexual. Similarly remarks apply to *mother* and *friend* but not to *acquaintance* or *second cousin*.

Furthermore, we have a dual character concept of a kind only when we see it as having a role or function, and see certain properties as important to, or even necessary for properly carrying out this role. “True philosophers like hotdogs” is a non-starter because, while philosophers are thought to play some or other social role (say, seeking truth and understanding), it is quite obvious that liking hotdogs is irrelevant to successfully playing this role. In contrast, the bus driver's tirade made it clear that he understood that bus drivers serve an important social function -- getting students to class on time so they can pursue their educations – and felt that aggressive driving was necessary for the successful completion of this role.<sup>11</sup>

However, simply having a social role or function is not sufficient for a kind to have a dual character conception. For example, there is a clear social function associated with bartenders, yet it is difficult to construct a dual conception of bartenders, at least without some stage-setting – and similar remarks apply to the ordinary conception of bus drivers. The key difference seems to be this: in the normal case, the social role of these kinds is not distinct from the descriptive criterion for membership

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<sup>11</sup> The notion of a social role or function is intended in a broad and inclusive sense here. For example, one of Knobe and Prasada's examples of a dual-character concept is *rock music*. They asked people to consider the following scenario: “The new song ‘Born to Rebel’ features screaming vocals and electric guitars. However, the song was actually created by a marketing firm that was putting together an advertisement designed for elderly people who are interested in imitating youth culture, and serious music fans always say that it has no real energy or feeling.” Their participants judged that “Born to Rebel” was not true rock music. The notion of a role or function that I have in mind here is broad enough that rock music could be said to have as its primary role/function something to the effect of *expressing and communicating genuine energy and authentic rebellious feelings through a musical medium*. “Born to Rebel” fails to fulfill this function and so is not true rock music.

in them – that is, the *social role* of a bartender or a bus driver on the normal understanding is simply a specification of *what it is to be* a bartender or a bus driver.<sup>12</sup>

Consequently, I propose that, as a minimal condition of a kind having a dual character, there has to be a plausible characterization of the social role of that kind such that it can be successfully carried out by a someone who does not meet the descriptive criterion for membership in the kind, and conversely, that meeting the descriptive criterion of the kind does not entail successfully carrying out the social role.

Earlier in the paper, when we attempted to coerce *bartender* into having a dual character, we needed to open up precisely this sort of space. We considered a social role for bartenders that went beyond the descriptive criteria for being a bartender (e.g., being employed to serve drinks in a bar) – something to effect of *lending a sympathetic ear to customers' troubles in a bar setting*.

So far we have been operating under an obvious simplification; namely that there is a single social role associated with a social kind. Obviously this is not so; a number of social roles can be associated with a given social kind; in some sub-cultures the roles of wife, mother and hostess are associated with the social kind *woman*. So also, in some sub-cultures the role of drink-server and confidant are associated with the social kind *bartender*. One question is whether we can meaningfully filter out the various social roles, so that some of them count as primary (wife, mother; drink-server) and secondary (hostess; confidant). If so, we can conjoin the various primary social roles and speak, harmlessly, of *the* primary social role.

Distinguishing between primary and secondary roles is helpful for the following reason: one might hold that bartenders *do* in fact play the social role of extending a sympathetic ear to customers, and recognize that this is more than what is required to count as a bartender, without thereby having a dual conception of bartenders. That is, one might associate this social role with bartenders – a social role that is appropriately distinct from the descriptive criteria for being a bartender – but still not have a dual character concept of bartenders. In particular, one might think that this is a *secondary* social role – one that is a by-product, as it were, of the primary social role of bartenders. To the extent that this role is merely secondary, this role is not an appropriate basis on which to construct an ideal of bartenders – one will not think that it tells us anything about who is a *true bartender* in the intended sense. This observation leads to an obvious refinement of the account: we have a dual conception of a social kind when our conception of the *primary* social role or function of the kind is disjoint from the conditions of membership of the kind. That is, proper fulfillment of the primary social role is neither necessary nor sufficient for being a member of the social kind.

### *Predictions of the Account*

Where there is no social role, or analog of a social role, the prediction is that there will not be room for a dual character. So when it comes to noun phrases like “conscious subject” there will be little or no room for consistent claims of the form “conscious subjects do not F” and “conscious subjects F”. What, after all, is the social role of a conscious subject as such? Likewise, little sense is to be made of remarks like

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<sup>12</sup> For simplicity, I am writing as though there will be an identifiable criterion for membership in the kind, though in most cases this is more of an idealization rather anything else.

“he is twice the conscious subject that you are”; nor is there the relevant sense of “true conscious subject”.

Moving in the other direction towards more specific categories or kinds, we have “true doctor” and “twice the doctor that you are”, whereas “true orthopedic surgeon” (in the relevant sense) and “twice the orthopedic surgeon that you are” are much harder to make felicitous. This is because there is very little gap, if any, between what it takes to be an orthopedic surgeon, namely being a certified bone and tendon setter and carrying out the social role of an orthopedic surgeon, namely setting broken bones and severed tendons. Similar remarks apply to *philosopher vs. virtue epistemologist*, and *scientist vs. evolutionary biologist*.

Some social kinds thus seem to lack a dual character, not because they lack a primary social role which determines an ideal of the kind, but because there is no ‘gap’ between this ideal and descriptive reality. As further examples, consider generics such as “Supreme Court justices only hear cases that pertain to constitutional matters” or “senators serve a six year term between elections”. These kinds do not admit of dual conceptions largely because these roles are well-understood and strongly enforced. If the current members of the Supreme Court became more lax and started hearing all sorts of cases, then *Supreme Court Justices* might well admit of a dual conception. Because the role is clear and well-enforced, there are no instances in which descriptive members of the kind fail to fulfill the ideal. This would seem to be due to contingent circumstances, however. Perhaps the dual character is potentially available, but the contradictory utterances which would make it manifest just do not seem true, because the associated norm or ideal is so well enforced.

Consider finally such widely discussed generics such as “bishops move diagonally” and “spades outrank hearts” (e.g., Carlson, 1995). These generics obviously have a salient normative reading. Extending the account given in this paper, we might say that these normative generics pertain to kinds that play a particular role or function, here in the context of a specific game or genre of games. These kinds do not have criteria for membership that can come apart from this role or function – rather, membership in the kind depends on playing the specific role or function in question. Normative generics such as “bishops move diagonally” specify this characteristic role or function, or at least an aspect of it. A piece of wood that is a duplicate of a bishop, but which is moved as a knight should be is not a bishop *in the relevant sense*.

There is, indeed, evidence for polysemy here too. We can understand the instruction “Throughout this game, let your knights be bishops and your bishops knights”. It does not send us into an interminable loop, nor does it leave us just where we were. If we know how to play chess, we know how to play this variant on chess. The instruction is readily understandable because there is a merely descriptive use of “knight” and “bishop” where the criterion for membership in the kind has to do with the shapes of the pieces. An enemy of all variants on chess might point to a horse-shaped piece during a game of variant chess and say “That is not a real bishop.”

As further evidence that the chess term “bishop” exhibits polysemy, consider the difference between traditional and decorative chess sets. The traditional sets give their bishops some distinctive feature reminiscent of actual bishops (typically the mitred top), while the decorative or “themed” sets are under no such constraints. For example, in the *Winnie the Pooh Hand-Painted Chess Set* by Studio Anne Carlton the bishops are (models of) owls (specifically of the character Owl). There are four bishops, and they are all (models of) owls. But if I order a traditional Staunton chess set, and instead of being

sent four mitre-headed pieces, I am sent three and a scale model of an owl, I can certainly call up and say “I am missing a bishop”. I know that the scale model of an owl could function as a bishop, but my set is missing one of its bishops. (The same situation could arise, of course, if one ordered a Winnie the Pooh chess set and received one with three owl-pieces and one mitre-headed piece.) So there is a sense in which a model of an owl can be a bishop, and a sense in which it cannot. The first sense fixates on the function of the bishop, the second on its set-relative design.

### *Gender and Race*

How then does the forgoing bear on the issue of gender? For most people, membership in gender kinds is believed to be a matter of biology. (This perspective elides the distinction between social gender and biological sex, but is the most widely held view, at least outside of academia.) If a kind is believed to have its membership (descriptively) determined by biological features, or other such non-role-based features, but also is believed to have an important social role or function, then the present account would predict that the kind would readily admit of a dual character conception. This would seem to be the case with gender – descriptively, people believe that being a woman or a man is a biological matter, but there are also believed to be very important and distinctive social roles played by women and men respectively. If someone is believed to have the biological features of a man, but is judged lacking with respect to the relevant social role, he will be deemed to be ‘not a real man’. Conversely, a biological woman – such as Hillary Clinton – may be said to be a ‘real man’ if she is perceived to be playing the social role of a man rather than a woman (e.g., taking charge, etc). Since the ideal of a kind involves not just a specification of the role, but also a specification of features that are deemed to be important or necessary for the role, such judgments may also arise without reference to a specific role: Hillary Clinton may be called a man simply for being resolute and assertive.

Examples are somewhat less forthcoming in the case of race, which would be expected since, unlike the case of gender, it is increasingly less common and acceptable to think of racial groups as having determinate social roles and hence ideals associated with them. What do should whites (or Asians or African-Americans) as such, do, or be like? One would hope that an answer to that question does not readily come to mind. However, examples where people do take such views can nonetheless be found. Consider the following excerpt from an interview with Herman Cain, conducted while he was a candidate in the Republican presidential primaries:

**Interviewer:** Before you announced your campaign, you said that the liberal establishment is scared that “a real black man might run against Barack Obama.” Are you suggesting Obama isn’t really black?

**Cain:** A real black man is not timid about making the right decisions, that’s what I meant. Look, I’m not getting into this whole thing about President Obama. It is documented that his mother was white and his father was from Africa. If he wants to call himself black, fine. If he wants to call himself African-American, fine. I’m not going down this color road. (Interview with Andrew Goldman, *New York Times Magazine*, June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2011)

Cain’s response here is to clarify that he meant that Obama wasn’t ‘really black’ *in the normative sense*. That is, Cain clarifies that he did not mean that Obama failed to meet a *descriptive* criterion for being



black (though of course by weakly denying it, he also raises this specter, while officially distancing himself from it). Specifically, Obama falls short of being a 'real black man' in Cain's normative sense because "a real black man is not timid about making the right decisions". Later in the interview, Cain speaks of Martin Luther King Jr. as an example of a real black man, which sheds some light on the role the Cain thinks a real black man occupies, and which Obama is not, in his view, equipped to play.

There is a somewhat archaic saying in the UK, "play the white man". It is normally uttered as an admonishment by one white man to another, if the former believes that the latter is not conducting himself fairly or honorably: "come on, mate – play the white man!" The saying originated in colonial times, and reflects the belief that the role of the white man is to be the upholder of fairness, justice and civilization in the 'backward' conquered lands. A true white man, then, must have the necessary qualities for fulfilling this role, such as being himself an honorable individual. The phrase of course implies that the addressee is in danger of being counted as not *really white*, since he is merely being asked "play" the white man.

### *Disagreeing about Ideals*

To summarize thus far, the hypothesis is that some social kinds are believed to have primary social roles/functions that are dissociable from the criteria for membership in the kind, in the sense that one can count as a member of the kind without occupying the role in question, and one can occupy the role in question without counting as a member of the kind. Such kinds admit of dual conceptions, and will thus pass Knobe and Prasada's tests. Further, since a dual conception of a kind gives rise to polysemy in the corresponding lexical item it will be possible to coherently accept seemingly incompatible generics about such kinds, e.g., *boys don't cry* and *boys cry*. The latter sort of generic involves the straightforward descriptive sense of "boys", while the former generic pertains to the normative conception of the kind, and specifies a characteristic property of the ideal associated with the kind. Characteristic properties of the ideal are either full or partial specifications of the primary role/function in question, or properties that are important or necessary for adequately fulfilling that role/function.

We are now in a position to understand what disagreement over such generics might consist in. Perhaps the most straightforward case is one in which there is disagreement over whether a particular role is a plausible candidate for being the primary role for the kind in question, and hence for determining the associated ideal. To return to the bus driver example, one might simply disagree that a bus driver's role is to get students to class on time no matter what (i.e. safety notwithstanding). The role around which the driver on my bus constructed his ideal is simply not the primary role of the kind. If the role upon which the ideal is built is rejected, then so will be the properties that are important or necessary for playing the role. Thus, if one disagrees that *getting students to class on time no matter what* is a bus driver's primary role, then one will also reject generics such as "real bus drivers drive aggressively", and so on.

Another possibility for disagreement arises if one agrees about the kind's primary role, but disagrees that a particular property is important or necessary for fulfilling that role. Two people may agree that a philosopher's role is to seek truth and understanding (or something to that effect), yet one but not the other may believe that knowing Kant's work inside out is important for this end. If the first asserts "a true philosopher knows Kant's work inside out", the second may disagree this with, even though the two are in agreement over the primary role of philosophers.

An interesting point to note is that, while there is plenty of scope for disagreement over these generics, the assertion of such a generic would seem to carry with it a certain presupposition (in the ordinary, non-technical sense): namely that the kind in question has *some or other role or function which determines an ideal for those who fall under the kind*. Disagreement may ensue over the nature of that ideal, or over which qualities are important for fulfilling it, but implicit in all of this is the idea that there is an answer to the question: what should this kind of person, as such, be like? To challenge this assumption requires something outside the normal conversational range, and is quite difficult to accomplish.

Consider an utterance of “boys don’t cry”. On one level, this utterance serves to enforce a particular norm concerning acceptable behavior for boys (and, by implicit contrast, it makes another norm salient for girls). The remark implicitly relies on the idea that there are distinctive gender roles – boys and girls, or at least the men and women they become, have distinctive social roles and corresponding ideals to live up to. Usually, the thought is something to the effect that men are to be protectors, breadwinners, and leaders, while women are to be nurturers, childrearers and homemakers (recall the peans to “real women” in the introductory section of the paper). In the case of men/boys, being stoical and tough are taken to be important qualities for successfully playing this role, hence the claim that *boys don’t cry*.

Consider then the most natural, ‘first order’ ways of challenging this claim: “it’s ok for boys to cry!” “Boys don’t have to hold it in!” Or even: “No, real men are in touch with their emotions!” An important point to note is that these challenges all leave intact the idea that it is appropriate that *there are gender-based ideals, both with respect to character and behavior*. The most natural *challenges* to “boys don’t cry” grant this underlying assumption. To question the assumption, once such an assertion has been made, requires a more awkward sort of meta-commentary on the situation. Put differently, even though “boys don’t cry” doesn’t explicitly mention anything about there being appropriate gender-based roles and corresponding ideals, it may nonetheless subtly communicate this. One interesting empirical question is whether hearing such generics may lead children to form the expectation that the kind in question has a social ideal associated with it, an ideal or required way to be if one is to properly be a member of the kind. This can be so, even if they do not know what the ideal is.

Marjorie Rhodes, Christina Tworek and I have found that hearing (descriptive) generic language about a social group leads children to *essentialize* the social group – that is, to view the members of the social group as sharing natural, inborn similarities (Rhodes, Leslie & Tworek, submitted). However, consideration of specifically normative generics gives rise to a distinct empirical prediction: that hearing normative generics about a group would lead children to expect that there is a particular social role that determines an ideal for the kind. How children identify normative generics in the first place is a further question, but there would seem to be some cues: normative generics are appropriately uttered as *rebukes*, whereas descriptive generics generally are not. Further, normative generics can be asserted even if the speaker knows that the descriptive counterpart of the generic is not true. Thus, if an adult says “boys don’t cry” as a rebuke, despite it being clear that boys do in fact cry, these cues may lead a child to understand that this is not a normal, descriptive generic. These are all empirical claims, of course, and will require testing going forward.

*Normative Force*

Setting aside cases of disagreement, we can make sense of the prima facie normative force of these generics, given the assumptions that underlie them. The connecting principle is something like the following: If one is a member of a social kind, and that social kind has a particular primary role or function, then there is a prima facie obligation to fulfill that role or function, and do so effectively. If a given feature is important for fulfilling this role, then even if there is no general obligation for people to have the feature, this creates a prima facie obligation for members of the kind to possess the feature. Thus, even if there is nothing intrinsically good about refraining from crying, “boys don’t cry” carries normative force because it suggests that the only way to effectively play the male role involves not crying. Similarly, an utterance of “a woman puts family before career” can convey a rebuke because it suggests that a working mother is not fulfilling her social role properly. It conveys no such rebuke if directed towards a man, however; since he is not a member of the relevant social kind, he will not be playing his role poorly if he puts career before family. (In fact, the reverse may even be held as true.)

An interesting question concerns whether one might feel the normative force of these generics even if one deems the property in question to be generally *undesirable*. While it is important to be clear that these generics only have a prima facie or defeasible force – that is, one might still decide that all things considered it is better to *not* fulfill the role in question – I think it is plausible that one might ‘feel the normative force’ even if one thinks that in general one ought *not* to have the property in question. That is, suppose someone believes that, in general, aggressive driving is not the sort of activity one ought to engage in. Suppose, however, that that person is a bus driver, and further accepts the role of a bus driver is to get students to class on time no matter what, and that aggressive driving is necessary for fulfilling this role. It is not farfetched, I think, to suppose that such a person might feel that in some sense that he or she ought to drive aggressively, despite judging this to generally be poor conduct. (Again, this is not to say that the person may not ultimately decide against driving aggressively.)

There are even more dramatic illustrations to be found. A fascinating example involves an interview with a former pimp named Kevin on *This American Life*.<sup>13</sup> Kevin recounts seeing other pimps physically assault the prostitutes in their ‘employ’, and being morally repulsed by their actions and feeling a lot of compassion for the women. That is, he judged that it was morally wrong to beat up prostitutes, and as a result had an unconventionally egalitarian (by pimp-prostitute standards) relationship with a prostitute named Lois. However, Kevin reports wishing that his moral qualms would “pass”, and goes on to describe the following incident:

**Kevin:** We did have an occasion where Lois did something that was totally unacceptable. And at that time, she had left the house. And she had been gone for maybe a week or something like that. And this was totally unacceptable behavior in any relationship, let alone a pimp-ho relationship ...

And I remember her waltzing in the house like nothing happened. It was like, hey, how's it going? And she comes in, and she's heading to the kitchen. And I remember the guys was there. And so I felt like, to some extent, I had to do something. I had to act. I couldn't let her just arrogantly walk in like that with the guys sitting there. So I remember I wheeled around and I slapped her. I slapped her. And I slapped her hard. I mean, I slapped her real hard ...

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<sup>13</sup> I am very grateful to Barry Lam for bringing this example to my attention.

Almost without thought, I remember I had this pool stick in my hand. And I just whacked her across her back with this pool stick just about as hard as I could. It broke the pool stick in half ...

**Tamar Brott [interviewer]:** Would you have hit her if you were alone?

**Kevin:** Initially, yeah, I probably would have. Yeah, I probably would have, *only because I would have known that it was in order. It was what was in order. Yeah. It's almost like I had to.* And she knew it. (<http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/127/transcript> emphasis added)

Despite judging it to be wrong to beat up prostitutes, Kevin felt that *he had to* assault Lois. A very natural elaboration of his sentiments is that *he had to do it because that's what pimps do*. Shortly before describing the above incident, Kevin recounts:

Believe me, over the years I heard people say, man, that nigger ain't no pimp. You know what I mean? He ain't no pimp, you know what I mean?

There was no question that he was a pimp in the *descriptive* sense, rather his status as pimp was being challenged in the *normative* sense of "pimp". The story concludes with Lois leaving Kevin to work for another pimp, but *not* as a result of the assault, but rather as a result of Kevin not living up to the ideal of a pimp. As Kevin puts it, "I think at some point, she needed somebody who held those values that she held higher than what I held them." The "values" in question here are those associated with being a *true pimp*, including being violent, demeaning, and oppressive towards Lois herself. Throughout the interview one finds the dual strands of viewing the behavior of pimps as objectively repugnant, but at the same time as demanded by the ideal of pimping, and therefore in some sense obligatory. (Similar sentiments are sometimes found in interviews with gang members – a teenager joins a gang, finds much of gang activity to be morally reprehensible on the one hand, but on the other hand feels obligated to participate – not out of peer pressure, but because *that's what a gang member does*.)

To return, then, to the case of gender, consider the properties that are traditionally associated with the feminine ideal: passivity, submissiveness, helplessness, vulnerability, and even weakness. These are not qualities that are regarded as intrinsically valuable or generally desirable – quite the contrary in fact. And yet the fact that they are taken to be markers of a true woman creates a context in which women feel under an obligation to display such qualities: *Beware, girls, of being assertive and confident, and taking charge of the situation! You might end up like Hillary Clinton who is more of a man than a woman.*

The dual character of certain concepts makes ready to hand an effective tool for creating a sense of obligation among members of a group, an obligation to possess features that no one would otherwise feel any obligation or desire to possess. This in its turn will often redound to the discredit of the group. We are told that "a real woman is not boisterous or loud in her speech or actions" – but then informed that women, descriptively speaking, don't excel in certain prestigious professions because they lack confidence and are insufficiently assertive. *A woman puts family before career* is offered as a normative claim, but its descriptive counterpart is used to justify discrimination against pregnant women, and more generally women of childbearing age. If women conform to the ideal, this props up a sexist system; if they do not, they are said to be mannish, and not real women.

## Conclusion

Dual character concepts arise when a social kind is believed to have a primary role or function, which is disjoint from the descriptive criteria for belonging to the kind. A particular variety of gender-based slurs exploit the dual character of gender concepts – a woman may be called a man, and a man may be called a woman. A closely related phenomenon involves normative generics, which are used to express characteristic properties of the ideal of the kind – e.g., “boys don’t cry”, “women are quiet, gentle, and nurturing”. Such generics involve either specifying the kind’s primary role or function, or features that are important or necessary for successfully performing that role or function.

Utterances that exploit the dual character of gender concepts and the consequent polysemy of gender kind terms – be they generics or straightforward predications – serve to enforce and police particular gender roles. More subtly, they also enforce the idea that *there are gender roles and their associated ideals or norms are in force*. (Though, contrary to Cohen’s account of normative generics discussed earlier, they do not literally mean this.). Suppose a child hears an adult utter “boys don’t cry”, and asks his or her parents about the remark – if the parents are progressively inclined, they can explain to the child that they disagree with that particular claim. But how might they disabuse the child of the implicit belief that he or she may form – that there are particular, distinctive roles that boys and girls and men and women ought to play? Even if the child comes to be convinced that crying is not part of the relevant role, he or she may still have implicitly absorbed the idea that there are such roles, and so be on the lookout for particular ways of elaborating those roles.

A more general diagnosis of what seems to be going on, sub-culture by subculture, is the following. In any given sub-culture there is a host of standing presuppositions about just how people of various social kinds should be and behave. These are not things that are outright asserted, and so they cannot be challenged by direct consideration, along with arguments back and forth. Rather the norms in question are continually insinuated by being continually presupposed by a host of assertions that are actually made about boys, girls, men, women, soldiers, doctors, and so on. The fact that many of our social kind terms are polysemous, precisely along the descriptive and normative dimensions, adds an extra twist to this general scheme of inculcation. We thus find it hard to track just when we are being encouraged to adopt a normative belief and when we are being presented with an empirical generalization of some sort. In the case of generics, this confounding mechanism is further enhanced by the fact that generic sentences are among the earliest understood general statements, probably reaching into the early part of the second year of childhood. As a result, “What’s a girl/boy to do?” is a question which has been pretty completely answered, however tendentiously, by the third or fourth year of life.

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