Chapter 1

Social Creationism and Social Groups

Katherine Ritchie

Social groups, like gender and racial groups, teams, committees, and legislative bodies, seem to be the sort of things that are created by us. If there were no humans,[1] we didn't act in particular ways, or we didn't have certain kinds of attitudes and intentions, there would be no such groups. Given that social groups depend on us (in some sense or other), one might take the following thesis to be true:

> *Social Creationism*: All social groups are social objects created through (some specific types of) thoughts, intentions, agreements, habits, patterns of interaction, and practices.

Here I argue that not all social groups come to be in the same way. This is due, in part, to social groups failing to share a uniform nature. I focus on two rough classes of groups. The first, which I call "feature social groups," include racial, gender, sexual orientation, and other groups that involve sharing (or being taken to share) some features.[2] Feature groups, I argue, are social kinds. They either falsify Social Creationism or are created but in an easy way as byproducts of property instantiations. The second, which I call "organized social groups," include groups such as teams, committees, courts, and clubs.[3] They are objects that are socially created in the way Social Creationism requires.

I adopt the distinction between objects and properties (i.e., the particular-universal distinction).[4] Notice that Social Creationism is a thesis about *objects*. If kinds are *properties* or *clusters of properties* (the two dominant views of the metaphysics of kinds), groups that are social kinds falsify the thesis. However, this is not to arbitrarily stack the deck. For, I argue that even if kinds are objects, they come to be in a way that is distinct from and "easier"

than the way organized social groups are created. The difference is not just relevant to metaphysical inquiry. It helps to explain why some groups seem to be natural and others do not and why some groups often come to be without people (collectively) intending for them to exist, while others do not (or do so less often). It is also part of the explanation as to why certain sorts of groups are widespread and persistent (e.g., racial groups) while others (e.g., a graduate admissions committee) are not.

To keep track of the distinction between the ways objects and properties depend on social factors, I adopt the following terminological conventions. I reserve "social creation" for claims about *objects* (i.e., particulars) coming to be through beliefs, intentions, practices, and so on. I use "social construction" for the claim that *properties* (i.e., universals) come to be through beliefs, intentions, and so on.

The chapter is structured as follows. I sketch a view of feature social groups as social kinds (Section 1). I then (Section 2) examine three views of natural kinds, outline social analogs, and consider whether feature groups (so understood) are socially created. I argue that they are not on two of the three approaches and that on the third approach, while they are created, it is only derivatively. They are just the extensions of social properties. Next, I sketch a view of organized groups as structured wholes (Section 3). I argue that organized groups are socially created in a robust sense (Section 4). Finally, I draw concluding remarks (Section 5).

Before proceeding, notes on the complexity of the categorization of groups and on connections to other arguments are needed. Brian Epstein has convincingly argued that social groups vary along multiple dimensions.[5] While I take groups within a class (e.g., groups that are in the class of organized groups) to share a general ontological status, I do not require that they all share a highly specific nature. Moreover, while here I discuss two classes of groups, I do not commit to the view that *all* groups can be classified as either feature or organized groups. In addition to teams, courts, races, and genders, there are non-human animals groups (e.g., pods of dolphins and herds of elephants) and groups of inanimate entities (e.g., books in a library and food groups). There are also human groups such as communities, crowds, queues, and mobs. There might be many classes of social groups and groups more generally. Part of my aim here is to shed some light on the massive complexity of the social world by revealing some of the complexity of a small portion of social reality.

Others have made the point that some social entities are intentionally created, while others come to be in a derivative sense. For instance, Amie Thomasson has argued that some social entities are intentionally created, and others are byproducts.[6] She argues that laws and corporations are things that are intentionally created, while class systems, gender bias, and economic

recessions are byproducts that are, as she puts it, "generated, rather than created or constructed."[7] Raimo Tuomela takes states of inflation and pollution to "belong to social artifacts broadly understood" but takes these to be derived in a way that can be unintended and unanticipated.[8] John Searle holds that there are "systematic fallouts" (e.g., recessions) that are at the "macro" level.[9]

The examples Thomasson, Tuomela, and Searle offer all involve systematic patterns or events. They do not consider the question of whether groups could be "generated" in this way. Groups might depend on broad social patterns, but groups themselves are far more entity-like than economic cycles or class discrimination. Social groups can be parts of events. For example, two teams might play a game. However, groups are not identical to events. The arguments I offer here differ from those that have come before in focusing squarely on entities that are neither events nor processes or patterns. Given the important roles social groups play in our lives and their centrality in social and political debates, a direct examination of the ways social groups come to be is called for.

1. FEATURE GROUPS AS SOCIAL KINDS

As the name suggests, membership in a feature group seems to require sharing (or being taken to share) one or more properties or features. Someone's being a member of a feature group is also often used to infer that the individual has other features. For example, if I find out that the candidate I am scheduled to interview is a woman, I might infer that she will be wearing makeup and will carry a purse rather than a briefcase. These features might not be part of *what it is* to be a woman but features that are commonly associated with women given broader social norms and practices. Depending on the particulars of the view, the metaphysics of feature groups may also help to explain stereotypes operative in making additional inferences, as for example one drawing the inference from the interviewee being a woman to the conclusion that she will be good at organizing departmental events.[10] These conditions can be formulated more generally as follows:

Membership in Feature Groups: Someone, x, is a member of feature group G just in case x has (been socially assigned) features associated with G.[11]

Feature Group Induction: If x is a member of feature group G, it will often be inferred that x has additional features F associated with G.

Membership in Feature Groups and Feature Group Induction are strikingly similar to conditions often given for natural kinds. Natural kinds are usually taken to be characterized by some essential or defining feature(s) and to factor

in inductive inferences. For instance, water might be characterized by the feature of being composed of H_2O. That some particular sample is water might figure in inferences about its boiling and freezing points.

While one might hold that feature social groups are kinds, they do not seem to be paradigmatic instances of natural kinds. Some natural kinds, like H_2O, might have shared intrinsic (i.e., internal and non-relational) essences, but social feature groups plausibly do not. There is, for example, no genetic material that all and only Blacks share. If one holds that a shared intrinsic essence is necessary for a kind to be natural, feature social groups are not natural kinds. Further, while being a member of a feature social group might figure in inductive inferences, the conclusions drawn are often unreliable and can be normatively dangerous in ways inferences from something's inclusion in a natural kind are not. The example involving the woman job candidate above provides one instance of an unreliable and potentially oppressive inference involving a social kind. How to understand naturalness is contentious, but these disanalogies between paradigmatic natural kinds and paradigmatic feature social groups provide reason to hold that feature groups are not natural kinds.[12] However, the similarities between feature groups and kinds made manifest by the conditions above should not be overlooked.

To account for the similarities and differences, we should take feature groups to be social kinds.[13] The features associated with social kinds do not "cut nature at its joints"; social kinds are not nomologically necessary. Rather, *social kinds* are kinds with membership or instantiation conditions that depend on social factors such as social behavior, patterns of action, habits, beliefs, intentions, processes, practices, activities, rules, laws, norms, and arrangements.[14] The intensions (i.e., membership conditions) of feature groups could depend on social factors in two distinct, but not mutually exclusive, ways.

First, our practices and intentions might be used to *count* the possession of some natural non-socially dependent properties as those that specify membership in some feature group. For example, levels of skin pigmentation and having XX chromosomes are properties that are not constitutively dependent on our intentions or practices. They are properties that are "out there" in the world. Our practices and beliefs could classify (or "count") these as the properties required for being a member of a feature group and endow them with further features (e.g., norms or statuses).

Mari Mikkola's trait/norm covariance model of sex and gender "counts" non-socially dependent properties as social kind properties in this way. She takes descriptive traits to describe "the way the world is."[15] Descriptive traits include, for instance, physical traits, features of one's appearance, that one engages in particular tasks, and that one calls oneself a woman. Evaluative norms, on the other hand, are stereotypical judgments that reflect values

and norms of a culture. Descriptive traits and evaluative norms are linked or co-vary due to social views. Mikkola states that "although it is a mind-independent feature of reality that Jane wears makeup, that Jane acts in a feminine way because she wears makeup is mind-dependent."[16] Societal views are what "count" Jane's wearing makeup as feminine or womanly.

Second, social practices and intentions might *construct* properties that determine feature group membership.[17] On this picture, natural features might help to guide our ascriptions of social kind membership, but the properties that ultimately define membership in a feature group are constitutively dependent on social factors. They might depend on factors like representations, beliefs, and intentions.[18] They also include more external, less mentalistic factors, such as patterns of interaction, habits, rules, laws, norms, arrangements, and material resources.[19] Ásta's, Haslanger's, and Thomasson's views involve this sort of construction of social properties.

Ásta argues that person x is a woman in a context C when the property *being a woman* is conferred on x in C.[20] While a person having some bodily features might be part of what justifies the conferral of the property, x is not a woman because of those features. Instead, x is a woman in virtue of being conferred the property *being a woman*, which is constituted through institutional or communal constraints and enablements. A person has the socially constructed property given attitudes, actions, or states of another subject (or group of subjects). The property itself, not just ascriptions of it, is dependent on our perceptions, judgments, intentions, and practices.

According to Haslanger, gender and race depend on being socially subordinated or privileged. For example, she states that "S is a woman iff S is systematically subordinated along some dimension (economic, political, legal, social, etc.) and S is 'marked' as a target for this treatment by observed or imagined bodily features presumed to be evidence of a female's biological role in reproduction."[21] Being socially subordinated is a property that is constructed by social practices and intentions.

On Thomasson's view, all social groups involve norms. Norms can specify how members of a group are to act, how others are to treat them, or what specific roles individual members are to play.[22] For instance, a norm like *one ought to be soft-spoken* could be a feature that is part of what defines membership in a feature group. Normative features (at least most of those relevant to social groups) are plausibly features that are constructed, rather than natural features that we target as those required for group membership.

Some views might involve both construction and counting. For instance, consider Searle's view. He states, "We make it the case by Declaration that for any x that satisfies condition p, x has the status Y and performs function F in [context] C."[23] According to Searle, constitutive rules of this form are put in place by collective acceptance in a community. For example, Searle takes

being a dollar bill to require the following condition p: being printed by the Federal Reserve with a particular color and design. Merely meeting p is not sufficient for being a one-dollar bill. The declaration or collective acceptance that meeting p gives an object a status and function is also necessary for something to have the status and function. Statuses and functions are constructed features, but being p might not be socially dependent. While Searle does not focus on social groups, his view might be extended to cover them. For instance, we might declare that certain bodily features, genetic material, or historical ancestry are the conditions p that someone must satisfy to have the status of being Black or being a woman.

My aim here is to keep the discussion of feature groups at a general level to allow for all of these views (and others). I will not argue for a particular view of which social features specify social kind membership in any particular feature groups. I leave open whether counted properties, constructed properties, or a combination of the two mark membership in social kinds. I claim only that feature groups are social kinds. I now turn to the question of whether feature groups *themselves* are socially created. That is, I turn to the question of whether the construction or counting of properties leads to the creation of social objects.

2. SOCIAL KINDS AND SOCIAL CREATIONISM

There are multiple ways for things to come to be. Plants and animals produce offspring. Stars form in nebulas when pressure builds and leads to a collapse. Robots can be built out of circuitry and gears; tables can be made out of wood and nails. Conventions might be generated by certain patterns of reproduction or beliefs and common knowledge. Widows come to be due to the death of a spouse.[24] According to Social Creationism, all social groups are new objects created through (some specific types of) thoughts, intentions, and patterns of interaction. To determine whether feature social groups are socially created objects we need to consider what kinds are.

The main discussions of the metaphysics of kinds focus on natural kinds. The dominant views of kinds identify them with properties[25] or clusters of properties.[26] On the view that kinds are properties, one might hold that some properties (e.g., being water) are natural kinds, while other properties (e.g., being larger than a breadbox or being blue) are not. On the view that kinds are property clusters, kinds are not identified with a *single* property. Rather, kind membership is defined in terms of multiple properties. In discussions of natural kinds, properties are taken to be clustered by internal biological mechanisms or external factors in the natural environment (including interactions with other populations in the environment). For social kinds, properties

might be clustered by our intentions, interactions, practices, habits, or other social factors.[27] For instance, the property of having recent ancestral ties to Africa might be clustered with the property of being deemed unintelligent as a result of the dispersal of propaganda, economic discrimination, and educational policies.

Others argue that kinds are *sui generis* entities.[28] For instance, James Summerford develops a view of kinds as sui generis collection-like entities. He argues that a "kind is an intensional entity exhibiting a class-like structure that . . . is identified in terms of the membership requirements an object must satisfy in order to be a member of that kind."[29] They are entities that are group-like in having members. Further, given an aim to capture naturalness, Summerford argues that kinds must meet Eli Hirsch's requirement on similarity-making which states: "If (and only if) the Fs are a kind, then the similarity between two things is enhanced by the fact that they are both Fs."[30] The similarity condition will not be met by some (perhaps many) social kinds. So modifications of the view will be needed, but the general picture of kinds as intensionally specified classes could be applied to social kinds.

Here I set aside questions of whether there are natural kinds and, if there are, what makes a kind natural. Instead, I consider whether on these three views Social Creationism holds of social kinds and, therefore, of feature groups.

If kinds are identified with (clusters of) properties, social kinds and, therefore, feature social groups falsify Social Creationism. Recall that here we are relying on the widely held object-property distinction. If kinds are (clusters of) properties, then no new *object* is created at all, as feature groups (i.e., social kinds) are not objects. Our actions might count or construct the properties with which social kinds are identified. However, on these views of kinds, Social Creationism fails. It fails as not all social groups are objects at all. On these views, social *construction*, but not social *creation*, has a role in feature groups coming to be.

If the social kinds with which feature groups are identified are group-like entities, it is plausible that they are objects of some sort. Summerford takes them to be abstract objects, but one could take them to be concrete objects. For instance, one might develop a view on which they are an instance of Kit Fine's variable embodiments.[31] Further, the features that specify membership in a social kind depend on social factors. If we did not count natural properties as the intensions of a social kind or construct the social properties that are the intensions of social kinds, there would be no feature groups. Moreover, even if we count non-social natural properties as the intensions of a social kind, we add new features that are plausibly not natural in the way having XY chromosomes is.[32] Such features, whether counted or constructed, are socially dependent. According to this view, feature social groups are not

identified with properties but with a (variable) collection or group of entities. Again, this could plausibly be taken to be an object of some sort. If so, on this view of kinds, feature social groups are not a counterexample to Social Creationism.

There is, however, something very easy about the creation of the kind (i.e., the feature group) in this case. Once the intension has been specified and some individuals have (been assigned) the membership conditions, the feature group exists. While on this view feature groups are objects that are socially created, their creation requires no intentions, beliefs, or practices be directed toward a group *itself*. On this metaphysics of kinds, an object comes to be through the construction of a property. Even though on this view feature groups are not identical to properties, they are still the mere byproducts of the social construction or social counting of properties.

Whether one takes kinds to be (clusters of) properties or intentionally specified objects, feature groups are not created robustly. If they are (clusters of) properties, they fail to be objects at all, thereby falsifying the Social Creationist thesis. If they are intentionally specified class-like objects, they are objects that are created but as a byproduct of property construction. The membership conditions of the kind are constructed and then the kind comes along "for free," as it were. So if feature groups are socially created, it is only in a minimal sense. In the next two sections, I argue that organized groups *are* socially created. When restricted to organized groups, Social Creationism holds.

The conclusion that feature groups are not socially created objects or are minimally socially created is not meant to diminish their importance in our lives or explanations in the social world. Rather, it can help to explain why social feature groups are so persistent both in a person's life and across generations. I return to this point in Section 5. Recognizing the differences between how various social groups come to be is also part of a more general project to understand the nature of social reality.

This claim—that feature social groups come to be merely through property construction or instantiation—is consistent with two views about individuals coming to be through the instantiation of a property. First, one might hold that an individual instantiating a property or being ascribed new roles, requirements, obligations, or functions fails to bring a new entity into existence. Instead, an *already existent* individual comes to have another feature. On this view, an individual having a new obligation or property does not create an entity with new persistence conditions. To motivate the ontological innocence of property instantiation, consider the example of a young Black woman. She, as a woman, as a young person, and as a Black person, can persist through the same changes in parts. It is not the case that she can persist through the loss of a finger as a young person but cannot persist through the same loss as

a woman.[33] Having new social roles, obligations, properties, and functions, the argument goes, does not yield new entities.

In contrast, one might argue that instantiating at least certain roles, obligations, or properties does involve the creation of new individuals. For instance, Charlotte Witt argues that human beings, persons, and social individuals are distinct entities.[34] She argues that they are distinct as they have different essential properties. Going further, one might argue that there are many non-identical social individuals. For instance, one could hold that there is an individual as a woman, as an American, as a Latinx, and so on, and that they are all distinct.

The first view—that new entities do not come to be through the application of social properties—is widely held in both analytic metaphysics and critical theory. On the analytic side, the view fits with Quinean views of existence on which ontology is tied to values variables can take. Variables do not, on this picture, take combinations of properties and objects as values. Instead, entities in a domain are taken to be values of variables and predicates are taken hold of them without bloating the theory's ontology. The view also fits with Kripkean views of the essence on which one's social position could vary radically while one's genes or ancestral lineage are essential.

Anti-essentialist views that are prominent in theories of sex, gender, and race could also be understood as failing to posit new individuals when properties are instantiated. For example, to make sense of Simone de Beauvoir's famous claim that "[o]ne is not born, but rather becomes, woman" one must exist first and then be gendered.[35] Even if new individuals fail to be created, the importance of social categorization can be central to how one conceptualizes oneself, one's personality, (dis)abilities, and so on.[36]

While I accept the general consensus that new individuals do not come to be through the instantiating of social properties, one need not accept this view to accept my conclusion about the way feature groups come to be. The question we are focused on is whether *feature groups* are objects that are created. Whether new individuals (e.g., a lesbian or a working-class man) are created when properties are instantiated is orthogonal to the question.

Whether feature groups are created relies on the view one takes of kinds. Moreover, I have argued, on the dominant views of kinds feature groups are not objects and, so, are not socially created (although they are plausibly socially constructed). Even if kinds are objects and are dependent on social factors in a way that satisfies Social Creationism, their creation is very easy. They are byproducts, just as recessions or other macro-level patterns that can be generated as byproducts of a social system seem to be. Organized groups are a different matter.

3. ORGANIZED GROUPS AS STRUCTURED WHOLES

Teams and committees have organizational structures with various positions and relations among them. Positions, such as power forward, catcher, president, and treasurer, are played by individuals acting in combination with others. A view of organized groups should capture that organized groups have both an organizational structure and members. In previous work, I argued for a view of organized groups as structured wholes, or what I originally described as "realizations of structures."[37] A group's structure captures its functional organization. For instance, a baseball team's structure captures the functional roles of the catcher, pitcher, outfielders, and so on. The structure can be represented as (but not identified with) a graph composed of nodes and directed edges. Nodes represent positions that might be occupied by individuals who carry out actions. Edges represent relations that hold between node-occupiers in the structure. For example, a secretary in a club might report to the president of the club. In such a structure, a "secretary" node is connected to a "president" node by the "reports to" relation.[38]

Organized groups are not merely structures. They are structures that have been realized by individuals through their interactions fitting the functionally defined relations specified by the nodes and edges. In many cases, this will also require having the right sorts of intentions to other individuals in the group and to extra-group entities (e.g., to Congress or to the president of the United States).[39]

In some cases, an individual being normatively bound by certain relations might be enough for someone to be a member of a group. For example, someone might be a pretty lousy secretary of a club. He might miss many meetings and frequently fail to take notes. Nevertheless, we might think that he still is the secretary of the club, even though in actuality he fails to bear the relations required by the node he occupies. To account for cases such as this, we could allow that being normatively bound by the relations that define a node is sufficient to occupy it. Since the lousy secretary is supposed to attend meetings and take notes, he is a member of the club.[40] While such cases are possible, if enough of a team's or a club's members failed to play the required roles, the organized group would likely go out of existence. Functional integration is required by at least many members.

When an organized group exists, it has both a structure and some members who occupy the nodes in the structure. To occupy a node in a structure, an individual must bear the relations specified by the edges. These might connect the node to occupiers of other nodes or, in the case of reflexive relations, to the node-occupier herself. Since someone can bear a relation to someone at one time (or in one world) without bearing it to that individual at every

moment (or world), group membership can change. The view captures this through the following condition:

> *Organized Group Membership*: Some things (X) are the members of a group with structure S at time t and world w if, and only if, together X occupy the nodes of S at t at w (i.e., X are functionally related, or at least normatively bound, in the ways required by S at t at w).

The synchronic identity conditions of organized groups also make requirements on membership, structure, and additional requirements on external relations to other groups (e.g., other teams) or to other entities (e.g., charters). A necessary condition for group identity is:

> *Organized Group Identity*: A group G_1 and a group G_2 are identical only if (1) for all t and all w, the structure of G_1 at t at w is identical to the structure of G_2 at t at w, and (2) for all t and all w and all x, x occupies node n in the structure of G_1 at t at w if, and only if, x occupies n in the structure of G_2 at t at w.[41]

The persistence and identity conditions offered here can be used to show that organized groups are not simply pluralities of members in two ways.

First, as specified in *Organized Group Membership*, members of organized groups can vary across times and worlds. In 2014, John Boehner was a member of Congress; in 2018, he is no longer a member. However, Congress still exists. It was able to persist through his resignation. Similarly, in 2018 LeBron James actually played for the Cleveland Cavaliers, but he might have played for the New York Knicks. The Cavaliers—that very team—could exist without James. Call the condition that groups can vary in members across times and worlds *Membership Variety*.[42] If organized groups were just some individuals, they could not vary across times or worlds. The plurality of individuals Jeante, Laura, Sofia, and Jingyih could not persist through the loss of Laura. They would not be the same plurality if one was lost or another added. This gives reason to hold that organized groups are distinct from the plurality of their members. Organized groups clearly can vary in membership. Pluralities of individuals cannot. Therefore, organized groups are distinct from their members. They are entities with structure.

Second, imagine a case in which Jeante, Laura, Sofia, and Jingyih are all and only the members (at a time and world) of the Fencing Club and the Philosophy Club. If organized groups were identical to pluralities of their members, the "two" clubs would be one. Yet, the clubs have different roles, histories, and futures. They may be involved in different events or competitions. While the clubs are presently and actually co-extensional, it certainly seems that they are still, in fact, two clubs. Call the condition that organized groups can be extensionally coincident but non-identical *Non-Identical*

Coincidents. The view of organized groups sketched here captures Non-Identical Coincidents by requiring the identification of organized groups to be sensitive to structure and to members across times and worlds.

Organized groups are more than just their members and more than just group structures. They are structured wholes. While the discussion here gives a sketch of a view of organized groups, very little has been said about how it is that organized groups come into being (or even if they do come into being). As I previously noted, "once a group structure is realized a group . . . exists."[43] Next, I directly address whether this requires a commitment to Social Creationism for organized groups.

4. ORGANIZED GROUPS AND SOCIAL CREATIONISM

I argued that organized groups are not identical to structures or mere pluralities of their members. They are structured wholes that come to be when a group structure is realized. The realizing of a group structure requires particular patterns of action, intentions, beliefs, habits, agreements, and practices. Social Creationism states that all social groups are social objects created through (some specific types of) thoughts, intentions, agreements, habits, patterns of interaction, and practices. So it seems that organized groups are socially created and that Social Creationism holds when restricted to organized social groups. Before taking the question to be settled, however, let's consider two ways one might argue against Social Creationism for organized groups.

First, consider an argument by analogy against Social Creationism for organized groups. Recall that when discussing feature groups I followed many philosophers in the analytic and critical theory traditions in holding that no new *individuals* are created through the instantiation of socially constructed properties. In cataloging the ontology of the world, the thought goes, we should not count persons and also middle-class women and also Latinxs and so forth. In giving an ontology of entities, we should not count each property instantiation as a distinct entity. By analogy, one might argue that since group structures are plausibly complex relational features, their instantiation also does not create new entities.[44] Call this the *Property Instantiation Challenge*. According to the Property Instantiation Challenge, if some individual person instantiating a property was not sufficient for a new entity, then some individuals instantiating a property is not sufficient for a new entity.

As a first-pass response to the Property Instantiation Challenge, a proponent of Social Creationism for organized groups might argue that there is an important disanalogy between *one* individual instantiating a property

and *many* individuals together instantiating a property. To make the possible response more concrete, consider the following thesis:

> *Unification by Property*: If a property *F* is instantiated by some things *xx* without it being the case that any of the *xx*s individually is *F*, then there exists something *y* that is distinct from the *xx*s and *Fy*.

One could argue that *F* holding of the *xx*s together yields a new and distinct entity. While perhaps prima facie plausible, considerations from plural logic can be used to argue against *Unification by Property*.

Predicates can apply to plural expressions distributively or collectively. When combined with plural expressions, distributive predicates distribute to the many individuals picked out by the expression. For example in 1 *be a woman* distributes to Mercedes, to Bella, and to Carrie, the truth of 1 entails that each is a woman.

1. Mercedes, Bella, and Carrie are women.

In contrast, collective predicates do not distribute. For example, in 2 and 3 *gather* and *surround* fail to distribute to Mercedes, Bella, or Carrie.

2. Mercedes, Bella, and Carrie gathered near the door.
3. Mercedes, Bella, and Carrie surrounded the dog.

Proponents of plural logic argue that while the semantics of distributive and collective predication differ, neither requires that there is an additional entity that satisfies a predicate. That is, they argue that the truth of 1–3 does not require that there is *a thing* that satisfies the predicates in 1–3.[45]

While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to thoroughly examine or evaluate plural logic, if its treatment of collective uses of predicates is viable, *Unification by Property* should be rejected. The thesis relies on an instance of collective predication yielding an entity, something proponents of plural logic explicitly reject. If plural logic is viable, the difference between how an individual instantiates a property and how some individuals instantiate a property is not a viable strategy for responding to the Property Instantiation Challenge. There is, however, another difference that can be appealed to show that organized groups are distinct entities and that the Property Instantiation Challenge fails.

Organized groups have persistence and identity conditions that are different from mere pluralities. In the last section, I argued that organized groups are not just pluralities of members. The realization of a group structure delivers a structured whole with persistence and identity conditions that

are distinct from the conditions associated with the plurality of its members. So the argument that Social Creationism holds for organized groups appears to stand. Perhaps that was too quick. Suppose one identified organized groups not with mere pluralities, but with pluralities instantiating a property.[46]

For instance, consider the plurality of people currently seated at JFK Airport as you read this sentence. They instantiate the property of *being seated at JFK*. In five minutes time, suppose that some people who were seated are now standing. There is a distinct plurality instantiating the property *being seated at JFK airport*. Some individuals a, b, c, and d instantiating a property is not the same as a, b, and c instantiating a property. Identifying organized groups with pluralities instantiating a property fails to allow for a genuine change of membership. Organized groups can change members across times; pluralities or pluralities instantiating properties cannot. The Property Instantiation Challenge fails as organized groups are neither pluralities nor pluralities instantiating a property.

Second, consider what I'll call the *Mere Structures Challenge* to the claim that organized groups are socially created. The Mere Structures Challenge claims that organized groups are not socially created objects as they are mere structures without physical realizations.

The challenge can be drawn out by considering criticism of Searle's view. On Searle's view, status functions are imposed on objects in physical reality. For example, a person (X) could be ascribed the function of being president of the United States (Y) in a context. While this view could be used to account for women, Blacks, gay men, Latinxs, and so on, Barry Smith and Thomasson argue it does not work for all social entities. Smith argues that Searle's view cannot accommodate entities like corporations and universities, which do not seem to be functions assigned to preexisting objects.[47] Smith calls such things "freestanding Y terms," as there is no X onto which Y is imposed. Similarly, Thomasson argues that Searle cannot explain entities like laws, companies, or religions. She states that things such as an anti-smoking law, Microsoft, and the Anglican Church "cannot be understood simply as preexisting physical objects with new status functions, since they are not physical entities at all—indeed we might call them 'abstract' social objects."[48] The Mere Structures Challenge argues that organized groups are not social objects but are just complex relational properties.

In response to the worry of freestanding Y terms, Searle has said that such entities are created "out of thin air"[49]; that "they need have no physical realization" and "may be just a set of status functions"[50]; and that such entities are "as they say . . . 'fictitious.'"[51] Even if Searle's responses work to diffuse Smith's and Thomasson's criticisms, they fail to apply to organized groups.[52] Organized groups are not created out of thin air but out of people intending

and interacting with one another and with physical objects like buildings, computers, and basketball hoops. They have physical realizations. They can take up space, be located, and come to be at particular times. They are not just structures.

Organized groups are also not fictitious. While teams and courts are not born in the way human beings are, they seem to be equally real. Further, the claim that all organized groups are fictitious elides the distinction between real and fictitious organized groups. Gryffindor's Quidditch team from the Harry Potter series and the Hellfire Club from Marvel Comics are fictitious organized groups; the Supreme Court and the Minnesota Twins baseball team are not.[53] The Mere Structures Challenge can be met, as organized groups are not identical to structures.

Arguments against Social Creationism for organized groups rely on the view that organized groups are identical to either pluralities or structures. I have argued that neither identity holds. Organized groups are structured wholes that are socially created.

5. CONCLUSION

Since social groups depend on human actions, practices, and beliefs, one might have thought that they are all socially created. That is, one might have adopted Social Creationism—the thesis that social groups are social objects created through (some specific types of) thoughts, intentions, agreements, habits, patterns of interaction, and practices. I have argued that not all social groups come to be in the same way or share a uniform nature. Depending on one's view of kinds, feature groups are either not socially created, as they are not objects at all, or they come about "automatically" in virtue of the instantiation of a socially constructed property. Macro-level patterns or events are not the only social entities that can be generated as byproducts.

Organized groups, in contrast, are socially created. Once a group structure is realized through actions, practices, beliefs, and intentions, a new object or thing exists. It can be referred to and quantified over. Perhaps it can also have intentions and beliefs, function as an agent, and can be held morally responsible for its actions.

Distinguishing between the ways social groups come to be can help to explain why some social groups are so widespread and difficult to change. Feature groups can classify people without their agreement and without people having intentions to classify (or be classified). Because they require so little in the way of explicit intention and effort, they are harder to alter or destroy than organized groups. Careful consideration of their existence conditions and natures helps to explain why. The social world is complex and

varied. To better understand our world and ourselves, we need to understand the relations between it and us. Analyzing social groups is one part of this project.[54]

NOTES

1. For simplicity, I equate social beings and human beings, given that the cases on which I focus are human groups.

2. At this point I am staying neutral on the nature of the features or properties. They might be natural, socially constructed, or partially natural and partially social in nature.

3. I call groups of this type "organized groups," as they usually have a specified organization and organizational roles. For example, baseball teams have catchers, pitchers, outfielders, etc.

4. I use "objects" and "particulars" interchangeably. I also use "property" and "universal" interchangeably. The object-property distinction is not uncontroversial, but it is widely held. For arguments against the distinction, see Fraser MacBride, "The Particular-Universal Distinction: A Dogma of Metaphysics?" *Mind* 114, no. 455 (2005): 565–614.

5. See Brian Epstein, *The Ant Trap: Rebuilding the Foundations of the Social Sciences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) and "What Are Social Groups? Their Metaphysics and How to Classify Them," *Synthese* (forthcoming).

6. See Amie Thomasson, "Foundations for a Social Ontology," *ProtoSociology* 18 (2003): 269–90.

7. Amie Thomasson, "Social Entities," in *Routledge Companion to Metaphysics*, ed. Robin Le Poidevin et al. (London: Routledge, 2009), 549.

8. Raimo Tuomela, "Collective Acceptance, Social Institutions, and Social Reality," *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 62, no. 1 (2003): 161.

9. John Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1995). See also Åsa Andersson, *Power and Social Ontology* (Malmö, Sweden: Bokbox Publications, 2007).

10. I am not taking these to be justified inferences, but they are inferences that are commonly drawn. Even if one does not accept that women (or Blacks, lesbians, Latinxs, etc.) share a uniform nature, research on implicit attitudes has shown that there are inferences that one draws easily and inferences that are significantly more difficult to draw. See, for example, Anthony Greenwald and Linda Krieger, "Implicit Bias: Scientific Foundations," *California Law Review* 94, no. 4 (2006): 945–68.

11. This condition could be relativized to contexts if one holds that one's racial, gender, or other feature group membership changes across communities or times.

12. For arguments that social kinds share some features with biological kinds, see John Dupré, "Human Kinds and Biological Kinds: Some Similarities and Differences," *Philosophy of Science* 71, no. 5 (2004): 892–900. For arguments that some social kinds are natural, see Muhammad Ali Khalidi, "Three Kinds of Social Kinds,"

Philosophy and Phenomenological Research 90, no. 1 (2015): 96–112. For ways to draw the natural kind/social kind distinction and for arguments that some social kinds are natural (on at least some ways of drawing the distinction), see Rebecca Mason, "The Metaphysics of Social Kinds," *Philosophy Compass* 11, no. 12 (2016): 841–50.

13. Others take specific feature social groups to be kinds. For instance, Sally Haslanger describes gender and race as social kinds in "Philosophical Analysis and Social Kinds—What Good Are Our Intuitions?" *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes* 80 (2006): 89–118. Esa Díaz-León defines a social constructivist view of race on which races are social kinds in "In Defense of Historical Constructivism about Races," *Ergo* 2, no. 21 (2015): 547–62.

14. There may be other attitudes or actions that are also relevant (e.g., desires or token actions). For general readability, I will often use just "practices and intentions," but this should be understood as shorthand for any other attitudes or actions that prove relevant.

15. Mari Mikkola, "Ontological Commitments, Sex and Gender," in *Feminist Metaphysics*, ed. Charlotte Witt (New York: Springer, 2011), 76.

16. Mikkola, "Ontological Commitments, Sex and Gender," 79.

17. Sally Haslanger draws a distinction between causal and constitutive social construction in "Social Construction: The 'Debunking' Project," in *Socializing Metaphysics*, ed. Frederick Schmitt (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 301–25. What I call constructing social properties is clearly on the side of constitutive construction. Counting social properties, at least in the way Mikkola developed the idea, is also a form of constitutive construction. I take this to be important given Díaz-León's arguments that constitutive, not merely causal, social construction is needed to justify claims that such features are contingent, unjust, and not intrinsic given in "What Is Social Construction?" *European Journal of Philosophy* 23, no. 4 (2013): 1137–52.

18. See Ron Mallon, *The Construction of Human Kinds* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Ian Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); and John Searle, *Making the Social World: The Structure of Human Civilization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

19. For discussion of the various ways social kinds, objects, properties, and facts might depend on social and non-social factors, see Brian Epstein, "How Many Kinds of Glue Hold the Social World Together?" in *Social Ontology and Social Cognition*, ed. Mattia Gallotti and John Michael (New York: Springer, 2014), 41–55 and *The Ant Trap.* For an argument that some social entities are not grounded in belief, acceptance, or representation, but rather in external features such as laws and contracts, see Giuliano Torrengo, "Institutional Externalism," *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 47, no. 1 (2017): 67–85.

20. See Ásta, "The Metaphysics of Sex and Gender," in *Feminist Metaphysics*, ed. Charlotte Witt (New York: Springer, 2011) and "The Social Construction of Human Kinds," *Hypatia* 28, no. 4 (2013): 716–32.

21. Sally Haslanger, "Social Construction: The 'Debunking' Project," in *Socializing Metaphysics*, ed. Frederick Schmitt (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield,

2003), 6. See also Sally Haslanger "Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them To Be?" *Noûs* 34, no. 1 (2000): 31–55 and "Philosophical Analysis and Social Kinds: What Good Are Our Intuitions?" *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* Supplementary Volume 80 (2006): 89–118.

22. Amie Thomasson, "The Ontology of Social Groups," *Synthese* (forthcoming).

23. Searle, *Making the Social World: The Structure of Human Civilization*, 99.

24. For discussion of social categories such as being a widow, see Haslanger, "Social Construction: The 'Debunking' Project."

25. See David Armstrong, *A World of States of Affairs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); and Katherine Hawley and Alexander Bird, "What Are Natural Kinds?" *Philosophical Perspectives* 25, no. 1 (2011): 205–21.

26. See Richard Boyd, "Realism, Anti-Foundationalism and the Enthusiasm for Natural Kinds," *Philosophical Studies* 61, no. 1–2 (1991): 127–48 and "Realism, Natural Kinds, and Philosophical Methods," in *The Semantics and Metaphysics of Natural Kinds*, ed. Helen Beebee and Nigel Sabbarton-Leary (New York: Routledge, 2010).

27. One might argue that the view that social kinds are property clusters rather than properties is preferable, as taking there to be a property *womanness* or *Blackness* is to essentialize. One might argue that not all women or all Black people have a shared (even socially constructed) feature; one should be anti-essentialist. For a nominalist argument in this vein, see Natalie Stoljar, "Different Women: Gender and the Realism-Nominalism Debate," in *Feminist Metaphysics*, ed. Charlotte Witt (New York: Springer, 2011), 22–46.

28. They might be *sui generis* entities of various sorts. For example, they might be special sorts of properties. Alternatively, they might be what Lowe calls "substantial universals." See E. J. Lowe, *The Four-Category Ontology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). They might also be a sort of entity that shares similarities with objects and properties. See James Summerford, "Neither Universals nor Nominalism: Kinds and the Problem of Universals," *Metaphysica* 4, no. 1 (2003): 101–26; and Eli Hirsch, "Complex Kinds," *Philosophical Papers* 26, no. 1 (1997): 47–70.

29. Summerford, "Neither Universals nor Nominalism: Kinds and the Problem of Universals," 114.

30. Hirsch, "Complex Kinds," 48.

31. Kit Fine, "Things and Their Parts," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 23, no. 1 (1999): 61–74.

32. This marks a difference between cases that seem to be non-social kinds but which still involve marking certain natural features. For example, consider the kind planet. Being a planet is very plausibly dependent on our taking certain natural features (orbit, size, etc.) to be the features that define what it is to be a member of the kind planet. Nevertheless, we might take the kind planet not to be social in the way race or gender are. The condition that some norm or function is added allows a distinction to be drawn between these cases. Thanks to Amie Thomasson for emphasizing this worry.

33. Thanks to Michael Rea for pressing me on this point.

34. Charlotte Witt, *The Metaphysics of Gender* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). For criticism of Witt's view, see Ásta, "Review of *The Metaphysics of Gender* by Charlotte Witt," *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, May 7, 2012.

35. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Vintage Books, 2009 [1949]), 330.

36. For an alternative conception on which subjects are not prior to socialization or discourse, see, for instance, Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

37. Katherine Ritchie, "What Are Groups?" *Philosophical Studies* 166, no. 2 (2013): 257–72 and "The Metaphysics of Social Groups," *Philosophy Compass* 10, no. 5 (2015): 310–21.

38. In discussing organized groups here, the focus is on individual teams, courts, and committees rather than, for example, the kind basketball team.

39. Determining exactly what intentions are required is complicated. For instance, in some cases, group members (at least for a time) might not need to have any intentions. For example, suppose that someone with certain powers decides to form a new organized group. One might hold that the group comes into existence prior to the new members having any intentions about their roles, the roles of other members, and so forth. Note, however, that even in this case, the person in power has intentions to form a group. Considering how power relations relate to the formation of organized groups and affect the requisite intentions at a time is a project I will not be able to take up here.

40. Thanks to Amie Thomasson for suggesting this point to me.

41. Identity requires that G_1 and G_2 are identical only if "they" co-vary in structure across times and worlds. This does not require that structure cannot change. The condition does not require that if G_1 and G_2 are identical then there is a structure that G_1 and G_2 have for all times and worlds. Here I do not take on the task of the persistence conditions of organized group structures. Thanks to Wesley Cray for pressing a worry about structural change.

42. There might be certain organized groups that cannot vary in members or that have some members essentially (e.g., certain bands). Generally, however, organized groups can vary in their members.

43. Ritchie, "What Are Groups?" 270.

44. For discussion of the nature of group structures and social structures more generally, see Katherine Ritchie "Social Structures and the Ontology of Social Groups," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* (forthcoming).

45. For proponents of plural logic, see George Boolos, "To Be Is to Be a Value of a Variable (or to Be Some Values of Some Variables)," *Journal of Philosophy* 81, no. 8 (1984): 430–49. See also Thomas McKay, *Plural Predication* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006); and Alex Oliver and Timothy Smiley, *Plural Logic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

46. Thanks to Esa Díaz-León for suggesting this as a possible view and for helpful discussion.

47. Barry Smith, "John Searle: From Speech Acts to Social Reality," in *John Searle*, ed. Barry Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1–33.

48. Thomasson, "Social Entities," 548.

49. John Searle, "What Is an Institution?" *Journal of Institutional Economics* 1, no. 1 (2005): 14.

50. Barry Smith and John Searle, "The Construction of Social Reality: An Exchange," *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 62, no. 1 (2003): 305.

51. Searle, *Making the Social World: The Structure of Human Civilization*, 100.

52. For arguments that Searle's claims do not hold for corporations or universities, see Frank Hindriks "But Where Is the University?" *Dialectica* 66, no. 1 (2012): 93–113. Hindriks argues that such entities are constituted by physical objects (often people).

53. Thanks to Amie Thomasson for suggesting this point.

54. Previous versions of this chapter were presented at the Pacific APA, The Ohio State University Social Ontology Conference, Notre Dame University, Lewis and Clark College, and the CUNY Logic and Metaphysics Workshop. I am grateful for audiences at these venues for helpful feedback. Thanks are especially owed to Sara Bernstein, Esa Díaz-León, Peter Finocchiaro, J. M. Fritzman, Kendy Hess, Rebecca Mason, Rachel Ann McKinney, and Amie Thomasson for comments on earlier drafts and for helpful discussion.

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