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Offensive Uses of Language: Slurring and Synecdochical Utterances

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UTTERANCES

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Be advised that some offensive language is *mentioned* in the following abstract.

'That woman's a dyke'. 'She's a piece of ass'. The former utterance is an example of a slurring utterance, and the latter is an instance of an utterance that I call a Synecdochical Utterance Targeting Women (SUTW). A synecdochical utterance targeting women is one in which an anatomical part term is predicated of a woman. What these utterances have in common is that, in many contexts in which either is uttered, the speaker does something at least alienating, if not disrespectful or worse. I argue, in this dissertation, for a theory of the distinctive act that the slurring speaker undertakes, and for a theory of the distinctive act that the SUTW speaker performs, that enables them to alienate, convey disrespect, or otherwise. The slurring speaker distances herself from the target, an act whereby she pledges to support a group that the slur she uses does not target and refuses to support the group that it does target. This act is separate from predicating the property that a slur expresses of the targeted person. I present a theory of which property this is, as well. On my theory of the property that a slur expresses, the slur expresses an essence. The kind of disrespectful act that a SUTW speaker performs is conversationally implicating disrespectful propositions, whose subject is the woman in question.

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Chapter I. Introduction

Please note that I *mention* slurs in what follows, and that it contains offensive excerpts from real slur-users.

‘That woman's a dyke’. ‘She's a piece of ass’. The former utterance is an example of a slurring utterance, and the latter is an instance of an utterance that I call a Synecdochical Utterance Targeting Women (SUTW). A synecdochical utterance targeting women is one in which an anatomical part term is predicated of a woman. What these (unfortunately, all-too-familiar) utterances have in common is that, in many contexts in which either is uttered, the speaker does something at least alienating, if not disrespectful or worse. I argue, in this dissertation, for a theory of the distinctive, alienating act that the slurring speaker undertakes, and for a theory of the distinctive act that the SUTW speaker performs. The slurring speaker distances herself from the target of the slur. This act is separate from predicating the property that a slur expresses of the targeted person. The SUTW speaker conversationally implicates disrespectful propositions, whose subject is the woman in question. In this first part, I will provide an overview of what I cover in the subsequent chapters along with a brief description of the components most pertinent to my project, Chapters II, III, and IV.

Let us first consider slurring utterances. There are two parts of my theory of what a speaker does in performing a slurring utterance: firstly, a theory of the property a slur expresses and secondly, a theory of the act a slurring speaker performs.

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I treat the first part of the project in Chapter II, "What Property Does a Slur Express? The Essence Theory". In that paper, I distinguish between the question regarding what accounts for the offensiveness of a slur, and the question concerning the semantic content of a slur. I argue in "What Property Does a Slur Express? The Essence Theory", that this property is an essence. The Essence Theory likens slurs to natural kind terms like 'gold' and 'water'. The Essence Theory makes the best sense of contexts in which bigots define what they mean by the slur. My view also fits better than the standard theories with findings from social psychology regarding the ways we attribute essences to socially salient groups. Furthermore, I give reasons independent of my theory for rejecting these standard views.

Importantly, the property that a slur expresses, an essence, is evaluatively neutral. It is not even alienating. For this reason, I cannot account for the alienating kind of act in which a slur-user engages in terms of the property a slur expresses. Rather, as I show in the third part of this dissertation, "Slurring Utterances as Distancing Speech Acts", I argue that features of the *context* of utterance enable a slur-user to perform an alienating act, namely, to distance. The most crucial feature is the speaker's support of a group other than that to which the slur applies (i.e. a non-target group).

Now we can turn to the second type of utterance in which I am interested, SUTWs. In Chapter IV, "Synecdochical Utterances Targeting Women", I address the distinctive, particularly insidious act in which the SUTW speaker engages. I also argue for a view of how the hearer generates the disrespectful propositions. In the process of interpreting a SUTW speaker, the hearer entertains a perspective, in Elisabeth Camp's sense but with some modifications, on the female subject. Additionally, I provide some reasons to think

that the relationship between the synecdochical utterance and the perspective that the speaker takes on is merely a perlocutionary effect of the utterance and does not bear any more substantive connection to the utterance.

Lastly, in Chapter V, I summarize my positions and briefly review the most important arguments that I make to support them.

Chapter II. What Property Does a Slur Express? The Essence Theory

1. The Semantics of Slurs

There are two questions that ought to be distinguished in the literature on slurs. The first concerns how to account for the derogatoriness of a slurring utterance. What explains the offensiveness of, for instance, 'Javier is a spic'? The second is the question as to a slur's semantic content. In our example, what property does 'spic' express?[1] In this paper, I will only address the *second* question.

There are two primary types of responses to this second question. One is the orthodox view, on which the property a slur expresses is identical to that expressed by its Non-Pejorative Correlate (NPC) (the term is from Hom 2008). On the NPC view—whose advocates include Camp (2013), Anderson & Lepore (2013), and Jeshion (2013a)—the property expressed by 'spic' is identical to the property expressed by 'Latino'. A consequence of this point for the NPC theorist's response to the first question is that she must explain a slurring utterance's derogatoriness in terms other than the slur property.[2]

On theories of the second variety, which we can call "Derogatory Semantics" views, the property a slur expresses is distinct from that encoded by its NPC. Yet, it is also that element of a slurring utterance that explains its derogatoriness. For example, on Bach's (2014) Derogatory Semantics theory, 'spic' encodes 'Latino and therefore, contemptible'.

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[1] Note that acceptance of any particular theory of the property a slur encodes does not require us to accept that a slur actually has, or would have in some possible world, an extension. The fact that slur-users take their slurs to refer to some people does not require *us* to think so.

[2] These include, but are not limited to, association with a distancing and derogating perspective (Camp, 2013), taboo (Anderson & Lepore, 2013), conventional implicature (Williamson, 2009; Lycan, 2015), conversational implicature (Nunberg, 2018) etc.

Hom (2008), McCready (2011), and Saka (2007) are other proponents of a Derogatory Semantics theory.

My own response is the Essence Theory, according to which the semantic content of a slur is an essence property. According to the Essence Theory, the semantic content of a slur is neither that property encoded by its NPC nor that element responsible for its derogatoriness. Thus, acceptance of Essence Theory entails a rejection of both NPC and Derogatory Semantics theories.

This is the plan. In §1, I present the Non-Pejorative Correlate (NPC) account, as well as some data from non-bigots that it cannot explain. In light of this data, I suggest a possible defense for the NPC theorist: data from slur-*users*. However, as I demonstrate, this data from slur-users also gives us reason to reject the NPC theory. I consider additional data in §2 from slur-users on the sort of property a slur expresses. Then, in §3, I propose the Essence Theory as one that can explain all of the data surveyed. I present additional evidence, findings from social psychology, in support of the Essence Theory in §4. In § 5, I argue against Derogatory Semantics theories. Lastly, in § 6, I identify deficiencies in the dominant methodologies and assumptions in the literature that would lead one to embrace either the NPC theory or a Derogatory Semantics theory, and emphasize the significance of accepting the Essence Theory for the larger debate on slurs. Despite the fact that it is *not* my purpose in this paper to provide an answer to the first question, but to propound and defend a theory of the semantic content of slurs, acceptance of my theory has consequences for the first question: the derogatoriness of a slurring utterance is *not* due to the property a slur expresses.

2. The NPC Account

On what I will call the Non-Pejorative Correlate (NPC) account, the semantic content of a slur—the property a slur expresses (or more simply the "Slur Property") or its truth-conditional contribution to a proposition—is identical to that expressed by its NPC (or "NPC Property"). [3] [4] To illustrate, according to the NPC theory, sentences (1) and (2) are true for the terms 'lesbian' and 'dyke' express the same property.

(1) Ellen DeGeneres is a lesbian

(2) Ellen DeGeneres is a dyke

It may seem implausible that 'dyke' and 'lesbian' express the same property, for (2) is offensive but (1) is not. Yet, we should remember that the NPC theorist does not account for the offensiveness of a slur in terms of the Slur Property.

On the NPC theory, 'faggot' expresses the same property as 'gay man', which is a distinct property from that expressed by 'lesbian'. Sentence (4) is false because DeGeneres does not instantiate the property encoded by 'faggot'.

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[3] I understand the semantic content of a slur to be the property it contributes to a proposition. Not everyone may accept this general semantic theory, but this way of discussing the matter can be translated into alternative semantic frameworks.

[4] NPC theorists need not accept that the semantic content of a slur is its contribution to a *Russellian* proposition. As mentioned in the previous footnote, the contribution a slur makes on the NPC theory can even be formulated in non-propositional terms.

(3) A lesbian is a faggot

(4) Ellen DeGeneres is a faggot

For this reason, the person who sincerely asserts (3) or (4), if (4) knows that DeGeneres is a lesbian, and does not intend to be using the slur non-literally makes a semantic error. That is, she does not understand the property 'faggot' expresses.

Now that we see the assignments of truth and falsity the NPC theorist assigns to (1)-(4), we can proceed to compare these with our own judgments. If the NPC theory is adequate, then it should predict the judgments we assign to (1)-(4). The truth of (1) as well as the falsity of (3) and (4) is consonant with our own judgments. Yet, contrary to the NPC theorist's prediction, we non-bigots intuitively think that (2) is *false*.

The NPC theorist could reply that we judge (2) to be false because we do not want to derogate DeGeneres. If it is true that we do not judge (2) to be true because we want to avoid causing offense, then there is no reason why we should not grant that entailment (5) holds for the slur does not occur in an asserted context.

(5) If Ellen DeGeneres is a lesbian, then Ellen DeGeneres is a dyke

Yet, despite the fact that affirming that (5) holds is not offensive, we refuse to do so.

Nevertheless, the NPC theorist may still maintain that we refuse to grant entailment (5), or judge (2) true, because we want to avoid causing offense. Relying on data from those who do not have ethical qualms that would prevent them from distinguishing truth-

conditional from derogatory content, slur-*users*, would preclude this problem. Indeed, if slur-users' judgments correspond with what the NPC theory predicts, this would constitute stronger support for the NPC view. After all, slur-users plausibly have greater competence with slurs, and so their judgments would carry greater weight than non-bigots'.

Yet, just like their non-bigoted counterparts, many slur-users who recognize that DeGeneres possesses the property expressed by 'lesbian', judge (2) to be false and refuse to infer in accordance with (5). Since slur-users are not concerned with whether they cause offense, the NPC's theorist's explanation for why non-bigots judge (2) false or fail to affirm entailment (5) in terms of seeking to avoid offense, is implausible. Rather, the more convincing explanation for why non-bigots judge (2) false or fail to affirm entailment (5) is that the Slur Property is distinct from the NPC Property.

Before I present additional evidence for the distinction between the Slur Property and the NPC property, we should address the following objection. One who distinguishes between the Slur Property and the NPC Property will judge (2) to be false. However, continues the objector, to judge that (2) is false is equivalent to judging that (6) is true.

(6) Ellen DeGeneres is not a dyke

This result, according to the objector, counts against a view that distinguishes the NPC Property from the Slur Property.

My response to this objection is two-fold. Firstly, we non-bigots *do* judge (6) tobe true. The second prong of my reply concerns the origin of this objection. The objector is likely confusing the truth-conditional content of a slur and its NPC with that element of a

slurring utterance that makes the utterance offensive. Someone who distinguishes between the Slur Property and the NPC Property certainly thinks that verbally affirming (6) is offensive. However, she accounts for its offensiveness, like any slurring utterance, in terms other than the Slur-Property. She might say that we refrain from denying (6) for doing so conversationally implies something objectionable like that—although Ellen is not a 'dyke'—there are 'dykes' or that it is appropriate to use the slur.

Stepping aside from this putative objection, the facts that slur-users deem (2) false and that they refuse to grant entailment (5) do not constitute the only evidence from slur-users for the distinction between the NPC and Slur Properties. There are also contexts in which the bigoted speaker makes clear that there is such a distinction between those instantiating the NPC Property and those that instantiate the Slur Property. Please note that these contexts are upsetting to read. Utterances (7) and (8) are examples of such contexts.

(7) Not all Blacks are *******..[sic] not all Hispanics are Spics, not all Italians are Wops, and not all Jews are Kikes (Hudson).

(8) My Black Mama taught me as a child that there's a difference. There's black people and then there's niggers. Not all black people are niggers and not all niggers are black. (SleeteWayne, 2012).

The speakers of (7) and (8) make clear that there is a difference between blacks and 'niggers'. The speaker of (7) goes on to distinguish 'Hispanics' from 'spics', 'Italians' from

'wops', and 'Jews' from 'kikes'. As with (6), the best explanation for the distinction is that 'nigger' expresses a different property from that expressed by 'black'.

Contexts (7) and (8), in which the slur-user refrains from ascribing the slur to a subset of those possessing the NPC Property, are like (9).

(9) Obama is black, but he isn't a nigger (Jeshion, 2013a, p. 252).

There is an interesting point of difference between (7)-(8) and (9). In (6) and (7), the slur-user makes explicit that there is a difference between the groups *generally* of those instantiating the Slur Property and those that possess the NPC Property. The speaker of (9) indicates that Obama, a *particular* individual, instantiates the NPC Property, but not the Slur Property.

Context (9), like the more general contexts (7) and (8), is evidence that slur-users distinguish between those who possess the NPC Property and the Slur Property. Nevertheless, the NPC theorists who discuss contexts like them do not recognize them as evidence of a genuine semantic difference between a slur and its NPC, that is, as counterexamples to the NPC theory. Rather, some NPC theorists consider the cases in which a slur-user refrains from ascribing a slur to a particular person instantiating the NPC Property as an instance in which the slur-user "grants an exception" to that person (Camp 2013, p. 342 fn.16; Bach 2014, p. 8; Jeshion 2013b, p. 316). On this defense, all of the following are true: a slur encodes the same property as its NPC, the person to whom the exception is given possesses the NPC Property, and that person does not possess the Slur Property.

Notice that we can exclude the possibility that the slur-user refrains from ascribing the slur to someone instantiating the NPC property because she does not want to deprecate that person. To grant an exception is to withhold the ascription of the Slur Property to the person in question and, on the NPC theory, the Slur Property is *non*-derogatory.

The NPC theorists who avail themselves of this defense provide no evidence—independent of their theory—for accepting it. Without such evidence, the NPC theorist begs the question against other theories of the property a slur expresses.

In addition to the NPC theorist's lack of justification for discounting the failure of slur-users to ascribe a slur to someone that possesses the NPC Property as a counterexample, accepting that this phenomenon is *exception* granting compels the NPC theorist to recognize that the slur-user acts inconsistently. If a slur-user knows that the property a slur encodes is the NPC Property (as the NPC theorist holds) and recognizes that some people instantiate the NPC Property, then there is no consistent justification for why the slur-user refrains from ascribing the corresponding slur to those persons.

Kent Bach concedes that the bigot is not "quite coherent" (p. 8). Alleging that the slur-user acts inconsistently, though, is a serious consequence and should, for theoretical purposes, only be taken as a *last* resort. Acknowledging that there the slur-user does not behave on the basis of some principle is tantamount to conceding that we cannot theorize about it.

Rather than holding that the slur-user grants exceptions, the NPC theorist may reply that the property a slur expresses in (7)-(9) *differs* from what it would express in contexts in which it is literally used. This is Jeshion's strategy. According to her, there are distinctions among the property a slur expresses in a literal "G-referencing" context, the

property the same slur expresses in a non-literal "G-contracting" context, and the one it expresses in a non-literal "G-extending" context. G-referencing uses like (2) are those in which the slur is ascribed to a person (or any given person) possessing the NPC Property. G-contracting uses are those in which the slur is ascribed to a *sub*set, and G-extending uses are those in which the speaker ascribes the slur to a *super*set, of those instantiating the NPC Property (2013a, p. 238). Contexts (7) and (9), on her view, are G-contracting uses of a slur. In (8), the slur is used in both G-contracting and G-extending ways.

She analogizes uses of slurs that are not G-referencing slurs to uses of terms like 'girl' (p. 251). 'Girl', in its G-referencing use applies to female children, although it is also ascribed on occasion to men who exemplify stereotypically feminine traits. (This is, in particular, a G-*extending* use of 'girl'). We do not, according to Jeshion, think on the basis of these ascriptions, that 'girl' encodes some property other than that of being a female child. In other words, the existence of these uses is insufficient to show that 'girl' does not express the same property as 'female child' (p. 251). She suggests that this is because only uses of 'girl' in which it is ascribed to female children are literal uses, and all other uses are non-literal. In the same way, Jeshion maintains that we should not infer that because there are uses of a slur in which it is applied to someone who does not instantiate the NPC Property that the slur does not encode the NPC Property. These uses are like those in which 'girl' is applied to a boy, and thus, are also non-literal.

There are multiple reasons for why we cannot accept this response from the NPC-theorist. Firstly, Jeshion also does not specify the semantic content a slur expresses in either the non-literal G-contracting or G-extending use (p. 239). This lack of specification

seriously impedes our ability to assess whether a slur is semantically ambiguous depending on its use.[5]

Granted, there *are* non-literal uses of slurs—and given this, Jeshion is correct that not just any use of a slur is permissible data for the claim that the Slur Property and the NPC Property are distinct. We need a criterion—and one that does not presuppose the truth of any particular theory of the Slur Property—to distinguish between literal and non-literal uses of slurs. From Jeshion's discussion, it is clear that contexts in which the speaker's intention is to use the word to refer to someone she takes to instantiate the Slur Property are permissible data. However, (7) and (8) *are* contexts in which it is clear that the speaker intends to use the slur literally. Thus, on her criterion, (7) and (8) are literal uses and so, constitute, contra Jeshion, evidence *for* the distinction between the properties a slur and its NPC express.

The NPC theorist might also explain the fact that the slurs in contexts (7)-(9) are not used in a way co-extensive with the NPC property in the following way. The speaker of any of those utterances uses the slur in a *meta*-linguistic manner. The speaker of (7), for instance, informs us that the word 'Italians' is used to refer to some group of people and 'Wops' to another group. Now, continues the NPC theorist, a meta-linguistic claim need not be a claim about the property a slur expresses.

The meta-linguistic strategy is vulnerable to the same objections I gave against Jeshion's view. Firstly, there is no principled motivation—again, *independent* of the truth

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[5] She says, "in offering these characterizations of G-extending and G-contracting uses, I am not here taking a stand on the semantic contribution of [for example] 'nigger' to what is semantically expressed... I wish to remain neutral here about the various different competing analyses of the slurring terms in these different uses" (p. 239, my interpolation).

of any particular theory of the property a slur expresses—for why we should consider (7)-(9) meta-linguistic claims, rather than literal uses of the slurs.

A theory on which the Slur Property and the NPC Property express different properties is also methodologically preferable to the NPC theory plus either of the strategies designed to explain contexts (7)-(9): Jeshion's strategy or the meta-linguistic strategy. If we accept the distinction between the Slur Property and the NPC Property, we do not have to tack on another component to the theory of which property a slur expresses, like the NPC theory does. We can explain the fact that the speakers in contexts (7)-(9) apply the relevant slurs in a way that is not co-extensive with their NPCs without additional theoretical elements such as different properties the slur expresses.

Thus far, I have argued for the distinction of the Slur Property from the NPC Property. Yet, what sort of property is the Slur Property? In the next section, I present my own theory, the Essence Theory, as well as additional evidence for the sort of property the Slur Property is. As I will show, the Essence Theory best explains this data.

3. The Essence Theory

On the Essence Theory, the Slur Property is an essence property possessing four primary properties. It is (a) shared by and unique to all those to whom, according to the slur-user, the slur is correctly ascribed and (b) is permanently and immutably possessed. This property also (c) plays a causal-explanatory role in relation to stereotypical properties, including those properties associated with those to whom the slur's NPC is ascribed, and is (d) "hidden" in the sense that it is epistemically inaccessible, particularly by perceptual

means. The essence is also specific to those to whom the slur is ascribed, and so, the essence will vary by slur. The essence shared by and exclusive to 'chinks', for example, differs from that possessed by 'spics'.[6]

What is meant by properties (a) and (b) should be straightforward. An analogy between the Slur Property and a natural kind property may illuminate characteristics (c) and (d). We can consider the natural kind property expressed by, for example, 'water' (henceforth, Water Property).[7] The Water Property is that of possessing a certain atomic structure, H20. For a substance that instantiates the Water Property, that property is thought to cause—and in an epistemic mode, explain—that substance's manifestation of observable, stereotypical properties like transparency, odorlessness, and tastelessness. Since the Water Property causes, and is evidential for, the manifestation of these stereotypical properties, the presence of them does not *constitute* the essence itself. The Slur Property plays the same role with respect to those who instantiate it. For those who instantiate the property expressed by 'chink', for instance, the 'Chink Property' causes a 'chink' to manifest stereotypical properties (according to the Sinophobe) like a certain eye shape or inability to drive.[8] Like the stereotypical properties of the Water Property, the stereotypical properties of the Slur Property are not part of the essence.

Not all such properties are equally indicative of the presence of the Slur Property. The property of having a boiling point of 212° Fahrenheit, for instance, is a more

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[6] My claim about the constituent elements of the Slur Property is independent of the claim that this property refers, whether in this world or in some possible world.

[7] There is a point of disanalogy between 'water' and a slur: it is uncontroversial that 'water' has an extension, but it is unclear whether a slur does. If one thinks that a slur lacks an extension, she can substitute a natural kind with no extension such as 'phlogiston', for 'water', and still appreciate the parallel that I draw.

[8] Notice that stereotypical properties for many slurs, especially those for race, ethnicity, stature, etc. include phenotypic ones (Jeshion, 2013b, p. 322 fn.16).

epistemically robust ground for attributing the Water Property to a substance than, say, colorlessness. Hence, one has stronger evidence for attributing the Water Property to a gray substance with that boiling point than to a clear one without that boiling point. The same is true for the Slur Property. To return to our previous example, a certain eye shape is thought to be a more inferentially robust property for the attribution of the particular Slur Property than the inability to drive.

As is the case with the Water Property, some stereotypical properties associated with the Slur Property are even defeasible. The phenomenon of "passing", particularly as white by those that instantiate the property expressed by 'nigger', illustrates the defeasibility of skin color for the ascription of that Slur Property.

Let us turn our attention to (d). Recall that properties caused by the Water Property such as clarity or tastelessness—like eye shape or driving inability for the relevant Slur Property are epistemically accessible. The Slur Property, like the microstructure H_2O, is "hidden" or epistemically inaccessible. We infer that some substance possesses the Water Property on the basis of its instantiating stereotypical properties like transparency or tastelessness. In the same way, the slur-user infers on the basis of her access to stereotypical properties a person instantiates that that person possesses the hidden Slur Property associated with those properties.

We should pause to note that the Slur Property, like the Water Property, is not derogatory.[9] Even though the Slur Property may bear a causal-explanatory relation to stereotypical properties, stereotypes—including derogatory ones—do not constitute the Slur Property.

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[9] Hence, I need to account for slurring utterances' derogatoriness in terms other than the Slur Property.

The Essence Theory best explains another set of data: contexts like (10)-(14) below that explicate the Slur Property's central characteristics. Before reading these excerpts, I warn my reader that they are absolutely abhorrent.

(10) A Jap is a Jap (Okihiro, 1994, p. 170).

(11) she's [sic] a spic enough said. She will have illegitimate children cause that's what spics do (Richie 2011).

(12) Both have lengthy criminal histories (of course they do, they're niggers) (INCOGMAN, 2013).

(13) Kikes are the way they are because they're kikes (Glanton).

(14) Niggers are different from whites and always will be (Drake et al., 2015, p. 277).

Contexts (15)-(17) are intended to model real slurring utterances, whereas in (18), the one mentioning the slur is the slur-target herself.

(15) You're a Spic and you'll always be a Spic (Breslin).

(16) You'll always be a nigger no matter how many degrees you get (Camp, 2017, p. 12).

(17) Ellen Craft was constantly humiliated, lest she forget that despite her white skin, she, too was a 'nigger' (Stampp & Nichols, p. 39).

(18) I was the Other, the *Gook*, the foreigner, *no matter* how perfect my English, how American my behavior (Ngyuen).

Contexts (10), (14), (15), and (16) most clearly show that the Slur Property is permanently possessed, and that once possessed, it cannot be disposed of—despite anything one might do (in (16), for example, attain scholastic success). The speakers of (14), (15) and (16) make this point explicitly using language like "always"; the speaker of (10) implies that a 'Jap' cannot expunge herself of the property 'Jap' expresses.

Utterances (11)-(14) indicate that "stereotypical properties" play a causal-explanatory role in the imputation of the Slur Property. In (11), the speaker explicitly communicates that the property expressed by 'spic' causes the tendency she names by her use of the phrase "[be]cause that's what spics do". The phrase "of course they do" in (12) shows that the slur-user thinks that the Slur Property causes criminality. The speaker of (13) conveys that there is some "way" that 'kikes' are, although she is less explicit about which stereotypical properties these are. The speaker of (14), despite an inexplicitness about what it is that makes 'niggers' "different from" whites similar to that we see in (13), doubtlessly thinks that there are such traits that do differentiate the groups.

The speakers of utterances (16)-(18) expresses the same point about the causal-explanatory role of stereotypical properties in the ascription of the Slur Property, but in a negative manner. They all indicate that the slur-target instantiates the Slur Property *despite* her possession of "counter stereotypical properties, which are not indicative of the presence of the Slur Property. By indicating that someone instantiating the Slur Property possesses counter-stereotypical features, the slur-user implies that that person would possess some stereotypical features in virtue of instantiating the Slur Property. The slur-user indicates in (17) that the slur-target's appearance belies her possession of the Slur Property. In that context, in particular, the slur-target's appearance was apparently sufficiently "convincing" to enable her to "pass" as white. In (16), the stereotypical property is not phenotypic in character. The slur-target's scholastic success in (16), according to the speaker, belies her possession of the property encoded by the slur. The same is true of the slur-target in (18): "American behavior" and command of the English language belie instantiation of the property 'gook' expresses.

The slur-user's attribution of the Slur Property to someone *despite* her possession of counter-stereotypical properties evince that the Slur Property is hidden.

There is no reason to think, as Jeshion does, that an essentialist semantics of slurs presupposes that the essence a slur expresses is "biologically grounded" (2017, p. 25).[10] The essence possessed by those to whom some slur applies need not be of *any* particular nature: physical (some genome or the folk-biological concept of "blood"), psychological, or spiritual. The essence need only have (a)-(d), none of which depend on the essence's

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[10] Contrary to what Jeshion alleges about 'faggot' that "our mode of conceptualizing sexual orientation has not been shown to be essentialist" (2017, p. 25), there is evidence from social psychology supporting precisely this claim (Haslam & Levy, 2006).

having a particular nature. It is also compatible with my claim that the nature of the essence expressed by one slur differs from that of another.

Indeed, the fact that the essence a slur encodes need not have any specific nature enables the proponent of the Essence Theory to accommodate slurs that plausibly lack a biological basis such as those for sexual orientation ('faggot'), intellectual or physical ability ('retard'), or immigration status ('wetback'). From the bigot's perspective, the people belonging to any of the groups the slur labels, say 'faggot', are still "all the same" and will "always" be 'faggots' no matter what they do. If there is no "gene" or psychological disposition corresponding to being gay, then they must have a "gay spirit" of some kind. The same thought pattern could be found in the Nazis' thinking about the "Jewish essence". Once Nazi pseudo-scientists found no distinction between Jews' and "German" blood, Nazi officials concluded that the essence of Jewish people was spiritual in character (Livingstone Smith, 2011).

At this point, we should consider two important points, beginning first with a clarification. Firstly, acceptance of the claim that a slur expresses some kind of essence property is compatible with the NPC theory. Indeed, my claim that an individual slur encodes a particular essence, as specified by the Essence Theory, does not entail the falsity of the NPC theory. Rather, the falsity of the NPC account is independently established by the data we examined in §1 and §2.

The other point concerns the relationship between a slur and its NPC. Although, according to the Essence Theory, there is a distinction between the Slur Property and the NPC Property, one may wonder if there is any semantic relationship between them. Does one need to know that a slur is only, or is usually, ascribed to those who also possess the

NPC property in order to count as understanding a slur's semantic content? After all, it seems that, for many slurs, the majority of those to whom a slur is ascribed are also those that possess the property expressed by its corresponding NPC.

The Essence Theory proponent's answer is this: to be *semantically* competent with a slur, one need not know if the extension of a given slur is co-extensive or not with that of its NPC. The coincidence or not between the extension of a slur and its NPC is, rather, a matter of knowing how the world is, of *metaphysical*, knowledge. For this reason, it is possible—indeed, I provided evidence that, according to slur-users, it is *in fact* the case— that some of those who instantiate the NPC Property do not instantiate the Slur Property (demonstrated by (7)-(9)) and that those who do not even possess the NPC Property possess the Slur Property (as (8) showed).

Since it is possible, as the slur-user maintains, that the extension of a slur and its NPC *coincide*, the Essence Theory not only explains contexts (7)-(9), in which a slur and its NPC are used in a way that is not co-extensive, but also the universally quantified (19):

(19) All guineas are Italians

The speaker's statement that all those instantiating the property expressed by 'guinea' also instantiate the property expressed by 'Italian' is a claim based on her metaphysical knowledge of what the groups share, not on her understanding of the properties encoded by 'guinea' and 'Italian'.

We should pause to appreciate that the Essence Theory explains (7)-(9) and (19) in a way that is superior to the NPC Theory. Recall that NPC theorists explain contexts like

(7)-(9) as either instances of granting exceptions or as non-literal uses. The Essence Theory proponent can explain all of these contexts, (7)-(9) and (19), and in a way that is both principled and simplest: in each of these contexts, the slur-user's pattern of ascribing the property encoded by the slur to those that instantiate that expressed by its NPC reflects her metaphysical knowledge of those the slur-user takes to be in the extensions of the slur and its NPC.

4. Psychological Evidence for the Essence Theory

There is ample evidence from social psychology that bigots—whether defined as those having prejudiced attitudes, those inclined to make other negative judgments, or those disposed to stereotype—think of persons belonging to the same social groups for which we have slurs as possessing essences with the features I identified.[11] This evidence, in turn, bolsters my claim that the Slur Property is an essence property.

The studies I cite in favor of this claim include the same socially relevant groups for which we have slurs: gender (Mahalingam, 2003), ethnicity (Gil-White, 2001), race (Hirschfeld, 1996; Verkuyten ,2003), mental disorder (Haslam & Ernst, 2002; Haslam 2000), physical disability (Haslam et al., 2000), and sexual orientation (Haslam and Levy, 2006).

Moreover, the most widely held understanding of essence has the same features named above, (a)-(b). Rothbart & Taylor (1992) proposed that this essence has the

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[11] I appeal to data on bigots defined in any of these ways for it is quite difficult to find data directly on bigots. One difficulty is that there is (fortunately) a strong social stigma on bigotry, so bigots are reluctant to self-identify as such.

following properties: it is shared by and unique to all those possessing the slur property, essences are permanent and immutable, and the underlying, "hidden" essence plays a causal-explanatory role in the production of certain properties (Haslam et al. 2000, p. 118). Medin & Ortony (1989) maintain, as I do, that the essence need not have any particular nature.

In *The Nature of Prejudice*, Sprott & Allport (1954) argue that a belief that the members of some social group share an essence is a defining feature of prejudice. Haslam et al. (2002) found a link between prejudiced attitudes and essence-ascription. According to Dasagupta et al. (1999), people inclined to think of members of races, ethnicities, and genders as having permanent and immutable traits, tend to make negative judgments about people belonging to these groups. Martin & Parker (1995) found that a link between the perception of greater differences between men and women, a characteristic linked with sexism, with holding essentialized 'folk theories' about women.

There are also numerous studies conducted on the connection between stereotyping and ascribing an essence to (or essentializing) various social groups (Levy et al., 1998; Plaks et al., 2000; Hegarty & Pratto, 2001). The findings from the study conducted by Hegarty & Pratto (2001), in particular, evince that people attribute essences to gay men to explain the instantiation of stereotypically gay characteristics. This suggests that people are naturally inclined to think that certain properties thought to be "typical of" gay men are the result of an immutable, causally efficacious essence.

5. Against Derogatory Semantics Theories

I have argued against *one* of the two primary theories of the Slur Property, the NPC theory. What remains to be seen is how the Essence Theory is preferable to the other type, Derogatory Semantics theories, on which the Slur Property is that element of a slurring utterance that accounts for its derogatoriness. This is my aim in this section.

Derogatory Semantics theories generally divide into two categories. On both, the Slur Property is specified as a complex property at least partly comprising a property of the following form in which c refers to the derogatory characteristic: 'c because NPC'. Each of these Derogatory Semantics theories differs in their specification of c. On one variety, c is at least partly expressive, containing emotive elements like contemptible or despicable. A simple example of the Slur Property on such a view is 'contemptible because NPC'. In contrast, on the second type of Derogatory Semantics theory, c at least partly encompasses a set of stereotypical characteristics.

One example of a Derogatory Semantics theory belonging to the first category is Bach's, on which the Slur Property has the form '(NPC) and (contemptible because NPC)'.[12] The Slur Property consists of the conjunction of the NPC Property and c, which is 'contemptible because NPC'. 'Dyke', for instance, expresses the property '(lesbian) and (contemptible because lesbian)'.[13]

Bach's theory is problematic in the attitude it specifies as partially forming the Slur Property: contempt. As Camp points out, 'contemptible' could not be a correct

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[12] Other examples include those McCready (2011) and Saka (2007) propound.
[13] I have inserted parentheses to eliminate ambiguity.

characterization of the attitude connected with the Slur Property (2013, p. 339). [14] Its inaccuracy becomes apparent when we consider the diversity of attitudes plausibly associated with slurs. 'Disgusting' seems to be a more plausible attitudinal property that slur-users think 'faggot' expresses. 'Boy', a slur for an African-American man is more reasonably associated, according to racists, with some property like 'inspiring condescension'.

The failure of Bach's theory to correctly characterize the attitude partially constituting the Slur Property has deeper consequences for its ability to explain an important feature of slurs' derogatoriness. Since Derogatory Semantics theorists trace derogatory force generally to the Slur Property, *variation* in derogatoriness should also be due to the Slur Property. 'Nigger' is more derogatory than 'limey', for instance, because of a difference in the property the former expresses (Hom 2008, p. 426). A theory on which the derogatory force of a slurring utterance is due to the property a slur expresses, and on which all slurs encode one type of property like 'contemptible', makes that theory unable to account for derogatory variation.

On Hom's view, c comprises normative and descriptive, stereotypical properties that stand in a particular justificatory structure. The Slur Property has the form 'ought to be subject to $d*_1 + \ldots + d*_n$ because of being $p*_1 + \ldots + p*_n$ all because of being NPC*', in which 'p' refers to some stereotypical properties and 'd' to deontic prescriptions (p. 431). The portion 'ought to be subject to $d*_1 + \ldots + d*_n$ all because of being $p*_1 + \ldots + p*$' is c. 'Chink', for example, expresses the property 'ought to be subject to higher college admissions standards, excluded from managerial positions…, because of being slanty-

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[14] The same criticism applies to the attitude Saka identifies: 'despicable'.

eyed, devious…, all because of being Chinese'. Hom's account falls under the second category of Derogatory Semantics theories for *c* includes stereotypical properties.

Hom's theory is a type of semantic externalism, which means that the property expressed by a slur is determined by something outside of the speaker's own mind to which that speaker is causally related. In this case, the external element is a racist institution, which comprises racist ideologies and racist practices. The speaker's relation to racist practices determines the deontic prescriptions, whereas racist ideologies determine the stereotypical properties.

Let us consider, in particular, the stereotypical portion of *c* on Hom's theory. The inclusion of stereotypes accounts for various data, including explicating contexts (11)-(14) and (16)-(18) as well as some of the studies considered in **§**4—all of which constitute evidence that slur-users are prone to stereotype. Yet, as those same contexts attest, stereotypical properties are not constitutive of the Slur Property but, rather, are diagnostic of the true Slur Property. In this way, although the stereotype theorist appears to be on the right track, she stops short of identifying the sort of property the Slur Property actually expresses: an essence.

The principal difficulty for a "stereotypical" variety of a Derogatory Semantics theory is identifying the stereotypical property or properties constituting the Slur Property (Jeshion 2013b, p. 318). The Sinophobe, for instance, need not associate a property like 'unfit for managerial positions'—or, indeed, any one of the properties Hom mentions as associated with Chinese people (Camp 2013, p. 334).

One might respond on Hom's behalf that the stereotypical properties constituting the Slur Property are determined *externally*—not by what speakers associate with slurs.

Yet, despite the external determination of properties partly constituting the Slur Property, as Camp points out, the stereotypical properties constituting the Slur Property should still be such that slur-users would accept those properties if they were presented with them (p. 334). In other words, the stereotypical properties composing the Slur Property should not be *surprising* to slur-users. After all, those who actually use slurs should have the best understanding of the property a slur encodes.

The challenge in characterizing the stereotypical properties 'chink' expresses is illustrative of the difficulty for *any* slur. The fact that there is no specific stereotype associated with the Slur Property suggests that there is no particular stereotype a speaker is required to know in order to understand the Slur Property. If this is so, then no knowledge of any particular stereotype plays a role in determining whether a speaker is competent with a slur. Provided that a stereotype theory of the Slur Property is correct, this is a highly implausible result.

Aside from inaccuracy in characterizing the Slur Property, an account on which the Slur Property encodes stereotypes may not be able to account for the derogatoriness of slurs. Many slurs, like 'chink', above are associated with positive stereotypes such as technological aptitude or mathematical prowess. As Jeshion (2013b, p. 323) objects, the inclusion of positive stereotypes in the Slur Property, like that encoded by the aforementioned, has the consequence that a slurring utterance containing it is at least partially *flattering*—a result that is clearly inaccurate.

The Essence Theory not only avoids this consequence but also is able to account for the fact that stereotypes are somehow associated with slurs *and* that knowledge of particular stereotypes associated with the Slur Property is not required for semantic

competence with the slur. Since a slur does not encode any stereotypes, it is not necessary that a speaker know any stereotypical properties in order to count as semantically competent with that slur. The Essence Theory, though, preserves a role for stereotypes: the Slur Property is an essence causally responsible for producing stereotypical properties.[15]

As well, the Essence Theory is methodologically superior to any of the Derogatory Semantics theories in its explanation of non-derogatory uses, including those of the appropriated and non-appropriated variety. Hom refers to instances of the latter category as Non-Derogatory Non-Appropriated (NDNA) uses. Appropriated uses of slurs are *non-derogatory* slurring utterances used primarily to subvert existing bigoted structures, and to establish and reinforce solidarity among other persons targeted by the slur. NDNA uses of slurs are those like (20) and (21), which Hom takes to be most fitting in a pedagogical setting (say, about Sinophobia):

(20) Am I racist if I think Chinese people are chinks?

(21) Racists think that Chinese people are chinks.

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[15] Jeshion objected to one of Camp's earlier, unpublished "stereotype" theory of the semantics of slurs that some slurs like 'midget', 'gai-jin', and 'goy' lack an association with *any* stereotypes, and so that we should not endorse a stereotype theory of the semantic content of a slur (Camp 2013, p. 342 fn.16). Although the Slur Property does not encode any stereotypes, her criticism has consequences for my view, since an essence is causally responsible for producing stereotypical properties. I deny that there are no stereotypes associated with these slurs. The Slur Property 'midget' expresses is an essence that is causally responsible for short stature and as she points out, stereotypes include "physical and cultural" characteristics (Jeshion 2013b, p. 322). 'Gai-jin' is associated with a non-Japanese appearance, and with lacking an appreciation of Japanese culture (such as a distinctively Japanese sense of honor). 'Goy' is connected with a disinclination to use one's mind, or lack of intelligence. (This stereotype is made more explicit in the pejorative phrase, 'goyishe kop'.) 'Shiksa' is associated with promiscuity (2013b, p. 323).

On the Essence Theory, because the Slur Property is non-derogatory, we should expect that non-derogatory slurring utterances in which the Slur Property is expressed, appropriated uses and Hom's NDNA uses, are also non-derogatory. For Hom, because the derogatoriness of a slurring utterance is explained in terms of the Slur Property, he is compelled to complicate his theory by distinguishing—on unprincipled grounds—among derogatory uses of slurs, as well as non-derogatory appropriated and non-derogatory non-appropriated uses. In comparison, the taxonomy the Essence Theory proponent avoids fewer unprincipled divisions and is more elegant: she need only include in her classification of slurring uses the difference between derogatory and non-derogatory uses.

6. Summing Up

In the preceding sections, I argued against the two primary theories of the semantic content of slurs, and recommended on the basis of these arguments that we reject both theories. Contrary to the NPC theorist, I demonstrated that the NPC Property and the Slur Property differ. In opposition to Derogatory Semantics theories, I proposed that a slur expresses a property that is not derogatory and is, in particular, an essence property. The Essence Theory accommodates all of the data. It accounts for the data in favor of recognizing a distinction between the Slur Property and the NPC Property such as slur-users' (and non-slur-users') patterns of inference and truth judgments, as well as contexts in which the slur is used in a way that is not co-extensive with its NPC like (7)-(9). Explicating contexts and social psychological research support accepting that a slur encodes an essence property, in particular.

Reasons for the dominance of the NPC and Derogatory Semantics theories are plausibly methodological. Firstly, theorists do not tend to use actual slurring contexts, or the judgments of slur-*users*, as evidence. Granted data from slur-users may be more difficult to obtain, but the absence of such data is a serious deficiency if we are to understand the property a slur encodes. Our fabrication of slurring contexts is likely to be reflective of our less-than-perfect understanding of slurs.

The likeliest reason for why the (comparatively few) theorists who recognize the difference between the Slur Property and the NPC Property think that Slur-P must also explain a slurring utterance's derogatoriness is also plausibly explained as a methodological assumption. If slurring utterances are offensive, and the Slur Property and the NPC Property differ, then the Slur Property must be derogatory. As I have stressed in this essay, it is consistent with the difference between the NPC Property and the Slur Property that the offensiveness of a slurring utterance is due to some contextual feature, rather than the Slur Property. The aforementioned assumption more effectively explains these theorists' inference to the conclusion that Slur Property is derogatory.

The Essence Theory avoids unsupported such assumptions about this property as any methodologically solid theory of the Slur Property is compelled to.

Chapter III. Slurring Utterances as Acts of Distancing

1. Background

A speaker does something distinctive when she uses a slur. My central question in this paper is: what is it that she does?

Some, like Christopher Hom (2008) and Kent Bach (2014), hold that a slurring speaker asserts that the target possesses the derogatory property expressed by the slur. Rae Langton (2009), Mary Kate McGowan (2012), Mihaela Popa-Wyatt & Jeremy Wyatt (2017) and Rebecca Kukla (2018) are all variations of a view on which the slurring speaker ranks her target as inferior. [16] Geoffrey Nunberg (2018) argues that a slur-user conversationally implicates her alignment with some bigoted group. Anderson and Lepore (2013) maintain that slur-users aim to break a taboo on usage, whereas Bianca Cepollaro and Isadora Stojanovic (2016) hold that slur-users presuppose some objectionable content. Slur-users, on Elisabeth Camp's (2013) theory, are "pledging allegiance" to a derogating and distancing perspective on the target's group.

In this paper, I argue for another answer to this question. On my view, a slur-user distances herself from the target's group. By "distancing", I mean that the slur-user pledges her loyalty to, or promises to, support another group and refuses to support the target group. Distancing has a number of distinctive features. One of these is that distancing is only successful if the speaker has a certain kind of status. This status is the slurring speaker's allegiance to a group to which the slur is not conventionally applied (henceforth, non-target

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[16] "Ranking" is Langton's (2009) language. For her, ranking is one way that a speaker "subordinates" someone through speech.

group). Another distinctive feature of distancing is that it is a type of promise. Distancing acts are also not acts of ranking: the speaker does not take herself to be in a superior position to her addressee.

An analysis of a slurring utterance as an act of distancing most effectively explains three central data. One is that we interpret slurring utterances as standard when the speaker supports a non-target group. Standard uses of slurs exclude appropriated, ironical, sarcastic, and metaphorical uses.[17] Secondly, distancing best explains intra-bigot uses of slurs. The last principal datum comprises our judgments of a slur-user's insincerity. We judge a standard use of a slur as insincere if the speaker, at the time she made the slurring utterance, is engaged in activity in the target-group's interests and contrary to the non-target group's interests.

Here is the plan. The first answer to my central question that I consider is my own, according to which a slurring utterance constitutes a speech act of distancing. The sense of "speech act" that I have in mind is like J.L. Austin's or John Searle's. In order to propound this theory, I will need to first explain what a speech act in this sense is (§2). Then, in §3, I present in brief outline my own theory of the sort of speech act a slurring utterance constitutes. The rest of the paper is primarily devoted to showing that distancing is the best explanation for the three data just indicated. I show that distancing gives the most powerful theory of why we judge a slurring utterance as standard in accordance with the speaker's support for a non-target group (§4). I argue against an alternative explanation of the data in terms of conversational implicature theory (§5). I consider the last two of the three central data, intra-bigots uses and judgments of insincerity, in §6 and §7 respectively. In

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[17] One might think that this just means that by a standard use of a slur, I have in mind one in which the speaker intends to predicate the property the slur expresses to the slur target.

§8, I argue that a type of rival speaker-sensitive speech act theories, on which the slur-user ranks, does not provide a plausible answer to my question. This data includes instances of slurring utterances, most particularly those containing slurs for people that are not subjugated in society.

Please be advised that some slurs are mentioned below. I use a circumlocution to refer to the most inflammatory ones.

2. Speech Acts

2.1 Speech Act Theory: A Sketch

The chief insight of speech act theory is that, in making utterances, we do not simply describe a state of affairs.[18] Rather, our utterances have a multiplicity of *functions*. We *do* things in making utterances—and things as multifarious as promising, thanking, requesting, and even calling strikes and marrying a couple. Austin called an utterance whereby a speaker does something extra-linguistic like one of these actions an "illocutionary act".

Illocutionary acts are classified according to their point or purpose (henceforth, illocutionary point). Let us take as a first example the promise, or as Austin (1975) referred to it, a "commissive". The illocutionary point of a promise is to commit the speaker to performing an action at some future time (Searle 1969). Since binding oneself to a later

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[18] In *How to Do Things with Words*, Austin argues that even acts that look superficially like we are merely describing some state of affairs in the world—like "Albany is the capital of New York" are also acts whereby we do something, namely *assert*.

course of action is what the act is designed to do, it is the "illocutionary point" of promising. When an espresso-lover tells her companion, "I'll buy you a macchiato" she thereby commits herself to purchasing a macchiato for that addressee. When the espresso-lover says to the barista, "One macchiato, please", she requests. The illocutionary point of the request is to get the barista to make her a macchiato.

Notice that the sentence the speaker utters could be used to do something other than bind herself to a future course of action. For instance, the speaker might be predicting later behavior. Thus, one needs to do more than merely understand the locutionary act the speaker performs, the speaker's act of uttering the sentence with a certain meaning (this includes having in mind a referent for indexical expressions like 'I') in order to determine the illocutionary act the utterance constitutes. One needs to avail herself of salient contextual features. In this case, one needs to know that ordinarily when one utters this sentence to a barista at a coffee shop, she does so in order to request.

It would help to also distinguish between an illocutionary act and the types of effects that the act causes. The macchiato request might produce any number of effects, including causing the barista to brew espresso, the espresso machine to violently rumble, or the next patron in line (incidentally, a devotee of gas station coffee on his first visit to an espresso bar) to groan at the perceived pretentiousness of the order. One of these effects is an effect the promiser intended to produce in making her utterance, namely causing the barista to brew espresso.[19] This is an "illocutionary effect" of the promise. The other effects are "perlocutionary effects. Perlocutionary effects need not bear any relation to the purpose

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[19] When I say, "the speaker intends", and not something like the "act is conventionally designed to produce", I am not implying that illocutionary conventions do *not* play a role in determining the felicity of the act.

of the utterance. It is not the purpose of requesting a macchiato to make a cantankerous customer groan.

In order to use an utterance to succeed as any kind of illocutionary act, it must meet certain conditions, which Austin called "felicity conditions" (p. 14). Some of these, preparatory conditions, need to be in place prior to the act for it to be felicitous. A commissive has a particular sort of felicity condition, a sincerity condition: the speaker must be sincere in her avowal to do whatever it is she promises to do. The macchiato purchaser promises to buy a macchiato for her addressee. There are also other preparatory conditions for promising to be felicitous, such as the speaker's ability to make good on what she promises to do. The buyer in our coffee shop case should, for instance, think that she has sufficient money to purchase the beverage at the time she promises to buy it.

We should be clear that the sense of sincerity relevant to commissives is distinct from the sense that is germane to assertions. When an elementary school teacher tells his dinosaur-loving pupil, "The triceratops is herbivorous", he commits himself to the truth of the proposition he asserts in making the utterance, namely, that the triceratops is herbivorous. An assertion has a particular sort of felicity condition, a sincerity condition: the speaker must believe that what the proposition the uttered sentence expresses is true (Bach 2008, p. 77).[20] The teacher's assertion is sincere if he believes that the triceratops consumed only plants. This is an epistemic sense of sincerity. The sense of sincerity pertinent to commissives is *not* epistemic. Rather, it is typically a commitment to undertake an *action*.

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[20] There is a voluminous literature on the epistemic norm or norms governing assertion. Many, like Timothy Williamson, propose that one should only assert p only if one *knows* that p is true (2000, p. 243, my emphasis). Matthew Weiner (2005) has a formulation in terms of *truth*. I am sticking here with the *belief* formulation, but I think that one could substitute the knowledge or truth norm in its place.

Some speech acts require, as a felicity condition, the speaker to possess a special status.[21] Here are a couple of paradigmatic examples. Calling a strike in baseball constitutes an act whereby there is a strike. Or, consider marrying. When the priest utters, "I now pronounce you husband and wife", his act also constitutes an act whereby a couple is married, and the couple becomes husband and wife. Acts like calling a strike or marrying are "exercitives". [22] They are acts whereby the speaker "exercises some special right, privilege or power" (1975). It is *characteristic* of exercitives that they have a special sort of preparatory condition. Most of them only count as exercitives if the speaker has the appropriate extra-linguistic status. The umpire's "Strike!" is an act of calling a strike because he has the right kind of status. Only he may call a strike. An overzealous fan's utterance of the same word will not count as calling a strike. Similarly, only the priest can marry a couple in uttering, "I now pronounce you husband and wife". If the best man, beset by emotion, uttered the same words, he would not thereby marry the couple.

Exercitives are acts whose success typically depends on the speaker's possession of a *formal* status. By a formal status, I mean one that is explicitly codified. What it takes to be an umpire (suppose, professionally) is determined by rules set by Major League Baseball. Who counts as a (Roman) Catholic priest is determined by Church procedure.

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[21] Traditionally, this status is understood as extra-linguistic. Some, like Mary Kate McGowan, identify some linguistic statuses, like being a conversational participant, as a special status.

[22] Austin identifies another category of speech acts that requires the speaker to possess some kind of authority: the verdictive (p. 42). For instance, a judge's proclamation that "We find the defendant guilty" constitutes a ruling. Verdictives differ from exercitives in that they are utterances whereby the speaker not only exercises some right in making her utterance—like an exercitive—but her utterance is also based on some information that may be true or false. Whether the defendant is guilty is something that the judge can be wrong about. It may be the case that the defendant did not commit the crime. I do not discuss verdictives in the body of this essay for the distinction between them and exercitives does not affect the claims that I make below.

However, the exercitive speaker need not have a formal status. Parenthood, for instance, is an informal institution. What it is to be a parent, unlike an umpire, is not explicitly codified.

The distinction between formal and informal statuses is important, for there are speech acts whose success requires that the speaker possess an informal status. One example, given by McGowan, is setting a bedtime for a child (p. 96). Only the parent's utterance, "You must be in bed by seven o'clock" constitutes setting a bedtime for her child. The child's mischievous brother cannot set a bedtime for his sibling in making the same utterance.[23]

An exercitive is not the only type of speech act that might require, as a preparatory condition, the speaker to possess some extra-linguistic status. Commissives also have this requirement. Consider the case of a new medical school graduate taking the Hippocratic oath. Only a new doctor can do this. The same is true when the President Elect recites the oath of office, in which he promises to uphold his duties as President and the U.S. Constitution. Only the President Elect is able to do this.

The status required for someone to perform some commissive might be informal. Suppose, for example, Buzz, friend to Woody, promises Woody to support him: "I promise to be there for you". The promise is made in virtue of their friendship, and friendship is an informal status. Notice that Buzz does not make this promise because he is simply the one that is distinctively able to make good on this promise. There are others that can support Woody; Buzz is not uniquely situated to offer support. Moreover, even if there are others that could make good on this promise, what enables Buzz to make this promise is not

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[23] Austin himself did not mention exercitive speech acts in which the relevant speaker status is informal.

simply as someone who can ensure the fulfillment of the promise: it is because he is Woody's *friend*. Friendship, although an informal status, is a deontic status. In virtue of being a friend to someone, one has certain obligations to that person, including supporting him. If this in doubt, imagine that Buzz abandons Woody in his hour of need. Woody is *entitled* to call Buzz out on his failure to uphold an obligation Buzz has to him, to support him. Importantly, Woody is entitled to do so in virtue of Buzz's status as a friend to him.

Indeed, as I will argue later, on my theory, slurring utterances are like Buzz's, the doctor's, and the President Elect's in that they are commissives with a constraint on who can successfully utter them. Yet, as in Buzz's avowal of his amicable duty, the sort of status relevant in the case of slurring utterances is informal. Slurring utterances are only felicitous if the speaker has a type of informal alliance: support for a non-target group.

3. Slurring Utterances as Distancing Speech Acts

3.1 Distancing in Outline

A standard use of a slur, on my view, constitutes two acts. One concerns the predication of a slur to a target group, or target group member. This is the locutionary act. In this paper, I will refrain from discussing the locutionary act, including remaining neutral about the property a slur expresses. The locutionary act is conceptually distinct from the illocutionary act, distancing.[24]

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[24] Two features of my view are like Elisabeth Camp's (2018): that slurring utterances constitute two speech acts, and that the locutionary act is separable from the other act.

Distancing is a commissive, albeit one that contrasts with paradigmatic commissives in one significant way: the speaker does not commit herself to performing some future *action*. The purpose of undertaking an act of distancing, its illocutionary point, is to pledge one's allegiance to a non-target group (in other words, "us") and to withhold allegiance, or dis-align, from the target group. To pledge allegiance to a group is to promise to support that group. In effect, then, what the slur-user says is "I am with you and with not with them". Consider this example: a straight man's application of the f-word for gay men to a gay man, as in 'That guy is a f-----.' In making this utterance, the speaker aligns himself with heterosexual men and dis-aligns himself from gay men.

If distancing is a matter of aligning oneself with a non-target group, why does distancing involve any reference to the *target* group at all? The answer is that the nature of the allegiance is such that it is categorical. The speaker cannot commit to both the target and the non-target group in question; she commits to *exclusively* the non-target group. Thus, in aligning oneself with a non-target group, the slur-user dis-aligns herself from the target group ("those other people" or "them").[25]

By "dis-alignment", I am not suggesting that the slur-user is dis-aligned from the target group in a sense more robust than that the speaker's loyalties are solely with a non-target group. I am not suggesting, for example, that the speaker is dis-aligned in the more robust sense that the slur-user is not only loyal to a non-target group but also pledges to work *against* the target group.

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[25] The fact that 'those people', a term indicating remoteness from the speaker, is considered a slur (Anderson & Lepore, 2013) is telling.

3.2 Distancing is an Act Sensitive to Speaker-Alignment

Moreover, distancing is a speaker-sensitive commissive: the speaker must possess a certain status for the slurring utterance to succeed. In this way, distancing is like the new doctor's recitation of the Hippocratic oath or the pact Buzz makes with his friend Woody to support him. In the case of distancing, the relevant extra-linguistic status is being sympathetic to, or supportive of, a non-target group.

A person's being supportive to a group is distinct from both her belonging to that group, and her being aligned with that group. For instance, a professor can support the ideology, and policies championed by, a student organization promoting charitable ventures. Yet, the professor does not (and cannot) belong to the students-only group. Now, alignment does not require that one belong to the group, but it does require one to support it. That is, alignment with a group presupposes group support, but not group-membership. We can imagine that our professor supports the charitable student organization *and* aligns herself with it. She would plausibly align herself with the group if she served as a faculty advisor for the group.

Now that we appreciate the distinctions among belonging to a group, being supportive of a group, and aligning oneself with a group, we should apply this distinction to examples pertinent to slurring utterances. Since the student organization in our example is analogous to the non-target group in a slurring utterance, these examples should be ones in which the relevant group is one for which there is a slur.

As in the student organization example, a member of a group for which we have a slur might be sympathetic to a non-target group. Some think that African-American Fox

News contributors, Diamond and Silk, are sympathetic to white people. They have maintained that African-Americans do not face discrimination and that, in fact, white people are the ones that are unfairly discriminated against. Their advocacy of "reverse racism" could plausibly be understood as support for whites.

Diamond and Silk, or people like them, might not pledge allegiance to whites. To my knowledge, neither Diamond nor Silk has done so. However, there have been members of groups targeted by slurs who have, plausibly, aligned themselves with a non-target group. For example, Otto Weiniger, a Jewish intellectual, proclaimed not only his support, but his alignment with, what he perceived as the naturally superior "Aryan race". Indeed, there were Jewish members of the National Socialist Party, and who even served Hitler. Jewish people's membership in this party, and support of Hitler, surely count as pledges of allegiance to a group to which they do not belong.

The speaker can indicate her alignment with a non-target group using "support indicators". A support indicator is some trait associated with endorsement of a group. Consider a case in which a white person addresses a Latinx person by the s-word for Latinx people. The speaker's simply being white is support indicator. The location of the utterance could also be a support indicator. The speaker's residence in an affluent suburban neighborhood with which Latinx people are regularly employed in menial positions could indicate support for whites. More overt indicators might be the way the hearer knows that the speaker treats her Latinx employees. Suppose that the speaker requires her employees to only use a back door or refuses to let them to eat or use the bathroom inside the house.

In the example that I mentioned, belonging to a non-target group is a support indicator. It is unusual for someone to fail to support the group to which they belong

(Brewer).[26] Yet, membership in a non-target group is still a *defeasible* indicator. People *typically* but do not always support the group to which they belong. Diamond and Silk and Otto Weiniger were examples.

With an idea of what a support indicator is, and their defeasibility, we should turn to a sketch of distancing. A full specification of the characteristics of distancing is given in the table below.

Distancing	
Essential Condition (Illocutionary Point)	1. Counts as an attempt by the speaker to align with (i.e. promise to support) a non-target group and withhold her alignment from the target group.
	2. For those acts of distancing in which the addressee is aligned with the target group to which she belongs (not another bigot), the hearer must *recognize* that the speaker is distancing.
	Note: The hearer need not *endorse* the speaker's view that she is aligned with the

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[26] In fact, there is a bias, "in-group favoritism", for people to favor the group to which they belong over others.

	social group to which the slur is applied— or that she belongs to another such group or that there even are such groups. If the speaker does endorse the speaker's view, this is a perlocutionary effect of distancing. The hearer must only recognize that the speaker perceptibly supports a non-target group.
Sincerity Condition	In making the utterance, the speaker intends to support a non-target group and to withhold her support from the target group.
Illocutionary Effect	In a use among bigots (in either the company of slur-targets or not), the speaker attempts to pledge her allegiance to, or support for, the non-target group. When the target of the slur is present (in either the company of other bigots or not), the speaker conveys to the target that she withholds allegiance from the slur target's group. A speaker can achieve both if she is in the company of both slur-targets and

	other bigots. Note that these groupings are not intended to be mutually exclusive.
Notable Perlocutionary Effects	Using a slur has, on many occasions, epistemic, emotional, and social effects—for the bigoted speaker, bigoted audience, and/or the target group speaker. In intra-bigot uses, using a slur it validates the bigoted beliefs of the speaker and her bigoted audience. Uses of slurs among bigots also facilitate group bonding and embolden their desires to advance the socio-political aims of the group. If the slur is uttered in the presence of (if not to) a target group member, that target group member might form beliefs about a profound distance between the group to which she belongs and the speaker's.

With this sketch of distancing, my general plan for the remainder of this paper is to show that we should accept that slurring utterances constitute acts of distancing by demonstrating that distancing best explains important features of slurring utterances. In the next section, in particular, I argue, as part of "the argument from speaker identity", that

slurring utterances are only felicitous if the speaker supports a non-target group. Later, I show that distancing, as a type of commissive, accounts, too, for data that show that slurring utterances are like promises. Distancing also makes comprehensible intra-bigot uses. In addition, as an act on which the speaker does not subjugate the target, or the target group, distancing will fit data that slurring utterances are not used to rank, contrary to what numerous speech act theorists of slurs contend.

4. Slurring Utterances are Speaker-Sensitive Acts: The Argument from Speaker Identity

The argument from speaker's identity can be expressed as follows. There is a correlation between the slurring speaker's support for a non-target group and our judgment of the slurring utterance as standardly used. The most powerful explanation for this pattern is that a standardly used slur constitutes an act of distancing.

The data in favor of the correlation claim is comprised of four distinct situations, Cases 1-4, in which a slurring utterance is made. The *only* element that varies among them is the speaker's allegiance with a non-target group. For Cases 1-4, the utterance is one containing the c-word for women. Since the slur is for women, they constitute the target group. Men are a non-target group.[27]

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[27] I refer to a target group in the singular for there are slur-users who either identify with a gender other than 'man' or 'woman' or lack any gender identification. I discuss cases in which the slur-user as belongs to the most typical non-target group for simplicity's sake.

Case 1: Student Project with Two Female Students

Consider Case 1, in which speaker and hearer are female students convening during class time for a group project based on a prior reading assignment. Suppose one student utters (1) to the other:

(1) C---, have you done the reading?

The female hearer is likely to interpret the speaker as using the slur in a metaphorical, ironic, sarcastic, or appropriated way—in short, in a way that is not the way slurs are paradigmatically or standardly used or what we can call a *non-standard* way.

Case 2: Mixed Gender Student Project

In Case 2, the speaker uses the same utterance used in Case 1, (1). The salient difference between Cases 1 and 2 is that the student speaker is a male classmate. In this case, the female hearer is not inclined to interpret his utterance as metaphorical, ironic, appropriated, or used in some other non-standard way. Rather, she interprets his utterance as used in the way slurs paradigmatically, or *standardly*, used.

Case 3: The Misogynistic Woman

For Case 3, as in Case 1, the interlocutors are two women. The speaker in this scenario is publicly known for her view of the superiority of men over women. Suppose, then, that the misogynistic woman makes a complaint about some nearby feminist activists, to the other, as expressed in (2):

(2) 'The c---s need to shut up!'

The female hearer is, most probably, not going to interpret the speaker's utterance as metaphorical, ironic, or appropriated—but as *standard* .

We should pause to recall the distinction between our interpretation of the utterance (here, as standard) and our possible psychological reaction to it (offense or lack of offense). In this case, since we recognize that the speaker is a member of the target-group, we may think that the speaker is self-loathing and may feel pity for her, rather than contempt or outrage at her using a slur for women standardly. In Case 3, as with any of these cases, our interpretation of how the slur is used is independent of our psychological reaction, whether that reaction is offense or lack of offense, pity, disdain for the speaker's bigotry, etc.

Case 4: The Feminist Man

Case 4 takes place at a feminist rally on International Women's Day. The speaker is a man. Indeed, he has in the past been a well-known advocate for women's rights, and a

vocal opponent of misogynistic men's rights group. This man's activism is known to all of the other rally participants. We can imagine that he says (3) to a woman rally participant, as he is holding a banner emblazoned with a feminist slogan:

(3) 'Us c---s are not going to shut up!'

The female hearer is inclined to interpret (3) as used in an unusual way, particularly as appropriated. That is, the speaker is disposed to interpret it as non-standard.

Cases 1-4 consist of a series of contexts in which a slurring utterance is used. The *only* feature that varies among them is the speaker's support, or lack of support, with a non-target group. Our judgments of which cases feature standard or non-standard uses of slurs is systematically sensitive to whether the speaker supports a non-target group or not, respectively.

On the distancing theory, we judge Cases 2 and 3 as standard because the speaker supports the non-target group and we know (implicitly or explicitly) that the speaker's support of a non-target group is needed for a slurring utterance to succeed as standardly used. In Case 2, the fact that the speaker is a man is (defeasible) evidence that he supports men, the group to which he belongs. As aforementioned, one's membership in a non-target group is often a support indicator, given that people often favor the groups to which they belong. The woman's public status as a misogynist in Case 3 is the strongest indicator of her support for men.

We interpret Cases 1 and 4 as non-standard, on the distancing view, because we know that the speaker must support a non-target-group for it to succeed as standard, and

the speaker in these cases lacks this status. The fact that the speaker in Case 1 belongs to the target group (she is a woman) is some evidence that she supports women. As for Case 4, the speaker's status as a public proponent of women's rights and opponent of men's rights, and to a lesser degree his presence at the rally and holding a banner with a feminist message, all indicate that he supports women. [28] The distancing theory predicts the interpretations given to Cases 1-4. If the speaker supports the non-target-group, the utterance is used standardly.

What other alternatives do we have to explain the cases? The most promising alternative is in terms of conversational implicature. Perhaps in each case the speaker implicates that her support lies either with the target group or a non-target group, depending on contextual details. In the next section, though, I argue that the distancing theory provides a better explanation than implicature.

5. An Alternative Explanation of the Hearer-Interpretation Data: Conversational Implicature

5.1 Conversational Implicature: Grice's Theory

On the Gricean picture of conversation, speakers are rational and cooperative. What it is for a speaker to be cooperative is for her to abide by various principles, or "maxims", that enable her hearers to interpret which proposition she intends to convey by making the

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[28] There is a common type of signal speakers use to indicate their allegiance to the target group. For example, having "friends" or "girlfriends" with from the target group.
Trump is an example. He has said that he "loves" and "cherishes" women—including his daughter and many of his female employees. (He has also made similar invocations as shields against charges of anti-Semitism: his son-in-law Jared Kushner and observant daughter Ivanka, both of whom are Orthodox Jews.) As Kate Manne (2017) points out, such "exceptions" are completely compatible with misogyny. I do not include references to such "defenses" since I take them to be patently unconvincingly.

utterance (1989). It is worth emphasizing that the hearer's primary task as interpreter is to work out which propositions the speaker *intends* to communicate by her utterance.

These maxims enable us to figure out, or "work out", what a speaker intends to convey. In some cases, the literal content of the sentence a speaker utters appears to flout one of these maxims. When this occurs, given that a speaker is rational and cooperative, when the literal content of the sentence a speaker utters appears to flout any of these maxims, the hearer should infer that what the speaker intends to convey differs from the uttered sentence's literal content (p. 30). Features of the context of utterance help us work out which proposition the speaker conveys.

One maxim, the maxim of manner, is to make one's conversational contribution as clear, brief and orderly as possible, and to avoid ambiguity (p. 27).

When a speaker conveys what she means by flouting a maxim, she is said to *implicate* it. [29] Here we will focus on conversational implicature. In conversationally implicating some proposition, the speaker can coherently (even if disingenuously) deny that he meant to convey the implicated proposition.

Let us consider a case in which a speaker flouts the conciseness component of the maxim of manner. Compare (4a) with (4b) (p. 37):

(4a) Miss X sang "Home Sweet Home"

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[29] Those times when a speaker appears to flout one of the maxims are not the only ones when the speaker implicates some proposition. However, I will be focusing on these types of implicatures in what follows.

(4b) Miss X produced a series of sounds that corresponded closely with the score
of "Home Sweet Home"

It is characteristic of a conversational implicature that it can be canceled, i.e. the speaker
can coherently (however, disingenuously) deny implicating it without contradicting
herself. In other words, the denial of the implicature is consistent with what the speaker
says. The speaker of (3b) can deny that she meant that the speaker sang poorly.

Conversationally implicated propositions are also supposed to be non-detachable
from the proposition the uttered sentence literally expresses. That is, for an utterance in
which a speaker implicates some proposition, it should make no difference whether you
substitute different words in that sentence: a speaker still is able to make the same
implication. An implicated proposition is detachable when substituting different language
prevents the speaker from implicating that proposition using that sentence. The idea is that
when an implication is detachable, this means that it is the meaning of the words that enable
the speaker to make some implication. Otherwise, as is the case with conversational
implicature, it is the context of utterance that enables the speaker to implicate.

How hearers ascertain the conversationally implicated content, namely, by
engaging in a certain inferential process, is distinctive to conversational implicature, too.
The central idea is that the hearer interprets the presumably rational and cooperative
speaker as implicating some proposition best explains why the speaker flouted the maxim.

A traditional Gricean conception of conversational implicature leaves open some
important details in a theory of what a speaker does in making a slurring utterance. For
example, which maxim does a slurring speaker violate? What proposition does she

implicate? In the next section, I consider the strongest version of an application of conversational implicature theory to explain what a speaker does in using a slur.

5.2 Conversational Implicature Theory Applied to Slurring Utterances

On a conversational implicature theory, in using a slur, a speaker conversationally implicates that she aligns herself with the group we associated with using the slur (racists, sexists, homophobes, etc.). In keeping with Grice's classic theory, the speaker implicates a proposition. The particular proposition she implicates, in which NTG refers to the non-target group, is "I am aligned with NTG".[30] For example, when a speaker uses the c-word for women, the speaker conversationally implicates that he or she is aligned with men, those who are associated with using that slur.

Which maxim does the speaker flout? I will take up Nunberg's suggestion that the slurring speaker flouts the maxim of *manner.*[31]

Notice that the maxim of manner, as Grice understands it, will not work. Ways to flout the traditional Gricean maxim of manner include being wordy, ambiguous, disorderly, or obscure. A slurring speaker clearly does not do anything of these things, so she does not flout the maxim of manner as Grice conceived of it.

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[30] Selecting the language "non-target group" over "the group who uses the slur" has consequences for most charitably characterizing a view I present below, the application of conversational implicature to slurring utterances. The latter locution, "the group who uses the slur", leaves open the possibility that there is no distinction between the group who uses the slur and the target group—and surely, there is such a distinction. The rival view I present below should be characterized in such a way as to preclude potential objection on this ambiguity in speech.

[31] I do not argue directly against Nunberg's theory for in many respects it is untenable. For one, his theory cannot be one of conversational implicature for he holds that a speaker does not implicate a proposition. (He makes it clear that he is, in his own words, not a "semanticist"). This is also suggested by the fact that in making the implicature one does in uttering the slur, Nunberg maintains that the speaker "evokes or impersonates", which are *doings*, a member of a particular bigoted linguistic community rather than *saying* or meaning something.

Therefore, if we are going to claim that the slurring speaker flouts the maxim of manner, we need to understand it in a different way. Nunberg relies on Levinson's more general characterization of the principle: "what isn't said normally is abnormal". On the basis of Levinson's more general characterization of the maxim of manner, Nunberg extends the maxim to include word choices. The selection of some words is somehow unusual or *marked*. A slur, then, is a type of marked word. So, when one uses a slur, a marked word, one violates (this expansive characterization of) the maxim of manner. The idea is that the speaker's choice of a marked word indicates that she intends to convey something special.

In order for the maxim of manner to encompass diction, there are two important theoretical, complementary components Nunberg introduces. One is the notion that a term "belongs" to a particular linguistic community. A slur, in particular, is the property of a certain bigoted linguistic community. By "belonging", Nunberg simply means that the word in question is most commonly associated with a certain community, whose members are thought to use the term (the medical community, bikers, "Valley Girls", etc.). In the case of an anti-Semitic slur, the linguistic community is anti-Semites, for women, misogynists, for gay people, homophobes and so on.

The other component is the *default convention* that you will select words that belong to your linguistic community. It should be clear that this is needed, for without a *default* convention, a word would not strike us as unusual (or marked) in a given context.

Nunberg gives the example of a dean that says to other academics, "If you don't publish, you *ain't* gonna get tenure". 'Ain't gonna', according to Nunberg, is language that does not belong to a middle-class, academic linguistic community. The default convention

in that community is, presumably, 'isn't going to'. Rather, 'ain't' belongs to blue-collar "regular Joes". 'Ain't' is the default convention in conversations among those belonging to that American, blue-collar linguistic community. Thus, when the dean uses 'ain't" he speaks as a member of an American working class community. In the case of slurs, when someone uses a particular slur she speaks as a member of the bigoted community that uses that slur.

5.3 Applying Conversational Implicature Theory to the Cases

How can a Nunberg-inspired conversational implicature theory account for the data in Cases 1-4?

Recall that on the distancing theory, we interpret Cases 2 and 3 as standard because we know (implicitly or explicitly) that standardly using a slur is only felicitous if the speaker supports a non-target group. We judge 1 and 4 as non-standard because the speaker lacks support for a non-target group.

In contrast, on the conversational implicature theory, we judge Cases 2 and 3 as standard because we work out that the speaker intends to convey the proposition that he or she supports a non-target group. We are supposed to work this out by the following procedure. We assume that the speaker is rational and cooperative, notice that she appears to flout a maxim, and then infer that the best explanation for she why she did so is that she meant to implicate something other than the proposition expressed by the sentence she utters.

As for Cases 1 and 4, we do not discern that the speaker intends to implicate this proposition (or any proposition). The speaker's support, or lack of support, for a non-target group is the contextual feature that enables the hearer to determine that the speaker implicates, "I am aligned with NTG".

The conversational implicature theory cannot be correct. On the conversational implicature theory, the hearer is supposed to be working out what *the speaker intends* to convey. However, a hearer can interpret a speaker as using a slur in the paradigmatic way even when the hearer knows that the speaker does not intend to use the slur paradigmatically. The fact that this is possible shows that determining how a speaker uses a slur is not a matter of discerning the speaker's intentions in making the slurring utterance.[32] Therefore, what a slur-user does in using a slur in the paradigmatic way is not conversational implication.

We should now see the evidence for the conclusion: a scenario in which the hearer interprets a speaker as using a slur in the paradigmatic way even when the hearer knows that the speaker does not intend to use the slur paradigmatically. Let us consider one of the cases, but this time considering the way that the speaker intends to use the slur. Suppose that in Case 2 the female classmate knows that the speaker of Case 2 intends to use his utterance in one of the ways that we called non-standard: in an appropriated way, to bond with his female classmate. Imagine, moreover, that the female classmate knows the speaker's rationale for using the slur to bond with her. His rationale is that because it is permissible for women to use slurs for women to bond with each other, that he, too should be able to use the slur to bond with women. We can imagine that he said to her on a prior

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[32] On the conversational implicature view, the hearer is supposed to actually work out the *proposition* the speaker intends to convey. I elide this subtlety in what follows for ease of exposition.

occasion, to invoke a rhetorical justification of an all-too-familiar form, 'Women call each other c---s and don't use it standardly, so why can't I do that, too?' Yet, despite the fact that the female classmate knows that the speaker is using the slur to bond with her, she is likely not to interpret his utterance as used in that way, or indeed, in a metaphorical, ironic, or sarcastic manner. She is disposed to interpret it as a paradigmatic use.

Alternatively, consider Case 3, the case of the misogynistic woman. Let us suppose that the hearer knows that the female speaker intends to use the slur to bond with her and believes that she is entitled to do so because she is a woman. As in the modified Case 2 scenario above, the hearer in Case 3 most probably does not interpret the woman's utterance as an attempt to bond with her—or as a metaphorical, ironic, or sarcastic use. The hearer plausibly interprets the misogynistic woman's slurring utterance as a paradigmatic use, notwithstanding her knowledge of the speaker's intentions.

The distancing theory also gives us the most compact and efficient explanation for why we judge Cases 1 and 4 as non-standard. The utterances featured in these cases are acts of distancing, and a preparatory, or necessary, condition for a slurring utterance's constituting an act of distancing is that the speaker must support a non-target group. This is a condition that a distancing act must satisfy irrespective of the context of utterance. Someone lacking support for a non-target group cannot use a slur standardly, so the slurring utterances in cases like 1 and 4 fail to be paradigmatic uses.

The conversational implicature explanation is less efficient. On the conversational implicature theory, whether a speaker implicates is based on features of the specific context of utterance. This is opposed to a context-independent rule a hearer uses like on the distancing theory. For this reason, the conversational implicature theorist cannot explain

the pattern of interpretation in Cases 1-4 by a principle specifying that only speakers that support a non-target group can successfully use slurs in the paradigmatic way. Each of the interpretations we assign to each of the cases gets an individualized explanation (namely, based on the speaker's identity in the context of utterance), rather than each interpretation being explained by a general principle that treats each case as an instance of the same, more general phenomenon.

Given the considerations I have given above, we should reject a conversational implicature analysis of what a slur-user does and accept that slurring utterances constitute acts of distancing.

6. The Argument from Intra-Bigot Uses

My chief aim in section §6 is to show that distancing most effectively accounts for another feature of slurring utterances, namely, their use in intra-bigot contexts. "Intra-bigot uses", as I am using the term here, are ones in which the audience comprises exclusively other members of the slur-user's non-target group. The use of the n-word among exclusively white supremacists, say, at a Ku Klux Klan meeting, would be an intra-bigot use of the slur.

Many theorists of slurs focus on weapon uses of slurs: offensive uses of slurs addressed to the target. Unsurprisingly, on such theories, the weapon use of a slur is the *primary* use of a slur.

Adherents of the weaker, "primary use" use view include, but are not limited to, Richard (2008, p.12), Jeshion (2013), Popa-Wyatt & Wyatt (2018), and Kukla (2018). "The

use of racial and ethnic slurs as well as other words are considered, whose *primary* purpose seems to be to hurt, to menace, to subjugate" (Richard, 2008, p. 12, my emphasis). Jeshion (2013) holds that a speaker uses a slur to express contempt towards the slur-target in virtue of the group to which the target belongs, as well as essentializes and dehumanizes the target. For Popa-Wyatt & Wyatt, using a slur is an act whereby the speaker, a member of the more powerful group external to the conversation, asserts dominance over a lower-status (what I would call a target-group member) interlocutor within the conversation. For Kukla (2012), the purpose of a slur is to call out and insult the slur-target. *Even* in contexts in which the audience comprises bigots, a slur-user "counterfactually" insults the target-group. This is also true of Anderson's view (2018), on which a slur-user calls out to a target. Examples could easily be multiplied. Yet, intra-bigot uses are no less representative of slurring utterances. A theory of what a speaker does in using a slur should be as well able to explain both weapon and intra-bigot uses.

What I aim to show in the remainder of this section is that theories that characterize the weapon use as the primary function of a slur, like those mentioned above, are not well able to explain what a bigot does when she uses a slur among her bigoted peers. The distancing theory, in contrast, gives us a compelling explanation of what a slur-user does.

The distinctive act that a speaker performs in using a slur standardly is performed on every occasion of it use, irrespective of her audience. Thus, any theory of the distinctive slurring act should be one that characterizes the act that a speaker plausibly performs on any occasion regardless of the composition of the audience.

Intra-bigot uses are, by definition, not made in the presence of those to whom the slur is applied but are uttered only in the company of other bigots. Since the slurring

utterance is uttered to only other bigots, intra-bigot uses of slurs must not function in a way that clearly requires the presence of targets, whether as addressees, contra Kukla and Anderson, or as interlocutors, as opposed to what Popa-Wyatt & Wyatt maintain.

Intra-bigot uses also do not plausibly function to do something that *reasonably* requires the presence of a target, such as to insult, belittle, disparage, display contempt towards, or dehumanize the target. These are all ways of somehow hurting the target. It is plausible that in order to succeed in doing any one of these actions that the target needs to recognize that the act functions in that way—and that recognition requires the presence of a target. Even if one thinks that an act of insulting still meets the conditions for success if it is not made in the presence of a target, it ought to be agreed that an insult is, in some way, *more* (even *fully*) successful when it is made in front of a target. When the target hears the insult, recognizes it as an insult, and herself as the one insulted, that insult succeeds in a way that it does not when it is not made in the presence of the target. The more plausible explanation for how intra-bigot uses function is as acts of distancing, whereby the speaker makes a promise to a non-target group and refuses to commit herself to the target-group. An act of distancing could be perfectly successful with *or* without the presence of the target.

Furthermore, the distancing account has a methodological advantage over its competitors: it is the simplest. In distancing, each slurring utterance is one whereby the speaker aligns herself with a non-target group and refuses to dis-align from the target group, *irrespective* of audience. There is no need to give an alternative explanation for what the speaker does when she addresses other bigots as opposed to slur-targets.

I have argued that there has an undue emphasis on weapon uses, at the expense of intra-bigot uses, in theories of what a slur-user in uttering a slur. It is just as important to

account for intra-bigot uses of slurs as it is for weapon uses. I have also shown that the distancing theory gives the better explanation of what a slur-user does in an intra-bigot context.

7. Slurring Utterances are Commissives

7.1 The Argument from Insincerity

In the previous section, I argued that distancing best explained what a slur-user does when she uses a slur among exclusively other bigots. Now, my next argument for the claim that slurring utterances constitute acts of distancing, in this section centers on the commissive aspect of distancing (distancing acts are *promises*), and the particular form that commissive takes (distancing acts are promises *made to the non-target group*). The crucial observation is that the speaker *commits* herself to a *non-target group*. We can call it "the argument from insincerity".

Let me outline the argument first, and then I will proceed to explain each of its important components. The data for the argument consists of two cases, which we can call Case 5 and Case 6. In each, an utterance is made at t_0 that we judge to not be used metaphorically, ironically, or sarcastically, but in the way slurs are paradigmatically slurs used. Then at a later time, t_1, suppose that we learn that the speaker was, at the same time he or she made the utterance, engaged in a project contrary to the non-target-group's interests and, in fact, in the interests of the target-group. In light of what we learn about the speaker, we judge the speaker's standard use of a slur as insincere. By "insincere", I simply

mean that the speaker did not, at the time that she made the promise, intend to commit herself to the non-target group. On this basis, we should infer that slurring utterances constitute acts of distancing.

Consider an application of it to the Hippocratic oath commissive mentioned earlier. When the medical doctor recites the Hippocratic oath, she promises not to do any harm. In the absence of any evidence to doubt her motives, we judge the new doctor's utterance as a genuine promise not to do harm. Suppose that we learn that the new doctor had, since the most nascent stages of her medical training, a heinous plan to kill as many patients as she possibly could upon becoming a doctor. The existence of the plan since the beginning and during the doctor's medical education is reason to think that she still held it as she recited the oath. Once we discover the new doctor's sinister motive, we are inclined to judge her profession to refrain from rendering harm as insincere—just as I am arguing that we do in the two new cases.

In the case of distancing, the commitment one makes is not to any specific action, but to the *group*, which makes it unlike the doctor's recitation of the oath. A commitment to a group is not reducible to any set of actions. Groups have certain social and political interests, which that would benefit or advance the standing of that group. We can use an idealization of these interests, namely, that obtaining them occurs in a "zero-sum" situation, to bring out most starkly what support for a group at the expense of another would look like.[33] For example, black people (justifiably) claim that they face discrimination in college admissions. There are only so many spots in incoming college classes. Those who use slurs

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[33] It is worth pointing out that many racists, those who would be disposed to use slurs, tend to think of the struggle among salient groups for goods and opportunities as zero-sum. Of course, I am not suggesting that they are correct, or that the narrative they endorse of a struggle among the salient groups is appropriate.

for black people, racists, think that a college admissions affirmative action policy would be in the interests of black people, but not white people. This should make sense: after all, racists are typically not in favor of policies correcting for what anti-racists (correctly) consider current and past wrongs. Thus, according to racists, if someone supports this affirmative action policy, she acts in favor of the interests of black people and not white people.

Observe that I am not implying that supporting affirmative action is the *only* way to support a group—or even, for any particular case, that we ought to support some affirmative action policy. I consider support for affirmative action policies because that is it is, on the racist point of view, a criterion for determining which group one supports *and* opposes. Supporting affirmative action, racists believe, means supporting one group at the expense of another.

Let us, now consider the two new cases, Cases 5 and 6.

Case 5: The Female FBI Agent

Imagine that there a woman employed at the hate crime investigation branch of the Federal Bureau of Investigation was chosen to participate in a clandestine operation against a militant, misogynistic group. This group sees itself as representing the interests of all men, in particular, working for men's "liberation". This group has perpetuated violent, criminal acts in order to further its goal of male liberation. In order to infiltrate (and eventually expose the group for its wrong-doings), the woman must pose as a man interested in joining the group. Suppose that she calls the group's president expressing her

interest, in which she is careful to present herself as another misogynist. She even uses (3), which I have reproduced below, in the conversation, in reference to feminists:

(3) 'The c---s need to shut up!'

From the perspective of the misogynistic group president, he is unlikely to interpret (3) as used in an unusual way, as metaphorical, ironic, sarcastic, or appropriated, but as used in the paradigmatic, standard way in which slurs are used.

Now, imagine that the group president learns that the woman is an FBI agent. Upon learning this, the president interprets (3), which he originally interpreted as a paradigmatic, standard use of a slur, as insincere.

Case 6: The Male FBI Agent

In contrast with Case 5, Case 6 is about a male FBI agent, who is infiltrating the same militant, misogynistic liberation group in order to collect evidence about their crimes. This agent works as part of a covert operations unit that investigates militant hate groups.

As in Case 5, part of his assignment is to pose as someone interested in joining the group. In the middle of lunch with a female friend, who is unaware of that her friend works as an FBI agent (let alone the particulars of his current assignment), the agent left to make a call to the misogynistic group's president. The male FBI agent wanted to be as convincing as possible, so in his call, he uttered (3). The agent's friend overheard the call. From her

perspective, she is unlikely to interpret the agent's slurring utterance as used in any atypical way, but as a standard use of the slur.

Once the relevant members of the militant group are publicly tried and convicted for their crimes, the identity of the agent that was instrumental in collecting crucial evidence is publicly revealed. When the agent's allegiance with the FBI is disclosed, the agent's female friend interprets (3), which she had earlier interpreted as standardly used, as insincere.

In Cases 5 and 6, when the hearer first heard (3), she judged that the speaker was not sincere in using (3) in the way slurs paradigmatically or standardly are used. Yet, once she discovers that the slur-user's role subverting the misogynistic group, the hearer thinks that the hearer was insincere in using (3) in the paradigmatic, standard way.

The distancing theory is well equipped to explain these judgments of insincerity, and particularly, in virtue of its commissive aspect. In Case 5, according to the distancing theory, the president interpreted (3) as not used in any unusual way but as standardly used prior to learning about the speaker's involvement with the FBI as part of a plan to expose and prosecute the pro-men, misogynistic group. The president interpreted the female agent's utterance as a *promise*, or a pledge of allegiance, to men (the non-target group) and as a refusal to align with women (the target-group). The same holds for the female friend in Case 6: she interpreted the male agent's utterance as a pledge of allegiance to men and a refusal to align with women.

Thus, when the president and the female friend learn of the speaker's work for the FBI—a group that is not aligned with men like the pro-men, liberation group is—the hearers judged the speakers of (3) in Cases 5 and 6 as insincere in making the promise they

made in uttering (3). That is, in each case, the hearer judged the speaker as clearly lacking

any intention to carry out his or her promise to the non-target group at the time the promise

was made. In this way, the FBI agent in either case violated his or her promise in the way

that the murderous doctor violated the sincerity condition on reciting the Hippocratic oath.

7.2 The Commissive Aspect of Slurring Utterances and Camp's Theory

I take the argument from insincerity to further bolster my claim that the distinctive

act a slur-user undertakes is a commissive. One other theorist, Elisabeth Camp in her

(2013), has also characterized the slur-user's disrespectful act in language that suggests

that it is a commissive, as an act whereby the speaker indicates her "allegiance" to a

distancing and derogating perspective on, or a way of thinking about feeling about, the

target-group.[34] Briefly, this perspective is one in which the target-group is essentialized as

one homogenous entity, and presented in a derogatory "light".

I am not entirely sure what it is to pledge allegiance to a perspective. Another

question is what the exact nature of this pledge is. Is the commitment one undertakes in

pledging allegiance to a perspective like the epistemic commitment one undertakes in

making an assertion, namely, to say what one believes? Camp (2017) makes explicit that

the perspective can be articulated propositionally, but that it can*not* be reduced to a series

of propositions. Thus, an analysis of pledging allegiance to a perspective as committing

oneself in the sense of believing the propositional articulation of one's perspective is

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[34] In Camp's language, this is the "non-truth-conditional" act since, for her, a slurring utterance constitutes two acts. One is the imputation of the property a slur expresses to the slur target. The other act, which involves a perspective, is the act that accounts for the objectionableness of a slurring utterance.

incorrect. Perhaps pledging allegiance to a perspective is like committing oneself to the appropriateness of experiencing some emotion. Yet, again, one can make the same reply to a propositional reduction: perspectives cannot be reduced to emotions.

In any case, pledging allegiance to a perspective is not making a promise in the same sense that one does in distancing, that Buzz does in pledging his support for Woody, or that the doctor does in avowing to do no harm. In other words, despite the commissive-suggesting language Camp uses, a slur-user does not "pledge allegiance" on her view in the same sense one does in undertaking a commissive. [35] This is because pledging allegiance to a perspective is not pledging allegiance to an action, much less to a group with various social and political interests as one does in distancing. Given that pledging allegiance is not meant in the sense of making a promise, it is unclear how, on this analysis of a slurring utterance, one is to explain the judgments of insincerity given to (3) in Cases 5 and 6.

Despite the lack of clarity in how to construct an explanation of a perspectival explanation, there is reason to doubt that a perspectival account can explain the insincerity judgments that is not based on any particular characterization of a perspectival explanation. It is this: there is no feature of perspectives that encodes or expresses the speaker's *group allegiance* and group allegiance was the basis for the hearers' judgments. The speaker was working for the FBI hate crimes unit. The interests of the FBI hate crimes unit are opposed to the misogynistic group, which takes itself to represent the interests of the target group. From the perspective of the hearer in either case, the speaker was working for a group

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[35] Indeed, the language she uses to describe the perspectival act in her (2018) is decidedly less like a commissive. In that work, she describes the perspectival act as one whereby the speaker "indicates the appropriateness of a distancing and derogating perspective" on the target group.

whose interests opposed the non-target group's interests. The hearer did not make this judgment based on anything he or she learned about the speaker's perspective on the target-group—or even the feelings and beliefs she has about the group.

8. Against Other Speech Act Theories

Many theorists take slurring utterances to be acts whereby the speaker "ranks" the target as inferior (Langton, 2009). I argue in this section that ranking is implausible as a theory of the distinctive act a slur-user performs for it does not account for slurring utterances containing slurs for dominant groups and slurs for target-group members that align themselves with a non-target group. Ranking also does not account for an intuitive difference between what slur-users do and what the speaker of a paradigmatic ranking act does.

Many theorists claim that the slur-user, in particular, ranks, or places the target in an inferior position relative to the speaker, or the speaker's group. An extension of Langton's (2009) view on pornography to slurring utterances, McGowan (2012), Popa-Wyatt (2017), and Kukla (2018) are all versions of a view on which slurring utterances rank.[36]

We should first appreciate that one can *simultaneously* hold that some slurring utterances act both rank and distance. To indicate that one's target belongs to an out-group, or is not "one of us" but "one of them", as the distancing speaker does, is compatible with

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[36] McGowan's theory is actually about hate speech generally, but for our purposes, we can (I think judiciously) still refer to her as a theorist of slurring utterances for slurring speech is a type of such speech—as she makes clear in her writing on the subject.

also indicating that the target is inferior. In fact, it is plausible that many slurring utterances rank, but not all slurring utterances are acts of ranking—let alone that ranking characterizes the distinctive act a slurring utterance constitutes.

There are multiple reasons, though, to think that distancing—not ranking—best characterizes the distinctive act a speaker undertakes when she utters a slur. This is because there are certain types of slurring utterance that do not plausibly rank. These types of slurring utterances do not rank because the slur used does not apply to a subjugated group.

Firstly, there are slurs for the *dominant* groups in society. For example, there are slurs for the privileged racial group, white people, such as 'honky'. There are also slurs for heterosexual people, who are powerful relative to those in the LGBTQ community, such as 'breeders'. Some slurs are also applied to the rich such as 'the one percent'. An utterance in which the speaker predicates 'honky' of a white person, 'breeder' of a straight person, or 'one percent' of an affluent individual, is not ranking the person in any of these groups as inferior. Each of them already has a privileged role in society relative to the oppressed socially salient group (non-whites, LGBTQ people, people that are not wealthy).

A related family of slurs is for people applied to those who are not privileged role in some respect but *are* privileged in another—and in the respect relative to those who frequently use them. 'White feminist' and 'Becky' are two terms black women use to refer to white women. Despite their avowed stance against all women's oppression, 'white feminists' are blind to their own racial privilege. A 'Becky' is a middle-class to upper class white woman who garners special privileges, particularly attention from men, because of her race and class.

Secondly, there are slurs that people apply to other group-members—and not because those target group members are inferior. The type of slurs I have in mind, call them "traitor slurs", are those people apply to other who have shifted their allegiances to the more socially dominant group.

There are numerous examples of these. Some Asian people call other Asian people who have adopted aspects of the culture associated with white people (behavior, language, clothing, etc.) 'bananas' or 'eggs' by other Asians. The idea is that they are 'yellow' "on the outside" and whites "on the inside". Some black people refer to other blacks who "act white" as 'Oreos' or 'coons'. Some Latinx people apply the term 'coconut' to other Latinx persons that adopt features of the white, mainstream culture.

Slurring utterances containing traitor slurs evince that slurring utterances are not subordinating, which is reason to accept the rival distancing theory. Yet, traitor slurs also provide *positive* support for my claim that slurring utterances distance. For an utterance to distance, the hearer must perceive the speaker to support a non-target group, and traitor slurs are most clearly applied to someone in virtue of her *group-allegiance*. The cogency of the traitor slur presupposes a central distinction in my theory: the distinctions between membership in the target group and alliance with it.

Lastly, the distancing theory also explains another datum. Intuitively, the slur-user does something different in kind from what the speaker of an act of ranking does. The paradigmatic act of ranking is an utterance whereby the speaker predicates what we can call a hierarchical pejorative of her target. A hierarchical pejorative is one whose applicant is an "inferior" in some pecking order. One common type of hierarchical pejorative is based on class or occupation. Examples include 'peasant stock', 'riffraff', 'rabble', 'undesirables,

'drudge', 'skivvy', 'undesirables', 'dregs of society', 'canaille', 'the underclass', 'the masses', 'the rank and file', 'the hoi polloi', 'the unwashed', 'the plebs' and the German 'Gästarbeiter' ('guest worker'). My point is that when someone does when she engages in a paradigmatic act of ranking by predicating some hierarchical pejorative, like one of the terms listed above, she intuitively does something different from what the slur-user does.

We have been given a number of reasons for why the distinctive act a speaker undertakes in using a slur in the paradigmatic way is not to rank. If a slur-user ranked her target as inferior, we would be unable to explain utterances containing slurs for those that belong to dominant groups or target group members that are perceived to have betrayed the group to which they belong. There is also an intuitive difference between what a speaker does in undertaking a paradigmatic act of ranking and predicating a slur of someone.

9. In Summary

We have seen that slurring utterances have a number of distinctive features, all of which are most effectively accounted for on the distancing theory. Firstly, we interpret slurring utterances as standardly used when a non-target group member is the speaker. On the distancing theory, this is because the felicity of a standardly used slur is sensitive to the speaker's non-target group allegiance. Secondly, we judge a standard slurring utterance as insincere if the speaker is, at the time she utters a slur, advancing the interests of the target group at the expense of the non-target group. We make these judgments, according to the distancing theory, because slurring speakers pledge their allegiance to a non-target group, and refuse to align themselves from the target group. Uses of slurs exclusively confined to

bigots are perfectly comprehensible on the distancing theory. The speaker who slurs in the presence of only other bigots aligns herself with those bigots.

The fact that other speech act theorists of slurs omit this promise-making aspect of slurring utterances makes them unable to explain the insincerity data. I show how ranking speech act theories of slurring utterances failed to accommodate the full range of slurring utterances. A speaker of a slur for a dominant group, or a target group member speaker of a "traitor" slur, does not seek to rank the referent of the slur as inferior.

Chapter IV. Synecdochical Utterances Targeting Women: Indirect, Indeterminate, and Insidious

1. Synecdochical Utterances Targeting Women

In a 1991 interview with *Esquire*, Donald Trump said of his daughter, Ivanka: 'She's a piece of ass' (Rappeport, 2017). Call this utterance (1). By a "synecdochical" utterance, I mean one in which the speaker predicates a part term of the whole. Synecdochical utterances targeting *women* (henceforth, SUTWs) are ones in which the "whole" is a woman, the "part" a bodily part, and in which that part is one associated with female bodies.[37]

The SUTW speaker clearly does something disrespectful. My central question in this paper is this: how do we characterize the disrespectful act the SUTW speaker undertakes?

In order to ascertain an answer to this question, we should take into consideration some data regarding SUTWs. One is that the speaker cannot claim that he *merely* conveyed 'she's a piece of ass', which is clearly false, on pain of failing to be a cooperative conversational participant. Secondly, the SUTW speaker chooses to predicate a part term of the woman, as opposed to similar language. When some hearers engage with the SUTW, they experience certain psychological effects, most commonly offense, but also the felt sense that the target has been reduced. Another datum is "plausible deniability", the

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[37] These are not the only conditions for an utterance to be a SUTW. As I will elaborate below, the utterance must be used in a genuinely synecdochical way.

speaker's ability to deny *any* particular propositional explication of the significance of her utterance.

The best answer to my central question, based on this data, is as follows. The speaker engages in an act in which she conveys disrespect towards the woman. The SUTW speaker conveys disrespect because she conveys some disrespectful content. In particular, I argue that the speaker conversationally implicates some indeterminate set of disrespectful propositions.

The indeterminacy of the propositions a speaker conveys raises an additional question: how does a hearer generate these disrespectful propositions? Answering this second question requires us to take into account another datum, which is the fact that the speaker also activates, as a causal effect of her utterance, a disposition to entertain a certain way of thinking and feeling about the target woman in a disrespectful way in Elisabeth Camp's sense (e.g. 2013, 2017, 2018, etc.), on the female subject.[38] Aside from being a causal effect of the SUTW, the perspective enables the hearer to work out the disrespectful propositions the speaker conveys**.**

Understanding what a speaker does in uttering an SUTW is significant for philosophy of language and feminist theory. We can address the former first. There is presently a paucity of philosophical theories on synecdoche. Indeed, there are no theories in the philosophy of language on whether a synecdochical speaker conveys any content in making her utterance, and if so, what this content is like, and how the speaker conveys this content. My theory of SUTWs is a step towards such a general theory.

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[38] Camp does not hold that a hearer *entertains* a perspective, but the stronger view that the hearer actually *takes on* the perspective. The weaker view is mine, which I defend in §5.

My theory is also pertinent for objectification theory. Both Martha Nussbaum (1995) and Sandra Bartky (1982, p. 129-30) are among those that note the relationship between the fragmentation of one's body into its constituent bodily parts and objectification. The existence of SUTWs, shows that one form objectification, or fragmentation, can take is linguistic.

My first task is to further elaborate on what a SUTW is more specifically (§2). I then focus on the features of SUTWs to be explained (§3). Then, I provide reasons for accepting that the significance of the SUTW is propositional (§4). This brings us to the question to of how a hearer is able to generate the disrespectful propositions associated with a SUTW. In §5, I consider a plausible way the hearer is able to do this, namely, by entertaining a perspective in Camp's sense. Then, in §6, I address the relationship between the propositions the speaker conveys and synecdochical utterances. I argue against an extension of Camp's theory of metaphor that the content of a synecdochical utterance is presented with primary illocutionary force, rather than being conversationally implicated. Next, in §7, I turn to the relationship between the synecdochical utterance and deploying a perspective. I hold that deploying a perspective is both an effect caused by understanding an utterance and determines the significance of the SUTW, as Camp does. For me, though, perspective-taking plays no other substantive role. I argue against Camp that there are reasons to think that the speaker does not pragmatically presuppose the perspective.

This takes us to my theory's practical implications, if the significance of SUTWs is disrespectful to women, then we have identified one important source of disrespect. Given that women comprise a group that already systematically faces disrespect in society, identifying a driving force of this sexist phenomenon is all the more important for

ameliorating women's societal position. This is especially important when the speaker is someone whose power enables him to influence societal attitudes towards women, like Trump.

2. What Are Synecdochical Utterances Targeting Women?

We can call Trump's utterance above, (1). Utterance (2), which is taken from a blog post, is another instance of a SUTW.

(2) She's a pair of legs ("Gaitana").[39]

Utterance (3) was commonly heard on social media, especially Twitter, during the 2016 American presidential campaign.

(3) 'Hilary is a cunt'.

Note that from now on, the part term mentioned in (3) will be referred to as the c-word, except for when it appears in targets' testimonials.

We should now identify those aspects of SUTWs that make them SUTWs. Firstly, SUTWs typically exemplify some variant of a simple, *characteristic* grammatical form:

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[39] The original quote is, in reference to a Eurovision star named Gaitana, "*Gaitana* is a lot more than a pair of boobs. *She's a pair of legs*, too!" Of course, this (pretense of) deniability leaves intact some problematic presuppositions, like that she is most important for the relevant bodily parts.

'pair of legs' is in the predicate position, and 'she', the term used to refer to the woman, is in the subject position.[40]

In contrast, (4), taken from a ZZ Topp song, lacks the characteristic synecdochical form.

(4) She's got legs (ZZ Top, 1983).

The speaker of (4) does not say that the woman "is" a pair of legs, but that she "got" or possesses legs.

To be an SUTW, the part term must also be used in a way that is genuinely synecdochical. In a "genuinely synecdochical" utterance, the speaker asserts the proposition literally expressed by the SUTW sentence. Most importantly, the bodily term must express the sense of the relevant bodily part. I'll use braces to mark the sense of the term in what follows. In (1) 'piece of ass' expresses {piece of buttocks}, the posterior of the pelvic area. For (2), the sense of 'pair of legs' expresses is {pair of legs}, the limbs people use to walk.

For this reason, SUTWs like (3) differ from predications of part terms to women that are used in other ways like as all-purpose put-downs. The predication of the c-word to the subject in 'That guy is a [c-word]!', as uttered by a driver that has been cut off by the referent of the c-word, functions as an all-purpose insult. When it is used as an all-purpose insult, the c-word does not express the same sense as that expressed by 'vagina'. The same

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[40] I say "characteristic" since there are other forms SUTWs can take, as in, for example, 'She and her legs: they're one and the same'. Nonetheless, the form is useful as a diagnostic since, in my experience, it is the most common one a SUTW takes.

is true for when the c-word is used in an amiable manner, as it is popularly used among British, particularly Scottish, men.

Apart from being genuinely synecdochical, there is another condition for an utterance to be a SUTW: a constraint on the type of bodily part. The part must be characteristic of *female bodies.*[41]

The condition that the part should be characteristic of female bodies does not imply that the part is *unique* to women. The predication of 'pair of legs' to a woman is a SUTW—but men have legs, too. It also does not imply that every bodily part that a woman has qualifies as the right sort of part. Earlobes, for example, are not distinctive of women so predicating 'ear lobes' of a woman (suppose one known for her appearances in earring advertisements), as the speaker of (5) does, is not undertaking a SUTW.

(5) She's a pair of earlobes.

One type of body part that springs to mind when we think of those characteristic of female bodies are primary sexual characteristics or those directly involved in reproduction and child bearing, like a uterus.[42] The SUTW (6) is an example.

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[41] Notice that I say "female" instead of women's bodies. "Female" names a sex, whereas "women" names a group of people belonging to a gender. Bodies are "female" by virtue of biological features such as hormones, chromosomes, and *anatomical parts*, whereas gender is social or cultural in nature (see, e.g. Haslanger 2012).

[42] The 2016 U.S. presidential campaign was one such occasion in which speaking of women in terms of being a 'uterus' or 'womb' became popular. At a rally for candidate Bernie Sanders, rapper Mike, infamously said of Hilary Clinton. 'A uterus doesn't qualify you to be president'. Others, like director, actress, and self-proclaimed feminist Lena Dunham, said that she wouldn't "follow her uterus" to the polls, i.e. vote for Clinton. The problematic implications those like Killer Mike and Dunham make are highly objectionable. Arguably, they implicate some of the same propositions SUTW speakers do.

(6) You [to a woman] are only a uterus (Eichler).[43]

Secondary sexual characteristics like breasts, waists, or bottoms are also often predicated of women—as we see in (1).

The kind of bodily parts that figure in SUTWs, those characteristic of women, are not limited to primary and secondary sexual characteristics. SUTWs can include 'skin' (Bartky) and even mass nouns like 'flesh' or 'fat'.

A SUTW, then, is an utterances whose (i) subject is a woman, (ii) in which the bodily part predicated of the subject is characteristic of female bodies, and (iii) is used in a genuinely synecdochical way, i.e. to predicate a part term of a woman in which that part term expresses the sense of the relevant bodily part.

Now that we have a clearer idea of what an SUTW is, we can turn to the data about SUTWs needing explanation.

The data is intended to show that the speaker performs an act *in addition* to the genuinely synecdochical one (§3.1). Recall that a genuinely synecdochical act is one whereby the speaker conveys the face-value significance of the utterance. For instance, in 'She's a piece of ass', the part term expresses *piece of buttocks*. This additional act is one whereby the speaker conveys disrespect towards the woman in question (§3.2-3.3), and one whose disrespectfulness is explained by the propositions the speaker conveys (§3.4).

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[43] In a similar vein, Mary Beth Whitehead, the defendant in a landmark case on the custody rights of surrogate mothers, said of the couple that contracted her to bear their child that, they viewed her "as a uterus with legs" (Hanley 1987). Erin King, a medical doctor who provides abortions to women in Missouri has said in a discussion of recent attempts to ban abortion in many Southern states, "It is fair to say that the uterus is the most regulated thing in the state of Missouri" (2019).

3. The Central Data

3.1 Illocutionary Non-Cancelability

To see the first distinctive characteristic of SUTWs, re-consider (2). As a genuinely synecdochical utterance, the speaker asserts the face-value significance of the utterance, 'She's a pair of legs'. The part term expresses {pair of legs}.

However, this cannot be all the speaker intends to do by asserting this for the assertion that a woman is identical with the relevant bodily part is patently false. Rather, the speaker must intend to do something else using her utterance, on pain of failing to be a cooperative conversational participant. For this reason, the speaker of (2) cannot be merely the asserting that 'She is a pair of legs'.[44] The speaker must be doing something *in addition* to conveying the utterance's face-value significance. We can call this characteristic of SUTWs illocutionary non-cancelability.

3.2. Choice of Bodily Part Term

Why does the speaker predicate a *bodily part* term at all, as opposed to some other language? There are two points of contrast here: bodily as opposed to non-bodily, and part as opposed to non-part. First, bodily in contrast with non-bodily. There is a sense in which a person is constructed of non-bodily parts.[45] A woman "comprises", for instance, non-

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[44] I say "exclusively" for the speaker may also assert that 'She's a pair of legs'. The point is that this cannot be the *only* thing she intends to assert.

[45] Accepting this claim does not entail an accepting an obscure, "heavy-weight" metaphysics for "part" is not meant in any metaphysically robust sense.

bodily parts like her intelligence, personality or emotional dispositions. This brings us to the first question concerning the speaker's choice of term: why a bodily, rather a non-bodily, term? Why didn't the speaker refer to the woman in question as 'the dummy', 'the tyrant', 'the ice queen', etc.?

The second point of contrast is a *part* as opposed to a non-part term. Why would someone use 'piece of ass', rather than (seemingly) rhetorically similar language like 'the shelf' (metaphor), 'the hot pants' (metonymy), or 'the bottom' (neutrally toned definite description)?

There must be *some reason* why the speaker chose to use both a term for something of a bodily nature, and a bodily part at that. Otherwise, the speaker fails to select her words on a rational basis. Note that the speaker must select her words in virtue of the *content* she wishes to convey by using them—that is, not for some merely meta-communicative reason such as mere expediency or a reason pertaining to the phonetic (or, if written, graphic) features of the word. The speaker cannot both respect this restriction on selecting words on a basis that is not meta-communicative *and* say that she chose them for, say, their mellifluous sound.

On the assumption, though, that the speaker does choose her words rationally and in virtue of the meaning of the term (not on some meta-communicative basis), we should infer that the speaker's choice of a both a term for a *part*, and a *bodily* part, plays some distinctive role in the act, additional to the genuinely synecdochical act, the speaker performs.

3.3 Psychological Effects: Offense and Reduction

Moreover, targets and empathetic hearers experience a certain psychological effect in understanding what a SUTW speaker conveys: offense (Hom, 2008).

We should note that not all targets of SUTWs find SUTWs to be offensive. One example is the caption Bethenny Frankel attached to a photograph of herself that she posted on Instagram, in which the relevant anatomical part figured prominently. She wrote as the caption: "a lotta people refer to me as an ass" (Frankel, 2017). Contextual information, most saliently, knowledge about Frankel's self-objectifying attitude towards her body, make it clear that she perceived her admirers' synecdochical characterization as flattering. Of course, the fact that Frankel in this case is not in fact offended by her characterization as a bodily part does not entail that a negative evaluation of the utterance is not justified.

Indeed, some women describe the type of offense they experience more specifically, whether as targets or empathetic hearers, as the feeling that the woman is most important in virtue of the part. I will call this effect *reduction*. One testimonial comes from Glennon Doyle (2017) concerning the c-word: "Misogynists call women cunts when they are trying to…remind us that what our identity boils down to is: our cunt".

Aside from testimonials like Doyle's, the sorts of responses some women give to these remarks evince that they make them feel reduced. The form of reply is to insist that the woman is more than the part with which she is identified. One woman says that she is "more than a uterus" (Eichler, 2018; Loribeth, 2013). Political journalist and author

Amanda Marcotte (2016) responded to a remark made by Killer Joe about Clinton that "women…[are] more than a 'uterus' ".[46]

3.4 Plausible Deniability

There is another notable feature of SUTWs. This feature evinces that the disrespectful act the speaker does is one of conveying something of significance, or content, that is disrespectful. That is, the disrespectful act in which the SUTW speaker engages is a meaningful one.

The speaker can deny commitment to *any* particular paraphrase of the utterance's significance. We can refer to this feature as "plausible deniability". Consider (1.1), which is an objector's attempt to call out the significance of (1):

(1.1) Wait a minute! You're saying that she's most significant as a person for her bottom. It's disrespectful to say that about her!

The speaker *can* coherently—however disingenuously—deny (1.1), that the woman is most important for the part. She can also deny explications (1.2), (1.3), and (1.4).

(1.2) Wait a minute! You're talking about her like she's a piece of meat, and that's degrading!

(1.3) Wait a minute! You're speaking about her like she's an animal. That's dehumanizing!

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[46] Marcotte's original comment is that "Clinton's remarkable career isn't enough to prove that women can be worth more than a 'uterus' ".

(1.4) Wait a minute! You're speaking about her like she's just an object to be used, and be to be gawked at, in whatever way you want. That's objectifying!

Indeed, the speaker is able to deny *any* particular paraphrase—not just (1.1)-(1.4).

The explications the speaker is most convincingly able to deny conveying vary with *context*. Suppose, for example, that (1) were uttered in a context in which women are treated like "meat". One anonymous actress says of her experience working in pornography that this is the case. She says explicitly: "they treat us like meat" (qtd. in Carol J. Adams 2010, p. 72). Linda Lovelace, a well-known former adult film actress, describes her experience auditioning for a director as a pornographic actress as follows: "[He] looked me over like a butcher inspecting a side of beef" (p. 72). It is harder for the speaker to deny explication (1.2) if the utterance is made in a context like that of Lovelace's audition.

Furthermore, the accessibility of the hearer's explications of the content conveyed varies. They might range from those based on beliefs that are fairly widely shared to those that are highly particularized—to the point that these explications depend on beliefs specific to the individual speaker. For example, explication (1.2) is based on beliefs a misogynistic portion of society hold about women: that they, including the female target, are pieces of meat. This is a belief that is shared by a significant number of people, but one can concoct explications of (1) that are based on the beliefs of a more rarified group, even those idiosyncratic to the speaker.

The significance of the explications that the hearer generates would plausibly account for the data identified in the previous section, that the speaker says something disrespectful about the target. If, in uttering a SUTW, the speaker conveys content like that explicated above, this would make uttering an SUTW an act whereby the speaker conveys

something disrespectful. The hearer's recognition that the speaker conveys material like that explicated above would very plausibly cause her to experience offense.

We have identified some important features of SUTWs: illocutionary non-cancelability, the speaker's choice to predicate a bodily part term of the woman as opposed to some other language, the fact that SUTWs are disrespectful acts that produce offense— and even the felt sense of reduction—in targets and empathetic hearers, and the plausible deniability of any particular paraphrase of a SUTW's significance.

At this point, we should turn to consider the nature of the content that the SUTW speaker conveys. I will argue in section 4 that this content is propositional. I hold that the nature of the explications of what the speaker conveys, as in (1.1)-(1.4), are propositions.

4. The Nature of the Content Conveyed in the Disrespectful Act

The content the synecdochical speaker communicates has a features characteristic of, indeed essential to, propositional content: truth-aptness, or the ability to be true or false. Thus, speakers can agree with, or contest, a proposition (Camp, 2013, 2017, 2018, etc.). As I will show below, hearers can agree or disagree with the SUTW speaker.

Let us consider a context in which, say(2), is used. Suppose that the speaker of (2) and her hearer, both of whom are struggling actors, are discussing the ability of a female acquaintance of theirs to obtain a coveted role. The hearer could agree with what the speaker says using (2.1a)-(2.3a).

> (2.1a) Yeah, all she has going for her is those legs. I heard she had them insured.

(2.2a) Yeah, she certainly has nothing else going on: no brain, no personality.

(2.3a) Yeah, she's just something to look at it, and dress up, and parade on the set like a doll.

The hearer can also disagree with what the speaker says by insisting on the target's identity as a person, as in (2.1d), or her possession of features like intelligence, subjectivity, and certain traits (kindness, industry, etc.).

(2.1d) No way: she's a whole human being, not some mere part of a body!

(2.2d) No way: she's intelligent, hardworking, and genuinely talented!

(2.3d) No way: she's not just something to be looked at!

The fact that the hearer can agree or disagree with the content the SUTW conveys is evidence that the significance of what the speaker conveys is best described as propositional. These propositions are disrespectful, which accounts both for the fact that we think SUTW speakers convey something disrespectful and that they are offensive—and for many hearers, offensive in the particular sense that they induce the felt sense of reduction. Understanding speakers as conveying disrespectful propositions by their synecdochical utterances also explains why the speaker does something special by selecting part terms. That is, such an understanding explains why the speaker cannot simply

be asserting the proposition the uttered sentence literally expresses (illocutionary non-cancelability) or that the speaker's choice to predicate a bodily part term of the woman plays a role in what the speaker does.

One remarkable feature of the propositions that we noted is that their accessibility varies. Some of the explications of the propositions that the speaker generates are based on characteristics particular to the context of utterance (e.g. the beliefs of the individual speaker), while others are predicated on more communally shared views of women. Reflection on his remarkable feature raises the question: how do hearers generate their explications of the propositions that a speaker conveys? This is a question to which I provide an answer in the next section, §5.

5. How Does A Hearer Generate the Propositions a Speaker Conveys?

5.1 Characterizations, Perspectives, and Deploying Perspectives

A speaker conveys some propositions, but how is the hearer able to generate these propositions, as she does for (1) with (1.1)—(1.4), (2.1a)-(2.3a), and (2.1d)-(2.3d)? (Note whatever points I make concerning (1.1)-(1.4) that are not about the specific content of these explications, also apply to (2.1a)-(2.3a) and (2.1d)-(2.3d)). One way of more specifically characterizing this question, which I will use, is in terms of the hearer's *interpretive process*: what kind of interpretive process does the hearer use to assign propositional content to a SUTW? In this section (§5), I argue that the interpretive process a hearer uses is entertaining a perspective, in Camp's sense. The hearer takes a perspective

on the female subject of the SUTW in order to ascribe propositional content to the SUTW. In particular, in, §5.1, I explain the interrelated notions of a characterization, a perspective, and deploying a perspective. Next, in §5.2, I illustrate how certain data support thinking that a hearer's taking on a perspective is what enables her to formulate the propositions the SUTW speaker conveys. I also distinguish the way in which a hearer deploys a perspective on my view from the way it does on Camp's in §5.3.

Let us turn, then, to *characterizations*, which are "complex ways of thinking about a subject" (Camp, 2017, p. 50). A characterization comprises information about that subject into a structure that is holistic and intuitive. Its constituent components might include concepts, encoded as descriptive properties (e.g. red, rectangular), evaluatively laden "thick" properties (brave, wanton), or "thin" properties (superlative, awful). Despite the fact that they might include cognitive elements like concepts, characterizations are non-propositional.[47]

The elements constituting a characterization vary in terms of their public accessibility. Some elements of a perspective are idiosyncratic, while others like stereotypes, are widely shared. My characterization of gamblers has, as some of its constituents, idiosyncratic properties like [having slicked-back dark hair] and [clad in flamboyant suits].[48] (I will use brackets to indicate components of a characterization.) Yet, my characterization also comprises more widely shared (not necessarily accurate) properties such as [greedy], [impulsive], and [financially irresponsible].

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[47] However, Camp (2017) does maintain that characterizations are in principle *specifiable* propositionally.

[48] These constituents could also be imagistic. Camp's characterization can have imagistic components, but because I have been discussing only concepts and for the sake of simplicity, I will describe these components as concepts.

There are two important structural relations among the properties comprising a perspective. Some properties are more *central*: they "explain, cause, or otherwise motivate" the other contents (2017, 50-51). Consider my perspective on clowns. It may contain properties like [colorful], [grotesque], and even the "thin" property [horrible]. Some of these, like [grotesque], are more central: they cause and explain features like [terrifying].

For the characterization associated with a SUTW, at its very center, is the concept of the relevant anatomical part. Note that depending on the language used to refer to [part], [part] *itself* may be evaluatively infused, as it would be in the case of [booty] or [gams]. For (2), it would be [legs]. The maximal centrality of the concept of the part captures the sense in which the woman is *most* important for the part.[49]

As the maximally central component or what explains why all of the other conceptual components of the perspective are attributed to the female subject, [part] explains why all of the other properties in our perspective are attributed to the woman in virtue of (according to the perspective) her in terms of [part]. To illustrate, consider the

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[49] I am presenting a view of the perspective associated with a SUTW that takes inspiration from perspectives associated with slurring utterances. In a perspective associated with a slur (say, 'kraut'), the maximally central element is an essence associated with Germans. The significance of the essence's structural position is that the target of 'kraut' is most significant for that essence. The essence is one that presents Germans as "all alike", and as causally responsible for other perspectival components including concepts encoding "German traits", like [sausage-eating], [beer-drinking], and [inclined towards engineering].

On the subject of perspectives associated with slurring utterances, one familiar with Camp's work might wonder why I take inspiration from slurring perspectives rather than perspectives associated with metaphorical utterances. After all, synecdochical utterances look like they would work the way metaphors so. Here is one reason. Hearers of a SUTW that do re-structure their perspectives on the woman in light of the part in the way that the hearer of "Juliet is the sun" restructures her perspective on Juliet in light of the sun. In interpreting what a SUTW means, a hearer is not trying to find matches between the properties a woman possesses, and those a bodily part of hers has. Yet, synecdochical perspectives are like metaphorical ones, and unlike slurring ones, in one crucial way. The perspective associated with the slur constitutes the significance of the disrespectful material the slur expresses. In the case of metaphor and synecdoche, taking on the perspective is *used* in order to determine its significance; it does not *constitute* part of its significance.

perspective we form on the basis of hearing (1). The element representing the anatomical part, [legs], explains the woman's possession of the other properties constituting the perspective, such as [most valuable for her appearance].

Others features are more *prominent* than others (2017, p. 51). Features prominent in my perspective on clowns like [flaming red hair] and [red noses] enable me to identify, or pick out, which features matter in determining which things are clowns. Notice that prominent features are not ones that *must* be possessed. Of course, clowns need not have red noses to be clowns. Nonetheless, red noses help me identify clowns.

Properties that would be prominent in a characterization associated with (2)—in which the maximally central concept is [legs]—might be [wears mini skirts] or [wears high heeled shoes]. These concepts are prominent because a woman's choice of clothing helps determine whether she is a 'pair of legs'

We have concentrated on cognitive features of characterizations: properties expressed as concepts. How do affective attitudes and emotions fit into characterizations? There are at least two ways. One way is that some of these properties like the "thin" [horrible], or the "thick" [grotesque], are already associated with an (in this case, negative) affective attitude. Another way a perspective can be affectively enriched is through the relationships among its constituent properties, some of which might be already emotively infused. For example, suppose that [repulsive] is connected with [terrifying] in some characterization. Connecting [repulsive] with [terrifying] enables one to appreciate that, horror makes sense as the attitude to have towards clowns. The type of affective enrichment will not only be determined by which property is connected to which, but also the structural

relation between them. In sum, on this second way, what make perspectives affective are the *connections* among these properties.

The components constituting the characterization are structured into a coherent whole, in a way that is intuitively "fitting" (2017, p. 51). The sense of "fitting" cannot really be articulated in terms of any principle: it's the sort of norm one knows something conforms to intuitively. In this way, "fittingness" is like an aesthetic norm. That is, these contents "fit" together in the way that, say, a chair with a simple, sleek design fits into a room otherwise furnished in a modern style.

Perspectives are interpretive tendencies that we have to form characterizations, "to notice, relate, and respond in certain ways". For instance, if I encounter a clown, I'm most apt to notice her red hair and nose, to become fearful, and avoid her. Henceforth, I will focus on perspectives, our disposition to construct characterizations, rather than characterizations.

Some utterances engage our tendency to deploy a perspective on the subjects on the subject of the utterance. Deploying a perspective involves being able to see how the elements among the speaker's perspective, and the feelings aroused by them, fit together and to see how these elements fit together in a way that is intuitive, rather than explicitly rule-governed.

Most importantly, deploying a perspective enables the hearer to assign propositions to the utterance. Take a general formulation of one proposition a SUTW speaker conveys: 'She is most significant for the [insert relevant part]'. The hearer is supposed to formulate this proposition by taking on a perspective in which [part] is the most significant aspect of the woman. The woman's maximal significance in terms of the part is what it means for

[part] to be, structurally, in the perspective's center. For a component like [part], the cognitive significance of the synecdochical *utterance*'s content (the proposition) a hearer generates mirrors the significance of the relationship a perspectival component has to some other components within the *interpretive structure (*a perspective). Some propositions can even be "read off" a perspectival component. For example, if in (1), one's perspective contains [important for appearance], the hearer can generate the proposition that the female subject is important for her appearance.[50]

There is another feature of perspective-deployment that it would behoove us to observe. Deploying a perspective is "partly but not entirely under voluntary control" (2017). The fact that deploying a perspective is partly involuntary makes it, in Camp's (2017) language, "irresistible". By partially "irresistible", I mean the following. The hearer, *at first*, or *until a certain point*, takes on the perspective involuntarily. That is, the hearer reaches a stage at which she has the choice to engage or disengage from the perspective. Past that stage, whether or not she continues to take on the perspective is voluntary.

The irresistibility of perspective-deployment brings us to the causal relationship between a perspective and an utterance with which it is associated. Perspective-deployment is an effect c*aused* by hearing the SUTW. In other words, it is a perlocutionary effect. If I order you to close the door, you might feel resentful that I did not do it myself. Your resentment is an effect I cause by making my order. In the same way, for utterances

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[50] Other, more complicated propositions can be generated by connecting multiple components—both cognitive and emotive—but I do not discuss these more complicated mechanisms for proposition generation from perspective-deployment in an effort to keep the discussion as simple as possible.

associated with perspectives, the speaker causes the hearer to experience a perspective on the subject of the utterance.[51]

5.2 The Role of Deploying Perspectives in SUTW Interpretation

With an understanding of what characterizations, perspectives, and perspective-deployment are and how SUTW hearers generate propositions by deploying a perspective on the female subject, I can account for why the interpretive process that a hearer undergoes involves deploying a perspective.

Deploying a perspective explains why some explications of the propositions a speaker conveys are more plausible than others. For example, explication (1.1) of the significance of (1) is more plausible than the others. It also accounts for why denying certain propositions is more plausible than others. The speaker of (1)'s denial of (1.1) as an explication of the proposition she conveyed strikes us as less plausible than denying, say, (1.4). That is, the speaker of (1) can more easily deny conveying (1.4) than (1.1).

The plausibility of certain explications of what the speaker conveys, and with it the implausibility of denying those explications, is explained by two factors. Firstly, the relationships among the contents of the perspective a hearer takes on in assigning the propositional content of the SUTW such as centrality. Secondly, these relations are

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[51] According to Camp (2017), the irresistibility of perspective-taking has a potentially dangerous consequence: it enables the hearer to be "cognitively complicit" in the speaker's thinking. Cognitive complicity is not inherently pernicious, but if the speaker's perspective on the subject is derogatory as it is with perspectives associated with slurs, it is. However, it is not clear to me that at least an *initial* inability to resist deploying the perspective entails complicity in any problematic sense unless one espouses a strong view of deploying a perspective like Camp's perspective-*taking*. I discuss this further below.

gradational: some perspectival elements are more central (or prominent) than others. The bodily part is component is *most central* in the perspective on the woman we form in hearing a SUTW. [Part] figures most centrally in our understanding of what the speaker conveys.

The degree of centrality some perspectival concept bears to the center, [part], corresponds to the plausibility of a propositional explication based on that concept or the significance of the relation that concept bears to other perspectival components. In other words, the more central the component in a perspective, the more central the component is in our thinking about the woman—and correspondingly, in the propositions hearers generate as those the SUTW speaker conveys.

When we hear (1), for instance, the concept expressing the relevant part is most integral to our understanding of (1). Thus, an expression of the propositional content that the speaker conveys that makes explicit that the speaker conveys that the woman is most significant for the part—as (1.1) does for (1)—will seem to be the most plausible explication. Given the central role [part] has in our understanding of the SUTW, that kind of explication will also be the hardest for the speaker to deny communicating.

We noted above that which explications seem more plausible as the significance of what the speaker conveys is contextually dependent. Which contents comprise the perspective, as well as their position within that perspective, also depends on contextual features. That is, context help determine which components a perspective has, and their structural placements within that perspective. The same utterance in different mouths, or uttered on different occasions, or aimed at a different target can result in a different configuration of perspectival contents. For instance, when someone utters (1) at the

swimsuit component of a Miss. Universe pageant, it is more likely that properties like [valuable for appearance] are more centrally or prominently located in the perspective.

The sorts of contents a perspective might comprise are also sufficiently permissive to include elements that vary in their public accessibility. A hearer's perspective might contain components ranging from widely shared beliefs about women, or the woman in question, to those shaped by the particular occasion of utterance, even beliefs on those subjects idiosyncratic to the speaker.

The relations among perspectival components also provides a model for the connections we make when we are interpreting a SUTW, we connect particular elements in the way we do. Thinking of the woman as most valuable for a part "gets" one into thinking of her in other ways the speaker does, to attribute other salient properties to her.[52]

I argued in the previous section that SUTW hearers deploy a perspective to generate the propositions speakers convey. In other words, deploying a perspective is the interpretive process in which a SUTW engages. Deploying a perspective explained why some explications of SUTWs are more plausible, and thus why these explications are more difficult for a speaker to successfully deny. Some propositions are more plausible as what the SUTW's disrespectful content, and harder for the speaker to deny, because these propositions are based on concepts that are more central in our perspective the woman subject. That is to say, these concepts in question figure more deeply in our understanding of what the speaker means to convey. Perspectives' contents are also contextually sensitive

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[52] The point I am making is that perspectives, given their structure, give us a model for the structured way we think about the subject of the SUTW *generally*. I lack the space to argue for the *particular* explications I provided for any of the SUTWs above. Although, there is plenty of data to support the connections a hearer makes between thinking of a woman as a part and as an animal, and, in turn, as an instrument or something to be used.

and permissible enough to allow for contents that widely diverge in terms of their public accessibility. This allows for a corresponding context-sensitive and variability in the public accessibility of the propositions formed on the basis of the relevant perspectival components. Deploying a perspective also gives us a useful way of modeling aspects of our interpretive experience, including why we make certain connections between different components.

5.3 Entertaining versus Taking on a Perspective

The interpretive process of deploying a perspective, which I claim that the hearer of a synecdochical utterance undergoes, is like Camp's understanding of deploying a perspective in two crucial ways. Firstly, deploying a perspective is a perlocutionary effect produced in the process of interpreting the utterance. Secondly, deploying a perspective plays a role in determining the significance of the utterance. Deploying a perspective also explains how speakers are able to generate the significance of SUTWs. In this way, they are not merely perlocutionary effects, or "bumps on the head", as Davidson (1978) would say. Deploying a perspective enables hearers to discern the meaningfulness of synecdochical utterances, too.

However, on my theory, the way in which a synecdochical hearer deploys a perspective differs from the way Camp understands deploying a perspective in an important way. For Camp, deploying a perspective is actually *taking on* the speaker's perspective. Taking on a perspective "involves a level of cognitive involvement beyond that required for literal speech, often closer to "empathetic imaginative engagement". In

contrast, on my theory, the way in which a SUTW hearer uses a perspective does not require anything like or close to "empathetic engagement" with the speaker's perspective on the woman (Camp, 2017).

It is not clear that "empathetic engagement" is, as Camp claims, distinct from "endorsement" of the perspective (2018, p. 2). The level of "empathetic engagement" is robust enough that a hearer is in peril of "losing" herself when she takes on a speaker's perspective. When a hearer "loses" herself, I take it that she means that the SUTW interpreter begins to think about, and feel towards, the subject *in the way* the speaker does. To say that the interpreter thinks and feels towards the subject in the way that the speaker does seems to just be tantamount to saying that the hearer *endorses* the speaker's perspective. This consequence is grave when we consider that the sorts of utterances that Camp and I argue are associated with perspectives, SUTWs and slurs, respectively. Both of these types of utterances are ethically problematic.

Even so, it is simply not true that one "empathetically" engages with the speaker of a slurring or SUTW utterance. It is not true that when we "get" the perspective, or understand what the speaker seeks to convey, that we engage with it in a way that is *empathetic* to the speaker. When Trump says of his daughter 'She's a piece of ass', we understand what he means. We have enough of an idea of his (misogynistic) thoughts about, and feelings towards, his daughter to construct what he means. We grasp what he conveys.

For instance, we can appreciate the thick concepts that plausibly partly constitute the speaker's, Trump's, perspective (e.g. [valuable for appearance], [valuable for sex]), and the sort of attitudes induced by seeing how these components fit in a perspectival

constellation. However, at all times—as non-misogynists—we do not think and feel as he does.

Indeed, it is characteristic of our engagement with what the speaker conveys by referring to a target by an anatomical part that we feel a *gap* between what the speaker conveys and our own beliefs and feelings. Merely modeling our thought, as people who respect women, to conform to the speaker's can even activate intense emotions of dismay, outrage or anger. Indeed, we are often aware of more than a gap between how we think and feel about women, or the particular female subject of the SUTW, and how the speaker thinks and feels. When we see how the speaker thinks and feels—that the speaker connects, [legs] with, for example [most important for her body], along with an attitude appropriate towards inanimate tools rather than human beings, we can in fact experience trigger strong emotional responses, and responses that we are well aware are our own. Our experiences of these kinds of responses make it all the clearer that we think and feel very differently from the speakers.

Our experience in deploying perspectives to interpret what a SUTW speaker means is like what we non-bigots experience when we take on a slur-user's perspective. We neither hold the slur-user's bigoted beliefs about, nor share the slur-user's feelings towards, the targeted group. As with SUTW utterances, we are aware of a gap between what we, and the slur-user, think and feel about the targeted group. It is also likely that we experience strong emotions towards the speaker's way of thinking and feeling about the targeted group that make this gap even starker.

Understanding what a SUTW speaker conveys in predicating a bodily part of a woman is closer—although, not analogous—to what one does when she draws an inference

using a logic, or simply a rule of inference, she does not endorse.[53] Suppose, for instance, that you reject the rule of bivalence. Nevertheless, your rejection of the rule does not prevent you from being able to draw the same inferences a proponent of the rule does. In an analogous way, you need not empathize with or endorse the synecdochical speaker's perspective in order to appreciate the contents of that perspective.

More specifically, on my view, the hearer need only *entertain* the perspective. The hearer appreciates that the *speaker* thinks and feels a certain way towards the target, but the hearer need not empathize—or do anything close to empathize—in any way with the speaker's perspective on the target.

At this point, my theory amounts to this. A SUTW is associated with a perspective on a woman. When a speaker uses a SUTW, she activates a disposition in the hearer (a perspective) to deploy a certain type of cognitive tool (a characterization) to think about the female SUTW subject. The activation of a perspective is an *effect* a hearer experiences, caused by hearing the SUTW.[54] Yet, deploying a perspective is a special type of effect in that it has import in generating a SUTW's propositional content. On my view, the speaker merely entertains the perspective when she deploys it. Entertaining a perspective enables the hearer to assign propositional content to the SUTW.

A couple of important questions remain. What is the relationship between a SUTW and the propositions the speaker conveys? Does a SUTW bear any more substantive a relation to the hearer's perspective than merely causing it?

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[53] It is not analogous because deploying a perspective should be an *intuitive*, rather than an explicitly rule-driven, process.

[54] Note that I do not yet broach whether deploying a perspective bears any more substantive link to the SUTW utterance. This is a topic that I take up in §6.

We will first consider the former question. In doing so, we will consider Camp's illocutionary act approach (§6.1) to metaphor, adapted here to synecdoche, and a conversational implicature (§6.2). The latter vehicle for conveying significance is the one that, I argue, best captures the way the synecdochical speaker conveys the significance of her utterance. I reserve the next section (§7) to the second question of whether there is a more robust relationship between a SUTW and the hearer's perspective than simply a causal one.

6. The Relationship between SUTWs and Their Disrespectful Content

6.1 Camp's Theory: Assertion

We are now considering the relationship between a SUTW and the propositions a SUTW speaker conveys as part of the disrespectful act she undertakes on Camp's theory. Recall that the hearer assigns disrespectful propositions to a SUTW by deploying a perspective on the female subject. This significance is *asserted.*[55] On this view, for the assertion 'She's a pair of legs', the hearer would assign disrespectful propositions like 'She's valuable for her body', 'She's just something to look at', etc. as what the speaker asserts. The speaker does not imply, presuppose, or otherwise indirectly convey the utterance's disrespectful significance.

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[55] I use the language "assertion" rather than Camp's "primary" illocutionary acts for simplicity's sake. Primary illocutionary acts, though, are not limited to assertion, but encompass acts like promising, orders, and requests. Nothing about this simplification affects my theory.

Moreover, on this view, the speaker does not *also* assert the face-value significance of the utterance: 'She's a pair of legs'. The speaker *only* asserts the disrespectful significance of the SUTW, e.g. 'She's valuable for her body'.

Why should we reject Camp's view? For one, if the speaker only asserted the disrespectful significance of the utterance—and not, in addition, its face-value significance—there would be no distinction between genuinely synecdochical utterances and other uses of part terms. One such use is as an all-purpose insult, one example of which is the c-word utterance made by the disgruntled driver. For a predication of a part term to be a SUTW, the speaker must use the part term to express the sense of the anatomical part. In the case of the c-word, this would be the sense expressed by 'vagina'. The irate speaker is not predicating the sense expressed by 'vagina' of the offending driver.

The lack of a distinction between the assertion of a SUTW's face-value significance and its disrespectful significance also makes mysterious why illocutionary non-cancelability is an interesting feature of SUTWs. If *only* the face-value significance of the utterance is asserted, then the issue of whether the speaker can deny using her utterance to do something *other than* the face-value significance of the utterance does not even arise.

Another reason for why we should reject Camp's view is the following. If the disrespectful significance of a SUTW is asserted, its asserted significance—on a traditional semantic theory—should be based on the meaning of the words comprising the sentence the speaker utters, plus rules of compositionality. 'She's only valuable for her body' is not generated on this basis from 'She's a pair of legs'. This problem is not simply one of the vagueness or ambiguity of the synecdochical sentence. It is not as if the sentence 'She's a

pair of legs' is ambiguous. 'Pair of legs' does not have, among the properties it encodes, 'valuable for one's body'.

For these reasons, we ought to prefer my theory to Camp's. Instead, as I argue below, we should accept that the speaker *implies* the disrespectful significance of the SUTW. In particular, I argue that the way the speaker conveys the disrespectful significance matches a specific form of implication: conversational implicature.

In order for us to see how the speaker conversationally implicates the disrespectful significance, we need to become clear about how a speaker conversationally implicates some proposition. Doing so involves first understanding the theory of communication held by Paul Grice, the theorist who first identified conversational implicature. We shall do this in the very next section (§6.2).

6.2 Conversational Implicature

On Grice's conception of how conversation works, speakers are rational and *cooperative* (1989). By "cooperative" I mean that they abide by various maxims that enable their hearers to interpret what they mean, or which propositions they intend to convey, by their utterances. One maxim, for instance, is to say what one thinks is true, or at least justified by one's evidence: the maxim of quality. Given speakers' rationality and cooperativeness, when the sentence a speaker utters appears to flout any of these maxims, we should infer that the proposition the speaker intends to convey diverges from the sentence's literal significance.

We should make such an inference for the synecdochical speaker. The significance of the sentence the speaker utters—the identification of the target with a bodily part—is clearly false. Thus, the speaker appears to flout the maxim of quality.

When the speaker conveys the proposition they mean by flouting a maxim, she is said to *implicate* it.[56] The sort of implicature relevant for our purposes is *conversational*. A defining feature of conversational implicature is the speaker's ability to coherently (even if disingenuously) deny conveying the implicated content.

Consider Grice's famous example of the letter of recommendation for an academic post in philosophy (7), or the metaphorical utterance (8):

(7) Jones has impeccable penmanship and is always punctual.

(8) You're the cream in my coffee.

In uttering (7), the letter-writer conversationally implicates that Jones is not a good philosopher by failing to mention that Jones possesses traits germane to the job to which he is applying. The speaker of (8) conversationally implicates that the referent of 'you' is valuable, even indispensable, to the speaker.

Conversational implicature best explains the way in which the speaker conveys propositions disrespectful to the target woman for a number of reasons.

Firstly, a speaker conversationally implicates some *propositions*. As we saw above, propositions best capture the sort of significance that the speaker conveys.

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[56] This is not the *only* way to implicate a proposition, but I avoid discussing other ways for they are not pertinent to my purposes and would only complicate the discussion. See also fn. 29.

Moreover, the process of working out what the speaker conveys on a conversational implicature theory matches the pattern of inference we hearers make to determine what the speaker intends to communicate. For (2) we inferred that the speaker must be engaged in a communicative act other than saying that 'She is a pair of legs' because saying that would be blatantly false. This datum was one piece of evidence that we used to infer that the speaker was performing some other meaningful act. An understanding of what the speaker does is easily explained in terms of conversational implication. The speaker violates the maxim of quality, and so implicates the disrespectful propositions.

One might be concerned about how the claim that a hearer *infers* what kind of act the SUTW speaker undertakes fits with the claim that hearing the utterance *causes* a hearer to take on a perspective. Inferring is, paradigmatically, a consciously undertaken, deliberate activity whereas what one is caused to do something is initially involuntary. Both claims are compatible but seeing how requires us to be clear about the sequence of interpretive processes. On the theory that I am offering, the hearer does not take on a perspective until she has inferred that the SUTW speaker violates the maxim of quality. *Then*, the hearer takes a perspective on the SUTW's female subject, a process that is initially involuntary.

As we saw in §3.4, the SUTW speaker can deny her commitment to any particular proposition the hearer explicates as the one conveyed. This is characteristic of conversationally implicated content. The speaker of (8) can deny that she meant to say that Jones is not a good philosopher. In the same way, the speaker of (1) could deny (1.1)-(1.4).

With respect to the relationship between SUTWs and perspectives, Camp and I agree that deploying a perspective is a causal effect produced by trying to interpret the speaker's utterance. As I clarified in the previous section, a speaker takes on a perspective

after she infers that the SUTW speaker flouts the maxim of quality. Camp and I also concur that deploying a perspective plays a special role in the determination of the disrespectful significance of synecdochical utterances. We diverge, however, with regard to whether deploying a perspective plays any additional role. For her, the speaker pragmatically presupposes the perspective. On my view, perspectives play no other role. I elaborate on, and argue against, a pragmatic presupposition theory it in the following section (§7).

7. The Relationship between Synecdochical Utterances and Perspectives

Camp (2017) has argued that the speaker of a metaphorical utterance pragmatically presupposes a perspective. First, we should understand what a presupposition is. Utterance *(9)* is a paradigmatic example of a presupposition.[57]

(9) George still smokes.

The speaker of (9) presupposes (S): that George smoked at some previous time.[58] We can say that (9) is associated with this proposition.

How does the speaker of (9) pragmatically presuppose (S)? When she utters (9), (S) enters the common ground, a body of assumptions conversational participants share, and which each participant assumes that each of the others also assumes (Stalnaker, 2002).

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[57] The speaker of utterance (9) pragmatically presupposes (S), but (S) is also a *semantic* presupposition of the sentence (9) expresses. Of course, semantic presuppositions can also enter the common ground.

[58] Since the presupposition is semantic, we can actually put this in terms of truth: that George smoked at some time in the past because for (9) to be true, this proposition must also be true.

Since (S) is in the common ground—that is, conversational participants assume that (S) is assumed by all of the other participants—any interlocutor may refer back to it, use it as a counterexample, or otherwise build upon it. For instance, if someone says, "George smoked a pack a day" interlocutors will assume that she assumes that this is not the first time George smoked.

On an extension of Camp's view to synecdoche, when the speaker of (2) utters, 'She's a pair of legs', she presupposes a perspective of the woman. This perspective is then added to the common ground.

There are, however, several considerations against this theory. Firstly, it is not clear how one can one pragmatically presuppose a *perspective*. The types of entities that are pragmatically presupposed on Stalnaker's theory are *propositions*. We need an account of how one is able to do this, which Camp does not provide.

Furthermore, a presuppositional account does not capture the plausible deniability pattern for synecdochical utterances. Presuppositions are not cancelable when they are unembedded. Yet, as we saw above, the speaker *is* able to deny conveying the significance of (1) as specified in objections (1.1)-(1.4).

Additionally, a presupposition is supposed to be an assumption accepted among all conversational participants, but, in some contexts, *not all* participants endorse the perspective (Richard, 2008; Potts, 2005, p. 33).

Richard distinguishes two ways in which a perspective can be shared among interlocutors, which he calls *de facto*, and *de jure*. I will consider each of these in turn.

A perspective would be *de jure* presupposed if, as a matter of a *convention* of using an anatomical part term to refer to a woman, the disrespectful perspective is added to the

common ground. A perspective is *de facto* presupposed if the speaker adds it to the common in merely making the utterance, and not because of some rule of use.

Let us consider *de jure* presupposition first. One wonders, though: who would endorse such a convention? There are doubtlessly patterns of conversation that take place within misogynistic communities. However, for a presuppositional account to be the correct analysis, it must account for all conversational contexts—not just intra-misogynistic ones.

Generally, women and men do not think—at least explicitly—that a woman's value primarily stems from the relevant part. Thus, it is implausible that a convention, which must be widely agreed upon, arose according to which one would presuppose these propositions.

Now, for the *de facto* understanding. As with *de jure* presupposition, there is no evidence that, *generally*, speakers think that a woman in primarily valuable in terms of some anatomical part.

To say that men and women generally do not think this does not imply that sometimes women and men interlocutors may in fact let the reference to a woman by a part term slide by without protest. They may so for some practical reason like avoiding an unpleasant confrontation. Nonetheless, they do not endorse such things as 'She's most valuable for the part', 'She's most important for her appearance', or any of the other proposition like those explicated in the objections to (1) above. Yet, if pragmatic presupposition is the right analysis, all parties to the conversation, however, should endorse propositions like these.

On two interpretations of how a presupposition is added to the common ground, the significance of a SUTW, disrespectful propositions like those mentioned in objections (1.1)-(1.4) are not shared among conversational participants. For this reason, and those mentioned above, we should consider another way of explaining how synecdochical speakers convey the disrespectful significance of their utterances.

8. Synecdochical Utterances as an Insidious Use of Language

There has recently been a surge of scholarship on socially important and damaging speech. Much work has been done in the last several years on *explicitly* injurious speech like slurs (e.g. Camp, 2013; Jeshion, 2013; Anderson and Lepore, 2013; Hom, 2008) and other hate speech (Maitra & McGowan, 2010). There has also been work on hurtful speech that is, in some way, difficult for an objector to call out. Jennifer Saul, for example, has written about various forms of dogwhistles (2018).[59]

The failure to recognize the disrespectful nature of this speech is acutely problematic when the speaker is someone possessing the power to influence, and even legitimize, certain ways of speaking—as leaders like Trump do. Even more disturbingly, hearers may repeat these leaders' way of speaking without knowing that they convey deleterious material. For instance, someone might—taking a president's language as speech one should emulate, given his leadership position—speak as he does, without being aware of the disrespectfulness of this language.

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[59] On Saul's taxonomy, the type of dogwhistle to which I am referring is explicit. This does not make them like slurs for explicit dogwhistles are not explicit in the same way: dogwhistles are still coded speech.

On the analysis I have argued for, SUTWs bear affinities with both slurs—especially on Camp's theory—and dogwhistles. Like slurs, SUTWs seem to be acts whereby one does something alienating (if not disrespectful) and many hearers experience offense when they hear them. For Camp, slurring utterances are associated with perspectives, whose contents are indeterminate—as the propositions a SUTW conveys are.

SUTWs are akin to dogwhistles in that their disrespectful significance is conveyed indirectly. Indeed, on Saul's theory, the significance of dogwhistles is conversationally implicated, which is how I argue that a SUTW speaker conveys disrespectful propositions.

I see my research on SUTWs as a contribution to this body of research on socially salient language. In particular, it is a contribution to work on language like dogwhistles that work in insidious ways despite wearing their disrespect on their sleeve.

SUTWs are insidious for two reasons. The speaker cannot deny that she conveyed something other than that 'she is a piece of ass'. Moreover, what the speaker does is disrespectful, and offends us. Yet, the speaker can deny any specification of the significance of the utterance that the hearer provides.

The fact that the speaker can deny any articulation of what she conveys make it difficult (not to mention exasperating) for the objecting hearer to say why the speaker's utterance is disrespectful, and why she is offended.

An objecting hearer may avail herself of a meta-linguistic strategy. She may say something like "That's a degrading way to speaker about her". Although, the same problem that arose for the previous strategy, specifying the significance of the SUTW arises: the hearer is at a loss to explain what it is about the speaker's utterance that is disrespectful.

The difficulty in articulating the disrespectful significance of a SUTW plausibly at least partly accounts for why some may flippantly dismiss this sort of language, as Melania Trump did with regard to her husband's use of SUTWs, as mere "boy's talk" or "locker room" banter.

Chapter V. Conclusion

I have argued, in this dissertation, for theories of what a slurring speaker does and what a SUTW speaker does.

My theory of what a speaker does in using a slur consists of a theory of the property that a slur expresses and of the act that the speaker performs. Concerning a theory of the Slur Property, I argue against the orthodox view, on which a slur expresses the same property as its Non-Pejorative Correlate (the NPC theory) that the NPC theory cannot explain both our (non-bigots') *and* bigots' judgments of truth and falsity and failure to infer in accordance with conditional statements containing slurs. I also do not assume, as the proponent of a Derogatory Semantics theory does, that if a slur does not encode the same property as its NPC that a slur must encode something derogatory.

Rather, I argued that the Slur Property is an essence. An understanding of the Slur Property as an essence makes sense of the aforementioned judgments and failures to infer. It also makes sense of explicating slurring contexts, in which slur-users indicate that the Slur Property has properties like that of essences such as possession by all and only members of the group, permanence, immutability, and a causal role in producing stereotypical traits. Research from social psychology supports a theory on which a slur expresses an essence, too. Those that are inclined to have negative attitudes towards or stereotype the same human groups for which we have slurs tend to ascribe an essence to those groups.

The evaluatively neutral Slur Property does not explain the alienating act that a slur-user undertakes. Instead, other features of the context of utterance enable a slur-user

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to perform this act. I showed that a slurring speaker performs a certain kind of alienating speech act (in Austin's or Searle's sense): distancing. In an act of distancing, the speaker pledges her allegiance to a non-target group and refuses to align herself with the target group. I made three primary arguments for my claim that a slurring utterance constitutes a speech act of distancing. The first and third arguments most explicitly drew upon two integral features of distancing, namely, its sensitivity to the speaker's identity and its status as a commissive.

The first argument, the argument from speaker identity, is that distancing is only felicitous if the speaker supports a non-target group. In the argument from speaker's identity, we examined four situations in which a slurring utterance was used. The principal aspect in which these situations varied was in terms of the speaker's identity as a supporter of a non-target group. In those cases in which the speaker supported a non-target group, we judged the slurring utterance to be used in a way that is not metaphorical, ironic, or appropriated way, i.e. as standardly used.

Next, I argued that, contrary to theories on which slur-users do something like insult the target, understanding a slurring utterance as an act of distancing make the best sense of intra-bigot uses. It is likelier that when a speaker uses a slur amongst exclusively other bigots that she performs an act that does not reasonably require the presence of the slur target than an act that does require the slur target's presence.

My last argument turns on the fact that distancing is a type of promise, in particular one to support a non-target group and to refuse to support the target group. The argument from insincerity, which was designed to show that a slurring utterance constitutes such a promise, consisted of two contexts in which a slurring utterance was made. Each of these

situations was articulated from the hearer's perspective. In each situations, the hearer initially judged the slurring utterance as used in a way that was not metaphorical, ironic, or appropriated—but as used in the way slurs standardly are. Once the hearer learned that the speaker worked for the FBI—a group lacking allegiance to the non-target group—at the time the speaker made the slurring utterance, the hearer judged the speaker's original slurring utterance as insincere. Understanding a slurring utterance as an act of distancing best explained this judgment. The speaker performed an act whereby he or she pledged her support for a non-target group when that speaker clearly had no intention to support the non-target group.

In Chapter IV, my primary aim was to argue for a theory of what the speaker of a Synecdochical Utterance Targeting Women does in predicating an anatomical part of a woman. My view is that the SUTW speaker conversationally implicates disrespectful propositions of the female subject. A conversational implicature theory explained a number of data. Firstly, conversational implicature explains the fact that the speaker cannot uncooperative speaker, claim that she just asserted the proposition the uttered sentence literally expresses. Otherwise, the speaker would be uncooperative. When a speaker conversationally implicates a proposition, she conveys a proposition other than the one literally expressed by the uttered sentence. A view on which a speaker conversational implicates some disrespectful propositions also accounts for the fact that the speaker must, on pain of irrationality, have chosen to predicate a bodily part term—and not some similar language. That is, the speaker must have done so for a reason, and once that crucially involves something this language is designed to do so. Conversationally implicated

propositions are also ones that the speaker can plausibly deny. We saw that the SUTW speaker was able to deny any specification of the propositions she conveys.

Other features of SUTWs included the capacity to produce certain psychological effects, typically, offense and for some hearers, the sense that the targeted woman has been "reduced". The specific propositions that the SUTW speaker implicates explain this effect. Hearers experience these effects because they grasp these propositions. I also provided a theory of how speakers are able to generate these propositions. Hearing a SUTW causes an interpreter to entertain the kind of perspective that a speaker takes on the female subject. In other words, entertaining a perspective is a perlocutionary effect produced by hearing the SUTW.

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