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Beyond Sexual Orientation: Integrating Gender/Sex and Diverse Sexualities via Sexual Configurations Theory

Sari M. van Anders

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Abstract Sexual orientation typically describes people's sexual attractions or desires based on their sex relative to that of a target. Despite its utility, it has been critiqued in part because it fails to account for non-biological gender-related factors, partnered sexualities unrelated to gender or sex, or potential divergences between love and lust. In this article, I propose Sexual Configurations Theory (SCT) as a testable, empirically grounded framework for understanding diverse partnered sexualities, separate from solitary sexualities. I focus on and provide models of two parameters of partnered sexuality—gender/sex and partner number. SCT also delineates individual gender/sex. I discuss a sexual diversity lens as a way to study the particularities and generalities of diverse sexualities without privileging either. I also discuss how sexual identities, orientations, and statuses that are typically seen as misaligned or aligned are more meaningfully conceptualized as branched or co-incident. I map out some existing identities using SCT and detail its applied implications for health and counseling work. I highlight its importance for sexuality in terms of measurement and social neuroendocrinology, and the ways it may be useful for self-knowledge and feminist and queer empowerment and alliance building. I also make a case that SCT changes existing understandings and conceptualizations of sexuality in constructive and generative ways informed by both biology and culture, and that it is a potential starting point for sexual diversity studies and research.

Keywords Sexuality · Intimacy · Gender/sex · Polyamory · Asexuality · Sexual orientation

S. M. van Anders (✉)
Department of Psychology, University of Michigan, 530 Church St., Ann Arbor, MI 48105, USA
e-mail: smva@umich.edu

S. M. van Anders
Department of Women's Studies, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, USA

Introduction

Sexual orientation is largely used as the primary way to describe a person's sexuality (Katz-Wise & Hyde, 2014; Rosario & Schrimshaw, 2014). Since understandings of sexual orientation generally revolve around gender, this means that gender is the de facto foundation for categorizing sexuality. More accurately, two genders are a necessary foundation for categorizing sexuality: an individual's gender and the gender(s) of those whom the individual finds sexually attractive. But is it gender or sex? Sex (biological, evolved, physical features related to femaleness, maleness, and sex diversity) actually seems to be the unstated but underlying feature that is evoked in lay and academic discussions of sexual orientation (e.g., Freund, 1974; Pillard & Weinrich, 1987). But does that mean gender (socialized, cultural features related to masculinity, femininity, and gender diversity) is irrelevant to sexual orientation?

The scant empirical evidence about the universal centrality of sex over gender in sexual orientation leaves the question "Is it gender or sex?" open. For example, if one is sexually attracted to men, is one attracted to penises? Social identities? Body frames? Interactions? And, how is sexual orientation defined if one is attracted to masculinity regardless of the sex of the person presenting or embodying it? What about attractions to feminine men? The concept of sexual orientation bulldozes these distinctions in ways

Table 1 Sexual identities, orientations, and statuses: definitions, broad disciplinary purviews, and examples

	Defining features	Disciplines of major focus	Sexual parameter examples		
			Gender/sex	Partner number	Other components
Identity	Labels, communities, politics, positioning	Sociology, political sciences, social psychology	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, heterosexual, butch, femme, pansexual, person-not-gender	Polyamorous, asexual, demisexual, player, slut, virgin, single-by-choice	Dom, sub, kink-identified, etc.
Orientation	Interests, approaches, attractions, fantasies (also used by some as an umbrella for itself plus identity and status)	Psychology, psychiatry	Male-oriented, female-oriented, same-sex sexual, homosexual, bisexual, heterosexual, monosexual	Multisexual, nonsexual, unisexual, multierotic, unierotic, multinurturant, uninurturant	Kink-oriented
Status	Behaviors, activities	Public health, anthropology, history	MSM, WSW, heterosexually active	Multipartnered, unipartnered, abstaining, not sexually active	In the lifestyle

that are neither scientifically useful nor reflective of lived experiences[1] (e.g., see Califia, 1999; Serano, 2013).

Sexual orientation as defined by gender (or is it sex?) is largely positioned as the singular defining feature of people's sexual selves, but should it be? There are a number of other axes along which sexuality could revolve, including age, partner number, type of sexual activity, consent, solitary sexuality, and intensity among others (e.g., Califia, 1999). And there is no a priori reason why these should be secondary or less important relative to gender for characterizing sexualities.[2] For example, one could argue that interest in sexual partners *at all* is a prerequisite for gendered sexual interests. Thus, preferred or actual sexual partner number could be a key way that people come to understand their sexual selves (Tweedy, 2011). But sexual orientation as currently utilized largely precludes these possibilities.

Sexual orientation is largely seen to be fixed and immutable, a "rock" that sexual identity is constructed upon (Bogaert, 2012b; Gagnon, 1990). This parallels notions of sex and gender, with sex the fixed foundation for a constructed gender (Delphy, 1993; Muehlenhard & Peterson, 2011; Rubin, 1975). In other words, sex + culture = gender is an equation that seems to be the basis for thinking sexual orientation + culture = sexual identity. But is sexual identity really just a sort of glorified culture-infused orientation by another name? And, can behavior be more central to theories of sexuality than merely being what people do? Attending to sexual orientation,[3] sexual identity, and sexual behavior (see Table 1 for definitions of these terms) as related but distinct phenomena could be crucial to scientific theories of sexualities and also to making meaning of sexual lives as many have argued (Klein, Sepekoff, & Wolf, 1985; Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, & Michaels, 1994; Rosario & Schrimshaw, 2014; Sanders, Reinisch, & McWhirter, 1990).

Of course, sexual orientation is largely understood to be *sexual*, meaning that it is oriented around desires for genital contact and/or erotic pleasure. But is sexual orientation always and only sexual? As Diamond (2003b) noted, sexual orientation seems to orient love in addition to lust, and others have argued for similar subconstructs (Klein, 1990; Weinrich, 1988). A narrow sexually-focused interpretation of sexual orientation fails to capture all of the intimate phenomena people actually use it to mean. For example, how could a unitary lust conceptualization of sexual orientation accurately categorize the sexuality of a person who is attracted to men and falls in love with women? But a broad interpretation that is inclusive of lust and love reduces the precision and utility of the term. What are we including in sexual orientation anyway?

In this article, I introduce Sexual Configurations Theory (SCT) as a way to address the complexities of actual people's sexualities. I argue that each of us has a sexual configuration that is composed of locations in multiple sexual dimensions. These dimensions relate to gender and sex. They relate to partner number. They relate to dimensions that I do not focus on in this article but which others may wish to focus on. Both love and lust are delineated. And, behavior, identity, and orientation are treated as simultaneously related and distinct. SCT models and connects diverse sexualities in ways that are culturally situated and scientifically

[1] Lived experience refers to stories and accounts of what it means to live as a specific person within a specific set of social contexts. Lived experience also conveys the notion that group members have valuable knowledge about their group and social location, and that this insider knowledge is an important resource for scholars and others (van Manen, 2004). Social location refers to the place a specific person occupies along multiple axes of identity, reflecting intersectional thinking (Anderson, 2012; Crenshaw, 1991).

[2] Scholars have argued the same for sex as characterizing individuals, i.e., that it is not a priori the one overarching defining difference feature of humans (Butler, 1990; Crenshaw, 1991; Markowitz, 2001; Spelman, 1988).

[3] I explain my reasoning for employing the term "sexual orientation," despite its limitations, in the section ""Sexual Orientation" as a Term and Concept: A Claim for Retention/Reclamation".

generative. It adopts a fundamentally dynamic perspective on sexualities, treating change as potentially central rather than peripheral, irrelevant, or aberrant. Sexual Configurations is not another word for sexual orientation; it is a broader and more comprehensive framework for modeling and conceptualizing diverse sexualities. And it uses what I call a sexual diversity lens that is grounded, perhaps surprisingly, in bioscience (see below: A Sexual Diversity Lens).

I detail the structure of SCT, mapping out its general organization and parameters and outlining how sexual configurations are assembled. The theory is interdisciplinary and rooted in literatures on polyamory, asexuality, intimacies, and social neuroendocrinology that are themselves interdisciplinary (e.g., Barker & Langdridge, 2010; Bogaert, 2004, 2006; Brotto, Knudson, Inskip, Rhodes, & Erksine, 2010; Brotto & Yule, 2011; Carrigan, 2011; DeLuzio Chasin, 2011; Diamond, 2003b; Klesse, 2006; Noël, 2006; Prause & Graham, 2007; Przybylo, 2012; Scherrer, 2008; Sheff, 2005; van Anders, Goldey, & Kuo, 2011).

As I discuss closer to the article's conclusion, SCT has broad and major applications and implications for researchers in a variety of ways from measurement to empowerment to social neuroendocrinology, and also for the potential for a new academic engagement with sexuality in sexual diversity studies and research. SCT provides a testable, empirically grounded framework for understanding diverse partnered sexualities in ways that are meaningfully rooted in and accountable to lived experiences and culture as many have called for (e.g., Gagnon, 2000). And, though new issues will likely emerge, SCT resolves many of the existing limitations of current theories of sexual orientation.

Limitations of Existing Theories About Sexual Orientation

A major limitation of existing theories about sexual orientation is that they do not always map onto people's actual experiences, limiting these theories' validity. What are these theories? They often are unarticulated assumptions, or "pre-theory," that can be read through their enactments like measurement (for reviews of sexual orientation theories and limitations, see Longino, 2013; McWhirter, Sanders, & Reinisch, 1990; Rosario & Schrimshaw, 2014).

Sexual orientation is theorized as continuous by following Kinsey's paradigm shifting work (Bullough, 1990; Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948). Despite this, it is often measured via a single question with three options (bisexuality, homosexuality, heterosexuality), and researchers often exclude those who do not fall into the discrete groups (Galupo, Mitchell, Grynkiewicz, & Davis, 2014a; Jordan-Young, 2010; Korchmaros, Powell, & Stevens, 2013). Sometimes, sexual orientation is measured via "Kinsey questions" that have 7–8 options on one or multiple scales (Kinsey et al., 1948). Still, numbers on these scales are usually used to categorize people. This categorization has been critiqued (e.g., Diamond, 2014; Korchmaros et al., 2013; Vrangalova & Savin-Williams, 2012), with the recognition that individuals with the same "Kinsey number" may not actually have the same sexualities (Whalen, Geary, & Johnson, 1990). Some studies recruit by sexual identity and then categorize people into specific sexual orientation groups (Jordan-Young, 2010), undermining the point of separating these identity and orientation constructs (Korchmaros et al., 2013). Though the Kinsey scales sometimes include "X," a space for "no sexual orientation," this option is rarely used. The presence of X in the Kinsey scales may allow theoretical space for asexualities, albeit theorized as absence of sexual orientation counter to many understandings, but also is the basis for envisioning asexuality as the opposite of a gendered sexual orientation (e.g., Storms, 1980) in ways that do not map onto many asexual individuals' experiences (Scherrer, 2008).

In addition to measurement problems, a problematic aspect of current usages of "sexual orientation" is that it awkwardly and imprecisely marks a category and a subcategory. Sexual orientation refers to sexual attractions, fantasies, and arousals organized around gender/sex (a term that refers to both sociocultural and innate/evolved aspects of women, men, and gender/sex-diverse people, discussed further in Sex- and Gender-Specific Limitations around Sexual Orientation: Getting to "Gender/Sex"). But sexual orientation also is used to refer to itself plus sexual identity and sexual status/behavior (see Table 1) with the implicit assumption that all map onto each other; which is fine when they do, but problematic when they don't. It also is, obviously, linguistically confusing (which sexual orientation is meant?) and not very scientifically useful: it can mislead researchers into thinking that the same phenomena are being invoked (Gagnon, 1990).

The typical use of sexual orientation in research can be problematic in other ways: it fails to account for people's experiences of sexual fluidity (shifts in sexual orientation and/or identity) or nonexclusivity and implies a fixedness that does not appear to be empirically-based (i.e., accountable to the patterns visible in people's actual lives) (e.g., Diamond, 2003a, 2012, 2014; Galupo et al., 2014a; Herdt, 1990). One example is Money's (1986) "lovemap" theory of sexual orientation. Lovemaps were intended to be a directed, orienting force that differentiated early in life and organized concepts of idealized lovers. They were intrinsically deterministic, static once set, normative, and prescriptive with heterosexuality as the ideal. Lovemaps were rooted in a medicalized frame of sexualities and aberrations, pathology and its absence, seemingly unlinked to lived experiences or science.

Positioning sexual orientation as the defining feature of sexuality is also problematic because sexual orientation is dyadic, defined in part by one's attractions and engagements with others. But what is the evidence that a person's entire sexuality is defined by its dyadic aspects? On the one hand, partnered and solitary sexuality are largely seen as overlapping; Freund (1974) talked about masturbation as a "surrogate" for dyadic sexuality. There is

some evidence for this, via overlap in solitary/partnered orgasm experiences and sexual frequencies (Laumann et al., 1994; Mah & Binik, 2002; van Anders & Dunn, 2009). But solitary sexuality is also positioned as lesser and thus different than dyadic sexuality; masturbation is often discussed as a sort of second best or last resort as if it were partnered sexuality minus the partner (and minuses are never positive). Empirically, the two diverge as well. For example, solitary and dyadic desire show opposite correlations with testosterone and cuddling (van Anders, 2012b; van Anders, Edelstein, Wade, & Samples-Steele, 2013), and solitary and dyadic sexual indices are only correlated at low to moderate levels (Levant, Rankin, Hall, Smalley, & Williams, 2012; van Anders, 2012b). Partnered and solitary sexuality are thus best understood as related though separate constructs, according to empirical research (Laumann et al., 1994). If solitary and dyadic sexualities are not the same thing, how can the inherently dyadic sexual orientation be the defining feature of a person's sexuality inclusive of solitary sexuality?

Another important limitation of current theories of sexual orientation is that they are organized around sameness versus difference. But what counts as same and the other as plastic. For example, does a butch–femme relationship entail sameness because it may be same-sex or difference because it may be other-gender? Terms like homosexual or heterosexual are a decision placed onto a sexual configuration rather than a property of it. SCT does not use sameness and otherness because both problematically adhere to a gender/sex (usually sex) binary while simultaneously failing to name it. In other words, how does homosexual (same-sexual) come to mean sexuality with someone of the same gender/sex rather than, for example, sexuality with someone of the same age or predilection?

Certainly, some individuals may be specifically attracted to people *because* they are the same or other gender/sex, but it is an empirical question how many people's sexuality are characterized by this. It seems unlikely that people generally organize their sexuality around notions of what they do or don't have, such as "I am attracted to these people who have vulvas *because* I have a vulva and they are like me," or "I am attracted to this person who has a penis because *I* have a vulva and he is *not* like me." That is not to say that sameness and otherness (or oppositeness) are not important or primary to some people.

Interestingly, features of complementarity are certainly primary organizing features of the way many people implicitly understand sexual orientation to work regardless of how it actually does. Scholars have documented the underlying assumptions of complementarity (that vulvas/vaginas complement penises, that women complement men) and oppositeness (that women and men are opposites) as changing historical characterizations of sex. These pervade ways of thinking so strongly that oppositional sexes seem natural despite variations in time for what and who counts as opposite (e.g., see Fausto-Sterling, 2000; Rodriguez Rust, 2000).

Still, a benefit to thinking about sameness and otherness in sexual orientation has been to understand that homosexuality and heterosexuality are related rather than disparate unconnected sexualities. For example, Freud (1905) argued that they were two sides of the same coin and that everyone had bisexual tendencies. But he also argued that ideal development was heterosexual, as did Money (1986). Complementarity is a lens that is often uncritically imported from cultural value judgments into theories along the lines of categorizing sexualities as normal or abnormal.

Sex- and Gender-Specific Limitations around Sexual Orientation: Getting to "Gender/Sex"

A major limitation of existing sexual orientation theories is that sexual orientation implicitly invokes sex rather than gender though supporting evidence for this is sparse at best. For example, when discussing sexual orientation,[4] Freund (1974) stated that attraction was to sex: visually perceived male or female body shape. Pillard and Weinrich (1987) focused on genital morphology. Studies of sexual attraction measure physical sex, like static images of faces or body shapes (e.g., Mehrabian & Blum, 1997). No studies, however, provide proof for sex over gender and almost none empirically assess gender in any way. This subsumption of gender into sex is problematic because it lacks scientific precision and external validity (Coyote & Sharman, 2011; Unger, 1979). Sexual orientation ends up being problematic as operationalized because *gender matters*.

Gender is how some groups make distinctions. And sexual orientation fails to make sense of these distinctions (e.g., between women who are interested in women vs. women who are interested in butch or femme women). It fails to account for heterosexual men interested in feminine women regardless of sex versus those aroused by breasts, vulvas, or vaginas regardless of gender. It makes no room for women who are attracted to men regardless of penis presence. Theories of sexual orientation rooted solely in sex are scientifically problematic because they fail to "see" diverse sexualities that empirically exist. Even measures like the Klein Sexual Grid (Klein, 1993), which allows for much more complexity, including over time, have a unitary (sex) focus (Galupo et al., 2014a).

The focus on sex in sexual orientation leads additionally to criticisms of its reliance on discrete binaries. Sex binaries necessitate individuals who are women or men being attracted to individuals who are men or women[5] (e.g., see Diamond & Butterworth, 2008). Binaries usually sideline gender as they

[4] Freund (1974, p. 68) actually used the term "erotic preference," which he defined as "…relative sexual arousal value of male and female body shape".

[5] Some scholars use androphilic/gynephilic or gynoerotic/androerotic, which mean love of (or attraction to) men and women, respectively (e.g., Freund, 1974; Storms, 1980; Vasey & VanderLaan, 2012). These terms are useful for describing people's sexual interests regardless of their own gender/sex, but still rely on *targets* having a discrete binaristic gender/sex and thus do not fit the purposes of this article.

Table 2 Operational definitions and examples of gender, sex, and gender/sex

	Label examples	Definitions
Gender	Feminine, masculine, genderqueer, transgender, trans, tomboy, butch, femme, etc.	Aspects of masculinity, femininity, and gender-diversity that are situated as socialized, learned, and cultural (e.g., appearance, behavior, presentation, comportment). May refer to one's internal sense of one's self, culture, roles, other's beliefs about one's self, structures and systems, etc.
Sex	Male, female sexqueer, trans, transsexual, intersex	Aspects of femaleness, maleness, and sex-related bodily features that are situated as biological, bodily, evolved, physical, and/or innate (e.g., vulvas, penises, breasts, body shape). May also refer to one's internal sense of one's self
Gender/sex	Woman, man, trans woman, trans man, ciswoman, cisman, genderqueer, intersex	Whole people/identities and/or aspects of women, men, and people that relate to identity and/or cannot really be sourced specifically to sex or gender

privilege sex—bodies and especially primary and secondary sex characteristics (e.g., Coleman, 1987). Focusing on sex can serve to make the sexual orientations of some genderqueer (genders that challenge or go beyond sex binaries) and trans individuals and their partners nonsensical, but there have been compelling arguments that it is the current conceptualization of sexual orientation that is nonsensical and not the individuals or their sexualities who sit beyond it (e.g., Galupo et al., 2014a). Clearly, theories about orientations rooted in sex binaries are problematic in that they fail to address known "gaps" (i.e., real people's lived experiences) (Galupo, Davis, Grynkiewiez, & Mitchell, 2014b; Joel, Tarrasch, Berman, Mukamel, & Ziv, 2014).

The ways in which women and men are operationally defined are muddy for the purposes of science and fail to acknowledge that what even counts as sex is contingent (Joel, 2012). As Delphy (1993) argued: "…biologists see sex as made up of several indicators…for sex to be used as a dichotomous classification, the indicators have to be reduced to just one…this reduction is a social act" (p. 5). For example, secondary sexual characteristics in women are often understood to mean breasts of a certain consistency and waists of a certain dimension relative to hip circumference, both of which are typically found in younger as opposed to older women. This is true despite the fact that the secondary sexual characteristics of women are *still female* regardless of their age. In the rare cases that sex is explicitly identified as the organizing feature of sexual orientation, it seems to be based on randomly selected features that themselves go completely undefined. For example, if breasts are a defining feature of femaleness, are prepubertal girls not female? Are very small-breasted adult women not female? If researchers operationalize breasts as those with the characteristic shape of reproductively-aged non-parous women, are older or parous women not female? Even though sex is supposed to be more scientific than gender because sex is biological, the actual use of sex in science reflects—ironically—a *lack* of science in terms of science as method (e.g., operational definitions, empirical tests, replicability, external validity). And, the focus on young women falsely conflates age with sex despite evidence that these are separable dimensions (Blanchard et al., 2009, 2012; Seto, 2012).

I use "gender/sex" rather than only "gender" and "sex" in SCT (see Table 2 for definitions). Gender/sex is an umbrella term for both gender (socialization) and sex (biology, evolution) and reflects social locations or identities where gender and sex cannot be easily or at all disentangled (e.g., Goldey & van Anders, 2011; van Anders & Dunn, 2009; van Anders & Goldey, 2010; van Anders et al., 2011; van Anders, 2012a, b). Gender/sex is useful in describing people and features, as both can involve phenomena that are not easily sorted into gender or sex. For example, a person might ask: Am I a man because I have a penis now? Because I was born with a penis? Because I find that masculinity resonates with me? Because I identify as a man? Another person might ask: When I am intimately interested in being with women, am I interested in people who identify as women? People who have vulvas and/or vaginas? People who act in ways that are culturally understood to be feminine? People who are recognized as female? Few people[6] have stopped to consider what it is about themselves that "makes" them women, men, or gender/sex-diverse, or what it is about men, women, and/or gender/sex-diverse people that they find particularly attractive.

Though some gender/sex features are not divisible into gender or sex, some certainly are. Indeed, scholars, especially feminists, have worked hard and long to disentangle gender from sex—as well as to trouble the notion that the two are so easily separable (e.g., Dreger, 1998; Fausto-Sterling, 2000; Kessler, 1998; Muehlenhard & Peterson, 2011; see Vanwesenbeeck, 2009 for sex research specifically). For example, testosterone is understood to be biological and thus a feature and marker of sex, but testosterone can be socially modulated (e.g., via sexual thoughts/activities or nurturance, etc. (Goldey & van Anders, 2011; van Anders, Hamilton, Schmidt, & Watson, 2007a; van Anders, Tolman, & Volling, 2012). So, is testosterone "sex" because it is biological or is it "gender" because social forces affect it? What to call those features that are both gender and sex, socialized and biological? Gender/sex.

I use gender/sex *sexuality* in SCT as the umbrella term rather than sexual orientation because this latter term semantically implies nothing about gender/sex even while being understood

[6] With the exception of some who are minoritized on the basis of gender/sex and/or sexuality or those who are specifically interested in engaging with these constructs (e.g., some feminists and gender/sex/sexuality scholars).

to invoke it. The lack of reference to gender/sex in terms that are used to reference gender/sex ironically serves to position gender/sex as *the* key organizer of all sexuality because sexuality itself must be understood as reflecting gender/sex even when gender/sex is not named. In other words, why should "sexuality" also mean "gender/sex," especially when it often doesn't? And, why is sexuality seen to be organized primarily by gender/sex rather than other features? Moreover, where is this claim visible and thus actionable in scholarly ways? If the claim (theory) that gender/sex is key to sexuality is not explicit, how can anyone actually *see* the claim and empirically test it? Narratives and empirical work demonstrate that many people's sexualities are either not primarily organized around others' gender/sex or not at all organized in this way (Boswell, 1990; Coyote & Sharman, 2011; Serano, 2013). Moreover, different times and places including "this" one have positioned features other than gender/sex as primary organizers of sexuality, including partner number, virginity status, ability, marital status, fertility, race/ethnicity, age, reproduction, citizenship, legally or religiously recognized marriage, or payment to name a few. In this way, highlighting gender/sex by naming it explicitly alongside naming other forms of sexuality (like partner number) actually works to decenter gender/sex while giving it the important place it seems to hold in many people's lives.

"Sexual Orientation" as a Term and Concept: A Claim for Retention/Reclamation

Above, I describe limitations to the way sexual orientation tends to be theorized but there are other problematics. Sexual orientation as a term is increasingly seen as regressive for the same reasons it is often seen as progressive. Relative to "sexual preference," which might be understood to reflect gender/sex sexuality that is a result of postnatal development (Bell, Weinberg, & Hammersmith, 1981) or choice (Money, 1990),[7] sexual orientation invokes a natural, biological, unlearned, and unchanging sexuality (Freund, 1974). While this affords sexual orientation some of the authority and protection granted to science, people have asked why sexuality would have to be natural, predetermined, or unchosen to be accepted or permissible, and how research that focuses on biological determination implicitly buys into and reifies this line of reasoning (Halley, 1994). Most poignantly, people have pointed to precedents where biological determination was used to validate persecution, not to mention genocide, rather than legal protection and rights (Lerner, 1992).

The focus on sex over gender might be one reason that critics often suspect that sexual orientation research belongs to a bioessentialist project, a worldview where people are most critically defined by their biological features (e.g., sex over gender or identity). To be clear, I am not saying that sex is *not* an important or defining feature of many people's sexuality; I am saying that sex is not the only organizing feature of gender/sex sexuality (e.g., see Coleman, 1987; Galupo et al., 2014a; Rodriguez Rust, 2000; Sedgwick, 1990).

There are other critiques of sexual orientation as commonly used. Many people see sexuality as relational (Tiefer, 1996), but sexual orientation is typically placed within a person despite its dyadic nature. In contrast to sexual orientation, sexual identity is seen as more relationally grounded. Sexual identity is rooted in communities and thus more appropriate for alliance building and social action. So, many use sexual identity instead of sexual orientation.

One problem with using sexual identity in place of sexual orientation is that one is not just a progressive version of another. The two have very distinct meanings, laid out in Table 1. Despite this, the use of sexual identity often ends up relying on the notion of a shared underlying sexual orientation in ways that largely go uncritiqued (Hird, 2000). This ends up leaving sexual orientation to be constructed by scientists and sexual identity to be constructed by others.

This is markedly similar to disciplinary divvying up of gender and sex, which feminist scholars have identified as exceedingly problematic (e.g., Haig, 2004; Unger, 1979). Gender and sex were largely separated by feminist scholars with the goal of focusing on gender and leaving sex behind. But feminist science studies scholars have cogently highlighted how focusing on gender did not leave sex behind, and it left sex *uncritiqued*, a difference with major implications in a world where science and critique are crucial (e.g., Fausto-Sterling, 2000, 2005). Leaving sexual orientation behind in favor of sexual identity is similarly problematic. It ends up implicitly positioning sexual orientation as the core foundation (biology) upon which sexual identity (culture) is built in ways that exactly mirror how sex is seen as the impenetrable and unmovable base upon which gender is flimsily constructed. Attending to sexual orientation and sexual identity as different constructs that are both cultural sidesteps this. This is one reason why I retain orientation in Sexual Configurations.

There are other reasons to retain orientation and they relate to its utility. Though it is often understood to mean something that is innate, static, fixed, and/or essential, there is nothing intrinsically semantic about the term that necessitates this. In fact, orientation is used quite widely to mean just a set of interests without connotations of determinism or permanence. SCT uses *this* meaning of orientation, i.e., a dynamic one.

Conceptualizing orientations as dynamic does not mean that sexual orientation is intentionally or consciously changeable in SCT. Extensive evidence shows that gender/sex sexual orientations cannot be shifted or changed by individuals or others, even as individuals do report experiencing shifts in their sexual orientations (Beckstead, 2012; Diamond, 2003b; Freund, 1974; Nichols, 1990; Rust, 2001). Accordingly, gender/sex sexual orientations (and maybe other kinds too) cannot be understood as universally fixed *or* externally/internally changeable. A comparable

[7] Money noted that sexual preference, implying voluntary choice, was a politically dangerous term.

analogy might be age: individuals change with age but aging cannot be caused by individuals or others. It is not clear why anyone would want to change their gender/sex sexual orientation for reasons other than social stigma (Diamond, 2003b; Haldeman, 2002; Herek & Garnets, 2007) in which case social action—not individual change—seems required (assuming social action is possible). Shifts in sexual orientations might and do occur but cannot be imposed by selves or others.

There are multiple reasons to argue for the continued use of orientation including scientific precision, utility, and strategic reasons. It captures a set of features that seem to resonate as a meaningful dimension for many people and does so alongside and separate from identities and statuses (Rosario & Schrimshaw, 2014). I am thus arguing that orientation is worth retaining and reclaiming and I have tried to use it in this sense in Sexual Configurations. For other reclamation projects around orientation, see Ahmed (2006).

What About Lust and Love? Why Eroticism and Nurturance?

As described above, sexual orientation is almost always used to discuss gender/sex or, more specifically, sex. But when Diamond (2003b) compellingly asked: "What does sexual orientation orient?", the question highlighted how our current employment of sexual orientation explicitly orients lust but implicitly orients love in addition. Both love and lust are folded into the "sexual" in sexual orientation.

In SCT, I deliberately use the terms eroticism and nurturance as sexual subconstructs instead of lust and love (van Anders et al., 2013). Eroticism refers to aspects of sexuality tied to bodily pleasure, orgasm, arousal, tantalization, and related concepts (see also Storms, 1980). Nurturance refers to warm loving feelings and closeness.

Why eroticism rather than lust? Lust implies sexual desire, wanting, or motivation. Eroticism denotes phenomena that are sexually tantalizing, evoke one's sexual interests or thoughts, are sexually arousing in that they elicit psychological or physiological sexual responses (whether desired or not), or are related to features tied to sexuality. Eroticism is useful because it does not necessitate the same kind of need/desire for release that lust does, even while it can invoke it.

Nurturance and love are also not synonymous. Love implies an important and deep affective connection whereas nurturance implies a warm, loving, supportive, and potentially committed connection. Nurturance is useful because it does not denote the primacy, intensity, or infatuation that love does. Neither love nor nurturance are unique or specific to sexual/romantic relationships, as either can characterize friendships, family connections, and even pet ownership. And, neither lust nor eroticism are unique to partnered sexuality, as people can be solitarily erotic or lust for objects. Accordingly, neither nurturance nor eroticism are uniquely relevant to dyadic sexuality, though I discuss them here in that context.

Eroticism and nurturance might be seen to map onto physical and emotional sexuality, but these terms artificially conflate the pairs. For example, individuals can be physically nurturant or engage in physical expressions of emotion (e.g., via hugs, cuddling, or sympathetic touch). And individuals can be psychologically erotic, as sexual thoughts increase testosterone (Goldey & van Anders, 2011), or emotionally erotic, as with feelings of deep sexual connection with another person. Though erotic contact is arousing, which might be interpreted as a physical or emotional feeling, not all phenomena that are erotic lead to arousal of either kind. The boundary between emotion and physicality is permeable, as exemplified by the warmth one can feel from loving support, which makes physical/emotional less scientifically useful than eroticism/nurturance.

Nurturance and eroticism can be clearly distinct: people can feel one without the other (Diamond, 2003b; van Anders et al., 2011). Yet, they can co-occur in partnered sexuality. Partnered sexuality that involves both nurturance and eroticism can be understood as a sort of pair bond, one example of a social bond. Social bonds are studied in a wide variety of disciplines, including neuroscience. Neuroscientific evidence points to a common evolved neurobiological system for social bonds like pair bonds and parent-infant bonds (reviewed in Carter, 1998; Diamond, 2003b; Fernandez-Duque, Valeggia, & Mendoza, 2009; Fisher, 1992; van Anders et al., 2011; Young, Wang, & Insel, 1998). This converges with psychological evidence that intimacy and attachment characterize both pair bonds and parent-infant bonds (Bowlby, 1969). Pair bonds and parent-infant bonds thus share a common neurobiological system: nurturance. Nurturance likely evolved to support parent-infant bonds, which obviously contribute to survival, but also supports social bonds more generally, including pair bonds.

But nurturance cannot be the whole story underlying all kinds of social bonds. For example, though pair bonds and parent-infant bonds overlap, they must differ: one common system cannot support nurturance in both, but selectively relate to sexuality in pair bonds but not parent-infant bonds. Accordingly, evidence and theory support a second neurobiological system: eroticism (for reviews, see Diamond, 2003b; Diamond & Dickenson, 2012; van Anders et al., 2011). Eroticism likely evolved to support reproduction, which is the engine of evolution. But, as nurturance piggybacked on parent-infant bonds, eroticism piggybacked on reproduction (van Anders et al., 2011). This is not to suggest that reproduction is the major or primary framing for eroticism or pair bonds,[8] only that, for evolutionary theorizing, reproduction is a relevant starting point (with pleasure one potential next step: Pinkerton, Cecil, Bogart, & Abramson, 2003).

[8] That is, evolution is not the only or primary arbiter of meaning even as it is useful and relevant for this discussion.

The two neurobiological systems—eroticism and nurturance—are distinguishable but not completely separate, however, and their conjunction contributes to partnered sexuality and pair bonds (van Anders et al., 2011; Young & Wang, 2004). There is compelling arguments and empirical examples that the two are physically interconnected with loops for mutual influence (Diamond, 2003b; Diamond & Dickenson, 2012). For example, sexual activity like intercourse can facilitate nurturant pair bond formation and feelings of closeness (Carter, 1998; Diamond, 2003b; Snowdon, 2001; van Anders et al., 2007a; Young & Wang, 2004). SCT is based on the evidence that partnered sexuality has subconstructs of eroticism and nurturance. They are separable and interconnected, and highlighting this is useful for theorizing lived sexual experiences.

The Foundations of Sexual Configurations Theory

What Makes Sexual Configurations a Theory?

Theory is critical to science, but often undefined (Tolman & Diamond, 2014). This may be because theory seems to have one clear definition across all contexts; in reality, its definition and usages differ by discipline and epistemological goal (for in-depth thinking about theory in sex research, see Bancroft, 2000b; Katz-Wise & Hyde, 2014; McWhirter et al., 1990; Tolman & Diamond, 2014). How is Sexual Configurations a theory, then? The type of theory I mean to invoke is grounded in other scholars' theorizing about theory (e.g., Davis, 2008; Longino, 2002; Rodgers, 2000). A theory is a data-based model that "makes sense" of empirical findings in new ways and guides how we engage with the world. It is a novel pattern recognition, articulating and naming a set of interconnections in useful but previously unseen ways. Theories are models that simplify and match the world in some fundamental and important sense (Rodgers, 2000). Theories solve problems, offer explanatory power, are testable; a theory lays one's cards on the table.

Can there be only one theory to explain any set of phenomena? Most would argue no (e.g., Gagnon, 2000; Longino, 2002; Rodgers, 2000; Tolman & Diamond, 2014) and I offer Sexual Configurations as "a"—not "the"—theory of sexuality. Rodgers (2000) makes the case elegantly: "The real world is, presumably, complicated enough that there are any number of ways to simplify it in meaningful ways" (p. 258).

Theories may coexist while being differentially useful. They can be tested against the world they are meant to reflect and, depending on whether they share levels of analysis, each other. Gagnon (2000) wrote that theories of sexualities can be preferable when they "…go against the grain of accepted theorizing and offer some resistance to the dominant…status quo" (p. 172). He argued that political concerns are crucial to building theory. Rubin (1999) argued that theories of sexuality must be situated in rich descriptions of lived experiences of sexuality. For evaluative purposes, one could ask: Does a theory meaningfully and usefully model what it sets out to? And for whom? As theories are generative, one could ask: Does a theory channel research into more productive avenues? Does it inspire insights that were otherwise obscured? Theory is not necessarily complete or static and the most successful theories tend to contain flexibility (Davis, 2008). A theory does not end question-asking; by "clicking" otherwise scattered observations together, it focuses questions and opens up new avenues.

My use of theory in this article is underscored by the following principles: (1) theory should explain the entirety of a delimited known phenomenon and not just part of it (i.e., theory should not just focus on the majority of a phenomenon or its most/least obvious cases) (Bell et al., 1981). As Vrangalova and Savin-Williams (2012) noted regarding sexuality: "…any non-zero category…needs to be considered for and incorporated into scientific theories" (p. 98). I focus on a set of restricted dyadic sexual phenomena in Sexual Configurations but, within these domains, attempt to incorporate known and potential diverse sexualities that are more typically excluded from theory and nudged into an "awkward surplus" of knowledge (Fujimura, 2006); (2) theory should be relevant to and account for (and be accountable to) lived experiences (i.e., theory should reflect, and make sense to, the people whose experiences theorists seek to "explain") (Tolman & Diamond, 2014); (3) theory should promote clearer understandings of phenomena in all their complexity (i.e., theory should make complexity clearer and more comprehensible but should do so without eliminating those aspects that *are* complex). Glossing over complexity for the purposes of a simpler model obscures patterns and elides differences rather than revealing and making sense of them; and (4) theory should make phenomena legible, including lived experience. For example, if people think that love and lust are the same one thing, they will find it impossible to reconcile the notion of a lesbian-identified woman falling in love with a man; if people think that gender and sex are the same, they will find it impossible to reconcile the notion of attractions to feminine men.

I would like to emphasize that these are ideals of which theory—like all other scholarship—is likely to fall short. Fortunately, it is in recognizing and clarifying gaps that scholarship happens and moves forward. As a final and critical point for scientists, (5) theory should make for better science. Otherwise, researchers could expend tremendous effort seeking to understand irrelevant, spurious, or imagined phenomena. For example, if people have experienced lust and love in separate and interconnected ways, then theory should drive research that reflects these separations and interconnections rather than falsely focusing on intimacy or sexuality as one universal unified phenomenon *or* as completely unrelated subcomponents.

Why is Sexual Configurations Theory So-Named?

I use "configuration" deliberately in SCT because the term denotes dynamism rather than fixedness. In addition, I mean to convey several other key points. First, sexuality is not unitary, it is multifaceted; a configuration has many components. Second, sexuality is socially situated, which means that even a specific aspect of sexuality (e.g., heterosexuality) is not the same one thing across cultures or times; configuration connotes one arrangement out of many possible arrangements without denoting value or permanence. Third, sexuality is dynamic even within individuals; a configuration can shift. SCT acknowledges the possibility of within-person shifts over age, context, and/or lifephase even though sexual configurations cannot be shifted (see "Sexual Orientation" as a Term and Concept: A Claim for Retention/Reclamation for further discussion). The relative prominence of any component of a sexual configuration can also shift (e.g., bisexuality might be more salient in one time and place, but partner number might be more salient in another), such that the components that constitute SCT have, will, and may emerge, disappear, fade, and/or strengthen within individuals, over times, and across cultures (Laumann et al., 1994). For example, there are sexual components now that have no historical analogue (like culturally-specific sexual identities [e.g., "gay," Rubin, 1999] or internet-related sexuality). There are future components that do not yet exist or are not formally delineated. And, there are components that are culturally understood to be primary and universally important for sexuality that nevertheless will shift or fade. Configuration is apt because SCT is intended to convey a dynamic, multifaceted, and value-neutral approach to sexualities.

A Sexual Diversity Lens

Thinking from the Sexual Margins to Sexual Diversity Thinking

"Sexual minority" is typically understood to mean lesbian, bisexual, and gay (LBG) individuals. There are other individuals who are increasingly included as sexual minorities because they share with LGB individuals and communities the experiences of stigma, discrimination, and/or social proscriptions against their sexualities. One definition of sexual minority is grounded in statistical infrequency but this is a limited definition: though sexual minority status can overlap with statistical infrequency, there are many statistically infrequent sexualities that are culturally sanctioned and not seen as sexual minority, such as men who have sex with over 50 women or women who experience orgasm with penis-vagina intercourse (Lloyd, 2005). A more expansive and empirically-relevant definition of sexual minority that I use in this article is: a marginalized sexual social location in a power hierarchy that can refer to individuals or groups.

Sexual minorities share in stigma in part because they are perceived as violating norms. But they often transgress very different norms in ways that do not always go appreciated (see Table 3) (and see Serano, 2013). The term queer is sometimes useful (and sometimes not) as an umbrella term to describe sexual minorities and minority sexualities (marginalized sexual practices) that are perceived or intended to challenge gender and/or sexuality-related norms, even when the actual norms being challenged differ.

The collapsing of diverse sexual minority groups into one sexual minority category can be problematic given differences in lived experiences. For example, the conflation of gender minorities (e.g., trans-identified people) and sexual minorities (e.g., LGB individuals) can obfuscate the disparate challenges these groups face and the types of social change they might seek. Other times, shared experiences of stigmatization might be a push to collective action among sexual minorities.

Some approaches to knowledge, like thinking from the margins, value the insights gained from minoritized individuals who critically engage with their standpoints (e.g., Collins, 2000; Dreger, 1999; Stryker & Whittle, 2006). So, though marginalized groups are often theorized by others, i.e., dominant groups, thinking from the margins allows for theoretical insights that may not be available to others *except* through marginalized groups because of their experiential derivation (e.g., Harding, 1986). And, it may be important to the groups that knowledge about them is rooted in their own lives.

Thinking from the sexual margins is useful for many reasons, including for conceptualizing sexuality because theorizing marginality is often a starting point (see Fig. 1a): marginalized groups work to make sense of themselves as marginal and/or as groups; researchers notice or seek out this marginality and study it as, typically, difference from an undifferentiated, unarticulated normative backdrop (Lorber, 1996).

But minority sexualities are not the only sexualities in the sexual landscape. At some point, minority groups make clear to others that their marginalization is relative and active. In other words, sexual minority groups are minoritized by sexual majority culture and are positioned as minorities relative to sexual majority groups (see Fig. 1b). At this point, sexual majority groups (e.g., heterosexuals) come to be recognized and studied in addition to sexual minority groups. This parallels critical race theory and feminist studies, which respectively started with attention to racial/ethnic minorities and women/femininities and now also include critical whiteness studies and men/masculinities (Kimmel, 1987; Wiegman, 1999) (though there are tensions: for example, with both whiteness and men/masculinities studies as sometimes separate fields).

The recognition of minority sexualities is a precondition to recognizing that majority sexualities are such. For example, genetic sex determination in mammals becomes visible as genetic only in juxtaposition against sex determination that follows other routes, like temperature-dependence in turtles. Attending to minority

Table 3 Various norms related to gender/sex and sexuality, the ways in which these norms might be violated, transgressed, or challenged, and the individuals and groups who might be seen to challenge these norms

Norm	Violation/transgression/challenge	Targets
Heteronormative sexuality: that sexuality should follow stereotyped heterosexual scripts (e.g., other-sex sexuality; high male sexuality/low female sexuality, etc.)	Having sexual desires for or sexual engagement with same-gender/sex individuals; sexualities that are seen as 'cross-gender'	Could apply to LGBT individuals, MSM, WSW, etc., or anyone who is, wants to be, or could be sexually active with individuals who are, or are perceived to be, of the same gender, sex, or gender/sex as themselves. Could also apply to cisgendered heterosexuals who are seen to transgress their gender-specific norms
Heteronormative nurturance: that nurturance/love should follow stereotyped heterosexual scripts (e.g., other-sex love; love should overlap with sexuality)	Having nurturant desires and/or activity for same-gender/sex individuals	Could apply to LGBT individuals, MSM, WSW, etc., or anyone who is, wants to be, or could be intimately connected (e.g., via relationships, marriage, and potentially even friendships) with individuals who are, or are perceived to be, of the same gender, sex, or gender/sex as themselves; also could be nurturant connections that are deemed *too* nurturant/close for same-gender/sex individuals (and therefore are suspected of sexual aspects)
Shame normativity: that minority sexualities should be embarrassing to others and selves and kept hidden as much as possible	Having one's minority sexuality readable and/or acknowledged/(pro)claimed	Could apply to any out sexual/gender minority individual/group (e.g. individuals who are LGBTQ, polyamorous, asexual, kink-identified, slut-identified, etc.)
Fixedness normativity: that sexualities should be static rather than fluid	Shifts in one's sexual target	Sexual fluidity, bisexuality
Mononormativity: that people should want to have, and only have, nurturant-sexual connections with one person	Being interested in or having multiple intimate partners; publicly acknowledging multipartnered status	People engaged in consensual non-monogamy, cheaters, single-by-choice people, multisexual individuals
Homonormativity: that people with same-sex intimate interests should follow homonormative intimacy scripts (e.g., only have same-sex intimate interests, etc.)	Expressions or desires that might include other-gender/sex individuals, etc.	Bisexuals, some trans individuals, gay or lesbian individuals with other-sex interests and/or activity
Sexual normativity: that people should be and/or want to be sexual with other people	Not having sexual interest in other people; not being sexually active with other people	Asexual individuals, demisexual individuals, individuals in nonsexual lifephases, etc.
Gender/sex normativity: that gender and sex should match, and follow heteronormative gender/sex scripts	Having gender and sex sexual desires and/or activities that are divergent, are not uniform (in that they can change), *not* having gender/sex as a primary or any orienting feature of intimacy, or having interests in both and/or any gender/sex, having interests in trans or nonnormatively gendered/sexed bodies, or having a nonnormative gendered/sexed body	Butch, femme, bisexual, pansexual, person-not-gender, sexual fluidity, trans, queer, partners/contacts of trans individuals
Alignment normativity: that sexual and nurturant desires and behaviors should be co-incident	Having sexual and nurturant desires and/or activities that are divergent	Branched sexualities; sexual fluidity
Female nonerotic normativity: that women should have low or no sexual desires, and that nurturant desires should be the key organizing principle of intimacy (e.g., over sexual desires)	Having sexual desires as a woman at all and/or that are strong enough to result in erotic decision-making and identity-formation	Could be polyamorous women, lesbians, cisgender women, trans women, trans men, slut-identified women, kink-identified women, femme men, etc.
Male nonnurturant normativity: that men should have low or no nurturant desires, and that erotic desires should be the key organizing principle of intimacy (e.g., over nurturant desires)	Having relational desires as a man that are stronger than sexual desires or strong enough to be acted on	Men, masculine women, butch women
Cisnormativity: that individuals must retain one sex (gender; gender/sex) their entire lives from birth onwards	Experiencing branchedness in one's gender/sex and/or shifting/changing/recognizing a gender/sex that is not the one identified at birth	Trans individuals, genderqueer individuals

Table 3 continued

Norm	Violation/transgression/challenge	Targets
Feminine normativity: that women should be feminine or that gay men should be feminine because they transgress gender/sex norms by being intimately interested in men	Presenting or wanting to present as a masculine ciswoman, gay man, trans woman	Butch lesbians, tomboys, masculine gay men, feminine straight men, masculine trans women or ciswomen
Masculine normativity: that men should be masculine, that lesbians should be masculine because they transgress gender/sex norms by being intimately interested in women	Presenting or wanting to present as a feminine cis or trans man or lesbian	Femme lesbians, masculine straight women, feminine gay men, feminine trans men
Binary normativity: that individuals are hardwired to be women or men and/or be intimately interested in men or women; that women and men are opposite	Seeing the world as having more diverse gender/ sexes than exist within a woman-man binary	Bisexuality; trans; genderqueer
Conventional normativity: that people should only want to be sexual with each other in one way	Having sexual interests/behaviors that are kink-related, involve non-bodily items	Kink-related sexualities, consensual non-monogamies, sexually open individuals, etc.

These norms, their definitions, and the groups that might be seen as transgressing them are not meant to be definitive or exhaustive

sexualities eventually ends up foregrounding majority sexualities. But does this happen at the expense of paying focused attention to sexual minorities? Can researchers foreground both minority and majority sexualities simultaneously?

A sexual diversity perspective synthesizes minority and majority sexualities, viewing them as simultaneously interconnected, unique, and, above all, *positioned* relative to each other (see Fig. 1c). It attends to the particularities of each sexuality and its relations to other sexualities, acknowledging that sexualities can be grouped in various ways (and that there is no one natural way to group). It uses a macro lens to take multiple sexualities into simultaneous account alongside a micro lens to address the particularities of a specific sexuality. I see a sexual diversity perspective as a stage in a sequence that focuses initially on sexual minorities as "other" relative to an unstated normative backdrop, then recognizes that minorities are minoritized relative to majorities and focuses additionally on sexual majorities and minority-majority difference, and then understands that positionality is relative and dynamic, with sexualities existing within social locations in such a way that there can be heterogeneity within sexualities and commonality between them (Fig. 1) (and see Lorber, 1996, for discussion).

A sexual diversity perspective is not post-minority; it calls for attending to the understudy of minorities and is not a new justification for the same overattention to majorities. A sexual diversity perspective does not somehow transcend stigma or discrimination nor should these critical aspects of sexual minority experiences be left behind. It explicitly attends to power dynamics; for example, one might consider heterosexuality and bisexuality alongside each other, paying equal attention to their shared and divergent complexities while recognizing that heterosexuality is a majority sexuality and bisexuality is a marginalized one—and what that means.

A sexual diversity perspective holds that everyone has a sexual configuration. The ways in which some come to be minoritized is a human social decision-making endeavor. Every sexual configuration has positionality and is located relative to others.

The Bioscience Roots of Sexual Diversity Perspectives

Though it may be surprising to some, a sexual diversity lens emerged from bioscience, especially the comparative frameworks of behavioral and social neuroendocrinology (e.g., Adkins-Regan, 2005; Oliveira, 2009; van Anders & Watson, 2006; van Anders et al., 2011; Wallen, 2001; Wingfield, Hegner, Dufty, & Ball, 1990). This may be unexpected because biology is typically conflated with biological reductionism, essentialism, and determinism by its critics (often for good reason).[9] So how does one get from bioscience to a sexual diversity lens?

Biological epistemologies are diverse themselves and encompass a range of approaches. For example, species-specific behaviors might be studied as rooted in the context of local ecologies and evolutionary trajectories. Hormones might be studied both as influences on behavior and responses to it given relevant contexts. Accordingly, context is not a background or side-point to many biological questions but a prominent and active factor.

Many biological approaches study particular behaviors within particular species within particular social and ecological contexts

[9] Biological reductionism is the belief that social processes can be best understood by studying underlying biological substrates or systems and the more reducible the biology the more informative (e.g., genetics are uniformly more informative than hormones, hormones are always more informative than cognition, genital responses are universally more informative than self-report). Biological essentialism is the belief that groups are unitary and have an underlying biological essence (e.g., homosexual men are all homosexual in the same way, for the same reason, and thus have the same biology). Biological determinism is the belief that biology causes a specific behavior universally, sometimes with allowances for cultural "nudges" (e.g., sexual outcomes are really caused by biological factors that culture only masks, dampens, or amplifies).

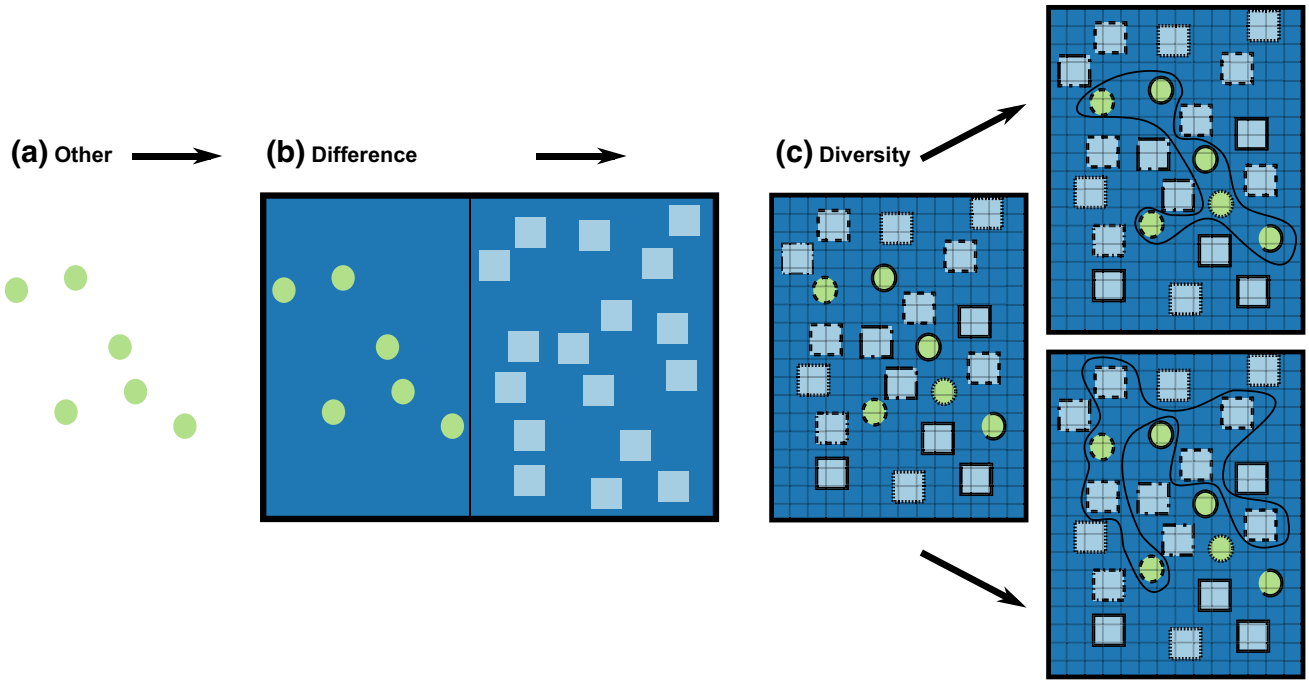

Fig. 1 Stages to sexual diversity. These stages move from **a** "other": focusing on sexual minorities as "other" against an unarticulated normative backdrop, to **b** "difference": recognizing that sexual minorities are minoritized relative to sexual majorities within a social context, and studying how they differ, to **c** diversity: seeing sexual minorities and majorities as positioned relative to each other and embedded within other social location axes in an intersectional framework; includes the recognition that there may be sexualities that come in and out of scholarly view, and that both sexual minorities and majorities have internal heterogeneity such that various groupings may occur along a number of shared features; includes attention to particularities and generalities along with power differentials

to (1) to glean specific information about a phenomenon (e.g., What does this species do at this time of year in this social context and part of the world?) and (2) to consider what general principles might underlie the phenomenon in relation to a larger category of phenomena (e.g., How do these specificities relate to what is known about other related phenomena?). A scientist might study how testosterone in one species responds to social phenomena in a specific season to learn about that species and also to develop general understandings about evolution (e.g., Cain & Ketterson, 2012). There is no assumption that a specific *or* general principle is only under investigation and, similarly, there is no value differential accorded to particular versus general insights.

Paying attention to generalities and particularities is fundamental to a sexual diversity lens. That a sexual diversity lens grew out of bioscience matters because there are insights, even from "across the aisle" epistemologies, to be gained from interdisciplinary thinking. More nuanced understandings of the diversity of each epistemological position may help us build new generative theory, more so than can be done from within or across boundarized disciplines.

A sexual diversity perspective focuses on understanding specific sexualities as situated and localized and also considers diverse sexualities in relation to each other. Using a constantly interchanging lens, neither generality nor specificity is prioritized. Even a focus on a specific sexuality involves the constant recognition that it exists alongside others. And a focus across sexualities nevertheless involves the recognition that each sexuality inheres specificities.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is important to SCT. It is a theory from African-American women's experiences and scholarship in which people occupy a social location that is not the sum of its parts. Collins (2000) and Crenshaw (1991) have described how Black women (in a U.S. context) do not experience oppression based on womanhood plus Blackness but a distinct experience specific to being a Black woman. Intersectionality could be thought of recognizing that social oppression is based on a social location at the meeting points of several identity axes (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1991; Moore, 2012) in a way similar to concepts of emergence. The list of possible intersecting axes is potentially unlimited but ones that currently seem to resonate most generally include gender/sex, age, sexuality, race/ethnicity, immigration status, nationality, gender identity, ability/disability, and class. Intersectionality matters for SCT because sexual configurations are not assumed to be isolated from other identity categories (Katz-Wise & Hyde, 2014; Stokes, Miller, & Mundhenk, 1998). Instead, sexual configurations may be experienced very differently depending on factors like race/ethnicity, age, etc. (see Sexual Identities in SCT).

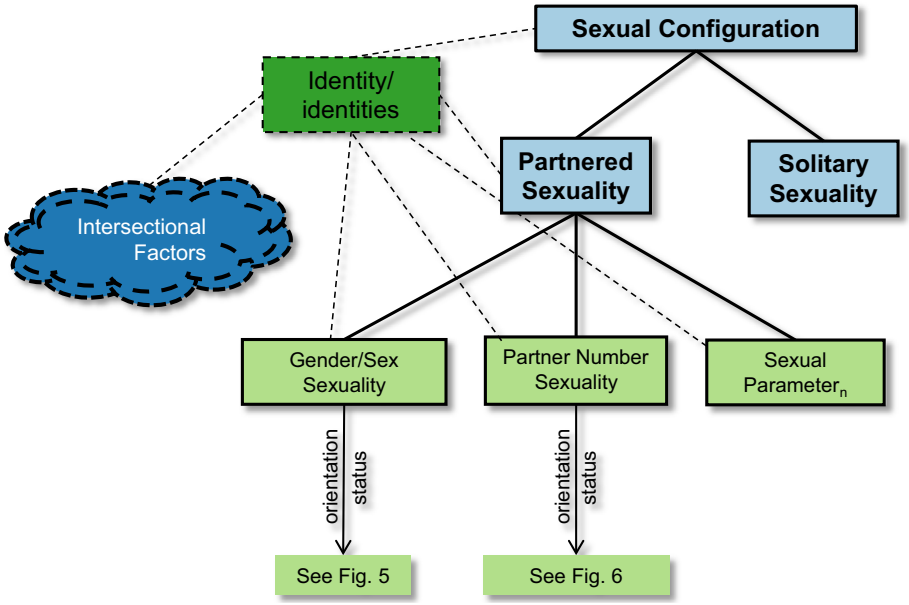

Fig. 2 Basic outlines of SCT. Each person has a sexual configuration that involves solitary and partnered sexuality. Partnered sexuality is subdivided into partner number sexuality, gender/sex sexuality, and sexual parameter$_n$. Sexual identities are a function of the ways these parameters assemble in connection with intersectional factors (i.e., other social location factors) that can vary in size and import. Orientations and statuses are demarcated, in this article, on the figures for partner number sexuality and gender/sex sexuality

Sexual Configurations Theory

General Organization

SCT provides a generative framework for studying and understanding diverse sexualities. It is a dynamic way to delineate diverse sexualities because it makes space for novel sexualities that are not yet embedded within it. Figure 2 shows the basic structure of a sexual configuration, which is composed of two domains for the purposes of this article: partnered sexuality and solitary sexuality. Earlier, I described the evidence both for distinguishing between the two and considering their overlaps[10] (see Limitations of Existing Theories About Sexual Orientation). For the remainder, I focus on partnered sexuality.

Partnered sexuality has four parameters in SCT, three of which are visualized on Fig. 2: gender/sex sexuality, partner number sexuality, and sexual parameter$_n$. Partnered sexuality is connected to identity/ies through each parameter, their combination, and/or intersectional factors in dynamic and bidirectional ways (discussed further in "Sexual Identities in SCT"). Identities are names given to some sexual configurations so I do not use identity terms within the parameters of SCT. The remaining parameter of partnered sexuality, eroticism/nurturance, is built into the others and thus not visualized on Fig. 2 and discussed later on (see Parameter 3: Eroticism and Nurturance).

SCT has an additional domain outside of partnered sexuality discussed in Individual Gender/Sex. Individual gender/sex and gender/sex sexuality are separate phenomena (e.g., Storms, 1980), though they can also be interconnected (Vanwesenbeeck, 2009). For example, gender (not sex) has predictive power for lifetime number of sexual partners such that femininity in women and men predicts fewer lifetime partners (Tate, 2011). Below are descriptions of the parameters of partnered sexuality in detail.

Parameters

Parameter 1: Gender/Sex Sexuality

In this section, I discuss gender/sex sexuality as a unitary construct: I later address how it can be partitioned into eroticism and nurturance (Parameter 3: Eroticism and Nurturance) as well as gender and sex (Separating Gender and Sex). Gender/sex sexuality maps out targets of orientations (e.g., gender/sexes of those whom one is attracted to) and partners for statuses (e.g., gender/sexes of those whom one is partnered with). In this section, I use "attractions" to avoid the unwieldy use of status/orientation each time I describe a feature of gender/sex sexuality. So, what does gender/sex sexuality involve?

[10] What is the line between solitary and dyadic sexuality? There is little empirical research on this point but could be. For example, if one masturbates in the presence of another person with no contact, is that solitary or dyadic? If one is using someone else for sexual gratification and not actually engaging with that person's subjectivities, is that somewhat solitary? Is phone or internet sex solitary because one is alone or dyadic because another person is involved? If a person masturbates while watching sexual media, is there a dyadic element to that? If the presence of partners impacts sexual arousal while watching visual sexual material (van Lankveld et al., 2014), is that dyadic or solitary? Finally, if someone is aroused by the thought of being arousing to others (e.g., Bogaert & Brotto, 2013) is that solitary or dyadic?

In Fig. 3, I use a step-by-step process to show how gender/sex sexuality is built from various dimensions. The end product is a model that allows for identifying one's gender/sex sexuality along all these dimensions plus the other parameters (nurturance plus eroticism, gender plus sex). At that point, a person will be able to demarcate their gender/sex sexual orientations and statuses with, for example, o-dot and s-dot, multiple notations, and/or outlined areas to represent points or ranges.

In Fig. 3, one dimension is gender/sex type, which has two levels: binary and nonbinary. Figure 3a shows one of these levels: binary gender/sex, which refers to attractions only to women, men or both men and women. This ring is continuous, such that people can be polar (only attracted to women or men) or somewhere in the intermediate space (attracted to both men and women; attracted mostly to women but a little to men; attracted more to men but some to women; etc.); research has clearly demonstrated that there is room for this more continuous understanding (Laumann et al., 1994). In terms of statuses, a person could be partnered with one or more women, one or more men, or both men and women.

Binary gender/sex (continuing on Fig. 3a) shows women and men as somewhat near each other, but separated by a gap. Why? One reason is that attractions to only men and only women are conceptually more similar (e.g., are more specific) than attractions to both. Another reason is that the gap is actually closed by nonbinary gender/sex (Fig. 3b).

Figure 3b shows nonbinary gender/sex, the second level of gender/sex type. Nonbinary gender/sex refers to attractions to individuals who exist outside normative gender/sex binaries. There are multiple locations in nonbinary gender/sex; one of these is gender/sex challenge. Gender/sex challenge refers to attractions to individuals who are not identified (by selves and/or others) as normative men/women and who challenge, transcend, or destabilize binaristic gender/sex. Some examples might include those who are attracted to people who identify as genderqueer or genderfuck, i.e., genders/sexes that challenge, mess with, destabilize, and/or play with traditional genders and gender binaries in some way. Gender/sex challenge *might* include attractions to individuals who have transitioned gender/sex, intersex-identified individuals, individuals with differences/disorders of sex development (DSDs),[11] etc. Gender/sex challenge does not necessarily reference action or intentionality. People might self-position and/or be positioned by others in ways that may overlap or not (and can be separately demarcated). For this reason, gender/sex challenge is separated from women and men by contingent norm boundaries.

Contingent norm boundaries are margins between women and men in Fig. 3a and gender/sex challenge in Fig. 3b. Who counts where? Who gets counted as a man or a woman is largely contingent and subjective, rather than universal, and differs by time and place (Spelman, 1988). For example, an individual can be attracted to people who are unquestionably categorized as women in one time and place but not in others (e.g., women who work out, wear make-up, smoke, enjoy erotic pleasure, have penises, cannot gestate). Accordingly, these contingent norm boundaries are malleable, permeable, and moveable.

The contingent norm boundaries in Fig. 3b continue from the circle's edge to the middle; focusing only on the circle's perimeter, these repeated straight lines (lines of isospecificity) represent a gradation from nonbinary gender/sex (at the very middle of gender/sex challenge) to binary gender/sex (past the contingent norm boundaries). What does this mean? A person at the very middle of gender/sex challenge might be attracted to people who completely challenge gender/sex norms (e.g., someone with many competing signs of genders), whereas a person closer to the man contingent norm boundary might be attracted to men who challenge men-specific gender norms (e.g., expressive men). But this positionality is culturally relative (e.g., in some cultures, expressive men are the norm).

There is another location in Fig. 3b, nonbinary gender/sex: all gender/sexes. All gender/sexes refers to attractions that involve all possible gender/sex formulations (including people who have any mix of gender/sex features as well as women and men). It is rooted in a nondiscrete, pluralistic nonbinaristic understanding of gender/sex.

At all gender/sexes (continuing on Fig. 3b), the straight lines of isospecificity from gender/sex challenge join up. In addition, at all gender/sexes, another set of lines of isospecificity converge: curved lines from the ring's perimeter, showing a gradation from binary gender/sex (in Fig. 3a) to nonbinary gender/sex (in Fig. 3b). What does this mean? A person at all gender/sexes could be attracted to people of any gender/sex: women, men, and people who challenge gender/sex in all ways. A person intermediate between all gender/sexes and the left-most side of the circle might be attracted considerably to women, somewhat to men, and somewhat to people who challenge gender/sex.

Both gender/sex challenge and all gender/sexes represent nonbinary gender/sex; Fig. 3c in conjunction with Fig. 3b shows how they differ: in specificity. Specificity is high for gender/sex challenge, where there is a specific attraction to people who challenge gender/sex in a specific nonbinary way. Specificity is low for all gender/sexes, where there is attraction to people of any gender/sex. Gender/sex challenge and all gender/sexes are thus opposite ends of a specificity continuum. Figure 3c also shows specificity for binary gender/sex (Fig. 3a). Being attracted to women or men is a specific (binary) attraction, whereas being attracted to both gender/sexes is a nonspecific (binary) attraction; these are thus opposite ends of a specificity continuum. Thus, being attracted to women, men or a specific kind of gender/sex challenge (e.g., butch women) are similar in high specificity. And, being attracted to both or all gender/sexes are similar in low specificity. Specificity—and notions of high/low

[11] There is a medical consensus statement supporting the use of disorders of sex development (Hughes, Houk, Ahmed, & Lee, 2006), but a number of people have argued for other terms, like difference of sex development (Diamond, 2009).

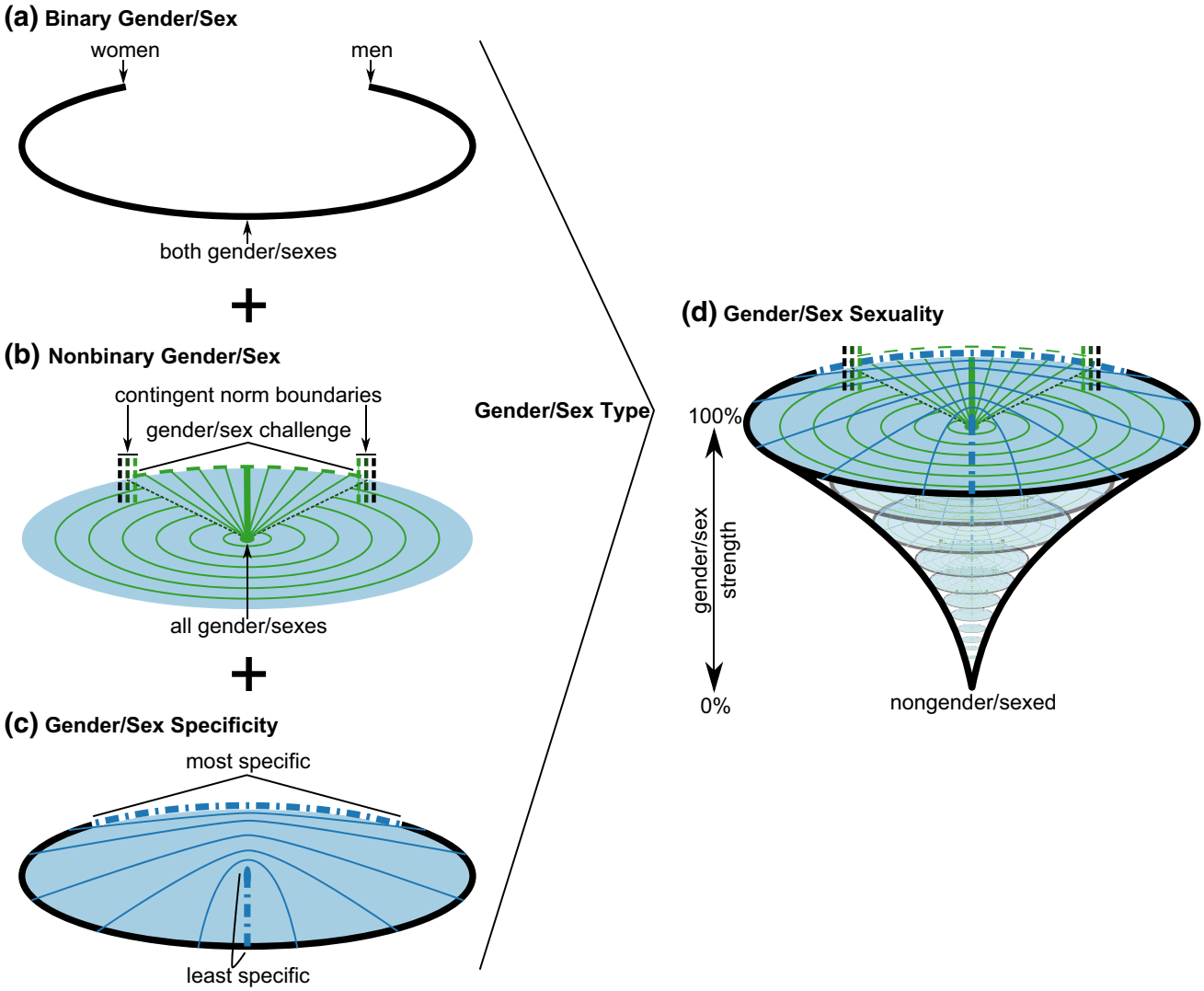

Fig. 3 Gender/sex sexuality. The parameter of gender/sex sexuality is characterized by a dimension of gender/sex type, which has **a** binary gender/sex, **b**, nonbinary gender/sex, and **c** gender/sex specificity. Gender/sex sexuality is also characterized by a dimension of **d** gender/sex strength, which ranges from 0 % (nongender/sexed) to 100 %. This figure also can be used to map individual gender/sex

specificity—could be reconceptualized in another way: e.g., as specificity/openness or multiplicity (high/low).

Figure 3d shows how gender/sex sexuality involves several overlapping dimensions in gender/sex type: a binary/nonbinary dimension (such that the binary perimeter is just one end of a binary/nonbinary continuum) and a specificity dimension. It also shows a third dimension: gender/sex strength. Gender/sex strength refers to how strongly gender/sex matters to one's partnered sexuality. It ranges from the very top (100 %) to nongender/sexed (0 %). At nongender/sexed, target gender/sex ceases to be relevant to partnered sexuality (e.g., Boom, 2008). That is, gender/sex is no longer a feature salient to sexual attractions. What would sexual attractions be based on then? At nongender/sexed,[12] sexual attractions are based on other factors, like power, intelligence, humor, kindness, etc. (e.g., Janssen, McBride, Yarber, Hill, & Butler, 2008). There are various ways that attractions may be nongender/sexed: for example, gender/sex may be irrelevant to a person's attractions or to the person they are with. Similarly, there are various ways that attractions may be gender/sexed: sexual attractions may be strongly oriented to gender/sex or partners may be strongly gender/sexed.

Gender/sex strength can range from 0 to 100 %, as visualized on Fig. 4d via the iterating gender/sex type discs. That is, at any non-zero degree of gender/sex strength, a person is located on the gender/sex type disc. For example, gender/sex could have only

[12] Is nongender/sexed another word for androgyny? Androgyny could actually be the opposite; it could be seen as strongly but ambivalently gendered/sexed rather than not at all gendered/sexed (Bem, 1974; Lorber, 1996). Androgyny might be better conceptualized as existing as a specific form of gender/sex challenge (perhaps at its midpoint).

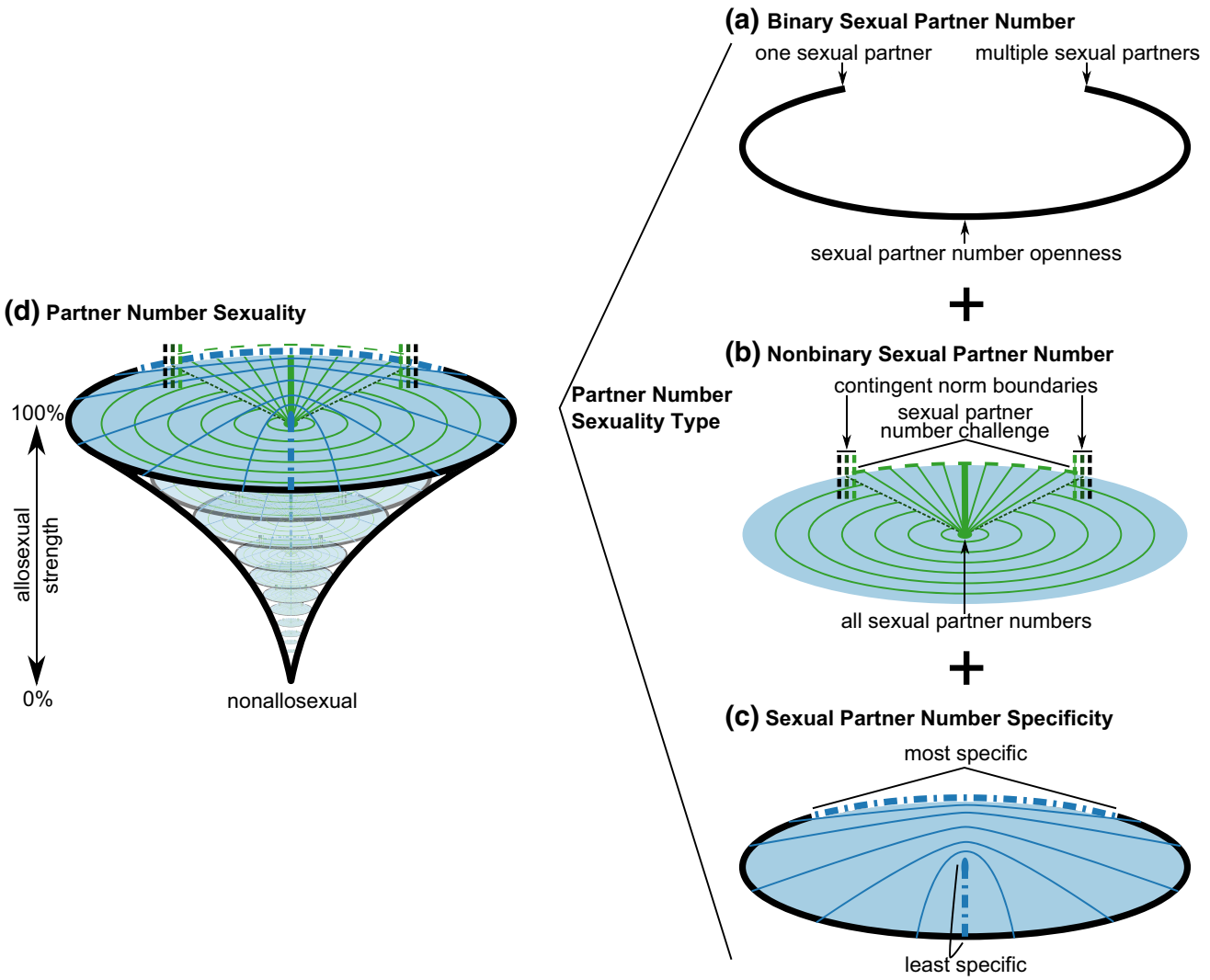

Fig. 4 Partner number sexuality. The parameter of partner number sexuality is characterized by a dimension of partner number sexuality type, which has **a** binary sexual partner number, **b** nonbinary sexual partner number, and **c** sexual partner number specificity. Partner number sexuality is also characterized by a dimension of **d** allosexuality strength, which ranges from 0 % (nonallosexual) to 100 %

minor importance to one's sexuality (relative to other factors), though one's attractions are still only to men.

Figure 3 thus visualizes that any one location has meaning in three dimensions: binary/nonbinary, specificity, and gender/sex strength. Locations that differ on one dimension can be the same in another (e.g., two people can have high specificity but differ on binary/nonbinary). And, a person could have strong attractions to one gender/sex and moderate attractions to another. Another potential implication of Fig. 3d is that there may be a space where all gender/sexes and nongender/sexed meet.[13] In other words, being attracted to people of any and all gender/sexes may be the flipside of gender/sex ceasing to be relevant to one's sexual attractions (because, if one is attracted to any gender/sex, gender/sex ceases to be a deciding factor).

[13] I see this warp as a sort of space tunnel where one is instantly positioned at two locations that occupy the same space.

Separating Gender and Sex Many people's attractions are guided by whole identities or gestalts (e.g., being attracted to people who identify as women, men, or as gender/sex-diverse people). These people could be located on Fig. 5a, which is similar to Fig. 3d. However, some people's attractions are guided by other features like gender (e.g., comportment) or sex (e.g., genitals). These people could be located on Fig. 5b, c, respectively. SCT models gender/sex sexuality as both a gestalt (Fig. 5a) and as reflecting the separable subconstructs of gender (Fig. 5b) and sex (Fig. 5c). But why should gender/sex be separable into subconstructs at all?

Though most theories of sexuality focus on sex (e.g., physical bodies) as the guiding feature of sexual orientation, this is based on the unstated assumption that "everyone" is sexually focused on features like genitals or breasts. Competing assumptions may hold that "everyone" is sexually attracted to people's ways of

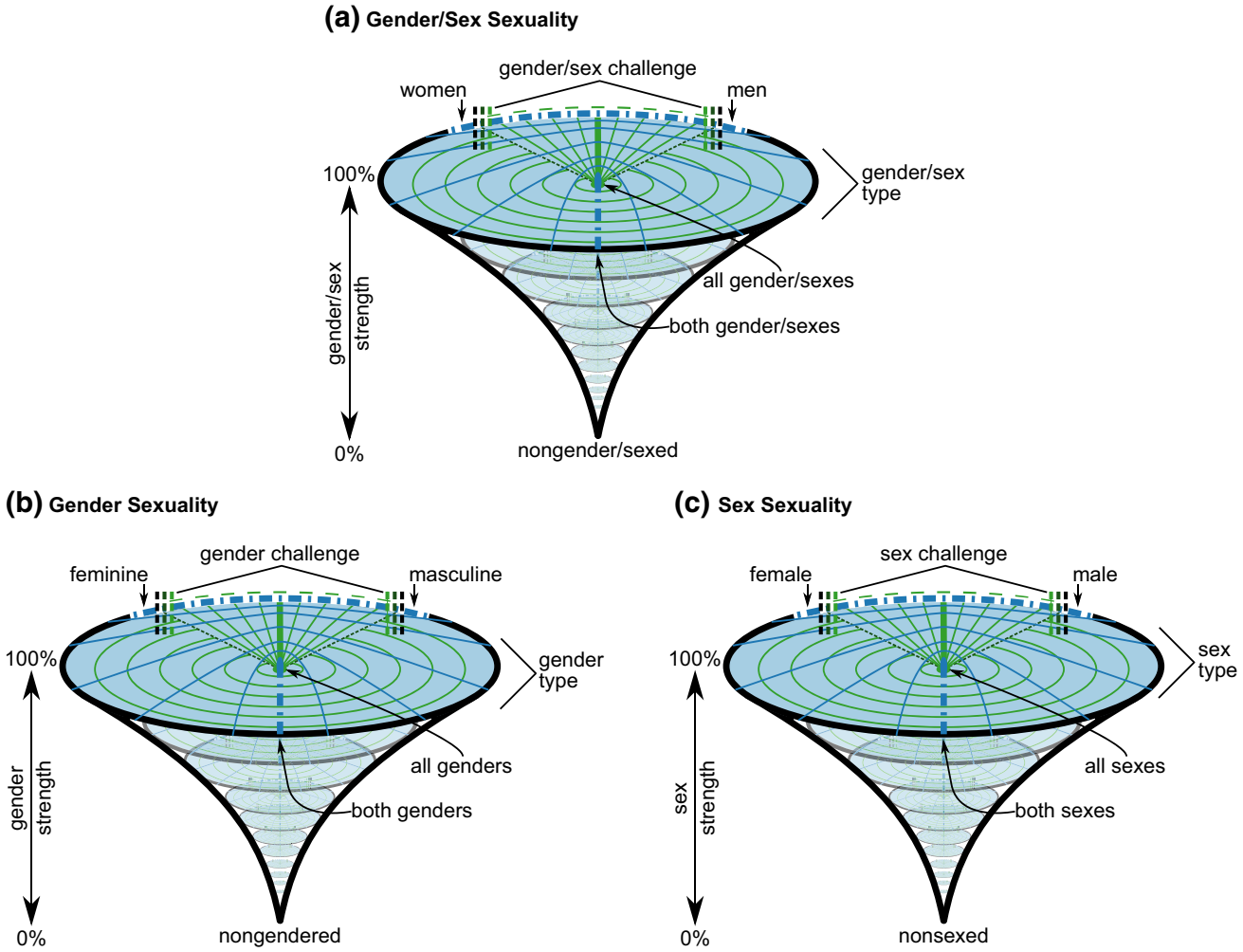

Fig. 5 Branched gender/sex sexuality. Gender/sex sexuality (**a**) has a gender subconstruct (**b**) and a sex subconstruct (**c**)

moving through the world. But SCT makes these claims testable, and reflects known lived experiences. For example, some individuals might be sexually interested in people who have vulvas and vaginas, regardless of any other sex marker, gender, or identity and could use Fig. 5 to reflect this: locating gender/sex sexuality in all gender/sexes (Fig. 5a), all genders (Fig. 5b), and female (Fig. 5c) noting specifically genitals. Others might be sexually interested in queer men and could also use Fig. 5 to reflect this: locating gender/sex sexuality in gender/sex challenge near men (Fig. 5a), gender sexuality wherever appropriate (Fig. 5b), and sex sexuality in all sexes (Fig. 5c).

What about people with partners who have transitioned gender/sex? Some people may see themselves as having a gender/sex challenge status, because their partner's transition challenges norms of sex (or gender, or gender/sex). Others may not position themselves in this way because they may use a set of factors to define their gender/sex sexuality in ways that render transition no longer salient (e.g., they may use their partner's current gender/sex). Individuals may mark their gender/sex sexuality on Fig. 5a when target gender, sex, and gender/sex are coincident or all of Fig. 5 when they are not. The key implication of gender/sex separability is that SCT does not assume that all people experience all their sexualities in ways that only implicate sex or collapse all aspects of gender/sex.

Parameter 2: Partner Number Sexuality

Partner number sexuality refers to the number of partners people have or are interested in having. For example, someone might want to have no partners, one partner, two partners concurrently, or more. The concept of partner number sexuality is sometimes called relational identity or relationship orientation (e.g., The Polyamory Society, 2014; van Anders & Goldey, 2010) or folded into sexual orientation or sexual identity. However, these terms fail to identify the particular variable of interest (i.e., number) and so are less useful for science than they might be.

Unlike partner number sexuality, people largely conceptualize gender/sex as an important feature of partnered sexuality, such that gender/sex sexuality seemingly needs no justification.

What about partner number? Is there a reason to give it place, much less prominence? A major reason to include partner number as a parameter of partnered sexuality is lived experiences. Increasingly frequent narratives underscore the importance of partner number in many people's identities, behaviors, and orientations. For example, polyamory, slut,[14] and asexuality are identities that I argue are organized in part around partner number. Empirical evidence also provides important support for including partner number sexuality (Barker & Langdridge, 2010; Bogaert, 2004; Brotto et al., 2010; Carrigan, 2011; Klesse, 2006; Scherrer, 2008; Sheff, 2005). And, logical considerations almost necessitate its inclusion because a person must be interested in at least one sexual partner before their gender/sex sexuality could even be a consideration. Partner number sexuality is thus a separate parameter from gender/sex sexuality in SCT, though the two could and do interrelate (and arguments could be made that partner number sexuality comes first, in that it must be above zero for gender/sex sexuality to exist). In the present section, I focus on partner number sexuality as a unitary construct; in subsequent sections, I discuss how it can be partitioned into eroticism/nurturance (Parameter 3: Eroticism and Nurturance).

Partner number sexuality (see Fig. 4) is modeled in similar ways to gender/sex sexuality (see Fig. 3), and visual inspection of both shows clear parallels. Like gender/sex sexuality, partner number sexuality maps out both orientations (e.g., how many sexual partners one would like to have) and statuses (e.g., how many sexual partners one does have). Orientations and statuses can be demarcated with different notations: dots (o-dot and s-dot), multiple notations to represent multiple statuses/orientations, and/or outlined areas to represent a range of orientations/statuses. But, in this section, I use "orientations" to avoid the unwieldy use of status/orientation each time I describe a feature of partner number sexuality.

In Fig. 4, I use a step-by-step process to describe how partner number sexuality is built from various dimensions. One dimension is sexual partner number type, which has two levels: binary and nonbinary. Figure 4a shows one of these levels: binary partner number sexuality, which refers to orientations towards having one sexual partner, multiple sexual partners, or either (sexual partner number openness).

Sexual partner number openness (on Fig. 4a) refers to sexualities that are oriented more towards the specific partner(s) than the partner number: for example, a person at sexual partner number openness might be "happy" to have one partner or many, depending on the partner(s). This ring is continuous, such that people can be polar (only interested in being with one or multiple sexual partners) or somewhere in-between (interested in being with either; mostly interested in being with one sexual partner but open to others; mostly interested in being with multiple partners but open to being with one; etc.). In terms of statuses, a person could be partnered with one person, multiple people, or be in a more ambiguous location of sexual openness, where partner number is not so clear cut. There are many cases where partner numbers are ambiguous, including differing degrees of commitment or contact (e.g., a person may be open to being sexual with another person such that their engagement depends on their crossing paths—is this a "current" contact or not?), timescales (e.g., if a person had causal dates with three different people this week, do they have multiple "partners" or none?), and plans (e.g., if a person has one current ongoing sexual partner and will soon have more, is that one or multiple sexual partners at "present?").

Like sexual partner number openness, multiple sexual partners (on Fig. 4a) could refer to a number of things. It may refer to having multiple sexual partners over a discrete time period (e.g., having or wanting three boyfriends). It may be an orientation towards having multiple sexual partners during the same event (e.g., having or preferring threesomes). It also could refer to wanting multiple sexual partners in a series (e.g., having or wanting nightly hook-ups with different people). How to tease these apart? Individuals may annotate their positioning (e.g., "o-dot" on multiple sexual partners, with the notation "sex event") or researchers could operationally define the terms as per their research questions (e.g.: "by multiple sexual partners, we mean X"). Is there any ordinality to multiple sexual partners? For example, is having four sexual partners "more multiple" than having two? I see this aspect of Sexual Configurations being more about the presence of multiplicity than its count, and partner number sexuality above one may be less a function of how many partners one wants than how many partners with whom one can cope or be meaningfully connected. Still, one could easily demarcate a numerical preference or status.

Binary sexual partner number (continuing on Fig. 4a) shows one and multiple sexual partners as somewhat near each other, but separated by a gap: why? One reason is that orientations towards only one or multiple sexual partners are conceptually more similar (e.g., are more specific than orientations that are open). Another reason is that the gap is actually closed by nonbinary partner number sexuality (Fig. 4b).

Figure 4b shows nonbinary sexual partner number, the second level of sexual partner number type. Nonbinary sexual partner number refers to orientations that exist outside normative one versus multiple sexual partner number binaries (e.g., outside of mononormativities and polynormativities). There are multiple locations in nonbinary sexual partner number; one of these is sexual partner number challenge. Sexual partner number challenge refers to orientations that are not identified as normative for one or multiple sexual partner numbers and who challenge, transcend, or destabilize this dichotomy. Some examples might include monoamorously partnered individuals who have internet sex with others, multiply partnered individuals who engage

[14] An identity organized in part around wanting and/or having multiple sex partners for reasons of sexual pleasure, usually used by women who take this identity as part of a reclamation project (i.e., using it positively in ways that challenge its oppressive uses) (Easton & Liszt, 1997).

in different sexual activities with each partner, people who engage in penetrative sexuality with one partner and non-penetrative sexuality with others, someone who enjoys partnered sexuality but does not want to, etc. Sexual partner number challenge does not necessarily reference action or intentionality. People might self-position and/or be positioned by others in ways that may overlap or not (and these can be separately demarcated). For this reason, sexual partner number challenge is separated from one and multiple sexual partner numbers by contingent norm boundaries.

Contingent norms boundaries are margins between one and multiple sexual partner numbers in Fig. 4a and sexual partner number challenge in Fig. 4b. Who counts where? Who gets counted as having one or multiple sexual partners is largely contingent and subjective, rather than universal, differing by time and place among other factors. For example, a man with a mistress can be seen as monoamorously married in the same cultures where a woman cannot. Or, some people see sexual liaisons while traveling as not affecting their monoamorous status. Accordingly, these contingent norm boundaries are malleable, permeable, and moveable.

There are gradations of nonbinary partner number sexuality shown in Fig. 4b with lines of isospecificity intersecting sexual partner number and ending at the contingent norm boundaries. Accordingly, a person at the very middle point of sexual partner number challenge might have an orientation that completely challenges both one and multiple sexual partner norms (e.g., multiple marriages), whereas a person closer to the multiple sexual partners contingent norm boundary might have an orientation that fits more closely with norms around multiple sexual partners (one marital partner and several casual sexual contacts). But this positionality is culturally relative (e.g., in some cultures, multiple marriages are the norm).

The straight lines of isospecificity from sexual partner number challenge join up at all sexual partner numbers, another location in nonbinary sexual partner number on Fig. 4b. All sexual partner numbers also refers to orientations that challenge sexual partner number norms and is rooted in a pluralistic view of partnered sexualities. Here, too, there is a gradation from binary (the ring in Fig. 4a) to nonbinary (the circle's area in Fig. 4b) shown via the curved lines of isospecificity radiating out from the perimeter to all sexual partner numbers. A person at all sexual partner numbers might be open to any form of sexual partner number configuration. A person intermediate between all sexual partner numbers and the left-most side of the circle might be oriented considerably to one sexual partner, somewhat to multiple sexual partners, and somewhat to sexual partner numbers that challenge partner number norms.

Both sexual partner number challenge and all sexual partner numbers represent nonbinary gender/sex; Fig. 3c in part shows how they differ: in specificity. High specificity marks sexual partner number challenge, which is a specific (nonbinary) orientation to a specific sexual partner number. Low specificity marks all sexual partner numbers, which is a nonspecific (nonbinary) orientation to any and all formations. Sexual partner number challenge and all sexual partner numbers thus are located at opposite ends of a specificity continuum. Similarly, high specificity marks being oriented to one or multiple sexual partners, which is a specific (binary) orientation. And low specificity marks sexual partner number openness, which is a nonspecific (binary) orientation). Orientations to one or multiple sexual partners, or to a specific kind of sexual partner number challenge are similar in high specificity. Orientations to sexual partner openness or all sexual partners are similar in low specificity.

Figure 4d shows how partner number sexuality involves several overlapping dimensions in partner number sexuality type: a binary/nonbinary dimension (such that the binary perimeter is just one end of a binary/nonbinary continuum) and a specificity dimension. It also shows a third dimension: sexual partner number strength. Sexual partner number strength refers to how strongly sexual partner number matters to one's partnered sexuality, and ranges from highly allosexual (100 %) to nonallosexual[15] (0 %). At nonallosexual, sexual partner number ceases to be relevant to partnered sexuality.

Like allosexual, nonallosexual could refer to status or orientation. One could have no sexual partners or contacts (status) or have no interest in sexual contacts or partners (orientation). A person could have an allosexual orientation and a nonallosexual status (i.e., wanting but not having partnered eroticism). A person could also have a nonallosexual orientation and an allosexual status (i.e., not wanting but having partnered sexuality).

Allosexuality has gradations, and Fig. 4d shows this via the repeated allosexuality type disc vertically iterated. Thus, at any non-zero degree of allosexuality, a person has a partner number sexuality type; for example, allosexuality could have minor importance to a person even as their orientation is only towards one sexual partner.

Examining Fig. 4d, where all the dimensions are presented, raises additional questions. For example, where would the status location be for a man with one sexual partner who is herself multipartnered? He might locate himself in one sexual partner (that is, after all, what he has) or perhaps sexual partner number challenge, since his status might challenge some norms around having one sexual partner (i.e., that his partner "should" only have one partner: him). And, what about people who have attractions to partners based on *those* partners' partner number sexualities? For example, someone might be turned off by others' interests in having only one or multiple partners. These could be located by adding specifiers to any notations.

[15] I am not necessarily satisfied with using a scale that marks the absence/presence of allosexuality, as if 0 % was a lack of something, but I have not figured out another approach. So, in short, absence is not meant to imply lack.

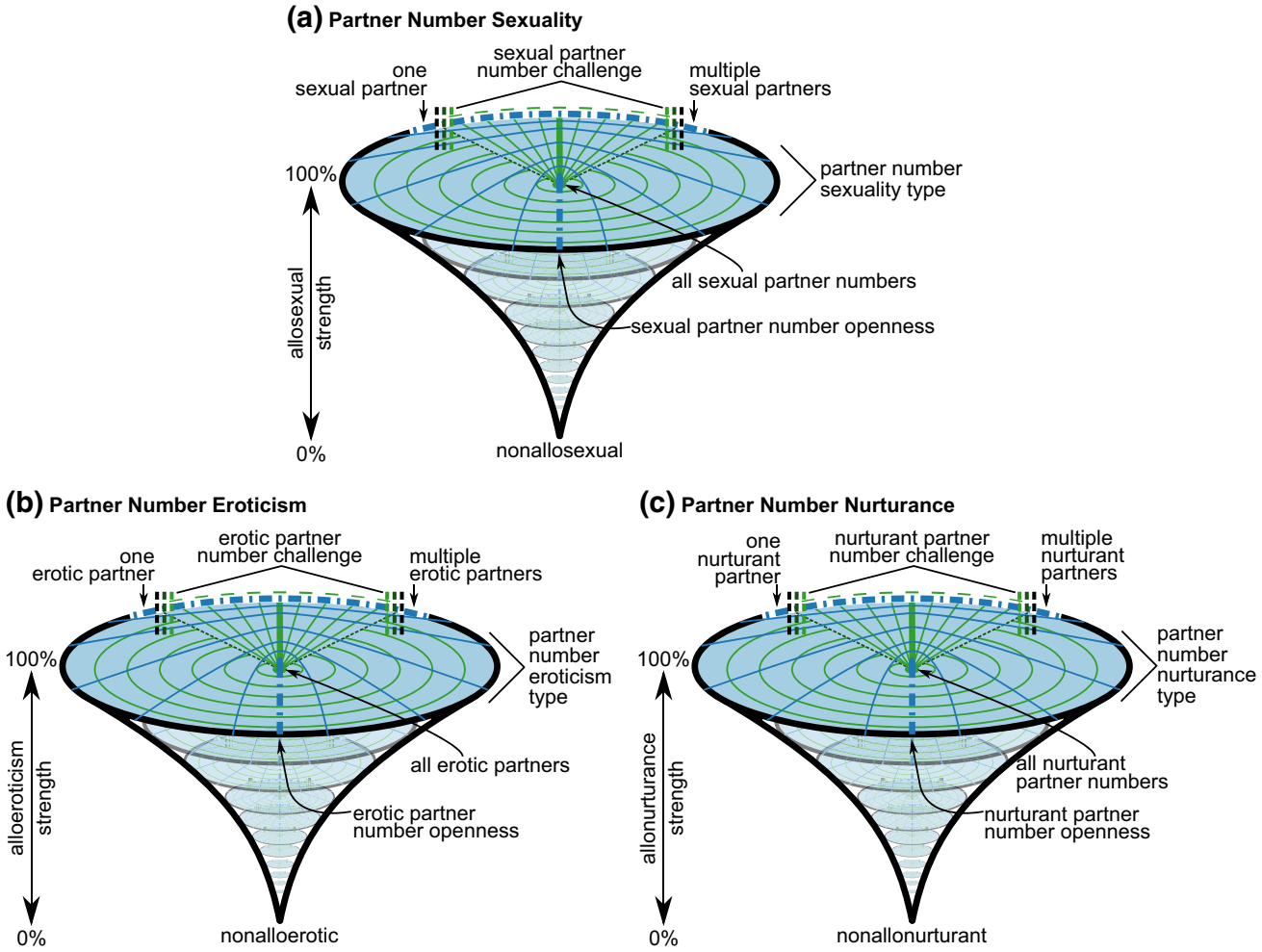

Fig. 6 Eroticism and nurturance in branched partner number sexuality. Partner number sexuality (**a**) has an eroticism subconstruct (**b**) and a nurturance subconstruct (**c**). Eroticism and nurturance can also be separated within gender/sex sexuality

Parameter 3: Eroticism and Nurturance

In this section, I explain a third important parameter of SCT: eroticism/nurturance (see also What About Lust and Love? Why Eroticism and Nurturance?). Many people's attractions are sexual, such that eroticism and nurturance are inseparable aspects of their partnered sexualities. These people could be located on Figs. 5 and 6a. However, some people's attractions and/or statuses can be partitioned separately into nurturance (e.g., feelings of close intimacy) and eroticism (e.g., genital arousal). This could be true for partner number sexuality, as shown in Fig. 6. This could also be true for gender/sex sexuality and, though I have not shown the eroticism/nurturance partition here, it would simply parallel that in Fig. 6.

Most theories of sexuality focus on eroticism as the defining feature of sexual orientation but, as has been theoretically and empirically demonstrated (Diamond, 2003b), nurturance is also implicated even in traditional understandings of sexual orientation. Additionally, there is broad empirical support for the ability to partition sexuality into these subconstructs, among potential others. SCT provides a way to map out partner number sexualities that are branched (e.g., erotically inclined towards multiple partners and nurturantly towards one). It also provides a way to map out gender/sex sexualities that are branched (e.g., when a person feels closest to women but is more strongly erotically attracted to gender-diverse people). The key is that SCT does not assume that all people experience sexuality as reflecting only eroticism or the confluence of it and nurturance.

Sociosexuality Sociosexuality is a measure of interest in and history of uncommitted ("unrestricted") partnered sexuality; it focuses on behavior, attitude, and desire (Penke, 2013; Simpson & Gangestad, 1991). It seems related to partner number sexuality in general, and eroticism/nurturance more specifically, but the constructs differ markedly. At the behavioral level, sociosexuality focuses on counts of uncommitted sexual contacts, whereas partner number eroticism focuses on strength or type of alloeroticism, with room

for counts as well. Sociosexuality also focuses exclusively on intercourse. Some attitude items (e.g., "Sex without love is ok") may characterize a general societal attitude rather than an individual orientation. Sociosexuality measures fantasies about and arousals to people outside a committed romantic relationship, but assumes that those extra-relationship fantasies are outside all relationships rather than the one a person is in at that moment (in other words, a person could fantasize about having two committed relationships, but sociosexuality does not allow for this). The most marked difference, however, might be that sociosexuality imagines committed/nurturant and "unrestricted" sexuality as opposites, whereas SCT allows for this possibility but also the reality that some people exist at high levels of both (e.g., having multiple committed sexual relationships or having some nurturant/sexual relationships and some erotic-only ones). Sociosexuality measures important concepts that clearly dovetail with those in SCT, but with markedly different baseline assumptions about dyadic sexuality.

Dyadic Sexual Desire Partner number sexuality has ties to dyadic sexual desire (i.e., the desire to be sexual with another person) in terms of the vertical axis of allosexual strength in Fig. 6. Dyadic sexual desire seems divisible into erotic dyadic sexual desire (e.g., desire to experience genital pleasure with another person) and nurturant dyadic sexual desire (e.g., desire to be close and intimate with another person in a sexual context) depending on what is being desired (Burke, Goldey, & van Anders, under review; van Anders, 2012b). In other words, dyadic sexual desire is multifaceted itself and two of its facets seem to be alloeroticism and allonurturance, which can be represented in SCT. In addition, dyadic desire may be multifaceted in terms of responsive or spontaneous origin (Meana, 2010), and this can be demarcated via specific notation.

Parameter 4: Sexual Parameter$_n$ Sexuality

Partnered sexuality obviously involves more components than gender/sex or partner number, which I cover in this article. To that end, I have included "sexual parameter$_n$" as space for parameters in existence that I do not cover or are still to be named. How do the constructs that might make up sexual parameter$_n$ relate to or precede/follow those I do discuss? Ongoing debates exist around these and whether they "count" as sexual orientations. There is much at stake in these debates for scholars and communities because some of these sexualities are illegal, stigmatized, and/or problematic; conceptualizing them as orientations within a non-pathological science frame could be seen as granting legitimacy. Accordingly, I leave extensive discussion of various sexual parameter$_n$'s to scholars studying those topics and communities of critically engaged stakeholders. Respecting the importance of these issues means, for me, acknowledging that they are complex, lengthy, outside the scope of this article, and merit sufficient sophistication of engagement. As such, I focus in this section only on these other possible parameters to point out where SCT might be useful.

What might some of these additional sexual components be? Some have argued for sexual age orientation by varying names with evidentiary support (e.g., Blanchard et al., 2012; Ebsworth & Lalumiere, 2012; Freund & Kuban, 1993; Lykins et al., 2010; Seto, 2012). SCT might be useful for thinking about age-related sexualities because of its insights about age as multifaceted beyond physicality including: cognitive, social, intellectual, and experiential components. Exploring these facets may prove useful in some way to understanding age-related sexualities over a sole physical focus. Understanding adult preferences for older people too might be useful since adults are not a uniformly-aged group (e.g., what does it mean for a younger adult to be attracted to middle-aged adults?). Finally, there may be intersections between age-related sexualities and Sexual Configuration Theory's eroticism/nurturance parameter. Some child sex offenders score high on sexual gratification scales while others self-report high empathy for children or claim nurturant connections (Wilson, 1999). These may be different pathways to the same behavioral outcome, related to differing neurobiological systems, which may be useful to prevention efforts and understanding sexual age orientation more generally.

Two other subcomponents may be relevant to partnered sexualities: consent and physical violence/force. Some people rape and force nonconsensual sexuality upon others and there is overlap between these people and those who are especially aroused by or interested in the thought of this (Gavey & Senn, 2014; Harris, Lalumiere, Seto, Rice, & Chaplin, 2012). Though it is problematic to conceptualize consensual and nonconsensual activity along a continuum (as if there were gradations of nonconsent), feminist rape and sexual coercion researchers do sometimes distinguish between the two (Fitzgerald, Swan, & Magley, 1997; Gavey & Senn, 2014; Jozkowski & Peterson, 2013; Koss, Gidycz, & Wisniewski, 1987; Koss et al., 2007), and conceptualizing interest in nonconsent as separable from presence of nonconsent may be useful for sexuality research, therapy, and treatment.

There are also people who engage in physically violent or forceful sexuality. Though this is often conflated with nonconsent, there are clearly some individual who engage in mutually consensual physically violent or forceful sexuality and/or who are interested in it. For this reason, separating physical violence from nonconsent makes sense (Seto, Lalumiere, Harris, & Chivers, 2012), as does acknowledging that these two can go together. Separating these two components (consent from physical violence/force) could be useful for lay understandings of rape (as feminist scholars have long argued, rape does not definitionally involve physical force or violence; Gavey & Senn, 2014). and also for those who engage in physically violent/forceful *consensual* sexual activity and/or fantasize about it.

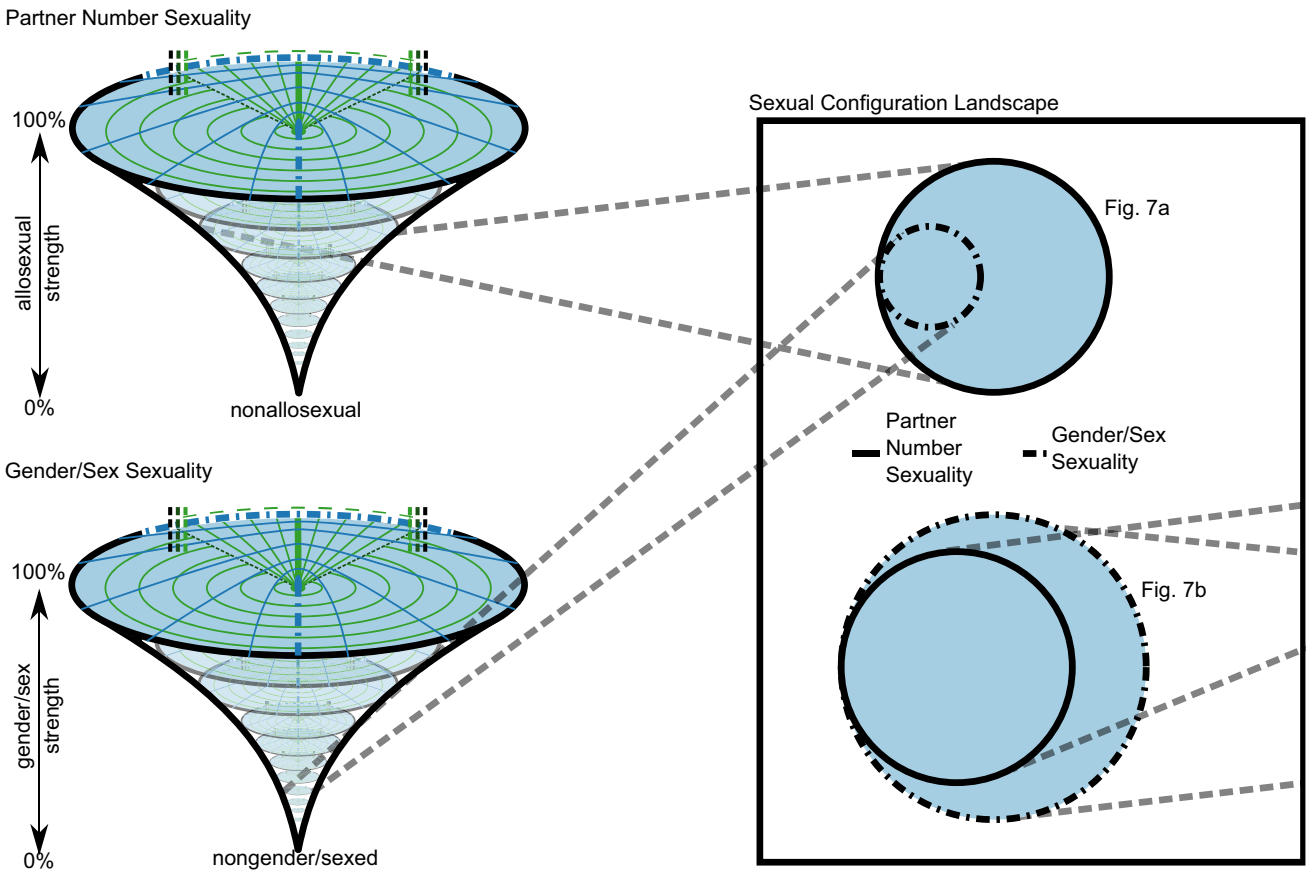

Fig. 7 Sexual configuration landscapes. An example of the relative strength of two parameters of partnered sexuality for where **a** partner number sexuality is a bigger part of a person's partnered sexuality than gender/sex sexuality is and **b** the reverse, where gender/sex sexuality is a bigger part of a person's partnered sexuality than partner number sexuality is. Gender/sex sexual strength is always contingent on non-zero allosexual strength. Landscapes are conceptual, not quantitative, maps

Another parameter may relate to kink-identification (in general or to specific kinks). For example, people who engage in varying types of BDSM (bondage, dominance, sadism, masochism) can do so within a framework of behavior, identity (e.g., kink-identified, in the lifestyle), and orientation (being drawn to this partnered sexuality over or alongside others) (Kleinplatz & Diamond, 2014; Terry, Suschinsky, Lalumiere, & Vasey, 2012; Terry & Vasey, 2011; Weiss, 2011). Becoming excited or drawn to themes of exhibitionism, risky sex, voyeurism, or other kink-related sexualities could be another iteration of sexual parameter$_n$.

Assembling a Sexual Configuration

Sexual Configuration Landscape

In SCT, partner number sexuality and gender/sex sexuality can have varying degrees of importance to an individual's partnered sexuality. Figure 7a shows a person's sexual configuration landscape who is located at 75 % partner number sexuality strength and 25 % gender/sex sexuality strength. Figure 7b shows another person's sexual configuration landscape who is located at 75 % allosexual strength and 100 % gender/sex strength. In a sexual configuration landscape, gender/sex sexuality is always relative to partner number sexuality because partner number sexuality must be above zero for gender/sex sexuality to exist, whereas the reverse is not true (i.e., gender/sex sexuality can be zero without affecting the existence of partner number sexuality). Gender/sex sexuality and partner number sexuality are not compared on quantitative metrics; the sexual configuration landscape represents conceptual space.

Sexual Configurations are Multifaceted

SCT is multifaceted in a number of ways already described: it has solitary and partnered sexualities; partnered sexuality has (a) gender/sex and partner number sexualities, (b) eroticism and nurturance, and (c) orientations, statuses, and identities. Each of these facets is often conceptualized as being unitary itself (e.g., behavior = penetrative sexuality; eroticism = genital arousal). This lower level of unitarity is rarely justified and it is unclear, a priori, which facets should be privileged or why (Korchmaros et al., 2013). In this section, I will detail how these multiple facets are themselves multifaceted.

One aspect of multifacetedness relates to the status/orientation/identity domain, with each of these involving multiple constructs. For example, orientation is understood to refer to attractions, arousals, fantasies, and/or desires, i.e., a set of facets that may not be the same, which is why they are listed at all. For example, a person can be sexually attracted to men and want to flirt with masculine people regardless of gender/sex. Even one aspect of orientation, like arousal, can be multifaceted: evidence shows that genital and psychological sexual arousal can differ (e.g., Cerny & Janssen, 2011; Chivers, Seto, Lalumiere, Laan, & Grimbos, 2010). Status, too, is multifaceted including, for example, penetrative sexuality, flirting, sexual touching, and/or kissing (Kleinplatz & Diamond, 2014; Korchmaros et al., 2013).

Another aspect of multifacetedness is via temporality across and within domains of partnered sexuality (e.g., past/present/future) (Klein, 1990). And, each of these may internally be multifaceted; for example, the recent past versus far past, etc. Temporality can interact with other facets of partnered sexuality; for example, a person may want to hook-up with masculine people, have short connections with women, and have longer-term connections with men (Diamond, 2014). This temporality can be extended to considering sociocultural contexts (e.g., historical moment), clearly an important aspect of multifacetedness, which can draw out (or in) various aspects of partnered sexuality. Sociocultural context does not include only time, however, as place and social location also can draw out/in sexualities.

An additional aspect of multifacetedness is how partnered sexuality is experienced in terms of receptivity/proceptivity. People might differ in whom they want to approach versus who they want to approach them. They might differ in whom they want to arouse versus who they want to arouse them.

There are multiple facets specific to gender/sex sexuality beyond its gender and sex subconstructs. Each of these in turn can be made up of subconstructs. For example, gender sexuality might involve attractions to presentations that differ from behaviors. Sex sexuality might involve attractions to body shapes that differ from genitals. And, there are multiple interactions with other identity categories. For example, attraction to chest hair cannot universally mark attraction to males of any social location because men of many race/ethnicities and ages do not grow any (and women sometimes do).

There are also multiple facets inherent to nurturance/eroticism. For example, nurturance might involve interest in hugging that differs from interest in social support. Eroticism might involve interest in arousal that differs from pleasure. There is neurobiological evidence highlighting the difference between wanting and liking (Berridge & Kringelbach, 2008; Dewitte, 2014; Krishnamurti & Loewenstein, 2012) with potential implications; for example, someone may not want partnered sex but may enjoy it. Another person may want partnered sexual activity yet find it unfulfilling.

What to do with all these multiple facets? I have built SCT to allow recognition of this complexity when it exists (and I predict much more of it exists than is typically thought). Someone might use symbols or notations to denote the complexity of their sexual configuration; for example, using different symbols for their fantasies, arousals, and attractions as relevant. One could denote attractions to feminine men and masculine women by locating an "m" in feminine gender and men gender/sex and an "f" in masculine gender and women gender/sex. In this way, Sexual Configurations makes no assumption about the ways that facets assemble, and provides a way to map, rather than elide, existing empirical complexities.

Beyond Alignment: Sexual Configurations Can be Branched or Coincident

The very concept of multifaceted sexual configurations raises the concept of alignment, discordance, or incongruence (Chivers, Rieger, Latty, & Bailey, 2004; Korchmaros et al., 2013; Rosario & Schrimshaw, 2014). These terms suggest there is one right or correct combination or overlap of identities, orientations, and statuses, or a correct mix of parameters. But, how should alignment or "misalignment" be judged? In SCT, alignment is a subjective decision placed upon some sexual configurations rather than a natural property of them.

How *is* alignment typically adjudicated? Alignment might be ascribed to a heterosexual-identified woman who is sexually interested in men and sexually active with men. It might be applied to a lesbian-identified woman who is sexually interested in women and sexually active with women. Unstated assumptions about alignment are one reason why bisexual individuals are often seen by heterosexual, lesbian, and gay individuals as nonsensical: a bisexual-identified woman who is sexually interested in women and men "but" sexually active with only women might be seen as *mis*aligned when bisexual alignment is assumed to entail sexual activity with both women and men. But one can reasonably ask: Who gets to determine which patterns of identity, orientation, and status are aligned?

Alignment is conferred as if it were a natural property of some configurations even as it is a socially constructed position statement. Still, there are times when considerations related to social justice might lead individuals to stake a claim for or against alignment. For example, if individuals feel deep same-gender/sex sexual interest but feel they cannot act on it because they fear stigma, one might want to claim misalignment or unalignment for this sexual configuration because of cultural values around the ability to freely express this stigmatized sexuality. Misalignment may exist within an individual (who should not have to have a culturally imposed status and identity) and/or a culture (which should not be structured so as to suppress diverse gender/sex sexualities). In the same way, men who feel like they must be more masculine simply because they think that's what being a man necessitates might be seen as unaligned, meriting individual and/or cultural interventions. Accordingly, the

concept of alignment might be limited to those cases where social justice—and thus critical judgment—is explicitly part of the frame. In these cases, alignment is explicitly understood to be a subjective position statement.

Outside of social justice, alignment is typically grounded in beliefs and vague assumptions of rightness that do not necessarily reflect any evidentiary or truthful position. It is problematic, however, for outsiders or others to diagnose an individual's sexuality as misaligned, especially when this pronouncement is rooted in a top-down notion of rightness. For example, why *should* a man who is sexually attracted to women and men have to *be* sexual with men and women for his sexuality to be judged "right?"

In SCT, "configuration" refers to parts coming together and does not include judgment about the rightness of either the components or the ways in which they assemble. This makes SCT useful for thinking about sexual diversity and for moving away from judging alignment. Still, some configurations seem to have more complexity to them in ways that might be valuable to articulate, even as there is no natural or right amount of complexity. In this case, *co-incident* and *branched* are useful as non-value laden terms. Orientations, identities, and statuses, as well as parameters, that are seen as homogenous are labeled co-incident, and those that are heterogeneous are labeled branched. Branched and co-incident lack oppositional, value-based, or natural connotations and both terms can be understood as situated and localized such that sexualities that are branched in one time and place might be seen as co-incident in another.

It makes sense to think of branchedness as a property of sexual configurations, given how branchedness is presumed to exist as properties of other human phenomena. We rarely expect non-sexual interests to map onto nonsexual activities in one-to-one ways. For example, we rarely expect that people who are interested in watching horror movies are murderous themselves. It may be that some interests are more likely to be coincident with some behaviors, and this is an empirical question.

One very tricky aspect of alignment is that individuals can value how the feeling of alignment contributes to their sense of sexual authenticity and rightness. I do not mean to undermine or underestimate the importance of felt-alignment even as I would argue that it sometimes merits questioning. Felt-alignment often is situated in normative notions of sexualities (and both traditional or transgressive sexualities have normativities about them, as in homonormativities) that involve making sense, belonging, or fitting into existing groups (Cass, 1990). These processes may occur in a way that is misperceived as natural because individuals are socialized to want and value felt-alignment for their sexualities. Yet our feelings, longings, and senses of self are no more immune to social processes than other sexual and social phenomena.

A lesbian-identified woman may feel "unaligned" when she experiences sexual attractions to men, but there is no "true" reason why a lesbian cannot be sexually attracted to men (Califia, 1999). Indeed, sexual identities are not constituted entirely or even necessarily at all by sexual orientations, and that is supposed to be the point of sexual identity (i.e., that it is not merely a synonym for sexual orientation). Many argue that sexual identity is about community, politics, and self-identification, not some predetermined ratio cut-off for gendered/sexed attractions (Califia, 1999; Diamond, 2014; Korchmaros et al., 2013). In the case of the male-attracted lesbian, it would be more useful for her sexual configuration to be positioned as branched than unaligned because there is no objectively authoritative position from which it can be decided that a lesbian can't be attracted to men.

Branched and co-incident can apply to how identities, orientations, and statuses configure (e.g., a bisexually-identified person attracted to women and men who is sexually active with women only) or how the sets of phenomena that make up any of these categories configure (e.g., status: a person could want to flirt with men and engage in penetrative sexuality with women). Branched and co-incident can also extend to other dimensions like age, lifephase, or context. For example, identity politics (or alignment politics) call into question whether a lesbian-identified woman can still be a lesbian when her partner transitions from a woman to a man, whether a woman can be heterosexual if she spent much of her sexual life with women but is now partnered with a man, or whether a man can be gay if he infrequently engages in sexual activity with a woman. But one could just as easily refer to these sexualities as branched rather than as causes for skepticism. In this way, the terms branched and coincident may be useful for thinking about sexual fluidity and non-exclusivity of sexual identities, now well-documented in adolescents and adults of various gender/sexes, sexualities, and cultures (Cass, 1990; Diamond, 2003a, 2003b, 2014; Gartrell, Bos, & Goldberg, 2012; Herdt, 1990; Savin-Williams, Joyner, & Rieger, 2012). These terms may also be useful for thinking about the complexity of multiple facets and how they configure.

Engaging with the concept of alignment also raises the question of how one could or should define the totality of an individual's sexuality for group membership or scientific purposes. By the majority of sexual contacts (e.g., absolute numbers? percentages?), the intensity of connections (e.g., depth of feelings?), present behaviors (e.g., over past?), whatever is most stigmatized or easily measurable? SCT is a way to both sidestep and highlight these issues because one can make explicit the branchedness of individuals' sexualities, including the temporality of present, past, and/or future/hoped for formations (the Klein Sexuality Grid also incorporates temporality; Klein, 1993).

I have mostly relied on examples of gender/sex to make the case for branched/coincident, but they are useful terms for partner number sexuality as well. For example, a person who is oriented to having one sexual partner might date multiple people before they find a life partner, and having multiple sexual partners may be a place through which they pass (which is not to suggest that having multiple sexual partners is a stepping stone to having one sexual partner in general). Or, a person could be branched by having

multiple sexual partners and being oriented to having one sexual partner, as with some people doing sex work, doing sex for survival, doing romance/erotic/pornographic acting, because it is culturally expected, etc.

Branched and coincident are also useful for the separation of eroticism and nurturance. For example, an individual who is interested in having and does have two sexual partners would have a co-incident partnered sexual orientation. An individual who has one nurturant partner and multiple sexual partners would have a branched partnered sexual status. An individual who preferred having multiple nurturant partners but has one actual relationship partner would also have a branched partnered sexual configuration.

Branched and coincident sexual configurations may differ themselves by groups. For example, there is evidence that strictly heterosexual cisgender women differ from other women and men in the degree to which their genital arousal branches from their psychological arousal (Chivers et al., 2010) and, similarly, in viewing times and attraction (Lippa, 2012). So branchedness and coincidence seem like important constructs to study, and related constructs are receiving empirical attention (e.g., Chivers & Timmers, 2012; Kukkonen, Binik, Amsel, & Carrier, 2007; Laan & Janssen, 2007; Suschinsky & Lalumiere, 2012; Suschinsky, Lalumiere, & Chivers, 2009).

SCT is thus an argument for a more nuanced, critical, and positioned engagement with the notion of alignment/misalignment and for its replacement with coincident and branched. Rooted in a sexual diversity lens, engagement with these concepts would include attention to the lived experiences of those with branchedness in their sexual configurations, i.e., those who are often subjectively (mis)positioned by selves or others in alignment terms.

Individual Gender/Sex

SCT mainly focuses on partnered sexuality, with gender/sex sexuality one of its parameters. But it also models individual gender/sex, which is perhaps unsurprising (it would be difficult to model a phenomena that applies to others but not selves). Thus, individual gender/sex can be plotted on Fig. 5. Essential detail for understanding these figures is provided in Parameter 1: Gender/Sex Sexuality, but it bears repeating that individuals can have varying degrees of: binary/nonbinary gender/sexes (e.g., woman/genderqueer), gender/sex strength (ranging from nongender/sexed to highly gender/sexed; e.g., feeling strongly gender/sexed to gender/sex having no salience in one's identity), and specificity (ranging from a unitary or fixed gender/sex to one that is more fluid or broad; e.g., identifying as a genderqueer person to sometimes identifying as a man and sometimes as genderqueer). And, individual gender/sex can involve gender/sex (Fig. 5a), gender (Fig. 5b), or sex (Fig. 5c) and thus be branched or coincident.

Coincident gender/sex is widely assumed to be the status quo, but the frequency of gender/sex branchedness is far from settled: research points to higher levels of branchedness than typically thought (Joel, 2012). Apart from frequencies, how might branched gender/sex play out? Some individuals might unequivocally identify as women (gender/sex), and feminine (gender), but position themselves in sex-challenge (sex) because of any one of a variety of features that might be seen as challenging norms (e.g., perhaps they are very strong, have narrow hips, could not breastfeed, are somewhat androgynous in appearance, have a DSD). Others might feel that that they are unambiguously female (sex), women (gender/sex), but masculine (gender). The key is that branched/coincident gender/sexes are contextualized decisions and not natural properties.

How might SCT relate to trans?[16] There may be a difference between branchedness (having one's gender, sex, and gender/sex located in different places) and unalignment (feeling that these different places must become coincident) that is partially explained by the degree of gender/sex strengths individuals feel. This may be relevant to some trans experiences in diverse ways. This may also be relevant to some cisgender/sex (see footnote 16) experiences, as with "gender/sex work," where some work to make their gender/sex facets more coincident (e.g., by altering their appearance or comportment to fit gender/sex norms). And, the convergence/divergence between branchedness and unalignment may be one way of connecting those who feel branchedness in their gender/sexes while also considering its differing implications and politics given where and in whom it occurs.

To be clear, nowhere in Sexual Configurations do I point to the *origins* of gender/sex strengths. SCT is not an origin story in this way; it is a socially situated phenomenology of certain kinds of sexual diversity. As Bogaert (2006) cogently argued, sexual orientation development need not be equated with sexual orientation phenomenology.

Branched gender/sexes are likely to be seen as contexts for discrimination, i.e., someone whose gender transgresses what is expected for their sex will likely be seen as a threat to notions of clear-cut sex binaries. In part, this is because gender/sex is not just a property of a person but is transactional and relational, i.e., it is not just internal but is a negotiated and agreed upon identity in cultural terms. Along these lines, one could plot one's own sense of gender/sex alongside others' senses of one's gender/sex. For example, a person might have an internal sense of gender/sex that is not presented in some contexts (e.g., through choices about safety or openness), is not agreed upon by others (e.g., family members, authorities, etc.), or is seen differentially depending on context (e.g., a man with long hair in some times and places).

Individual gender/sex is separate from gender/sex sexuality in SCT, though still interrelated. For example, there is research showing that some women high in femininity are more attracted to men high in masculinity (Maybach & Gold, 1994) or

[16] I use the term trans to include people who are trans-identified, transgender, transsexual, and/or individuals who have experienced gender/sex transition, as well as any other groups for whom this identity is meaningful. It can be contrasted with "cis," which is used to mean gender/sex assigned at birth that coincides with felt gender/sex.

that individuals may become erotically aroused by fantasizing about their own gender via autoeroticism (for differing perspectives on this, see Blanchard & Collins, 1993; Moser, 2009; Serano, 2010). Some have suggested that individual gender/sex may interact with gender/sex sexuality and preferred sexual behavior (Zheng, Hart, & Zheng, 2012, 2013).

Sexual Identities in SCT

Identities are an important part of SCT: they are names people give to specific sexual configurations. Identities may be informed by individual partnered sexual components like sexual partner number (e.g., polyamorous, asexual, player, slut, monoamorous), gender/sex sexuality (e.g. gay, bisexual, lesbian, heterosexual), and/or sexual parameter$_n$ (e.g., kink-identified or any number of other existing or future phenomena). Identity is deliberately positioned in web of interconnections and can result from numerous sexual components in conjunction with intersectional factors that may vary in size and scope (see Fig. 2). For example, twink (e.g., youthful, typically white, gay men) represents an intersection between sexuality and age, gender/sex, and race/ethnicity, as does bear (e.g., masculine gay men with prominent and dark body and facial hair, often white) (Moskowitz, Turrubiates, Lozano, & Hajek, 2013). Stud reflects an intersection between sexuality, gender/sex, and race/ethnicity (e.g., a term used by/applied to African American lesbian masculine-identified/appearing women) (Moore, 2011).

Connections between identities and sexual parameters are bidirectional; identities can influence or inform partnered sexuality and/or reflect a quasi-summation of partnered sexuality components that have names because they map onto existing communities. Individuals might choose identities from a range of possibilities or claim identities because they are the only or best fit. Identities might be imposed on individuals or suggested to them. In many cases where sexual configurations challenge sexuality and gender/sex norms, the term queer has been employed.[17] For example, a woman who is attracted to women and is partnered with a trans man (a man who was assigned female at birth, transitioned gender/sex, and claims/has a trans man identity) might identify as queer because she is a lesbian who is no longer partnered with a woman. Of course, she might also identify or be identified as straight (because men do not need to be *born* men), lesbian because of political and community affiliations, or queer lesbian. Identity terms and labels are sourced from communities themselves rather than a top-down scholar-applied fashion.

The goal of SCT is reflect diverse identities. Next, I provide examples of how some identities might map onto SCT. This does not imply that every sexual configuration has a unique identity or should have. And I do not suggest that identities are fixed, universal, essentialized, or discrete. Individuals might locate the same identity in different ways (e.g., one lesbian might locate her orientations in all gendered + female + women, while another might locate hers in masculine + all sexes + women). The same individual might locate the same identity differently over time (because identities are contextual). When this degree of subjectivity becomes a problem, researchers can operationalize terms instead. SCT is intended to allow identities related to partner number sexuality, gender/sex sexuality, and individual gender/sex to be mapped in ways that reflect sexual diversity.

Asexual, Demisexual, and Gray-A Identities, and Nonsexual Lifephases

Asexual identities are often conceptualized as the obverse of LGB and heterosexual identities (Bogaert, 2012b; Storms, 1980). And, they are discussed in terms of general sexuality rather than specifically partnered sexuality. In SCT, asexuality relates to a set of orientations and statuses that involve nonalloeroticism at their core and are related, not to gender/sex sexuality, but to partner number sexuality. In this way, sexuality as multifaceted is key to understanding asexuality: separating nurturance from eroticism, and dyadic from solitary eroticism.

There is a body of empirical research supporting understandings of what could be described as an alloerotic/nonalloerotic dimension (e.g., Bogaert, 2004, 2006; Brotto et al., 2010; Brotto & Yule, 2011; Carrigan, 2011; DeLuzio Chasin, 2011; Prause & Graham, 2007; Przybylo, 2012; Scherrer, 2008). In SCT, an asexually-identified person could identify as having little to no alloerotic interest and being nonalloerotic. Thus, asexual individuals could be located on Fig. 4b with a dot in nonalloerotic and a dot in the meaningful location on Fig. 4c (partner number nurturance). Partnered eroticism and partnered nurturance are separate constructs in Sexual Configurations, so a nonalloerotic asexual person can still be nurturantly oriented to or partnered with other people in ways that intersect with gender/sex and self-locate on Fig. 3 (e.g., "heteroromantic" (Bogaert, 2012b). This matches lived experiences from asexually-identified people who often have and/or desire nurturant partners, sometimes with gender/sex-specificities (e.g., Van Houdenhove, Gijs, T'Sjoen, & Enzlin, 2014).

More specifically, asexually-identified individuals are not interested in being sexual with others for the purposes of experiencing dyadic erotic pleasure though there is diversity within this as well. There is debate in the field and

[17] I have not used the term queer in the actual models from Sexual Configuration Theory even though it obviously echoes much of what I mean to convey with challenge. One reason is that many see queer as representing a specific set of politics that people may not relate to for a variety of reasons (the politics might be seen as White, as Western, as radical, as not radical enough, etc.). In addition, it is often used synonymously with minority sexualities as an identity label and it seems problematic for someone to have to self-locate as queer who does not identify as queer. And, it seems problematic for someone to have to *not* self-locate as queer who does identify as queer. But the term is still useful as a frequently employed identity category/label (e.g., see Serano, 2013).

among asexually-identified individuals about whether asexuality references desire or attraction (e.g., Bogaert, 2012b; Hinderliter, 2009). It may be both or either depending on the person in question, and I think that SCT sidesteps this debate anyway by positioning partner number eroticism as multifaceted (it makes no assumptions about the primacy of desire vs. attraction in orientation or identity, and they could be branched or coincident) and by separating dyadic and solitary sexuality.

SCT makes no assumption about the solitary sexuality of asexually identified individuals. This maps on to lived experiences of asexual individuals, some of whom are solitarily sexual (Prause & Graham, 2007). Even in people who are erotic-"sexuals"-dyadic and solitary desire and activity are only mildly correlated (van Anders, 2012b) and show divergent correlations with other factors (van Anders, 2012b), highlighting how different solitary and dyadic eroticism are despite both being "sexual." Finally, some asexually-identified individuals might engage in sexual activity with partners even though they do not desire it, for the same reasons that sexually-identified individuals sometimes engage in unwanted sexual activity with their partners (e.g., power differentials, fear of stigma or losing partners, part of the give-and-take of relationships, sexual coercion) (Van Houdenhove et al., 2014). In addition, Bogaert (2012a) argued that some asexuals may have nontargeted sexual fantasies that do not involve identifiable people.

Though asexuality is an identity that maps onto nonalloerotic orientations and statuses, there is no reason to assume that alloeroticism is a constant for people who *do* have a sexual identity (whether articulated or not). That is, a sexually-identified person could still have times and lifephases of nonalloeroticism. This could be noted on Fig. 4, and has relevance for thinking about clinical issues of dyadic desire: are there some adult lifephases where nonalloeroticism might be seen as common rather than medicalized?

Demisexuality is an identity where erotic connections are only desired after establishment of nurturant connections (Demisexual, 2013). A demisexual individual might experience nurturant interest in others but no partnered erotic interest until a nurturant contact is established, at which point the nurturant contact appears to facilitate alloerotic interest. This could be notated on Fig. 4 using numbers and arrows (e.g., 1 on nurturance and an arrow to 2 on eroticism).

"Gray-A" or "gray-asexuality" denotes degrees of asexuality rather than its categorical presence/absence (Bogaert, 2012b; gray-a/grey-a., 2013). This can be modeled in SCT as well, using the alloeroticism strength axis.

Bisexual, Pansexual, Person-not-Gender

Though pansexual, bisexual, and person-not-gender sexual identities are often difficult to separate conceptually, they are typically experienced quite differently. SCT is able to position these sexualities in distinctive ways in accord with lived experiences (e.g., Rust, 2001). Though pansexuality has many definitions, one might be that it involves attractions to people of various gender/sexes that are not rooted in gender/sex binaries. Accordingly, someone who self-identifies as pansexual might be located on all genders/sexes in Fig. 5 along the vertical gender/sex strength continuum. Someone who is bisexual might be located at the both gender/sex positions.[18] Finally, someone with a person-not-gender orientation (where gender/sex is not relevant to sexuality) might be located in nongender/sexed.

Bisexual identity and behavioral bisexuality reflect a multitude of positionings, even when using something as specific as genital arousal as a measure (e.g., Cerny & Janssen, 2011; Rosenthal, Sylva, Safron, & Bailey, 2012; van Anders, 2012a). People might identify as bisexual because they are attracted to women and men, because they are person-not-gender and therefore *could* partner with men or women (even though gender/sex is not an organizing feature of their sexuality), and/or because they are interested in all genders/sexes beyond female-male binaries and see bisexual as the best term for this. SCT thus allows individuals to distinguish between different identities that might inhere the same status.

Butch/Femme

Many butch/femme individuals articulate specific orientations and identities (e.g., see Coyote & Sharman, 2011) and SCT is able to capture these specificities. One reason is that butch and femme are related to gender (i.e., masculinities, femininities, etc.), which largely goes untheorized in most (academic) models of sexuality.

Both butch and femme are claimed by people of various gender/sexes and sexualities, and not just lesbians where the terms may be more well-known. Attractions to butch identities inhere attraction to masculinity and, accordingly, one might place a "b" on Fig. 3b (gender) to notate this attraction. Butch masculinities are often situated as queer masculinities

[18] Bisexuality is often positioned as somehow more problematically reifying gender/sex binaries than other sexualities because it involves attraction to "both" genders/sexes (Rust, 2001). I find this mystifying given that heterosexual, gay, and lesbian identities are also understood to inhere attractions to one and not "the other" gender/sex in a way that could be interpreted as providing the same support for a gender binary. Perhaps this is because some people see bisexuality as attempting to transgress sexuality and gender norms but somehow not going far enough. This is similar to hurtful critiques of some trans individuals who identify as men or women rather than an identity outside gender/sex binaries (i.e., that they should identify as genderqueer, Serano, 2013). However, it is not clear why monosexual or cisgender individuals should get to dictate that trans and bi identities should leave binaries behind when cisgender, heterosexual, and lesbian/gay individuals don't, or why doing so should be a precondition for progressive politics and/or worldviews that allow for nonbinaristic identities. Accordingly, a more generous (and accurate) positioning is that some people's orientations inhere some form of a binary in a way that is not indicative of their worldview. See also Serano (2013) for useful extended discussion on these points.

though, so the b could be located in gender challenge or on the contingent masculine norm boundary. Similarly, partnering with femme-identified individuals involves femininity, and one could place an "f" on feminine, contingent feminine norm boundary, or gender challenge in Fig. 3b.

Cisgender

How might a cisgender person (i.e., a term for people who retains a birth-assigned gender/sex throughout life) use SCT? Cisgender individuals can have branchedness in their individual gender/sex (Fig. 5), with some men self-locating as feminine for example. There may also be change over time: for example, a cisgender woman might locate a feminine childhood gender with c, a masculine adolescent gender with a, a feminine parenting gender lifephase with p, etc.

Heterosexual and Mostly Heterosexual

Heterosexuals are a diverse group that typically includes people who are currently in other-gender/sex relationships or wanting them, but who have diverse past behaviors, current behaviors, and orientations. These can be separated out via SCT, such that heterosexuality is modeled in ways that reflect its complexity. Moreover, heterosexuality may be more queer than typically thought, because individuals might be more interested in maleness than masculinity or femininity than femaleness (thus challenging the notion that gender and sex are necessarily congruent or the same thing). Someone could easily identify as heterosexual even while having a trans-identified partner or a gender independent partner.

Researchers have recently paid increasing attention to "mostly heterosexuals" as an understudied and underappreciated but quite common sexual orientation or identity (Vrangalova & Savin-Williams, 2012). Mostly heterosexuals themselves are diverse, however, and SCT may be one way for this diversity to be mapped out. This is in stark contrast to many existing models of sexual orientation that generally fail to capture mostly heterosexuals at all, much less the diversity among them.

Polyamory, Open Relationships, Slut, Player, and Single-by-Choice

There are many types of multipartner sexualities that are conflated or co-implicated despite having a very different set of behaviors and lived experiences (e.g., Barker, 2005; Ritchie & Barker, 2006; Rust, 2001, 2003; Sheff, 2005). This is paralleled by the many identities used in polyamory and multiple partner discourse (Ritchie & Barker, 2006). SCT can represent their distinctiveness (though many have cogently complicated clear distinctions between these and other types of multisexualities) (e.g., Klesse, 2006).

People who identify as polyamorous can represent diverse formations of partnered sexuality, even while being multisexual in status and/or orientation. On Fig. 6c, partner number nurturance, they might self-locate in multiple nurturant partners, nurturant partners not number, or nurturant partner challenge. On Fig. 6b, partner number eroticism, they might self-locate in similar locations. A polyamorously-identified person could locate in multiple nurturant partners and one erotic partner (i.e., they want multiple nurturant relationships and one erotic one).

An open relationship typically involves one longer-term relationship and other shorter-term erotic contacts that may or may not be nurturant (though the definition is contested and contestable). On Fig. 6, then, an open relationship may be located in multiple erotic partners and one nurturant one.

Player is an identity for those who want to have multiple erotic contacts but no nurturant ones (Anderson, 1989; Giordano, Longmore, Manning, & Northcutt, 2009; Milhausen & Herold, 1999; Player, 2013). On Fig. 6, it would be located in multiple erotic partners and nonallonurturance. A slut identity or appellation might be someone who is located on multiple erotic partners (Fig. 6b), with no specific location on Fig. 6c (allonurturance). Single-by-choice individuals do not want partners as defined by nurturance, but may be interested in having erotic partners or contacts. On Fig. 6, single-by-choice individuals could be located in nonallonurturant (Fig. 6c) but anywhere in eroticism (Fig. 6b).

How do player, slut, and single-by-choice identities differ? Player can differ markedly from single-by-choice; both involve nonallonurturance but only player has a defined erotic partner number location. Player also can differ from slut, because player is explicitly defined by multiple erotic partners and no nurturant ones, whereas slut is explicitly defined as multiple erotic partners (but slut can still entail a nurturant partner). Or, slut may be the woman version of player, with slut stigmatized because multiple erotic partners is lauded for men but not women. Interestingly, single-by-choice is an identity often claimed somewhat transgressively by women (as opposed to male "bachelors") perhaps because women are assumed, not based on empirical evidence, to be high on allonurturance and men low.

Sex Worker

Though SCT has focused on a circumscribed array of partnered sexualities, it may also be used to locate sex workers. On Fig. 4, someone could have a high alloerotic status or multiple erotic partners for financial reasons, but be oriented to one erotic partner, or oriented towards multiple erotic partners in general. Someone could have a multiple erotic partner number status and orientation with branched or coincident multisexualities (e.g., their multisexuality might or might not involve the people they would prefer it to). But not all sex work is multierotic

anyway, as some individuals engage in a financially supported position as a long-term exclusive sexual partner.

Applications and Implications

The goal of Sexual Configurations is to provide a theory of partnered sexualities that is rooted in and reflects sexual diversity and that (1) models and visually organizes specific kinds of sexual diversity, (2) allows diverse individuals (in theory, all individuals) to self-locate their gender/sex and partner number sexualities, and (3) provides a scientific theory and phenomenology of sexualities that can be falsified and/or revised with empirical data. There are at least six domains of applicability I see for it at this point.

Sexual Diversity Studies and Research

SCT is rooted in a sexual diversity lens, and this lens may be useful outside the scope of the theory. Various fields engage with sexuality including sex research, sexual health research, sexology, sexual medicine, queer theory, transgender studies, and sexuality studies. Though interdisciplinary, most of these fields are disciplinarily-rooted in humanistic, social sciences, biosciences, or biomedical approaches. Some focus on differences between sexual groups and critique those that lump sexualities while others seek to destabilize difference and critique those who would reify it. A sexual diversity lens may be a way to sidestep this boundary policing and focus instead on question-specific particularities or generalities while valuing both (for some relevant discussion, see Hines, 2006).

What does a field of sexual diversity studies and research contribute? By focusing on particularity, it attends to heterogeneity in ways that are scientifically useful, meaningful to lived experiences, and avoid empirically inaccurate homogenizations (Parker, 2000). On the flipside, attending to generalities prevents an overfocus on difference and facilitates more relative and positional understandings of sexualities. This double lens of particularity and specificity, macro and micro, coupled with openness to insights from disparate disciplines may prove especially useful for understanding sexualities (Bancroft, 2000a).

Sexual diversity studies and research could be useful for conceptualizing minority and majority sexualities. The same gender/sex sexual orientation may be classified as a minority in a certain time and place but not in another because what counts as a minority gender/sex sexuality can depend on a host of factors (Gagnon, 1990). Minority sexualities are always minoritized by and within a culture. But cultures change. And, since cultures change, the ways sexualities come to be defined as minority or majority vary as well (Rubin, 1999). A strength of a sexual diversity lens is that "minority sexuality" is understood as a function of how a person or culture engages with a type of sexuality or person.

A sexual diversity lens recognizes that there is no natural universal way to classify minority sexualities. As a corollary, it provides the recognition there is also no natural universal majority sexuality. Heterosexuality as a construct might be understood to be a majority sexuality across many times and places, but what gets counted in that construct varies by person, culture, and time. For example, can a woman be heterosexual if she has romantically kissed a woman? If she is attracted to some women? If she has no interest in penetrative sexuality?

The lack of natural majorities or minorities has evolutionary implications. Even majority sexual expressions have not been the same one thing throughout cultures and history, which means that evolution has resulted in sexual flexibility or plasticity. A sexual diversity lens denaturalizes the distinctions between sexual minorities and majorities and also sidesteps the need to make those distinctions while acknowledging the utility of doing so.

Empirical Research

Obviously, a major goal of science is to understand the phenomena around us, including us. The figures could be used to locate individuals' partnered sexualities or gender/sex in qualitative or even quantitative ways, despite their complexity. Though their complexity is one draw-back, scholars have long and repeatedly argued for multidimensional models of sexuality that are complex enough to capture rather than elide existing diversity (e.g., Joel et al., 2014; McWhirter et al., 1990; Sanders et al., 1990; Whalen et al., 1990). Moreover, the models of SCT can vary in degree of complexity to match individual experiences (e.g., by collapsing categories that are coincident; by allowing for notation of important information). SCT provides a way to describe a delimited range of partnered sexualities, which is a critical step in science: "…any scientific *analysis* must be preceded by an adequate *description*" (Whalen et al., 1990, p. 68, italics in original).

Many individuals exhibit sexualities and gender/sexes that are not well-captured by existing theories of sexual orientation, and this has been known for some time (McWhirter et al., 1990). This is true for people who see their sexualities and/or gender/sexes existing outside current norms, but also for surprisingly large numbers of others; for example, 46.7 % of "normative" women in one study experienced some degree of a sense of both genders and only a minority of men (29.6 %) never wished to be the "other" gender (Joel et al., 2014). Being able to separate gender/sex from gender from sex, partner number from gender/sex sexuality, and eroticism from nurturance can help to make sexual diversity empirically visible. Moreover, it can help to assess the degree of interconnection and branched/coincident among the parameters. Because SCT will allow for the empirical study of previously excluded aspects of partnered sexuality, I hope that it will be generative and lay groundwork for identifying patterns as yet not understood. As Bullough (1990) suggested: "A more complex

scale could have numerous research advantages by not only allowing us to research over again what we have done before but also allowing us to ask different questions and to forge different kinds of answers" (p. 11).

Self-knowledge

Understanding the phenomena around us-including us-is not a drive limited to practicing scientists and academics. People outside academia have provided some of the most comprehensive and precise contributions to understanding sexualities. Still, most theories of sexuality end up marginalizing many people who are seen to fall outside theoretical purview. Though belonging should not be uncritically desired, people should be able to situate themselves and see that they have a place in scholarship that ostensibly aims to place everyone within a delimited frame. One of the applications of SCT, then, is a more comprehensive understanding of our sexualities for us as people (not just the us who are scientists and researchers) in ways that provide a place for diverse sexualities and do not further marginalize the marginalized. As Lorber (1996) argued, "There are revolutionary possibilities inherent in rethinking the categories of gender, sexuality, and physiological sex" (p. 155).

Self-knowledge can be useful in other ways. Individuals currently may feel guilty for sexualities they perceive to be mis/unaligned rather than branched. SCT positions branchedness as a real part of sexualities that is not inherently problematic (though it recognizes that it can be experienced that way) and, moreover, reflects historicity and positionality in experiences of sexuality (Rubin, 1999). For example, why should a heterosexual man feel uncomfortable by transient or persistent desires for men? Many people desire men, so why not heterosexual-identified men? After all, desires do not constitute identities (Rosario & Schrimshaw, 2014). Or, why should someone feel that the people ze (a gender/sex-neutral pronoun) wants to flirt with should be the same people ze wants to be kiss? It may be useful to realize that multiple erotic partner number fantasies may have nothing to do with erotic behavior because orientations and statuses are different constructs that can be branched or co-incident. There are no natural laws that say co-incident sexual configurations are better, more right, necessary, or desirable; rightness is instead a human judgment. SCT might be a way to support more liberatory self-knowledge.

Social Neuroendocrinology

Researchers have historically tried to link sexuality to testosterone with varying success. Focusing on testosterone and gender/sex sexuality may have fit cultural ideas about masculinity, but evidence repeatedly fails to support linkages between the two despite some very disturbing historical attempts (for further discussion of this, see Bogaert, 2012b; Jordan-Young, 2010; van Anders, 2013). As Whalen et al. (1990) noted, Kinsey recognized that testosterone may be linked with intensity of sexual drive, but not its focus. Instead, researchers have found that testosterone is linked to relational phenomena and partner number sexuality (for reviews, see Gray & Campbell, 2009; van Anders, 2009) and various types of sexual desire (Burke et al., under review; van Anders, 2012b). This body of work suggests that testosterone is related to being oriented towards multiple sexual partners in men, and having multiple sexual partners in women (Gray & Campbell, 2009; Gray, Yang, & Pope, 2006; van Anders, 2009; van Anders & Goldey, 2010; van Anders, Hamilton, & Watson, 2007b), with much still to be understood.

Social neuroendocrinology, the bidirectional study of hormones and social behavior in context (van Anders & Watson, 2006; van Anders, 2013), is interconnected with SCT. Eroticism and nurturance are derived from various findings as well as the Steroid/Peptide Theory of Social Bonds (S/P Theory) (van Anders et al., 2011). In the S/P Theory, peptides like oxytocin are linked with both nurturance and eroticism. But testosterone, in contrast, distinguishes between the two: nurturance is linked to low testosterone, and eroticism is linked to high testosterone, one of the empirical reasons the two can be separated. Eroticism is a subcomponent of competitiveness, which is related to acquiring/defending resources, broadly defined to include erotic contacts, status, power, etc. Thus, the S/P Theory and social neuroendocrinology could be useful for devising empirical tests of SCT. For example, high alloerotic strength in Fig. 6b could map onto high testosterone-competitiveness in a variety of ways including desire for partnered erotic pleasure or sexual dominance.[19,20] In Fig. 6c, some sexual desires might be represented in terms of closeness, as desire to be sexual with someone else to experience intimacy rather than genital pleasure per se, and research supports this link between lower testosterone and more nurturant forms of sexual desire (Burke et al., under review). SCT thus might provide important ways to assess hormonal associations with partnered sexuality in context.

Feminist and Queer Empowerment, Action, and Alliance Building

Women and sexual minorities often have their sexualities at best theorized as problematic and at worst rendered invisible or illegible (or possibly vice versa). Conceptualizing sexualities only along minority/majority lines is a limited and limiting way to

[19] It seems worth noting that someone who has strong interests in sexually coercing others or who *does* sexually coerce others might locate as highly alloerotic because eroticism does not necessarily denote positive, wanted, or consensual phenomena. The same activity may be erotic for one person and traumatic for another.

[20] Individuals strongly interested in consensual sexual dominance and/or who do engage in it might also be represented here. Given that detailed consent is a major feature of dominance/submission kink-related sexualities, I do not at all mean to conflate these with sexual coercion (hence separate footnotes).

think about sexuality (which is not to undermine the importance of doing so sometimes), and only sometimes useful for science. So, one goal of SCT has been to *de*minoritize marginalized sexualities (though not in a post-minority sense), which may be useful. However, I also recognize that academic theories are sometimes useful and sometimes not beyond academic spaces and, though I have tried to incorporate and pay due to ideas from community sources, I obviously have not developed or presented SCT as a for-community by-community theory.

Liberatory worldviews are often ascribed to specific identities, orientations, or statuses, and this has often been the case for women and sex partners for masculine-identified individuals (e.g., "If you were liberated, you would have sex with me!"). SCT, however, positions sexualities without ascribing a more or less liberatory nature to them, which is—after all—culturally contingent and decided upon. A progressive sexuality is not necessarily more sexuality or different sexuality. Instead, I position the *theory* of Sexual Configurations as potentially liberatory; one could argue that a progressive sexuality is one that recognizes sexual diversity, situates its own sexuality/ies among this diversity, and recognizes its and others' situatedness (i.e., that recognizes how it is not the only, the right, or the natural version).

Identity politics have often been used to police sexual minority communities (e.g., see Serano, 2013). For example, are you polyamorous enough if you only have two partners? Are you queer enough if you are attracted only to people with vulvas/vaginas? Can trans women be lesbians? Do bisexuals reify the sex binary? Can heterosexuals be queer? SCT positions a diverse array of sexualities such that one can begin (or continue) to see how individuals might align based on discrimination or worldviews rather than, for example, interest in penises.[21] As Haraway (2006) has argued, collective action based on affinities (e.g., anti-normativity) rather than identities may be one compelling and effective way of uniting for social change.

Gendered sexual scripts have been identified as problematic (Braun, Gavey, & McPhillips, 2003; Wiederman, 2005). Many people, especially but not exclusively young heterosexual women, engage in sexual behavior with men because of heteronormative sexual scripts that position love (nurturance) alongside sexuality (eroticism) (e.g., Holland, Ramazanoglu, Sharpe, & Thomson, 1998). These scripts are sometimes used by individuals (especially masculine individuals, most commonly men) to convey the notion that "if she loved me, she would have sex" in or outside a relationship. One interesting liberatory potential of SCT is the contestability of the assumed tie between eroticism and nurturance. By separating the two in common understandings of sexuality, it would make little sense to have sex with someone to prove love.

Similar scripts state that sex will lead to love. And, many women (though not exclusively) follow sexual scripts that suggest that sexual engagement with a man will lead to him falling in love with them or be a way to retain/enhance love. This may be possible, after all, love and sex are not without connections. But, SCT also makes this an unlikely proposition in that the two are separable: eroticism cannot be expected to lead to love.

Clinical, Counseling, and Health Contexts

SCT might be useful in helping clients understand their own sexualities as branched rather than unaligned or misaligned when this makes sense. It may be helpful for individuals "grappling" with their nontraditional sexualities to see them laid out; this might aid in a deeper understanding, potentially especially in the context of the complexity of one's own sexual configuration or one's partner's. For example, a polyamorous person might be interested in multiple nurturant partners and one erotic one, and understanding this might be useful to relational insights. Some monoamorously-identified couples who have experienced infidelity and are specifically concerned about loss-of-love (rather than sexual straying) might choose to position their partners as oriented towards one nurturant partner and multiple erotic ones. Sexually-identified people might more usefully situate lack of sexual desire as a nonalloerotic life phase or asexuality rather than as a sexual desire disorder.

SCT might also be useful to public health contexts, where clear mapping out of statuses can be critical to policies and/or prevention efforts. Already, concepts in wide use like men who have sex with men (MSM) and women who have sex with women (WSW) could be mapped out on SCT. SCT also models other important concepts like multiple erotic partners that could be relevant. Moreover, it allows for the separability of erotic partner number statuses (which could involve attention to contraception and/or safer sex practices) from nurturant ones (which might not). Importantly, the intersectional nature of Sexual Configurations allows for the separation of identity from behavior, which can be important when identities are understood to describe majority cultural groups with which ethnic minorities may not feel a sense of belonging or may reject. Finally, SCT could provide a framework that addresses diverse sexualities in ways that are not stigmatizing or additionally marginalizing.

Conclusions

In SCT, I have aimed to provide conceptualizations and models of diverse sexualities that are rooted in empirical research and lived experiences and are scientifically generative. There are many sexualities that I did not cover, obviously, and I have made space for them with sexual parameter$_n$. I have argued that solitary and partnered sexualities are separable. I have highlighted the importance of gender/sex sexuality as one, but not the only or major feature of sexuality, incorporating gender/sex without focusing only on its relevance for difference (Bancroft, 2000b; Katz-Wise

[21] Not to minimize interest in penises.

& Hyde, 2014; Unger, 1979; Vanwesenbeeck, 2009). And, I have disentangled gender and sex from each other and gender/sex itself when these are more typically conflated (e.g., Freud, 1905).

In SCT, I make the case for partner number sexuality, a parameter of partnered sexuality that is often only conceptualized by individuals on its margins (e.g., asexually- or polyamorously-identified individuals). It usefully models the interconnections and distinctions between otherwise seemingly disparate identities like asexual and polyamorous, single-by-choice, and player. And, SCT models the distinctions between nurturance and eroticism for partnered sexuality in ways that map onto lived experiences.

To replace concepts of alignment and misalignment, I have provided branched and co-incident as more scientific terminology. In doing so, I have argued that sexualities are deeply and recursively multifaceted. I have also articulated a sexual diversity lens as a way of engaging with sexuality, one that focuses on particularities and generalities to provide local and broad insights about diverse sexualities.

I have offered a set of potential applications for SCT, and these are empirically testable. For example, I have suggested that it may have utility for counseling around sexual and relational health and well-being. My brief attention to social neuroendocrinology also opens up new avenues for hormonal research; for example how partner number sexuality might map onto neurobiological substrates for social bonds and what the limitations are of converging these different epistemologies. SCT is meant to be generative and open up novel avenues for research. Some relate to temporal issues; for example, is an orientation towards multiple sexual partners organized around multiple partners at one time, over an extended period of time, and/or different partners in close succession? Or is an orientation to multiple people in the same event different from wanting multiple sexual relationship partners? Other questions relate to intersectionality; for example, how might culture inform the ways gender/sexes are conceptualized as normative or gender/sex-challenge? Of course, one question I would like to make explicit is whether SCT *works*. Does it reflect diverse sexualities and make sense of them? How might it be expanded or revised in light of sexualities that will come to matter or should already?

One major goal has been to root SCT in this time and place and be able to reflect diverse times and places. Another has been to demonstrate how uniting knowledge from lived experiences and biology, neuroscience and feminist scholarship, social neuroendocrinology and sociology provides for compelling and generative theory. I hope, therefore, that with SCT I have provided a way to denature sexuality into culturally contextualized phenomena and rebiologize situated notions of sexuality. In other words, I hope I have provided a model for studying phenomena that are meaningfully and simultaneously cultural and biological without the determinisms, essentialisms, and boundary policing that often accompany each.

Critically, I have tried to make clear how *all* people have located sexualities using a sexual diversity lens, regardless of their socially-derived position of sexual minority or majority. I argue that this can be one way to build diverse alliances around social justice aims, i.e., to recognize that each of us is situated in a larger social and sexual landscape. In sum, with SCT, I have aimed to change existing understandings and conceptualizations of sexuality in meaningful and useful ways.

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