

# Effable *Slash*: An Intersective Coordinator in English and its Behavior Slash Properties<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract.** This paper presents an analysis of the synchronic distribution and syntactic behavior of the English expression *slash*, as in *These are my cats slash best friends*. First, *slash* is a new type of coordinator: in nominal cases it productively coordinates two bare nominals resulting in an intersective reading. Second, it is semantically similar but syntactically distinct from similar combining mechanisms: intersective *and*, Latin *cum*, N-N compounding, and orthographic *slash* </>. Third, *slash* has a unique subcategorization requirement of only coordinating bare nouns (*bartender slash dentist*), adjectives, and verb phrases, but not clauses or full noun phrases (*\*the lawyer slash the doctor*). By providing a range of examples showing productive use, I argue that *slash* is incorporated in the grammar of English, and that it is a unique example of innovation in the ‘very closed’ functional category of coordinators.

## 0. Introduction

In this paper I describe the word *slash* in its use as a coordinator in English. Examples of *slash* in this use are shown in:

- (1) Orange County cities are blocking projects because of NIMBYism slash selfishness.<sup>2</sup>
- (2) she was also my receptionist slash research assistant who was darned near becoming a fantastic skiptracer.
- (3) He’s a part-time bartender slash ski instructor slash mountain guide.

The object of study in this paper is what I call the *effable slash*: in spoken language, the word pronounced *slash* /slæʃ/; in written language, the word spelled out *slash*. By analyzing data from spoken and written speech in formal and informal domains, I argue that this word *slash* exhibits all the properties that are expected of coordinating conjunctions and so is best categorized as one. This identification is interesting for the following reasons. First, the syntactic literature on coordination has not acknowledged the existence and productivity of this coordinator in English, as far as the author is aware. Second, *slash* provides a new empirical domain to test theories about the syntactic structure and semantics of coordinators. Third, the category of coordinators is a functional category and expected to be closed against new members.

In section 2, I explain its meaning. I show *slash* in use in a variety of contexts, and demonstrate that *slash* is a productive word, distinct from the compounding hyphen <-> as in *singer-songwriter*, the Latin *cum* as in *house-cum-office*, and others. In section 3, I address the question of what kind of word *slash* is. I discuss its categorial properties and present an array of tests that show that it is a coordinator. Section 4 discusses its syntactic behavior.

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<sup>2</sup> Examples from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) were retrieved in September 2016.

## 1. *Slash* and its Meaning

*Slash* appears in hundreds of examples in COCA in spoken and written modalities, formal and informal contexts, and published works and broadcast media. Here is a selection of examples demonstrating its diverse and widespread usage. Examples (4-15) are instances encountered by the author in spontaneous, natural speech. Examples in (16-22) are examples from COCA, and are all recorded examples of speech.

[Observed examples]

- (4) I ran into one of my family friends slash customers at the Bartell's on R. street.
- (5) I invited my sister slash anyone else who wants to come.
- (6) My cats slash best friends sauntered in.
- (7) My friend was doing a Ph.D. slash career change.
- (8) I'm rapper slash actress Queen Latifah.
- (9) We got your notebook back from your best friend slash enemy.
- (10) Franz is a free messaging app slash former Emperor of Austria and combines chat and messaging services into one application.
- (11) Egli declined politely slash embarrassedly.
- (12) *Of Mice and Men* is a good example of a play slash novelette.
- (13) Louis just shot his HBO special... which is, uh, I'm very very happy for you slash jealous.
- (14) This weekend I'm reflecting on how fortunate I was to have grown up in a place where one of my best friends in high school was a gay, Thai, male cheerleader and my neighbor slash faux big brother was a die hard conservative.
- (15) What is the politically correct way to ask about someone's race slash ethnicity?

[Examples from Spoken COCA]

- (16) Drew and I have shared clients slash patients countless times and there is kind of a tug-of-war.
- (17) PALIN: I think it's funny that the cocktail circuit slash circuit gives me a hard time for eating elk and moose.
- (18) the thing that has fueled me more than anything in my career is being a Canadian slash British actor
- (19) we're going to get an exclusive look inside the small box on which magician slash contortionist slash performance artist David Blaine is going to step tomorrow for 44 days.
- (20) I'm going to, for, for my money, for my entertainment slash education dollar, I'm probably going to spend a little bit more time writing
- (21) This is the kitchen slash washroom.
- (22) CHRIS-CUOMO-1-ABC: (O -camera) I hear that a 20-something-year-old is having some kind of friendship, slash, sexual relationship with another man, what do I think?

I compare *slash* with three other elements of grammar: the coordinator *and*, the Latin linker *cum*, and the orthographic *slash*, and show that has distinct usage from these. As a starting point, I compare the meaning of *slash* with the meaning of *and*. *and*, when coordinating two Ns, is sometimes ambiguous between an *intersective reading* and a *collective reading*. The intersective reading of *and*, seen in (23), refers to a single individual. The collective reading, seen in (24), refers to multiple individuals.

- (23) Intersective and = denotes one individual  
a. That liar and cheat cannot be trusted. (Champollion 2016)  
b. My friend and colleague always sang too loudly. (Heycock & Zamparelli 2005)
- (24) Collective and = denotes multiple individuals  
a. The farmer and X-ray technician both claimed the right to asylum.  
b. My mom and dad were always shouting at each other. (Heycock & Zamparelli 2005)

*Slash* can appear in only the intersective contexts, denoting one and the same individual.

- (25) Intersective *slash* = denotes one individual  
a. That liar slash cheat cannot be trusted.  
b. My friend slash colleague always sang too loudly.
- (26) Collective *slash* = denotes multiple individuals  
a. \* The farmer slash X-ray technician both claimed the right to asylum.  
b. \* My mom slash dad were always shouting at each other.

Corpus examples show this pattern of use.

- (27) This is the kitchen slash washroom.  
(28) the thing that has fueled me more than anything in my career is being a Canadian slash British actor

Renner (2008) calls this property ‘homoreferentiality’, where the ‘denotata are fused’ (in compounds). Professions are one of the more common uses of *slash*.

- (29) In the winter months, I moonlight as a bartender slash ski instructor.

In this use, *slash* overlaps with the Latin *cum* /kum/, which means exactly the same thing: a single person fulfilling multiple roles. There are also examples of Latin *cum* used with adjectives (30c) and generic places (30d), as well as being fossilized in toponyms (30e).

- (30) a. In the winter months, I moonlight as a bartender cum ski instructor.  
b. Sites such as this show the full power of the Internet as a propaganda medium cum travel service cum organizing tool. Oh, and nightlife directory.  
c. The fervent mediaevalism developed a philosophic cum economic tinge. [OED]<sup>3</sup>  
d. The atmosphere of laboratory-cum-workshop... [OED]  
e. Prestwich-cum-Oldham was an important place in present-day Lancashire, England.

In all examples in (30) (except the place names), *cum* can be replaced by *slash*, showing that their meaning and distribution overlaps quite a bit. Still, *cum* differs from *slash* in at least two ways. First, I perceive a significant register difference between the two. Latin *cum* is unmarked only in relatively formal contexts, and it’s nearly obsolete in contemporary, casual conversation. *Slash*, on the other hand, is very common in informal conversation, and as shown by the many examples, appears in other domains like news reporting and published media, indicating its general

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<sup>3</sup> In addition, the OED lists *cum* as a preposition.

acceptance.<sup>4</sup> Second, *cum* has the additional shade of meaning of ‘turned-into’ or ‘became’. Compare the pair of sentences below.

- (31) a. Ronald Reagan is the only actor *cum* President of the United States.  
b. Ronald Reagan is the only actor slash President of the United States.

In (31a), *cum* refers to Ronald Reagan’s unique status of being an actor who later became President. The *slash*-alternative carries no meaning of a temporal relation between the two positions; they are held simultaneously.

Perhaps *slash* is a lexicalization of compounding morphology. The typical use of *slash* also partially overlaps with noun-noun compounds, called copulative compounds in Olsen (2007), or appositional compounds in Bauer (2008).

- (32) a. The poet-translator was present at the lecture.  
b. I consulted with my bartender-psychologist.

Corpus instances suggest there is a distinction between simple compounding or nominal juxtaposition and the use of *slash*, as shown in (33). Coordinated complexes don’t seem to be headed in the way that the compound is.

- (33) I’m not a student-athlete, I’m an athlete slash student.

This is not a contradiction, which means that nominal compounds are not equivalent to *slash*. There is some sense where the hyphenated compound (34) and the *slash* variant (35) are not equivalent. (In fact, (35) is judged to be false.)

- (34) Låpsley is a singer-songwriter.  
(35) Låpsley is a singer slash songwriter.

A singer-songwriter is specific profession where a performer writes the songs that he or she later sings.<sup>5</sup> The singer *slash* songwriter instead strongly suggests that the person works full-time as a singer and full-time as a songwriter, and the two roles don’t necessarily interact. Compare also, in

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<sup>4</sup> Emerging evidence suggests that, as far as actual usage of *slash*, comprehension may not be, but production certainly is age-graded: younger speakers are more likely to use *slash* in this manner.

<sup>5</sup> One could argue that singer-songwriter is an idiomatic compound or collocation, which makes the nonequivalence of the (35) uninteresting. This is a possibility. However, this does bring up two points: it is additional evidence that *slash* is acting compositionally and therefore operates as an independent element (lexical item) in syntax. It also introduces the interesting question of compounding and coordination in idioms. If noun-noun compounds give rise to noncompositional, idiomatic readings, does true coordination give rise to idiomatic readings, too? There are certainly idioms with coordination in them (i), and the second conjuncts, or coordinated parts, are necessary (ii):

- (i) a. Every day in Seattle it rains cats and dogs.  
b. I know a thing or two about quantum computing.  
(ii) a. \* Every day in Seattle it rains cats.  
b. \* I know a thing about quantum computing.

This shows that, in principle and practice, coordination is not a category exempt from idiom formation. We might expect to see, given enough time, idioms incorporating *slash*.

(8) *I'm rapper slash actress Queen Latifah*, Queen Latifah's full-time role as both rapper and actress — the two roles are separate occupations that don't interact with each other. *Slash* is then set apart in meaning and distribution from compounding morphology.

Lexical *slash*, while related to the orthographical *slash* *</>*, has a separate distribution. I limit the discussion to examples where orthographic *</>* is functioning as a combination operator (e.g., I do not consider the *</>* in "60 miles/hour", or fractions like "5/7"). In the following sentences, (a) using the orthographical *</>* indicates a definite disjunction. In (b) sentences, the lexical *slash* suggests some sort of hybrid application or mode of travel. The result (b) is not equivalent to the original (a), and in fact (b) usually sounds anomalous.

- (36) a. While taking the survey, you should use Chrome/Firefox/Safari.  
 b. ? While taking the survey, you should use Chrome slash Firefox slash Safari.
- (37) a. Eileen will travel to the conference by air/rail.  
 b. ? Eileen will travel to the conference by air slash rail.

These pairs of sentences in (36-37) illustrate that orthographic *</>* and pronounced *slash* no longer have the same distribution and *slash* is considered by speakers a separate word.

A final observation about the usage of *slash* is that it productively coordinates proper names, but only when those proper names have the same referent (homoreferentiality). In other words, it is only coherent as a coordinator with the intersective meaning, so we only see it when the individual has two names. One example of that is with performers, who typically have an ordinary name and a stage name.

- (39) Brian slash Katya wore a scandalous red dress that he bought at a consignment store.

To conclude, *slash* has a unique distribution, separate from other, similar devices in the grammar of combination. *Slash* is similar to *and* in meaning, but syntactically distinct from these alternatives.

## 2. *Slash* is a Coordinator

I now turn to the question of what syntactic category *slash* is. I show that *slash* is a coordinator, to be added to the same category as *and*, *but*, and *or*. This merits discussion because the literature standardly assumes the class of coordinators is both very small and closed. *Slash* exhibits all the classical properties of coordinators. It coordinates two parts, where the two parts have the same status; it does not create a subordination relationship.

There are several syntactic arguments to be made that qualify *slash* as a coordinator. The surface distribution of *slash* is similar to that of *and* and *or*. It always links two similar conjuncts. We've seen examples of nominal terminals (N, A). *Slash* satisfies the reversibility criterion for coordinators. There is no other syntactic category where reversing the order of the associated elements yields truth-conditionally equivalent sentences. (Chaves 2007: 17). (41a) and (41b) are truth-conditionally equivalent sentences, even though the clausal associates of *and* have been reversed. In (42) the same property holds for *slash*: the two sentences are equivalent even though the coordinands are switched.

- (41) a. Tom likes to sing and Jane likes to dance.  
b. Jane likes to dance and Tom likes to sing.
- (42) a. John is a bartender slash ski instructor.  
b. John is a ski instructor slash bartender.

No other category has this reversibility criterion. (43) shows this for a preposition: (a) and (b) are not equivalent.

- (43) a. I like stories about pictures.  
b. I like pictures about stories.

*Slash* is generally monosyndetic, like English coordinators – there is one coordinator per pair of coordinands. In Section 4 I discuss this in more detail.

- (44) David Blaine is a magician slash showman slash entertainer.
- (45) David Blaine is a magician slash showman slash entertainer slash musician.

Iteration of *slash* doesn't necessarily create subordinate relations, as shown in (46a); unlike prepositions, as in (46b).

- (46) a. I like stories slash pictures slash movies.  
b. I like stories about pictures about movies.

Only coordination allows the ambiguity of distributed modifiers. (47a) is ambiguous: John can be a skilled bartender and a mediocre ski instructor, or skilled at both professions (or the third subtle reading, unique to *slash*, is that John is skilled at being a hybrid of both professions). We see the same interpretive possibilities with *and* in (47b).

- (47) a. John is a skilled bartender slash ski instructor.  
b. John is a skilled bartender and ski instructor.

Coordinators can appear as 'heads' of a parenthetical aside, and can stand at the beginning of a continuing utterance (Blakemore 2009). *Slash* can, as well.

- (48) a. John is Mary's neighbor (and best friend).  
b. John is Mary's neighbor (or best friend).  
c. John is Mary's neighbor (slash best friend).
- (49) A: John is Mary's neighbor.  
a. B: ...And best friend!  
b. B: ...Or best friend!  
c. B: ...Slash best friend!

The exchange in (50) shows another observed dialogue where one character, Louise, is adding onto the description from another character, Gene.

- (50) GENE: [The breakdancing class] is Brazilian!  
 LOUISE: Slash hilarious.<sup>6</sup>

The last syntactic diagnostic I use here to distinguish coordination from subordination is the classic Coordination Structure Constraint (Ross 1967). Subordinate constructions allow extraction of one or more daughters (51). But coordinate constructions don't allow extraction (52). *Slash*, as well, does not allow extraction (53).

- (51) a. Who did you mistake [ \_ ] for [ Eric Idle ]?  
 b. Who did you mistake [ Eric Idle ] for [ \_ ]?  
 (52) a. \* Who did you see [ \_ ] and [Tim]?  
 b. \* Who did you see [Tim] and [ \_ ]?  
 c. \* Who did you see both [ \_ ] and [ \_ ] ?  
 d. \* Which of her books did you find both [a review of \_] and [ \_ ]?  
 (53) a. \* What is Lila a cat slash [ \_ ]?  
 b. \* What is Lila a [ \_ ] slash [friend]?  
 c. \* What is John both [ \_ ] slash [ \_ ]? (A bartender slash ski instructor.)

*Slash* shows all the syntactic characteristics of being a coordinator.

### 3. *Slash* and its Syntactic Behavior

Here I examine in much finer detail the syntactic behavior of *slash*, presenting a range of contexts and tests. I focus on comparing *slash* to two other coordinators *and* and *or* for two reasons. These are the most common coordinators in English. The literature also concentrates on these two, for example: "Concerning the connectors, I shall (not surprisingly) take *and* to be the connector *par excellence*. That is, *and* is the most basic and the least specific connector, or comes close to it." (Lang 1984: 23)

#### 3.1 Categories

What categories do we see flanking *slash*? I work from the bottom (N) up through the top of the clause structure (CP). *Slash* in many examples we've seen so far simply coordinates bare nouns (N).

- (54) Just a sip of beer... that's what they serve these days at the home slash beach slash pub.<sup>7</sup>  
 (55) Michael Scott: There are four kinds of business: tourism, food service, rail- roads, and sales.  
 (pause)  
 Michael Scott: And hospitals slash manufacturing. And air travel.<sup>8</sup>  
 (56) The patient has a teratoma slash neuroblastoma.

*Slash* does not coordinate full noun phrases with an article (DP), though.

- (57) \* A doctor slash a lawyer walked in the room.

<sup>6</sup> Bob's Burgers. Season 1, Episode 4.

<sup>7</sup> Mike Birbiglia. My Girlfriend's Boyfriend. 1:08:42.

<sup>8</sup> The Office (US). Season 3, Episode 16

Nor does it work that well with any pair of determiners (D).

- (58) \* I saw a slash the movie yesterday.  
 (59) \* This slash that box should go in the closet.

Adjectives and adverbs readily coordinate with *slash*.

- (60) I'm very very happy for you slash jealous.<sup>9</sup>  
 (61) Egli declined politely slash embarrassedly.

*Slash* coordinates bare verbs (V).

- (62) Justin wants to tapdance slash sing onstage.

There are examples where *slash* is attested to coordinate verb phrases (VP).

- (63) A: What are you doing?  
 B: Office hours slash watching Olympics.  
 (64) I forgot that you lived slash work here. (=Figure 1)

*Slash* seems fine with T.

- (65) I could slash should help you clean the kitchen, but I'm lazy so I can't slash won't.

Assuming subjects in Spec,TP, T' coordination seems to be the limit. Any larger, including the subject in a TP-coordination, seems unwieldy at best.

- (66) John was cleaning the kitchen slash will be leaving soon.  
 (67) ? John was cleaning the kitchen slash Mary was vacuuming the carpet.

Finally, C and unambiguous CP (that is, unambiguously not TP) resist co-occurrence with *slash*.

- (68) ? I know what slash when John sang.  
 (69) \* I know what John sang slash when he did so.  
 (cf. the grammatical What and when did John sing? (Citko & Gračanin-Yuksek 2016: 394))

These results are summarized in the table in Table 1.

**Table 1.** The categories that *slash* may coordinate

Category	CP	C	TP	T	vP	VP	V	DP	D	NP	N	A	ADV
Status	*	?	?					*	*				

<sup>9</sup> That this is not extraposition is evident by the ungrammaticality of the ostensible source:

- (i) \* I'm very very happy  $t_i$  for you [slash jealous]<sub>i</sub>.  
 \* I'm very very happy slash jealous for you.

*Slash* is sensitive to the category it subcategorizes for, but in an idiosyncratic way. It is not the case that simply small elements like terminals are allowed and larger units are not. Nor is it the case that *slash* coordinates only nominals. The grammatical examples of multi-word VP coordination dispel this (*I am working at home slash conducting meetings all day*). Rather, it looks like there is a rough dividing line between lexical categories, which are allowed (N, NP, V, VP) and functional categories, which are not (D, DP, C, CP). It is more selective than *and* or *or*, which are unconstrained: they coordinate nearly every type of word and phrase (see Zhang (2010: 45) for a list).

### 3.2 Behavior that Patterns with *and* or *or*

In this and the following subsections, I compare *slash* directly to the syntactic behavior of *and* and *or*, and note properties that seem to be shared between the coordinators, and those which are not shared. I discuss negation, the Law of Coordination of Likes, the Coordinate Structure Constraint, comitative and collective predicates, and relational modifiers.

Under negation, *slash* is most naturally interpreted just like *and*.

- |      |  |                          |
|------|--|--------------------------|
| (70) | Alex is not a lawyer or judge. (... He is an accountant.)              | $\neg La \wedge \neg Ja$ |
| (71) | a. Alex is not a lawyer and judge. (... He is ONLY a lawyer.)          | $\neg(La \wedge Ja)$     |
|      | b. Alex is not a lawyer slash judge. (... He is ONLY a (mere) lawyer.) | $\neg(La \wedge Ja)$     |

But there are some examples where distributivity is the more natural reading.

- |      |  |                          |
|------|--|--------------------------|
| (72) | When you're not married slash in a relationship, it's incumbent on you to be proud of yourself for things. | $\neg My \wedge \neg Ry$ |
|------|--|--------------------------|

The data are inconclusive, but suggest that *slash* is mostly interpreted like *and* under negation.

The Law of Coordination of Likes (LCL) states that coordinands must be of the same category, or "type" (Williams 1978). For *and* and *or*, category identity is too restrictive, as Sag et al. (1985:117) shows with these and other examples.

- |      |  |
|------|--|
| (73) | Pat is either [stupid] <sub>ADJ</sub> or [a liar] <sub>DP</sub> .                          |
| (74) | Pat is either [a lunatic] <sub>DP</sub> or [under the influence] <sub>PP</sub> .           |
| (75) | Pat is [a Republican] <sub>DP</sub> and [proud of it] <sub>ADJ</sub> .                     |
| (76) | You can rely on [my assistant] <sub>DP</sub> and [that he will be on time] <sub>CP</sub> . |

*Slash* is unlike *and* and *or* in that it does not allow these exact kinds of exceptions to the LCL. Coordinands mostly seem to be the same category, as the (b) examples show.

- |      |  |
|------|--|
| (77) | a. Pat is [stupid] <sub>ADJ</sub> or [a liar] <sub>DP</sub> .  |
|      | b. * Pat is [stupid] <sub>ADJ</sub> slash [a liar] <sub>DP</sub> .   |
| (78) | a. Pat is [a Republican] <sub>DP</sub> and [proud of it] <sub>ADJ</sub> .                                    |
|      | b. * Pat is [a Republican] <sub>DP</sub> slash [proud of it] <sub>ADJ</sub> .                                |
| (79) | a. Svidrigailov brushed the question aside, [gruffly] <sub>ADV</sub> and [with loathing] <sub>PP</sub> .     |
|      | b. * Svidrigailov brushed the question aside, [gruffly] <sub>ADV</sub> slash [with loathing] <sub>PP</sub> . |

There is at least one instance where *slash* coordinates unlike categories:

- (80) When you're not [married]<sub>ADJ</sub> slash [in a relationship]<sub>PP</sub>, it's incumbent on you to be proud of yourself for things.

So while *slash* allows some violations of the LCL, they are not the same kind of violations that we see with *and* and *or*.

The Coordinate Structure Constraint (CSC) bans extraction of, and out of, conjuncts in a coordinate structure (Ross 1967). Lakoff (1986) noted that the CSC can be circumvented in certain cases below, using the coordinator *and*, in the (a) examples below. In these examples, replacement of *and* by *slash* yields ungrammaticality.

- (81) a. Here's the whiskey that John [went to the store] and [bought \_].  
b. \* Here's the whiskey that John [went to the store] slash [bought \_].  
(82) a. How many lakes can you [pollute \_] and [not arouse public furor]?  
b. \* How many lakes can you [pollute \_] slash [not arouse public furor]?

It was shown above that *slash* is independently capable of coordinating VPs, so the ungrammaticality of the (b) sentences is not fed by a subcategorization restriction. Instead, we see *slash* remains subject to the CSC, unlike certain types of asymmetric *and*.

In ordinary coordination, both *and* and *or* usually require the conjuncts to be distinct in meaning.

- (83) # This year the winter has been surprisingly mild and this year the winter has been surprisingly mild.  
(84) # John is looking for Lollek and Lollek is being sought by John. (Lang 1984: 99)

Yet there are cases of *and*-conjuncts where the conjuncts are not only semantically non-distinct, but they are identical in form. This construction is a somewhat idiomatic but nevertheless productive use of *and*, and yields a particular "intensifying" reading. (Gleitman 1965) *slash* does not allow this; neither does *or*.

- (85) a. Garraty walked faster and faster.  
b. \* Garraty walked faster or faster.  
c. \* Garraty walked faster slash faster.

A key property of *slash* is that there is no 'summative' property of *slash* that will license a collective, reciprocal, or similar predicates. *Or* behaves the same way; *And* does not.

- (86) Comitative predicates  
a. James and Maria went to the wedding together  
b. \* James or Maria went to the wedding together.  
c. \* James slash Maria went to the wedding together.

- (87) Collective predicates with proper names
  - a. Ethan and Laura met (each other) in semantics class.
  - b. \* Ethan or Laura met (each other) in semantics class.
  - c. \* Ethan slash Laura met (each other) in semantics class.
- (88) Collective predicates with bare nouns
  - a. A doctor and lawyer met.
  - b. \* A doctor or lawyer met.
  - c. \* A doctor slash lawyer met.
- (89) Swarm predicates
  - a. The bees and locusts swarmed the garden.
  - b. The bees or locusts swarmed the garden.
  - c. ? The bees slash locusts swarmed the garden.

The internal reading of relational modifiers like *same*, *different*, is the reading where the two agents are singing the same song as each other. It is unavailable. The external reading is unaffected.

- (90) a. Zac and Jessica sang the same song.
- b. # Zac or Jessica sang the same song.
- c. # Zac slash Jessica sang the same song.

It's worth exploring what (90c) could possibly mean. As we saw before, *slash* forces the proper names to refer to the same individual, so (90c) is out if Zac and Jessica, as standardly assumed, are separate individuals. In cases of performers with multiple names, or individuals with split-personality, it may be possible to obtain a variant of (90c) with an internal reading that is "true" in some sense.

- (91) Brian slash Katya sang the same song.

If Brian and Katya are one and the same individual, and it is possible for a single event to give rise to internal readings (If *I sang the same song as myself* is good, where there was no external singing event), then it is possible for him (Brian) to sing the same song as herself (Katya). I find this interpretation difficult, but logically possible given the right scenario.

### 3.3 Behavior Unique to *Slash*

In this section I highlight some syntactic behaviors that are unique to *slash* – neither *and* nor *or* exhibit any of these properties. I discuss adjectives, names, strict binarity, and the intersective interpretation.

When coordinating adjectives with *slash*, *slash* seems closer to allowing something bordering on disjunctive uncertainty. Consider these examples (adapted from Troseth 2009: 41), highlighted by sluicing:

- (92) a. \* Mercury is a shiny and dangerous substance...
- b. Mercury is a shiny or dangerous substance...
- c. ? Mercury is a shiny slash dangerous substance... ...but I don't know which.

As discussed before, while names referring to distinct individuals readily combine with other coordinators, *slash* is not so permissive. This was discussed in Section 2 at length.

- (93) a. Kirk and Spock entered the bridge.
- b. Kirk or Spock entered the bridge.
- c. ? Kirk slash Spock entered the bridge.

*Slash* does allow more than two coordinands, but unlike *and*, *or*, it requires additional instances of slash. It is obligatorily monosyndetic: for  $N$  number of conjuncts, there are  $N - 1$  instances of *slash*. In (94) there are 3 conjuncts, and 2 slashes.

- (94) we're going to get an exclusive look inside the small box on which magician slash contortionist slash performance artist David Blaine is going to step tomorrow for 44 days.

*And* and *or*, allow this very naturally as well.

- (95) You are a magician, and contortionist, and performance artist.
- (96) You are a magician, or contortionist, or performance artist.
- (97) You are a magician, slash contortionist, slash performance artist.

But *and* and *or* allow, for stylistic and/or meaning reasons, “all but last” omission, where all but the last coordinator is dropped, as in (98 and 99). If we attempt this with *slash* (100) the sentence becomes degraded, and it is difficult to pronounce with continuous prosody.

- (98) You are a magician, contortionist, and performance artist.
- (99) You are a magician, contortionist, or performance artist.
- (100) ?? You are a magician, contortionist, slash performance artist.

Consider *but*: similar to *slash* in the just-mentioned property (101). However, *but* in general does not allow many terms (102) – and cf. (94):

- (101) \* You are a magician, contortionist, but performance artist.
- (102) \* You are a magician, but contortionist, but performance artist.

So *slash* is alone in this exact pattern of behavior.

Lastly, we arrive at the intersective property of *slash*, introduced earlier in Section 2, which is made explicit as follows. Gazdar (1980) proposed a semantics for bare noun coordination, which is straightforward generalized intersection and union for conjunction (*and*) and disjunction (*or*). Bergmann (1982) noted the intersection analysis of conjunction doesn't account for the collective reading (multiple individuals) that obtains with bare noun coordination (103).

- (103) A cat and dog ran in. (collective only; 2 animals)
- (104) That liar and cheat was a criminal. (intersective)

*Or* has only a disjunctive reading.

(105) A cat or dog ran in. (disjunctive only; 1 animal)

But *slash* acts like neither of these. With *slash*, we see a forced (potentially gruesome) intersective reading (which is a logically possible but difficult interpretation of (103) as well).

(106) A cat slash dog ran in. (intersective only; 1 animal)

The contrast is even clearer with this pair of examples. While (108) is ambiguous between meeting with two individuals or one, (109) is not ambiguous: there is only one individual.

(107) Meeting with your colleague and therapist can be therapeutic. [ambiguous]

(108) Meeting with your colleague slash therapist can be therapeutic. [unambiguous]

*Slash* has only the intersective coordination meaning, as opposed to the polysemous *and*. Later work will compose a formal semantic analysis of *slash*. Such work should build on the foundational work on the semantics of bare noun coordination. Heycock & Zamparelli (2005) noticed this ambiguity of conjunction of (bare) nominals as “joint” (=intersective) and “split” (=collective) and provides parallel examples from Germanic languages. Bruyn & de Swart (2012) propose a semantics for similar split coordination structures. Champollion (2016) revisits the issue and gives a new semantic analysis of intersective bare nouns. A table summarizing the above observations is shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Summary of the syntactic behavior of *slash*.  
A cell with “+” indicates that the property holds for that coordinator.

	And	Or	But	Slash
Exceptions to the LCL	+	+		+
No exception to the CSC			+	+
No iterative intensification		+	+	+
No comitative meaning		+	+	+
No collective meaning		+	+	+
No swarm predicates	+	+	+	
No internal reading of relational modifiers		+	+	+
Proper names – distinct individuals	+	+		
Proper names – same individual				+
Strict binarity			+	+

In sum, *slash* behaves like *and* or *or*, but not *but*. To wit, *Slash* syntactically behaves more like *or*, yet has the semantics of intersective *and*. It shares few, if any properties with *but*. What seems to unify these observations is a constraint on reference: *slash* prefers strongly not to coordinate multiple referents. This follows from the fact that *slash* carries and forces an intersective reading.

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