Gender as a Scientific Experiment: Toward a Queer Ethnomethodology

Luca Greco

Chapter Seven

GENDER AS A SCIENTIFIC EXPERIMENT: TOWARD A QUEER ETHNOMETHODOLOGY[1]

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Introduction

While I was conducting fieldwork on drag king workshops (DKWs)—social occasions in which female-assigned-at-birth persons transform their gender through makeup activities, verbal resources and corporeal exercises—I was intrigued by the number of reflexive activities deployed by the participants. Drag kings spent a lot of time discussing their gendered bodily transformations, theorizing on walking and its relationship to gender norms and public spaces, testing with other co-participants how gender transformation affected their spatial perceptions, and finally, over the course of their interactions, discovering the existence of a phenomenon they had been theorizing about in preceding conversations.

By "Gender as a scientific experiment," I refer to the fact that gender can be experienced by participants as something resembling a scientific experiment—science as it is practiced within and through everyday activities. In her study on experimental demonstration and discovery as a practical accomplishment in school science labs, Sherman Heckler (2011, 13) notes that developing a disciplined perception of the world is the result of interactional work between students and teachers. In a quite similar way, interactions in DKWs lead participants to develop a fine-grained analysis and strong consciousness of gender construction processes. In DKWs, participants experiment with the transformation of their bodies, while making inquiries into the workings of (their) gender.

I will show how drag kings mobilize what Michael Lynch calls "epistopics," epistemic topics that relate to "description, measurement, categorization, observation, reproduction" (1993, 247), while being shared by scientists within their professional activities and by lay people in the course of their ordinary practices. My focus on gender as a scientific experiment is inspired by two branches of literature. First, I draw on research from science and technology studies, ethnomethodology and linguistic anthropology,

1. This chapter is a substantially modified version of Greco (2020), initially published in *Whatever. A Transdisciplinary Journal of Queer Theories and Studies*. I thank Carmen dell'Aversano for her permission to have the article reprinted.

research that approaches science and daily life as practical accomplishments situated on a *continuum*, rather than stipulated as discrete entities. In this framework, scholars have approached science as its practical and interactional accomplishment (Latour and Woolgar 1988; Mondada 2005; Sormani 2014), a method of the "knowing-body" (Bjelić 2003, 12–13), and in its intertwining with daily life, trivial matters, poetics (Ochs et al. 1996; Latour 2007) and art (Sormani et al. 2019). Second, I draw on a tradition of research from queer studies and feminism that approaches the experiences of one's own body as a source of knowledge and political change in society and in people's everyday lives. The experiments conducted by Mario Mieli (2019) on and through cross-dressing as an aesthetic and political activity, or those of Paul Preciado (2008) on his own body through the injection of testosterone, recall the experiments carried out by Freud (1884) with cocaine and artistic performances. In this vein, bodily experiences are treated by activists and artists as inscribed in a political agenda against the binarity of bodies, and as an aesthetic reflection on bodies as plastic materials. In my case studies, the gendered body of the participant becomes the locus of a proto-scientific experiment, in contrast to a historical approach in which science constructs its genealogy and credibility through processes of disembodiment and the desexualization of scientists' bodies (Bjelić 2003).

At first sight, a "critical" perspective within ethnomethodology could appear to be an "oxymoron" (Barthélémy 2013). Ethnomethodology does not explicitly propose to transform the world through the analysis of social order. However, if we consider that a critical analysis focuses on the intrinsic instability (vs. naturalness) of meaning, i.e., its proper indexicality (McHoul 1994, 105–6), this perspective could become a powerful device in the hands of minoritarian subjects and activists. This type of radical situated approach, inspired by the theory of textual criticism and in a particular way by Derrida, supports queer perspectives on gender conceived as the result of chains of iterative signifying discursive practices (Butler 1990, 1997), rather than as something referring to a pre-discursive, natural realm.

Although Garfinkel's (1967) Chapter 5 on Agnes in *Studies in Ethnomethodology* became an essential part of the canonical texts for Transgender Studies (Stryker and Whittle 2006), along with the writings of Butler, Haraway and many others, the articulation between a feminist and queer approach, on the one hand, and an ethnomethodological perspective, on the other, is not something to be taken for granted—neither in the field of ethnomethodology, nor in the field of critical and queer studies for that matter. Yet, and despite what mainstream academia has made of it, the ethnomethodological program contains an enormous potential for social critique, insofar as it deconstructs (and could eventually contribute to transform) the routines of social order. While this dual articulation has been proposed by Smith (2005), combining an ethnomethodological approach with a Marxist and feminist perspective, the ethnomethodological perspective continues to be perceived in gender and queer studies as something very peripheral to the feminist agenda and gender/queer theories (for recent exceptions, see though Crawley et al. 2021; Schilt and Joynt forthcoming). By and large, the same point holds for cognate disciplines, such as conversation analysis advocating a feminist approach (Kitzinger 2002; Stokoe 2006; Osterman and Kitzinger 2012), and ethnomethodologically informed discussions (e.g., Malbois 2011) that engage with gender and feminism,

not just as an object of inquiry, but as a theoretical framework. Ethnomethodology is often considered "too micro," "apolitical," "disembodied" and disengaged from the social arena in which social actors construct and deconstruct their gender. Moreover, and partly because of its political and critical agnosticism and its reluctance to produce *grands récits* of domination and social inequalities, the field does not attract the attention of critical and feminist theorists in the way that Foucauldian, Bourdieusian or materialistic perspectives do (for further discussion of these matters, see Maynard 2003, chap. 3; vom Lehn 2016, 149–54).

However, if we look further into the history of the discipline, attempts to combine ethnomethodology with critical theory or feminism have not been lacking, and social issues have constituted an important topic of ethnomethodological interest (Zimmerman et al. 1976). Garfinkel's early interest in marginalized actors, including Black people, transgender persons, communists, criminals and mentally ill soldiers, has recently been echoed by a collection of ethnomethodological/conversation analytic approaches to race and systematic racism in everyday interactions (Rawls et al. 2020) and related to his biography and personal experience of racial segregation as a Jew in the Southern United States (also see Eisenmann and Rawls, this volume). For Garfinkel, marginalized people constitute an exemplary case for probing social order, insofar as their difficulties to satisfy social expectations make them "natural experiments" (Rawls et al. 2020) to exhibit that order. It is in this framework that Agnes is perceived by Garfinkel as a practical methodologist (Garfinkel 1967, 180):

> To speak seriously of Agnes as a practical methodologist is to treat in a matter of fact way her continuing studies of everyday activities as members' methods for producing correct decisions about normal sexuality in ordinary activities.

From a queer and ethnomethodological perspective, minoritarian subjects are not to be considered as "judgmental dopes" (Garfinkel 1967, 68) whose meaningful practices have to be unveiled by an omniscient (and possibly male, White and bourgeois) scholar. To the contrary, the empowering character of Agnes as a practical methodologist, practicing a lay sociology of gendered everyday conduct, belies any paternalistic attitude vis-à-vis the subject(s) under scientific scrutiny. However, Garfinkel's approach is not "feminist" or "gender oriented." As some feminist and queer theorists have suggested (Connell 2009; Denzin 1990; Preciado 2005), he was totally uncritical vis-à-vis the medical machinery regulating trans subjects and his interest in Agnes was less concerned with gender per se than its accountability. Arguably, Garfinkel's focus on Agnes' "passing" was more of a scholarly issue at that time than the "real problem" for Agnes (O'Brien 2016). Yet some of Garfinkel's assertions about the cultural construction of sexuality and sex—"the possession of a penis or a vagina as a biological event is to be distinguished from the possession of one or the other or both as a cultural event" (Garfinkel 1967, 123)—echo not only certain foundations of feminist thought circulating during the 1970s but also some contemporary declarations of queer and activist groups, declarations that I collected during my fieldwork on drag kings in Brussels (see Excerpt 1).

Excerpt 1 DKBWORKSHOP—je suis peut-être une FEmelle

```
1 A en gros si tu veux/ MOI je suis peut-être une FEmelle/ mais j- je
     basically if you like/so maybe I'm FEmale but I- I
2    ne (v-)je ne suis pas une femme [...] voilà
     don't (w-) I'm not a woman [...] that's all
3  F donc tu voudrais être un homme/=
     so you would like to be a man/=
4  M =n[on [...] pas [nécessairement
      n[o... not [necessarily
```

In Excerpt 1 drawn from my corpus, the leaders of the DKWs are welcoming newcomers. In this type of situation each participant takes the floor and introduces themself. The introductions were followed in this case by a passionate and vivid exchange between one of the newcomers (Frédérique: F) and a leader of the group (Aurel: A) over gender and gender-fluid identity. Aurel's turn—"maybe I'm a female but I'm not a woman" (lines 1–2)—echoes Garfinkel's quotation about the distinction between a biological and cultural event, thereby reminding us of gender categories as being political devices which need to be deconstructed and questioned. In Frédérique's categorial world, if Aurel is not a woman, this means that Aurel occupies the category of man. Another leader of the workshop (Max: M, line 4) then gives a response that dismantles and questions the binary categorial system "male/female," providing an opening for new categorial grammars of gender, as they are or might be deployed by participants in the course of their social practices.

Among the practices I observed throughout my fieldwork, *walking* caught my attention for at least two reasons. First, this practice was part of the repertoire of actions mobilized by drag kings in order to deconstruct gender, while being incessantly theorized and questioned by workshop participants. In this way, walking became a "perspicuous setting" (Garfinkel 2002)—a "domain [...] where phenomena can be particularly clearly observed" (vom Lehn 2016, 109). Second, its detailed analysis can reveal how queer theoretical approaches can be combined with an ethnomethodological perspective to bring forth what I call "queer ethnomethodology."

Walking as a gender construction device

Walking has attracted the interest of scholars in the social sciences and humanities, as well as political activists and contemporary artists. It has been approached as a form of emancipation by pedestrians in urban spaces in that perambulation tactics deployed by social actors in their everyday activities question the strategies that public authorities employ to organize urban spaces. De Certeau (1974) proposes a fascinating parallel between walking and speaking: pedestrians experience public space through walking as social actors appropriate and perform language through speech acts. The emancipatory potential in walking also emerges in feminist and LGBTQIA+ movements. Activists consider walking as a political activity through which they disrupt the social order in urban spaces dominated by patriarchy and heteronormativity. In this sense, the occupation of a space constitutes an important move in the repertoire of political action. As

a means of emancipation, social actors embody this move through walking, screaming and constituting joyful communities in streets and public spaces.

In the framework of my fieldwork, I approach *walking* as it is approached by participants, namely as a topic in talk, as an action they accomplish, and as a gender (de-) construction device (Greco 2021). The analysis of walking is an excellent prism through which we can examine the ways in which gender works, as walking is something participants observe and manipulate in the course of their actions, just as scientists peer through a microscope to observe the functioning of cells, manipulate materials and discuss their observations and experimental manipulations with colleagues.

As social actors, we experience gender in different ways and to different degrees, through the accomplishment of everyday actions or when we occasionally revisit what we have experienced through verbal accounts. In the first case, an experience of how gender works in our bodies is more lived and perceived than spoken, whereas in the second case, it is made verbally explicit. The two cases will be approached in this chapter through the analysis of (what can be considered as) three distinct epistemic activities: *theorizing*, *testing* and *discovering*. My analysis is inspired by an interdisciplinary framework that combines ethnomethodology, linguistic anthropology and queer linguistics (Barrett 2017; Goodwin 2006; Stokoe 2006). Gender is approached as a social resource, interactively (de-)constructed and deeply intertwined with the experiments participants undertake with their gendered bodily transformations and language. In this perspective, gender is approached as a doing, a practical achievement and constructed through a repertoire of multisemiotic resources (Garfinkel 1967; Goffman 1976; West and Zimmerman 1987). This praxeological vision entails a focus on language as a primary site for the emergence, the construction and the deconstruction of gender, and more broadly as a "mode of experiencing the world" (Ochs 2012).[2]

My focus on gender through language and experience allows me to think about gender as a process (vs. result) and through what scholars in queer studies and philosophy of language have called performativity. As a queer scholar working on daily interactions, I define "performativity" as the power of a multisemiotic (linguistic, corporeal, material, spatial) sign to produce gender in cultural and historical contexts, through ritual and embodied interactions with co-participants.

Compared to the approaches presented by Austin (1962) and Butler (1990, 1997) in their groundbreaking works, the approach that I envision is more *empirical*. The examples that Austin and Butler provide are imagined, idealized and not ethnographically grounded, while here performativity is *interactional and multisemiotic* and is elaborated within talk-in-interaction with at least two participants and through a repertoire of semiotic resources not limited to talk. Performativity is also *temporal and experiential* and as a process is itself constructed, perceived and observed by participants in the course of interaction. Finally, the perspective I defend is *participant-related*. In this framework, participants themselves deploy what I call a "metaperformative competence," i.e., the

2. For recent studies that combine queer studies and membership categorization analysis, see McIlvenny (2002), Greco (2012), Dell'Aversano (2018).

capacity, the skills they have in observing, describing and testing the performativity of their action and gender. Viewing participants as social actors "doing science" through their everyday activities, and not necessarily in a lab, is particularly empowering and irreducibly feminist and queer in that it disrupts the dichotomy between "high" and "grassroots" science, while making participants the scientists, the "methodographers" (Zimmerman and Pollner 1971) and the creators of their own lives.

Corpus and data

DKWs are wonderful occasions to carry out an experiment on how we experience our gender through bodily transformations made with the help of an expert, i.e., a person particularly knowledgeable in gendered transformations techniques (Greco 2018, forthcoming).

The DKWs are structured into five steps:

i) the objectives and techniques used for the male-gendered transformation are briefly presented, and a roundtable discussion is held in which each participant introduces themself to the other members of the group;
ii) a makeup session is held where each person gives life to a character seated in front of a mirror. Novices can be helped by experts who have attended numerous workshops, who perform outside the workshops and whose know-how can facilitate the novice's transformation;
iii) a number of exercises and role-plays take place after the makeup session;
iv) the participants visit the bar located below the workshop space and eventually take a walk around the Grand Place (central square) of Brussels to "test" their/the new body;
v) the participants then return to the workshop space to share their feelings about their experience.

Analysis

My analysis deals with walking exercises through which participants can feel and experiment with a new gendered body. Inspired by the pioneering work of the linguistic anthropologist Ray Birdwhistell in kinesics—a field of research on the social aspects of body motion in culture(s)—walking will be approached as a cue to gender display. Reflecting the feminist wave in the 1960s and 1970s, Birdwhistell (1970) distinguishes between *primary* sexual characteristics, relating to the physiology of the production of fertile ova or spermatozoa; *secondary* sexual characteristics, referring to anatomy and *tertiary* sexual characteristics "which are patterned social behavior in form [...] learned and [...] situationally produced" (ibid., 42).

In this section, I focus my attention on walking as it is "situationally produced" and theorized by participants. In three successive subsections, I will therefore analyze three different moments and activities in which participants deploy a scientific stance on gender, body and walking: *theorizing* walking, *testing* walking theory in practice and

the *discovery of a phenomenon* involving walking, gender and space that they had previously experienced and theorized.

Theorizing

In the next two excerpts, Max (M), the leader and one of the cofounders of the DKWs in Brussels, takes the floor and gives his personal view on the relationship between walking, gender and space:[3]

Excerpt 2 WalkingAsScienceDKB—Taking up space

M: Max

```
1  M  en général ils ((en se référant aux hommes)) prennent
      generally they ((referring to men)) take up
2     plus de place y a cette impression d'enveloppe,
      more space there is this impression of a (bodily)
      envelope,
3     d'espace personnel qui est beaucoup plus large,
      of personal space that is much wider,
4     beaucoup plus grand
      much bigger
```

Though I was inspired by Francesco Careri's work (2006, 9), I also distance myself from this work as I consider the act of walking as both an aesthetic and semiotic form and an instrument capable of describing and modifying urban spaces, but also of building a certain vision of gender. Max's account involves something I call "theorizing practices" of the relationships between space, walk and gender. This type of theorizing practice is constructed through the mobilization of the adverbial phrase "en général" ("generally," line 1) in a first position turn, uttered in an assertive mode and establishing a relation between gender (men) and the construction of personal (and wide) space through their way of walking. This process of generalization and abstraction of walking is accomplished in the next excerpt by another participant, Daniel (D):

Excerpt 3 WalkingAsScienceDKB—Let's try this out

D: Daniel (%)

```
1  D  moi j'ai trouvé assez euh\ au contraire assez assez facile à
      as for me I found it quite uh\ actually quite quite easy to
2     différencier/ rien que l'allure au niveau du coin de l'œil\ xxx
      tell the difference/just by catching a glimpse of way they walk xxx
3     parfois des mecs vont marcher euh ils ont pas de souci
```

3. The audio and video recordings composing the empirical materials of this chapter have been transcribed using the conventions proposed by a group of scholars (ICAR Group) working in multimodal conversation analysis in Lyon, France, and by Lorenza Mondada: http://icar.cnrs.fr/projets/corinte/bandeau_droit/convention_icor.htm

sometimes guys walk euh they don't worry about
4 d'être gracieux/ ils se posent pas du tout la question de d'être
being graceful/ they don't think at all about being
5 féminin à partir gracieux donc\ %ils marchent comme ça%/
feminine from graceful so\ they walk like this
%bends over and reaches up to his ears%
6 %puis les mains dans les poches%
then their hands in their pockets
%he bends over more%
7 %mais presque complètement% recroquevillé avec un truc sur la tête
but almost totally bent over with something on their head
%he bends over %
8 et euh\ tandis que j'ai vu aussi des nanas qu'étaient parfois
and uh\ whereas I've also seen girls who were sometimes
9 ensemble alors elles se prenaient par le bras/ ça on verra jamais des
together so they linked arms/ you never see
10 M mecs le faire quoi\(.) quoique dans le coin\ et euh donc e-elles vont
guys do that\ though in the neighborhood\ and uh so they go
11 se promener bras dessus bras dessous et tout puis c'est c'est la
walking arm in arm and all that that's that's their
12 démarche aussi est différente parce que j'en ai vu plusieurs qui
way of walking is different too because I've seen plenty who
13 portaient des talons donc %elles sont obligées de marcher euh avec
wear heels so they have to walk uh with
14 euh avec l'avant du pied% ça ça f- s- s- ça
uh with the front of their foot this this this
--→%
15 donne toute une démarche totalement différente
it makes them walk totally differently
16 du coup plus fragile aussi\
and more fragile-like too
((some lines omitted))
21 M: on va mettre ça en pratique alors
let's try this out then

In this excerpt, Daniel formulates a relationship between gender and ways of walking. He is applying what Harvey Sacks calls a "category-bound activity" (1992), i.e., activities culturally linked to categories. In this example, gender is not produced in itself by walking; it is made accountable, observable and reportable by and through walking. In this framework, Daniel adopts a fine-grained scientific stance, focused on his observation of walking practices, and a generalization about the relationship between gender and ways of walking. In this example, he approaches his observational activity as accounting for gender difference (lines 1–2). He focuses on the ways through which "guys" avoid any trace of grace or femininity (lines 3–5) through a corporeal representation of their physical postures and gestures in walking activities (lines 5–7). Conversely, he (re)presents "female walking" as fundamentally collective, caring for each other and tactile (lines 8–9). He thus constructs a dichotomy between "guys" and "girls"—a standardized relational pair (Sacks 1972)—whose corporeal behaviors are presented as dichotomous (lines 9–10), accountable and generalizable. The formulation of a generalization does not exclude the presentation of a deviant case in his folk

theory. The walking practices as they emerge in the neighborhood show a subversion of the norm previously observed and formulated (line 10). "The neighborhood," as he refers to it in his turn, is a notorious gay area in Brussels, and gay male walking is presented as deviating in relation to a norm referring post hoc to straight (male and female) walking.

His observation and theorization about gender and walking is nourished by an element focused on the way in which women mobilize their bodies, and in particular their feet, during walking practices. Focusing on the movement of feet recreates a vision of the world as gendered and dichotomous, and dominated by an ideology of difference in which the fragility of women is created, nourished and accountable by their way of walking (lines 12–16). This echoes some of the theoretical remarks formulated by the French writer Balzac on walking in his "Theory of Walking" (*La théorie de la démarche*, 1833). In this essay, he establishes a relationship between locomotion, gender and material artifacts such as dresses through the identification of two different ways of walking shaped by the gender of pedestrians and by the way they are dressed.

Femininity as it emerges in the excerpt under scrutiny is theorized as less tied to an essence women have by virtue of their anatomy than as the result of historicized practices in which women learn to walk in a specific way with artifacts (high heels) that constrain their way of walking. As witnessed by Iris Marion, a feminist scholar combining phenomenology with existential feminism:

> The young girl acquires many subtle habits of feminine body comportment—walking like a girl, tilting her head like a girl, standing and sitting like a girl, gesturing like a girl, and so on. The girl learns actively to hamper her movements. She is told that she must be careful not to get hurt, not to get dirty, not to tear her clothes, that the things she desires to do are dangerous for her. Thus she develops a bodily timidity which increases with age. In assuming herself as a girl, she takes herself up as fragile. [...] The more a girl assumes her status as feminine, the more she takes herself to be fragile and immobile, and the more she actively enacts her own body inhibition. When I was about thirteen, I spent hours practicing a "feminine" walk which was stiff, closed, and rotated from side to side.
>
> *(Young 1980, 153)*

Finally, following Daniel's account, Max takes the floor and suggests translating these comments into practice (line 21). He thus opens an avenue for a new activity, walking, approaching Daniel's observations as theoretical and needing to be tested in practice.

Testing

In this section, walking ceases to be treated as a topic in discourse. It becomes a practice through which participants can and do test some of the theoretical points debated in the workshop. At the beginning, Max invites the participants to focus on themselves and to imagine the type of walking most relevant to the character they are embodying (lines 1–4):

Excerpt 4 WalkingAsScienceDKB—Observe yourself

M: Max

E: everybody (the group of six participants) (£)

```
1  M  vous êtes vraiment concentré sur vous vous vous ne télescopez pas
      you are really focused on you you you don't limit yourself
2     vous êtes vraiment allez tout uniquement par rapport à vous
      you are really focus only on yourself
3     £en essayant de voir un peu le personnage quel est/ quelle serait
      by trying to see a bit of the character what is what would be
   E  £gradually each participant starts to walk---->>
4     la démarche, la vitesse/
      their way of walking their speed
5     (25)
6  M  tout en marchant, vous observez/ sur vous-même/ comment/ vous
      while you walk, observe yourself, how you
7     marchez/ comment vos pieds, se déposent sur le sol, sans bouger à
      walk/ how your feet, come in contact with the ground, without going
8     quoique ce soit mais faites simplement m-
      anywhere in particular but simply m-
9     (4)
10 M  m-
      m-
11    (2)
12 M  faites attention plus spécifiquement à: comment vous marchez
      pay attention specifically to: how you walk
13    (4)
14 M  est-ce que vous mettez d'abord/ sur le sol/ est-ce que vous posez
      do you first put/ on the ground/ do you put
15    d'abord/
      first/
16    (3)
17 M  est-ce que c'est (la fin) est-ce que c'est le talon/
      is it (the end) is it your heel/ is
18    est-ce que c'est:::
      is it:::
19    (3)
20 M euh une pression euh forte/
      uh strong pressure
21    (3)
22    est-ce que vous êtes en équilibre/ en déséquilibre/
      are you steady/ unsteady
23    (3)
24 M  quel serait votre personnage
      what character would you be
25    (2)
26 M  par rapport à cette démarche justement
      if you walked like this
```

While Max is speaking to the participants, they all gradually start to walk around the room in circles (cf. nonverbal descriptions in line 3). They begin walking just as Max explains the goal of walking: to test the most relevant way to walk for the character they are embodying. The participants carry out this activity in silence, while Max gives them

useful verbal instructions for the exercise. The participants are thus experimenting with their new gender kinesthetically by walking, feeling the movement of their legs and regulating their speed. They are testing how walking functions, applying a phenomenological view of gender to their bodies and transforming themselves into the subjects and the objects of their experiments.

Max's instructions broach the same subject developed by Daniel earlier: the gendered dimension of foot movement in walking (lines 14–20). Contrary to the preceding excerpt, here Max calls on the participants to introspect using movements creating a sense of balance or imbalance (line 22). In this excerpt, walking is linked less to an idealized gender than to the gendered character they created during the makeup session.

Following Max's invitation, the participants continue to perform their gender through walking practices and some of the most ritual practices we experience in everyday life, greetings:

Excerpt 5 WalkingAsScienceDKB—How's it going

```
            B: Bob (£)
            M: Max (*)

1  B    >>walking, looks at Max, stops
2       sal£*ut
   B&M  £*M&B shake hands---->
       hi
3  M    salut
       hi
4       (0.5)
```

Figure 7.1 Shaking hands (1).

```
5  M    ça va bien/
       how's it goin'/
6  B    ça va
       good£*
       ---->£*
```

Figure 7.2 Shaking hands (2).

In these examples, the participants are walking around the room and exchanging greetings. These can be exclusively nonverbal (handshakes), constructed as part of a fine-grained choreography of walking and gestures through which an encounter is accomplished (as in Figure 7.2), or via an assemblage of multimodal resources, corporeal and verbal (as in Excerpt 5). Greetings are organized in adjacency pairs (Schegloff and Sacks 1973), such as "hi/hi, how's it going/good" (in Excerpt 5), and they are intertwined with walk, gaze and gestures (see the nonverbal description, lines 1–2). In the following excerpt, the participants are performing a situation in which drag kings construct an escalation of tension through the repetition of formulaic greetings:

Excerpt 6 WalkingAsScienceDKB—Are you sure

```
              M: Max (*)
              J: Jo (@)

1  J    >>>walks toward Max
2       sa@*lut/ ça va/
        hi how's it goin'
   J&M  @*M&J shake hands-->
```

Figure 7.3 Shaking hands (3).

```
3  J    ça va/
   How are ya
4  M    ça va et toi/@*
        alright how about you
             ----->@*
```

```
5  J   ouais
       fine
6  J   t'es sûr/ ça va/
       are you sure/ you alright /
7  M   ouais
       yeah
8  J   t'es sur/
       are you sure
9  M   ouais ouais
       yeah yeah
```

In this excerpt, the greeting machinery (via a "Hi/How are ya/how's it goin'" sequence) is interrupted by Jo (line 6). The position of the question "are you sure" right after the expected answer (line 4) to a formulaic expression such as "How are ya/how's it goin'" (line 3) introduces a source of conversational trouble. It questions the ritual and formulaic nature of greetings and opens a sequence in which the repetition of the same phrases indexes a teasing frame between the participants and a situation in which "guys" perform a sort of provocative masculinity.

In these examples, the participants are experimenting with their new gendered bodies through walking and greetings. They are approaching social actions and their ongoing genders as "experiment[s] in miniature" (Garfinkel 2006, 180). Action, as well as gender, is achieved practically within an intersubjective frame in which each participant can test their own gendered and living body through the performance of walking and greeting. In these excerpts, participants deploy a "metaperformative competence," i.e., the capacity, the skills they have in observing, describing and testing the performativity of their action and gender transforming their bodies into experiential labs. In the first subsection above, the participants could be seen to demonstrate a strong capacity in describing the kinesthetic theorization of the links between gender and walking. In second subsection, the social actors showed their ability to experiment and test some theoretical points through bodily techniques. In the next subsection, we will see how this metaperformative competence is made intelligible through the participants' capacity to discover phenomena and to treat them as proof of their theories.

Discovery

This section focuses on analyzing the participants' discovery of the phenomenon that they had theorized and tested in previous phases in the workshop. Discovery is an ongoing process accomplished by and through interactional routines (Garfinkel et al. 1981; Sherman Heckler 2011), temporally organized and multimodally constructed:

Excerpt 7 WalkingAsScienceDKB—Look!

```
M: Max (*)
A: Aurel ($)
D: Danielle (£)
E: Eliane (%)
```

```
1  M   ok al$ors on va on va tester$ $((regarde la montre))
       so let's try (it) out ((looks at watch))
   a   $goes over to the window$ $looks out the window-->
       2)
3  M   euhhh
4  A   MAIS C'EST VRAI $£ILS MARCHE*%NT avec le bassin en avant
       WHOA IT'S TRUE, THEY (men) DO WALK with their pelvis thrust forward
                       $points and goes over to another window-->>
```

Figure 7.4 Looking out of the window.

```
d                          £looks out the window-->>
m+e                           *%join aurel at the window-->
```

Figure 7.5 Joining Aurel at the window.

```
5  E   ben oui
       well yea
6  A   regarde par rapport à elle
       look at that compared to her*%
   m+e                  ----->*%
```

While Max is announcing to the workshop members that the group is going to test something related to male walking, Aurel goes over to the window (line 1) and begins to look outside. After a two second pause and an attempt by Max to take and keep the floor (lines 2, 3), Aurel announces (line 4) something of importance, relevant for the workshop and involving the relationship between gender, walking and kinesthetics. The exceptional character of his announcement is underlined by a prosodic feature, an increase in the volume of his voice (cf. capital letters in transcription, line 4).

The French connector "mais" ("but," here "whoa") is indexing a cohesion between a topic discussed in previous conversations and what he is discovering and relating in his turn. The sentence "c'est vrai" ("it's true") gives an element of truth to the relationship between gender ("ils/they"), walking ("marchent/walk") and a kinesthetic feature ("avec le bassin en avant/with their pelvis thrust forward"). In this way, Aurel treats the facts he observed as proof of a theory and worthy of interest. This discovery, the facts he is observing, is proof of a previous theorization, temporally organized and achieved through multisemiotic resources and a reorganization of the participation framework (Goffman 1981). The observation of what is happening on the street—observing men who are moving their pelvis in a particular way while they walk—is achieved step-by-step with the dynamic and strong engagement of Aurel's body orientation (line 4, non-verbal description) and triggers a collective participation in the observation of the fact. The discovery of the fact is ratified by the co-participants corporeally and verbally (line 5) and is temporarily closed with a gendered comparative element (line 6): the "female walk" is treated objectively as opposed to the "male walk." The next excerpt, following the last one, opens an interesting discussion about the participants' observations.

Excerpt 8 WalkingAsScienceDKB—Center of gravity

M: Max
A: Aurel
D: Danielle
C: Charlotte
F: Fred (&)
E: everybody

1 E looking out the window --->>
? ben oui tu vois c'est la
yes,you know that's the
3 F tu vois par rapport à elle est
look compared to her it's
4 F mais c'est ça t'as ton ton poids de comment on appelle ça comment
but that's it you have the weight of what do you call that
5 on appelle ça ton centre de gravité voilà
you call that your center of gravity that's it
6 ton centre de gravité c'est q- quand-même &y a rien à faire
your center of gravity it's s- anyway you can't do anything about it
&bending over toward her belly
7 F y a rien à faire
you can't do anything about it
8 D c'est pas la caricature mais
it's not a caricature but
9 F c'est ça c'est vraiment ton centre de gravité c'est ça
that's it it's really your center of gravity that's
10 le mot
the word
11 (1)
12 M et on peut tester son centre de gravité hein
we can test our center of gravity huh

In the first part of the excerpt, the participants are focused on observing what Aurel previously presented as a fact worthy of observation and related to a discovery he made in relation to points discussed in the workshop. The comparative dimension is still present in the participants' accounts of the scene performed outside by pedestrians. Fred, one of the participants in the workshop, takes the floor using a connector ("mais/but," line 4) establishing a logical connection between what they have just observed and the topics participants had raised in the workshop. The phrase "mais c'est ça" ("but that's it," line 4) helps stabilizing the discovery about the relationship between gender, walking and kinesthetics. Fred, who is no longer in front of the window, adopts an objective and a scientific stance. In fact, he is operating a symbolic displacement of the discussion from what is going on in the street, in the field, to something that he, and everyone, can test on their own body. The body, through the interactions within the workshop and what happens outside the window, becomes a "measuring body," i.e., "an integrated interrogating apparatus for querying, explicating, revealing and exchanging with phenomena (evidence, entities, objects)" (Sissel Hoel and Carusi 2018, 62).

The focus on "ton poids" ("your weight," line 4), its reformulation as "ton centre de gravité" ("your center of gravity," line 5) and its embodiment through movements account for a sort of embodied symbolic translation in which facts observed and discovered in the field can be tested on one's own body. This is presented as a general truth, unquestionable (line 7) and different from caricature or folk beliefs (line 8), ratified and categorized once and for all (line 9–10) as the formula "center of gravity." After this particularly interesting moment where facts observed through the window are translated in the body of Fred, Max invites the participants to test the notion of center of gravity using corporeal exercises (line 11).

Opening the Pandora's box of gender: A call for a queer ethnomethodology

Through the analysis of a corpus of video-recorded interactions in which drag kings experiment with the transformations previously carried out on their bodies, I showed how drag kings use their verbal accounts to deploy practical sociological reasoning on their gendered bodies. Their accounts thus offer a means to access the fabric of gender: how gender is interactively constituted and made accountable.

Agnes, in her narratives, had to convince Stoller and Garfinkel that she had always been a woman and had always been perceived as one by rendering her femininity as something accountable and taken for granted, while providing the methods she used to achieve it. Drag kings open the Pandora's box of the gender a little more. They show the methods they mobilize to construct a male gendered body, account for their feelings brought about by their bodily modifications and offer a "lay" sociological analysis in which they connect their gendered bodily transformations to what they call "society" or "social phenomena."

By focusing attention on walking practices, I was able to bring to the fore of gender and queer studies not only the body but also the experiments participants carry out involving the materiality and the motility of their bodies. In this perspective, I showed

how the material forms of a body are thematized, imagined and experimented in the course of walking practices and verbal exchanges; how they are connected with gender, locomotion and space and how they are tested as proof of theories. The systematic analysis of speech practices and corporeal conduct mobilized by participants in the course of their ordinary practices allows me to treat gender less as a stable theoretical resource than as a Do It Yourself resource we mobilize in the course of our interactions. Focusing on theorizing, testing and discovery as they are mobilized by participants through dynamic and unusual assemblages of language, walking, space and gender norms create a great opportunity to think of our living gendered bodies at the intersection of science, experience and art.

Viewing gender as a scientific experiment transforms the life of participants into creative laboratories and analytical materials. The work participants do *on* and *with* their bodies displays the constraints but also the possibilities our bodies offer to us. Through the observation, the manipulation and the experiments we conduct on our bodies we become the ethnographers and the scientists of our gendered transformations. We become the creators and the analysts of our own genders, showing how the machinery and the accountability of gender work. Our metaperformative competence accounts for the capacity we deploy in observing, theorizing, comparing, generalizing and testing contingent connections between genders, bodies and practices in which we are constantly engaged. A focus on metaperformative competence entails an interactional, multisemiotic, temporal, experiential and a participant-related vision of gender performativity, i.e., a democratic conception of intellectual activity.

Focusing on the capacity participants showed in making their gendered bodies an object of inquiry and a site of political and aesthetic experimentation allowed me to bridge the gap between ethnomethodology and critical approaches such as feminist theories and queer studies, giving rise to "queer ethnomethodology." Adopting queer ethnomethodology helps me underline another aspect of the "radicality" (Lynch 2016) of the ethnomethodological program and specify its critical potentiality and emancipatory dimension for all of us. In this framework, a queer ethnomethodological approach is less the result of the intersection between two different theoretical approaches than an empowering resource deconstructing domination processes in our societies through grassroots experimentation, fine-grained analysis and the demonstration of possibilities for struggle and resistance.

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