



WORKSHOP ON GENDER

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- This workshop is grown out of the conviction that gender, the cultural construction of femininity and masculinity, cannot be avoided in any research activity.
- Gender must be taken seriously in every kind and at every level of research, from practical choices to methodological questions, as well as at every stage of the research process. Ignoring gender in qualitative research is the same as ignoring one of the most fundamental elements in the natural sciences.
- Gender is an important criterion in identifying ourselves and is central to the way we perceive and structure the world and events in which we participate.

Exercise 1.

- Write your very short autobiography in five minutes!

Gender stereotypes

- Gender stereotypes within a culture are pervasive in a baby's surroundings. J. Bridges (1993) made a qualitative analysis of 60 randomly chosen congratulatory cards for parents of newly-born male children, and of 60 cards for those of female children.
- The study revealed that qualities emphasizing activity (pictures of running, building or wrestling boys), were associated with a male child,
- whereas passive qualities were associated with a female child. Girls were pictured watching the activities of the male children or sitting in the middle of roses and hearths.

Agnes. learning to be a woman

A famous and instructive example of the cultural construction of the institutionalization of gender construction is the study by the sociologist Harold Garfinkel (1967). He studied Agnes, who was a patient sent, in 1958, to the psychiatric clinic of UCLA.

-Agnes had been born as a boy with boy's genitals, and raised as a boy until the age of seven years.

Agnes had become a very sensitive ethnographer of gender. She was conscious of the connections between behaviour and gender in all kinds of everyday social situations. The key situations were dressing up and applying make-up, and the problem of 'proper female behaviour', i.e. sitting/walking/talking like a woman. What is it like to build a ship when it is already sailing?

Gender in Membership Categorization Analysis

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Does MCA sound masculine?

- It does not make sense to abandon MCA only because it sounds 'masculine'
- Several French feminists have abandoned naming and 'labelling', considering them to be fallogocentric in their drive to stabilize, organize, and rationalize our conceptual world
- Toril Moi (1990: 175-6) however, has said that logic, conceptualisation and rationality are not to be abandoned as 'not feminine' but instead it is worth trying to develop a society in which these virtues are not categorised as masculine (Heinämaa, 1999).

Baker, Carolyn "membership categorisation and interview accounts", kirjassa Silverman, D. Ed. Qualitative research: theory, method, and practice. Sage. 1997.

- Case 4.1 Assumed gender categories
- Carolyn Baker observed the following scene: a woman, a young boy holding a screwdriver, and a man entered a bakery. The woman behind the counter greeted them and then addressed the child as follows: 'Have you been helping Daddy?' There was a pause that I distinctly remember because, as an observer-analyst of the scene, I had time to consider the gender assumption being made: that Daddy was being helped rather than the mother. The woman customer then said: 'This is not Daddy.'

Generic pronouns

- In the English language the generic use of the pronoun 'he' has only been standard practice for less than 200 years. When reading Jane Austen one notices that the plural form of the pronoun, 'they', is used as generic far more often than the pronoun 'he':
'If someone's stolen my pen, will they please return it' (Cameron, 1996: 122). It is the Harvard linguists who assembled a mass of obscure theoretical assumptions based on the hypothesis that grammar is a 'natural' autonomous structure, unaffected by people's practices. The hypothesis is faulty (ibid.).

Extract 2. Field diary, Virrat 1988, 33-37. MEN: Antti, Ilmari, Tauno (amongst others). WOMEN: Anna, Sylvi, Helmi.

1. Anna left quite early and I realized quite soon that she had gone to make coffee. A little later on, the other women left as well. After a fairly long time she came back saying that it was «coffee time». At first, the players payed no attention to her. Then they repeated the piece.

Then we all went to have coffee. Some of the musicians had to take their chairs with them.

2. The men were sitting at the table, women pouring coffee.

3. Everybody goes, one after the other and washes up their cups. Antti in front of me is joking: «I cannot wash the dishes. I have to see how Ilmari does it.» Tauno continues: «Haven't you washed the dishes since you have been out of the army?» «No, I didn't do it even then, I just knocked my mess tin a bit.» Sylvi (the other women) took the cups from under men's noses and washed them up. The women came to the rehearsals later on (after the second piece?). By accident, even I nearly stayed with them to clean up.

...? When I was

Now, let us take up the little biographies you have written. Let us use 7 minutes

Analysis of your own autobiography you wrote for Exercise

1. How did you present your own gender in the text? To whom did you write the story? How did that affect the way you presented your gender? How did the form of the story, i.e., written, affect the way of presenting your gender? What kinds of gender roles have you learned at home, at school. at different places and stages of your life?

Biography vis-a-vis autobiography

Liz Stanley 's sociological theory of 'auto/biography' refers to the statement that there is not much difference between one's autobiography and a biography written by someone other than the subject of the life lived . These categories of knowing overlap. The notion of 'auto/biography' indicates that while reading other people's lifenarratives, a researcher inescapably produces, consciously or unconsciously, her/his own story as well (Stanley, 1992; see also Marcus, 1994; and Marcus, 1996: 188-9, 194).