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A Nice Place

The Everyday Production of Pleasure and Political Correctness at Work
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Jag vill tacka mina doktorandkollegor på sociologin - Björn, Malin, Åsa, Stefan, Daniel, Eva, Markus, Marit och Karin - för många år av spektakulära konversations (av mestadels ovetenskaplig natur), genuin omtänsamhet och härligt lagarbete. Även om röda rummet i strikt bemärkelse inte existerar längre,
så kommer det alltid att finnas som ett litet utrymme inom var och en av oss 😊


Jag vill tacka min mor och min bror för stöd och uppmuntran under avhandlingstiden. Far ska också ha tack för visad förståelse och påhejning. Mitt alla sista tack går till Liselotte - tack för allt. Utan dig skulle jag kanske aldrig ha sett min fot på ett universitet, än mindre läst sociologi.

Karstad, en onsdagsförmiddag i november
1. Introduction

It is the second day in the field and I find myself out in the country side, staring at two archaeologists digging a thin trench across a garden. The porch of the house in the middle of the garden is our base camp and I sit on the stairs, sipping some coffee. The weather is nice and the smells and colours of late spring surround us. I have the best job ever. Ralf, one of the archaeologists, makes it clear to me, probably in an attempt to prevent me from expecting too much, that it is uncertain what the excavation will result in. In theory however, he continues to explain, this place has everything. At that moment it is not difficult to understand the charm of his profession. I look down and wonder what lays hidden beneath our feet. Perhaps a building of some sort? That would be truly fantastic. Meanwhile, I certainly know what I except to excavate today – something that tells me whether the museum is a heteronormative workplace. That is my job.

When the trench is finished, Ralf and his younger colleague, Tina, who is only a part time employee, start to examine the layers revealed. Armed with brushes and trowels they collect soil, stones, and, hopefully, pieces of pots and charcoal, in a big, square sieve. Ralf asks me to help him sift through the material and I gladly do so. It is exciting! This procedure, however, goes on for quite some time. From the field notes:

_The work is very peaceful (...) It is also, I realise after a while, very instrumental. Dig, sift, put fragments in small plastic bags, tag the bags. Then some more probing and Ralf snaps a couple of photos. Tina makes sketches of especially interesting spots, which she finds difficult since it involves the calculation of scales. We don’t find much._

I ask Tina why she chose to become an archaeologist and she says that she is not really sure. I make some more small talk, learning that as an archaeologist you often have to settle for building plausible stories around the objects found. They offer clues and provide for construction of theories, but you have to deal with the fact that, at the end of the day, many of them are just silent, puzzling remains of the past. Apparently I have proven myself by the sieve and am offered a spot in the trench. I step down, get a trowel and start to scratch the ground randomly and ineffectively. An hour later I am growing impatient. Where is my precious, heterosexual norm (a.k.a. heteronormativity)? Is it in
their clothes? They are both wearing practical trousers with patched knees. But wait, is Tina’s t-shirt not a little tight, tighter than Ralf’s anyway? Somehow that does not seem to be what I am searching for, even though it is not uninteresting. Is it in their stories about drunken people who accidentally fall into trenches and land on invaluable, archaeological findings? In the way they hand each other plastic bags, tools etc? I give up. There is nothing sexual or heteronormative about what is going on. In fact, the whole scene seems blatantly asexual and non-normative. Oh, what do we have here? I bend to the ground and have a closer look. Could it be a piece of old pottery? I gently pick up the small, orangey splinter. No, it is only tile from the house.

Little did I know about the journey that lay ahead of me at this point, how I would shape and re-shape the purpose of this study, what eye-opening people and books I would stumble upon along the way. But that is, after all, quite the normal gig for a Ph.D. student. I chose to kick off the dissertation with this particular piece of observation because it displays so many layers involved in it – the excitement, the unforeseen pleasure of learning about the lives and work of other people, the problem of not knowing what to look for, and so on. As researcher, I have tried to be as visible as possible throughout the text and there are a couple of reasons for this. Firstly, trying to eliminate the presence of the author/s seems to be an unnecessary exercise, since we all know that texts are produced by a person or persons. More importantly though, it can be a questionable ambition from an ethical as well as scientific point of view, something I will come back to in chapter 7. Another reason for my wish to be visible comes down to the overall benefit of having a distinct narrator. Texts written by closeted authors tend to be less reader-friendly because of their sterility. Which leads me to a related issue - who do I write for? This being a dissertation in sociology, it must of course be tailor-made accordingly. But apart from sociologists and social researchers in general, I hope to make sense to curious and happy-go-lucky non-academics as well and for this reason I have also done my best to keep the language as light and accessible as possible. It could of course be argued (from a Scandinavian perspective) that writing in English is a step in the wrong direction, but it is decidedly so that a lot of people read English with ease. The only regret I have when it comes to choosing English is that some of the participants in the study will not be able to read first-hand what I have written about them and their workplace. For that I am sorry.
Normative heterosexuality from a bird’s-eye view

Sexuality has, much like gender, been investigated thoroughly by squadrons of physicians, sexologists, psychologists, social scientists, etc. It is a daunting task to try to wrap one’s head around this mountain of produced knowledge and sort out which books should be put on the reading list or not. In this section I present the texts I ended up examining in the early stages of the research project. These books were processed rather higgledy-piggledy, one author leading me to another in a spider web inspired kind of selection. Below, however, I have tried to arrange them more comprehensibly in themes. These are, in order of appearance, the treatment of normative heterosexuality (or heteronormativity) by 1) feminists, 2) queer theorists, and 3) sociologists. A map is drawn of some, by contemporary social science, recognised ways of formulating, theorising and, in short, organising normative heterosexuality as an object of scientific inquiry in the Western context.1 Admittedly the overview is roughly outlined, leaving much to be desired in terms of nuances and explications. Starting out parts of it was suppose to, in a more elaborated guise, constitute the theoretical foundation of the dissertation, but for reasons which will be discussed later it turned into a sort of common library instead.

Normative heterosexuality has been at the heart of feminism for quite some time. That is where I, in my first year as a student, initially encountered notions of heterosexuality as a problem, not only for homo- and bisexuals, but for heterosexuals as well. In the 70s and 80s, a number of well-known feminists like Atkinson (1974), Rubin (1975), Bunch and Myron (1975), Brown (1976), Dworkin (1981), MacKinnon (1987), and several others, understood the gender order as depending on or partly being the same thing as institutionalised heterosexuality. Rich’s (1980) article Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence is often used to exemplify the theoretical achievements of the radical feminists. It poses heterosexuality as a hegemonic, or compulsive, construction reproducing male dominance, and suggests that women should orient themselves primarily toward other women and enter a lesbian existence in order to avoid being exploited by men. Already in 1898 however, Perkins Gilman theorised the heterosexual marriage as a sexuo-economic relation where women could gain no economical independence and so remained effectively silenced

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1 Which means that I will leave otherwise influential people like Krafft-Ebing (1886), Ellis (1897), Freud (1905), Horney (1933), Kinsey et al. (1948, 1953), etc., out of it.
throughout their lives. I think it is fair to say that while the first wave feminists, such as Perkins Gilman, problematised heterosexual relations, first and foremost the institution of marriage, they did not as a rule advocate alternative ways of organising family life, like Rich.

We will now jump forward in time, past the second wave of feminism and the radical feminists, to the 90s. In the beginning of the 90s, queer theory emerged as the academic offspring of poststructuralism, radical/lesbian feminism, gay activism and lesbian and gay studies (Rosenberg 2002). Butler’s (1990) work, *Gender Trouble*, is often used to denote the birth, or at least uprising, of this tradition. Other heavy-weight champions include Foucault (1976), Sedgwick (1991), de Laurentis (1991), Fuss (1991), Witting (1992), and Halberstam (1998). Queer theorists tend to focus heterosexuality, because, as Wilkinson and Kitzinger (1994:308) put it, it is typically homosexuals that are being questioned and analysed, and, in the end, “whose very existence is rendered problematic by social scientists”. Stein and Plummer (1996:134) define queer theory as an elaborate critique of dualisms:

...(male/female gender models, natural/artificial ontological systems, or essentialist/constructionist intellectual frameworks) that reinforce the notion of minority as “other” and create binary oppositions which leave the centre intact.

Queer theory has received some harsh critique throughout the years when it comes to this particular issue. Hird (2000), for example, asserts that while queer theorists mix the cards in unconventional ways, they still end up playing the same old game over and over. Conceptual dualisms and binaries are not left behind once and for all, but rather handled in imaginative ways.

Another quest of queer theorists, or researchers later incorporated in the queer theory tradition, has been to investigate the history of hetero-, homo-, and queer sexualities, see for example Foucault (1976), Weeks (1985), Halperin (1990), Katz (1995), Adams (1997), Nilsson (1998) and Laskar (2005), and bring much needed attention to how multi-faceted and changeable sexual practices are. Going back in time is certainly one way of revealing all the cracks and

2 You may wonder why lesbian and gay studies are not given more attention in this overview. The answer is, quite simply, that I have never been very involved with this tradition. I however recommend *Handbook of Lesbian and Gay Studies* (Richardson and Seidman, eds., 2002) for a thorough introduction.
fractures in heterosexuality, as well as the limitations of the very term “heterosexual”. However, Prieur and Ulstein Moseng (2000) suggest that the aspiration of queer theory to point out the equivocal may cause researchers to overlook more lasting constructions, such as the superordination of masculinity and heterosexuality. From the point of view of queer theorists, the act of digging up “deviant” sexualities and blurring boundaries could be seen as both a deconstruction of socially produced categories and a refusal to accept the minority status assigned to certain groups (Gamson 1996). Queer theory, to conclude, turns both normative heterosexuality and marginalised, non-normative sexualities into a topic of critical investigation. This two-headedness appears to create a fruitful tension within the tradition from time to time, although many researchers argue that it is necessary to look at the construction of sexual “normals” as well as sexual “Others” in order to understand the complexity of heteronormativity.3

The relationship between queer theory and feminism is rather intriguing. Kulick (2005:18) points out that what is often viewed by feminists as provocative “hetero-patriarchal” trademarks, for example sado-masochism, pornography, anonymous sex and sex-sellers, queer theorists on the other hand perceive as activities troubling normative heterosexuality and therefore, on some level, approvable. When such heterosexual practices are flaunted in public, they may disturb the notion of heterosexuality as at heart good and natural. Overt alternatives also make people aware of the fact that what is regarded as sexually arousing differs and that there are in fact many ways of organising one’s sex life. While some researchers effortlessly mix queer theory and feminism (see Rosenberg, 2002, for an excellent example), some friction can occasionally be detected between the groups, then. In 2006, Östergren, who used to belong to the feminist establishment, upset many of her former allies by taking a queer turn and claiming that we tend to view all (female) sex-sellers as victims because of an old-fashioned middle-class notion of women as sexually frail. As a contrast, she claimed that the sex-selling women she interviewed for the most part were quite happy with their choice of profession.

3 I will use the term Othersexuals to denote homo-bi and other people with non-normative (in this cultural context) sexual practices. More and more often the concept “non-heterosexuals” seems to be utilised for this purpose, but to me it sounds like the only important thing about the people referred to is their lack of heterosexuality. One might argue that the word Othersexual adds to the otherness of the people referred to, but I use this word to underline the constant making of persons and (imagined) groups as the Other, as “non-heterosexuals”, if you will.
The dispute between queer theory and feminism, when there is one, seems to
boil down to whether gender and sexuality is separated on a structural level,
and, as a consequence, which structure you want to smash. The radical
feminists mentioned earlier believed that the gender order and the heterosexual
order were intertwined, or the same even, causing them to attack both
simultaneously. Queer theorists, on the other hand, may focus solely on
heterosexuality and the hetero-society, turning all heterosexuals, regardless of
sex, into the problem. The relationship between sexuality and gender has at
times, for this reason and others, been something of a hot potato in both a
political and theoretical sense. Sedgwick (1991:31) states that "without a
concept of gender there could be, quite simply, no concept of homo- or
heterosexuality", and Epstein (1996:206) answers that being "typically
feminine", for example, does not make sense except in a heterosexual
relationship to its binary opposite, the "masculine". The ambition to make
clear-cut distinctions between sexuality and gender, for analytical or disciplinary
reasons, is counterposed by the tendency to look at things more holistically.
Butler (1990) refers to the current cultural bundle of correlated ideas about and
expectations on bodies, behaviours and desires as the heterosexual matrix. We
will have reason to return to the matrix in chapter 3.

When it comes to the relationship between sociology and heterosexuality, I will
only make a brief sketch. If feminists, alongside lesbian and gay groups, have
helped turn normative heterosexuality into a social and scientific problem by
laying bare its consequences for Othersexuals as well as women, and queer
theorists have deepened the understanding of sexualities as constructed as well
as context-bound (and separable from issues of gender?), sociologists have
“sociologised” heterosexuality by putting it into a sociological framework.
Already in the first decades of the twentieth century, sociologists of the so-
called Chicago-School researched all sorts of marginalised as well as normative
sexualities (Heap 2003). According to Epstein (1996), however, it was not until
the 60s and 70s that sociologists started to critically examine naturalised notions

4 I have heard this feminist "riddle" being told on numerous occasions: A man and his son are out
driving when they have an accident and are taken to the hospital. The boy needs surgery and when
he lies there, waiting to be operated on, the doctor comes in. Upon seeing the boy, the doctor
exclaims "My son!". Now, how is this possible? The answer is, of course, that the doctor is the boy’s
mother. Peoples’ attempt to put the injured father in the doctor scrubs is taken as evidence of their
inability to picture women as doctors (although it may be evidence of their attempt not to be conned
by the riddle teller, first and foremost). From a queer perspective, however, the putting together of a
heterosexual, nuclear family is hardly to make a political point.
of sexuality as biologically determined or simply as a set of behaviours. The Homosexual Role by McIntosh (1968) is often mentioned as a groundbreaking piece of work, as well as Simon and Gagnon’s (1974) Sexual Conduct. In Sexual Conduct it is argued, among other things, that “the sexual emerges in interaction, in the performance” (Irvine 2003:446), a notion often associated exclusively with queer theory and the work of Butler. These researchers, and others like them, clearly shared an ambition to denaturalise sexuality and turn it into a social and cultural phenomenon, as opposed to a labelling system produced primarily to detect deviance. From then onwards, sociologists have theorised and researched normative heterosexuality as a historically specific and stratified phenomenon.

Jackson (1999) provides us with a good example of such stratification when she distinguishes heterosexuality as social structure, meaning (in the form of discourses on, for instance, normal and abnormal sexuality), everyday practice and finally as subjectivity (processes where people acquire sexual and gendered identities). This four level-model allows her to address both the diversity in sexual identities, practices and experiences, and heterosexuality as an impersonal, institutionalised system. She asserts that (ibid., p.5):

The forms of sexuality existing in any given society at any one time are products of a particular history and culture, particular institutionalized and habitual ways of doing sex. Viewing sexuality as fully social means consistently relating it to gender and recognizing that it is constructed at a number of intersecting levels.


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5 It has been argued that sociology as a discipline has been more concerned with sexual deviance, usually homosexuality, in the past than with normative heterosexuality (Gamson and Moon 2004), this of course being problematic since it contributes to the making of Othersexuals. Seidman (1998) claims that most of the classical sociologists missed sexuality as an explorable phenomenon, and Warner (1993) adds that some big-league modern theorists, such as Bourdieu, Habermas, Luhmann and Laczau and Mofie has failed in this area as well. Sociology has, in short, received a lot of internal critique when it comes to the problematising of hegemonic, sexual relations. Irvine (2003) suggests that this critique is misinformed and asserts that sociological research on sexuality has been highly progressive and multi-layered from the 60s and onwards, but that this research has been ignored by mainstream sociology as well as other disciplines. When looking at her list of sociology’s contributions in this area, it indeed seems as of nothing much has happened since the 60s.
part of the standard terminology in this area. Warner suggests that (ibid., p.xxiii) heteronormativity permeates almost every aspect of human existence and “clothes itself in goodwill and intelligence”.

The purpose and presentation of this study

Sweden, present day. There is an increasing body of work on heteronormativity and hetero-, homo-, and bisexual practices in different contexts (Sandell 1996; Berg 1999; Martinsson et al., eds., 2000; Andreasson, ed., 2000; Piltz et al. 2001; Lundahl 2001; Norrhem 2001; Gonäå and Wikman 2002; Haansbæk 2002; Lindholm 2003; Ambjörnsson 2004; Thörn 2004; Roman 2004; Röndahl 2005; Mattsson 2005; Nordberg 2005; Lindström 2005; Gustafsson 2006; Svensson 2007; Bertilsdotter Rosqvist 2007; Norberg 2009), the health of homo- and bisexuals and transgender people (Roth et al. 2006), the treatment of homo- and bisexuals by the Social Services (Landelius and Ramaeus 2004) and violence against homo- and bisexuals (Klingspor et al. 2007; Tiby 2000). In her dissertation Begärets lagar (“Laws of desire”), Edenheim (2005) examines what she terms the genealogy of heteronormativity, revealing the awkward conservatism of the Swedish government when it comes to the handling of homosexuality. The important work of Runcis (1998) on the politics of compulsory sterilisation in Sweden between the years 1935-1975 should also be mentioned, as ideas about abnormal or unsuitable sexuality, usually in women, played a key role in this “cleaning” process.

Heteronormativity as a feature of workplaces, which is what will be analysed in this dissertation, became a subject of investigation relatively recently (Bildt 2004; Skidmore 2004; Bildt and Sahlström 2006). Heterosexuality in organisations and everyday working life has however, in a more loose sense, been targeted by researchers for quite some time (Hochschild 1983, 1997; Burrell and Hearn 1989; Acker 1990; Adkins 1995; Adkins and Merchant 1996; Wahl et al. 1998; Hearn and Parkin 2001). In many cases it is really gender relations at work that is being examined, but heterosexuality becomes a prominent aspect (albeit implicitly at times). The existence of heterosexual profession-constellations is often highlighted in this research, for example in Kanter’s (1977) classical study Men and Women of the Corporation, where the relation between managers and their secretaries is made into one of the main themes. Pringle (1989:84), observing this particular constellation too, states that
the “boss-secretary relation is organised around sexuality and family imagery”.
Roper (1996) presents a flip-side to the image of the heteronormative workplace, arguing that men’s sexual desire for each other is often overlooked in studies of organisations and male homosociality. That male homosocial bonding contains traces of, or in fact is, homosexual desire has been suggested earlier (Sedgwick 1985), and Roper’s contribution appears to take this notion into the corporate world.

This dissertation is the offspring of a pilot study entitled *Homosexuellas villkor i arbetslivet* (Forsberg et al. 2003, “Working life conditions for homosexuals”), which investigates the working life experiences of “non-heterosexuals” in contemporary Sweden. Interviews were conducted with homosexual men and women working in elderly care, child care, law enforcement, the military and the church. It is suggested that in male dominated, hierarchical workplaces (i.e. law enforcement, military and church) the participants more frequently had to put up with homo-negative jargon than those working in the elderly-, and childcare. It is concluded that the gender order plays an important part in the construction of normative heterosexuality - male dominated workplaces simply appear to be straighter. Since all the workplaces examined in the pilot study were considered either male- or female dominated, it seemed like a good idea to look at a sex-mixed organisation for this project. It also seemed clever to find an organisation with hierarchy-climbing women and men in non-promotion jobs, which might lead to interesting observations on what aspects of heteronormativity are constituted by men, or masculinity rather, and what is rooted in a hierarchical system per se. The possibility of conducting the first study (starting off I had in mind to conduct a couple of smaller surveys) at either a museum, library or university was discussed; workplaces that tend to fulfil the criteria above. Finally we settled for a museum, partly because I realised that I had a lot of preconceived ideas about what universities and libraries are like, partly because it seemed fun. Museums, how do they work, are they all about exhibitions, and what kind of people will you find there? Little did I know. A couple of studies on gender in the worlds of museums has been conducted (see *Genus på museer*, “Gender at museums”, 2004; Aronsson and Meurling, eds., 2005), but to my knowledge none on sexuality.

The purpose of this study, finally, is to examine whether museum X is a heteronormative workplace by looking at the actions of the employees. Heteronormativity is understood as a, in various ways, hetero-privileged order
which is reproduced or negotiated by the employees/actors in everyday life. Or this was the purpose, rather. It transformed during the research, and this, among other things, will be addressed below.

A word on transparency and chronology

It is common practice to fix at least the most obvious incongruities that emerge during the research process. The various leaps many researchers take can be rather unpredictable and often disrupts the plans made. Purposes are altered to fit whatever the studies ended up being about, theoretical frameworks are tweaked, sometimes discarded, and so on. These things usually occur behind the curtains when academic texts are produced and readers will never know of them, which is neither strange nor wrong. Producing a neat, stringent text is to make scientific sense and while it appears self-evident that we should try to be as comprehensible as possible (what else would be the purpose of this practice?), there is also the ever present question of how open researchers should be about what it is that they are doing.

I have chosen to present the different parts of this dissertation more or less as they formed, i.e. chronologically, and also to reveal as much about the research process as I can without muddling the text too much. There will be no tedious expositions of how this used to be that and how the very shift between this and that was carried out, but there will be short announcements about the behind the curtain events. When presenting the overview earlier, for example, I revealed that bits of it were meant to form the theoretical framework of the dissertation. It was replaced relatively late in the research process by a form of sociology known as ethnomethodology, which happened to catch my attention. The new-found ethnomethodological perspective changed the character of the dissertation quite drastically, among other things it made me aim for as much transparency as possible. The scientific practice is always intertwined with the phenomenon examined in different ways and my attempts to capture normative heterosexuality, theoretically as well as empirically, my self-declared insights and failures, tell something about not only the development of this study, but about how heteronormativity as phenomenon can be made intelligible and accounted for in a broader sense. Transparency, in short, enhances intelligibility. How heteronormativity can be made intelligible and accounted for is, in turn, related to how it can be practiced. There is, in short, a link between descriptions and
doings. This idea, which is central to ethnomethodology, will be elaborated further in chapter 3.

For chronological reasons, the purpose presented above is the old, unaltered one. Putting the newer, tweaked purpose (now presented at p.51) there could make it tricky for readers to understand why I conducted interviews, which is something of an illegitimate method to many ethnomethodologists (this will also be discussed later), or perhaps why the interview questions were formulated the way they were. Below is a brief summary of the chapters:

Chapter 1. The main problem, to discern what heteronormativity is, is introduced with a scene from one of the very first trips to the field. Normative heterosexuality, or heteronormativity, as subject of scientific investigation is presented from a feminist-, queer theoretical-, and sociological perspective. The purpose governing two thirds of the research process as well as the ambition to stick to the actual chronology of the research process is put on the table.

Chapter 2. I enter the field and consequently this chapter deals with the ethnographic design of the study. Quite a lot of attention is paid to questions regarding ethics and my attempts to develop an ethically satisfying relationship with the participants.

Chapter 3. After about two years in the field, it is time to start the analytical work. Realising that I need special tools in order to examine interaction, I look up social psychology and stumble upon Garfinkel, father of ethnomethodology. In this chapter the ethnomethodological framework of the dissertation is elaborated.

Chapter 4. The analytical work can begin at last. Analytical threads are picked up continuously while in the field, but there is a difference, I argue, between thinking about how to analyse a material and actually doing it (at least in this case). By mainly analysing the interviews conducted during the first year in the field, I here account for how the participants and I tried to make sense of sexuality and sexual-related issues at the museum.

Chapter 5. In the second analytical phase, the initial interest in sexuality is superseded by an interest in how women and men were routinely turned into a, usually non-sexual, pair by the participants. Sexuality is left behind, then, as I
examine how the participants created the appearance of an inevitable relationship between women and men, and established a commonsensical truth about (primarily male) homosociality as inherently negative.

Chapter 6. Finally the very interaction between women and men in various situations at the museum is being focused. I investigate how the participants positioned themselves explicitly as women and men, and interacted as a pair in different respects. Sexuality is reintroduced, because when the participants interacted in this fashion, a latent (or implicit) sexual element was often present.

Chapter 7. Time to discuss the main findings, look at how they may be interrelated and to evaluate the ethnomethodological approach. In this chapter I basically try to make sense of what I have done.
2. Into the field, out of my mind

This chapter is entitled like it is for two reasons. One reason is that I felt a little bit out of my mind during the first period in the field in the sense that I did not know what to pay attention to or how to relate to the employees at the museum. The other reason for using the phrase “out of my mind” is perhaps more interesting. It has to do with how spending time in the field helped change my ideas about what it was I was suppose to research. However chaotic my library (see overview in previous chapter) was when I entered the museum, I still had a clear, sociological vision. I knew, for example, that I understood more about sexuality and normative heterosexuality than the participants, well, all things social really, and that this would enable me to explain their actions and the social structures involved. A little bit at the time I drifted away from these ideas. I left my mind, in a manner of speaking.

Gathering the material

“In the villages, what are the popular amusements? Do the people meet to drink or to read, to discuss, or play games, or dance? What are the public houses like? Do the people eat fruit and tell stories? or drink ale and talk politics? or call for tea and saunter about? or coffee and play dominoes? or lemonade and laugh at Punch? Do they crowd within four walls, or gather under the elm, or spread themselves abroad over the cricket-field or the yellow sands?”

(Martineau 1838:65)

Doing ethnography is, according to Smith (1987:160), not just to conduct interviews and carry out observations, but “a commitment to an investigation and explication of how “it” actually is, of how “it” actually works, of actual practices and relations”. Do researchers not usually want to find out how “it” actually works, one might ask, and this is, from one perspective, difficult to deny. But what Smith seems to encircle is a particular attitude which ensures that the research is built solidly around the empirical material and uncompromised by theoretically founded expectations. The researcher needs to get involved with the people she studies and know what their days are like,
otherwise she will not understand how “it” actually is. This notion mirrors the
doubts posed above by Martineau, who over one and a half century ago tried
to find ways to examine and make sociological sense of everyday life in
different parts of the world. I believe I started out as a rather poor observer
who, through a process, was drawn more and more into the ethnographical
mode. Partly because spending time with the employees forced me to face the
complexity of social life without being able to conveniently abstract it away, and
partly because I got involved and began to feel as if I had certain obligations to
them. I could not just up and leave.

Starting off I used a very basic ethnographic model elaborated by Spradley
(1980:78), which meant that I tried to note:

1. **Space**: the physical place or places.
2. **Actor**: the people involved.
3. **Activity**: a set of related acts people do.
4. **Object**: the physical things that are present.
5. **Act**: single actions that people do.
6. **Event**: a set of related activities that people carry out.
7. **Time**: the sequencing that takes place over time.
8. **Goal**: the things people are trying to accomplish.
9. **Feeling**: the emotions felt and expressed.

It was frustrating to try to cover all these aspects and still be able to walk and
talk. With time, however, the observations became more habitual, as I started to
feel more secure at the museum and eased into my own ethnographic practice.
What I observed also changed during the two years I spent in the field. The
first year I was inclined to look primarily at what was being said and by whom
in different situations. I was, in short, discourse oriented. The second year I
gradually became increasingly interested in (and capable of tracing) the way
people moved and demanded interaction with each other in subtle ways. I also
started to trust my competence as a temporary member at the museum, which
led me to pay more attention to the emotional side of the ongoing interaction.
We might say that I turned to what Wittgenstein (1958) calls the fine shades of

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6 As a general rule I will use feminine pronouns when referring to indefinite persons. In one respect it
is as problematic to make indefinite persons female as it is to make them male, that is why more and
more writers use “s/he” or develop/give up gender neutral pronouns. S/he however reinforces the two-
sex system and I lack confidence when it comes to utilising gender neutral pronouns. Since the
usage of feminine pronouns disrupts more routines than the usage of masculine, this seems to be
the way to go.
behaviour, which includes, among other things, body language and the usage of different tones when speaking. It is really tricky to describe how one observes and interprets hand gestures, facial expressions and so on. On a couple of occasions in the beginning of the second year, I tried to be as meticulous as possible when depicting such things in conversations I had had, but the notes ended up incomprehensible. The problem seemed to be the missing context; a certain gesture is understood in a certain way because of the context. When too much attention is paid to the gesture itself and the context is treated as secondary, the gesture is rendered meaningless. In the end I settled for a more modest course, noting what I came to call speaking glances, smiles, how people placed themselves in relation to each other physically, etc., but usually not hand movements or changes in peoples’ posture (unless they seemed especially significant for some reason).

Some of the points in Spradley’s (ibid.) model never seemed to serve much of a purpose, most notably point 7 and 8. Even though I could perhaps have done more to include time as a factor in the research, it is uncertain what such an approach would have brought to the final analysis. In a way the time dimension is inevitable, the question is if time passing has anything to do with the purpose of the investigation. I suppose time made me more confident as a researcher and thus willing to open more analytical doors, but that is about it. Point 8 is problematic because it is difficult to look into people and know for sure what they really want to achieve. I settled for looking at what the members actually accomplished in interaction, but, as will be noticeable in the analysis, I treat their accomplishments as an outcome of some sort of intentionality. Whether people always have clearly detectable (or conscious) goals is uncertain, perhaps unlikely, but it appears equally wrong to treat us as intention-less beings. My guess is that we are often something in between, moving along a continuum rather than being stuck by either the goal or the non-goal station.

The observations were conducted sporadically for two years, with a more intense time in the field at the end of this period. During the last four months, I would spend two or three days in the field every week. In general I would never conduct observations for more than five hours at the time, since it was clear from the very start that I had trouble staying focused for longer than that. I developed different methods to get some rest while in field and with time it got easier to zoom in and out depending on what was going on. Field notes were usually written straight after, as well as during, observations; whenever
something that seemed especially interesting took place, I tried to sneak away and write it down. Because things would often come back to me a little bit too late, I got into the habit of adding more to the field notes a day or two after the observation (in a separate note pad). Many field days, thus, ended up having both primary and secondary notes. The next step was to enter the field notes into the computer. During this procedure I would usually turn to the primary notes, but sometimes add from the secondary. Looking back, the eagerness to remember and write down as much as possible probably turned me into a more attentive observer since it made me realise how much data could be produced after just a couple of hours in the field. I have to admit that some field notes never made it into the computer, they safely remained in the books. Interestingly many of these notes ended up in chapter 6.

I used my gatekeeper at the museum to full extent and she gracefully did everything I asked, as well as contributed with her own ideas. Tentatively I explored the setting and began to understand that the front, the part that the public has access to, is quite a limited part of a museum. I suppose it should not have come as a surprise that, in fact, more things are going on behind closed doors than one might suspect. I conducted twelve formal interviews in total, a majority during the first year in the field and eight of these with archaeologists and architectural conservationists because they happened to belong to the same working unit as my gatekeeper. It was easy for her to set up the interviews and I was happy to get going. The remaining interviews were conducted with employees from four different working units who I suspected saw a lot of the museum through the work they did. The interviews lasted between one and a half to two hours and were fully transcribed, except in three cases. Three interviews were conducted late in the process and because the (still unaltered) purpose of the research began to grow clearer, I was able to determine that parts of them would not contribute very much and those parts, then, were not transcribed. The transcriptions overall include interruptions, laughter, pauses, on a few occasions speaking glances and bodily movements, but mostly, though, it is a transcription of words. I am aware of the fact that more details could have been added and that this might have modified my understanding of what was going on in a certain situation. It seems like this particular problem, which I have already touched upon, is ever present – we can always collect more data and expand our notion of what may actually constitute data. In order

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7 A gatekeeper is a person who has agreed to function as a guide for the researcher. Usually it is someone who is well-connected and knowledgeable about the setting.
not to miss any relevant details however, I listened to every interview three times. The field notes written directly after every interview were also carefully examined to see if they could add something.

All conversations referred to as interviews covered all or some of the following themes (from the interview guide): The participants’ backgrounds (education, earlier occupations, parents’ occupation), present job, general experiences of the museum as a work place, general experiences of issues regarding equality and gender inequality at the museum, and, finally, experiences of gender equality and/or inequality at the museum. When interviewing people who conducted investigations of some sort, such as archaeologists, or were involved in pedagogic work, I also asked if they applied a gender perspective or a sexuality perspective as part of their job, and what they thought characterised such perspectives. The questions were kept intentionally vague and as a rule I did not define any of the concepts used, unless explicitly asked to.

Fifteen informal interviews were conducted with participants from all corners of the museum. I am not sure how to explain why I chose to talk in depth with those particular persons, but it comes down to a combination of coincidence (that we were in the same place at the same time), positive vibes (that we seemed to click), and strategy (I tried to collect perspectives from as many different professions at the museum as possible). As Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) point out, it can be difficult to know when a conversation turns into an interview in the field. I listed private conversations that went on more or less uninterrupted for more than twenty minutes as informal interviews, but only if I had the chance to ask questions from the pre-formulated interview guide. While the formal interviews were semi-structured and left plenty of room for the participants to manoeuvre as they saw fit, the informal interviews should probably be described as minimally structured.

I also conducted three formal group interviews with representatives from three different working units. This was organised by my gatekeeper and to my knowledge the representatives were asked to participate by the head of their respectively unit, I do not know on what grounds. I had in mind to conduct seven group interviews, one with each unit, but for different reasons this did not happen. These interviews lasted between one and one and a half hour, and were fully transcribed when possible. At times the lively conversation made it impossible to hear what was being said. Basically I introduced the same
questions as in the individual interviews, but I also asked the interviewees what they thought constituted sexual harassment and whether they believed that a person can be sexually harassed by someone of the same sex. Finally, I conducted three informal group interviews that lasted between ten and fifteen minutes with random employees. Of course group conversations took place ever so often and the reason why some of them were labelled interviews was that I managed to pose questions from the interview guide.

**Ethical considerations**

Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) distinguish five ethical issues that ought to be considered by researchers doing ethnography, and these served as my guidelines throughout the research. The first issue concerns informed consent. Whether or not it is necessary to always get full, informed consent from the participants has been the focus of some debate. While some argue that doing covert research is acceptable in certain cases, others assert that it is hard to conceive of a case where the knowledge gained is so valuable that deception can be justified. However, as the authors point out, even when a commitment to the idea of getting consent is made, there may be reasons why the researcher does not reveal everything about the research to all people involved. In the beginning of the research it can, for instance, be difficult to clearly state what the purpose of the study is. The initial research idea is usually developed and/or transformed during the research process, and when the silhouette of the study becomes more recognisable, other reasons not to tell the participants too much might arise. They might not be interested. I certainly came to realise this a few times, when the employees I was chatting to, as they asked polite questions, also tried to make me understand in subtle ways that they had a job to do. I found those instances humbling. After all, the museum is a workplace and my presence did not alter that fact in any way. Most of the participants, however, engaged quite cheerfully in conversations about my research and I did not have a finished set of answers to their questions.

Another reason not to over-inform the participants is that the research could be compromised. If they were to perceive the research topic as threatening or otherwise disturbing, then that might cause them to drastically change their behaviour in the presence of the researcher, not wanting to share their experiences etc. I often chose to pitch my research as a study of gender and
“gender-related issues” (yes, deceitfully vague). It is not a lie, since issues of gender and sexuality are interrelated, but it is not the whole truth either. I was worried that the members’ preconceived notions of sexuality would make them clam up if they knew everything about the purpose of the research. In the end, how much I told them differed, in relations signified by rapport I spoke rather openly, and in others I was the one clamming up. This covering up definitely gave me some ethical headache. A sociological understanding of sexuality and normative heterosexuality, I believed, stands out in this time of dirty confession in the tabloids, glittering gay parades and TV-programs dedicated to spicing up the love lives of couples. Trying to explain heterosexuality as an impersonal normative order, because that is how I understood it at this point, rather than something constituting a (potentially dirty) core in individuals seemed like a much too difficult task. Looking back, my hesitation to talk openly about the research topic probably revealed more about me and my limitations, than about those of the participants.

Let us continue on to issue number two: Privacy. The line between public and private is a wonky one. What happens in the bedroom is commonly regarded as private, but what about people talking on a bus or in a store? What data can be collected without any risk of violating people’s privacy? Hammersley and Atkinson (ibid.) assert that different groups in a population are often given different rights to privacy. Children, for example, have been researched in ways that would be unthinkable if they were adults. When the study is published, the participants may feel like the researcher has invaded their privacy and misused their trust, and this is of course something that should be avoided if possible. On the other hand, if great care is taken to let the participants control what in the end is written about them, the study could be severely compromised. How much damage the research can cause depends on what questions have been asked and how personal the data published is. The sociological perspective used in this dissertation does not entail an interest in, for instance, unique, personal motifs for actions or childhoods. From one point of view that could presumably be somewhat unethical in itself, since so many participants have shared their stories about such things so generously with me, but it also protects them from having their private matters flaunted in public. The participants would sometimes tell me things that could be potentially harmful, either to themselves if they were to be identified, or to other employees, and such information, even if juicy in relation to the purpose of the study, was simply regarded as too private and therefore unusable.
I also took great care not to force myself on the employees. Those (few) who showed no interest in me, I usually did not approach. In the beginning I made sure to remind the employees that they did not have to answer my questions if they did not want to, that they had the right to remain silent. At times I felt a bit silly for taking such precautions; a youngish, insecure doctoral student (“is that like an ordinary student or what?”) who tried to sound all grown up and reassuring in front of truly secure and grown up people who actually knew what they were doing. As I got to know the employees and the museum, this ceased to be a problem because we established a fairly stable researcher-participant relationship. When I started to analyse the material, however, these precautions suddenly seemed like a very good idea. It was not until then that it finally dawned on me where my power as researcher (in this case) actually originated – by the computer. At the end of the day it is I who tell the story about the museum and its population, not the employees.

Issue number three concerns harm. Research could be deemed harmful if it causes anxiety or stress, this being especially important to consider if the participants belong to a vulnerable group, and if it somehow reinforces racism, sexism or similar. A couple of the employees wanted me to promise that they would not in any way be identifiable in the final text and it is possible that being researched caused them some stress. At these instances I explained the process of anonymisation and was extra careful not to push the envelope. The fact that I was in the field for such a long time made it easier to hide the employees from each other since so many changes took place during this period, at the museum as well as in the personal lives of the participants. Time and change are great discombobulators, it seems. In order to anonymise the employees I have altered names and other information that could help determine their identities. This will be discussed later. Whether my research has reinforced sexism, racism, or any other -ism, I am not sure it is my place to say. Hopefully, of course, it is the other way around.

We might as well turn to issue number four and five simultaneously: Exploitation of the participants and consequences of the research for other researchers respectively. I am tempted to say that no employees at the museum were exploited during the research. Some participants, though, seemed to be under the impression that I would speak on their behalf. They told me a great deal about illegitimate use of power and under-the-table decision-making, hoping that I would shed some
light on this shady business in my dissertation. Even though I have tried to
enclose passages where such experiences are being voiced, I am not sure
whether the participants involved would say that I have done them justice.
Hammersley and Atkinson (ibid.) suggest that research that does not give
anything back to the participant can be labelled exploitative. In an attempt to
pay my debt, I returned to the museum half-way through the analysis and talked
about some of the findings at a staff meeting. There were interested questions,
laughter and also debate about some of my less commonsensical arguments
(such as the body count routine, see chapter 5). It is probably fair to say that
because participants usually will have different expectations on the research (if
they have any at all, that is), they will feel more or less satisfied with the result.
One’s job as researcher is not to please the crowd, but of course one should be
held accountable for one’s actions and engage in discussion. Letting the
participants of a study respond to and challenge the results also constitute a
validity test called respondent validation (Silverman 1993). Although critiqued
for relying solely on the conscientiousness of the participants, this form of
validation appears to at least force the researcher to consider the experiences of
the participants. When it comes to the consequences for future research in this
particular field, we shall just have to wait and see. I do not think that I managed
to spoil it, i.e. make it inaccessible to other researchers, but that remains to be
seen.
3. Studying interaction and the production of social order

So, after reading a lot of books and spending two years on and off at the museum, it was time to sit down to do the analysis. As Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) note, part of the analytical work takes place in the field while you are gathering the material, and I entered this phase with many ideas at the back of my head about how this part of the dissertation could be constructed. But I soon started to feel like I was missing something very important. It dawned on me that I lacked tools to examine the most apparent feature of the data collected – the interaction. Even though I had been doing an ethnographic investigation and really gotten into observing the interplay between the employees, my analytical framework was not updated. This realisation led me to the interactionists and social psychologists, a bunch I rarely came across and did not take very seriously during my years as a sociology student. Soon I stumbled upon Garfinkel, had an insight or two, and ended up going down the ethnomethodological rabbit hole in a painstaking process. The duck-rabbit figure introduced by American psychologist Jastrow (1899) comes in handy when the relationship between ethnomethodology and mainstream sociology (characterised by a belief in norm/rule governed behaviour and distinctions such as macro-micro, structure-actor) is to be illustrated. Jastrow utilised the figure, and others like it, to show that perception is a mental activity – from one point of view it is a duck and from another a rabbit. Where mainstream sociology usually sees a duck, ethnomethodology tends to see a rabbit, still they appear to be looking at the same thing.

Below I will present ethnomethodology primarily by patching together thoughts formulated by Garfinkel (1967), and Garfinkel and Rawls (2002; 2006; 2008). Garfinkel’s best known work is probably *Studies in Ethnomethodology* published in 1967, but I favour *Seeing Sociologically* (2006). Here a text (also entitled *Seeing Sociologically*) written by Garfinkel in 1948 is skilfully contextualised and clarified by Rawls. Throughout the book many of the basic ethnomethodological notions are explained in depth and Rawls’s contribution is substantial, which is why I treat her as co-author rather than merely editor. *Ethnomethodology’s Program* (2002) and *A Sociological Theory Of Information* (2008) is arranged in a similar fashion; texts written by Garfinkel are given new, at times more readable coats
by Rawls. I wish to make clear that while I am inspired by Garfinkel and Rawls, I am not limited to their ideas, or to ethnomethodology as tradition for that matter. To some extent this has to do with my comprehension, or lack thereof, of Garfinkel’s writing (and Rawls’s clarifications). In certain cases it is, simply put, difficult for me to judge whether I have fully grasped the arguments or not. At other times I only use parts of some garfinkelian idea because I want to construct my own argument. Concepts marked like this will play an important part in the coming analysis and may deserve some extra attention.

Resourceful actors in a see-through society

Ethnomethodology (EM) understands social order first and foremost as a skilful accomplishment by competent actors (Garfinkel 1967). However simple people make it look (however easy it may actually be for that matter), they still have to produce order through the course of their daily business. They do so in a number of situations and it is situations, as locations of shared practices, which is the primary focus in EM. People, in turn, are understood as locations for different practices, moving from situation to situation. When one situation is altered into another, the actor will have to change her practice in order to be recognised as legitimately belonging to the new situation. We might say that she uses a strategic competence in order to change and adjust her guise (for an elaborate discussion about such skills see Arvidson 2007). Situations are, however, often collective accomplishments and it is important for people to know who we, the makers of this particular situation, are. Garfinkel and Rawls (2006:44) state that “a person is member of a group when, and only as long as, they are committed to a shared set of methods for producing a situation, and are recognized by others as being so committed”. Issues of “are you in or are you out” arise all the time when people move about, albeit often in very non-dramatic ways.

Actors are at every instance involved in a specific working act, together with other members or by themselves. Right now I am writing this. I am quite concentrated and many other aspects of my life, and perhaps many sides of me, simply are not present. I do not think about my friends, what to cook for dinner, or whether or not I should get a new armchair. I am busy looking up

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8 I will refer to Garfinkel and Rawls as co-authors when there is no reason to distinguish between them and I will refer to them separately when this procedure seems to violate their individual contributions or cause confusion.
In short, I am involved in a specific working act. Because of the way actors engage in different working acts it is a mistake to treat them as whole units, and as a consequence it is problematic to ask them questions about other working acts except for the one they are currently performing. Garfinkel and Rawls (ibid., p.17) state that the “modes of consciousness are so different that one might as well ask the questions of two different persons”. An edgy formulation, perhaps, but I find the general idea interesting and best taken seriously. If we believe that there is something to this line of reasoning, we must problematise, for instance, the practice of interviewing. Actors are often interviewed about what they do and how they feel in all kinds of situations, and it is worth considering whether their answers first and foremost reflect what they actually do and feel in those situations, or what they do and feel during the interview.

How do members, as Garfinkel (1967) term individuals populating a situation, through their interactional practices organise situations so that it is possible for them to know what it is they are doing and why? In order for a thing (a piece of action, a concept etc.) to be something, we have to articulate it as just that, i.e. place it somewhere appropriate in the interaction and treat it more or less as a natural occurrence. Think about a class room situation, how do the members know for sure that it is a classroom situation? From an EM perspective it is not enough that they simply know this when they enter the room, although they do need to utilise background expectancies in order to coordinate their actions, they know by doing and by clarifying in front of each other what it is they are doing. As noted earlier, the members must show one another that they are in a certain situation and ready to make it come true. Garfinkel suggests that what we normally place in individuals (like background expectations) should be understood as belonging to the situation, since while members come and go, many situations do not lose their basic meaning. Of course in many ways, attending a lecture in the 17th century was something quite different from coming to class today, but the fact that we still cast people as either lecturers or students and organise certain settings where lectures takes place, suggests that situations can be studied in their own right.

The making of situations also depends on the flexible character of our language, since it enables us to convey information and coordinate our practices without having to write entire dissertations. Coulon (1995:17) asserts that we must look
at how actors in their everyday lives “produce and treat information in their exchanges and how they use language as a resource; in short, how they build up a ‘reasonable’ world to be able to live in it”. If I am told that “on Monday we will go to the zoo, we certainly like animals, do we not? Oh, that monkey spat on you last time, but you know, that was one weird monkey!”, I receive information about a number of things, such as what we will do on Monday, something we have done before apparently, that there is a “we”, that there is some kind of time unit called Monday, that the zoo is a distinct place that we have to transport ourselves to (this is not the zoo), that we like animals, that the animal called monkey does not necessarily like me, that there indeed is an animal called monkey, and so on. This simple utterance coordinates us in a multitude of ways and is part of the weave of information that we need to create in order to coexist meaningfully.

The flexible character of words makes the complexity of social life possible, indeed, makes social itself possible. The concept of indexicality, denoting such flexibility, is therefore important in EM. Coulon (1995:17) says that “indexicality is all the contextual determinations that are implicitly attached to a word”, meaning quite simply that words can be given different meanings in different contexts and in different situations (within every context). This width of words is made clear in Jakobsen’s (1999) study of differences in people’s perception of the word “risk”. In the interviews conducted, risk was given both very negative and very positive definitions by the participants, whereas the word “threat” was only defined in negative terms. Jakobsen suggests that since risk is a more abstract concept to begin with, it can be used in a wider sense than the more concrete threat. To what extent words may have fixed meanings is indeed an interesting question. In Mema’s House, Prieur (1997) sets out to explore the world of transvestites, queens, and machos in Mexico City. She writes (ibid., p.26):

The Spanish word *heterosexual* is rarely used, so many do not have an opinion of what it means, but some think that being *heterosexual* is being a man, or being normal – and here a man is a man or is normal as long as he looks like a man and sticks to the active role, regardless of whether he has sex with women or men.

Prieur is not the first to discover that, in certain contexts, a man is allowed to penetrate other men without being labelled homosexual, gay or anything in
particular (cf. Becker 1963; Nilsson 1998). In other contexts, however, a homosexual is someone having sex with people of the same sex. Period.

Why are the members so anxious to organise situations and produce social order? According to Garfinkel and Rawls (2006) it comes down to a question of moral practicality, to the members trusting each other to interact to the best of their ability out of necessity. Rawls (ibid., p.9) points out that:

This civil morality of practice – ‘trust’- is, for Garfinkel, not motivated by anything more than the mutual interest in producing those recognizable orders of practice on which intelligible social life depends.

Order and meaning, then, represent two sides of the same coin to the member. The order produced is not flawless and the members constantly have to “normalize the (…) incongruities within the order of events of everyday life” (Garfinkel 1967:54). Peoples’ ability to ad-hoc in different ways to create interactional flow is crucial. And, as Collin (1997) notes, ethnomethodologists pay attention to how actors quite often create order retrospectively. They do that by deciding, afterwards, that what in fact happened in that classroom went according to plan, even if it did not. That way the appearance of a constant and predictable (trans-situational) order is preserved.

Social order is produced through interaction and depends on visibility. The only possibility for the members to create order is by orient themselves towards the witnessable actions of the other members, to what is put on the table. This is essential since we are not, as sometimes assumed, mind readers. We all (or most of us most of the time) know social order when we see it. Just as we recognise when someone is not quite getting what the situation is about, i.e. we notice when someone’s behaviour is off. Looking at a situation from an EM perspective, there is not anything to figure out, there is no hidden order to detect. The only order that exists lies before us, researchers and members alike. It is manufactured in real time, minute by minute, and by carefully examining it, we might be able to show how it is practically achieved in everyday life. The EM researcher does not reveal a secret society, rather she wants to capture the sociological expertise of the members as they make sense of the world and build social order.
It has been pointed out that the notion that researchers, in most cases, do not know more about what is going on than the other members makes EM a feminist-friendly tradition (Stanley and Wise 1993). Presumably that means that EM as tradition is friendly to all groups that may be prevented from voicing their experiences properly. It does not automatically arrange researcher and researched in a hierarchy, where the researcher, armed with mysterious theoretical tools, detects the invisible workings of the social and tell people about their lives. What separates the EM researcher, on a fundamental level, from other members is her disinterest in producing interaction flow and situational meaning. She may even try to mess up interaction in order to understand more about it, which is what Garfinkel (1967) let his students do in so called breaching experiments.

Despite being produced at every instance, the world does not appear to be incomplete to the member. Instead it seems to be ready-made, like a house. It follows that the member usually conceives of herself as moving about, trying to locate and conform to or challenge the factual order already present (she can assume that it is there since all the girls at school wear skirts and none of the boys). A difference between mainstream sociology (norm/rule governed behaviour, distinctions such as macro-micro, structure-actor, etc.) and ethnomethodology is the perspective taken on what it is that constraints people (Garfinkel and Rawls 2002). For Parsons, for instance, the social walls are made up of what individuals know to be socially acceptable. The analytical terrain is separated into two spheres; one empirical, where the actors and action is, and one constituted by the normative, non-empirical system of rights and wrongs. This notion enables for sociologists to develop a theoretical attitude and study, first and foremost, the normative order which restricts actions. Social order is reified, or thingified. A reified social order is an order turned into a completed (and abstracted) thing, and when referring to it, we do not have to specify which acts or practices produce it in certain contexts, we can simply say “the gender order”. Convenient, sure, but also deceitful since the gender order comes across as action-independent, monolithic and universal. For Garfinkel the actions of the members are first and foremost limited by what is socially recognisable in different contexts. As a member you must constantly make yourself understood as a student, a rebel, a compassionate friend etc., and the strategies used to accomplish this must be ”appropriate to the situation that actors find themselves in, with regards to just those identities they are trying to present” (Garfinkel and Rawls 2006:41). From this perspective, order is
recognisable action, or interaction, and when referring to order, we refer to what people do, to their practice, not to a pre-conceived, reified norm or script.

Non-academic members also routinely reify social order; they too believe in the existence of restrictive norms and the like. Hilbert (1992:44) suggests that “it is through the routine avoidance of terra incognita that people continue to convince themselves and each other that institutionalized proscriptions exist”. The difference between saying that there are norms and that people believe in the existence of proscriptions/norms, and using this belief in interaction in order to make sense, may seem insignificant enough, but it really is not. It is the difference between going more or less native and miss order (or norms) as an ongoing accomplishment, and not. Below I will give you an example of how members skilfully reify social order.

Annika: I’m thinking that people have like photos of their children and partners as screensavers and on photos, and I wonder why people have that, one thought is that it makes them happy, but another is that it’s like a signal, ”hey, I’m normal, I’ve got a partner of the opposite sex we’ve got children”… that it’s like a, that you display…

Peter: A sort of confirmation then? Yeah…eh, that’s actually an interesting idea, considering this particular society’s, or the group’s, view of the nuclear family, but maybe it’s both, ’cause, sure it’s about displaying, but then it’s also, well, it’s a link to the family, but you don’t necessarily have to manifest it like that. But it’s nice to look at. Yes…that’s interesting, I’ll have to say

Annika: Yeah, because I read a text ---

Peter: Because it’s sooo common! Everybody has it! That has a family. But when someone has got it, it’s just like ”oh, that’s so cosy, I must have that”. But that just goes to show this, it really goes to show this thing with sameness10

Annika: Mm

Peter: That that too is a normalisation thing, that everybody’s got to have one

Annika: ’Cause I got my brother (laughs), ’cause he’s close family

--- means that the speaker is interrupted,  … means that there is a pause.
10 ”men det visar ju väldigt tydligt det här med likställdhet då”. I am not sure about my translation.
Peter: Yeah, you do? (a little surprised)

Annika: Yeah, and he’s pretty young and people then assume that it’s my boyfriend and I’ll tell them that it’s my brother and that’s still OK, but it isn’t their first guess… and that’s how I got the idea to look for texts, “what is this about”?

(Just to clarify – the texts I intended to look for are in fact photos and similar things. In this interview I refer to them as texts rather than, say, artefacts or objects even, I am not sure why. Maybe I try to sound professional?)

Peter: But that’s self explanatory, what if I would have a guy on my screensaver, you know…

Annika: Or yourself? (laughs)

Peter: No, would that be OK, no, it wouldn’t

Annika: Or your best male friend?

Peter: Yeah, no, not even that would be ok, probably… that ought to be researched as well

In this piece of conversation, Peter and I seem to circle around something that we know is there, something regulating what kind of loves/photos you are allowed to publicly display. We do not attempt to define this rule, instead we treat it more or less like a fact. It is there, inevitably, and it affects us. To give Parsons some credit, we do establish what is acceptable and not, but on a more profound level we produce an ordered situation by establishing a recognisable, common ground.

The way members refer to rules has been investigated by Wieder (1974). In *Telling the Code* he explores how ex-addicts in a half-way house manage to organise their world by strategically using a set of unwritten rules. At first glance, these rules appear to be carved in stone, but Wieder experience how the members tweak and twist them to their liking in order to produce certain orders and events. The rules do not constrain the members. On the contrary, the use of them as a resource makes all sorts of actions possible. However, by using the
rules in certain ways, the members do constrain and control each other. Garfinkel (2006:203) remarks that:

We shall speak of a relationship of Power when actor A is so regarded by actor B that A's treatment effects a change in some element or elements of B's cognitive style, the changes being in such a character as to limit B's alternatives of action to those or that which A desires.

Cognitive style means frame of reference, or basic understanding, and the kind of power Garfinkel talks about is thus on the deepest level an asymmetry when it comes to members' perception of what is a realistic course of action or not (situationally speaking). The point is nevertheless that people control people - often, I imagine, in attempts to embody identities like parent, man, prison guard, etc. – not a structure or a norm. A member may play different kinds of cards in order to manipulate her co-member. These can, for instance, be related to identity; if A tries to convince B that it is time to go to bed by referring to her own status as adult and B's status as child, then A have played an identity-card (or an age-card) as parent.

Earlier in this chapter I said that people know that a classroom situation is precisely that by participating in the situation and clarifying in front of each other what they are doing. While mainstream sociology occupies itself primarily with questions regarding why people do what they do, EM researchers want to know how people make certain actions appear valid (Hughes and Månsson 2007). An actor must be able to account for her actions, i.e., describe, explain and clearly show what she is doing and to what purpose. Competent members are able to demonstrate that they have only acted in accordance with guidelines or rules (Lynch 1993). Garfinkel (2002:43) asserts that, instead of following rules, people learn how to produce instructable forms of actions: “One knows whether one has ‘instructably reproduced’ an action by its ‘praxeological validity’, whether the action works, or has coherence for others”. I am not sure that I fully grasp the idea of instructably reproduced actions, but what seems to be of essence is that the member must make her actions appear to appropriately follow upon the actions of the other members, for instance by accounting for them in clever ways. The idea that human action is governed by rules, which is often assumed, has been contested by several big league researchers and philosophers (see Lynch 1993, chapter 5, for an excellent overview), and while I
do not want to enter this discussion, I would like to reassert the difference between believing in norms/rules and believing that people believe in norms/rules. Parsons, as Garfinkel and Rawls (2002) point out, assumed the existence of the normative order. It simply had to be there, otherwise patterns in society could not be explained. This belief prevented him from actually looking for peoples’ tricks for achieving patterns, as well as, maybe, recognising how unorderly the world can be at times.

**A horizontal sociology**

As Layder (1994) asserts, social theory has concerned itself quite a bit with a set of dualisms, individual-society, agency-structure, and micro-macro. I have chosen to use Layder as an example of how mainstream sociology treats these issues simply because, from my corner of the world, it seems as if mainstream sociology on a fundamental level is, more or less, a layderian sociology. This could certainly be disputed with reference to the heavy influence of post-modern theories, phenomenology and such, but I will argue that the doing of these traditions do not interfere too much with the ongoing production of the dualist-drenched sociological common sense. To be intelligible as sociologists, we have to wrestle with dichotomies one way or the other. In any case, the layderian framework functions as a contrast and will, hopefully, help make the position taken by EM clearer.

Starting off, Layder (ibid., p.1) defines the difference between micro and macro sociology in the following way:

Micro analysis or ‘microsociology’ concentrates on the more personal and immediate aspects of social interaction in daily life. Another way of saying this is that it focuses on actual face-to-face encounters between people. Macro analysis or ‘macrosociology’ focuses on the larger-scale more general features of society such as organizations, institutions and culture. As such, macro phenomena are more ‘impersonal’ since they often appear to be more remote from daily activities and personal experiences such as emotions and self-identity.

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11 For a well-rounded overview of how dichotomies, dualisms and opposite pairs are made to matter in different respects in the social sciences see Miegel and Schoug, eds. (1998).
12 Although postmodernists also rely social order and because of this should be seen as belonging to mainstream sociology/social science, according to Garfinkel and Rawls (2002).
He then goes on to place different kinds of, by sociology distinguished, entities on either the macro or the micro level. It is partly a confusing segregation of entities. Language is, for example, placed on the macro level after being declared a cultural resource. One might think that language, being one of the most prominent aspects of face-to-face interaction, should be trickier to place in the right category. It seems, however, as if things we may consider big and impersonal, such as power, institutions and categories like “Swedes”, pretty much end up on the macro level, whereas interaction and the personal is produced as micro phenomena. The separation, Layder claims, is both empirical and analytical. Micro and macro phenomena are different, then, but we also need to make an analytical distinction between them in order to see them clearly. This raises interesting questions. Why would we need to make an analytical distinction between phenomena that we have already managed to distinguish empirically? And what do we deem empirical, is language empirical? Similarly, what is abstract, should a category like “Swedes” be seen as an abstraction or a factual part of the world population? And does life in organisations really lack emotions? I find Layder’s account a bit bewildering.

Garfinkel has been described as a sociologist using a bottom-up strategy, rather than a top-down (Clayman and Maynard 2003), but when placed in a conventional, vertical sociology, where the bottom is face-to-face interaction, and the top the impersonal/abstract phenomena Layder refers to, many of the points made by Garfinkel are lost. Instead, EM represents what tentatively can be termed horizontal sociology. The focus on situated practices and everyday production of phenomena, be they accounted for as concrete or abstract, short circuits the micro-macro question, since the micro - macro divide needs reified macro phenomena/structures. Rawls (2002:63) asserts that “Garfinkel does not study either institutions or individuals. (…) His is a view of a whole sociology, not a collection of dichotomous parts”. The micro-macro divide also appears to be populated by mysteriously transmutable actor. Layder (1994:210) asserts that:

By talking of human agency we are highlighting the degree to which individuals are capable of changing the circumstances in which they

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13 As a contrast, Turner (2002) construes the micro-, meso-, and macro level as empirical entities organised and recognised by the members of society, as opposed to sorted out by sociologists.

14 More often, however, Garfinkel is defined as a micro sociologist preoccupied solely with individuals acting, seemingly, anyway they please (see Layder 1994). This understanding of his ideas has made him the target of (macro)sociological moral panic.
find themselves and of responding creatively to social constraints. By contrasting it with structure we are attending to the way in which the social context shapes and moulds activity and behavior.

So people function as agents, or actors, when they modify or rebel against social constraints, but what are they when they blandly act in accordance with social constraints? Are they then part of what constrains the actors who indeed try to act creatively, i.e. are they structure/normative order? All the people who work every day to accomplish an ordered reality, in organisations, homes or airplanes, at zoos, universities, farms and cafés, are they not an inextricable part of all phenomena, be they big or small, intelligible to the masses or more obscure side-shows?

It is very difficult, I will argue, to turn the actor and social structure into different (analytical?) objects if the idea that there cannot be a social reality without the actions of actors taken seriously. This simply because the action of actors are social order, hence, in a way, actors are order (that is, I figure, why they are called actors as opposed to individuals or persons in social science). Indeed, they would not be comprehensible to each other if they were not. Two people who manage to successfully argue about the unfairness of the gender order inevitably must produce order as they go along if they are to organise a coherent conversation where they are able to conclude that they are arguing. That they disagree, e.g. if one of them does not believe that women are systematically discriminated against in our society, constitutes a common sense conflict. But ordered social reality is not just shared beliefs, it is potentially everything we share (even the very desire to share). A shared set of methods for establishing knowledge, for example, is as necessary for interaction to work as the knowledge-content itself.

One type of criticism ethnomethodology has faced because of its interest in particular situations regards the missing context, i.e. the surrounding society. Garfinkel (2006) speaks of local orders, but is not very interested in measuring sizes or sketching the contours of big contexts. Lynch (1993:29) makes a crucial point when stating that "the way we characterize the events, participants, and actions – already imply the relevance of context". As we enter a research site and try to make sense of it, we will to a large extent have to use a terminology that reveals significant parts of the context involved. The context of a study is always specified throughout the text, then, whether the author want it or not,
and an observant reader will be able to grasp it quite quickly. One may argue that an academic text only reveals something about notions born and bred in the academic society, but it is best kept in mind that, in many respects, social researchers study that which “ordinary” people are experts on. Researcher may of course use a professional terminology when accounting for their experiences and so create barriers between academics and non-academics, but that is to some degree a different matter. This brings us back to the question of transparency which I addressed in the introduction. My attempts to nail the purpose of this study, the concepts I use, the theories and perspectives I find interesting enough to present and the problems I admit bumping into, specifies the context in which this dissertation is manufactured. In short, the context is not missing, it is realised between the lines.

When we look at society from a horizontal perspective the interest shifts from levels or layers, to the inter-connectedness of situations and relations, or practices (cf. Simmel 1950 [1908]). Schatzki (1996) asserts that big and small social phenomena/orders can be studied on the same terms and compares the organisation of a family with that of an economy. He writes (ibid., p.201):

A family, for instance, consists in a specific bundling together of (often local versions of) such practices as those of sleeping, cooking, rearing, recreation, and hygiene (…). The total state of coexistence encompassed by a given family is all the ways that family members’ lives hang together as that intermeshing of practices…

He also notes that the sharing of a particular place and the arrangement of clear social positions, such as “big sister” and “car-washer”, constitute important components when we are to understand the making of a family. When it comes to economy, he asserts that it includes a changing set of persons who do not need to be related by blood. In this respect it is different from a family. The practices involved in the making of an economy are spread out geographically and may include, says Schatzki, transportation, bargaining, advertisement and celebration.

While a family (whose members of course do not have to exhibit a particular biological relation) is one thing and an economy quite another, the similarities seem to be more prominent and enable a similar research approach. The horizontal perspective also calls into question how things, or artefacts, make the
linking of practices and situations possible. Latour (1998) has outlined how actants (as opposed to actors, a concept with clear human connotations) form networks and the role non-human actants play in these, albeit often overlooked. It has been pointed out that things, as “materialized understanding”, need to be explored further and the divide between the cultural and the material continuously challenged (Reckwitz 2002:212). Divisions of this kind are problematic when we consider, for instance, things like the internet. The internet has in a short span of time, Jasanoff (2006:16) notes, changed peoples’ ideas about “what it means to belong to social units such as the family, community, workplace, firm or nation”. Our technology has the ability to stretch out human relations in time and space, and also to let people culture relations in ways that would be otherwise impossible. In this sense, technology is at the core of what is going on when people chat and create alliances across the globe, at the same time as its inner design may be perfectly alien to most human users. Alien or not, the internet is very much part of culture and everyday, human practice (in many parts of the world), and just like trucks, wind power stations and satellites, it both shapes and is (re)shaped by human activity. To elaborate on some of the themes addressed in this section, I will turn to another important issue below.

**Reality**

Reality. Truth. Truth about reality. Difficult things to wrap one’s head around as well as a battleground for scholars with a passion for philosophy of science. EM is bound to experience some trouble when trying to put its feet down in an area plagued by dichotomies and, at times, conceptual confusion. According to Rawls (2002:32) EM deals with reality as experienced, not conceptual:

> Whereas for phenomenologists, postmodernists, and pragmatists, reality is forever beyond human reach because it cannot be perceived without being either conceptually constructed or constructed by the mind, for Garfinkel the world is ‘really’ there (as a locally produced social construction) and, as such, can be perceived in its own right.

There is no other reality, then, than the one we experience as real. And that which we experience as real, we treat as real, thus organising our social landscape, well, the actual landscape in a tree-bush-and-stone sense as well.
Garfinkel (1967:53) states that the members expect their common sense knowledge to be accurate, and consequently, “the features of the real society are produced by persons’ motivated compliance with these background expectancies”. In short – what we, as social beings, think is real, we realise. This is not a new idea, peoples’ tendency to fulfil prophecies has been known for quite some time, but it is a good idea. Smith (1987:125) develops this position by suggesting that:

The social construction of reality is precisely that of creating a world we have in common. It is the work of continually accomplishing a world that does exist as a reality that is the same for you and me. Where you see a chair, I see a chair. Or if I do not recognize that strange humpy lumpy object as a chair, you tell me ‘that’s a chair’ and I know then how it works as an object coming to hand or rather to seat. And, rather gingerly, I sit down to wait while you put the kettle on.

It may be tempting to try to come up with things that people who belong to the same culture do not necessarily share, like political views and so on. But consider everything that we do share for a moment (such as knowledge about political views). Quite often in philosophical discussions, at least in my experience, commonsensical facts tend to be largely ignored. If we are able to discuss whether the world we are experiencing is merely a product of neural processes, thus only existing in our mind, or if there is an externally real world, we have in fact already created an intersubjective (in some respects external) reality. The idea that we need to take an anthropocentric, slightly pragmatic perspective on truth and reality, and leave Plato’s theory of form behind, was of course formulated by Durkheim (1965 [1912]) some time ago.

In EM, peoples’ descriptions, or accounts, of phenomena are regarded as part of the phenomena itself (Garfinkel and Rawls 2002). Hilbert (1992:80) states

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15 For an interesting treatment of philosophical practice as socially determined see Lundberg’s (2007) Filosofisociologi. Lundberg believes that sociologists should set out to investigate the thoughts of dead philosophers and leave the living ones alone. Even though I too think that philosophers should be able to continue to do their thing, I am convinced that in order to understand how philosophical theories come into being we need to examine the social practices as they, in fact, are practiced. Indeed, EM researchers have examined all sorts of practices; one good example in this case is Liberman’s (2007) Dialectical practice in tibetian philosophical culture.

16 I am aware that it is a very commonsensical way of seeing things and that the argument made does not, in a strictly philosophical sense, solve the problem. However, the problem, resting on a shaky either-or ground (either it comes down to neural processes or to an external reality), does not seem to need a solution as much as a proper burial.
that there is no “knowledge about reality independent of social regulation; there is nothing to know – better, nothing to know with”. The dichotomy between the knower and the known is thus, in some ways, made redundant and a sort of continuum, or a relationship if you will, is established between the parties involved (cf. Hartsock’s, 1997, idea of the feminist standpoint). From this point of view the potent tradition of representationalism, which treats the knower and known as eternally separated, seems to somewhat miss the mark. As a critique of the representationalist stance Pernrud (2007:55) writes:

…the notion that the world may be out there, and epistemology is a matter of trying to reach it from inside of our minds, does not really capture a problem of knowledge; rather it is evidence of a philosophically bad habit of thinking that reality ends where the mind begins, and words somehow exist on an otherworldly plane.

We exist in this world as interconnected beings/phenomena, then, rather than independent bits and pieces rattling about.17 This does not imply harmony and everybody holding hands, it simply means that we constantly affect and are affected by other things and beings. Many things matter in the making of this reality: Matter, ideas, politics, words, animals, technology, etc. The approach is similar to that of the ANT (actor-network theory) tradition, with forerunners like the already mentioned Latour (1987), Callon (1986), and others, which examine how relations that are both material and non-material (semiotic) form networks.

Instead of reducing reality by sorting things into neat dichotomies, we can look for the complexity in the reality-constitutive interplay between different actants, actions and situations. I do not mean to suggest that all borders should be abandoned and everything put in the same cookie jar, but that we ought to open the lid and allow for alternative, more imaginative accounts of reality. However, attempts to redefine boundaries and challenge binaries can be met quite harshly, as bi-theorist Hemmings (2001) have experienced. She remarks that bisexuality has been demonised as a neutral middle ground only reinforcing dichotomous notions of gender and sexuality. So far little attention has been

17 Or perhaps as intra-connected phenomena/activities, as Barad (2003) suggests? Intra, “within”, is used by Barad to describe how phenomena exist only in the relations they are (currently) part of. From this point of view relations determine phenomena - there are no separately existing phenomena that can be inter-connected.
paid to how bisexuality might constitute an actual alternative beyond the hetero – homo binary, despite the efforts that has been made in this area.

Now, why is this important? I have briefly outlined a rather commonsensical position. It is commonsensical because there is a real reality that is not forever out of reach in some ideal dimension or sort of graspable but always distorted by the words used to describe it. It does not even presume that the reality is out there, instead it is right here, and we are really in it. I will not analyse complex networks or non-human actants in this dissertation, but I will try to sort out the situational, collective making of a really real reality. This means that things referred to outside of the situation looked at, such as different events, what this or that person said or did etc., will be treated as a resource for the members to use in interaction rather than information. That which is merely referred to is not deemed unreal, unknown, or false - it simply is not what is being investigated. I am interested in our practical attempts to create a world in common, not whether people are telling the truth about what happened last Thursday. I am also interested in the relationship between the knower and the known, since social things are what they are because we know them to be those particular things. This is not a thought foreign to most people. During a conversation with one of the employees at the museum about her day-to-day tasks, I asked if a gender perspective was utilised and got the following answer: “Well, I could probably find something and say “hey, this is a gender perspective…thing”, and maybe they would buy into it and from then on it would be. That would be kind of funny”. Because something has been articulated as a “gender perspective thing”, it can then be treated as a gender perspective thing. I will analyse how the members produce the relationship between themselves and that which is situationally known by accounting for it in various ways; in short, how they realise things/phenomena, explicitly as well as implicitly, within every situation by relating to them.

How the members make reality happen

So far I have described EM’s notion of active members producing visible social order and reality in different situations. Below we will turn to the question of how they actually accomplish this. As a member enters a situation, she starts to co-produce it, but to be able to do that competently she must gain a sense of what is going on. To use one of Goffman’s (1986:8) expressions, she is looking
for a way to (co-)frame the situation by asking herself “what is it that’s going on here?” Are we performing some sort of drama or is it more like a comedy? In order to figure out the framing, maybe change it and in general partake in the making of a situation, the members use a couple of tricks, or methods.

**Ethnomethods** are the methods people use in order to make sense of and arrange the world, indeed ethnomethodologists seek to “observe and document ‘member’s methods’ for producing particular social orders wherever they occur, whether the phenomena are small or large” (Garfinkel and Rawls 2002:27). These methods seem to come in different shapes and sizes. Garfinkel (2006) mentions a couple of **devices** members use on a regular basis. The device of selection, for example, allows the actor to pick out certain stimuli in messy situations and treat them as if they are the only present. Another device is reality designation, which is sort of complicated, but simply put constitutes a method for the actor to judge in what way something is real. How things are deemed real (or not) depends on the cognitive style of the actor, i.e. on the framework constituting her most deep-set sorting out principles.\(^\text{18}\) The device he terms time organising enables for the distinction of time entities. Used in a successful way it lets us speak intelligibly of the past, present and future. Below I will give an example of how this device can be applied in interaction. The excerpt is taken from my interview with Anna, an archaeologist. I am trying to make her reveal her perspective on sexuality.

Annika: *What about objects, what about objects that may have some pornographic…*

Anna: Yeah, yeah, well pornographic…*in an archaeological context you write about that as cultic\(^\text{19}\) (laughs)*

Annika: OK

Anna: *Well, pornography, at least I think that it has to do with modernity…so you can’t find pornography…but you can find…*

Annika: *The cultic?*

\(^{18}\) A parallel could probably be drawn to Bourdieu’s (1977) notion of doxa, Goffman’s (1986) idea of a primary framework, and, I am sure, a bunch of other alpha theorists. \(^{19}\) “Cultic” (“kultiskt” in Swedish) does not appear to be a proper concept in the English language. Since I am not an archaeologist I do not know how to translate it.
I am using the concept of pornography to lure Anna to talk about sexuality, as an archaeologist as well as an employee at the museum (the latter only indirectly). She re-frames the conversation topic archaeologically by using the term “cultic”. This lets me understand that she holds a certain kind of professional knowledge, hence the use of a certain terminology. She then utilises a timeline to place pornography in modernity and this strengthens her position – now I follow her, instead of the other way around. After this intervention, I continue by trying to use her concept, “cultic”. Note that we have not even attempted to define pornography, which means that we do not really know what we are talking about. Not that that seems to cause us any problems whatsoever; there is interaction flow. Presumably the time device Garfinkel refers to is something members utilise to arrange their life-time, first and foremost (we remember that we are supposed to go to the zoo on Monday and face that monkey). But people also tend to organise the world by placing phenomena, like pornography, in historical time. As an archaeologist, Anna is actually making a living out of this.

The devices Garfinkel talks about appear to be empty in a way, they have organising qualities but what they organise, the content, is left rather open. Sacks, who collaborated extensively with Garfinkel, was interested in relevancy constraints, i.e. how the members establish what the reality of a specific situation is and control each others’ behaviour so that it matches/organises this reality (Silverman 1998). An interest that seems to correspond quite well to Goffman's (1986) curiosity about framings, which we have already touched upon. According to Sacks (1992) most of the common sense the members use is constituted by the membership categorisation device (MCD), also referred to as the machinery. This device allows the actors to quickly orient themselves in different situations. An example: Commonly one of the first things members ask each other is “what do you do?”, and the answer provides them with enough information to place the respondent in a preliminary category. It also enables them to ask other questions along the same line, such as “how long have you worked there?”, or “but is not urban exploration illegal?”. When we are able to categorise other members, even if it is preliminary and based on, perhaps, shallow facts, a lot of social work is done.

The MCD consists of categories such as gender, typically female and male, and family, usually constituted by mother, father and baby/child (cf. the idea of prototypes put forward by Rosch et al. in 1976). There are also standardised
relational pairs (Sacks 1992), such as wife and husband. Here is an excerpt from the field notes, illustrating members’ usage of this part of the MCD:

When I arrived at the museum today they had finished hanging the paintings in the gallery. There are still some final adjustments to make, but all in all it’s pretty much done. Susan, Yvonne and Christian were talking about how to present the work of (beep) in the most favourable way. I listened passively to what they had to say. It’s interesting that despite the fact that neither Susan nor Christian actually guide visitors, they still talked as if this was part of their job. Perhaps this has to do with the relative looseness of the unit-boundaries at the museum? Only yesterday I saw an upstairer, can’t remember his name, help one of the technicians carry some furniture. Just a thought…

Yvonne, Christian and Susan discussed one of the paintings in particular. It depicts a woman standing in front of a house. Christian said: “Maybe she’s waiting for her husband to come home or something”, and Susan replied: “Maybe, or her children?”. Yvonne said: “Yeah, it sure looks like she’s waiting for someone, doesn’t it?”, and turned to me, she asked: “Doesn’t it?” I nodded and replied: “Yeah, or she’s making up a getaway plan”. They all laughed at this and Susan responded: “Yeah, she might be sick and tired of living there”. We laughed some more and then we continued to talk about the exhibition as a whole.

In this situation the members create an interpretation of a painting using the MCD. When Christian asks “I wonder if she’s waiting for her husband to come home or something?”, he deploys the standardised relational pair wife and husband. Susan then adds children, thus stretching the relational pair into a family. This part of the MCD, or machinery, is of special interest because of the purpose of the dissertation. I would like to suggest that the concept of the heterosexual matrix, mentioned in the introduction, clarifies as well as deepens Sacks’s notion of both gender as a category, and women and men as a relational pair. Butler (1990:151) defines the matrix as:

…that grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders, and desires are naturalized. (...) A hegemonic discursive/epistemic model of gender intelligibility that assumes that for bodies to cohere and make sense there must be a stable sex expressed though a stable

To my knowledge, Sacks does not include other animals besides humans in his description of the MCD. Samuelsson (2008) makes a contribution by suggesting that we tend to arrange other animals in a hierarchy where mammals are given a higher value than for example insects and amphibians, because we are able identify with them.

The heterosexual matrix was renamed the heterosexual hegemony by Butler in 1993. The idea of a matrix is much more compatible with EM and for that reason I favour this concept.
gender (masculine expresses male, feminine expresses female) that is oppositionally and hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality.

To marry Butler into the machinery is not an entirely uncomplicated task, but here the usage of the matrix is understood as producing intelligible bodies, basically, as well as understandable relationships between bodies. Or, perhaps better put, it allows people to see and articulate what they need to in order to make sense of the world and interact successfully as sexed, desiring and loving beings. The matrix is a tool then, and our interest here is to see how the members at the museum might utilise it (as part of the general MCD) in their everyday activities.

We note that the MCD is not as empty as Garfinkel's (2006) devices, but instead organises particular entities, for example women, men and children. Sacks (1992) also talks about category bound activities, the “who is probably/supposed to do what” dimension of the machinery. There is also a spatial dimension hidden here. Karlsson (2005), studying the information society-project initiated in the mid-90s in Sweden, detects differences in how the city and countryside were depicted. While the city was staged as male, elite and technology-friendly in a government official report, the countryside was feminised and made out to be ignorant as well as critical of technology. In addition, Wreder (2005) shows how elderly as category is linked to nature in research about health in the old age - walks outdoors (spatially bound activity) is proposed to improve elderly peoples’ health substantially. All in all, we may say that the machinery equips us to imagine and articulate who does what, with whom/what and where.

It may seem as if the MCD (common sense) in fact is the same thing as social order, that the two notions are interchangeable. If we understand the MCD, what categories it contains, how they can be related to each other etc., is it not the very structure of social order we are looking at? For sociologists who believe that the foundation of the ordered society is shared knowledge and a shared set of rules, the answer to this question is probably yes. But from an EM perspective, having access to the MCD and other cultural resources is not enough, we have to put these resources to use and manufacture a shared, ordered reality. The machinery should not be mistaken for social order – it is order to the same extent that the paint on a palette is a painting. It is also
important to note that our knowledge of the world, our common sense, albeit grounded in experience, is actually directed forward in time. That is why it is problematic to assume that many people make heterosexual assumptions because most people in our culture in fact are heterosexual. However correct it may be that most people make themselves intelligible as heterosexual, a heterosexual assumption first and foremost accomplishes something in the interaction in which it is made. Common sense primarily constitutes a resource to use to realise situations, rather than a static memory bank. People are not programmed - they are resourceful.

So, these are the concepts the analysis will be centered around:

**Member** - a person is a member if she is recognised as legitimately belonging to a certain situation.

**Background expectancies** - according to Garfinkel background expectancies belong to situations and in order to realise a situation the members must find a way to enact its expectancies collectively. It may be easier to understand them as part of, for example, the spatial dimension of the MCD.

**Trust** - the members need to trust each other in order to co-produce situations. If I do not trust that you will commit to our interaction, then neither will I.

**Card** - by playing a card, a member tries to manipulate her co-members. By saying “if you really cared about me, you would hand me that ice cream”, I play a cleverly combined love/guilt-card.

**Praxeological validity** - situationally worked out validation of actions. An action has praxeological validity if it can be made to intelligibly fit in with those of the other members.

**Frame** - to frame a situation is to place it in a genre, i.e. to decide what is going on, in order to be a comprehensible part of it.

**Ethnomethods** - an umbrella concept, here taken to include devices and the MCD, but basically every trick in the book to make sense constitutes some sort of an ethnomethod.

**Device** - different tools the members can use to organise and sort out entities of all kinds.

**MCD/the machinery** - provides the members with a smörgåsbord of common sense. The members’ ability to constantly isolate, assemble and

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22 An idea comparable with the existential psychology formulated by May (2005), where people are seen as users of their experiences in order to make the present work. The way persons refer to the past, May argues, says more about how they try to make sense of their current situation than about how they in fact experienced the events referred to.
reassemble categories of people, actions, things and places is essential when situations are to be produced.

**Standardised relational pair** - things that can be made out to go together, such as an employer and an employee, or a pet and a pet keeper.

**Heterosexual matrix** - common sense that can be utilised especially to assess and address someone's bodily status as either female or male, as well as the relationship between bodies, behaviours and desires.

**Of course there are women and men?! An example of reality-making**

In EM it is asked how things come to be real to us, not first and foremost whether they are real in a realist sense of the word (Garfinkel and Rawls 2006). The two-sex system certainly is real to many people in our culture, and from an EM perspective it stands out as an incredible accomplishment. Instead of just recognising that there are women and men, we need to examine the existence of these categories, the technologies, bureaucracy etc., needed to make them work and seem self-evident (cf. Haraway 1991). If we as researchers assume what the members assume, we risk going native and leave the taken for granted, routinely produced reality unexamined. Common sense may become an unexplicated resource for researchers, causing them to lose part of their critical outlook (ten Have 2004), but on the other hand we need to draw on common sense all the time since we would not be able to understand the actions of the members otherwise. The trick may be to use common sense as a way into situations and practices, but as soon as this is accomplished, start looking at it as just another thing to investigate.

How we as social scientists should understand sex/gender has been debated for quite some time. At the heart of this discussion is the notion of the social and the material as separatable dimensions. The body, which of course is both material and social, ends up in-between chairs and is pulled in different directions (see for instance Butler 1990; Haraway 1991; Fausto-Sterling 1992; Delphy 1993; Harding and Hintikka, eds., 2003). Carlson (2001:69) asserts that the sex/gender distinction “is fundamentally political: it is there to show that a woman does not necessarily need to be womanly and a man manly, and thus to make social change easier”. In that sense, the sex/gender divide could be viewed as a practical tool, utilised to enable for gender equality. Another disputed division in this area is of course the woman-man divide. Kessler and
McKenna (1978) argue that it is irresponsible to take the two-sex system for granted, since it covers one’s own co-production of the world. They continue (ibid., p.1-2):

…consider a list of items that differentiate females from males. There are none that always and without exception are true of only one gender. No behavioural characteristic (e.g., crying or physical aggression) is always present or never present for one gender. Neither can physical characteristics – either visible (e.g., beards), unexposed (e.g., genitals), or normally unexamined (e.g., gonads) – always differentiate the genders.

“Nature” is something of a hippie when it comes to organising people into two clearly distinct groups (men and women) – every now and then it produces intersexed (or Othersexed, perhaps) individuals. On the other hand, experts like physicians, psychiatrists and surgeons have, at least in our culture, done an excellent job sorting out who belongs to what group.

To be able to state how many sexes there are and what distinguishes them, we need to construct some sort of criteria, as Kessler and McKenna (ibid.) underline. We also need to overlook certain things that may disturb notions of universal sex, for example the fact that the average Japanese man and American woman is of the same height and weight (Rothblatt 1995). There are two threads to follow here; one concerning our attempt to organise peoplekind in everyday life through polarisation, and the other regard the complexity of that which we have reality-checked, and now try to use as criteria, such as gonads, chromosomes and general morphology. What do we look for in order to, once and for all, discern a person’s sex, why do we look for those particular things and what are the consequences for the people labelled this or that? Should we at all care about what people have to say for themselves in these matters? Dreger (1998:5), who investigated how sex and sexual categories were organised during the second half of the 19th century through the scientific study of hermaphrodites, writes:

When we look at hermaphrodites, we are forced to realize how variable even ‘normal’ sexual traits are. (...) We see that boundaries are drawn for many reasons, and could be – and have been, drawn in
many different ways, and that those boundaries have as many complex effects as they do causes.

Indeed, this holds true for sexuality as well. Plummer (1982) asserts that there is no universal definition of sexuality. What appears to be an asexual event at first can later prove to be loaded with sexual symbolism for the people involved, and vice versa. What actions, relations, desires, bodies are we willing and able to view as sexual and not? Neal and Davies (1999:3) also remark that even though it is rather unusual that people display totally clear-cut sexual orientations “the myth of dichotomous sexualities continues to be pushed by both the heterosexual and the homosexual communities”. A conundrum, clearly. Johnson (2004), on the other hand, asserts that the notion of sexual fluidity in late modernity is severely misinformed and states that people tend to practice rather clear-cut and stable sexual orientations.

Garfinkel (1967) was among the first to persuasively argue that the two-sex model is a way to organise peoplekind, rather than a natural phenomenon. He had the opportunity to follow Agnes; a young, male-to-female transsexual who went through sex reassignment surgery, or as Garfinkel would put it, tried to achieve the “ascribed properties of the natural, normal female” (ibid., p.133). By analysing Agnes’s trial-and-error trip through the social, Garfinkel was able to distinguish the details of peoples work to fabricate gender, i.e. recognisable femaleness and maleness. He states that (ibid., p.116):

> From the standpoint of persons who regard themselves normally sexed, their environment has a perceivedly normal composition. This composition is rigorously dichotomized into the ‘natural’, i.e., moral, entities of male and female. The dichotomy provides for people who are ‘naturally’, ‘originally’, ‘in the first place’, ‘in the beginning’, ‘all along’, and ‘forever’ one or the other.

Garfinkel has received critique for failing to analyse his own (masculine) part in Agnes’s production of femininity, and for his overall inability to critically examine how we all produce gender (Bologh 1992). I agree and find it somewhat troublesome that both Garfinkel and Kessler and McKenna use, in many peoples’ opinion, unusual cases to make their points. True, they manage to demonstrate something important, namely how gender status truly is a practical accomplishment, not something given, but at the same time the Agnes
case obscures the fact that people who are deemed normal also have to achieve membership in one or the other sex category. Even if you are visibly equipped with all the culturally correct gadgets and curves, you still need to perform an intelligible femininity or masculinity in order to pass. The point Garfinkel is trying to put across is, in my eyes, thus both made and, to some degree, unmade.

The two-sex system was routinely produced by the members at the museum in various ways. This is interesting since a system where women and men are constructed and thought of as stable categories by some researchers is taken to naturalise heterosexuality (see Liljeström 1990). We remember the butlerian (Butler 1990) idea that the making of female and male categories is entangled with the making of a “normal” (heterosexual) relationship between the two. Below is a piece from an informal group interview, which haphazardly took place one day during a coffee break. Present were some downstairs (people working mostly downstairs at the museum) and allrounders (people working all over the place). From the field notes:

_They talked about the gift shop at the museum, which is run by the reception, and John said something about it being visited primarily by women. Frank concurred and added that perhaps it’s nicer for the (female) customers to be serviced by women, because they expect “that little extra”. I looked around the room to see if anyone reacted to this, but no, they all looked OK with it. He then said: “I mean, just take the café (indicates one of the cafés near the museum where some of the employees dine frequently), when it was owned by men it looked like just any old truckstop, but as soon as that woman took over, it changed”. John nodded at this and muttered something in agreement. I said that “yes, it’s nice”, and Frank answered: “Yes, it’s different, it’s just a fact”. A woman, don’t know her name, tried to oppose this by saying something like “it’s because you men haven’t learned to…” and then she went on to describe research that has been carried out in pre-schools, showing how the girls are taught by the teachers to set the table and take care of things (can’t remember her exact words). I tried to look at her encouragingly. Frank responded that “there are always exceptions” and the woman started to assert once again that “we’re taught…” , but never finished the sentence. Frank then claimed, in a rather authoritative voice, that “blue is blue, and red is red”. Another woman nodded at this and muttered “yes, that’s right.”_

In this situation (most of) the members produce women and men as separate entities, characterised by certain skills, or lack thereof. Frank uses what could be
called an empirical evidence device to make his point when referring to the nearby café. The opposing woman is utilising a similar device when talking about research, but no one picks up her thread and she is left hanging in the air. It is interesting that Frank does not really respond to what she is saying, which is that women and men learn to be, rather than are from the beginning, different. Instead he says that “there are always exceptions”, which gives the impression that the entire argument made by the woman is something that can, or should perhaps, be overlooked. This is just one example out of many, where the two-sex system was established in the everyday life at the museum.

The members at the museum also routinely embodied, in different ways, certain traits that made them able to place each other in either the sex/gender collective Women or Men. Another way of putting it is to say that they as a rule tried to achieve membership in one of these two categories. The women typically, but not always, wore their hair longer than did the men. The men would seldom or never use make up and they often wore more loose fitting clothes. In the summer time they did not shave their legs or their armpits, whereas this was common practice amongst the women. Many women would now and then dress themselves in patterned textiles, something that set them apart from most men. They also wore skirts at times, short sleeved t-shirts and pieces of jewellery, this too something that set them apart from most, but definitely not all, men. One man in particular would accessorise quite extensively on a daily basis and this was considered by the others as “his thing”. I never heard any talk indicating that he was viewed as a weird man who ornamented himself like that, but he was, however, regarded as having a “thing”. The women did not have “things” just because they wore jewellery. When it came to conducting the body, the men usually spread their legs more when sitting down. For other accounts of how sex/gender is achieved at a daily basis in different contexts, see for instance Eglin (2002), Ambjörnsson (2004), Speer (2005) and Berg (2008). It should be noted that the purpose of this dissertation is not to investigate the production of the two sexes per se, but rather how the sexes are related and relate to one another.

Analysing the material
It has been suggested by ten Have (2004:146) that “there is in ethnomethodology nothing like a generalized analytical strategy (...) There are only hints as to how one might try to gain access to the phenomenon of interest”. This is a rather discouraging notion, but looking at the various EM studies I have come across, it appears to be true. Maynard and Clayman (1991) ask what an EM researcher is allowed to analyse and not. This has been debated by EM-inclined researchers, and while some argue that situational interaction only makes sense if the setting at large (in this case the museum) is taken into account, others assert that it is better to examine a number of settings and then compare them. That way it is possible to understand whether what goes on in a certain situation is institutional or interactional. All interaction is original insofar as it only takes place right there and then, which is an important feature, but because the members must perform recognisable actions, the ethnomethods utilised cannot be too peculiar. There are several EM approaches, then, and some of them seem to be more adapted to ethnography as method, whereas some may be suitable for rather limited observations. The difference between these seems to largely come down to how the context is dealt with, if it is given any explanatory value and in that case in what ways. As stated earlier my ambition was to stay put within each situation, an ambition which probably made me more attentive to details, but that I nevertheless had to rethink little bit towards the end.

It has been suggested that EM researchers should favour natural talk and events (ten Have 2004) and if I had stumbled upon Garfinkel earlier in the process, it is possible that I would not have conducted any interviews at all. But here we are. I suppose that if I would have discovered a huge discrepancy between the use of common sense and other methods in interviews and in everyday, “natural” life, there might have been a problem. But since no such gap was detectable, I do not feel the need to dwell on this issue. Of course an interview is a specific kind of situation and this must be taken into consideration, but rather than rendering interviewing as a method useless, let us explore its ethnomethodological possibilities (see ten Have, ibid., for a more elaborate discussion).

In the analysis I will count myself as a member and try to analyse my own actions just like those of the other members. This way, I am able to look at how my actions help produce order (or disorder), and see whether or not they can be given praxeological validity. Garfinkel (2006) points out that it is not the
researcher who creates the situations in which we find the actors, and therefore it is problematic to focus on the researcher (by, for example, trying to grasp her assumptions and intentions). I am, however, responsible for the interview situations and must try to make sense of what kind of situation an interview is to the participants. Even though I analyse myself as a member, it is worth noting that the members and the researcher have different modi operandi. While the main concern of the members often is to forge together elements (or resources, rather) into an intelligible, orderly, meaningful situation, I, even if I am a co-producer in the field, wish to tear everything apart. I take notes, tape and transcribe conversations, and then separate, isolate and relate the carefully intertwined elements, over and over again. This makes me, in a way, unsympathetic to the reality project of the members. On the other hand it is, in parts, a reality project that needs to be critically examined.

Back to the question of what an EM analysis might entail. Smith (1987:126) says that investigations aim to “explicate” rather than “explain” what is happening, and the intention in this study is not really to reveal the whys, but to unfold situations and look at the hows and whats. When it comes to the rereading and coding of the data, I printed out several copies of the entire material and simply underlined parts that seemed interesting (sometimes without understanding why) the first time around. I then started to use colour codes, i.e. different colours for different properties (such as producing the taboo, the production of men and women as relational pairs, etc.) in the data. As Asper (2007) notes, this way of coding material is time consuming, but the analysis ends up being very perspicuous. I changed my mind many times about what actually constitutes a, for this study, significant phenomenon or not. The process can only be described as painstaking, partly confused and deeply engaging.

What have I looked for and what has, in the end, been the purpose of the investigation? A couple of questions have been asked with the original purpose at the back of my mind, but transformed because of the ethnomethodological twist: What kind of situation are the members part of, what kind of common sense is put to use in the situation, what sort of categorisation work is going on, and what other methods/devices are they utilising? In other words – what situations, common sense, categorisation work, and methods/devices overall seem to be involved in the making of heterosexual order (at this point the concept of heteronormativity had been left behind, since it was the production
of social order I intended to investigate and not some sort of normativity) at
the museum? The fact that it is the categorisation work of the members and
general usage of the MCD that is being focused on means that I, as researcher,
cannot impose categories on the material. If the members treat gender as
important in a certain situation, then so can I. Of course turning gender into a
factor must not always involve explicit references to women or men, since
spoken words are only part of a situational practice.

Some fairly tricky translation work has been involved in the production of the
analysis. Translating Swedish as spoken (but transcribed) language, often
flavoured with common but quite strange expressions (when removed from
context), technical terms and dialect to written English has been a delicate
endeavour. At times the result is not wholly satisfying and when this is the case
I enclose the passages in Swedish in footnotes. An inevitable question that
arises is of course how I can be sure that I have gotten anything at all right. As
you will notice, the excerpts from interviews and field notes are often quite
extensive. The idea is partly to give the reader an idea about the context and an
opportunity to draw other conclusions and, perhaps, see other things, than I
have. It is also a precaution against relying too much on the absolute
correctness of every single word translated. Because of the indexical nature of
words, a thick context (or thick description, as Geertz put it in 1973) helps
clarify what they mean in different situations. Another reason why many
exceptions are so lengthy is of course that social order is achieved through
interaction, not in disparate utterances. As to the overall question about my
competence to grasp and express myself (and the participants) in English, I
suppose I shall have to resort to claiming to possess some sort of linguistic skill.
The question is thus not overlooked, but handled in the best way I could think of.

4. Making sense of sexuality at the museum
Below I will take you through an ordinary day at the museum in an attempt to describe the setting and give it some colour and movement. Bits and pieces from different days, and thus different field notes, have been glued together and as a result the chronological order of the events presented is not meant to be meaningful. The, at times, severe alteration of the field notes is not compatible with EM, as I am well aware of, still I choose to handle them in this insensitive way. This because I feel it is important that the museum becomes a real place, and not just a research setting. By presenting the members in everyday situations I hope to bring them, and the museum at large, to life.

Enter the museum

The walk from the bus station to the museum is, as always, invigorating. This part of town is usually a quiet place before noon and somehow this seems fitting. At least for me, as I am trying to collect myself and put on the see-everything-important-glasses. The museum stands tall among the other surrounding buildings. It has an appealing exterior, and certainly, being a museum it is expected to. I open the door and familiar sounds and smells greet me. At the entrance desk Christina is sorting out some post cards, putting a couple of them up for display. She is dressed neatly in a figure-cut, moderately colourful dress. She is one of those people who seem to maneuver with a mysterious grace no matter what the circumstances are. Come to think of it, all women currently working at the desk seem to share this particular quality. Although obviously busy, she looks up and gives me with a big smile. I approach her and ask how she is. We chitchat for a while and it turns out she had a wonderful weekend visiting some friends, but is now facing a rather horrid week. I am still a bit confused when it comes to who is doing what and where at the museum, so when she hastily explains why this week means such hard work on her part, I simply nod. Something about rearranging the merchandise in the museum shop (this I get), and then all the books in store have to be moved from where they sit now to some other place. This is when I do the understanding, but ignorant nod. I also learn that a truck full of paintings will arrive sometime before noon for the new art exhibition. Perhaps they will need my help transporting the paintings from the parking lot to the art gallery? Many of the employees at the museum would do this, suggest where I

23 Forsberg (2002:15) talks about how a "place identity" can be achieved by symbolic usage of, for instance, clothes. It appeared to me as if the women at the reception somehow produced special place identities by dressing nice and smart in a casual way.
should go and whom I should talk to. At times because they think a certain activity or person would be especially enlightening, and at other occasions, like now, because help would be appreciated. Some of the employees, I learned later, actually thought I was a student getting some working life experience. Even though I did show up at a staff meeting and introduced myself and the research prior to entering the field, not all employees were properly informed about my whereabouts. Treating me a little bit like an intern became something of a pleasantry among certain employees and they would jokingly ask me to do this or that.

The museum is medium sized, somewhere between 50 and 60 people come to work here every day. They are janitors, cleaners, members of the director’s office, receptionists, architectural conservationists, archaeologists, technicians, photographers, hosts, communication coordinators, curators, etc., in short, the usual kind of people you will find at a museum. They are arranged into different units. When I first arrived at the museum there were seven units, but during my time in the field a re-organisation took place, a unit or two were added and some people transferred from here to there. This seemed to pose difficulties for a while, since I did not know whether I should present the old or the new unit setup in the dissertation. Or both. As we shall see, however, the employees solved this problem by letting me know what groups and boundaries really mattered, regardless of the official arrangement.

I leave Christina and continue up the stairs to Monica’s office. Monica has been a great gatekeeper, not only for lending me office space, but for fixing me up with future interviewees and making me feel welcome in general. She is not in, but her door is unlocked. This is common practice at the museum and it still surprises me. In my corridor at the university, doors often remain locked. Of course, at the museum, to get to the offices upstairs you need a swipe card and that makes the task relatively difficult for thieves. What surprises me, though, is not the unlocked-door practice, but the atmosphere it helps create. It is friendly. Of course the light, yet non-clinical walls and big windows help too. I do not know what it is about schools, waiting rooms and areas like that, they appear to be organised to fit some sort of generic citizen who no one likes. The museum has character; its décor, architectural quirks and sheer roominess almost makes you feel as if you are standing inside a being, and not just a building.
Armed with just a small bag containing a note pad, a number of pens and a list of the employees, I decide it is time to check in on the technicians, and luckily, Jimmy is just passing by in the corridor. He is dressed in overalls and seems preoccupied by invading thoughts. I ask him if I may join him and he gives me an “of course”. While we make our way downstairs again, he wants to know how my research is coming along. For a moment I struggle to find the right words. He laughs and suggests in his gentle way that it of course can be difficult to talk about things while you are in the midst of them. I agree. We arrive at the technicians’ work shop and find it completely empty. Apparently it is cleaning day today and every technician on duty is supposed to be here, doing their fair share. Jimmy sighs. The situation is not entirely atypical, he explains, but at the end of the day the work shop is always tidied up properly. He picks up some sort of gadget from the floor and hangs it on a nail on the wall. At that second Michael turns up with an energetic look on his face. He has been at a meeting, but refuses to tell us what it was about or who was present. It is difficult to see if he is upset, happy or something else. He quickly grabs some tools and then disappears again. Jimmy and I stare at each other for a second and then laugh. “That’s Michael for you”, he says with a shrug, “want to help me clean this place?”. I really do not. I make up some lame excuse and sneak out.

I wander into the permanent exhibition. A year ago I had no idea how much work goes into an exhibition like this. All the careful planning, heated debates about what would be the most pedagogical approach, excessive carpentry, manufacturing of props, clever placing of spotlights, etc. It is noticeable how a more knowledgeable way of looking makes the details stand out. I really enjoy this part of the museum and allow myself to come here and rest now and then. It is a little bit like entering another dimension. Bennett (1995) asserts that in the late 18th and 19th century, when the museums were still young, they, alongside similar institutions, were used by governments to steer the emerging middle class in the correct moral direction. A lot has certainly changed since then, but while some of the employees believe that the exhibitions in general work out well, as a rule others think that they are flat, promoting correct (boring), mainstream views. Anyhow, I wish the university would have a similar parallel space, but realise, however, that this is the outsider in me talking. To the employees at the museum the exhibitions mean different things; the fulfilment of ideas, unappreciated work, etc., but they hardly represent anything out of the ordinary.
As I stand there, eyeing an ornamented necklace, Frank suddenly hurries past me, saying something about a truck. Ah, the paintings have arrived! I quickly follow him to the parking lot, where a number of people, mostly downstairs but a couple of upstairs as well, have shown up to give a hand.24 Michael smiles at me, Victor gives me a nod. I also spot a couple of people that I have talked to on some occasion, but whose names escape me. The back of the truck is opened and the cargo revealed; numerous boxes, some clearly painting-sized, some big and some truly big. My job, I am told, will be to guard the truck while the others transport the treasure, piece by piece, to the art gallery. The paintings are worth A LOT of money, someone kindly remarks, and I suddenly feel slightly anxious. What if some lunatic turns up, trying to steal the truck? I realise that it is a highly unlikely scenario, but a vague uneasiness remains in my gut. It certainly is interesting to do ethnography, you never know what the day will bring. This I repeat to myself, while secretly scanning the surroundings for suspects. Some time passes. The thick morning clouds are now stretched so far across the sky that the sun comes through them in tickling rays. They search my face and it strikes me that the whole summer thing will soon be a reality. How marvellous. No longer in the mood to keep a suspicious mind, I ask Frank, when he appears, if I may help with the boxes instead. “Sure”, he replies and tosses me a couple of gloves. Interestingly, no one is put on truck guarding duty after me.

Hereafter follows half an hour of hard, manual labour. Some of the boxes are ridiculously heavy and we have to shove those onto a trolley and then carefully manoeuvre the trolley to the art gallery, trying not to hit anything on the way. Usually I am, however, ordered to get the smaller boxes and I ask Michael why he thinks this is. He responds, in a matter-of-fact voice, that the big boxes weigh a lot. It is not really an answer to the question, but it indicates that he does not believe me to be strong enough to move the bigger boxes. He must be corrected. I point to a sadistically big box and say “that one”. Ten minutes later we unload it in the art gallery, a bright, spacey room, and take a well-deserved breather. I sort of hope that he will get back to me on the subject of physical

24 Lindgren (1992) describes how people from different layers of the hierarchy at the hospital where she conducted observations at times would meet as individuals, rather than members of different categories. Usually this occurred during weekends, when fewer people worked and the atmosphere was more relaxed. What made this across all borders-interaction possible, Lindgren suggests, was a “communicative fundament” (ibid., p.82) which exists as a constant potential in organisations but that can only be realised in situations where people do not segregate on the basis of gender, class, age etc. I argue that such a fundament existed at the museum as well, and that the employees as a matter of fact tried to reinforce it by taking opportunities to create borderless situations every now and then.
strength, preferably in a way relatable to the purpose of my study, but no. He just stands there, quiet, watching Victor and Frank as they gently place a box on the floor and start to remove the screws holding the lid in place. Looks like my efforts were all in vain.

Minutes later it is lunch and we, the hard working people, trod off to get something in our bellies. There are two lunchrooms at the museum; one upstairs and one at ground level. Just as there is, according to many of the employees, two categories of people working at the museum, the people “up there” and the ones “down here” (the people at the art unit often seemed to end up in-between). We are heading for the ground floor lunchroom. It is not really meant to be a lunchroom, it is simply an office that has been equipped with a small fridge, a microwave oven, some settees and a coffee machine. It is quite comfory. The employees using this room have been encouraged to lunch upstairs by the director’s office, but with poor result. It is not like they refuse to mingle with the upstairs residents out of principle, indeed the border dividing these groups is often, but not always, unpatrolled and easy to cross. Some employees who belong to downstairs-units lunch upstairs on a regular basis, but identify with their units in key situations and talk about “the people upstairs”. Likewise, some upstairs residents lunch both downstairs and upstairs.

I recognise a majority of the people in the lunchroom as belonging to the units working primarily on the ground floor, such as the technicians and the janitors. A couple of persons from the art unit are also present. The atmosphere is cheerful and unrestrained. We take turns by the microwave while talking about this and that. It is almost a bit strange how familiar this setting seems to me. My position as outsider becomes evident only when Jimmy, in a humorous way, tells the tale of how I abandoned him earlier in the workshop. On cleaning day, nevertheless. Unlike the employees I can more or less choose where to go and what to do. I reply in a fake-snobbish voice that “unfortunately, my services were needed elsewhere”, which causes some laughter. They discuss the art exhibition, if it was a good idea to pick this particular painter, what the public will think of the exhibition, what media will turn up for the opening, and so forth.

25 Often I will refer to someone as “working upstairs” or “belonging downstairs”, instead of plainly stating their profession or specific position. This mainly because it mirrors many of experiences the employees have of the museum as divided, but in some cases it is a question of keeping the participants anonymous. Some employees work in the entire museum on a daily basis and these I call “allrounders”.

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After lunch I sneak into a WC and write down interesting pieces of the lunch conversation. This takes quite a while. Then I venture upstairs again. I am curious about the work of Miriam, an archivist. On my way to her office I encounter Philip, one of the cleaners, and ask him how things are. Leaning on his mop, he tells me that he is already finished with all the floors up here and is ready to head downstairs. He looks a bit tired, should he not take a break before continuing? He shakes his head, he would rather finish early and go home. We go our separate ways, I see him push the cleaning wagon into the elevator. I find Miriam in her office. At the moment she is sitting very still, looking at an old photo through a magnifying glass. I am not sure whether it is a good idea to disturb her, so I gently nock on the doorframe, thinking that I am giving her a fair chance to ignore me, should she prefer to. She turns around and looks at me with calm curiosity. I introduce myself briefly in case she does not know who I am, Annika, from Karlstad university, doing a Ph.D. in sociology, it has to do with gender, and then wonder if she would mind telling me about her work. “Certainly not”, she replies.

She points me to a chair and explains that all the photos at the desk in front of her need to be sorted out before being put into the archives. There are a million photos at the desk. Well, no, but many. I watch as she carefully picks another one up and gives it a good look, before placing it in a stack of already examined photos. “Where do they come from?”, I enquire, and she explains that the museum receives them from estates of deceased people. And since people die all the time, there is always a lot of job waiting for her at this desk. Oh my, I think, what a tedious, never-ending task. I see her pick up and old, worn out photo album and carefully place it in her lap. “This used to belong to a Martha…something”, she says a little solemnly and opens the first page, "looks like an angry lady". I lean over to steal a glimpse and there is Martha. A stern-looking woman dressed in a seemingly uncomfortable dress from the early 20th century. Eyes of grey shades stare at me, she is standing very straight and it hits me that Martha once was as real as I am now. In silence we look through the rest of the album. Afterwards Miriam shows me the archives, hidden in a big room at the back of the museum. It is a bit chilly and she explains that this is because the items in here are best preserved that way. And there are so many items in the archives, so many people like Martha. Only a small portion of it is used in exhibitions and the like. It makes me a bit sad. Does it make Miriam sad too? “Well, yeah, it’s a pity”, she says. She looks around, hands firmly on the waist, and mutters something to herself.
When stepping by Monica’s office to pick up my things, I find Monica there, plopped by the computer. When she notices me she smiles and wants to know what I have been up to today. I give her a quick summary and then we go to the lunch room to get some tea. She is currently involved in a project for expanding the collaboration between the museum and its surrounding community. Back at her office we close the door and sit down. Apparently they had a collaboration meeting before lunch and she says that it was not terribly productive. Because of all the efforts put into the new exhibitions at the moment they are all drained of energy. We talk about the exhibition she is involved in and I can tell that she is really excited, in an exhausted way. It will open in less than two weeks and there is still major work to be done. I ask her if she thinks the exhibition will be everything she hoped for, and she responds that, as always, compromises had to be made; “your initial idea will never be carried out the way you envisioned it, but on the other hand, people will add their perspective and make the whole thing richer. Or create disputes.” She chuckles a little.

I have to go now, if not to miss the bus home. The bus ride takes quite a while and I want to be home before it gets dark. On the way to the entrance I pass by the downstairs lunch room, and for a moment I am thinking that I would like to go in, have some coffee, some conversation. I see Frank and Andrea in there, but I decide that I need to get on that bus and start writing up field notes. Scenes from the day are passing before my eyes, it is like a movie that has been clumsily cut, I hear the voices of the employees and see them clear as day. I have to capture it in words before it goes away. It is funny how you turn into a sort of a video camera in the field, and it is equally funny, but in another respect, that, for the longest time, there is no way of evaluating the usefulness of what has been recorded.

**Bringing the museum into existence**

In this section I will try to show how the employees, in a couple of instances, produce the museum and make it intelligible as their workplace, just like I have made it intelligible as my research site in the account above. Of course they co-produce it simply by coming to the museum as employees, but here I have chosen to pick situations where this production is more explicit and so easier to
detect. The intention is also to clarify certain aspects of the analytical approach before we get to the most interesting parts.

On this particular day I find Julia, from upstairs, at the entrance desk. She explains to me that some upstairers, who normally do work very much downstairs, take turns helping out on days when they are short on staff at the desk. From the field notes:

*She told me that she enjoyed spending a day at the entrance desk: “every now and then, since the work doesn’t require much in terms of responsibility”. Then she said that she “and another woman from upstairs use to joke that one should take up a job at ICA”. Some visitors showed up and she sold them tickets. I have never seen her smile or talk to people like that. She suddenly seemed extremely service-minded.*

In this situation Julia is talking about the museum as a place where people (she, for example) pitch in if need be. She indicates to me that while she, in one respect, does not disprove of this, that it is in fact rather enjoyable, she also communicates that her being in a position like that is comical by referring to her colleague: “and another woman from upstairs use to joke…”. Within two sentences she manages to create a division between professions/people at the museum by utilising a criteria device and putting up “responsibility” as criteria. In doing this, she clearly places herself on the preferable side of the divide (the side which she does not joke about).

Now, in what way is this an example of how the employees organise the museum as an intelligible workplace? As we remember, utterances accomplish many different things in interaction, they coordinate actors relationally, in time and space, etc. From this perspective it is interesting that Julia chooses to frame the situation from the positions of an outsider. She could, hypothetically, have talked about what the work entails, how a visitor should be treated, what happens if a visitor would like to know more about an exhibition or is upset by something she has seen, and so on. What she actually says is not unreasonable in any way, it may be ever so correct, but it is not about whether she is right or wrong – it is about what kind of common sense is utilised and how this particular situation is ordered. This does not mean that we leave the question of what is behind, it means that we look for another kind of what is, or rather, we look for that which is produced as being is. As mentioned, “responsibility” is

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26 Comparable to British chain Sainsbury’s in size and organisation.
used by Julia as a criteria (she could have chosen another one, like “service-mindedness”, with a very different result), and the use of that specific concept allows her to make a certain distinction. The distinction positions the actors populating the situation as well as the museum at large. It may seem like I am building a lot on very little, but I ask you to entertain the ideas formulated above as we move to example number two.

Next up is an excerption from the group interview with the technical unit. Present are, apart from me, Michael, Richard, Jimmy and Christoffer. I start by asking them what they did for a living before coming here and what it is they currently do at the museum. They have all been doing manual labour in the past and although they have special tasks to carry out at the museum, they often serve as right-hand men, taking care of all sorts of things (I suppose that explains why they kept popping up everywhere). Against this background, a conversation about what the museum generally is like as a workplace emerges. After a while, Michael states that it is a good place to work, but that it can be difficult to get through to the decision makers. Jimmy agrees, and adds that it is a “slow place”, where it takes a long time for decisions to be made. Michael then remarks:

Michael: Most people who work here are getting paid to do things they're really interested in. You take the job home with you, it's with you in your leisure time maybe and that makes people eager to have a say in matters that concern them. Too many want to have a say

Michael steps in and offers an explanation as to why it takes time for decisions to be made at the museum, by pointing to an intertwining of the professional and the private in the lives of the employees. We are to understand that since employees invest a lot in their work out of sheer interest, they have an urge to be involved all the way. This is another way of producing an intelligible museum – as a place where people are committed to a point where it causes organisational problems.

The device used in this case, which I will term polarisation device, allows Michael to draw a distinct line between work and the private (that can then be crossed). The line, if we accept it as legitimate, works to support Michael's case and produce the museum accordingly. By saying that “you take the job home with you”, Michael includes himself in the group referred to and, again if the procedure is accepted, this works to increase the credibility of the statement.
The initial concern for Michael was, we note, not the slowness of decision making processes, but difficulties involved when one is trying to influence these: “Too many want to have a say”. By using Jimmy’s notion of the museum as a “slow place” as a slingshot, and accounting for this slowness, he manages to put across his own understanding of the museum in a subtly determined way.

Finally I will show how the museum is produced at an instance as a PC (politically correct) place. Below is a piece from my interview with Lisa, an upstairer. We have been talking about which of the other employees she hangs out with outside of work.

Annika: Some don’t establish such a clear boundary between work and private life

Lisa: But I do! I really do. We were told at some point that we ought to attend more evening seminars and I said “no way”, I said that at a staff meeting, “in that case pay me”. I protect my private life, my work comes in fourth or fifth place, I’ve made that clear from the beginning.

Annika: What kind of reactions did you receive?

Lisa: People looked like they were in a state of shock, because this is the museum “and it’s the most important thing in life”, and culture and art and exhibitions, “it’s so amazing”. I made it clear from the beginning that I don’t like art all that much and I don’t like quasi-intellectual people who try to appear smarter than they are and I just “I don’t know anything and I don’t find it very interesting, so that evens out”.

Lisa makes it very clear that she consistently has been promoting the right to a private life, despite being encouraged/pressured to partake in the museum life at her spare time. We are both utilising the polarisation device in order to separate private from working life, and Lisa also uses a grading device, “my work comes in fourth or fifth place”, to clarify the position of her work in her larger life context. The evening lectures she refers to was a series of lectures given by invited speakers which usually dealt with important issues such as multiculturalism, the role of culture in society, etc. They were, as a rule, not terribly well-attended by the employees, nor by the public (at least as far as I am aware). Even though proclaiming her lack of interest in the, by the museum endorsed, after-work activities, she very aptly produces the museum as a PC place by positioning herself as a rebel in a sea of yes-sayers: “People looked like they were in a state of shock.”
During the interview, Lisa also told me that the director's office preferred if a man with foreign background were to be hired for reception work and in an analysis of this she concluded that the museum, because it is a museum, must look good from the outside. It must appear to clearly take a stance for diversity, equality and democracy. She was indeed not the only one to portray the museum in this fashion, and while some underlined that it made the museum an exciting and important workplace, others communicated that the PC ambition sometimes made life at the museum a little bit duller and more restricted.

Above I have tried to show how the museum, as a social, factual object, is brought into existence in rather different ways. It is these ordinary, very non-dramatic parts of everyday interaction we are interested in; people describing their work, the museum, other employees, and, at times, the world at large, trying to tell the truth which they think is the most relevant in the current situation. All ideas, facts, opinions, feelings, etc. expressed in relation to the museum constitute it in various ways. My presence is also contributing, of course, since I am studying a gender-related issue at the museum (and nowhere else). In relation to my research, the museum could easily be produced as a workplace-turned-into-research site. Apart from the employees and myself, the visitors represent another crucial element in the production of the museum. Background expectancies after all give that a museum is characterised by having visitors, and if it were not for them, we would probably experience considerable hardship when trying to produce the museum as just that.

**The search for sexuality – groundwork**

The analytical chapters, chapters 4, 5 and 6, are arranged more or less in accordance with the stages of the analytical process. This first chapter also reflects my first actual steps in the field – most of the material presented comes from the interviews I conducted during the first year at the museum. We do a lot of what I will refer to as *groundwork* in the interviews, i.e. we explicitly try out the meaning of concepts and ideas and search for common ground. As already declared, I found it difficult to know what to look for in the beginning. At the time I thought that I was investigating the participants’ truths about sexuality and, by extension, heteronormativity as a feature of the museum. Only later did
I realise that I first and foremost was asking the members for help to locate and define my research topic.

*The “cultic” – a way in?*

From talking to my gatekeeper, I knew that the archaeologists and architectural conservationists were expected to have some sort of gender perspective in their work. This seemed like a safe place to start, so I asked them what they thought a gender perspective entailed and if they indeed found such a perspective useful. I then tried to elaborate the topic into somehow including sexuality. Below you will find an excerpt from the interview with Anna, whom you have already met. The reason I chose to start off with this particular piece is that it contains many typical and therefore interesting traits. We have talked about how a gender perspective can and should be used in archaeology and I have asked her, as you might remember, about pornography.

Annika: *Cultic?*

Anna: No, but you can find things that have to do with fertility and the harvest, and it’s obvious that large, male limbs and all such things, they symbolise reproduction and things that have been important…we’re very…we don’t talk very openly about these things, we sort of hide it, but they probably didn’t have that kind of relation to it, OK? So they thought about it differently, they haven’t been taught to feel embarrassed…so…maybe there was an openness in the 8th century, more nudity, and there are the rock carvings for instance, where one often see it, in Norway you have the holy white stones and everybody know what they are

Annika: *What are they?*

Anna: It’s stones with like a penis figure (laughs) that stands about and perhaps have symbolised fertility, and perhaps the male limb became the symbol of it because it’s something concrete, much more concrete than the females…somehow

Annika: *Mm*

Anna: But one happily wraps it up in the same context, it sure got harder in the case of Pompeii, for example, that Italian city, because there they found a lot of erotic wall paintings and stuff like that weren’t published at first and it was presented only quite recently…and it
shows too that they weren’t so shy, like us, that they had a much more open way of looking at it and there was also, well, prostitutes, or places where one comes to have more than a glass of wine (laughs). And stuff like that...but, we don’t have anything like that here. It may be rock carvings one interprets as symbols of fertility...that probably isn’t far from the truth, since the coming of spring every year and the sun rising every day wasn’t something that was taken for granted.

Annika: No

I try to use the new concept handed to me, when suggesting that an archaeologist deals with the “cultic” (instead of pornography), but it is rejected, as Anna carries on talking about “things” (as in objects, probably) related to fertility and harvest. Large male limbs are proposed to clearly symbolise reproduction and at this point Anna starts to hesitate, she pauses, almost to illustrate what is then suggested, namely that “we don’t really speak openly about such things”. She produces sexuality as something hush-hush, something a little bit mysterious maybe? I will suggest that she competently creates a sexual taboo. By taboo I here mean an object/phenomenon that is being constantly charged because it is not openly talked about, and talked about as not talked about, and which may seem offensive, or is believed to be offensive, in the eyes of many members. She does this both by establishing a common sense where people nowadays do not talk about “such things” (although we are trying to), and by doing so hesitantly.

Our taboo is also produced in relation to their openness; “they haven’t been taught to feel embarrassed”. A polarisation device is put to use, allowing us to be something different from them. There are many examples of how this device is applied in order to produce the Other, the Other often being more uncivilised, less enlightened, in short, beneath us (for thorough treatments of othering processes see Beauvoir (2002 [1949]), Said 1993 and Johannisson 2004). Here, however, I am compelled to say that the Other is taken to represent something more natural, and hence better. It is interesting throughout the interview excerpt how she keeps referring to “it” and “that”, without ever exposing what it or that is. There is a lot of silence work going on here, which is necessary (presumably) when a taboo is to be manufactured.

Moving on, when mentioning the holy, white stones, she lets me understand that because all people know what they are, no particular knowledge is involved
in categorising them as fertility objects; she is using a collectivisation device. When utilising this device she is able to deal with sexuality without seeming to do so – she acts as if what she knows is simply what everybody knows, i.e. she hides in a crowd. I do not let her get away with it, but ask her what the stones are. I call her, to use a poker metaphor. She is then forced to elucidate that they are figures with penis-shapes standing about. She also, quite voluntarily, explains that the male penis has been used instead of the female unmentionable, since it is more obvious.\textsuperscript{27} Where the clinical vagina, at least something, should have been, there is just silence. Garfinkel (1967:70) underlines the importance of the terra incognita and states that it is not rules constraining the actions of the members in these cases, instead it is “anticipatory anxiety that prevents him from permitting a situation to develop”. The vagueness or down right silence in Anna’s account suggests that the common sense put to use here is partly constituted by a negative space, or terra incognita, and possibly that she is experiencing some anticipatory anxiety.

Finally we talk about Pompeii and the erotic wall paintings found there. The people in Pompeii had a more open approach to “it”, and the paintings are presented as empirical evidence. She continues to build the mystery of the liberal view of the Others on sex by suggesting that it was not until recently that they started to publish news about… (yet another silence, we still do not quite know what we are talking about). The Pompeian also went to see prostitutes without further ado, Anna claims one moment, just to change her mind in the next and instead suggest that they went to places where “one comes to have more than a glass of wine”. She laughs. At the very end Anna explains why fertility symbols were necessary, it is not a detailed explanation, but we understand that it has to do with the “fact” that the coming of spring and new days was not a given to them.

So, to sum up what happens in this piece of interaction: As an archaeologist Anna establishes a common sense regarding pornography which situates it outside of her professional territory. Throughout the interview she is distancing herself from the topic by referring to certain unidentified but contextually known phenomena as “it” and “that”, and we quite successfully frame sexuality as a mystery, or a taboo. As interviewer, I co-produce this kind of sexuality by refusing to shed some light over the topic. The laughing, I will argue, is also

\textsuperscript{27} For a queer theory-informed interpretation of these stones see Solli (2008), and of archaeological material overall see Olsson (2006).
part of the taboo-making, since it signals that this is not just any, old topic, but a topic that needs humour as social bubble wrap.

**Who should/could deal with “it”?**

The employees attacked the subject of sexuality with different degrees of professional know-how and certainty. In the interaction below, Ralf, an archaeologist, appears able to deal with sexual issues without a moments hesitation. He successfully creates the impression that a body that makes morphological sense, also makes sense sexually. Like in the previous case with Anna, I introduce sexuality as a conversational topic:

Annika: *At an excavation or inventory, have you ever encountered speculations about sexuality?*

Ralf: *Yes, well, and that has a lot to do with, good thing that you asked, one has, one sees it in the difficulties involved in this.*\(^{28}\) One has often, well, with certain kind of objects then it’s men versus women, and very much so before they started to examine skeletal material, then it was like, if you found a razor it automatically belonged to a man, while if you found a fancy pin or bracelet, well, then it was a woman

Annika: *Mm*

Ralf: *One example is Bäckaskogs-woman. Perhaps you’ve heard of her?*

Annika: *Vaguely, but no details*

Ralf: *They discovered her some time ago now and she was buried with arrow heads. Because of the weapons it was a man, aha, until they examined her skeleton and then things were put to the test. And there are other examples, they found a man with an arrowhead and through an osteological analysis they decided that it was a man, but you can never be a hundred percent, but ninety, and at the same time there were all these classical female objects in the grave, like a drop spindle, one of those were in the grave, and then you sort of don’t know, it’s not suppose to be there!*

\(^{28}\) “det ser man ju i det svåra med detta”. I do not know what Ralf means by this. People often talk in rather fragmented and muddled ways, which explains why members need great ad-hocing skills.
Annika: Mm

Ralf: Why is it there? And it's quite common, they have talked about for instance razors, which are rather common in graves from the bronze ages and when conducting osteological tests it's clear that it's not just men who get those, but women as well. And then you start to think: that maybe they didn't have the same ideas about masculinity and femininity and that perhaps things didn't work back then as they do now. They might have had a different understanding of... but exactly what understanding, it's... it's difficult. But we can see that during the bronze age they treat the bones of the dead in an, to us, distasteful way. They smashed the bones and poured them in post holes, for instance, and this indicates that they had a different understanding. Among other things, that also indicates that they saw femininity and masculinity in a different way.

In this piece of conversation Ralf really shows off his competence as a performer of archaeology. His working act at this instance is to inform me about the perspectives used in archaeological work and how different perspectives allow us to see different things. The problem he has set his mind to solve concerns the possibility of archaeology to determine the sex of human remains. When I ask him about speculations on sexuality at excavations, he immediately leads me on to this trail by saying: “yes, well, and that has a lot to do with, good thing that you asked, one has, one sees it in the difficulties involved in this. One has often, well, with certain kind of objects then it’s men versus women.” The answer to my question is to be found in the sexed body, Ralf asserts. Bodies thus become silent backgrounds on which sexuality can be made to make sense, although the connection between the sexed body and sexuality is never specified.

Ralf’s presentation of untypical objects in graves is based on certain background expectations about what is normal today. As a matter of fact, the whole case rests on the possibility to portray the division between the sexes as self-evident (needless to say, Ralf is using a polarisation device to make this division happen). As we know, it is not. The un-orderly past is compared to the orderly present, then, and this illuminates how statements of this sort reveal as much, if not more, about the context in which they are made, than about the phenomenon referred to. Ralf endorses the idea that what counts as feminine or masculine changes respectively and, at the same time, establishes the atypical findings as part of an archaeological mystery. He both entertains the notion of sex/gender transformations, and constructs it as something which needs to be explained: “like a drop spindle, one of those were in the grave, and then you sort of don’t
know, it’s not suppose to be there!”. However, osteological tests represent, in Ralf’s presentation, an end to archaeological confusion regarding sex designation. In this situation he puts his trusts in the criteria device used by those conducting such tests, as well as in the technology itself.

It is a very competent accomplishment by Ralf. Others were not equally eager to claim knowledge and competence in this area. Robert, an architectural conservationist, for instance, is quite prepared to throw in the towel:

Annika: Mm. I have to ask you about the sexuality perspective as well, have you ever encountered such a thing? Perhaps during your education…or at some

Robert: No, I don’t think it actually, no, a seco…what did you call it? Sexuality perspective?

Annika: Yes

Robert: No, it…no, what would that be? If gender is difficult to suss out, then…sexuality perspective, if it’s about mediating historical events…to research history, sexuality…no, there was this one time in Göteborg\(^{29}\) when they pointed to a window and said that “in there Oscar XI engaged in love making\(^{30}\) with his mistresses” (laughs a little)

Annika: (Laughs) But that is sort of sexuality…

Robert: At Linnégatan\(^{31}\). There is a (names a department store), just next to Hagabion,\(^{32}\) a 19th century house

Annika: At that corner?

Robert: Yes, it’s kind of at the corner, I don’t know…

Annika: So sexuality isn’t something that was…

Robert: No, and that can perhaps partly be explained by the fact that we deal with cultural heritage conservation, and it isn’t impossible, but I think that the step to sexuality is a step

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\(^{29}\) Gothenburg.  
\(^{30}\) He is using the dated expression “älskog” in Swedish.  
\(^{31}\) “Linnégatan” is a well-known street in Gothenburg.  
\(^{32}\) “Haga cinema” is a well-known cinema in Gothenburg.
Robert is basically turning sexuality into somebody else’s problem. As an architectural conservationist he has no reason to take such issues into consideration. Archaeologists, historians and others, on the other hand, have, because ‘he is supposed to map out an entire society’. Robert may experience some problems with putting together common sense that actually makes sense, and so is forced to direct me to other, better suited professions. But I do not believe that Robert is any less competent than Ralf in this area, rather he seems to understand the situation differently. Whereas Ralf, the teacher, want to provide me with appropriate, archaeological answers to my questions, Robert takes the opportunity to investigate himself in different respects throughout the interview, for example as an architectural conservationist. We struggle to find a common ground here, which is noticeable, I think, in the way we focus on other things to co-produce. This ambition is revealed, for instance, when I ask ‘at that corner?’. It is not really of any interest where Oscar XI engaged in love making, the intention is rather to synchronise our common sense. It does not work out, as he responds; ‘yes, it’s kind of at the corner, I don’t know’, in a rather disinterested way.

Certain similarities between this conversation and the one with Anna can be detected. I offer Robert a way into the problem by referring to his education. This thread also makes the question appear valid, because it indicates that a sexuality perspective could (even should perhaps?) have been introduced to him as a student. His usage of the word älskog in Swedish echoes Anna’s talk about places where “one comes to have more than a glass of wine”, since it is an old-school word (and euphemism, perhaps?) for sex. Just like Anna, then, he hints towards something without really putting it into words. He also laughs upon referring to sex. We see that the interviews display the same types of characteristics, but Robert reinforces the comical dimension of sexuality in the situation by reciting something funny: “in there Oscar XI engaged in love making”. Just like Anna, he produces a mystification, or perhaps better put, an elusiveness of sexuality by placing it in a hierarchy by utilising a grading device: “If gender is difficult to sort out,
then...sexuality perspective". This sentence lets me know that this is a difficult
topic and that we have already pushed the boundaries when discussing issues of
gender in relation to his profession.

Some members would gingerly take on the challenge to discern sexuality, and
some would go about the whole thing more reluctantly. The more reluctant
ones often tried to use the common sense I deployed as a frame for the
conversation. Sara, an architectural conservationist, leans heavily on me:

Annika: Then I guess I only have one more question about the mysterious sexuality
perspective. Have you encountered such a thing at some point, during education or something?

Sara: What do you mean by sexuality perspective?

Annika: I mean sort of like a gender perspective, that it’s a way to interpret and question
evident facts somehow? But firstly I think that it can be different things, has anyone talked
about it?

Sara: No... no, I don’t know, no, the only thing that comes to mind when I think about
sexuality is that I know this newly-wed man and he’s married to another man, so... ahem,
and it, but otherwise

Here I initially produce sexuality as a mystery. This of course sets the tone for
our future interaction. I would often refer to sexuality (and gender as well) as
mysterious or somehow difficult to grasp as a way of downplaying my authority
and give the participants a chance to formulate their ideas more independently.
Many of them expressed confusion and at a couple of these instances I was,
more or less explicitly, asked to provide them with a frame: “What do you mean by
sexuality perspective?”. Sara does not want to do this on her own, but wants me to
guide her. And I do so by being indistinct and mystifying, which forces her, in
the end, to leave her profession and play an entirely different card: “the only thing
that comes to mind when I think about sexuality is that I know this newly-wed man and he’s
married to another man”. That (hetero-self identified, presumably) people routinely
associate sexuality and sexual orientation with Othersexuals and effectively strip
themselves and heterosexuals at large of such properties has been documented
in numerous studies (Forsberg et al. 2003; Smart 1996). In this case Sara puts
her newly-wedded friend at the table as an attempt to structure our interaction
in some way. She claims competence, then, but not specifically as an architectural conservationist, merely as a common member of society.

**But, really, what is it?**

The problem of discerning the nature of sexuality kept surfacing during the interviews and we tried to figure out what should and could be deemed sexual. As shown above, some members believed themselves capable of handling this just fine, usually not by organising clever definitions if phenomena, but by handling the matter self-confidently, while others went about it more hesitantly.

As mentioned in the beginning of this section, at the time I understood these interviews as events where I investigated the notions of the participants regarding gender, sexuality and their workplace. It was genuinely thrilling to start thinking of these interactions as instances of local reality-production instead. That meant that I could not exclude my own actions in any way. I became a co-producer of whatever was going on. It also meant that instead of seeing myself as extracting knowledge of peoples’ practices through the use of a scientific method, I started looking at my (documented) experience of the situational making of practices.

Below I discuss the whereabouts of sexuality with Peter, an archaeologist. We are talking about the role of photo exhibitions at the museum and, in relation to this, what kind of art seems to be approved (or not).

Peter: *Yeah, there was nudity, but it wasn’t anything sexual…that’s in the eye of the beholder really. ‘Cause it was like croquis, but it was amateur photographers and there was a discussion among the employees here, was this ok or…but when a recognised photographer…*

Annika: *That also did nudity…*

Peter: *Yeah, then it didn’t…so that’s very interesting*

Annika: *Really. Why is it like that?*
Peter: But it's more accepted then, sexuality, it's like that with art, fine art and high culture\textsuperscript{33}, then it's immediately accepted somehow

Annika: Why do you think that is?

Peter: Well, then it is perceived as art in a different way, sort of

Annika: The body becomes art

Peter: Yeah, depending on who's responsible for it and it isn't very strange, after all it's like that with a lot of art, and culture over all

Here Peter and I make sense of sexuality by looking at the way it is treated by the art people at the museum. Staring off, he is about to assert that the nude photos in an amateur exhibition were not sexual (something, he never finished the sentence): “Yeah, there was nudity, but it wasn't anything sexu ...”. But he changes his mind and instead suggests that "that's in the eye of the beholder really". This leaves everything open for us to explore and Peter puts himself in a relativist position, since he does not claim to know in person what is sexual or not. What is interesting about the way our conversation unfolds, is the fact that we only examine the common sense and methods used by the other members. I try to make him explain the actions of the other members twice, a little bit impatiently, but he does not seem to have a proper explanation: "Well, then it is perceived as art in a different way, sort of". In that situation I wanted him to provide me with a slick argument that would fit my theoretical understanding (as we recall, EM has not yet interfered with my original sociological vision), but what I get is a commonsensical and rather slick argument about the meaning of context - whether art is regarded as sexually tacky, or simply artistic depends on the how famous the artist is.

My suggestion that "the body becomes art", is not really taken into consideration by Peter, it is merely treated as a support for what has already been said. This is, however, an active attempt on my behalf to re-frame the conversation and move it in a slightly different direction. I want us to get to the physicality of things and leave the relativist stance behind. In the end, Peter in a way de-mystifies the phenomenon we are investigating by stating that “yeah, depending on

\textsuperscript{33} Peter uses the expression “finkultur” in Swedish, which literary translates to fine culture. Finkultur is often used to denote as well as put down art that is understood as not for ordinary people, but a cultural elite.
who’s responsible for it and it isn’t very strange, after all it’s like that with a lot of art, and culture over all’. In other words, sexuality is just one more thing that art people handle the way they please.

Peter and I never come close to defining sexuality, but Oscar, an architectural conservationist, and I are onto something.

Annika: Now I have to try something here, since I don’t know, but glädjehus and brothels and such, is there, have you come in contact with anything like that?

Oscar: No, I don’t really know. Have such things existed? Yes, they have... I really don’t know. In Sundsvall there was a street known for its prostitutes at the end of the 19th century, because it was a merchant town, and in Göteborg, Andra långgatan; it still has a certain character, it probably used to be really messy back in the days, but what that... that means when it comes to the formation of the city, I really don’t know. But sure, it could be nice with a real brothel environment, with silk in burgundy and...

Annika: (Laughs) Velour pillows?

Oscar: Yes, and dimly lit, you know. Yes...

Annika: I think that sexuality, that it is, and I see it all the time, that it’s strange because it’s there all the time, at the same time as it’s invisible, it’s a weird thing, because it’s tangible in some ways, but very often it’s tacit

Oscar: Mm, yeah, yeah... I think about another connection one might make in relation to sexuality, but I immediately think about homosexuality and hetero...heterosexuality, it doesn’t have to be about that, obviously

When asking me if such a thing as brothels have existed, Oscar appears to put on an innocent act: “Have such things existed?” Right after this glitch, however, he states their existence. Had he not, he would risk looking ignorant in my eyes since the question posed clearly implies the existence of brothels. He then utilises a placing device, just like Anna in the Pompeii example, locating the kind of sexuality which might be of interest to an architectural conservationist to Sundsvall and Göteborg (at the same time making it some other architectural

34 “Glädjehus” literary translates to joy house, or house of joy. It means brothel, or something to that effect.
35 Andra långgatan is a well-known street in Gothenburg.
conservationist's problem). At the end of the first passage he suddenly asserts that it could be nice with a brothel milieu. This is interesting because sexuality, in the form of sexual activities at a brothel, is quite hastily defined as something nice and not just messy. What Oscar accomplishes with this sentence is a subtle form of self-sexualisation, i.e. he demonstrates that he is not uninterested in matters related to sex and sexuality. I mystify sexuality by stating that: “I think that sexuality, that it is, and I see it all the time, that it’s strange because it’s there all the time, at the same time as it’s invisible”. This muddled piece of conversation, which ideally probably should have been formulated as a question, gives sexuality a transparent, ever-present status and helps build the sexual taboo. Just like Anna I refer to “it”, no less than 6 times, and let the silence speak. By labelling “it” tacit I situate sexuality under the surface. Finally Oscar uses a polarisation device; “I immediately think about homosexuality and hetero...heterosexuality”, thus creating a sexual dichotomy.

In the interview situation, many of the members seemed to walk a fine line – to some extent they utilised common sense in a way so that they did not navigate too skilfully in the sexual area, but on the other hand it appears as if they were trying to avoid de-sexualising themselves completely. It was a rather intimate situation, with two strangers talking in-depth about everything from upbringing to feelings toward other employees. Often these interviews were conducted outdoors somewhere close to the museum (it was summer and warm), which gave them an air of comfortable informality. It was a situation that demanded that the employees both represented the museum and spoke as just one person to another. I will suggest that this mix of background expectancies made most of the employees try to realise themselves as adequately sexual without any crude or irresponsible tendencies. For a similar argument, see Berg’s (1999) research on heterosexual adolescent girls and their relation to boyfriends, sex and pornography. Bergh suggests that the girls need to do some hard-core balancing when it comes to dealing with sexuality and pornography, at least if their goal is to display a normal, proper, but not too prissy sexuality (which it usually is). Berg provides us with a good example of how complicated it is to produce “normal”, everyday heterosexuality. In the interview I conducted it looks like the employees also performed a balancing act, although in relation to me.
Is it to be found at the museum?

I found the attempt of the members to discern the existence of sexuality at the museum especially interesting. In most conversations regarding this, I experienced that we were really talking about the **appropriateness** of sexuality at the museum. What we were engaged in, then, was a moral assessment. Below is an excerpt from an informal interview with some upstairers. I have just asked the people present what sexual harassment is:

Gustav said that in the beginning some of the things he heard surprised him. At his former job people would never dare talk like that, he claimed: “The first thing that happened was that someone told a joke and it was very sexually charged, but people just laughed”. I asked him what kind of joke it was and he told me that it was a blonde joke with sexual connotation. I then asked him who was present at the time and he answered that it was everyone at the table, both men and women, and that anywhere else the joke would have been seen as “a possible sexual harassment, since it was a man who told it”. Mona seemed to tense up at this and replied that it’s dangerous to take things to absurd levels: “Here we use our common sense and we tell a lot of jokes and we like to laugh”. Gustav answered, looking a bit troubled, that he didn’t have a problem with that, but that…Mona interrupted him to make yet another remark about the importance of distinguishing between people having a good time and people harassing one another. Gustav then said something (can’t remember exactly what) like “but still, it could be a problem if…” and was interrupted by Mona again. At this point I started to feel uncomfortable. What had I gotten myself into? Mona asserted that people have to use their common sense in situations like these, and that she very well might laugh at a joke degrading to women just as she can laugh at a joke degrading to men, “because it is a joke”. Gustav quickly responded that the problem with that argument becomes obvious when a person slaps someone else’s butt and then says that “it’s just a joke, use your common sense”.

In this situation many things are up for debate, which means that the members are prepared to do a lot of groundwork, such as who should have the right to decide what constitutes an inappropriate use of sex as (humour) resource at the museum and whether or not the gender order plays a part in this. Indeed sex and sexuality at work constitute a messy phenomenon, as Williams et al. (1999:91) puts it: “The social organisation of sexuality at work may be linked to

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36 She used the word “bondförmuh”, which here is translated to common sense. It literally translates to farmers reason, and thus implies a down-to-earth wisdom, rather than a knowledge gained from books or the like.
workplace inequality, stratification, and discrimination – and also to job satisfaction, self-esteem, and happiness”.

Gustav, taking an outsider position, and Mona, taking an insider ditto, really wrestle each other over what is the proper common sense to establish in this situation. In the process they end up showing off their skills as competent members; while Gustav tries to frame the topic as a question of gender equality and perhaps respect in a broader sense, Mona’s ambition is to frame the subject by turning it into a matter of common sense and humour (and not equality or respect). Their competence lies, at least partly, in the way they set traps for each other. Mona, for example, by assuring that she is able to laugh at jokes aimed at both women and men, thus proposing that the problem could be rendered gender neutral. She achieves this by utilising a consistency device, which means that she demonstrates her own consistent point of view. Gustav, on the other hand, sets his trap at the very end of the excerpt, by displaying how Mona’s argument easily could be twisted and used as defense by (real) offenders. First he turns things up a notch by letting the offender go physical and slap someone’s butt, and then he uses Mona’s own words, “it’s just a joke, use your common sense”, to demonstrate their treacherous nature.

There is sex in the form of sex talk at the museum, according to both Mona and Gustav, and between them it is organised as both potentially disturbing and as a source of harmless entertainment. But what about other types of sexualised actions? Below I ask Sara, an architectural conservationist, if the museum is a flirtatious workplace.

Sara: No, I wouldn’t say that, it’s pretty boring at times (laughs), no, I wouldn’t say that. It feels like people have a lot of respect for one another, you don’t step over any boundaries… no, when you go to construction sites it’s worse and when you’re about to climb scaffolds and “so you’re not wearing a skirt today?” and “so you dare to go up?”; it’s, it’s like a totally different environment and my husband, who works at a male dominated workplace, says that there is kind of a different jargon, crude but cordial. I don’t experience that at all here, except sometimes when I receive e-mails with pictures of nude guys…

According to Sara, sex is normally to be found outside of the museum. Indeed many of the members would tell me the same thing, and partly I understand this as the ongoing creation of the PC museum in the interview situations. She
uses the device criteria and is able to suggest that it is the respect for co-workers that restraints people and gives the museum its asexual character. However, she also signals that she is not asexual as a person; “No, I wouldn’t say that, it’s pretty boring at times”, thereby avoiding the risk of being labelled abnormal by me. She strengthens this at the very end by telling me that she sometimes receive e-mails with pictures of nude men. This does not only sexualise her (indirectly), but also others at the museum. Sara, I will suggest, tries to both de-sexualise the museum as a workplace, thus making it appropriate and respectful, and sexualise herself as well as some other employees, and so avoiding inappropriately boring, sexual labels.

Who had/took the right to sexualise was another subject that the members wanted to assess. Here is a piece of conversation from the group interview with the technicians:

Michael: I think that the girls here at the museum are more responsible for the blokeish, since, in this society, guys can’t say everything whereas girls are allowed to comment on guys in whatever way they please. They’re allowed to have ruder discussions and I think that this is one of those workplaces. If one of the guys would say something like that, then it would be considered blokeish and rude, it wouldn’t be accepted, but when the girls sit and discuss a little bit girlish, girl talk, we could call it, if you were to comment on this as a guy, then you get “we have had to put up with this for two thousand years, so now it’s our turn”.

In this situation Michael argues that men are really the victims of women when it comes to issues of overt sexualisation at the museum, presumably because of the general gender equality discourse in society. Michael’s assertion that the female members at the museum as well as in society at large, get away with sexualising men, because they politisise the issue and use a time device in order to defend their actions: “we have had to put up with this for two thousand years”. This builds the museum as a paradoxical PC place. The sexualising actions of the females are established as a category-bound activity, and use of the spatial dimension of the MCD makes it possible to place that category at the museum: “I think that the girls here at the museum are more responsible for the blokeish”. As in the case with Gustav and Mona, the discussion does not revolve around the existence of sexualised actions, but instead focuses on what these actions are and whether they are appropriate or not. Here as well, a gender card is played to account for injustice at the museum.

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38 “Grabbigt” in Swedish.
Below is a piece from the interview with Peter. We have talked about gender equality and what a gender perspective might entail. He argues that it is difficult to use a gender perspective as an archaeologist, since it is the features of the objects investigated that decide what speculations can be made. In critical realism, a similar argument is made. Bhaskar (1978) states that the ontological properties of phenomena determine how they can be handled epistemologically.

Annika: I have a question about the sexuality perspective, ’cause when I’ve read this visions statement it’s been absent… you know, they talk about gender and class, to some extent, but sexuality is just missing. Have you ever heard…

I start by mystifying sexuality, claiming that as a perspective it is completely absent in a document where it supposedly belongs. To say that it is completely absent, “sexuality is just missing”, may be understood as an exaggeration. Pomerantz (1986) suggests that people might exaggerate or use extremes in attempts to argue their case more persuasively. Placing it alongside gender and class renders it the same MCD status, thus legitimising critical questions about its absence on my behalf. It is also quite apparent that I am doing some serious sociology, telling Peter what categories to fit his answer into.

Peter: Everybody like, tittle-tattles (laughs), no, I don’t know, how do you mean?

Peter responds to this by humorously building on the secrecy surrounding sexuality, suggesting that people talk covertly about it. He laughs and then throws the ball back in my court. His assertion that all people tittle-tattle about sexuality reminds us of Anna’s collectivisation of the knowledge in regards to the holy white stones, a.k.a. the penis figures. Peter is also using a collectivisation device and it allows him to make statements about reality without necessarily taking individual responsibility for it.

Annika: I’m thinking that it’s just like with gender, that there’s a lot of assumptions about how people used to live and maybe it isn’t always…

Without really answering his question, merely pointing to a possible parallel “one” might acknowledge, I indicate that with a sexuality perspective one could excavate hidden truths.
Peter: People’s sexuality?

Peter then calls me, looking for the framing of the situation. What is it that I want him to talk about?

Annika: Yeah, that and the structuring of society, pure and simple, how one pictures sexuality in society and for individuals historically, since it has differed

I am, however, determined not to lead him on, plus I cannot – I do not know the first thing about what a sexuality perspective could or should look like in the archaeological field. I refuse/am unable to provide him with a ready-made frame and instead I sort of babble.

Peter: Yeah, sexually, what has been approved of and stuff…

Now he is getting it, or he sees a possible framing and tries it out.

Annika: Yes, is it something…is that a discussion you’ve encountered? In course literature or something?

Peter: No, it’s very absent, I don’t know if it’s like a taboo or something, ‘cause it’s not something you run into

(At this point I say that we have to move out of the sun, he mumbles something unspecific about the ozone layer and that people get burned and we move)

Peter: No, this thing with sexuality, I don’t know, if you look at society at large you get the picture that it isn’t such a taboo, but if you look at like a workplace, I still think it is, so here it’s not something you talk about, perhaps with people you know really well, but, yeah…

Here, Peter de-sexualises the museum in a way, thus indirectly creating a foundation for the sexual taboo.

Annika: Why do you think it’s taboo then?

I want him to explain the existence of the sexual taboo, in this I also call him on the issue since I do not quietly go along.
Peter: No, 'cause it's something that you, all the time sort of, from when you're little and when growing up, it's something that you don't talk about sort of, you take it with you… maybe. Ahem, I don't know. It feels like something that I don't really give a lot of thought. That's sad!

The taboo is here explained by Peter as the result of peoples' upbringing, or socialisation. With the last sentence Peter sexualises himself, stating that his tendency not to think about sexuality and sexually related matters is a flaw, and this is a successful move, because I continue to:

Annika: (Laughs) No, I think this is very interesting, 'cause what I'm dealing with is an invisible norm, that's everywhere and nowhere, somehow

Building the mystery. Again.

Peter: But still, 'cause that's so odd, you're bombarded by it, everywhere, all the time, sort of, when you read magazines and stuff

Peter helps me with this enterprise. He continues to paint a picture where sexuality is both visible and not, by referring to society's way of using the polarisation device. In doing so he of course uses this device as well, dividing the world into one part where sexuality is there, clear as day, and one where it is not. We are both quite occupied with creating sexuality as a mystery, which presumably amuses us, but first and foremost presents a good storyline and a clear frame to work within.

To summarise

I will start by defining the devices I have distinguished so far. They are as basic as they are handy:

*Timing device*: Allows actors to distinguish different time units, such as yesterday, a short while and the Renaissance.

*Empirical evidence device*: Enables actors to present a piece of reality which corresponds to the argument put forward.
**Criteria device.** Utilising this device, an actor is able to explain why something is/ought to be ranked/perceived differently than something else.

**Polarisation device.** A device that makes it possible for actors to do either-or assessments, and place people or phenomena in one of two distinct groups.

**Grading device.** Allows an actor to measure things and put them on a scale.

**Collectivisation device.** This device transforms one into many, turning me into us and you into them.

**Placing device:** Makes it possible for actors to locate phenomena geographically.

**Consistency device:** The use of a consistency device helps actors to keep a straight line in conversation, thus making arguments appear more solid. This device is a little bit different from the others because it is a tactic to arrange, rather than a method to present, common sense.

The members at the museum, including me, routinely produced sexuality as taboo in interview situations by referring to sexualised phenomena as “it” and laughing when making such references. They/we explicitly talked about sexuality as something un-talked of, which creates an interesting ambiguity; sexuality is very competently produced as something unknown. The members were more or less ready to deal with sex-related issues. At a few instances they clearly demonstrated their competence, but more often they wanted me to clarify the topic and provide them with a frame for the interaction. I usually did so by becoming non-talkative and conveying blurred things, thus co-producing sexuality as something mysterious and difficult to grasp. The sexuality talked about was established as a context-dependant phenomenon, taken to exist in one guise then but not now, here but not there, appropriate or inappropriate respectively (depending on whom was performing the assessment). The category of gender was intersected with sexuality at a few instances in order to provide for analyses of problematic, gendered aspects of sexuality, such as men’s sexual harassment of women and the restriction of men’s sexualised talk due to the gender equality discourse at the museum (maybe society at large).

A question that emerged after finishing this chapter was whether we actually managed to make sense of sexuality or not. Also, to what extent did the members establish sexuality as partly unknown because they perceived it as the situationally correct thing to do, as opposed to actually lacking common sense to put to use? It is probably safe to say that even if they in fact had difficulties imagining what a sexuality perspective, for example, could entail, they still needed to produce an intelligible uncertainty. And as Ralf clearly demonstrates,
it really comes down to swift thinking, confidence and taking control over the situation, not to an impeccable (usage of the) MCD. I think we made a lot of sense, albeit at times in a modest way, especially if we take the from-scratch perspective and view every fact, problem and question produced in relation to sexuality as an accomplishment. However, we did not seem to nail down sexuality once and for all. This appears to be one of the things with this sort of groundwork – it is more about establishing sense that we in fact can have in common, than clinically defining phenomena.
5. The body count routine

Blokeish. This word circled in conversations where I participated at the museum. We remember Michael’s assertion that: “I think that the girls here at the museum are more responsible for the blokeish”. To my knowledge it was introduced (or re-introduced?) as part of the gender equality terminology in the 80s or 90s, and used to address immature macho men. After some time in the field, it was clear to me that blokeishness was something very bad in the eyes of the employees. The word blokeish is not inherently negative, as will be discussed below, still the members only used it as criteria when referring to undesirable traits or events. This made me curious.

Bad sex

Blokeish is a flexible, or indexical (Garfinkel 1967), word. I have heard it being used to describe something likable, such as a healthy, if not always pleasant to non-blokes, bond between blokes. When applied in this sense, it usually distinguishes some sort of male, semi-flattering but always somewhat invigorating essence, such as competitiveness or unsanitary habits. At the museum I never heard anyone use blokeish in a positive way. On the contrary, it exclusively denoted homosocial badness of some sort. Usually male. Sometimes girlish was used by the participants, but it could not be made to have the same flow quality. Michael delivers the line “but when the girls sit and discuss a little bit girlish, girl talk, we could call it” (see p.78), a little bit hesitantly. Perhaps because the words girl and girlish are used in many contexts to refer to categorised females of young age and therefore degrading to older females, whereas bloke and blokeish can be given a certain ageless quality more easily?

As already mentioned, the members condemned blokeish men, and blokeishness at large, and the members at the museum, despite of unit, produced an extensive knowledge of blokeishness whenever necessary (in interview situations, for example). Dan, an archaeologist, asserts that:

Dan: But at construction sites, when you're out excavating, there you find a very blokeish culture, those who work at constructions, there’s a blokeish culture, those who dig drainage and build houses and stuff, and it's often them we work with, sit and have coffee with in the barracks
Annika: Mm

Dan: It’s very, very rough there and it sure isn’t easy being a girl

Dan establishes where the bad men are and what they are doing: “those who dig drainage and build houses”, and even though it here remains unspecified, the consequence of this blokeishness is severe for women. Another archaeologist talks about when he discovered calendars with pictures of nude women in a barrack and how he asked the men to take them down – the nude calendars are used as empirical evidence of the blokeishness infesting these sort of surroundings. A female architectural conservationist claimed that it can be difficult to be a woman in her line of work at times: “You wouldn’t believe the things they say, some of the men I meet when out doing inspections. Like, “are you sure you’ll be able to climb that ladder wearing a skirt?”. And I might not even be wearing a skirt?”. The common sense produced by the members in this area appeared heavily routinised and it is tempting to suggest, in line with this, that being able to convey knowledge about harmful blokeishness is important if you wish to present yourself as a competent member at the (PC) museum.

Every now and then the technicians were construed as posing a problem in this respect. The excerpt below is taken from the interview with Gustav, an upstairer. We are talking about the diversity policy at the museum:

Gustav: In that respect we’ve come far, we employ people who come from other parts of Sweden, but not from other countries. But looking at the units, it’s very blokeish at the technical unit…and very, very girlish at the reception, that is, there are no guys there. And there are no girls at the technical unit

Here the women at the reception are given their share of gender equality as well, but quite often only the technicians would be pointed out and turned into an issue (not by the women at the reception though, maybe because they were sympathetic to their situation). It is interesting that no reason as to why the technical unit is blokeish is provided. This absence of reason becomes even more apparent when the reception is discussed: “and very, very girlish at the reception, that is, there are no guys there”. We are to understand that the mere lack of men leads to girlishness, i.e. the only criteria used is the devoid of the other sex. The degradation of the sexes when they are left to simmer in their own juices,
then, is commonsensically self-explanatory. When talking to John, a male allrounder, about gender equality at the museum, he stated:

John: *Even if we have an even spread at the museum at large, it's still very traditional if we look at, well, we don't have a female technician, it's sort of obvious that there are sex roles*

That which can be deemed traditional is established as problematic by John, and the lack of a female technician is taken to denote something traditional, i.e. this lack is used as criteria, and, by extension, it empirically proves the existence of (traditional) sex roles at the museum. The technical unit is thus related to the traditional, and hence it is established as a problem. Even when the technicians were not made out explicitly to be a problem, they could still serve as a signifier that some things needed mending at the museum. I have to admit that I grew increasingly curious about the technicians during my first year at the museum. When I finally faced four of them in a group interview it was obvious to me that they in fact were not made out of any other material than the rest of the members. They did not express anything particularly odd or disturbing, neither did they do weird, incomprehensible things. All in all, they seemed rather ordinary, and because of this the eager production of them as blokeish became something of a mystery.

In this interview it became clear that the technicians had their own ideas about where the really blokeish men are to be found. I have just told them that I have encountered the idea that the technicians are blokeish among the other employees at the museum. Do they perceive their own unit as blokeish? At first they want to know if I believe this to be true, and I assure them that I have no idea. At this they start to talk about their experiences of truly blokeish workplaces:

Richard: *It's very different in comparison to construction sites, where it's very blokeish, I know because I have been there*

Jimmy: *It was like that at sea too, very blokeish, but I don't think it's like that here, of course I can toss things like "Richard, did you get any last night?", like that* (Richard laughs)

Annika: *I don't think you're alone there?*
Jimmy: But it's not, it's not

Michael: Maybe it isn't so blokeish

Jimmy: Nah, but it can be like, if he arrives very happy one morning (laughs), 'cause that doesn't happen very often (Jimmy and I laugh), nah, but I don't think that that's blokeish, we talk about sports quite often when we have coffee

Richard: And sports as well (did not hear what Jimmy just said)

Jimmy: Yeah, sports

Michael: Just everyday events

Annika: Yeah, it can be an idea to fight, because it's assumed that when there's a lot of guys, then there's a blokeish jargon, but it doesn't have to be

Jimmy: Not at this workplace

Richard: It's very different from construction sites

Annika: What was it like there?

Richard: I didn't perceive it as horrible or anything, 'cause it's part of the normal conversation, I was about to say, but it was sort of direct, you joke around a lot

Michael: Perhaps a bit rougher

Richard: Yeah, a little rougher, I don't want to give an example (Richard and I laugh)

Jimmy: At a blokeish workplace there's nude girls on posters

Michael: I think that at a blokeish workplace it's tough to be the only girl

Richard: I don't know if you've followed the debate on the military, but several girls have been sexually harassed, and many have had to quit because they've felt harassed, even by commanders

39 "pang på rödbetan"

88
In this situation men at construction sites, the sea and in the military are established as bad through the usage of a grading device. It is never specified what this badness consists of, except for it being hard on women and resulting in inappropriate posters on the walls. Whether there is any difference between girlishness and blokeishness is unclear, they more or less end up being the same - a too excessive sexualisation of the opposite gender/sex collective. The title of this section, bad sex, is hence meant to have double connotations. As already mentioned, Michael seems to experience some problem when trying to put across his notion of girl talk, he just cannot make it sound very menacing. Commonsensically I believe that it is difficult to pitch girl talk as a threat to men, because, at least in my experience, most people use the term to denote women sitting around talking crap, but only in a way that could be harmful to other women. Michael is probably aware of this and plays it safe by utilising a collective device: "girl talk, we could call it". The polarisation of men and women is extra important in this situation, because it provides Michael with an opportunity to put even more distance between himself/the technical unit and harmful blokeishness. Not only are many other groups of men more blokeish than them, but women (overall) as well. Interestingly, Michael was not the only one who stated that primarily the women at the museum constituted a bad element. In an informal interview Andrea, an upstairer, spoke about the other upstairs-women as backstabbers and remarked “that’s how it gets with women”.

By placing the troublesome maleness outside of the museum, the technicians create a space for themselves. An endeavour that I, the gender researcher, legitimise by not challenging it in any way. At the same time, Richard makes an attempt to frame blokeishness (or construction sites workers, rather) as being about blunt but harmless humour, using the humorous momentum Jimmy has brought to the interaction by saying ”nah, but it can be like, he arrives very happy one morning”. He asserts: “I didn’t perceive it as horrible or anything, ’cause it’s part of the normal conversation, I was about to say, but it was sort of straight forward, you joke around a lot”. What Richard is getting at is of course the meaning of the context – the atmosphere at construction sites is produced as a bit more crude, but not in any way abnormal. This could, perhaps, be seen as a problematisation of using the moral benchmark of the museum when analysing other workplaces.
Doing the underdog

The members, mainly the upstairers (but certainly not all of them), seemed to believe that they simply told the truth when asserting that the technical unit left something to be desired when it came to gender equality (maybe appropriate maleness in a wider sense as well?). However, the common sense produced by the technicians in regards to gender equality and equality overall did not differ significantly from that which was produced upstairs. Still they were ascribed blokeishness and taken to resist gender equality. The practice of referring to the technical unit as blokeish was given high praxeological validity in most situations and the referencing is here understood a method for making political sense of the museum as a workplace. I suggest that the PC discourse at the museum is a resource for the members to use (when produced), in much the same way that the code was to the ex-addicts in the half-way house of Wieder’s (1974) study. The PC discourse allows the members to organise the units and employees at the museum in a moral sense when utilised in interaction. To be more precise, a criteria device (absence of either females or males) and a form of collectivisation device are combined. As Sahlin (1996) notes, people need to be clearly categorised if they are to constitute a problem and it was common practice at the museum to talk about the “technical unit”, or the “technicians”. Of course the members also talked about other units and the cleaners, for instance, but not as often. Members belonging to the units upstairs were usually referred to by name, i.e. they were usually treated as individuals first and foremost, as opposed to a collective. The combined usage of the criteria- and the collectivisation device here results in what Becker (1963) terms labelling.

Men and women in traditional working-class occupations are in some contexts assumed to constitute a degraded and polluted form of peoplekind (see for instance Skeggs 1997), and I believe that in this case the technicians are used as a scapegoat of sorts. They can readily be referred to when someone like me comes along and wants to know if there are any gender equality issues at the museum. In this sense, their unit functions as a container for the dumping of immoral crap (for a more elaborate discussion about work and the container function see Olsson 2008). My guess is that the technicians are easiest to use because they are perceived of as performing the most traditional working class tasks (such as carrying and building stuff). The only challenge for members who wish to utilise the PC discourse and the technical unit like this is that they must be able to establish the body count routine as a valid operationalisation of the
gender equality problem. Gender equality can of course entail a variety of issues – to focus on women and men in quantitative sense is only one way to account for the problem.

The technicians, on the other hand, would also do the underdog position. At one occasion I witnessed how they made fun of a bunch of upstairs women when we were all gathered in the upstairs lunchroom to celebrate one of the women’s birthday. A cake had been prepared and was ceremoniously brought before her. She, somewhat touched, held a flowery speech about how much she enjoyed working and just being at the museum, and one of the technicians rolled his eyes at a perfect moment, causing the other technicians to laugh quietly and exchange amused glances. Wettergren (2005:124) asserts that irony and humour can be used as “empowering devices”, and from time to time the technicians certainly would make fun of some of the upstairsers, both men and women, in this fashion. This positioning among the members reflects Garfinkel’s (2006:170) notion that “by your actions you tell me who I am, and by my actions, I’ll tell you who you are”. Joking about the refined actions of the upstairsers made the underdog position intelligible and usable for the technicians, and the talk of the upstairsers about the technicians as conservative and blokeish made them, in turn, appear more refined.

Accounting for women and men as a standardised relational pair

In all of the interviews conducted, I made gender equality a topic of inquiry. This because it seemed like an interesting topic that most likely would reveal something about the tendency of the members to normalise conventional, heteronormative ideas about femininity and masculinity. I however tried carefully not to serve them any truths, rather the members perception of the concept and what meanings they associated with it during the interviews was my primary concern (pre- as well as post- Garfinkel). Typically I would start by asking the members if they experienced that the director’s office pushed gender equality as an issue at the museum. Gender equality was, according to most of the members, not something they discussed or gave much thought in general. Even so, they displayed, as already noted, extensive knowledge and

40 To operationalise is to make an abstracted phenomenon examinable. You cannot measure racism directly, but you can, for example, look at differences in the income levels between categorised Swedes and categorised immigrants.
commitment when asked about it. It was obvious that questions involving justice and injustice could be dealt with in an instant, if necessary.

The archaeologist Ralf, whom you are already acquainted with, expresses a quite common view among the members when we talk about gender equality and whether there exist any issues regarding gender equality at the museum:

Annika: Mm, what about the gender equality policy then, there’s a rather new one that I haven’t had time to read

Ralf: No, I haven’t read it very carefully, and not the old one either, I have to admit

Annika: Would you say that there’s some sort of gender equality problem at the museum? Or do you think that it’s a shot in the dark?  

Ralf: If you look at the division between men and women, then there’s slightly more women, but that’s not a problem. And then at the technical unit, there’s not a single woman, I think, and at my department there are a lot of women, and for me that’s not a problem, I think it works out very well. I think it’s very nice with a mixed work place, when it’s either just men or just women, it gets very, very funny, and I don’t think a work place benefits from that

Annika: Mm

Ralf: I think a mix is necessary, it becomes more natural that way, otherwise there’s so much bullshit about all sorts of things, so a mix is very good

I frame the whole conversation by pointing to a new policy document, thus making Ralf understand that the gender equality I am interested in concerns work and the work place. While Ralf presents himself as being aware that there are more issues connected to gender equality than counting bodies, “depends on what you’re after and what you mean”, he nevertheless continues to discuss gender equality solely as the presence of categorised females and males. Primarily females. In fact females are turned into the sole variable; they are either missing, “at the technical department, there’s not a single woman”, or present, “and at my department there are a lot of women”. The whereabouts of men is unknown to us in the conversation and need not be specified. Ralf offers several reasons as to why a gender mixed workplace is better than an un-mixed – it is nicer, a

41 “eller tycker du att det är ett slag i luften?”
workplace dominated by either men or women gets funny (in a bad way), a mix is more natural, and finally there will be too much bullshitting in an un-mixed workplace. Really, this is a solid account of why we should treat/continue to produce women and men as a relational pair.

It is interesting that while Ralf is very clear on the fact that a gender-mixed place is preferable, he still needs to point out that the situation in his unit, where there are a lot of women, poses no problem for him. “A lot of women” could mean that the unit, and indeed the museum at large, is unbalanced (female-dominated), yet he expresses no opinion in that direction, and therefore has to say something about it to prevent me from spotting this possible error in his argument. Even if it is just that it is not a problem. He utilises a consistency device in order to fix an incongruity – by letting me know that he acknowledges the flaw in his argument, he communicates that he wishes to be consistent.

Indeed, that is enough – I do not call him and ask him to explain why he offers no criticism (which he probably should, since he recognises that there are a lot of women at his unit). Many of the employees would account for the museum as a female dominated workplace. When asked how they knew this, they would answer things like: “It just is, there are more women, and you can just feel it”. None of the members produced this “fact” as a problem, but it was duly noted.

Below we find another example of how a similar common sense is established. I am involved in a conversation between upstairs and the whole thing turns into an informal interview. I ask if there has been a lot of talk about gender equality, and the body counting starts immediately. How many women and men are there at the different units and what about in leading positions? I then ask how important numbers are in this area, and am told that they are very important: From the field notes:

Lisa very firmly remarked that; “As we said, women are different, see things differently compared to men”, at this she was interrupted by Oscar who leaned forward in an engaged way and said that a mixed workplace works better: “A workplace with just guys gets kind of “blokeish”’. He then added something a little bit peculiar, something like: “and a workplace with just…doesn’t work either”. Why didn’t he spell it out? Lisa nodded and said that it is especially important that the director’s office is gender-mixed.
As already stated, performing the body count routine is apparently to produce recognisable gender equality at the museum. I can conclude this, because in most situations where gender equality was dealt with and male and female bodies categorised and counted, interaction ran smoothly (as in the previous two examples). Ralf and Oscar’s notion that a sex-mixed workplace is more natural may indicate that the common sense established is not really, or primarily perhaps, centered round gender equality, but the idea is to let people live and work in a natural, healthy habitat.

Now, Lisa is up to something slightly different than Oscar. For starters she polarises men and women and organises women as the exception, “women are different”, and then goes on to underline the importance of mixing the sexes at management level. While Oscar communicates a concern about the atmosphere at work, Lisa puts power on the table. This is a different reason as to why men and women should be teamed up than we have encountered before, at least in such a direct way – to split the power. Her argument, as a whole, is that because women are different from men, both sexes are needed at the power centre of the organisation. Men here becomes a silent background, we sense their presence. When the sexes are equipped with different perspectives; “women are different, see things differently in comparison to men”, it is not difficult to see how it follows that both perspectives must be included, especially when it really counts.

In discussions about gender equality, regardless of what the situation was, men and women could easily be accounted for as a standardised relational pair (see Sacks 1992). The members offered a couple of different reasons for this, often relatable to pleasure (natural/nice habitat) or politics (the importance of splitting power and/or the need for both a female and a male perspective). When communicating her awareness of the gender order by asserting the significance of having both women and men in leading positions, Lisa in fact creates the very reality she is trying to de-organise. We remember that to most people, most of the time, it appears as if they move about in a ready-made world and they perceive of themselves as merely trying to maneuver in it to the best of their ability (Garfinkel and Rawls 2006). When researchers adopt the same notion, the actors become ghosts of social science – their actions mirror the real world, where we find real orders (i.e. theorised structures). From this perspective, Lisa’s actions should first and foremost be understood as conditioned by social reality, hence they are turned into a consequence. But when the
production of situations/situational reality is viewed as the prime concern (which it is for the members), Lisa’s actions, despite being built on cultural resources (such as the MCD), are seen primarily as constitutive of reality. And from this latter perspective, the body count routine, in many cases, establishes the phenomenon assessed as problematic to begin with – namely the idea that a sexed body carries a certain pre-social and pre-situational meaning. So when someone states that women are not cut out to lead, and someone else replies that they are too, they are sort of in callusion, since they are co-producing a dichotomously sexed/gendered world. Admittedly the person asserting that women can lead is put in a difficult situation, because how do we fight unjust background expectancies about categorised females, for instance, without producing just another set of stereotypical traits when referring to that very group? This is by now a classical feminist problem and the dilemma of finding intelligible non-gendered ways of talking about leadership is still present in a lot of contexts. Lisa’s way of reasoning is very understandable and, judging from the collected data, it has high praxeological validity in many situations at the museum.

In another conversation which ended up becoming an informal interview, the following exchange takes place. Before this we have talked about how men do not dare to work with children due to the risk of being labelled as child molesters and what a shame that is. Henry asserts that as a man you cannot tell people that you like children. From the field notes.

Annette responded that she didn’t really agree and continued: “I have children in pre-school and I love the male teachers”. Helen nodded at this. Thomas gave her a playful smile and said something like “so, you love the male teachers, isn’t that a big problem?”. Helen laughed a little in the background and Annette answered, without smiling, that “with female pre-school teachers it just gets very feminine”. At “feminine” she used a very high pitched voice, sort of a mock feminine voice. Thomas, serious again, slipped in something about the lack of male role models and Annette asserted that her children only get to build sandcastles with the male teachers and “we want that, all parents do”. She went on to say something about not wanting her children to be molested, but that there are mean female teachers as well. I lost track of the conversation for a second, because I tried to memorize what had just been said and when I got back into it again, Thomas just said: “And many children lack a father figure at home as well”.

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In this passage they are drifting from the initial question about gender equality at the museum to the situation in pre-school and then over to issues concerning absent fathers (and implicitly present mothers). The thread stitching this piece of common sense together is the use of women and men as a relational pair. Skilfully they move from one point to another, displaying quite an extensive, commonsensical knowledge in the area. Their play with different frames, or genres, is particularly interesting. Thomas draws attention to Annette’s self-declared love for the male pre-school teacher by using humour: “so, you love the male teachers, isn’t that a big problem?”. In doing so he turns Annette’s argument, “I have children in pre-school and I love the male teachers”, which is aimed at his statement about the difficulties for men to legitimately claim to like children, into a joke. This undermines her to some extent, at the same time as it keeps the interaction from getting too serious. This use of humour, I think, indicates that there is some real conflict potential in this situation. Indeed both Annette and Thomas attempted to control the framing and the common sense established throughout the entire conversation, while the others mostly sat silent.

When saying that her children only get to build sandcastles with the male teacher and that “we want that, all parents do”, Annette utilises a collectivisation device and creates the impression that she is speaking on behalf of all parents, that they all share one, unanimous opinion. This is supposed to add to the believability of her argument. Parents want male pre-school teachers. They want their children to build sandcastles. Building sandcastles is constituted as a male activity, it is thus produced as a category-bound activity, and sandcastles as products are, as a consequence, gender bound artefact. In this situation men and women are established as a relational pair as parents and as teachers. Or? In fact the participants only talk about how children need men. We may presume that they are taken to need women as well, but actually the only time women are referred to is when Annette ridicules femininity/women using a high-pitched voice. Nevertheless, it is with women as silent backgrounds, or silent partners, perhaps, that the need for men is articulated. We need male pre-school teachers because there are too many female ones. We need male role models at home, because many children have to make do with only female role models (if there is such a commonsensical thing, the members never spoke directly of female role models as I recall). We have seen earlier how women were produced as the variable when it came to issues of gender equality at work, in this children-centered area it is men who are produced as the variable – it comes down to the presence and essence of men.
The reception

Usually when women and men were established as a standardised relational pair, the conversation remained fairly fuzzy, Annette’s sandcastle argument being one of the few exceptions. Or the conversation regarded a big, abstract picture. Danermark et al. (1997:58) writes that:

An abstract concept, or an abstraction, is something which is formed when we – albeit in thought – distinguish or isolate one particular aspect of a concrete object or phenomenon, and what we abstract from is the various other aspects possessed by concrete phenomena.

In line with this I suggest that the members, in the situations accounted for above, establish women and men as standardised pairs mostly in an abstract sense. When talking about children’s need for a father figure, they do not deal with the complexity that inevitably is every child’s everyday reality, but an isolated and idealised parental aspect. An empirical child may be beaten up by its father figure and that would probably call for another approach on behalf of the members. As a contrast, Charlotte really got into the concreteness of things when handling the body count routine, or the PC discourse rather. We turn our eyes to the reception desk, where Charlotte is dealing with a customer who wants to buy a couple of books. From the field notes:

She was very pleasant. I can’t find a better word for it, even though as a general rule some part of me dislikes this way of describing women. Once again it struck me how approachable and slim all women currently working at the reception desk are, they seem much more homogenous in this respect than the employees who work in other spaces at the museum.

After handing the change back to the customer and telling him “thanks, bye”, she turned around and greeted me with a warm smile. “Sorry”, she said, “I don’t understand, I thought today was going to be slow”. I asked her where she gets all her cheerful energy from, and she answered that it’s just an occupational consequence. Her job requires a “happy face” (my words, not hers), it’s really that simple. She went on to describe herself as an allrounder at the museum, running up and down, which she sees as
mostly stimulating, but also frustrating since the lines of communication between up- and downstairs seem to be cut off from time to time.

At this point new customers appeared and I left the counter not to intrude on their interaction. This time it was two women who wanted to buy tickets for the exhibitions, and Charlotte flashed her smile and explained where they could find the art gallery and how the general geography of the museum worked. I noticed that she used the same voice and said the same things as with the previous customer, and after spending some time talking to her today I think it’s safe to say that all the customers get the same professionally pleasant treatment from her.

When the women had left I asked her about gender equality, making sure that the question was very loosely formulated. She immediately answered that despite the fact that there are so many women upstairs, Monica has been clear on the fact that she would like to see more men at the reception desk (as well as females wearing overalls). Charlotte had trouble understanding this demand. She said “one guy in a thousand is interested in wrapping gifts, everybody can answer a phone or sell things, but not wrapping gifts. Guys just don’t have the eye for it”. She then continued to talk about how she would arrange gift wrapping-courses for guys who came to work at the reception desk, and that sure, they would eventually learn, but it did take a lot of (her) time. And working at the reception, according to her, is a temporary thing for guys anyway, they never stick around for long: ‘We’re different, it’s just the way it is’, shortly afterwards, but with a distinct silence in between, she added: “But there needs to be a mix of men and women”. I asked “how come?”, she replied: ‘Men defuse situations, whereas women brings drama’. She went on to talk about her unit at the museum, where, apparently, the women indeed can be (overly) dramatic. All of a sudden a bunch of children appeared at the entrance and we had to pause the conversation for a while, in order for Charlotte to figure out where they came from and what they were supposed to be doing at the museum.

Not all categorised women can wrap gifts, but in Charlotte’s account women are indirectly made out to be born gift wrappers. Furthermore, not all women are interested in standing behind a counter doing what she is doing. Some would rather drive a bus, try to fix sick people or read Garfinkel. Yet, among other things, the lack of male interest in the job, as we recall they never stick around, is indirectly established as a sign of the inherent feminine quality of the job. She says that “one guy in a thousand is interested in wrapping gifts”, thus utilising a statistics device to do some legitimising work of a quite speculative nature. An action, wrapping gifts, is here linked to a spatial dimension, the reception, and
then the action and spatial dimension are both linked to women as a category with the line: “we’re different, it’s just the way it is”. This is followed by the production of women and men as a relational pair: “but there needs to be a mix of men and women”. This time I ask for a reason, and she tells me it is because men defuse (and solve?) dramatic scenes created by women. She is already heading in this direction when talking about how guys do not have what it takes to wrap gifts. Or to be precise, they might, but in contrast to women they need to practice. While I am convinced that Charlotte’s experiences of males behind the reception desk is real in every sense of the word, a problem arises when these experiences are produced as an account of sex/gender overall. We might say that Charlotte is in a theoretical attitude when using the category of sex to explain the situation at the reception, since sex/gender is given an trans-situational essence.

Or maybe not, maybe the gift wrapping argument is a defence used when people bring up gender equality. As already mentioned the reception unit and the technical unit end up in trouble when gender equality is produced as an agenda at the museum, or rather, when the body count routine is carried out. By turning gift wrapping into a category-bound activity (female), Charlotte may try to build a valid safeguard against critique of the quantitative kind. It is not that she does not want to work with males, it is just that “guys just don’t have the eye for it”. If she manages to convince people of this, it may prevent them from thinking that the lack of males makes the reception a problem that can actually be taken care of. Charlotte is walking a fine line here. On the one hand she is trying to steer away from potential gender equality danger (i.e. the criticism that can be aimed at her unit), but on the other hand she wishes to advocate a gender-mixed workplace. It is a risky thing to do in such a short span of interactional time, since it could endanger her chances to do recognisable consistency. To achieve some sort of balance, she asserts that on the unit level (there are not only receptionists at her unit) there needs to be men, defusers of female drama production.

Charlotte’s practice at the counter is designed to make people feel welcome and looked after during their stay at the museum. The fact that she, and all her female co-workers, so convincingly pass as female could be understood as part of the package somehow (for similar ideas about intertwinements of femininity and work practices in different contexts, see for example Adkins 1995 and Hoschchild 1983). It might be tempting to interpret this as women producing a
particular form of femininity, best described as conventional, heteronormative or emphasised (cf. Connell 1995). It seems to me as if their position, being the first individuals that visitors come into contact with, demands high intelligibility on their part. It is of course desirable that everybody who enters the museum immediately grasps what kind of place it is supposed to be and are able to help produce it accordingly, and the people working at the reception desk are there not only to serve visitors and sell them tickets, but also to set the social tone. They need to be very readable, as receptionists, as women and perhaps as other things as well, to enable the visitors to quickly coordinate their background expectancies and find the right museum mode. A male, approximately twenty-five - thirty years old, once appeared behind the desk. I guess he substituted for someone. Watching him interact with colleagues and visitors made it clear that many of the attributes and acts that at first glance easily could be (by me, for instance) ascribed to females doing femininity, in this case really should be understood as the practice the employees perform at the reception desk. Even though he commonsensically tried to pass as male (as far as I could see he only wore clothes designated for males, he did not wear any make up, etc.), his interaction with people more than resembled that of his female co-workers – in style it was exactly the same.

Studying him made me think less and less of his maleness, and more of the cleverly put together service practice. In Ethnography of a neighbourhood café, Laurier et al. (2001) suggests that the employees at a café skilfully created an informal, living room-like atmosphere by using different ethnomethods, such as shouting to each other and arranging the tables in a certain way. Similarly, the employees working at the reception used different methods to perform place-appropriate service; they dressed neatly, smiled a lot and organised postcards and other merchandise carefully at the desk, and so on. Researchers interested in gender and work has claimed that men employed in the service sector actually perform femininity and that the overall expansion of the service sector has lead to a feminisation of work (see McDowell 1994, 1997).\footnote{For an interesting discussion about the notion of feminisation, see Adkins (2001).} Rather than analysing situations and looking at the practices involved, be they pre-coded feminine or masculine, as well as what is achieved by them, the sex/gender category as interpretation scheme is largely kept unaltered in such research. Not that that necessarily is wrong or problematic, but it may end up obfuscating important aspects of what is going on. Researchers may end up producing more sex/gender than the people they are examining. I am not suggesting that the
employees at the reception desk were performing gender neutral practices; but
that we have to look a little bit past gender if we wish to understand what
background expectancies they are primarily orienting themselves towards. In
short, the situation itself can tell us more about what people are doing, than a
pre-identified identity (or body) category.

Producing other relational pairs and categories

Below I will make something of a detour in order to analyse the general
production of categories at the museum. It may seem as we are going off track
completely, that the route taken is not linked to the purpose of this study in any
way, but there are, as we shall see, connections. Overall, the members at the
museum were able to utilise the machinery quite extensively and perform a lot
of categorisation work. The important thing about categories is, to quote
Stokoe (2006:182-83), that:

…people can do things with them. They can accomplish bits of
interactional business by selecting particular categories, by describing
people in one way rather than another way, and by formulating and
reforming categories and descriptions.

The museum, which is supposed to be progressive and take a stance for
diversity (I was told by several upstairs), as a situation demands that
categorisation work can be carried out in a knowledgeable way. Policies (written
and verbal) of gender equality and diversity, as well as a general do-good-
ambition, play an important part when the employees at the museum try to
coordinate their commonsensical background expectancies. Below is a piece
from an interview with Gustav, an upstairer. We have been discussing the
importance of a sex/gender-mixed workplace and are ready to take it to the
next level:

Gustav: If you throw in age in the mix and look at it anthropologically, sort of, it becomes a
bit like a family, you function better in a group, I think, that consist of people of different sex
and age. You co-operate better, if I were to end up with seven other guys, all of the same age,
then we will co-operate fairly well, but we will do exactly the same thing, we won’t be able to
think outside a pretty narrow bubble, one suspects
Gustav: And there are obvious benefits with a mixed group

Annika: What other components in gender equality do you find important? Except to mix the sexes?

Gustav: Well, age, to mix it, from eighteen to — sixty five

Gustav plays a professional card when attempting to put together an argument that will demonstrate his competence in this area: “look at it anthropologically”. To my knowledge he is not an anthropologist, and that is of little concern, because what is important is that he claims to see things from a certain perspective. This will help his argument along, but only if the other members buy into the perspective. I do, since I do not question it. I will simply call the device used perspective device, since it organises the common sense put forward in a point-of-view sense.43 Gustav suggests that a workplace benefits from being anthropologically correct, i.e. staffed by people of both genders/sexes and different ages. Since I am a categorised scholar, Gustav may pitch himself as academically inclined to place himself closer to me, so that we can have a decent conversation, or he may simply believe that the situation calls for scientific investigation. He also draws on a family analogy to get his notion across, when saying that “it becomes a bit like a family”. Family is given status as something positive and understood as including both females and males.

Instead of pushing the idea that gender equality in fact is about gender equality and try to lead the conversation away from distractions such as age, I ask about what other components may be important and Gustav is quick to strengthen his original claim by once again asserting age.44 Note how he draws on formal work legislation: “from eighteen to — sixty five”. Many of the members touched upon the subject of age and nationality, claiming that the museum could do a better job at finding supplementary people from these categories. At least in terms of nationality and ethnicity, the museum was understood as being decidedly Swedish, which is interesting, considering the fact that some of the employees in fact came from neighbouring countries like Denmark. People

43 When asking the members about gender- and sexuality perspectives in the previous chapter, I thus wanted them to account for respectively perspective device.
44 In Sweden, the term “jämställdhet” is supposed to denote equality between women and men, but the participants quite often used jämställdhet when talking about equality between all sorts of relational pairs and categories.
from other Nordic countries did not count, it seemed, perhaps because they were almost Swedish (i.e. not real immigrants)? At the same time as homogeneity was seen as a problem it was, however, defended by some members who claimed that a natural habitat can never be artificially constructed, for example by the allocation of quotas. Here is an excerpt from the group interview with the technical unit:

Michael: Yeah, but instead of placing a number of men and women in every unit because of quotas, if you consider the organisation as a whole to be gender equal, then I think we should be happy with that and instead look at what each individual in question can do, that’s what’s important.

Annika: Yes

Michael: When you hire someone it’s about looking for, you can’t allocate.

Richard: No, it’s---

Michael: It’s not fair to anyone really, you overlook certain things, you’re not entitled to a job because you’re of a certain sex.

Richard: Me I think it should be about qualifications.

Jimmy: If there’s a guy and a girl at an employment interview and they have the same qualifications and there’s already more men in the group, in that sort of situation it’s OK to choose the girl.

Something happens. Jimmy risks breaking the interaction flow when he changes the premise by suggesting that women and men may have comparable qualifications. The common sense established so far by Michael and Richard depends on the premise that the imagined applicants clearly differ in this respect. We could say that they use a form of criteria device and thus are able to produce the truth that allocation of quotas is not a good idea. Jimmy messes with this by disregard the criteria (that the applicants are unevenly qualified) and then concludes that there are cases when the quota procedure is acceptable.

Annika: Yes
Michael: (smiles a little) It’s lovely to advert that ”we prefer male applicants”, then you might miss out on these capable girls because they may not apply

Michael acts as if he has not heard Jimmy. Instead he keeps building his case, this time by throwing a warning in the mix. We may lose (female) competence if we ask for applicants of a certain (other) category. By smiling and adding an ironic twist, ”it’s lovely”, he discredits people holding other opinions.

Jimmy: But then there’s some other group who feels like they are being discriminated against already at the application stage, they say

Jimmy does not give up – once again he makes an effort to complicate the common sense produced by the other members by bringing in new aspects. People may experience that they are being discriminated against before their competence is even reviewed, he suggests.

Annika: Yeah, they lose the complicated names, we know that much

I pick up his thread, flesh it out: ”they lose the complicated names”, and utilise the collective device: ”we know that much”.

Richard: Yeah, it’s been proven

By whom? We shall never know, for we are on the roll here, no need to explain anything to anyone anymore.

Annika: Yes, it has, actually

Settled then, and successfully at that, because:

Richard: So, wasn’t it proposed that they shouldn’t include names, what became of that?

Richard joins in, adding a question (to the current authorities - Jimmy and I).

Annika: I really don’t know, but I think it’s interesting, that way you can’t see whether it’s a man or a woman, or someone with foreign background or from Sweden. I wonder if that would change anything
The polarisation device is used by me to slice the population into females and males, Swedes and non-Swedes (another relational pair?), at the same time as I am wondering if a system where applicants’ membership in different groups remains unknown would change anything. In the conversation that followed after this, Jimmy suggested that it would not: “A racist workplace will not become any less racist”. Richard asserted that as an employer, he would not take nameless applications seriously and Michael underlined that we have to target and educate the employers, it should not be up to future employees to fix categorisation problems (my interpretation, not his exact words). The meaning of categories and how we should deal with categorisation problems was something most members were able to discuss with great conversational dexterity, which is demonstrated above. They would fearlessly address issues of gender, nationality, ethnicity, age, and, occasionally, physical disability.

Class was, interestingly, a different matter, only one or two of the upstairs talked explicitly about class as a category. More or less implicitly many of them used higher education and cultural know-how as criteria when assessing people and people’s behaviour. Previously in this chapter I talked about the technicians as the main offenders/victims when the body count routine was performed, with the women at the reception as a close second. I will now add that there was another group which could have been pointed out as problematic for the same reason as the technicians – the archaeologists. During a period of time all of the employed archaeologists at the museum were male. A female upstairer, with a kind eye to the technicians, made me aware of this. This strengthens the suspicion that members of certain professions, which demanded higher education, were made safe in a PC sense. While the technicians would not use the concept of class to make this power asymmetry intelligible, they said that people higher up in the hierarchy would sometimes, for example, take out their frustration on them because of their residence at the very bottom of the organisation. One of them told me about an incident where a technician was humiliated before the entire museum and he ended the story with the words “no one would ever say that to an academic”. It was obvious that the articulation of the underdog position was important to them, both in terms of open resistance and in the making of comradery among the fellow unit’ers.

As asserted earlier, the members of the museum were encouraged to present themselves as well-informed members of society and to acknowledge the meaning of all of the big, by academia and politics, recognised categories. Part
of Sacks's (1992) machinery is indeed intensively frequented by researchers using an intersectionality perspective. According to Mulinari and de los Reyes (2005:9, my translation): “An intersectionality perspective asks questions about how power and inequality is woven into notions of whiteness, maleness, sex/gender identity, heterosexuality, class identity, etc.”. There is an ever growing body of work on intersections between various structures of power, see for instance Prieur (1997), Skeggs (1997), Jackson (1999), Nagel (2000), Schippers (2000) and Trautner (2005). During the second wave of feminism, many researchers and political advocates stated that there were many structures of power to take into account and that the relationship between them was something that needed closer examination. One of the key texts produced was Davis's (1981) *Women, Race and Class*, in which the interrelated workings of sexism, racism and class are discerned (see also hooks 1984 and Collins 1986).45

Quite understandably, it is tiresome to keep track of all of the categories in the machinery, i.e. the categories which can be intelligibly produced by members of society in different situations. We encompass so many possible categories as individuals, but which ones do we consider and make relevant, as we move through the social landscape?

There were of course different uses of categories and so different ways to do the PC discourse. At times knowledge of the categorisation system was utilised in a purely satirical fashion. From the field notes:

> Had lunch upstairs. It's a bit funny how some of the employees who gather here hardly say anything to each other while they eat. Today Victor sat at one table, reading, Michael at another, reading as well, and then Miriam showed up and grabbed a third. Victor offered me to sit by him, but I told him that “today I’m doing it museum style”, and chose my own table as well. After a while, John entered. He said hi to me when he passed me by and then sat down at the other end of Michael’s table. They started to talk with somewhat muddled voices about something work-related, I think. A couple of minutes later Linda, Christina, Charlotte, Anna and Lisa appeared and suddenly the lunch room was filled with talk and laughter. They all sat down at the same table. They all put their food onto plates, instead of eating straight out of the lunch box (must remember to do the same if I decide to lunch with them).

45 This is not a new way of understanding and theorising the social. As pointed out by Lykke (2003), it stretches back to the 19th and early 20th century, when issues of gender, class and race were being addressed simultaneously by some feminists.
A conversation emerged between the John and Michael-table and the women-table. They talked about this and that and then one of the women (think it was Christina) said something about a job opening at the museum, and she wondered if the others knew of anyone who had applied for it. Michael answered that the director’s office probably would like to hire someone “with a different nationality”, and John suggested that that person should not only be a “foreigner”, but “have a physical handicap as well, he’d better be blind”. They all laughed at this. Me too. "Or she”, Michael added, looking at me.

Here we make fun of the PC discourse at the museum and the meaning of the categorisation system at large. It may be to stretch things, but I will suggest that the members sense that there is emptiness in the machinery. That it is, at least partly, an organising device, a social compass, rather than anything else. This is why people are able to spot stereotypes and clichés (just to buy into some other stereotype or cliché in the next situation they enter). In the situation described above, John uses satire, “he’d better be blind”, to point out and make fun of the inherent value that is placed in categories and, perhaps, the very quest for diversity. Because of the PC discourse at the museum, which the members had do relate to and use in one way or the other, it was best for them, in certain situations (and in interaction with certain people?), to play the correct PC cards, but in situations framed like the one above, it was equally important for them to be able to have fun with these cards. Producing political correctness at the museum was thus a quite delicate project, since being PC (in a non-satirical way) in fact could be considered non-PC in some situations.

To summarise

I will start by defining the two new devices I have found; statistics device and perspective device. With a statistics device the members are able to produce an account of relevant numbers in different respects and with a perspective device the type of common sense used can be properly labelled (as anthropological, commonsensical, etc.). In a slightly different guise this latter device is often used when framings need to be negotiated – we remember Mona’s and Gustav’s discussion (see p.76). They are both using a form of perspective device when assessing a certain episode at the museum; Gustav asserts that it is necessary to use a political perspective in order to make sense of the event (which, then, could be labelled as sexual harassment) and Mona tries to put
across that the only perspective needed is a commonsensical one. All of the devices I have defined so far organise, in some way, common sense in conversation. They are not like the ethnomethods Laurier et al. (2001) distinguished at the café (the employees speaking in loud voices, a certain way of organising the tables) or the ones I suggest that the members at the reception use (laughter, a special dress-code etc.). This thread will be picked up again in chapter 7.

So, to summarise, I found the routinely used concept blokeish and the doing of the body count routine interesting. The body count routine is understood as the members’ operationalisation of issues regarding gender equality at the museum. When given praxeological validity in interaction, it can be used to organise the different working units (as well as their members) and place them in a moral hierarchy. The badness of blokeish and girlish members/professions is often treated as self-explanatory, however at some instances blokeish and girlish behaviour is defined as the tendency to uninhibitedly sexualise the opposite sex/gender collective, i.e. to heterosexualise too much. Accounting for “undiluted” sex (homosociality) as dangerous is important to many members at the museum because otherwise they risk coming across as incompetent practioneers of the PC discourse. The act of condemning single-sexed groups also works to construe the body count routine as a legitimate operationalisation of the problem of gender equality.

The members routinely establish women and men as a standardised relational pair by utilising certain parts of the MCD in interaction. They pair women and men as co-workers, parents, role models and builders of sandcastles, usually at an abstract level. In most cases pairing of the sexes is accounted for with references to either a sound, natural habitat or gender equality. Other categories and relational pairs, such as age nationality, disability, Swedes and non-Swedes (“foreigners”), can easily be produced as well. Class is however rarely established directly in conversation. Instead it seems as if background expectancies regarding uneducated (working class) men are put to use when blokeishness is to be localised.
6. To get the framing straight

I struggled with this chapter to the very end. When starting the analytical work in chapter 4, I immediately dug into the interviews. I had experience of analysing interviews from before and felt comfortable with that kind of material. The sheer fact that I was reluctant to really dig into the field notes reveals a methodological insecurity, but at this juncture the field notes started to make more and more sense. I think of this as a result of a personal research process, where my ethnographical (as well as ethnomethodological) mode had gradually deepened. At this point of the analytical process I also felt sure that my initial interest in sexuality had been severely misguided. It appeared as if the everyday pairing-up of women and men, explored in chapter 5, in seemingly non-sexual ways was the foundation of what I tentatively had begun to call the heterosocial order (instead of the heterosexual order). The idea was to explore this notion further and in a way I did, but because of the growing confidence as analyst of observations, things took a slightly different turn.

The act of straight-framing

When first entering the field I knew that heterosexual assumptions was something to look out for because, as Weeks et al. (2001:80) state: "The heterosexual assumption plays a key part in shaping a sense of what are ‘appropriate’ and ‘natural’ ways of being in the world”. If I am assumed to be heterosexual almost every day of my life, chances are that if self-identified as heterosexual, I will have no reason do doubt myself as an emotional, relational and sexual being, but if self-identified as Othersexual, I risk doubting myself in many ways, my very right to fall in love, engage in sexualised interaction, etc. Everyday heterosexual assumptions, even though they may seem innocent enough, thus help to normalise of the heterosexual way of life. That is why I had to spot instances of heterosexual assumptions.

My imaginary boyfriend

As I got to know the members and the surroundings at the museum, I felt certain that heterosexual assumptions would be made by most people all the time. But they were not, at least not in such a manner that it was an easy job to
detect them. Of course it was often possible to retrace everyday chit-chat to some sort of hetero-oriented world view, but there was also the ever present danger of falling into one’s own trap, i.e. to make a heterosexual assumption in order to point one out. Nevertheless, it was surprising to come across so few instances of obvious heterosexualisation. It is not unthinkable that my presence played a part in this regard.

Something else to keep in mind is the fact that many of the members knew each other and so knew who was in what kind of sexual-amorous relationship or not. Someone saying “hey, looking fancy today, going home with a guy, eh?” or something similar, to a high profile person like Monica (who is living with a man since quite some time), can only with some difficulty be interpreted as making a heterosexual assumption. True, we may not know if Monica identifies herself as bisexual or something else which may encompass same-sex sexual activity. We can however assume that probably it is not first and foremost a heterosexual assumption rendering the remark possible, but actual knowledge about Monica’s sexual whereabouts. Here it becomes clear that an ethnographical approach provides the researcher with other analytical opportunities (as well as problems) than a, for example, clean-cut interview study would. A comment like that, however, still plays a part in the organisation of reality. Even though it may not serve as an example of a heterosexual assumption, it is in no way unimportant.

When trying to spot heterosexual assumptions, I relied on myself as primary resource. This for practical reasons: I knew that the members did not have a clue about my civil status or sexual-amorous preferences. And I succeeded. Ralf needs no further introduction:

Annika: Would you say that it’s common that such unusual objects are found in graves?

Ralf: Yeah, it happens all the time, but I can’t give an exact percentage, but it does. So and that, from the material you gain the insight that what we interpret as masculine and feminine today maybe wasn’t…but we have to build everything on material culture and I mean, it’s enough that you put on your boyfriend’s old pants and shirt, and we’re almost there, you know

Here I am provided with a boyfriend for the sake of the argument. As already mentioned, Ralf identifies as a sort of teacher, and when he, at the end of the conversation, refers to my (imagined) boyfriend, it is because he wants to make
a pedagogical point. He illustrates the argument made by asking me to view myself as a possible gender bender, which is a little bit funny considering that I am wearing men’s shorts and a men’s shirt at the time. As a side-effect he hetero-identifies me, in fact he has to in order to make his point. It is of course possible that he notice my shorts and shirt and is trying to suss out my sexual orientation, but in that case it is still interesting (and reality constitutive) that he starts by dangling heterosexuality as bait before me. If I am assumed to be straight and am not, there might be a problem. It does not have to be by default, Ralf’s point is not, after all, that I have a boyfriend, but that being an archaeologist is confusing at times. Anyway, I can choose to out Ralf as a heterosexist, or lay low and let him continue to error, but the responsibility to decide our future interaction inevitably falls into my lap. Ralf is probably happily unaware of what is going on. This was the very first obvious heterosexualisation I stumbled upon and although it was obvious enough, it was not very exciting. Probably because I did not quite know what to do with it at the time.

A similar thing happened with David in the art gallery. We were talking about his new born baby and how his life had changed lately. From the field notes:

_He told me that he feels a bit like a UFO when he is to choose baby food in the store. He advised me to have a baby and I said that the pain frightens me, he answered that his wife has already forgotten about it. “Yes”, I replied, “but maybe I should have it together with someone”, and he agreed that it would be good if the “man was in the picture”. “If only for the financial part”, I suggested, but he said that he was thinking primarily in terms of moral support._

It is established by David that there would be a man involved in my pregnancy, I am thus heterosexualised. I do not correct or question him, but instead invoke a deepening of the heterosexual assumption by saying “if only for the financial part”. Assumptions like the one David is making must be immediately falsified, I think, or they simply become a silent premise for the rest of the interaction. My comment about finances allows for all sorts of background expectancies to enter our conversation. Garfinkel and Rawls (2006) asserts that an actor becomes an identified other when she is recognised as legitimately belonging to a certain situation. How she is fitted in the situation by the other members is of the utmost importance when it comes to what kind of common sense can be utilised and established, and by indicating that I would physically give birth to a
baby, I open the door to a rather conventional usage of the heterosexual matrix (as part of the MCD). Babies, obviously, enter peoples' lives in different ways.

An important feature of the interaction described above is that everything is done in such a self-evident way. I am simply heterosexualised and all the possible groundwork that could have been of interest in another situation is bypassed. In the previous two chapters, it is obvious that the members are able to haggle quite a bit over what common sense a certain situation demands. In groundwork-situations we know that different cards can be put on the table and that something is up for discussion. That is not the case here. And because there is no discussion about the framing, it becomes more of a challenge to try to re-frame the situation. That members heterosexualise each other can of course troublesome from the points of view of Othersexual members, but if we look at the overall interaction we see that these heterosexual assumptions are just the tip of the iceberg.

**Direct straight-framing**

The making of heterosexual assumptions might be understood as hetero-identified people passively expecting others to be straight, but from an EM perspective people who say and do things are never inactive (even people lying absolutely still without making a sound may actively be co-producing a situation). They may be highly embedded in the natural attitude (see Schutz 1967) and unaware of the implications of what they are doing by large, but they are almost always productive in interaction. In order to produce a heterosexualised frame for interaction, the members need to successfully hetero-identify themselves as well as the others present in a casually sophisticated way. David accomplishes this beautifully when simply stating that it would be good if the “man was in the picture”. He seems to suggest this out of care for me – it is about me having the necessary moral support. The support part is of course troublesome in its own right, since it automatically turns me, the categorised woman, into primary parent.

Below is an example of how women and men at the museum would interact on the basis of heterosexual assumptions, or heterosexuality, rather. I am conducting an informal interview with Charlotte while she is working at the reception desk. From the field notes:
We kept getting interrupted, which was a bit annoying. However, it gave me a chance to observe Charlotte as she served customers and interacted with colleagues. She has some serious social skills, it seems, handling every obstacle effectively and without ever losing her approachability. Roland (from the technical unit) turned up at one point, asking if she knew about the whereabouts of Michael. Charlotte said she didn’t know where Michael was and Roland then asked in a mock-accusatory voice; “don’t you keep track of your men here at the museum?”, which made Charlotte laugh. She answered; “Not all the time, no. I had no idea that you would pop by like this, for instance”. Roland replied; “so that was a nice surprise then?”, and Charlotte laughed and said; “Yes, very nice”, then she added with a mock-strictness in her voice: “Now go and do some work, will you”. Roland laughed, waved at her and trod off. I don’t know what to make of this, but I know I recognise the way they related to each other. It was almost as if they pretended to be a couple or something.

What is going on between Roland and Charlotte? They act as if they share something, a common, relational ground of some sort, and voilà, instant interactional pleasure: Charlotte laughed and said: “Yes, very nice”. Charlotte and Roland mutually produce each other as a heterosexed relational pair in this situation. By heterosexed I mean that they interact as members of the categories female and male, and embodiedly so, and that they relate to each other as if connected specifically because of their membership in these particular categories.46 I will refer to this act as direct straight-framing. Of course the members would share moments of fun and pleasure in all sorts of constellations, as friends, colleagues etc., but what sets this type of interaction apart is its explicitly sexed (in a double meaning) nature. All the groundwork is skipped, women and men are not being established as a relational pair, instead this relation is enacted. No questions asked.

A parallel can be drawn to Goffman’s (1981:128) idea of “footing”, i.e. peoples attempt to position themselves appropriately vis-a-vis each other in interaction. A lecturer, for instance, has a certain footing, with a set of responsibilities and rights attached to it, and a student has another. In direct straight-framing

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46 One might ask how I know that Roland and Charlotte interact as man and woman. After all, Roland does not say “Woman Charlotte, do you know where Michael is?”. In chapter 3 I offered a brief description of how the members at the museum routinely try to achieve membership in the sex/gender categories female and male, and Roland and Charlotte are by no means exceptions in this regard. There is little doubt in my mind that the members utilise the two-sex system exclusively when enacting sex/gender and the question is not whether they interact as women and men, but rather in what situations they make these categories to matter.
activity the members must find footing as women and men, and they must also find a way of relating these footings to one another without it seeming strange or uncalled for. The idea presented in the summary above, to further explore a heterosocial order, begins to sound a little bit problematic since there seems to be something sexually related going on in the interaction between Charlotte and Roland (albeit implicitly). Sex is also sort of present in the interaction between David and me – most likely David pictures me in bed with the man that should be in the child-raising picture. Perhaps sex in different forms, sometimes as in overtly sexualised actions, sometimes as a silent premise or simply hinted at, cannot easily be taken out of the once sexed body?47

There is something ritualistic about the way Charlotte and Roland are interacting. Collins (2004:7), drawing on both Durkheim and Goffman, says that “ritual is a mechanism of mutually focused emotion and attention producing a momentarily shared reality, which thereby generates solidarity”. In this case the interaction produced clearly resulted in (temporary) intimacy and a feel-good atmosphere for the members involved, a form of solidarity, if you will. I watched this type of interaction take place on a regular basis and, it seemed, in all sorts of situations. On a couple of occasions I found myself merged in a female collective, one or several women talking to me as women, anticipating me to answer as a woman as well. Below is an excerpt from the interview with Julia, an upstairer. We have discussed nudity in exhibitions and how women may get upset when female bodies are displayed in inappropriate ways. I ask:

Annika: Mm, but is it OK to display male bodies?

Julia: Nah, but to display both

Annika: Yes

Julia: And then if there would be only nude men (laughs) then…

47 As Lundahl (1998) notes, the relationship between the sexed body and sexuality has a history. It was not until the 19th century that a particular connection between anatomy, desire and character was mapped out in scientific literature (later to be conceptualised as the heterosexual matrix, by Butler). Acts of “lesbianism”, for instance, could then be understood as performed by a male soul trapped inside a female body. According to Wallenberg (2002) however, this connection has been “known” in the European context for a lot longer than that and gender benders, i.e. males allowing themselves to be penetrated and females penetrating other females (to my knowledge she does not write about females penetrating males) with dildos, has risked being labelled perverse since at least the middle ages.
Annika: Yeah, what would happen then? (laughs)

Julia: Then maybe we wouldn't say anything (laughs), but isn't that the way women are? And men don't yell as much

Annika: It's pretty interesting why it gets so controversial sometimes…

Julia: Yeah, but it's like men say about this debate, that (something inaudible) more women get involved, isn't it? That when men are being ridiculed in commercials and stuff, it's women who address it

Annika: Yeah

Julia: To show that we're not only working for women

I am included by Julia in a female collective, "then maybe we wouldn't say anything, but isn't that the way women are?", and taught how to relate both to the female and male membership groups. I will stand alongside other women and yell at public display of female nudity, but when male bodies are being displayed, I will stand in the female collective in silence. I will, in short, relate differently to female and male bodies. The silence of women in relation to male nudity may be caused by some sort of heterosexual interest or at least latent heterosexuality, but that remains uncertain. However, if men are being ridiculed in commercials, I will fight for their rights in an attempt to use a consistency device and so appear more trustworthy: "To show that we're not only working for women". I am, in two different respects, told that I am a hypocrite just for being a woman, but Julia gets away with this, probably because she is utilising a collective device and so includes herself in the accused collective. In most situations she would probably be seen as being merely conscientious. I remain silent because I am researching her.

While this piece of conversation could be interpreted as taking place within just a gender equality frame, since we discuss the problem of displaying female flesh, there is a larger, implicit frame to consider. There is a reason why it can be argued that showing female genitalia and breasts is problematic in the first place – the existence of a male collective with a heterosexual and exploitative interest in women's bodies. But this collective, of course, has to be produced in
the interaction. Julia and I (since I do no protest) straight-frame this snippet of interaction then, by producing us as beings belonging to a group called women, establishing the existence of another group called men and relating the two through the problem of public (female) nudity. These interactions, where women or men in same-sex constellations straight-frame situations, are as important for the overall making of “straightness” as women’s and men’s mutual production of each other as heterosexed relational pair in mixed-sex constellations, but here I will primarily focus on the latter. This is only a matter of limiting the analytical scope in order to increase manageability and depth perception. I am not utilising a grading device.

Mock direct straight-framing

Direct straight-framing is characterised by the members relating to each other, not only as a heterosexed relational pair, but doing so overtly. When Roland humorously confronts Charlotte with the accusative question “don’t you keep track of your men here at the museum?”, he puts them in a direct relationship with couple-like connotations. Charlotte’s answer, “not all the time, no. I had no idea that you would pop by like this, for instance”, continues to build the current straight-frame, because it, even more than Roland’s comment, connects the two of them as specific individuals. Below is an example of what I have chosen to call mock (or fake) straight-framing. The actors do not pretend to be a (heterosexual) couple, they merely position themselves as a heterosexed relational pair. The term mock straight-framing is not to be taken too literally. The point is simply that there are different forms of straight-framing activities and that these ought to be recognised. From the field notes:

When we sat there, David (one of the technicians) walked by and he just beamed. He and Andrea quickly started to talk about his recent dad-ship. I felt a little bit like an outsider, didn’t know what to contribute with. Andrea said something like “it’s the worst thing when the fathers complain during delivery” and then told a story about a guy who (during delivery) asked his wife/girlfriend if she was in pain. David laughed and replied something like ‘yeah, what a nice thing to hear when you lie there’. Andrea laughed back and said that her man did in fact complain about a back pain when she gave birth. David laughed again and responded “I think I managed to avoid saying things like that”. At this point it was like I zoomed out and suddenly watched them from a distance. It struck me that the way they moved and talked usually is a sign of deep intimacy between the
parties involved. It was as if they had shared this special event and now talked about it. I know I have witnessed this (or something similar) before, but not been able to put it into words. It was like Andrea and David really bonded, instantly and effortlessly. And perhaps only for that moment?

I had never seen Andrea and David interact this way earlier, and to my knowledge they did not have reason to – they were just ordinary colleagues. They did not spend time together outside of work, but they liked each other well enough. Right from the beginning they speak as if they in fact had shared a profound moment, they skip a lot of ground work (like trying to establish what, really, they had shared) and head straight for the juicy part – interactional intimacy. It is important to note that they did not just compare experiences in general, but framed the interaction so that there was a legible female and a male part. When listening to Andrea, David could have conveyed his wife’s experiences of giving birth or asked Andrea questions about ditto, but instead he jumps into the male part and thus positions himself opposite Andrea (although he is not speaking as if he was her man), whereas talking about his wife’s experiences would have placed him, to expand the analogy, beside her. Skipping the ground work like this is really an act of faith, since the gesture so easily can be rejected. It is difficult to tell if it is Andrea or David who takes the leap, but I suggest that it is primarily David who initiates the heterosexual relational pair interaction by saying “I think I managed to avoid saying things like that”, thereby starting to co-tell the story from the male position. That they co-tell is essential – it is how they bond. But it is possible that Andrea is heading in this direction already when stating that “it’s the worst thing when the fathers complain during the delivery”.

Perhaps some would say that the birth of a child is very unique, and that people therefore tend/are expected to bond when talking about childbirth-related things, independently of their membership in sex/gender collectives. But I argue that something else is going on as well. David and Andrea are giving each other exclusive attention, almost as if I was not there. In direct straight-framing (mock or not) this exclusiveness is important, since it allows members to enter a more personal form of interaction. What is the point of distinguishing mock direct straight-framing from “real” direct straight-framing? Well, it seems to me like the real version demands more trust on behalf of the actors and perhaps it delivers more, ritualistically speaking. Besides, it appears as if different situations call for different approaches. It would have been plain odd if Andrea
would have started to refer to David as her man, or something to that effect, during their interaction. Garfinkel and Rawls (2006:41) assert that:

Strategies and tactics are for bringing order in and through the contingencies of the situation. This is only possible if the strategies are themselves situated. Transcendent symbols and values are of no use for this purpose – as their meaning requires contexting.

Straight-framing as a strategy for creating pleasure must be situationally designed, then, and the details of the different situations should not be overlooked in research, but understood as an inextricable part of the straight-framing being done.

**Indirect straight-framing**

Indirect straight-framing means that the members do not relate directly to each other as individuals, but instead take general heterosexed positions in interaction. While they do not place themselves vis-à-vis each other in a heterosexual constellation, they do respond as either female or male. From the field notes:

*The downstairs lunchroom was kind of crowded when I got there, mostly by allrounders and downstairs. I got a cup of coffee and sat down next to Christina. They talked about how pupils behave in school nowadays, the habitual use of crude and vulgar language, and how the teachers have no means of control. John was in charge of the interaction, it seemed, and at one point he announced that girls were called “whores” back when he was still in school as well: “Crude language isn’t something new”. Several people nodded as this, despite the fact that they seconds earlier had asserted the “whore”-increase. John then continued by addressing the differences between school and work: “What goes on in school could never happen here”. “Thank god”, Linda quickly responded at this. I turned to Frank, Christina and the others and asked me back: “How do you know what’s a sexual harassment or not in the first place?”, and I shrugged. Frank said that it’s about knowing who you can joke around with, and who you need to be a little bit careful around. Almost everyone working at the museum can take a joke, according to him. Rita added that certain clothes send certain signals and that: “Perhaps you’re not entirely without guilt yourself”. John leaned forward at*
this and said to the room: “The tension between the sexes at work is something very delightful, at a workplace with just men or women, well, it’s more fun if it’s mixed, and you have to realise that occasionally sparks will flare up”. Christina turned to me: “Yeah, that’ll happen whenever there are both men and women at a workplace”. Two separate conversations emerged after this, one concerned sexualised jargon in the police force and another one love at work (couldn’t hear that one very well, because of my position in the room).

This situation starts out as an ordinary coffee break, with the members discussing a media-heated issue in a semi-engaged way, but it transforms the second I ask “so sexual harassment could never be an issue here at the museum?”, into something resembling a group interview. This was not my intention, it happened because I clearly took the identity of researcher, but it turned out very interesting. Someone then puts me in my place by demonstrating that my question is questionable, “how do you know what’s a sexual harassment or not in the first place?” and I stand corrected (shrug, make no attempt to legitimise the question posed). Frank picks up the thread by framing sexual harassment as a matter of how you can or cannot make jokes around people. It seems as if he situates himself as a possible perpetrator, rather than a possible victim, and from this perspective he is able to asses that most of the employees are not potential victims (of his). Continuing within the current framing, Rita asserts that “victims” of sexual harassment may not be innocent, but rather ask for a certain treatment by sending out the wrong signals. She situates herself as a possible victim, I suggest, when saying: “perhaps you’re not entirely without guilt yourself”. Here Frank and Rita take heterosexed positions without actually going into a face-to-face interaction and addressing each other explicitly.

In this situation women and men are also produced as a standardised relational pair through the articulation of inevitable heterosexual desire; “and you have to realise that occasionally sparks will flare up”. This desire is evaluated as “very delightful”, a bit queer, one may think, considering that only seconds earlier the conversation took place at the other end of the scale, focusing on problematic aspects of (hetero)sexual encounters at work. How is this possible? Basically through the use of John’s polarisation of school and work. Truly bad sexual behaviour can be left in school, so to speak, and the sexualised interaction between adults at work thus analysed from within a different interpretation scheme. At work it becomes fuzzy, where to draw the line between acceptable and unacceptable sexualised behaviour, and are there any real victims of
sexualised behaviour anyway? The potential badness of (hetero)sexualised behaviour is made relative, step by step, until heterosexual desire can be labelled delightful and men and women organised as a relational pair, in purely a positive sense, without it seeming strange at all.

There is of course more to straight-framing at a general level (maybe direct straight-framing first and foremost): The possibility of flirtation and the production of sexual interaction. To let people know that you are in the mood for some hot, hetero (inter)action demands skills, and whereas I never witnessed such skills being put to use in person, I was told that such events in fact took place at the museum. This is something that would have been interesting to delve deeper into, how the members take the straight-framing further and actually do sex. However, considering the limitations of the collected material and the, usually, private nature of such interaction, we shall have to make do without this end of the straight-framing spectrum.

To play the gender equality-card

So, back to the trench where we started this journey in chapter 1. Ralf and Tina continue to sort out material. The day is almost at an end and by now I just want to go home and pull a blanket over my head. It has been a lovely day outdoors, but I feel overwhelmingly incompetent and fantasise about just doing interviews from now on. It is safer. Interviewees know that their job is to provide the researcher with clear-cut answers, they do not just poke around with trowels while talking about different layers of dirt. Luckily, this feeling gave in after a couple of days and I was back on the horse with my notepad.

At the excavation site I considered the possibility that some notion of the sexes as complementary actors was at play (i.e. the sexes as a standardised relational pair), but I did not really get anywhere with this thought. Later I learned that it is common practice at the museum to put both a female and a male archaeologist at every excavation, in the name of gender equality. In other words; the main reason why Ralf and Tina worked together that day was because, to some influential people at the museum (and perhaps to the archaeologists as well?), it seemed to solve the practical problem of gender inequality. Putting Tina and Ralf in the trench represents a recognisable, but perhaps not always agreed upon, answer to a recognisable question. How
should we accomplish gender equality? Let us make sure that both sexes get access to the power/information/material, and have a say in all matters concerning peoplekind. We might say that a gender equality-card had been played, and that the excavation situation was rigged according to the body count routine. Gender equality-cards were indeed played quite often at the museum and this section deals with this particular activity and its relation to straight-framing.

We, experts and representatives from the museum alongside representatives from the municipal executive committee, have been taking a look at cultural heritage spots in a nearby municipal. It is time for lunch. A restaurant has prepared for our company and we all sit down at the same table, quite randomly. I am the only vegetarian and a special dish must be prepared for me, and this, I learn, will take a while. I am asked a series of well-meaning questions about what it is like being a vegetarian, if I get the necessary nutrients, and so on. I look at the plates that are being placed at the table as we speak and note that they are not too impressive, vitamin-wise. “I’ve managed to stay alive for quite a while now”, I reply with a hint of dryness. It is a narrow path to walk. I cannot afford to be openly critical of their questions, but neither can I show full acceptance of the fact that it is I who is being questioned. Vegetarians, much like feminists, are in many situations turned into the opinionated part (whereas meat-eating is rendered neutral) and secretly held responsible if the interaction flow is broken. Caught up in this event, I am not aware of what is going on at the other end of the table. That is about to change rapidly. From the field notes:

From out of nowhere a male, municipal commissioner (I suppose, he wasn’t from the museum anyway) suddenly said, in a rather loud voice that most of us seemed to register: “Maybe we would be better off if things were more like in the Arab countries. The women there don’t have any rights at all”. A woman sitting somewhere across the table from the man who had spoken (I did not recognise her voice) quickly responded: “We would never allow that”, and after this a couple of comments were cast in haste. I could not make out the exact words, but they appeared to be similar to the ones already uttered – we, the men, could have more power, we, the women, would resist. To me, this is a serious topic, but the atmosphere was warm and quite relaxed, with a hint of something spicy. A woman from the museum (don’t know her name, we haven’t been introduced) said: “Well, having all that power, how much fun would it be after a while?”, and another male, municipal commissioner picked up the thread: “No, a lot of
things aren’t exactly fun when it comes to this matter”. It was as if something was resolved by this, the slight tension that had been built up disappeared. People continued to eat and chat about this and that, as if nothing had happened.

Unfortunately, I did not recognise the importance of this event when it went down and as a consequence I did not describe it as carefully as I could have when writing up the field notes. The framing is initiated by the municipal commissioner saying “maybe we would be better off if things were more like in the Arab countries. The women there don’t have any rights at all”. A more or less direct link is established between the men and women present, at least those who identify as men and women and believe that the situation calls for their participation as such. After this, a couple of men and women at the table start producing each other as a heterosexed relational pair through indirect straight-framing. They talk as women or as men, which of course is crucial, and they produce themselves as connected by the issue put on the table – men’s power over women, i.e. lack of gender equality. They share custody of a problem then, namely the problem of women and men living and interacting as a standardised but unequal relational pair. There is some meta-humour in this. As in the previous straight-framed situations, there is an underlying sense of cheerfulness. But it is not the only situational feeling, there is also tension and excitement, because we do not know how this is going to end. It however ends well, after the male municipal commissioner stating “no, a lot of things aren’t exactly fun when it comes to this matter”. I interpret this as a peace offering of sorts, a symbolic gesture which re-frames the situation and resurrects gender equality as an ideal, for both men and women.

It is interesting that despite the municipal commissioner’s reckless approach, which easily could have been accounted for as racist by the other actors and because of this sanctioned, the interaction flow is not harmed. The woman responding to his invitation, responds as a woman, “we would never allow that”, and enters straight-framing mode by utilising a collective device. I choose to label the straight-framing being done as indirect, because even though they are facing each other directly, the interaction is fairly impersonal. Nevertheless, there are definitely some elements of direct straight-framing in the mix. The woman could have commented on the possibly racist connotations (or shear narrow-mindedness) of what he said, which might have undermined him and put a stop to the whole thing. Instead she enters the “battle of the sexes” on his premises. Presumably this sort of interaction does not provide the members
with just pleasantries. To use a movie analogy, there are some thriller components in the interaction described above and it seems like the members experience some excitement. Indeed, when a gender card is played in this fashion, the uncertain outcome appears to be one of the thrills.

At times I felt like a walking, talking sign post at the museum, saying “pleased to discuss gender issues”. Regularly I found myself at the centre of discussion regarding gender equality and related topics. It seemed like the members quite often experienced a sudden need to discuss the existence of thongs for pre-adolescent girls, men’s drinking habits, etc., when I turned up. This remained alarming for quite a while and led me to believe that my presence affected the actors too much and that I thus destroyed my own data. Later I started to suspect that the members actually used me as a trigger, that I became an easy way for them to play gender equality-cards and produce some sort of straight-framed interaction. They were not always addressing me explicitly, and they were not always terribly successful. Below is an example:

It was warm so we had coffee at the usual spot behind the museum. It was me, Victor, Frank, Roland, David, Paula and another technician, I think, that I didn’t recognise. Paula and I ended up sitting next to each other, a short distance away from the rest. I tried to start up a conversation with her, but it just wouldn’t happen. She said she felt a bit ill. Lisa then joined me and Paula at one of the benches. After a while Roland said, loudly so that we could hear: “In the gender equality policy here at the museum it says that the museum should strive towards an equal division between the sexes, even though we’re fifty-fifty working now”. He glanced over at me and Lisa, but kept the interactional focus (seemingly) on the other men. Lisa replied something like: “Well, does that go for the director’s office as well, or?”. Roland shrugged at this and said: “Don’t know, but it’s a bit funny that the policy is formulated like that, when… you know”. There was a short silence and then Lisa started to talk about something else, turned to me and Paula. OK, so it happened again. What should I do when it happens? Pretend like it’s raining?

Even if Roland does not accomplish a whole lot in this situation, it is still a good example of how gender equality-cards could be played (less successfully) in everyday life at the museum. It appears as if Lisa is effectively drawn into interaction with Roland by his remark “in the gender equality policy here at the museum”. She was not the only one paying attention to what was being said, both Paula and I were keeping an eye on things. Indeed, being a female
member (or perhaps an upstairer? I am not sure which is more important, probably it depends on the situation) at the PC museum, it is your responsibility to take a stance for gender equality. Of course not all women/upstairers did, they tangled quite a bit with the PC discourse. Usually the gender equality-cards were played by men, but sometimes the roles were reversed. When a woman played such a card, for example by accounting for unequal salaries or men’s higher status in society, the men present would, much like Lisa above, act as if they were being tractor-beamed into the interaction.

Knowledge of how to play gender equality-cards could supply the male members with advantages, it appeared, because it allowed for them to enter interaction as if they were in charge, individually or as a group. It is, after all, commonsensically necessary to talk about gender equality in the first place precisely because men are understood as (or accused of, some would say) being more powerful/having more power than women. This, it seems, results in certain background expectancies beneficial to men who wish to subordinate women in this kind of interaction. At one point, one of the male downstairsers said to me, as we tried to disentangle the wires used to hang up paintings in the art gallery: “I guess I could order you to do my work as well, since I’m a man and have all the power”. This sentence was delivered with a friendly smile and it was obvious that he did not really mean to ask me to fiddle with his wires as well, but nevertheless, it put me in a position where I had to either ignore/accept his claim to power (not very PC) or somehow challenge it. I responded, contemplatively “I bet you could strangle someone with one of these wires”, and he laughed and that was that. The scenario is pretty harmless, I do not mean to suggest anything else, but when males played the gender equality-card like this and designed the conversation so that they appeared to be wearing the trousers, they were almost guaranteed a good starting position in the instant heterosexed relational pair-interaction that usually followed.

If we look at the ritualistic side of this gender equality game, we may consider additional aspects. Collins (2004:41) suggests that:

…looking inside the very group that is brought together by participating in a ritual, we can see that some individuals are more privileged than others, by being nearer to the centre of the ritual than others. Rituals thus have a double stratifying effect: between ritual
insiders and outsiders; and, inside the ritual, between ritual leaders and ritual followers.

Maybe the member initially playing the gender equality-card is in charge, at least to start with, because she becomes the ritual leader. Looking at the example with the municipal commissioner this seems rather probable. In that case, playing a gender equality-card should also be understood as an attempt to control a certain situation. From a feminist perspective it may be wholly satisfying to interpret this as just another example of how men exercise power over women, and sure, that aspect is present, but from a queer theoretical perspective, it is noticeable how most of the women did not break the heterosexed framing. In most cases they continued to act within the frames put up by the men, they danced with them, so to speak. Now, here is the rub – did they dance because it would cost them too much not to, or are there other reasons? I argue that there are. They have a lot to gain from going with the framing; they instantly become intelligible as females, they attain membership in a distinct collective, they suddenly face a self-evident enemy/dance partner, and if playing their cards right, they can come out of the interaction as the good guys (defeaters of sexist men). In short, they are neatly situated. Nevertheless, a refusal to go with the framing may also be the same things as breaking the interactional flow, and this is not something people in general are ready to do at the museum (at least not to my knowledge). In many cases the men would add some humour when playing the gender equality-card, which I believe make it even more difficult for the women to break the frame since it could make them appear inappropriately serious.

When the framing fails

All interactional endeavours can go wrong. This fact is quite haunting actually – how come some framing-attempts and usages of the MCD fail? The idea that successful interaction should be understood as a competent accomplishment, not something given, does not say anything about why some situations seem harder to realise than others. During the analytical process I became better and better at detecting how order was skilfully produced in most interactions, but the failures remained a mystery for the most part. Below is an excerpt from the group interview with the technicians. I have asked the participants if they think that it is possible to be sexually harassed by someone of the same sex, in order
to see whether they would talk differently about same-sex harassment than opposite sex, thus revealing a heteronormative stance. In doing this I of course use the polarisation device to split the population into heteros and homos, and there is also some straight-framing going on, since it is implicitly assumed that the normal, here unproblematised, sexual harassment involves men and women. Michael seeks to expand this straight-frame:

Michael: I’ll give an example, one of my co-workers, well, and a man that is openly homosexual came by and it was in the middle of the summer and hot, so we worked in shorts and t-shirt and he says (with an apparently fake feminine voice) “I think I’m going to go home and put on some shorts as well, it looked very pleasant with your good looking legs”

Michael changes to present tense and makes an imitation of what the homosexual man said in order to create a more vivid image of the situation and so emphasise the inappropriateness of the homosexual man’s actions.

Annika: Mm

Michael: And how are you to interpret this, knowing that the man is homosexual and open about it and sort of becomes interested in my colleague’s legs and told him that he had good looking legs, how are you to interpret that? If a girl would have said it, then perhaps you wouldn’t take it as such a hint, anything sexual at all, but when this person with a special sexual orientation says something like this, then that’s something slightly different. His questions are not really questions, instead they are there, in a paradoxical way, to make me think that there is only one valid interpretation of the situation. Indeed, Michael’s utterance is complex, since it both denies heterosexual interest; “if a girl would have said it, then perhaps you wouldn’t take it as such a hint, anything sexual at all”, and works to indirectly strengthen the straight-framing; “but when this person with a special sexual orientation says something like this, then that’s something slightly different”. He is up to something, make no mistake.

Annika: How did your colleague react?

I signal that I understand the possibly harmful consequences for the victim.

Michael: He didn’t like it, he didn’t like it one bit
Michael's case would be lost if he were to indicate something else.

Richard: *Me I would be pissed off*

Richard decides to jump in and enhance the sentiment already produced.

Jimmy: *I wouldn’t mind*

Once again Jimmy creates an incongruity by stepping outside of the current frame and demonstrating a different way of perceiving things.

Michael: *It differs ---*

Michael acknowledges Jimmy’s positioning, but it interrupted.

Richard: *That particular thing I would---*

Richard to the rescue. If this would have been a game of poker we might say that he just raised the stakes a little bit. We understand that Richard would put up with many things, but not “that particular thing”. As already noted, people who really want to put their points across often use a stronger language and stretch things so that it was the hottest day ever or the longest road in the country, and not just a very warm day and a very long road (Pomerantz 1986). Richard is doing a similar stretch here.

Annika: *But would it be a different matter if a girl would have said it?*

This question is for Michael. I am befuddled by his simultaneously hetero-negative and hetero-positive contribution made earlier and call him on it.

Michael: *Yeah, it kind of is, it's a rather open question*

It has not been up until now. We remember that Michael initially said ”*if a girl would have said it, then perhaps you wouldn’t take it as such a hint, anything sexual at all*”. He is making room to manoeuvre, probably because by now he recognises that he will not get away with what he said. I am not on his side.

Jimmy: *If a man said that to me I wouldn't mind*
Neither is Jimmy.

Annika: If a woman said it, it would make you happy?

I know that Jimmy has been involved in sexual-amorous practices with women in the past from talking to him, but this is nevertheless a distinct hetero-sexualisation of him.

Jimmy: Yeah, that would make me happy (Jimmy and I laugh)

We relieve some interactional tension by doing humour. We are using Michael as vehicle since we indirectly turn his serious ambition into something to laugh about.

Michael: I don't think he viewed it quite like that, I don't think that he would've been happy if a girl would have said it, but I believe that he would've sort of let it slip by

Michael’s voice contains traces of strictness now. He is correcting us. And not only using a certain tone, but by reminding us that there is a victim to take into consideration. He also continues to advocate the difference for his colleague between being complimented by a man and by a woman.

Annika: But that's the question, why it feels, why it becomes more serious because it's a man who says it

And I continue to push him.

Michael: In this case it wasn’t just any man, but a man that was openly homosexual and it felt like he eyed my colleague, because it wasn’t the work we did that mattered, but that he had good-looking legs

Michael sounds irritated as he once again clarifies the premises of the case. A man openly categorised as homosexual gave Michael’s colleague a sexualised compliment. In this he failed to recognise the work that was actually being done. Here Michael slips in another dimension – the unfairness of unappreciated work. Not only is the homosexual man out of line because he shows an interest in the colleague’s leg, he is neglectful as well.
Michael is trying to establish a common sense where it is a gruesome thing to be complimented/sexualised by a homosexual man if you yourself is a categorised (presumably straight) man. As a matter of fact, only within a solid straight-frame does his argument make sense – in a straight-frame a man is not supposed to desire another man, let alone let it show. At the same time he tries to avoid coming across as heterosexist. Therefore compliments/sexualisations from women (as abstract category) cannot be fully accepted either. They are, however, for some unclear reason, not as bad. His attempt to come off as consistent is not very successful. Maybe men are indirectly attributed with a special power to sexualise, which means that receiving a compliment from a male is more charged than receiving one from a female? In any case, he is undermined by me and Jimmy. I do my best to make his straight-framing activity explicit, which in a way is to ruin it, since it implies that Michael’s account may not be PC enough. Jimmy, on the other hand, seems to simply disregard Michael’s attempt to frame the situation. It is interesting, in all this, that the possibility of Michael’s colleague actually appreciating the compliment/sexualisation is not made an option. It could be because we (at least I) suspect that Michael primarily speaks on behalf of himself and not his colleague. I am not suggesting that the event described by Michael did not take place, just that he is reconstructing it through a principle – that gay men should not compliment other (straight) men (at work?). In this case it is easy to see who contests the frame Michael seeks to realise, and that we do so because we do not want to buy into the principle Michael is trying to establish.

At other times it was more difficult to see what went wrong. We find ourselves in the downstairs lunchroom, it is time for coffee and there are as many upstairs as downstairs present. Andrea, an upstairer, says that she recently learned that there is an exhibition about the history of erotica opening in a certain town. From the field notes:

Peter commented that those kinds of exhibitions usually are boring, or only show ladies from the 18th century in daring poses. They do not appear modern or the least bit provocative. After this the atmosphere suddenly became very merry, someone suggested that the museum should do its own erotica exhibition and the conversation quickly centered around this. There was a lot of laughter, especially on behalf of the women. Andrea and Lisa (mainly upstairs) joked about wearing sassy outfits when presenting the exhibition and apparently found this hilarious. Lisa had one of her fits of
laughter and just couldn’t stop. I have never experienced such excitement at a coffeereak before. Then Frank said, looking at Andrea; “if the exhibition is open on weekends, there’ll be no problem finding people who’ll work overtime”. He was met with a brief silence, and then Andrea said something to Lisa. Even though I couldn’t make it out entirely, it was obvious that it concerned work (but in a more businesslike way, they didn’t laugh). At weekends, downstairs men (and some allrounders) take turns to do what is necessary at the museum, for instance locking up the place after closing time. It’s not a very popular part of the job (don’t know if it’s obligatory, by the way), but, according to Frank, it could be, then.

What happens here is that Frank attempts to strengthen the current humorous framing by sexualising his female colleagues, as well as, of course, himself and the weekend working men. But it does not work out. The interaction flow is broken, if just for a second, and afterwards it is business as usual. This is demonstrated by Andrea and Lisa, who reframe the situation when they turn the attention from Frank and the imagined exhibition to their work. Simply ignoring someone in this way is a rather powerful method. When used excessively we talk about someone getting the silent treatment. When looking at Andrea and saying “if the exhibition is open on weekends, there’ll be no problem finding people who’ll work overtime”, Frank seems to ask her to enter a direct straight-frame with him, but she refuses and directs her attention to Lisa instead.

Why is Andrea unwilling to dance with Frank? There are numerous possibilities. She might feel uncomfortable being so explicitly sexualised by Frank, or she realised that there was something she needed to do elsewhere, we simply do not know. Speculation may be entertaining, but will not, in the end, provide us with an answer to the question posed. I witnessed this sort of thing happen once in a while. Typically it was a man trying to sexualise himself and a woman/some women, and that was the one thing these situations had in common, as far as I could tell. Maybe if I had singled out sexualisation as a phenomenon and studied different forms of it more extensively, both in terms of failure and success, I would be able to give a more detailed and nuanced account of it. For now, we shall have to make do with a rather sketchy one.

Since I believe that it is important to look at how the members fail to use certain devices, establish certain common sense etc., because these errors show how the production of reality is an accomplishment which should not be taken
for granted, I will include one more example of interaction failure in relation to straight-framing activity. From the field notes:

It was time for coffee, and since the sun shone brightly, a dozen or so of the employees gathered at the back of the museum, both upstairs and downstairs. There are a couple of benches to sit on and a patch of fresh grass. Even though we plopped down randomly and no unit formations could be detected, the social infrastructure was still noticeable in the way everyone talked to one another. Between certain people there was a lot of social tentacle going on, while other interactions just lazily happened. The meta-conversation was about how to repair some things in the exhibitions, and about the destructive force children constitute at the museum. “They break everything!”, Frank exclaimed and looked at me, like I needed convincing. And sure, it sounded a bit funny to start with, I pictured hordes of little people destroying everything in their way like a swarm of insects, but I came to realise that this actually is a real problem at the museum. They hardly have time to fix one thing before another starts to malfunction. After a while most of the upstairs went back to work, but the rest of us stayed a bit longer. We kept talking about the ungratefulness of children, but a sub-conversation emerged among some of the downstairs men. Roland was at the centre of this conversation, while Michael, Victor, Christopher and David mostly listened. Roland told an anecdote about a woman who had been very drunk at a pub and couldn’t find her way home. A woman walking a dog passed us by and Roland stared at her for a couple of seconds, before looking expectantly at the other downstairs men and saying with a big smile: “That’s a really nice dog, really nice. Don’t you think?”. Then he looked at me with something searching in his gaze, like he expected me to react. The other men did not reply, nor did they face him. It was obvious that the interaction flow was broken and Roland leaned over towards David, smiled directly at him and added: “Yeah, it’s not too often you see such a good-looking dog, eh?”. Then he laughed and as far as I could see, David gave him a little smile but that was it. Victor then mentioned another thing that needed to be fixed and suggested that perhaps they needed to be two people for the task, and soon after that David claimed that he had to go. He then got up and left and the rest of us soon followed.

Here Roland attempts to create straight-framed humour by sexualising the woman walking the dog, as well as, of course, himself and the other men present (but not me). The example is reminiscent, in a way, of when Julia and I discuss public nudity (see p.114). The way he is referring to the dog but in reality talking about the woman is supposed to be comical. You may of course wonder how I know that it really is the woman Roland is talking about. He
could be extremely fond of dogs, even sexually attracted to them (and open
about it). My certainty in this matter has to do with a number of things; that he
looked at the woman (presumably his head would have had to move more if he
had been following the dog), that he afterwards turned explicitly to the other
men when making the first comment, indeed that it was Roland to begin with.
He would occasionally, in a good humoured way, distribute these kinds of
comments, even when there were no animals in sight.

Roland laughs and smiles, and thus strengthens the (straight-)framing as funny
and light-hearted. When the other men do not join him in either the act of
sexualisation or the humorous framing, he turns to David for unknown reasons
and tries to make him enter a direct face-to-face interaction. David, however,
keeps his distance, and the situation is soon dissolved. Not just because of the
broken interaction flow supposedly; a coffee break can only go on for so long
and still be intelligible as a break. It is interesting that not one of us made an
effort to mend the broken interaction flow, if only to rescue Roland from
hanging socially high and dry. Quite often great care would be taken to fix
incongruities and try to prevent people from ending up in Roland’s position,
but not this time.

**The risk of ending up in a gay-frame**

It is not always easy to get the framing straight, as Michael, Frank and Roland
experience in different respects, but there is also the risk of ending up in a gay-
frame. This is not just to fail to straight-frame a situation, but to fail in a way
that invites background expectancies related to Othersexual activity and desire
to enter the interaction. The excerpt below is taken from the group interview
with the reception unit (which is a mixed unit, I only call it the reception unit
for practical reasons). We have discussed men’s harassment of women for a
little while when somebody asserts that “some people take this gender equality thing so
far that they start to counteract their own purpose”. The same person then goes on to
point out that it is usually men who are accused of being child molesters, ”but do
we know how common it is that women molest children?”. I agree that media seem to
focus on male child molesters and Linda says that she feels sorry for men who
have been wrongfully sentenced. Now I try to redirect our attention by asking:
Annika: I have one last question, is it possible to be sexually harassed by someone of the same sex?

Linda: Yes, I have been, at the pub

Annika: Do tell

Linda: Nah, I went home

Annika: That was a short story, how did you know that…?

Linda: No, I didn’t at first, it was others who sort of told me, that there was a person picking up women

Linda indicates to me and the others present that she ventured into this situation unaware, and that she, in fact, had to be told that there was a woman hitting on other women at the place. She is building her credibility as a heterosexual victim as well as her heterosexual position. Her use of the word “person” is interesting, since we already know that it is not just any person, but a female. I read this as her way of distancing herself from the event to some degree by rendering it gender neutral.

Annika: A woman, that is?

Linda: Yes

Annika: What did she do then?

Linda: No, I think those things are unpleasant, it’s not my cup of tea, really

Instead of answering my question, Linda produces another account of her status as a heterosexual. She does not tell us what, exactly, she finds unpleasant (thus staying within the PC border?) and she leans back in the chair, arms crossed over her chest after delivering this sentence, as if this is final. Johnson (2004:197) remarks that heterosexuals seek to establish “a normative and natural sexual identity at the expense of homosexuality”. To achieve this they must make it sound as if their sexuality is innate, rather than changeable or the
result of socialisation. Linda accomplishes this by stating that “it’s not my cup of tea, really”.

Christina: No, but we’ve seen it here as well ---

Christina starts on another account, but does not get far.

Linda: She stood in a corner and just looked at me, for a long, long time

Here come the details. Linda has successfully established herself as heterosexual in this situation and can therefore expand on her role as a victim of the Othersexual woman.

Annika: And it became unpleasant immediately, or?

I continue within the frame Linda has put up. I could have asked if she thought that the woman was good looking.

Linda: Yeah, of course it was, since I’m a hundred percent sure that I’m not such a person

Linda utilises a statistics device to back up her self-identification as heterosexual, but it is unclear what kind of person she is not. One standing in corners, throwing long glances, or an Othersexual? It is interesting, in a way, that no one is calling her at this instance.

Rita: Is it easier to break, if it’s obvious that you’re not wired the same way? Is it easier to break male than female attraction?

Annika: That’s interesting, is it easier or harder? You were saying? (nods at Christina)

I pretend that I understand Rita’s inquiry, but I really do not. I pass the ball to Christina’s court, perhaps to hide this fact.

Christina: No, I just recalled that the same thing has happened here at the reception desk, a girl that showed an interest in two of the girls down here

Christina is also building the victim of Othersexuals-frame. She is using a quite neutral language: “a girl that showed an interest in two of the girls”. As Leppänen
(1997) notes, stories like these may contain different stages, or components. One such component is the expansion, which allows the member to fill out certain aspects of the story. Christina is clearly expanding the story by putting the museum and events taking place at the museum in it.

Linda: Where was that again?

Christina: Yeah, down here by the desk.

Christina utilises a placing device and is able to specify where the event took place.

Linda: Yeah, yeah

Christina: They probably experienced it as a bit unpleasant because it’s difficult to get away, difficult to be frank with this person, who, at the same time, is a visitor and comes here quite often, and we’re suppose to respect that

Christina enhances the sense of danger by adding more complicating elements; “difficult to get away, difficult to be frank with this person, who, at the same time, is a visitor?”. This is top-notch framing and storytelling.

Linda: Yeah, you’re parked in the public

Linda clarifies the premises of the case.

Christina: Yes, and we need to be able to supervise the shop, we can’t just up and leave

Christina adds to this clarification and arrives at what Leppänen (ibid.) would call the point - the receptionists are victims in the truest sense of the word. The interaction is going very well, but Christina’s point actually threatens Linda, because Linda, unlike the women working at the reception, could just have walked away from the Othersexual at the bar.

Linda: No, but we’ll have to get it on camera and say that this is what’s happening, like if they get too intrusive, although I don’t think they will, not more than that, when it came and sat down next to me and started to chase off all the men who wanted to sit down, but then she became awfully drunk and disappeared, tipped over her chair and they came and took her out
Linda utilises the collective device and transforms the person Christina talks about into “they”, and then provides us with even more details from the time she was sexually harassed by “it”. Possibly the exact same common sense could have been established if the perpetrator would have been male, but Linda’s excessive self-heterosexualisation reveals a significant difference. She is not just a victim of sexual harassment, she is a heterosexual victim. More to the point she is a heterosexual victim who is not allowed to practice heterosexuality: “when it came and sat down next to me and started to chase off all the men who wanted to sit down”. Producing herself as an, in the eyes of numerous men, attractive female like this of course makes her even more intelligible as heterosexual (and thus as a heterosexual victim). Her silence work, referring to the woman as “it” several times, reminds us of the silence work that the members were doing in chapter 4, when talking about the holy, white stones, etc. Here as well then, a taboo may be manufactured.

So why do I suggest that we, or Linda rather, risk ending up in a gay-frame? Actually it is Linda who does not really believe that the situation is straight-framed enough. She acts, it seems, as if she risks producing a gay-frame simply by placing herself as a victim in a same-sex drama. This is an interestingly ambiguous situation, since it is straight-framed, but at the same time not. It is not like anyone openly doubts Linda’s expressed sexual preferences and we all build the victim-frame, but the framing becomes wobbly because Linda reasserts it too many times. Her groundwork, i.e. her self-heterosexualisation, works to undermine the framing. She may of course have misread the situation to some extent and believe that it organised primarily around her sexual orientation, but it is also possible that she in fact wants to create this ambiguousness for some reason.

To summarise

Straight-framing is introduced as a concept describing the members’ situational production of women and men as heterosexed relational pair through interaction. On a basic level the act of straight-framing makes the members intelligible as sexed beings, belonging to either the category women or men, and as relatable specifically because of their membership in these particular categories. To produce women and men as a heterosexed relational pair, the
members utilise the heterosexual matrix, here understood as part of the MCD, and a successful (collective) use of the matrix results in a straight-framed situation. The act of straight-framing should not be seen as a consequence of innate heterosexuality on behalf of the actors, but as a way to frame and make sense of situations. Straight-framings are performed in all sorts of situations at the museum, or rather, most situations can be straight-framed – in same-sex interaction (then simply referred to as straight-framing) as well as in mixed-sex interaction.

I chose to focus mainly on mixed-sex straight-framings and witnessed/partook in a couple of different forms:

**Direct straight-framing** occurs when a woman and a man interact exclusively and produce each other as a heterosexed relational pair through the use of the heterosexual matrix and couple-like terminology/common sense. The woman and the man interacting relate directly to each other as woman and man, and not to women or men overall. This kind of straight-framing, I suggest, takes a lot of trust, because the person initiating it relies on the other part to co-produce this quite intimate relationship. Except for making the members intelligible as heterosexed beings, this form of straight-framing also appears to energise the members and give them some interactional pleasure. I also suggest that there is a ritualistic element involved, since the members create a situational solidarity for two.

**Mock direct straight-framing** is similar; a woman and a man interact exclusively as a heterosexed relational pair. While they do not use couple-like terminology/common sense, they do relate directly to each other as individuals and produce female and male positions connected through couple-like and/or sexualised experiences. This form of straight-framing may provide the members with interactional pleasure as well.

**Indirect straight-framing** is performed when women and men interact non-exclusively and take female and male positions in a general sense, meaning that they speak on behalf of women and men (and as women and men as well, but only covertly). They also connect women and men as sex/gender collectives, implicitly or explicitly, in couple-like and/or sexualised ways. At times this form of straight-framing resulted in pleasure, the example chosen being sort of in a
grey area in this sense, but more often it appeared as if acts of indirect straight-framing mainly was performed to organise situations intelligibly.

While I feel certain that situations are straight-framed in many other ways than accounted for above, these were the forms I found comprehensible and sometimes helped produce. I would like to stress that these forms of straight-framing should not be confused with ideal types or anything to that effect. My description of them is not meant to sort out the essence of phenomena, rather it is a description of what the members make significant. They often need to be very clear about how they wish to realise a particular situation, otherwise the other members will not be able to co-produce it. It is also worth noting that in some situations the members did not manage to utilise the heterosexual matrix persuasively, i.e. the initiated straight-framing was not given praxeological validity, which could result in disruptions in the interaction flow and downright uneasiness.

The members also engaged in a particular thriller-like form of straight-framing at coffee breaks and in similar situations, which seemed to be a way to create excitement and entertainment. By playing a gender equality-card skilfully and thus relate women and men, either in general or those present, to each other in problematic/disturbing (couple-like, sexualised or other) ways, the men could provoke women to co-produce a straight-framed interaction. Once the political framing was accomplished, the women, presumably because they tried or felt obliged to position themselves as responsible, female members at the PC museum, rarely turned interaction games of this kind down. Quite often, though, they appeared to be enjoying the game as much as the men.
7. Conclusions, discussion and final words

In this final chapter I will attempt to clarify the conclusions drawn so far, then add some more thoughts and discuss both these and the study in general. What are the findings of the investigation, what are we to do with them and how did the EM approach turn out in the end?

A nice place
The museum is a nice place. It looks nice, it feels nice and the people you meet at the reception desk, in the art gallery and in the corridors upstairs are nice. After spending quite some time there, learning about questionable treatment of employees, informal hierarchies and whatnot, I still think it is, at core, a nice, relaxed place. Because this notion has stayed with me all the way, it is very likely that I have helped produce niceness at the museum in numerous situations. Probably by smiling a lot, acting agreeable and being markedly pleased with the opportunity to hang around. The everyday production of the museum as a nice place is something that many of the members participate in. Background expectancies play a crucial part in this – the employees expect the museum to be a pleasant place, hence they realise it as just that. We remember Garfinkel’s (1967) idea that people tend to act in compliance with their expectancies and so fulfil these expectancies. Even the employees who talked negatively about the museum usually made sure to point out that it is a nice place to work, despite some unpleasant features.

I believe that acts of straight-framing should be viewed in relation to the ongoing production of niceness at the museum (and in the extension to the realisation of certain background expectancies). Most forms of straight-framing can be performed in a way so that good mood, solidarity and familiarity is generated, and these pleasure procedures are, I argue, to a significant extent enacted as part of the general making of the nice museum. On a basic level, straight-framing, both in same-sexed and mixed-sexed interaction, depends on the competent utilisation of the heterosexual matrix. The members must produce themselves and others as intelligibly sexed beings, belonging to either the category women or men, and as relatable to people of the other sex in couple-like and/or sexualised (explicitly or implicitly) ways. The result of a successful direct straight-framing is as a brief intimacy with couple-like connotations. Exactly how women and men are (or are not) made relatable in different situations and contexts is something which needs to be explored.
further. While the construction of the sexes as complementary by science, popular culture, in various historical epochs etc., has been examined extensively (for interesting examples see Laqueur 1994 and Potts 2002), studies on how people in everyday interaction commonly, sensibly fabricate women and men as relatable, i.e. as a heterosexed relational pair, appear to be more rare.48 Straight-framings, to conclude, are here seen as some of the ritualistic pleasure procedures used to make the museum a nice place (primarily, but not only, for the employees). However, I also think it likely that straight-framings allow people to interact on other premises than those often actualized throughout their daily courses (cf. Lindgren’s, 1992, notion of a communicative fundament). When Andrea and David speak of their experiences of childbirth, it is irrelevant that they belong to different floors of the museum. So, straight-framings may realize the museum as a nice and cosy place in different respects, as well as a workplace where divisions and hierarchies can be (temporarily) disregarded.

I chose to illustrate each form of straight-framing identified using only one example, partly because I was not primarily interested in the quantitative aspects of the phenomenon (even though the fact that the members straight-framed on a regular basis of course was one of the things that caught my attention), partly because I believe that each of the examples provided is complex enough. The thought of adding more examples, sorting out the intricacies in every one of them, defining new forms of straight-framing etc., did not seem possible at that stage of the research process. Had I put my finger on this phenomenon earlier on in the analytical phase, the entire analysis might have ended up being about situational straight-framings. I am aware of the fact that the members at the museum probably engaged in many other forms of straight-framing, and more variations of the forms already identified than I have distinguished. I also feel certain that I could have made the definitions of the different straight-framing forms more detailed, or indeed more abstract. At this crossway researchers seem to run into something of a catch-22; a very broad, simplistic definition is useless because the phenomenon defined is not really defined, thus we are left with an empty definition, at the same time as a very detailed definition might tie the phenomenon, as well as the definition itself (which then becomes more of a description), to its empirical context and make it impossible to apply in other settings. I suppose this problem, among others,

48 Sometimes researchers claim to investigate everyday interaction, but in fact they are not, they are asking members about their everyday interaction in interviews (usually without analysing the interaction in the interview situation).
makes it tempting for social researchers to try to dig out the context-independent essence of phenomena. It has not been my ambition to produce a set of ready-to-use theoretical concepts for investigations of situational production of heterosexed order. Instead my intention has been to account for my experiences and empirical material in a way that, hopefully, will make sense and sensitise readers to how people engage in straight-framing activity, how they utilise the heterosexual matrix (and other parts of the MCD for that matter) in order to do so and what colours the different framings are given. Are they dramatic, homely, ironic?

Why is it important that the members at the museum with some regularity straight-framed situations? Well, it makes the museum a place where you are expected to accept straight-framings and be ready to co-produce them as a heterosexed and heterosexing member. Or as a silent, non-disturbing member. For different reasons you might want to intervene when straight-framing activity occurs, or at least not have to be part of it. Kitzinger (2005), mapping out how heterosexuality can be deployed as a resource in conversations, asserts that homosexuals who wish not to expose themselves (as Othersexual) have their work cut out for them. They need to micromanage their behaviour at all times, using the correct nouns, and so on. Kitzinger (ibid., p.258) also suggest that, because so many people come across as heterosexual with ease in the conversations analysed, ”the failure to display oneself as heterosexual must also be an indicator of possible homosexuality”. She may be right, but people who disrupt the interaction flow when straight-framings are performed could of course also be “flawed” heterosexuals who do not want to play the designated female or male part in “opposite” sex dramas or who do not know how to, self-identified bisexuals, pansexuals, asexual people or people who do not like to be entangled with others regardless of sex, gender benders who do not identify as either women or men, intersexed people who do not/cannot identify as either women or men, people undergoing sex reassignment surgery, political members who simply do not want to partake in the production of heterosexed order, etc. You do not have to be a self-identified homosexual to experience the need to re-frame a straight-framed situation, or to feel uncomfortable when straight-framings are being made. That members who have no desire to, or feel that they cannot, position themselves in certain heterosexed constellations may feel uncomfortable is one thing, that there are members who experience no problem what so ever with straight-framing activity quite another - it means that straight-framed situations belong to them.
Many of the members at the museum are also engaged in an ongoing production of what I refer to as the PC discourse. This discourse shares characteristics with the code examined by Wieder (1974) in the halfway house, since it is not a rule or a norm they try to conform to, but an often repeated list of dos and don’ts that they relate to (thus repeating it) and use in various ways to order situations. Every time the museum members talk about gender equality, diversity and similar things, they relate to and co-produce the PC discourse. My presence certainly intensified the production of the discourse, because already when defined as gender researcher, I became an incitement for the members to contemplate issues regarding equality and be ready to deal with them in interviews and general conversations. I certainly did not disappoint in that respect. But there is another reason why the members so willingly engage in PC activity; a museum is expected to be forward-thinking in PC matters, providing the public with educational, thought-provoking, sometimes provocative exhibitions and activities of all sorts. Yet again it is a question of realising background expectancies. Members unable to realise these expectations, i.e. unable to relate to the PC discourse intelligibly, risk coming across as incompetent.

The making of PC’ness at the museum is tangible, I suggest, in the delicate handling of sexuality in the interviews (and interview-like situations) conducted throughout the first year in the field. I talked to the members about sexuality and sex-related matters and we performed a lot of groundwork, trying to assess what should be counted as sexual or not, what seems to constitute appropriate or inappropriate sexualisation respectively, and so on. By avoiding making certain definitions, by hesitating and by laughing in these conversations, we produced sexuality as taboo, presumably because we perceived that as the situationally appropriate thing to do. I recall these talks with delight; it is rather interesting to engage in groundwork and having the carpet pulled from beneath your feet. Suddenly many things, ordinarily just functionally handled, were up for discussion as we with a lot of curiosity and some caution searched for a ground in common. It is as common as it is interesting that subjects dealt with rather navel gazingly in one situation, can be carelessly tossed around in another. For example, while having big problems to define what the “sexual” actually entails in chapter 4, I point to the sexualised elements of straight-framing without blinking in chapter 6. This reveals something about the
complexity of reality production and the fake-it-till-you-make-it approach we constantly have to rely on. By faking it I mean that we quite often interact in everyday life without actually knowing what we are taking about. We simply trust each other to try to make the situation work. Thus we make it, most of the time.

Another way for the members to produce in order to use the PC discourse was in talk about diversity. To turn diversity into a topic of conversation made it possible for the members to utilise many categories in the MCD and, at times, play with them. We remember the situation in the upstairs lunchroom, when it is suggested that the person applying for a certain job at the museum preferably should be of a “different nationality”, have a “physical handicap” and possibly be a woman as well. Garfinkel and Rawls (2006:78) stress that “issues of identity, or membership categories such as race and gender, would be located in the background expectancies of situated interaction”. The museum as a place and situation sometimes demand the use of everything at once, i.e. that references to gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality, age and disability are made. Class seems to be the exception. When the members handle and poke fun at diversity, it is really the relationship between the human body, sometimes identity like in the case with sexual orientation, and the situation that they are addressing (cf. Beauvoir 2002 [1949]). Following this thread, we may ask ourselves what kinds of situations we think call for what kinds of categories, and, consequently, how we try to realise such notions. Garfinkel and Rawls also state that (2008:23):

…we relate to persons not as whole biological beings, but rather as particular identified selves. We never interact with, or as, whole persons, and objects are never seen or apprehended by whole persons – only by identified actors engaged in particular local orders.

Every single person can be, and is, categorised in many different ways. In what situations is it made to matter that I am half Finnish, a Ph.D. student, raised in the countryside or that I fancy another categorised female? The striving for diversity at the museum is, from this perspective, the striving to balance a situation demographically. Or to, as one of the upstairs phrased it when we talked about the need for recruiting more “new Swedes” (categorised immigrants), make sure that the museum “reflects society at large”. The members at the museum usually do not mess with categories and point to the
arbitrary use of them, but give realist (although sometimes humorous) accounts of them as social facts.

The easiest way to produce and use the PC discourse at the museum appears to be to refer to gender equality, something which probably became more prominent because of my presence as gender researcher. Gender equality as conversation topic was mastered skilfully by all the members I talked to, and in these conversations women and men were commonsensically produced as a standardised relational pair on a meta-level through the use of the heterosexual matrix. The making of women and men as a relational (and complementary) pair in the name of gender equality has been explored by Dahl (2005:68), who points out that politics of gender equality conventionally rests on a “heteronormative foundation”, since it aims to fix problems of power in heterosexual relationships and so enable women and men to live happily ever after. Dahl suggests that there is a paradox hidden here, because “politics of gender equality maintain the very order it aims to change” (ibid., my translation). This notion was not given a whole lot of praxeological validity in the situations I chose to convey it. The members offered a couple of reasons, either politically rooted or to promote a healthy, non-homosocial habitat, as to why they turned women and men into a relational pair. Gender equality as subject was thus not made out to be an entirely political matter, but was constructed to be just as much about creating a nice, natural (work) environment. When gender equality was framed as a matter of politics, however, it was operationalised in a way so that it all came down to numbers. How many women work there, how many men? I refer to this as the body count routine.

While the body count routine made the issue of gender equality intelligible for the members, it also provided them with an opportunity to organise the working units at the museum. Single-sexed, or as good as single-sexed, units could then be problematised and placed lower in an hierarchy based on, basically, political (moral) correctness. Interestingly, this hierarchy pretty much corresponds to the upstairs – downstairs divide at the museum, which, generally speaking, is a division between people with and without higher education. The problem of gender equality was conveniently placed where it could be expected to be found, i.e. downstairs, at the technician’s workshop and the reception. Blokeishness, girlishness and conservatism in relation to gender equality were thus produced as category bound activities by the upstairers.
As with diversity, issues of gender equality were also used as a source of entertainment, most notably by some of the male members who would throw gender equality-cards and so provoke the females present to co-produce a thriller like kind of straight-frame. In this type of straight-framing activity women and men were made relatable through references to an alleged or disclaimed power asymmetry between the sexes.

Why is it important that the members produced women and men as a standardised relational pair, for example by doing the body count routine? Well, because this too organises a heterosexed order/reality, just like acts of straight-framing. Members of peoplekind are produced as intelligibly sexed beings (simply by being treated as such), belonging to either the category women or men, and these categories are, in turn, made relatable in an abstract sense in the form of parents, colleagues etc. The production of a heterosexed reality is something of an unintended consequence of the body count routine, since the routine is performed first and foremost to make sense of the museum and, more specifically, the problem of gender equality at the museum. Certainly the members as a rule never intend to create a heterosexed reality. Instead they intend to come to the museum every day and do their job. Their job, however, does not just entail ordinary chores, it also entails to try to be a competent member, i.e. to realise the museum as a nice, more or less politically correct, place.

Resourceful members

A prominent feature of the material is the width of the interaction of the museum members. I have already touched on this subject, but would like to expand it a little bit further. Maynard and Clayman (1991:392) claim that the phenomenological sensibility in EM gives that the actor “initially brings the world into being and only secondarily conceptualises it”. I have pondered this. There is something about this notion that just does not seem to be compatible with the idea of accountability. We remember that actors must account for their actions in order to make them valid and intelligible (Garfinkel 1967). This is as

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49 Reality has interestingly ended up being the same thing as order in my account. We remember that order and meaning represents two sides of the same coin to Garfinkel and Rawls (2006), and during the analytical phase I seem to have fused meaning and reality. Only that which can be given some sort of meaning, I argue, is (commonsensically) real and only that which can be ordered is meaningful. Hence order is reality (to the member).
important as to act in the first place. As an alternative, I would like to suggest that the phenomenological sensibility of EM instead results in an attentiveness to the multitude of ways in which actors bring the world into being. It appears more fruitful to acknowledge that the actors are involved in different kinds of working acts and examine the interrelatedness of these, rather than to treat some acts as secondary and others as primary.

To do groundwork, for example, is to be involved in a specific working act where common sense is not just put to use, but concepts, phenomena and perspectives are investigated and discussed. Just as academics examine their concepts and theoretical tools to see if they are workable in different contexts, it seems as if the members must check so that the machinery (MCD) is up and running every now and then. In the interviews conducted during the first year at the museum, the members did not have a lot of choice but to partake in groundwork concerning sexuality, but on numerous other occasions I witnessed how they stopped to sort out if they were on the same page, i.e. if they could agree on what kind of world they were sharing. Like a sort of reality check; do I make sense to you when posing these questions and do you make sense to me when you try to answer them? In short, are all systems go? When doing groundwork, we trust each other to try to order the situation, but we do not trust that we know the same things to be true, hence the need to explore matters. Asplund (1987:45) asserts that “genuine communication is always characterised by genuine insecurity” (my translation), and maybe groundwork should be seen as a form of genuine communication?

When performing direct straight-framings, on the other hand, the members trusted each other not only to know the same thing to be true, but to accept the invitation to interact in a socially intimate manner as well. In many situations nothing was examined or discussed, and the working acts (like straight-framings) seemed to constitute either everyday, practical solutions or be designed to accomplish different kinds of mood. These are intriguing dimensions of interaction – the degree of reality checking and trust involved, and how different situations call for quick adjustments in this sense. To shift working acts, to do groundwork in some situations and act merely on trust in others, was something that most of the museum members could do with ease. Hardcore groundwork in interviews could be interrupted for a moment of laughter and recreational interaction when something unexpected happened and then picked up again in a second.
Other skills that the members at the museum had cultivated included the ability to use common sense (the MCD) with much dexterity. Throughout the analysis I have made distinctions between a couple of different types, or families, of ethnomethods. One is the utilisation of common sense and another (overlapping the first in some respects) consists of a set of devices, or ethnodevices, which are used to present, sort out and organise common sense in general in conversation. The following devices were used regularly (albeit some more often than others) by the members: Empirical evidence device, timing device, criteria device, grading device, polarisation device, collectivisation device, placing device, consistency device, statistics device, and, finally, perspective device. These can be deployed much like gadgets on a Swiss army knife – swiftly and for practical reasons (but not always with the desired result). Another type of ethnomethod involves a clear embodiment of a situated identity and non-linguistic communication (like laughter, smiles and so on). The making of service, for instance, demands that the members working at the reception desk act in a way so that they appear approachable, knowledgeable and ready to help. Because they are the first people visitors lay eyes on, they must also set the social tone and, without explaining it in words, instruct visitors about what kind of a place they should be realising – a nice, friendly, casually sophisticated place. When trying to produce themselves as females and males in everyday life at the museum, the members also used methods of this type, for example by dressing in certain ways and having certain kinds of haircuts.

I have not concerned myself terribly with the question of what ethnomethods actually are. I did not have a clear-cut definition of the concept when entering the analytical phase, only a semi-vague idea, and, truth be told, I am not sure that I have developed one by now. For research as well as other purposes it will probably do to simply think of ethnomethods as tools that people use to realise situations. They may use words, arguments, gestures, make-up, racks for appetising arrangements of postcards, tractors, clothes, very small dogs wearing clothes, and so on. Depending on what we wish to explore, some of these tools will seem more interesting and important than others. This definition leads to the conclusion that straight-framings probably should be counted as ethnomethods, since they can be performed in ways so that situations become intimate, nice or exciting. If the heterosexual matrix needs to be utilised when a situation is to be straight-framed, and straight-framings are techniques used to
create for example niceness, we seem to end up with situationally interrelated ethnomethods (cf. Schatzki’s, 1996, idea of interrelated practices). This could turn ugly if we feel the need to figure out how different ethnomethods can and cannot be linked together, if it matters what family they belong to, etc. Luckily there is no need to go about things this way – that the members use several ethnomethods in the same situation is about as strange as the fact that they usually wear several pieces of clothing. And we do not have to figure out whether there are any principles or rules behind the member’s linking of different methods since we know that principles, just like everything else, must be produced in interaction in order to exist. If we look carefully such things will, in other words, manifest in the material we are analysing.

Post-research reflections (by a resourceful researcher)

After reading and re-reading the analysis I remember thinking to myself “so what?”. It all seemed pretty bland. This happens to many researchers, I understand. We become so familiar with our texts and ideas, that after a while they are like annoying neighbours you have to smile at every time you meet them in the hallway. The analysis also feels slightly disorganised. It is like I keep getting entangled in all these details not related to what I am supposed to investigate. I think this frustration is a leftover from my days as a mainstream sociologist, when I could just grab the quotes I needed to make my case from any interview and disregard the interview situation, the place that the situation belonged to and my own co-production of whatever was going on. When conducting observations or interviews EM style, you should never be able to extract yourself from what is happening in a situation. Your actions are in there, along with those of the other members. This analytical approach certainly leaves something to be desired when it comes to clear-cutteness and comfortable distance. I also thought rather despairingly to myself “but how on earth could people avoid doing straight-framings?”, and, oblivious of it at the time, put my finger on something very important. The feeling of inevitability is, very likely, key when it comes to routine, or habitual, practice.

Moreover, it feels like I have mistreated the members at the museum in the analysis. I am afraid that they will come across as calculating and unsympathetic, but they really are not. They are just ordinary people, doing what people ordinarily do. Of course researchers are often concerned that their
research will seem insensitive to the participant and there is no smooth way out of this dilemma. I have tried to solve this to some extent by not positioning myself above the participants in the analysis, but, as noted earlier, at the end of the day they are not the ones telling this story. In the introduction I argued that trying to eliminate the presence of the author/s seems to be an unnecessary and perhaps ethically questionable exercise, and the reason why this ambition is ethically problematic is that it facilitates for the researcher to overlook how she is part of the reality she examines, leaving the other members with full responsibility for how things turn out. The researcher effect is of course widely acknowledged within social sciences and handled in different ways, but as researchers performing interviews or observations, we do not just affect the participants and the setting, we co-produce a reality. From a scientific point of view it is at heart a question of validity, i.e. a question of what we think we have examined.

From an EM perspective it is important not to tell the actors what they are doing, instead they should tell the researcher what they are up to (Garfinkel 1967; Lynch 1993). The researcher must therefore be careful not to invent the social, by, for instance, describing what is really going on, as opposed to what the participants perceive as going on. I wonder if the members at the museum would agree that they engage in, for instance, straight-framing activity. If they read this text, will they recognise what I am talking about? Presumably they will experience some problems when trying to make sense of the notion of straight-framing, as this description of interaction is produced from a different angle that that of the common member. I do nevertheless feel confident that, given a minute, they will be able to relate to most phenomena presented and analysed. Even though, to some degree, they might prefer to make different accounts of them. Stokoe (2006:471) asserts that when researchers impose their own interpretation of what is going on in a situation, for instance by making gender relevant even though the members do not, they are “in the business of reproducing rather than studying gendered ‘facts’ about the world”. While I obviously sympathise with the ambition to stay as close as possible to the interaction performed by the members, I think that this ambition, if taken too far, may cause us to lose sight of the fine print. Many things are not spelled out, the references made may be very subtle and demand that the members fill in the blanks. When do we know for sure that the members are using a category? When they refer to it directly, needless to say, but what about more discrete actions? It may be helpful to perform ethnographic studies in this respect, since
there is time to detect and investigate implicit use of the MCD. I am aware that I have not been completely consistent when interpreting the members’ utilisation of categories and common sense in general. I have tried to focus on overt references and explicit use of the MCD, but occasionally I assume that I know what category, activity, etc., is implied. Just like the other members realising that specific situation, probably.

In chapter 3 I mentioned that different EM traditions deal with the context in different ways. Some look only at the situation at hand and refuse to grant the context any explanatory value, whereas other believe that interaction does not make sense except when put into context (Maynard and Clayman 1991). While I have not included a societal context, the museum as a place is turned into a form of context. I have argued that the members try to realise certain background expectancies connected to the museum (or the spatial dimension of the MCD rather) and that this help explain, among other things, their industrious production of the PC discourse. Garfinkel (1967) uses a similar approach when analysing how jurors do their job in court. The museum is conceptualised as a situation as well as a place, which enables for investigations of how it is organised at every instant through different practices and actions. As we recall, Schatzki (1996:201) suggest that the making of family entails various practices, such as “sleeping, cooking, rearing, recreation”, and the perspective taken in this study on what constitute the museum clearly echoes this understanding. As a context the museum is not a static, taken for granted background then, but rather an ongoing accomplishment which, when looked upon from the outside, appears to be a finished product. It is also a context in the sense that the members refer to it as just that. Lisa ridicules this tendency at one point when addressing the other employees’, in her eyes, idealisation of the museum as a workplace, with the following words: “because this is the museum “and it’s the most important thing in life”, and culture and art and exhibitions, “it’s so amazing””. By referring to the museum, the members produce it as a specific place and situation where they exist as embedded parts.

What about the purpose of the study, has it been properly attended to? I wanted to know what kind of situations the members were producing, what kind of common sense and methods/devices they used, and what sort of categorisation work they engaged in. In short, what situations, common sense, categorisation work, methods/devices seemed to be involved in the making of heterosexual order. Well, from my horizon it looks like answers to these
questions have been produced, although the heterosexual order has become the production of a local heterosexed order/reality. By talking about the production of heterosexed order/reality, the danger of reification is hopefully avoided.

And what about generalisation, finally, should I attempt to place the museum in a wider context, compare it to other museums somehow, or is it satisfactory to conclude that this is what is going on at this particular museum? I have asked myself whether this study will be useful at all, and if so, to whom, and thought about how questions of generalisation and usefulness may or may not correspond. It seems as if asking about the usefulness of a study could be one thing, and dealing with questions regarding how true, in a quantitative respect, the findings are, another. There are always issues of context and intelligibility present – where and how can a certain text, or parts of a certain text, be made to make sense? How must situations be framed in different respects to allow for input like this dissertation? While I am not particularly interested in speculating about the possibilities to generalise the findings of this study, I of course hope that it can be of some use. It is however not my place to say how.
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This dissertation investigates heterosexed order as an ongoing accomplishment by the members at a museum. Observations at the museum were carried out during a period of two years. 27 individual interviews and 6 group interviews were also conducted. The study departs from an ethnomethodological understanding of how order and meaning is produced situationally by actors in everyday interaction through the use of different ethnomethods.

The analysis reveals that the members try to, in different ways, realise the museum as a nice place. The concept of straight-framing is introduced to describe one of the pleasure procedures performed in order to generate good mood, solidarity and familiarity at work. In order to successfully straight-frame situations, the members produce themselves and others as intelligibly sexed beings, belonging to either the category of women or men, relatable to people of the other sex in pleasurable ways. Straight-framing is thus crucial in the making of heterosexed, local order. It further validates members identifying as heterosexual women and men.

The members routinely realise the museum as a nice, decent place by creating a discourse of political correctness. The easiest way to produce this discourse is to refer to gender equality. In conversations about gender equality women and men are turned into a standardised relational pair (as parents, colleagues etc.) through a procedure termed the body count routine. While the body count routine makes the issue of gender equality intelligible for the members and enables them to come across as politically competent, it also provides them with an opportunity to organise the working units at the museum. Sex-mixed units can be placed above non-mixed in a moral hierarchy.