
The category (Greek) ‘woman’: Some current predicates

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Abstract

This study applies the concept of Membership Categorization Device (MCD), as proposed by Sacks (1992), to the study of authentic data culled from a variety of contexts. It looks for category-bound activities and other related predicates, such as rights, entitlements, obligations, knowledge, attributes and competencies that the (female) incumbents invoke themselves or are imputed to them by other members. The aim is to, hopefully, offer a view on the current categorization of (Greek) femininity, and detect any changes that might have occurred in actual interaction, against the purportedly prevailing gender norms.

Keywords: MCDs, category-boundedness, accountability, gender, politics, relationships, care-taking

1. Membership categorization

In his lectures, Harvey Sacks (1992a, 1992b) attempted to capture common sense, or culture, as displayed in the methodic use of categories to describe kinds of persons, some of which can be used and heard as “going together”.

In the classic example “The baby cried. The mommy picked it up” (Sacks 1992a: 236), we get to hear that the mommy who picks up the baby is the mommy of the baby (although there is no genitive such as its mummy picked it up or variants thereof). And we also get to hear that the picking up has resulted from the baby’s crying.

In other words, we get to see the two *categories*, ‘baby’ and ‘mommy’, interactionally linked as members of *family*, which is a *collection* of categories or a *device*. Sacks thought that this is a machinery used for social organization and called it the M(embership) C(ategorization) D(evice) (henceforth MCD), which he defined as:

Any collection of membership categories, containing at least a category, which may be applied to some population containing at least a Member, so as to provide, by the use of some rules of applications, for the pairing

of at least a population Member and a categorization device member. A device is then a collection plus rules of application. (Sacks 1992a: 246)

Of particular importance in this discussion is the concept of *category-boundedness* and the related *viewer's maxims*. Sacks observed that certain activities are expectably and properly done by persons who are the incumbents of particular categories, e.g. 'babies' as members of the *stage of life* device cry, 'mommies' as members of the device *family* pick up crying babies. That is, some activities are category-bound (Sacks 1992a). Also, category and activity are *co-selected*, e.g. 'baby' & crying, 'mommy' & picking up. Besides activities, category-boundedness can also apply to "rights, entitlements, obligations, knowledge, attributes and competences" (Hester & Eglin 1997: 5) and other such *predicates*, which can be imputed to the incumbent of a category.

The first viewer's maxim (Sacks 1992a) states that the category-bound activity is relevant for *identifying* the person performing the action; and that *inferences* can be made concerning their identity or category incumbency. The second viewer's maxim (ibid.) adds that we make inferences about persons' identities by means of assumptions concerning how *norms* are related to activities and to the categories to which they are bound. That is, "the assignment of a person to a category ensures that conventional knowledge about the behaviour of the people so categorized can be invoked or cited to interpret or explain the actions of that person" (Hutchby & Wooffitt 2008: 36). We hear that the mommy is the mommy of the baby, because she's the one who *ought* to pick it up.

In other words, inferences can be drawn about the identity of a doer as an incumbent of a category not simply on the basis of their doing category-bound activities, but, crucially, on the basis of their conforming with the norms which provide for such proper category-bound activities.

In sum, membership categories provide us with inferential resources by which we can come to understand and interpret the behavior of persons so designated. They are *inference rich* because there are strong expectations and conventions associated with them, and in this sense, they point to the way "common-sense culture operates, and, with it, a broad swath of talk-in-interaction and other conduct as well, whether in interaction or not." (Schegloff 2007: 471).

But categories are not just taxonomic labels we use to refer to people (Schegloff 2007: 417). A classification or list of such categories is always *occasioned* –i.e. “a particular and contingent accomplishment of the production and recognition work of parties to the activity” (Zimmerman & Pollner 1970: 94)– and so, which particular category/device is activated is a matter of the particular *in situ* interaction and can be resolved on the basis of the *co-selection* of categories and category-bound activities, characteristics, duties, rights etc, which are properly and expectably performed by the incumbents of particular categories.

2. Ethnomethodological gender

Ethnomethodology, the theoretical foundation of Conversation Analysis, as founded by Harold Garfinkel (1967), looks into the methodic practices of members (or *ethnomethods*) as they go about making sense of their lives. The assumption is that talk can both “embody and constitute social relations”, and the concern is to expose “what social relationships consist in, considered as exchanges of talk” (Sharrock & Anderson 1987: 318).

In this sense, gender is viewed as an everyday on-going *accomplishment* (rather than a given), and Garfinkel (1967) has demonstrated just this, in his study of transsexual Agnes, who had been brought up as a boy and had to learn deliberately, and practice consciously what most women take for granted throughout life.

As a practical methodologist, Agnes had to produce, consistently, the performances that would sustain other people’s perception of her as a woman. Garfinkel (1967: 146) reports that “By acting in the manner of a ‘secret apprentice’, she would learn, as she told it, ‘to act like a lady’” gossiping with her female friends, cooking with her boyfriend’s mother, and learning “the value of passive acceptance as a desired feminine character trait” (ibid.: 147). So, her case has shown “how an apparently natural, immutable category such as ‘woman’ is produced in everyday life” (Connell 2009: 106). As West & Zimmerman put it, it has made “visible what culture has made invisible –the accomplishment of gender” (1987: 131).

In sum, the incumbents of gender categories are not seen as individuals who have particular ‘natural’ characteristics, but as individuals who accomplish their membership in interaction with others, and are involved in actions that may hold them “accountable for their performance of that action as members of their category” (West

& Fenstermaker 1995: 23). And this is the meaning of ethnomethodological *accountability*, which informs the following analysis.

3. Analysis

In this section, we will explore the accomplishment of gender within modern Greek society, in terms of the categories and relevant predicates imputed to Greek women, which are both stereotypically invoked, but also courageously resisted to and/or innovatively re-assigned. The on-going re-definition of the category ‘woman’ is largely carried out through Greek women’s claim to predicates traditionally bound to the category ‘man’.

3.1 *Politics as usual*

One such domain is the increased –even if unequal– presence of women in politics (cf. Pantelidou-Malouta 1992, 2010), which does not seem to go down well with the general public –who are still reluctant to vote for them¹– and, certainly not, with their male colleagues as displayed in the excerpts below.

This problematic perception of women is very eloquently illustrated in a news headline on the day of the announcement of George Papandreou’s government composition, when he was first elected as Prime Minister.

► Excerpt 1 [6/10/2009, TA NEA online]

Τέσσερα υπερυπουργεία με ανανέωση και γυναίκες
 Ορκίζεται σήμερα Πρωθυπουργός ο πρόεδρος του ΠΑΣΟΚ – Στα
 σχέδιά του ολιγομελές κυβερνητικό σχήμα με 14 συνολικά
 υπουργεία – Κόβονται 10 θέσεις υπουργών, υφυπουργών

**Four megaministries with {government} renewal and women
 PASOK president to be sworn in today as Prime Minister [...]**

Government participation is not viewed as an activity, right or entitlement bound to the category ‘woman’, and so “women” need to be mentioned together with “megaministries” and government “renewal”. On this basis, we could argue that ‘megaministres’, government ‘renewal’ and ‘women’ are locally constituted as

¹ The percentage of female MPs in the current Greek Parliament (national elections of 6/2012) is only 21% (http://www.isotita.gr/var/uploads/ANNOUNCEMENTS/CEDAW_GR_MAR2013_el.pdf).

categories of the MCD *out-of-the-ordinary parliamentary events* –or something to that effect.

The next incident gets to the heart of the problem of women's presence in the public sphere, especially in politics. A meeting of the ruling party parliamentary group is called to an abrupt end, through summary procedures, to the vociferous objection of several MPs, among whom there is 31-year² old architect/MP Eva Kaili, who also thinks she has been denied the chance to state her views.

What she gets in response from the male Secretary of the PASOK National Council and Deputy Minister for Regional Development and Competitiveness, 46-year old lawyer Sokratis Xynidis, is the comment "What's the big deal with that garter!?" (Turn 1), or even "Shut up, you garter!" (according to different reports of the incident), which causes one of his overhearing male colleagues to go on record with his disapproval (T2). Xynidis, however, shrugs him off as Kaili is not a force to be reckoned with, and anyway, he personally holds her in very low esteem (T3), as he hints at the Greek expression of utter indifference and contempt "have someone inscribed on one's balls".

► Excerpt 2 [3/11/2011]

- 1 ΣΕ: Σιγά την καλτισοδέτα!
 2 Β: Ρε συ Σωκράτη πώς μιλάς έτσι στην κοπέλα; Τι είναι αυτά που της λες;
 3 ΣΕ: Γιατί θα τη φοβηθώ; Δεν ξέρεις που την έχω γραμμένη;

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- 1 SX: What's the big deal with that garter?
 2 MP: Hey Socrates, this is no way to talk to the young woman. How could you ever say such a thing?
 3 SX: Why? Should I be afraid of her? Don't you know I don't give a fuck about her?

The use of the category 'garter' has certain sexual connotations which the public did not miss out on, as several (mostly male) bloggers doubted whether Xynidis, an ordinary, drab-looking, self-proclaimed family-man –in stark contrast to the attractive youthful looks of Kaili's, whose close-up photo they juxtaposed to his as evidence– could actually have any knowledge of such (kinky) stuff. They also observed that the

² Date of birth or (estimated) age at the time of the incident.

right term should have been garter belt or suspender belt, thus showing off their masculine prowess in using sexual terms for women (cf. Stanley 1977), and in this way further legitimising the disparagement of women.

Others noticed the discrepancy between Xynidis's demeanor towards the Prime Minister George Papandreou and towards Kaili (Excerpt 3), to the effect that Kaili was actually an easy target, and so, this was highly unmanly an act on his part. Xynidis's heavy-handed behaviour is one more proof that parliamentary interaction remains under male control, through illegal interventions against women (cf. Shaw 2000).

► Excerpt 3 [http://www.parakato.gr/2011/11/blog-post_4523.html]

Σωκράτης Ξυνίδης: Σούζα στον Γιώργο, μαγκιές στην Καϊλή

Sokratis Xynidis: Blind obedience to George, snotty bullying of Kaili

Some others commented on what they considered as Kaili's out-of-the-blue ascendancy to Parliament, due to her young age and good looks which, allegedly, were her passport to the central political scene, which she was meant to simply decorate like a 'flowerpot', a Barbie –also acting as a lure for young voters.

In all these versions, the gender of Kaili (either as a powerless/unprotected person or as an attractive young woman) seems to be of greater relevance than anything else, and this is also manifest in the choice of the term “κοπέλα”, ‘young woman’, (Excerpt 2, T2), rather than colleague or comrade (in memory of the socialist past of PASOK), even by the disapproving male MP who scolded Xynidis at the time.

Thus, Kaili was initially assigned membership to the locally constituted non-human MCD *underwear* or *kinky underwear* by Xynidis, and then to the MCD *gender*, and was not, in fact, rescued by the sympathetic fellow MP, as he also denied her membership to the MCD *Parliament* or *Pasok MPs*, instead categorizing her as just ‘κοπέλα’, ‘young woman’.

The incident made headlines and was accordingly titled as “Λεκτικό χούφτωμα”, ‘verbal groping’, by Laurie Keza, a female columnist of the very reputable newspaper TO VIMA. Soon after the incident, Kaili officially filed a complaint with the long-dormant party disciplinary-committee, reason enough for the same columnist to call

her a *κυρία*, ‘lady’, and a *παλικάρι*, ‘brave, courageous, stout-hearted’, (Excerpt 4) –which also means ‘young man’ (I hope you can see the irony!)– because of her stance against Greek society’s rampant sexism. Thus, the well-intentioned columnist (unwittingly) preserved the relevance of the MCD *gender*, with Kaili undergoing one more categorial membership change, by now being turned into a man, which is always so much more valuable than just being a woman!

► Excerpt 4 [5/12/2011, TO VIMA,

<http://www.tovima.gr/default.aspx?pid=6525&la=1&aid=433281>]

[...] η αντίδραση της κυρίας Εύας Καϊλή έχει την αξία της, είναι από μόνη της κάτι. Όχι μόνο επειδή δεν κατεβαίνει στο επίπεδο των συναδέλφων της (δεν ασχημονεί, δεν προσβάλλει) αλλά γιατί φέρνει στο προσκήνιο ένα πρόβλημα που έχει υποτιμηθεί από την ελληνική κοινωνία. Τούτων δοθέντων η κυρία Εύα Καϊλή είναι παλικάρι.

[...] Mrs. Kaili’s reaction has its own value; it is something in itself. Not only because she refuses to lower her standards to match her colleagues’ (she does not behave improperly, she does not insult), but because she brings to the fore a problem that has been underestimated by the Greek society. On this basis, Mrs.³ Eva Kaili is a courageous person.

3.2 ‘Cougar’ women

Another domain undergoing change is the area of sexual relationships, as instantiated in the practice of heterosexual women taking a younger lover/partner/spouse, which is frowned upon by members, who express their disapproval in various ways towards a (disparagingly labeled) *τεκνατζού/πιπινατζού*, ‘cougar’ woman, i.e. an elderly woman who likes/preys on young men.

Natalia Germanou (b. 1965), a lyricist/radio producer/TV hostess, has had several relationships with younger men, earning herself the eponymic categorization, sometimes used to her face! (Excerpt 5, (1)). The *cougar* badge has become

³ The translation fails to render the pragmatic force of the item *κυρία*, whose pointed repetition points to an interpretation of *lady* rather than of *Mrs.*, also based on the preceding category-bound activities of proper ladylike behavior.

something of a transportable identity tag with her (Zimmerman 1998), at least in yellow journalism sites, to the extent that it accompanies her (often, in lieu of her surname), even when the activity she is involved in has nothing to do with her being in such a relationship, as when she is hired to do an advertisement (2); tries to set her friend up with a boyfriend (3); comments on other celebrities (4), (5); or ponders her job prospects (6). Germanou has even come to adopt the term herself, wondering what exactly triggers the (disparaging) way the media treat her when she is not the only woman in such a relationship (7).

- Excerpt 5 [<http://www.inews.gr/62/natalia-germanou-eisai-teknatzou.htm>,
<http://www.palo.gr/gossip-news/natalia-pipinatzoy-arpaxti-mediafimistiko/3672233/>, <http://www.freegossip.gr/NewsPage-ID-106089-Title-natalia-teknatzou-kanei-proxenio-stin-katerina-kainourgioi.htm>,
<http://www.palo.gr/gossip-news/natalia-pipinatzoy-kakws-xwrisan-papoytsaki-tziovas/3441762/>,
<http://www.palo.gr/cluster/articles/?clid=337117>,
http://kataggeilte.blogspot.gr/2011/11/blog-post_8560.html,
<http://www.gossip-tv.gr/showbiz/story/281743/o-aytosarkasmos-tis-natalias-den-eimai-to-monadiko-cougar>]

- (1) Ναταλία, θεωρείσαι η εθνική μας τεκνατζού
- (2) Ναταλία Πιπινατζού: Αρπαχτή με διαφημιστικό
- (3) Ναταλία Τεκνατζού: Κάνει προξενιό στην Κατερίνα Καινούργιου
- (4) Ναταλία Πιπινατζού: «Κακώς χώρισαν Παπουτσάκη-Τζιόβας»
- (5) Ναταλία Πιπινατζού: «Ο Σάκης είναι σαν το παλιό καλό κρασί»
- (6) Ναταλία Πιπινατζού: «Είναι εποχές για τσαμπουκάδες; Ουρά περιμένουν τα κοριτσάκια»
- (7) «Ειλικρινά δεν ξέρω γιατί τους κάνω τόσο μεγάλο κλικ όταν δεν είμαι το μοναδικό cougar στην ελληνική πραγματικότητα»

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- (1) Natalia, you are considered our national cougar woman
 - (2) Cougar Natalia: Ad fling
 - (3) Cougar Natalia: Matchmaking for Katerina Kenourgioi
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- (4) Cougar Natalia: "Papoutsaki-Tziiovas breakup most unfortunate"
- (5) Cougar Natalia: "Sakis is like a fine old wine"
- (6) Cougar Natalia: "This isn't the time for bravado. Young girls have been queuing up {for my job}"
- (7) "Honestly I have no idea why they make such a big deal about me when I am not actually the only cougar in Greece"

Social disapproval becomes even more pronounced in the case of mothers, who are archetypally expected to behave like the virginal/asexual Παναγία, 'Mother of God', and not like the wanton Eve (Du Bulay 1986, 1991; Zinovieff 1991). Following a turbulent divorce, 41-year old pop singer Elli Kokkinou fell in love with a 22-year old basketball player, who is also strikingly taller than her. The tabloids and gossip blogs had a field day when the relationship was revealed, and the fact that she is also a mother of a 4-year old child seemed to weigh very much with the gossip-blog-frequenting public.

They variously called her a "whore", "one who puts her sexual gratification above her poor son's 'mental balance'", whom they predict to "grow up to be a junky", besides predictably "soliciting the sexual favors of his cougar mother to his school mates"! Others mentioned the awkward position of the basketball player's mother, and also speculated that the affair was probably "a desperate publicity-seeking move", which only made the singer look ridiculous, and "like a mom" to her lover, as he is also so much taller. They even got to mention actress Demi Moor and her 'toy boy', in comparison (<http://www.freegossip.gr/News.php?ID=55930>, 08/04/2011).

A few (women), however, considered the different treatment of women and men, mentioning similar instances involving older men dating very young women, with the added comment that they are never portrayed as bad fathers solely because they are in such a relationship, but even so they thought the age difference was too great, especially for a mother.

All these reactions attest to the fact that the *sexual double-standard*, which condemns women's sexual agency, is well and alive, especially in the case of age gap dating as ageism and sexism go hand in hand, posing a double burden on women (Poulios 2011). And although women themselves have their fair share in maintaining

this part of gender inequality, it is mostly men who exercise control over it (Rudman, Fetterolf & Sanchez 2013).

Even allegedly open-minded society members such as the Greek life-style guru, Petros Kostopoulos (b. 1954), the publishing industry champion of sexual laissez-faire –who turned into a dutiful family man and father, after sowing his very wild oats–, relentlessly grilled Kokkinou on air with respect to the age difference between her and her lover, even though he was discreet enough not to raise the mother issue.

Kokkinou initially tried to avoid discussing her relationship, but Kostopoulos repeatedly attempted to initiate the topic by asking her apparently innocuous questions about the sport of basketball and whether she could mention any basketballers she knew, besides checking her skill at shooting hoops (interaction preceding Excerpt 6). Kokkinou humorously fended him off until he openly asked the pertinent questions concerning the (significant) age gap (T1, T14, T23, T29, T34, T37, T45, T47):⁴

- Excerpt 6 [ANT TV, ΒΡΑΔΥ, 20/1/2012,
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QidhxoytiH>,
http://www.antenna.gr/webtv/watch?cid=_z_e_m_oo_f_o52rs%3d]

- 1 ΠΚ: Πώς είναι να τα 'χεις μ' ένα πιτσιρικότερο;
 <Αλήθεια!
 2 ΕΚ: >Α:χ! Α!< Σταμάτα μ' αυτή τη γκουβέντα!
 3 ΠΚ: Ο:χj!
 4 (.)
 5 ΕΚ: Ε: κα-γραφικό έχει καταν[τή:σει!]=
 6 ΠΚ: [Πέρα απ' ντη πλάκα!
 ((συγκατανεύει)) Γραφικό έχει καταντή[σει].
 7 ΕΚ: [↑ΕΞΥ πώς είναι
 να 'σαι παντρεμέ[:νος, [με μία πολύ πιο νέα γυναίκα=
 8 ΠΚ: [Εγώ: [Εγώ
 ΕΚ: =από σένα;
 9 ΠΚ: Εγώ: νοιώ:θω: μία μια χαρά διότι είμαι τό:σο:: πιο::
 (.) ε:: μ: (.) ε: ε: ((χειρονομεί θετικά))=
 10 ΕΚ: =Εντάξει. Κι' εγώ έτσι νοιώθω.=
 11 ΠΚ: =Δηλαδή ε:: (.) [((χειρονομεί)) Οι ά:ντρες-<Οχj δε=
 12 ΕΚ: [Τα ίδια λέμε

⁴ See Appendix for transcription notation.

- =λέμε τα ί:[↑δία:!
- 13 EK: [Τελείωσε το θέ[μα. Το ολοκληρώσαμε.
- 14 ΠΚ: [Εγώ () τη γυναίκα μου. Πώς είναι: (.) ρε παιδά:κι μου, μ' ένα πιτσιρικά. Πιτσιρικάς ξέρω 'γω.
- 15 EK: Και σένα πιτσιρίκα είναι η γυναίκα σου! =
- 16 ΠΚ: Πιτσιρίκα είναι σαράντα χρονών έγινε προχθές!
- 17 EK: Ναι αλλά εσύ δεν είσαι όμως σαρά:ντα! =
- 18 ΠΚ: =Οχ δεν είμαι σαράντα είμαι σαράντα δύο!
- 19 EK: M: :!
- 20 ((χειροκροτήματα))
- 21 ΠΚ: Έχω πει πόσο είμαι. Μη φοβάσαι! Τα λέω [εγώ!
- 22 EK: [Για πέστα!
- 23 ΠΚ: Πες μου ρε παιδάκι μου! (.) Φάίνεται:-σου φαίνεται λίγο: =
- 24 EK: =<Παιδί μου με βλέπεις καλά;
- 25 ΠΚ: N:αι.
- 26 EK: Εντάξει. Τελείωσε.↓
- 27 ΠΚ: ((χαμογελάει))
- 28 ((χειροκροτήματα))
- 29 ΠΚ: Αυτό ρε παιδάκι μου εθεωρείτο ένα κλασσικό:-ας μιλήσουμε σοβαρά, [των ανδρών, [δεν 'ναι τίποτα =
- 30 EK: [Ναι. [Ναι.
- ΠΚ: =καινούργιο!
- 31 EK: Καλά. Πήγαινε το τώρα εκεί που θες.[Άντε.
- 32 ΠΚ: [Το πάω εκεί που θέλω.
- 33 EK: Τελείωνε!
- 34 ΠΚ: Λοιπόν. (.) [↑Όμως τα τελευ[ταία χρόνια έχει έχει: =
- 35 EK: [M: [Κι' εγώ θα () εσένα)
- ΠΚ: =((χειρονομεί)) έχει γυρίσει, λίγο αυτό. =
- 36 EK: =N:αι.
- 37 ΠΚ: Πώς το βλέπεις αυτό; Είναι γιατί οι γυναίκες διατηρούνται πιο πολύ; Γιατί οι γυναίκες:-γιατί 'σαι στη σ:όου μπιζας πούμε και: θες πιο φρεσκάδα: ή για- (.) στο μυαλό:; γιατί φαντάζεσαι;
- 38 EK: Δε: ξέ:ρω:. Αλήθεια σου λέω. =
- 39 ΠΚ: =(Δε σου:)
- 40 EK: Σοβαρά μιλάω. [(.) Ετυχε =
- 41 ΠΚ: [(Δε σου)
- =και [:

- 42 PK: [Τι κουτσομπολιό να πούμε! Ξέρουμε τι ([])=
 43 EK: [Όχι:=
 PK: =μια σχέση έχεις.
 EK: =εσύ: τα ξέρεις από πρώτο χέρι.
 44 EK: Έ:τυχε: (1.0) και υπάρχει. (.) Δεν το επεδίωξα, ούτε
 περιμένα ότι θα μου συμβεί κάτι τέτοιο. (.) Ποτέ.=
 45 PK: =Σου είχε ξανασυμβεί με μικρότερους στη ζωή σου
 πριν;
 46 EK: Όχι.
 47 PK: Δηλαδή δεν ήτανε-ας πούμε αν:-αν σε ρωτάγαν πριν δύο
 χρόνια ότι τα φτιάχνεις με ένα πιτσιρικότερο, αρκετά
 θα 'ταν-θα 'λεγες το βλέπω;=
 48 EK: =Σε καμιά περίπτωση.
 49 PK: Σου κάθισε έτσι μπам και έγινε.
 50 EK: Ναι.

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- 1 PK: How does it actually feel to be dating a so much
 younger guy? <Seriously!
 2 EK: >Ah: Jeez!< Enough with this conversation!
 3 PK: Nope!
 4 (.)
 5 EK: Well, it has become a [joke!=
 6 PK: [No kidding! ((nods)) It has
 become a [joke.
 7 EK: [How about you? How does it feel to be
 [married [to a so much younger than you woman?
 8 PK: [I: [I
 9 PK: As for me, I feel just fine because I am so much
 more (.) er uhm (.) er er ((gesticulates
 affirmatively))=
 10 EK: =Right. I feel the same too.=
 11 PK: =That is er (.) [((gesticulates))Men-<Nope. We do=
 12 EK: [We mean the same
 PK: =not mean the [same!
 13 EK: [The discussion is [over. We're done!
 14 PK: [As for me ()
 my wife. How does it feel (.) Oh come on, to be
 with a young guy. A young guy and whatnot.
 15 EK: Your wife is a young chick too!
 16 PK: A young chick indeed! She turned forty the other
-

- day!
- 17 EK: True! But you are not forty yourself! =
- 18 PK: =Nope I am not forty. I am forty-two!
- 19 EK: Uh-huh!
- 20 ((audience applause))
- 21 PK: I have disclosed my age. Not to worry! I [have!
- 22 EK: [Well do
then!
- 23 PK: Come on you! (.) Does it look-does it look to you
a little =
- 24 EK: =<Hey, don't you see I am fine?
- 25 PK: Yeah.
- 26 EK: Okay then. We're done. ↓
- 27 PK: ((smiles))
- 28 ((audience applause))
- 29 PK: You know, this {practice} has been considered a
classic-let's be serious, [men's thing, [there's =
- 30 EK: [Yes [Yes
PK: =nothing new about it!
- 31 EK: Okay. You may direct this discussion any way you
like. [Go ahead.
- 32 PK: [That's what I am doing.
- 33 EK: Get it over with!
- 34 PK: So. (.) [But lately this [has has ((gesticulates)) =
- 35 EK: [M: [(Me too I'll () you)
PK: =it has changed a little bit. =
- 36 EK: =Yes.
- 37 PK: What do you think of this? Is it because women are
better preserved? Because women-because you are in
show biz let's say and you need more vigor or be-
(.) mindwise? What do you think is the reason?
- 38 EK: I do not know. Frankly now. =
- 39 PK: =(I am not)
- 40 EK: I am being serious. [(.) It happened by chance =
- 41 PK: [(I am not)
=an:[d
- 42 PK: [This is no gossip! We know what ([] =
- 43 EK: [No. =
PK: =you are in a relationship.
EK: =You have firsthand knowledge of it.
- 44 EK: It happened by chance. (1.0) And so it exists. (.)

- I did not go searching for it neither did I expect such a thing to happen to me (.) Never ever.=
- 45 PK: =Has it ever happened to you to be with younger men before?
- 46 EK: No.
- 47 PK: Which means that it wasn't-let's say if-if you were asked if you could have a relationship with a younger guy, considerably {younger}, would it be-would you say it was possible?=
 48 EK: =Not in any way.
 49 PK: It started with a bang and it just worked out.
 50 EK: Yes.

Kokkinou right away turns the tables on the host by asking him the same questions as he has been married to a woman 17 years his junior (T7, T15). She also curtly assures him she feels the same way *he* does in his relationship (T10, T12). That is, the relationship feels good (T24), and moreover there is nothing to talk about (T2, T5, T13, T26). She had never planned on having such a relationship, which had always seemed out of the question (T46, T48). Love simply came her way, period! (T40, T44).⁵

Kokkinou's moves introduce categorial reformulation, through the removal of the *partitioning*⁶ cast by Kostopoulos's singling out her relationship as aberrant, and by implication his as normal, on the basis of stereotypical gender practices associated with the MCD *gender*, which provides for their cross-membership as 'man' and 'woman'.

Instead, she introduces *partitioning inconstancy*,⁷ by evoking the MCD *relationships* –a collection of which might be 'unequal relationships'–, which gives her entry to the same category as him, making them co-members rather than cross-members, as they are both in an unequal relationship, and so co-classed on the same side of the partitioned population. As the two MCDs refract the scene differently, they activate “alternative bodies of common sense knowledge, inference, perception, etc.,

⁵ Cf. Pop icon Madonna's (b. 1958) similar account: “I didn't choose to, you know, I didn't, like, write down on a piece of paper, ‘I'm now going to have a relationship with a younger man,’” [...] “That's just what happened. [...] I just met someone that I cared for, and this happened to be his age.” (http://www.accesshollywood.com/madonna-talks-marriage-and-dating-younger-men_article_58986).

⁶ “...putting objects into various classes which stand in some relationship to completely different collections of categories and their internal relationships” (Sacks 1992b: 110).

⁷ Constancy/Inconstancy: “...persons split [in one way] and that (...) is preserved [or not preserved] over the addition of another collection of categories” (Sacks 1992a: 592).

as relevant to conduct and understanding in the situation, and *of the situation*” (Schegloff 2007: 469, emphasis in the original).

Kokkinou even attempts to dismantle the (stereotypical) relationship that the two MCDs or collections, *gender* and *relationships*, have to each other, which provides for being a man and also considerably older than your lover, but not the other way round –as the eligibility on how much older is controlled by one’s status as man or woman (Sacks 1992a)–, by claiming that there is no difference between hers and his situation, and so her relationship is not an issue. In this sense, she practically cancels the relevance of gender.

The overall assessment of the interview is that Kokkinou has come forward as quite self-confident and largely unapologetic, performing considerably well under pressure, as she also manages to reverse the turn-taking regulations of the interview (cf. Heritage 1998), by getting to also ask, and not just answer, questions, thus also contesting the omnirelevance of the collection *interview* –at least for that particular stretch of the interaction–, which provides for Kostopoulos as the interviewer and for her as the interviewee. However, she herself admits that she used to share the prevalent belief concerning the acceptable age-gap with regard to gender.

3.3 Housewifery

Another woman, actress Maria Solomou (b. 1972), also in a relationship with a younger man, is questioned by Kostopoulos about her lover, musician/actor Panos Mouzourakis (7 years her junior), but this time in terms of her fulfilling the care-taking duties of a woman towards her man. The question he first poses is whether she does his (shirt) ironing and (underwear) laundry for him (T1), phrased as a culturally recognizable idiom for such an activity (Edwards 1998):

- Excerpt 7 [ANT TV, ΒΡΑΔΥ, 19/1/2012,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=phSOcT4tsKc>,
http://www.antenna.gr/webtv/watch?cid=f%2f_u_f_s_kig1_a_a%3d]

- 1 ΠΚ: Ωραία. Για πες μας τι κάνεις για τον άνθρωπο, του
 σιδερώνεις κανά πουκάμισο του πλένεις κανά σάβρακο;
 2 ΜΣ: Δεν το πιστεύω! \$Μιλάμε δύ(h)ο ώρες για τον hh
 Μουζου(h)ρά: [(h)κη; hhh >\$ΓΙΑΤΙ ΔΕΝ ΤΟΝ ΕΦΕΡΝΑ;=

- 3 [(γέλια από το κοινό)]
- 4 ΠΚ: [Ναι εγώ γι' αυτό. Του κά:νεις:
- 5 ΠΚ: =Να δω τι σόϊ τι σόϊ: συ: σύντροφος είσαι.
- 6 ΜΣ: Ε:: (.) Ο Πάνος έχει το σπίτι του κι εγώ το δικό=
μου. ((τραγουδιστά, θριαμβευτικά)) [↑Ταν ταρά:μ!=
- 7 ΠΚ: [(Α Πάνος)
- ΜΣ: =Τελεί[α. Οπότε ο καθένας σιδερώνει τα ρούχα του=
- 8 ΠΚ: [(μιμητικά)) Τελεία.
- ΜΣ: =φανιάζομαι.=
- 9 ΠΚ: =((κουνάει αποδοκιμαστικά [το κεφάλι του])=
- 10 [(γέλια από το κοινό)]
- 11 ΜΣ: =↑ΣΟΥ ΦΑΙΝΟΝΤΑΙ περιεργαζ όλα αυτά[:
- 12 ΠΚ: [N:αι=
- 13 ΜΣ: =Δεν:-εντάξει. Υπάρχουν ορισμένα πράγματα τα οποία
για μένα δεν εί:ναι[:
- 14 ΠΚ: [Γιατί είστε καιρό πια-δεν είναι:
γι' αυτό το λέω:=
- 15 ΜΣ: =((συγκατανεύει)) N:αι. Είμαστε καιρό [αλλ:ά:
- 16 ΠΚ: [Σ:κέψη να
μείνεις: μαζί δε:ν.
- 17 ΜΣ: ↓Όχι.
- 18 ΠΚ: Τον έχεις καλέσει ποτέ σπίτι σου να του μαγειρέψεις
κιόλας να φά:ει ν' αυτώ:σει:;
- 19 ΜΣ: ΒεΒΑΙ:ω::ς ε: όταν: μπορώ: και μ: να κάτσουμε σπίτι
και τα λοιπά:-<ΩΡΑΙΟΤΑΤΑ> ντελίβεράδικα[:=
- 20 ΠΚ: [M:
- ΜΣ: =((χειρονομία τηλεφώνου)) <τηλεφωνα:κι> ((χειρονομία
παράδοσης παραγγελίας)) ΛΑΤΣ: Τι θες να φας;
- 21 ΠΚ: Ένα αυγό δεν ξες να κάνεις, ρε [παιδάκι μου;
- 22 ΜΣ: [Ένα αυγό φ:τιά:χνω.
- 23 ΠΚ: °Φτιάχνεις° ((φωνάζει μέλος προσωπικού)) >Για έλα
εδώ να δούμε αν ξερ' να κάνει αυγό.
- 24 ((εμφανίζεται καρότσι με σχετικά σύνεργα και η
Σολωμού εξετάζεται στην εκτέλεση βρασίματος αυγού))

-
- 1 PK: Good. Go ahead and tell us what it is that you do
for the guy, do you iron an occasional shirt, do you
wash the occasional drawers?
- 2 MS: I can't believe it! \$We have been talking for hh
Mouzou(h)ra[(h)kis for so long! hhh \$WHY HAVEN'T I=
-

- 3 ((audience laughter))
- 4 PK: [Yes I mean us to. Do you do for him
MS: =BROUGHT HIM ALONG?=
5 PK: =To find out what kind what kind of a pa: partner
you are.
6 MS: Uhm (.) Panos has his own home and I have mine.
((fanfare)) [↑Ta-dah!=
7 PK: [(Aha Panos)
MS: =Perio[:d! So each does their own ironing I expect.=
8 PK: [((echoing MS)) Period.
9 PK: =((nod of [disapproval))=
10 ((audience laughter))
11 MS: =YOU FIND all this stran[ge;
12 PK: [Yeah=
13 MS: =It doesn't-alright. There are certain things which
for me are [not
14 PK: [Because you've been together for a long
time now-it is not as if, that's why I'm asking you=
15 MS: =((nods)) Yeah. We've been together for a long time
[but
16 PK: [The thought of living together has not {crossed
your mind}?
17 MS: ↓No.
18 PK: Have you ever invited him over to your house to
cook for him too, to feed him and whatnot?
19 MS: Most certainly er when I have the time and we can
stay at home and so forth-<MOST EXQUISITE> food
stay services [((telephoning gesture)) <a phone=
20 PK: [Hm
MS: =call> ((food delivering gesture)) Splat! What is it
that you would like to have?
21 PK: You don't even know how to boil an egg, [huh?
22 MS: [I can boil
an egg.
23 PK: °You can° ((calling out to stage hand)) Come in so
we can find out if she can indeed boil an egg.
24 ((cart with cooking paraphernalia is wheeled in for
giving Solomou a public egg-boiling test))

Although Kostopoulos later uses the term “σύντροφος”. ‘partner’, and not woman/wife, as the incumbent of these activities (T5), the preceding use of “άνθρωπος”, ‘human being+MASC.’ (T1), –which routinely references males (Makri-Tsilipakou 1989)– and, more crucially, the duties he describes fall squarely on a (traditional) housewife’s shoulders.

Solomou initially bursts into an I-can’t-believe-this laughter (T2), commenting on the fact they get to talk about her lover so much in her own interview, and goes on to calmly respond that, as they live separately, they do their own ironing, she supposes! (T6). And no, she is not considering cohabitation (T17).

The next question is whether she asks her lover over to dinner she has personally cooked for him (T18), to which she very coolly responds that should the occasion arise, there exist superb food delivery services (T19) one can call, so what’s the fuss?

Well, the fuss is that cooking seems to remain an activity primarily bound to women. So, while tasting two different servings of μελομακάρονα, ‘honey macaroons’, baked by a man (TV presenter Fotis Sergouloupoulos, b. 1963) and a woman (co-presenter Maria Bakodimou, b. 1965), musician/stand-up comedian Dimitris Starovas (b. 1963), expresses his indignation over the fact that a man proves to be a better cook than a woman (Excerpt 8).

► Excerpt 8 [STAR TV, ΦΩΤΗΣ ΜΑΡΙΑ LIVE, 30/12/2011]

1 ΔΣ: Της Μαρίας είναι; Ε! Μαρία ανοικοκύρευτη! Να κάνει
άνδρας καλύτερα μελομακάρονα είναι σωστό;

1 DS: Are these Maria’s? Hey! You bad housewife, Maria!
How can it ever be right that a man should bake
better honey macaroons?

Though mockingly done, the quip undoubtedly drives home the cultural point of view, invoking the *standardized relational pair*⁸ man-woman –“a locus for a set of rights and obligations” (Sacks 1972: 37)–, even though Sergouloupoulos is a self-

⁸ “The members of collection R are such pairs of categories as husband-wife, parent-child, neighbor-neighbor, boyfriend-girlfriend, friend-friend, cousin-cousin, ...stranger-stranger. [...] Any pair of categories is a member of collection R if that pair is a ‘standardized’ relational pair that constitutes a locus for a set of rights and obligations” (Sacks 1972: 37).

confessed homosexual, and cooking could easily be seen as a category-bound activity for him, too.

The category-bound activity of cooking is occasionally invoked by women themselves as a desirable feminine attribute. And they don't have to be housewives by profession. I can remind you of the late Malvina Karali (1952-2002), an iconoclast journalist and writer, who besides daily lambasting the then prime Minister Kostas Simitis and other PASOK dignitaries (in her 1996-1997 shows ΜΑΛΒΙΝΑ LIVE, SKAI TV; ΜΑΛΒΙΝΑ HOSTESS, MEGA TV), she also made a point of teaching women how to cook for their family on a Sunday television show (ΑΠΝΑΚΙ ΜΕ ΚΟΥΣ ΚΟΥΣ, 'Lamb Couscous', SKAI TV, 1996) (cf. Makri-Tsilipakou 1997), in the company of her children –besides authoring two cooking books.

It does seem, then, that cooking continues to have an important place in the symbolism of feminine gender within Greek culture (Dubisch 1986), as several younger women strive to prove themselves good cooks, in addition to being accomplished professionals.⁹

4. Discussion

In the analysis of the excerpts, we came across both conventional and unconventional predicates imputed to women by themselves or others.

Despite numerous advances in gender equality, women in politics are still having a hard time trying to persuade Greek society (especially Greek men) that they are as qualified as any other politician –besides being entitled to the same rights. It turns out that part of society mistrusts them and men still call the shots in (androcentric) party organizations.

Greek women are also expected to be 'proper' housewives doing all the necessary care-taking for their families, cooking included, although it is certainly the case that not all young women embrace this culturally persistent practice and they also make no bones about it.

Women's sexuality –though generally hardly acknowledged (cf. Makri-Tsilipakou 2013)– appears to be more freely channeled nowadays as increasingly more women dare partner with (significantly) younger men. The reason might be that they find themselves in more *powerful* positions than before –enjoying *financial independence*,

⁹ I have personally handed down recipes to younger women who also happen to be very active in their fields.

lack of which had often caused women to settle for security with older men— and/or because their *erotic capital* lasts longer (Hakim 2010),¹⁰ allowing them to compete with younger women as they, indeed, take good care of their bodies (cf. T37, Excerpt 6). Nevertheless, such relationships still raise a few eyebrows, even among younger members (cf. Lai & Hynie 2011), as attested in the predatory connotations of the term ‘cougar’, which is rapidly becoming a recognizable term in Greek, too, —in replacement of the equally damning ‘πιπινατζού/τεκνατζού’, with its pedophilic aura.

The unconventional practices of the women we mentioned earlier —or of any other woman, for that matter, whose off-the-beaten track life-path is in conflict with prevailing norms— inevitably place them under extra social scrutiny, for the simple reason that categories are protected against *induction*,¹¹ and so anyone who does not fit the culturally available categorial description runs the risk of being seen as an “exception” (Sacks 1992a: 336), as “defective” (Schegloff 2007: 469) or *accountable*. So, accountability is the social magnitude to be confronted with, as women (and men) go about attempting to re-define their gendered lives.

As categories and predicates provide methods for assigning actors and actions their proper identities, it seems that a reconstitution of society is ultimately a matter of category transformation. We cannot undo the man-woman distinction on the level of sex —as it is a ‘natural’ fact of life, “right and correct, i.e. morally proper that it be that way”, as Garfinkel claims (1967: 123)—, but we can try to dismantle, or at least derange, the relational pairing of the categories ‘man-woman’ in their present configuration as parties to a persistently patriarchal social order.

And, if we were to go by Sacks’s rule of *consistency* (1992a: 246) —which states that we can use the same category or other categories from the same device to categorize further members of a population— as well as the related viewer’s maxims, according to which inferences about the identity of an incumbent of a category can be drawn on the basis of their doing norm-conforming category-bound activities, then,

¹⁰ A personal asset which is an important addition to economic, cultural, and social capital, consisting of beauty, sexual attractiveness, social skills in interaction, liveliness, social presentation, sexuality (and fertility, in some cultures). (Hakim 2010).

¹¹ “I want to turn now to one thing that is special about those categories. Such knowledge as is recognized as correct by virtue of the combination: [a category (whatever it is) plus some thing they do or attribute they have (category bound in that sense)], has a rather important property which I talk of as ‘*knowledge protected against induction*’. By that I mean, if you have a statement, “Women are fickle”, then it is no way to undercut that statement to introduce as a possible contradiction some statement which consists of a name of a person, plus not-fickle, where that person is a member of the category” (Sacks 1992a: 336, emphasis in the original).

we could probably argue that any woman –mutatis mutandis– can see herself in the shoes of the women whose old troubles and novel practices we have analyzed, and so, hopefully, we might take a step towards challenging our gendered lives.

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Appendix

Transcription notation

Symbol	Explanation	Symbol	Explanation
xxx-	cut-off utterance	{xxx}	translator's item
[xxx	overlap	[...]	omitted talk
xxx:	sound prolongation	(1.0)	pause/gap in seconds
xxx=	latching	(.)	pause/gap < second
>xxx<	quicker talk	↑/↓	rise/fall in pitch
<xxx>	slower talk	xxx?	rising intonation
<xxx	jump-started talk	xxx¿	weaker rising intonation
<u>xxx</u>	emphasis	xxx!	animated intonation
XXX	louder talk	xxx,	continuing intonation
°xxx°	quieter talk	xxx.	final intonation
() / (xxx)	non-transcribable/unclear	(h) hh hhh	outbreath/laughter
((xxx))	transcriber's comments	\$	smile voice