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Mapping performativity: a performance as research enquiry to how performative embodied repetition of gendered acts can challenge perceptions of gendered expectations as a woman

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2021
https://hdl.handle.net/10539/32113

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Mapping Performativity: A Performance as Research Enquiry to how Performative Embodied Repetition of Gendered Acts Can Challenge Perceptions of Gendered Expectations as a Woman.

ABSTRACT:

This research explores performance as an enquiry into how performative embodied gendered acts can challenge perceptions of gendered expectations of women. These expectations are predominantly ones of beauty and appearance in order to be perceived as a woman. This research uses the metaphor of a map to map out the ways in which gender is performed using objects that interact with the body, with a focus on high heeled shoes. It explores *how* a conscious awareness of repeated acts through active doing and witnessing or perceiving can challenge and shift understanding and perceptions of the lived bodily experiences of women. It also explores how performativity is not necessarily acknowledged by the subject but is always active.

Previous research has worked with the body and performance to explore gender and break conventions around gendered expectations; however, it does not explore internal and visceral shifts in understanding one's own phenomenological experiences with gendered *objects* and how a conscious awareness of them used in performativity can change perceptions. This mapping moves from a sensory experience to a psychological consciousness and shifts between the two, amplified by the use of repetition. This conscious awareness has the potential to shift perceptual norms that women have on how to present themselves as a woman. *How* this shift takes place is what this research comes to answer.

Through a self-exploration of body mapping and embodied performance workshops, I work with five women who are trained performers and five non-trained women, all of whom identify as a woman, to map through and with the body in order to uncover a sense of a shared phenomenological experience between women. High heels are the central gendered object of focus throughout the mapping. As a result of the process of embodied repetition we note the immediate effect it has on the body and the way it presents itself outwardly to the world.

KEYWORDS: PERFORMANCE, GENDER PERFORMATIVITY, PHENOMENOLOGY, PERCEPTION, EMBODIED PERFORMANCE, REPETITION, GENDERED ACTS, LIVED BODY, BODY-MAPPING.