Doing gender in management education

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Abstract

In this paper I explore teaching gender to management students, mainly to those studying Masters in Business Administration (MBA) degrees. I introduce and critique a *Gender Awareness* approach I have developed for this work. I recount two contrasting experiences of using this framework, tentatively analysing the differences between them. During the paper I note and develop various themes including my need for self-preparation as a tutor and how I and the groups I teach may engage in *doing gender* (using multiple associations of that term).

Doing gender in management education

Introduction

In this paper I shall explore teaching gender to management students, mainly to those studying Masters in Business Administration (MBA) degrees. I shall recount some experiences, offer and critique teaching frames I have used, and reflect on more general issues as I proceed.

I shall base the paper on a story of my practice which intertwines the above elements. This is a personal-professional story in that it is firmly grounded in who I am as a person as well as showing how I operate as a university academic.

As I proceed, I shall sometimes 'interrupt' the main narrative with explorations of related issues and with my self-reflections. I shall mark such sections by using *italics*.

I mean the title of this paper - *'doing gender'* (West and Zimmerman, 1991) - in several ways, which I should acknowledge at the outset. Firstly, I often teach gender-related issues. Secondly, as a female academic I do gender-related 'work' myself as I prepare myself, frame teaching programmes and materials, judge how much can be said and how to present potentially contentious themes, decide what to wear, and much more. Thirdly, my engagements with students in class sessions will sometime enact gender-associated patterns whilst we also address (and sometimes cannot address - see below) such issues through debate.

This paper focuses on gender because this lens is sharpest in the experiences reported and fits with the remit of the Special Issue. In the teaching discussed I would have commented also on race and other potential differences. More recently I have taken a more explicit diversity approach, with some reservations, as mentioned below.

One note on language use: I have been dissatisfied in writing this paper with the word 'teach' and its one-way implications. This does not fit my more mixed and participative style. But alternative phrases such as 'working with gender' or 'creating learning environments' all had disadvantages of vagueness and extra wordiness. So please read 'teach' as if in inverted commas.

"Would you do gender for me?"

Some years ago I was asked by a colleague to contribute a session on gender and management to a core organizational behaviour course he was running on one of our School's MBA programmes. This was one of my areas of expertise and the course was seen to need some appreciation of this sort. I accepted but with considerable trepidation. Working with MBAs can be great fun, and it can be intimidating. I have heard stories in some institutions of staff who have not survived, who have not seemed to possess 'the right stuff'. I am wary about listing the stereotypes which attach to MBA students lest I seem to be condoning their extreme form, but I need to paint some kind of image here. From my experience, MBAs <u>as class groups</u> are more likely than undergraduate management students or those on other forms of postgraduate studies to favour teaching which offers a selective range of interpretive frames, shows its relationship to practice clearly and has direct applications. They are more likely to become impatient at conditional knowledge, inquiry-based approaches, ideas which are offered

without direct practice links, and frameworks which ask them to question the legitimacy and foundations of current management knowledge and practice. <u>And</u> there is much variety amongst MBA students, as individuals and groups, so many people do not fit this imagery, and appearances can be deceptive.

By the time of this story I had already engaged with these issues and challenges, especially through teaching a core organizational behaviour course on another MBA programme for several years. So my trepidation was more associated with my expectation that I would be teaching potentially contentious material (gender) to a hitherto unknown MBA group than it was with MBA teaching per se. I am not, however, saying that I had perfected an infallible and safe MBA teaching technique, doing so would not fit my style of teaching through engagement.

I pushed the concerns and the potential materials I had in mind around during the weeks that followed. I was doing parallel work, as I often do in a range of activities, on the potential content and on my own process, as I sought a way to approach and feel comfortable with what I needed to do. Of the two tracks of development, the attention to my own process was the more important at that stage as it affected my stance, my sense of voice, and my framing of whatever material I then chose to use. I was working with several dilemmas. I did not know what bases the course participants would be coming from in terms of awareness of, knowledge about or willingness to talk about gender and management. Whilst I could quote research and case study based material I felt that there was little I could say that was universally 'true' about gender as organizations and individuals' situations vary considerably, and are undergoing great change. As a counterpoint, however, there are also some deep-seated patterns associated with gendered expectations, gender inequalities, gender-power dynamics and more which do seem often to be repeated and to persist despite more superficial changes. I did not warm either to the potential image of me strongly asserting perspectives which might be considered uncontentious in other settings (for example that most organizational cultures are male-dominated in various ways) only to have them rebuffed or rejected by course participants. I felt vulnerable, too, as a woman presenting material on gender to a course group amongst which there were only one or two women. Given all the above considerations, the potential for conflict and/or for me to be on the defensive seemed high.

In the background of these deliberation were key issues of identity and context which were also activated for me.

What aspects of me as person are relevant here? I can describe myself as a white woman, and any group I engage with is likely to make the same attributions. MBA teaching is still a male-dominated activity, as a woman I will therefore sometimes have to establish my credibility. In discussions about race, colour and cultural differences my experience and understanding hve limitations which may make my approach unawarely ethno-centric. I would also describe myself as heterosexual, from a working class background, and some sort of feminist, wanting to define the meanings of this myself. The latter is an especially tricky label to use or be defined by, and I would avoid it as an introductory self-definition in MBA and other teaching. Feminism is often seen as highly incompatible with management, especially at senior levels. Students, male and female, who think their tutor feminist may well devalue them; or some female students may assume an automatic alignment, which carries its own complications. How to claim and portray feminist perspectives as part of an array of teaching frames, and invite course participants to respect and entertain them, <u>and</u> not to be 'branded' is agile work. I find this a challenge with many different course groups. It is increasingly likely, though, that

some group members (women and men) will expect and bring with them more feminist appreciations. If I am over-cautious, favouring mainstream theory for fear of causing disturbance or rejection, I may be modelling unnecessarily limited thinking - and may be challenged for this.

And then there are issues about what kind of territory I am working in. Mainstream management education trades largely in theories which are portrayed as gender neutral but could more appropriately be defined as unaware about such issues (Marshall, 1995). Little sense of gender (or other) critique is incorporated. And many people would depict the MBA (despite variety in course offerings) as epitomising this mainstream, a cultural form in its own right, seeking to give its clients an understanding of core disciplines and function areas, with an overt agenda of enhancing their career prospects within management as it is currently configured. An emphasis on developing strategic appreciation within any topic area is an example of this orientation. Thus the degree is typically based in dominant, and therefore largely male, values about appropriate management knowledge, styles and notions of career development, and often replicates these within its own teaching approaches and environments (eg Sinclair, 1997). Teaching the 'softer' subjects such as organizational behaviour in this context can sometimes be quite challenging for tutors of either gender. Some MBA course participants are sceptical about their relevance. Raising issues of gender and race is even more likely to be provocative. So in my work (on other issues such as stress, different ways of knowing and alternative business values, as well as gender) I see myself as often speaking for what has been missed out, denied, muted or repressed, and may therefore prove threatening. It is also fundamental to me that I want to expand people's experiencing and understanding through education, rather than simply their range of ideas. Some people relish this invitation whilst others think it intrusive.

As I write, I notice how much I take working with the above challenges for granted as part of my vocation. Doing so has shaped my academic life and made it meaningful, and I am often seeking to develop further my skills for doing it effectively (and questioning what that means) and my courage. Issues of identity and self-presentation are relevant here. I therefore resonate with Meyerson and Scully's (1995) notion of 'tempered radicals' - 'people who work within mainstream organizations and professions and want also to transform them'. They have chosen the designation 'tempered' for its multiple meanings. These people seek moderation, they have 'become tougher by being alternately heated up and cooled down', and they are angered by incongruities in values and perceived lack of social justice (p.586). And I do not expect many male colleagues to be doing such work. I see it as involving 'doing gender' (and it has other, concurrent, under-pinnings) as a female academic. And I wonder what my male colleagues might think if I come unstuck in this (self-imposed?) juggling act.

As I puzzled away, a form for my approach to the session arose. As an idea it had initial clarity and simplicity and it appealed because it addressed and incorporated the concerns I had been working with rather than being an avoidance of them. It provided a resolution for my stance and so diffused some of my sense of concern, and it provided a robust holding framework for any material I wanted to offer. The form itself came by reaching outside my frames on gender into my wider realm of ideas and practices about inquiry and systemic change. From these I took a sense that the session could offer some prompts and processes to encourage people to look inquiringly through gender-associated perspectives at the organizational world around them. This in itself would be worthwhile and might have some persisting usefulness. *(I realise how much a sense of influencing people to change or develop can pervade teaching in this*

area. In this framing of what the session could achieve I reduced my possible objectives to something potentially achievable and likely to have some impact. I might otherwise have had an unacknowledged sense of wanting to communicate all there is to know about gender and management in a persuasive manner in one encounter.) A key element was inviting people to adopt a spirit of inquiry about their own assumptions and ways of perceiving, as these became revealed, as well as inquiring into the world around them. In keeping with a systemic approach to change I wanted to encourage a relatively non-judgmental approach, but one which could ask critical questions about appropriateness when relevant. I was also working with notions that mindsets and cultures are highly resilient. Sometimes shifts come about through clearly stating "what is" (rather than filtering perceptions through idealisations of what should be), by allowing understandings to evolve, and by maintaining conditions which keep them open to revision. It is also helpful to appreciate our own position and how we help to keep things the same.

Thus, I was hoping that people would look anew at the world around them and themselves with a more gender-aware gaze. Noticing, questioning and developing self-reflective abilities were sufficient "goals" in themselves, and might lead on to shifts in behaviour as previous patterns became inappropriate. And they might later lead on further to action for change if that was appropriate, but only, I would hope, grounded in a fully observed appreciation of current situations, practices and dynamics.

I do have questions about the completeness of this theoretical approach, which I now mention in advance to groups I teach to invite their inquiry and reflection. I wonder if it is sufficiently power-aware (in terms of multiple framings of power), whether it can adequately scrutinise institutional, social and cultural patterns which are highly resilient and in which we are all to some extent invested, and whether it over-estimates the potential for change from positions within the system. (As one alternative, change through senior people's vision and enforcement is valuable and sometimes indispensable.)

I used the title of *Gender Awareness* for the approach I was advocating, and explained its key elements in an introductory section of my handout. The open inquiry model I was using was further reinforced in a closing section. (MBA students are generally assumed to need handouts, well presented overhead projector slides and so on. How these assumptions shape our educational engagements with people might be worth exploring but I will not do so here. For the purposes of this story, I was happy to match this expectation given the other potential differences I might be introducing into the session. And I seek to use the apparent clarity of handouts paradoxically, hoping it will fragment as people start to make sense of their situations, and will so prove a valuable prompt for more inquiring engagement.)

As I have continued to use this framework I have modified its wording slightly. The opening section recently ran as follows:

MBA: GENDER AWARENESS approach

This session invites you:

1. Both to look with a questioning eye at the organizational world around you and to pay attention to yourself as you do so, becoming aware of the assumptions which guide your perceptions.

2. To **notice and explore** key aspects of organizations which are often gender-related.
and to move on to steps (3) and more at the end of the handout.....

The following questions and snippets from research findings are offered as prompts......

The closing section was:

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3. What next?? If anything....

Developing noticing abilities
Asking questions
Evaluating the effectiveness of current patterns - and questioning what criteria are appropriate to do so
Exploring the dynamics of how things stay the same
Noticing how **you** maintain current patterns
Taking action for change

Within this framework I then incorporated a range of materials to lead into discussions about areas of management which might be gender-associated. I scanned potential topics and eventually covered: the distribution of women in management positions; how organizational values might relate to sex-role ideals; whether management ideals are gender-associated; if behaviour is judged according to sex-role stereotypes; whether gender-power dynamics affect organizational processes; language use; communication patterns; and aspects of male gender conditioning and its potential effects on individuals' development and notions of leadership. I also planned to use a video - "The Tale of 'O'" based on Kanter's (1977) work on tokenism and the dynamics of relative number - to prompt discussion on the potential relative influences of personality, gender, power and situation.

In each area I included one or more sections inviting people to look at their own experiences and organizations using prompt questions designed to raise key issues. Sometimes I also offered illustrative research findings to broaden potential debate. I was therefore not saying that there was gender discrimination operating or that norms and practices might favour men or women. At best, I hoped that people would reflect on such issues and carry this sense of questioning back into their work situations. This seemed an especially important attitude to advocate for people for whom this was new territory, and it respected, and could work with, the experiences of people who were already gender-aware. Also I was leaving open which issues

would interest different members of the group, expecting this to vary. By providing illustrations from research data, however, I was also not encouraging people to respond simplistically and say that gender was not an issue in their organization, unless they could support this by providing evidence

I have changed some of the specific questions and examples used slightly over the years. Early versions were often based on notions of women as likely to be disadvantaged. One or two of these do now seem a little raw or slanted, but they can have an element of directness which more egalitarian forms might lack. Typically I have moved on to more open phrasing so that restrictions on men's lives are also likely to emerge. Recently I have revised the content to look at diversity more generally (see below). Since its early development I have more often used the *Gender Awareness* framework as a specific approach within a more broad ranging course format. Other sessions will explore specific issues (such as management and masculinities, communication patterns or career development) in more depth.

Examples of *Gender Awareness* discussion prompts

Here I have included a sampling of handout subsections. I have numbered them within this paper for formatting clarity only. All except Number 2 are original question formulations.

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1. Noticing where women are and are not in your organization

Is there a Glass Ceiling?
Are women in female ghettos, cut off from promotion opportunities?
Is 'women's work' low value, 'men's work' high value?
What factors and processes sustain this situation or make it amenable to change?

(This was followed by a table of statistics about women in employment in the UK - their proportion in employment, in management jobs, in senior jobs and so on - with references.)

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2. Noticing what characteristics are required of successful managers and whether these are gender-related (Revised version)

"Think Manager, Think Male"?   (title of research publication by Schein)
Is recruitment or promotion selective in some informal way?
What informal or covert qualities help towards promotion potential?
Might these exclude people?   Who?

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3. Noticing whether similar behaviour is judged differently if shown by a man or a woman

Management styles: task-orientation and people-orientation
Women adopting male styles as a common strategy
Women conforming to female stereotypes
Double standards?
Triple standards?
References: Marshall (1984); Loden (1985); Statham (1987); Rosener (1990)

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4. Noticing how apparent differences between women and men are perceived

Polarised thinking
Impose good/bad or positive/negative on the polarity
Male as norm
Male positive/female negative
Female positive/ male negative
Different but equal
Both...... and...... thinking

5a. Noticing gender-power dynamics

Examples: language use which makes women and their experiences invisible or abnormal
              academic theories which generalise from data on men (in split-role cultures) to
              all humankind, managers and so on
              use of power in conversation
              status levelling - see below
              use of sexual innuendo to undermine

5b. *Status levelling* occurs when:
A person is attributed lower status than their role typically warrants because of their social
group - eg a female manager is assumed to be a secretary or
A person is attributed higher status than their role typically warrants because of their social
group - eg a male nurse is assumed to be a doctor

6. Explorations in communication patterns:

a. Typical patterns of:
                    Men's Talk   Women's Talk
according to Tannen - detail omitted in this paper

b. Tendencies in other research findings about women and men in conversation:

Men:	**Women:**
more attention to tasks	more attention to social and emotional aspects
talk longer	encourage equal participation (even when leaders)
interrupt women	use more tag questions
interrupt men too	keep conversations going by facilitation
their conversational initiatives:	
are likely to develop	often do not develop

seen as:	
dominant	less intelligent
controlling	less knowledgeable
credible	less credible
powerful	possibly warmer
	possibly more polite

References: Aries, E (1987), Gender and Communication, in Shaver, P and Hendrick, C, Sex
        and Gender, Sage, pp 149-176
Spender, D (1980), Man Made Language, Routledge and Kegan Paul

Working with the *Gender Awareness* approach

In this section I shall review how I used this framework in practice and what happened with two course groups. As I look back over these experiences, which are now several years ago, I have reflective notes to work with. Some reviews of the sessions are in my ongoing teaching file for the framework. I have also consulted my personal diary for information about one occasion. All quotes in this section are taken from these sources unless otherwise stated.

In presenting and working with each section of the material I used the following format. I went through the invitation to questioning on the handout and through any illustrative research material, giving explanations and examples. I then invited a discussion in which people talked about their own organisations and experiences, and their reactions to the issues raised. I prompted consideration of the criteria by which we judge something to be appropriate (rather than assume it is 'normal'). If relevant, I invited people to notice the importance of emotional reactions as fundamental beliefs seemed to be being challenged. After that first presentation, I commented that I needed 'a spacious format' to allow time for an adequate discussion along these lines, and that I 'had far too much material'. As the model did not require me to present it all the latter was not a prime concern. The communication of a potential process of questioning was more important than specific content. A key element of my practice as tutor was 'sustaining questioning conversation'.

One of the key issues I find myself working in these discussions is balancing attention to individual and what I call 'systemic' issues. As individual and organizational/social issues are intertwined, they often mirror each other. Often characteristics of the system as a whole are lived out by individuals. If discussion is concentrating on gender at an individual or interpersonal level, I will often ask how the dynamics of the wider situation (such as those of tokenism) might be relevant or remind people that societal differences in terms of roles, economic resources and access to employment are a significant, gender-associated, backcloth to our discussions. I may thus be seeking to complement a potentially humanitarian acceptance of differences with a more political appreciation of social and economic inequalities. I believe we need frameworks of sense-making which incorporate multiple dimensions, certainly recognising potential individual and contextual factors and taking care if choosing one interpretative frame over another.

On the whole, that first use of the framework went very well. I was pleased that I had found an inquiring place from which to approach the session, and felt that how I worked had allowed me to bring contentious issues to the course participants' attention without (my term at the time) 'standing in the line of fire' either as a woman or a tutor speaking for muted/repressed issues. The framework 'made me feel stronger, firmly grounded, able to inquire. I had a form, so I could weave it [the process and material] all together and dance lightly..... (I was) very pleased with the closing'. One factor which helped greatly was that my presentational approach allowed contributions from people who did have some awareness or expertise on these issues. I especially remember a man who had been involved in gender and race awareness training making some strong statements asserting the importance of exploring such issues and of recognising areas of discrimination when they exist. He acted as an ally by reinforcing the process I was offering. My reflective notes remind me, however, that the session start was a little 'faltering', partly because I was not sure what to say about whether men and women are really different, and wanted to avoid heading the session into only discussing that irresolvable issue.

Other uses of the *Gender Awareness* framework have also been successful. But this story needs the counterpoint of the time when my teaching was largely unsuccessful - not only because I am guided by notions of 'honesty' in this self-reflective tale, but also because it reveals more of the challenges that *doing gender* in management education can offer.

On another occasion, with a very similar group, I contributed two sessions rather than one, asking people to do some inquiry in their organizations in between. That time I felt that most of my attempts to invite questioning and reflective discussion failed. From the outset, some course participants side-tracked my initiatives with questions of their own. I felt that I was being tested, almost that they were ganging up on me. My notes say 'challenged early about Glass Ceiling...... challenged often!.....'.   I remember some strongly made comments about how women taking maternity leave creates organizational difficulties. These were initially offered to test my implied advocacy (by mentioning potential Glass Ceilings) that women are suitable as senior managers and were repeated later. Some people were sure that gender equality was merely a matter of time, as suitably qualified people come through the promotion system. My attempts to question whether there might be other dynamics in play were rebuffed. Some people argued that women are different from men and not fitted to management. Many of the participants' contributions 'seemed more opinionated that exploring'. Some people did support looking at gender and exploring issues as I had initially invited, but this agenda proved difficult to sustain.

'I stood my ground'. I tried a triple response of respecting and discussing the issues participants raised, returning to my offered agenda and awareness approach, and sometimes commenting on the session process as I was experiencing it (as challenging and apparently dismissive questioning) and inviting some discussion at this level. But I did not manage to engage a debate of the latter sort, as is sometimes possible when content themes prove 'sticky' to work. A few comments of relevance did emerge. One of the few women in the course group said that it was not appropriate to focus on gender anyway, but then told me how to handle gender effectively. What she suggested 'was what I <u>was</u> doing, but in the face of opposition!' *In various teaching settings, not only the MBA, I have experienced women participants seeming to distance themselves from my introduction of gender-associated analysis. Sometimes the points they make have seem highly valid; sometimes their interventions seem*

more directed at trying to keep muted issues undiscussable, or at making it clear that if I enter difficult territory I should not look to them for comment or support. It may be over-interpreting, and it is not helpful to do so, but when, for example, the sole woman course member tells me informally 'I am happy to be one of the boys', I wonder if there is a secondary message. This hints at another dimension of attention in doing gender. By my activities I may place some course participants who feel 'different' in terms of gender, race, sexuality or some other factor in a difficult position. I am especially aware that whilst I want to create spaces in which people can voice their experiences and perspectives I cannot guarantee that those spaces are safe, that people will not become vulnerable or that there will be no longer-term consequences for their course group membership. These are testing issues. And I do not want them to deter me from raising difficult topics, or from risking making myself vulnerable in the service of exploration.

By the teabreak of the second session it all felt 'chaotic'. The conversation was dominated by 'their random fire'. (In relation to my previous imagery, I was obviously in the line of fire this time.) I repeatedly tried to come back to a spirit of inquiry, but was not able to encourage the course participants to join me in that. At the break, I took space away from the group to reorient. Later I showed "The Tale of 'O'" video. There was 'quite a good reaction' and discussion, although it was a little flat and with some 'anti-voices'. I closed the session with considerable relief. My diary notes 'at least I walked away, but I felt angry and bruised', and there were 'after effects' as I relived the session during the next day.

Trading war stories
During the coffee break at a recent conference I found myself exchanging stories of teaching gender with a woman academic from a very different discipline area and institution to my own. I was surprised that our experiences had marked similarities. We talked energetically about the strategies we adopt to be effective teachers and to take care of ourselves when possible.

Apart from simply naming the second example above as an awful experience, and acknowledging that I must have been largely responsible for this, can I engage in any analysis about the differences between the two teaching sessions that is worthwhile? I will test this line of inquiry, but do not expect to be able to account fully for what happened, and believe that sometimes it is better to have strategies for leaving such experiences behind rather than expecting them to provide clear learning.

Within the second course group there are various factors which may have reduced our abilities to work as a learning community.

I may well have been less prepared - as a person, rather than as a subject tutor - than in the first example, as I had not just developed the framework. Perhaps I was not so energised. In this field I cannot pick up previous course notes and expect them always to live again The group reacted against what they saw as 'bias' in the *Gender Awareness* framework, saying it belied its even-handed title. Their comments have some merit. They questioned the fairness of the prompt Numbered 1 above because it assumed women as disadvantaged. Nowadays I might either make such questions egalitarian, or persist in their gender bias and meta-comment about why I had done so. In this case because exclusion from promotion or senior jobs most often involves male elites excluding women and other men, and it is compromised not to mention this. The first group had not reacted to my phrasing of the prompt questions in this way. There

might be several reasons for this. My enthusiasm and broad-band attention for the newly created teaching frame may have laid less stress on fine details. And in the second experience people may have used their legitimate questions as a way also of testing my credibility as a teacher. Other course staff had found the group challenging, especially in 'softer' areas, so I was not entirely alone in this.

My experience of the groups contrasted too. In the first example, even though I spent less time with them, I had a sense of individuals and their agendas. Several approached me in the breaks and talked through gender-related interests or experiences. In whole group discussions some people were allies, explorers and inquirers. There were people who stayed silent, but if their non-participation represented resistance or resentment this did not affect the tone of the group. In the second example, I had more sense of the group having established its own culture, and of it maintaining a sense of solidarity in the face of a newcomer. I felt I was placed in the role of outsider and my attempts to change this positioning, including my invitations to engage in topic-based discussion, were rebuffed. In this contrast I see some of the dynamics of bridging or creating (respectively) differences which are often associated with gender, race or other factors.

The factors explored so far helped shape the interactions. But once we had started working together, we created a dynamic which had patterns of its own. I found these degenerative, but become increasingly less able to escape them. As people found that their questioning resulted in my apparently inadequate (or over-earnest?) responses I think a pattern arose between us which was more 'fun' than the session's stated agenda. A sense of pursuit and of (me) being on the run developed. My repeated response of coming from inquiry probably felt like a power/authority vacuum to them, which members of the group then needed to fill. Gender-related leadership expectations might have been in play here. A participative style can be interpreted as weak if more traditional models of expertise and authority are expected, and I think this was the case. I would have been well-advised to try a more authoritative stance, if only as an experiment. Eventually I think there was probably significant gender-patterning in the power dynamics that arose between myself and course participants. But these blocked our opportunities to discuss them. In situations such as this it is as if gender has been enacted rather than discussed - another meaning to my title of *doing gender* - almost as if it has been 'called', invoked. In this sense gendered patterns which course participants might reject as too extreme when named in teaching (as this group did) can sometimes be lived out in the process of the session. When this has happened to me I feel both confirmed that sometimes it is valid to adopt a clear gender-power analysis and frustrated that the other parties to the exchange cannot be engaged in debate about doing so.

Whilst I caution again about treating this analysis of what may have happened too seriously, I have enjoyed conducting it. It provides a base for me to question my behaviour in future gender teaching, and some dimensions for noticing data on how a situation is unfolding.

Teaching and learning from a respect for multiple perspectives

I especially want to note that the *Gender Awareness* teaching model outlined above requires a notion of working with multiple perspectives. This is part of my meta-frame for this kind of work. I need to do this, by creating, if I can, a shimmering space of multiple possibilities with

space for people to voice their distinct perspectives, but this should not be at the expense of critique or advocating values when deemed appropriate. I am also inviting participants to work in this way. This may not be easy, but it is an agenda to promote in its own right. I sometimes frame the multiple attentions needed to be aware of gender alongside other themes of analysis as key components of advanced managerial competence (Torbert, 1991), that all MBA students (and other people) should develop. I do believe my own rhetoric, and take an amused delight in using a 'sales message' for exploring muted or denied aspects of management knowledge and practice which seems so suited to the MBA as a cultural form (with its notions of aspiration). But this requires that people can work in that space and data suggests that many managers are not comfortable in doing so (Fisher and Torbert, 1995).

There is also a difficulty once I see the *Gender Awareness* framework from a multi-cultural perspective. A not so covert assumption is that we can access and discuss such issues, even though they are the unconscious background of our lives. Hall (1976) distinguishes between cultures in which he believes such negotiations of meaning occur (low-context) and cultures in which so much meaning is conditional on prior socialisation and subtle contextual cues that they are uncommon (high-context). When teaching multi-cultural groups I think this distinction has some merit, and am aware that ethno-centric teaching frames are potentially in play if I ask people from high-context cultures to be reflective openly about gender, race and cultural patterns.

Moving on to Diversity and Management

During the last few years I have reconfigured my MBA Gender and Management Option to become Diversity and Management. I have done so with some reservations, which I share with course participants and use as bases for discussion. Whilst 'diversity' is more inclusive in terms of potential differences and power dynamics considered, it can also represent a muting of appreciations of power, political, economic and group level issues which I think are inherent in the field. Diversity has also been adopted in some cases as a more business-friendly formulation, which might defuse valuable debate about fundamental assumptions and current practices. In some ways diversity' offers me a less contentious place to teach from. I can use more objective-seeming data to represent voices outside my experience, and so may feel less exposed personally. But in this multi-faceted approach it can then become a challenge to incorporate a more radical gender-associated voice as I might be perceived as having a biased perspective, undermining my intentions and claims as tutor to provide a space for everyone's voice.

In many ways, however, incorporating attention to other potential differences, especially race, has relocated me as 'tutor' in ways which seem generative. I find the work of black feminists such as hooks (1989) both challenging and exciting, for example. When she points out that white feminists have often been unaware about issues of race and class, and have written as if white women's experience is that of women generally, I see these deficiencies in my own work. I find conceptualisations of systems of multiple oppressions (Collins, 1990) valuable. These prompt class discussions inviting each participant to become more aware of the situations in which they have access to privilege and those in which they are likely to be defined as 'other'. We can then look with more complexity at the personal, interpersonal, organizational and other processes which maintain inequalities.

Developing themes

To conclude this paper and reflect on some of its themes I shall contrast my account of teaching gender with two other sources in this field. The first is the excellent model advocated by McMillen, Baker and White (1997) for diversity training. I share their approach of wanting to offer course participants both theoretical frameworks and educational processes which can help them engage with gender/diversity. In the above analysis I have been reflective about what it means for me as a person/woman to work in this space. The authors do not explicate this aspect or reflect how gender may have been an enacted dimension of their teaching. I suggest the some attention to both how we work <u>on</u> ourselves and how we work <u>through</u> ourselves is a valuable and possibly essential aspect of this field of practice. The multi-voiced book by Gallos, Ramsey and Associates (1997) is impressively revealing about what this might mean in diversity teaching. It also incorporates a theme which has been apparent but little analysed in my paper, the ways in which engaging with diversity issues as teacher and learner (and in the combination of these roles which many of us live) is highly emotion-tapping work. Some of my dilemmas as tutor above are related to how to work with this, as raising issues of gender or diversity are likely to bring into class-room discussion much which is unaddressed in other forms of teaching, and which course participants may therefore see as illegitimate. Again my willingness and abilities to work on myself are important here. Teaching gender and diversity tests my sense of being as much as it engages me in the craft of academic tutor. So I have come full-circle to two notions with which I started - that this paper is about personal-professional work and about *doing gender*, believing that the latter can be done transformatively.

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