Chapter 8

From Gender Difference to Gender Dialogue?

Introduction

This chapter illustrates a turning point in my overall inquiry. In it I show how I engaged with research literature at a point where I made a radical shift in my understanding of the construction of gendered power and inequality in organisations.

In the closing stages of writing my thesis, my supervisor encouraged me to make more explicit reference to literature reviews I had written during my inquiry. While these reviews had been formative in the development of my consultancy practice, I had not illustrated this within my case studies. This chapter addresses this gap in my account of my inquiry process, and is intended to illustrate the quality and breadth of my engagement with research literature on women and gender in management. In my case studies I will show how this informed my consultancy practice (chapters 9 -11).

In constructing this chapter three years later, I selected writings that had an important influence on my practice. I added an introduction, conclusions and commentary on their place in my overall inquiry.

The chapter is in two parts and based on two separate literature reviews, written during December 1997/January 1998, and August 1998.

In Part 1 I engage with four research texts that offered me new ways of conceptualising how gendered power was constructed and enacted in organisational contexts. They are concerned with how individuals enact gender within their interactions, and with how gender divisions are structured and reproduced through language and epistemology, as well as through social and institutional structures and practices. I reflect on key ideas from these texts and indicate how I might draw from them within my consultancy practice.

In Part 2 I introduce the literature review I carried out for the research described in my first case study (chapter 9). This review summarises my reflections on the women in management literature over the previous two years. Its purpose was to draw from this research to affirm the specific skills and attributes of women managers in the refugee sector, and on this basis to encourage dialogue about leadership between women and men in the sector

In my conclusions I reflect on the significance of this conceptual work in the context of my overall inquiry.

To assist my readers I have used formatting to distinguish between these texts and the time frames in which they were written. The literature reviews that form the basis of the chapter and were written at an earlier point in my inquiry to the introduction, subsequent reflections and conclusions to this chapter, are in a different font and indented with a line down their right margin. References to chapters written after the literature reviews are added in [square brackets]. The introduction, conclusion and subsequent reflections have no line at their margins and are not indented.

Part 1

CARPP WRITING DECEMBER 1997/JANUARY 1998

This is a reflection on four texts that introduced me to different ways of conceptualising and framing core issues that have emerged within my inquiry into life process and professional practice. In what follows I summarise the key concepts and ideas that strike me as important, and then reflect on them in relation to my thinking and practice. In this process I am attempting to enter into a dialogue with the texts from my position as consultant and as inquirer. The texts are:

1. Ingrid Ljungberg van Bruinum *'Getting a Glimpse of the Otherness of the Other; men and women in dialogue '* [publisher unknown, year circa 1997]
2. Collette Oseen *'Luce Irigaray, sexual difference and theorising leaders and leadership'* in Gender Work and Organisation, vol. 4 no. 3 July 1997
3. Carlene Boucher *How Women Socially Construct Leadership using Organisations: a study using memory work, in* Gender Work and Organisation, vol. 4 no 3 July 1997
4. Silvia Gherardi (1995) *Gender, Symbolism and Organisational Cultures* Sage: London

TEXT 1

Ingrid Ljungberg van Bruinum

Getting a Glimpse of the Otherness of the Other; men and women in dialogue

This writing intrigued me because of its focus on seeing the 'otherness of the other'. It's an important piece for me both because of its key concepts and methodology and because it is an account of an action research consultancy intervention using a dialogue-based methodology. i.e. both the method and the key concepts are intriguing.

Methodology

The aim was to open up dialogue between men and women about how each viewed the other. Although in the original design ILvB intends to ask how women view women, and how men view men, this disappears from the frame as it is she implies, (p. 47) absent from the material she analyses.

Ordinary men and women talked in a formative as well as a representative manner keeping perspectives open and attempting to 'create a shared world'. They showed 'knowledge in action' and demonstrated a wish for relational engagement:

> In order to take some steps in reducing the inequality between men and women the *relationship between women and men should be the starting point, both conceptually and operationally,* and we should *open the actual and potential institutional spaces for dialogue* [my italics] (p.68).

Key concepts

- Relational: the subordination of women is a relational issue that can only be addressed in a relational manner.
- Women and men are both the same and different; metaphor of figure and ground as a way of understanding this: common humanity (ground) and gender difference (figure), both the same and different. The common ground is essential to help us to engage with difference without appropriating or being appropriated by the other, without being reduced to the same (p. 43).
- The relationship between women and men is paradigmatic for the problematic of meeting the Other.
- The relationship between women and men is enigmatic, ambiguous.
- The problem is not the difference but the evaluation of the difference (p. 69).

- Internal worlds play a role in understanding as well as creating the external world.
- The way in which girls and boys experience their relationships with others and thus develop a sense of self.
- Women need to develop an identity without being colonised by significant others-not falling victim to 'cultural cannibalism' (Irigaray 1996).
- To take women as being equal to men is deeply flawed from an intellectual point of view, but also a political mistake; it leads to settling in terms of the masculine because the discourse of equality is so deeply embedded in the masculinist conceptions of the human, of sameness (Zerilli 1996).

One of the conclusions from the project evaluation was that there is more similarity than dissimilarity in the way that gender differences are perceived and with regard to the significance of the meaning attributed to these differences. (p.63). Totally opposite and conflicting understandings were the exception.

How is this useful? Thought provoking?

It doesn't focus on power or abuse of power by men against women. Or on women's struggle to get recognition or promotion. The focus on dialogue and opening it up suggests that women and men are moving into relationship in a way which would make it easier for women to challenge abuse and harder for men to sustain it, but at what cost to the women? How much harder are they working than the men to achieve 'dialogue'? There speaks my experience…but what choice do we have?

It has potential to help me develop my consultancy intervention in ABC (chapter 11). Dialogue between men and women, speaking as men and women, as a way of stepping outside of entrenched positions and embattled mindsets and into more exploratory approaches, e.g. for developing measures to tackle specific instances of abuse of power such as sexual/ harassment. This makes me think it's important that I prevent the discussion generated in the inquiry groups from closing down or degenerating into 'problem solving'. I must find ways to keep it open, as this is what generates energy and ideas which can then be taken up through the management systems

Sameness rather than difference as a basis for women's equality is at the core of equal opportunities policy and practice, and of local authority culture. It's also been at the core of my feminism. It is hard to be 'feminine' without signalling acceptance of a social script associated with domesticity and caring and being a decorative and understanding foil to others, and being unfit for roles with status in public life. Yet we are in a time of transition; women in public

office and top jobs and sexual harassment made public and challenged on unprecedented scale. Will this set of issues disappear in the next generation?

Accepting the 'otherness of the other ' offers an alternative strategy for asserting, demanding acceptance of women in senior positions in the workplace, in public office, in public life. And perhaps a way of conceptualising the difficulties between women that have arisen in my research and practice:

Might it be possible to speak / act as a female self without being 'othered'? Marginalised, or devalued? This text offers an explanation for consistent devaluing, but what alternative strategies might be developed from this approach?

My research has focused on relationships between women who could be described as feminists, or in some way associated with challenging women's inequality. I have explored what happens when they make alliances and found that what got in the way were inner world barriers as well as outer world: distrust, suspicion, perceiving each other as 'the enemy', betrayal, joining the 'other'. In addition that there was a minefield of explosive emotionality which came into play in relationships between women in positions of power and women who tried to work with them. These sometimes took the form of expectations for support that could not be met within their new organisational roles and perceptions of betrayal when this was not forthcoming. To achieve change we have to work with internal as well as external barriers to change; with internalised models of power and authority that are also gendered. To do this we need to conceptualise these challenges.

How / do women use gender to break through and take up authority? How / do women in power, in particular those with a history of commitment to advancing women's equality, create spaces for more women to come forward as leaders? How do women set boundaries when socialisation dictates that they do not, that boundaries are set for them and used to keep us in mother, virgin, whore modes - or to de-sex us entirely? Are there boundaries that women themselves set through silences, strategies of inclusion or exclusion, or by using irony?

TEXT 2

Collette Oseen (1997)

Luce Irigaray, sexual difference and theorising leaders and leadership

I am really excited reading the first paragraph again of this article:

- Leadership is framed as idealised masculinity.

- The heroine needs new plots, new myths, a new symbolic structure if she is to be represented, and if new ways of thinking about leaders and leadership are to be thought which create a space for women other than as imitation men. What we need is not the nostalgia of archaeology but the audacity of creation; just as Irigaray is not making the case for the excavation of some mythical women's realm but the intellectual daring of thinking what has not yet been thought.

- It is the symbolic realm, not only or primarily the socio-political structures which maintains men's pre-eminence, their position as the One, the sexually indifferent which obscures the sexually specific. This position of the One denies theorising of sexual difference which would create a space for women as speaking subject as well as create a space for the rejected male body which has hitherto been projected into women (p.170).

- Presumed fixed link between *what we are* and *what we do* (p.171). The answer is neither the erasure of women, nor adding stereotypical female leaders to stereotypical male leaders. Instead to explore the Irigarayan notion of the 'not yet invented she' which lies in the subversion of the metaphysical order and the invention of 'neither one nor two'.

- Feminist critique of Western philosophy, language and thought as dependent on binary oppositions (the same v different). Exclusion of women from the subject position has been made possible by the structuring of language itself, and Western philosophy ensures that men fill the subject position so that women can be object.

- We need a symbolic order where women are represented symbolically as ourselves, not as men with a lack 'where the other sex is defined in relation to men as mother, virgin or whore' (p.173).

My Reflections

Irigaray's project is to expose the network of images and representations in which women and femininity are in some necessary relationship to men and masculinity, and to show that it is based on a series of assumptions within which women are the rejected parts of men. Women need to set themselves up in contiguity to men, not in opposition' (174).

The project is to construct a symbolic that has many more places for women than those they have been allowed to inhabit. Representations between and among women other than the maternal, new myths that can represent women and men in subject to subject relations and express hitherto unthought of and creative ways of relating to one another and of leading *contiguously* (p.180).

We could analyse leadership differently by thinking about all the activities of organising of which leadership is a part, but which do not require domination or subordination; dynamic shared activities, where people both learn from each other and teach, where difference is 'side by side' not 'more' or 'less'.

Now the methodology in ILvB makes more sense: to focus on the specificity of how women or men do leadership; through dialogue create contiguity rather than opposition between men and women. Could this kind of dialogue be a way forward for women managers in ABC?

Irigaray seems useful in highlighting the desperate need to create a female symbolic. In ABC this is really apparent; the findings of the inquiry groups show that both women and men feel pressure to 'fit in' to the masculinist idea of top down 'blow a power hole to get things done' decisive leadership (chapter 11).

But does Oseen hide the extent to which some women have already achieved this? How would we recognise it when it appears? And why only one?

TEXT 3

Carlene Boucher (1997)

How Women Socially Construct Leadership using Organisations: a study using memory work

December 30 1997

Just read this study - a good illustration of what it means *in practice* not to have myths, symbolic representations of women's leadership, and of how this can be a significant barrier to women *taking up authority* when they are in senior positions i.e. to *feeling* powerful in relation to others, to being able to exercise power with or over people, to build credibility with them.

[Male gendered internalised images of leaders emerged as a barrier to women being perceived as having authority as leaders in my research on women in the public sector (Page / Lorandi 1991)]

I had thought about these issues in terms of gendered internalised images but now see the potential of the idea of myths, a symbolic realm in a wider sense, as a useful construct to

use in my inquiry. Perhaps I could formulate some questions for a small inquiry group at ABC, or for women consultants? This could be a way of conceptualising the interface between *inner and outer conditions* for democracy, and strategies and practices of / for reworking them.

A summary of key points from CB

- Women's constructions of leadership were located in the home and community; in these men went to work and led in organisations

- Women were absent from their constructions of leadership in organisations, therefore they found taking on a leadership role difficult and uncomfortable.

- Even within the home and community women's leadership was constructed in a limited way. They must *influence*, not *tell*; if they were too forceful or aggressive they were a 'bossyboots'.

- Once you became a leader you were different; leadership was about being different to those who used to be your friends.

- Women illustrated fighting against these constructions of female leadership in order to lead in ways which felt authentic and meaningful; they rejected male leadership qualities such as emotional distance, objectivity, unconditional confidence.

- Their leadership they felt must be credible and believable, competent to do the task

- The cost of resisting was self-doubt, not in their competence but in how they talked about being leaders, naming themselves as leaders in organisations.

Further reflections

This approach opens up ways of moving away from the universalising tendencies of previous texts by focusing on the specifics of what leadership means to different women. What language is used by them/us to talk about it, or represent ourselves in leadership roles, including consultancy? Also to explore how women who come into 'leadership' maintain their relationships to others?

Interview contributors spoke of difficulty that women moving into leadership have in repairing relationships with women constructed on the basis of shared opposition or 'outsider' status in organisations. They and some of the women managers in refugee organisations [case study 1] suggested that women have or are often expected to have more permeable work / personal boundaries, and that this can have generative and degenerative effects.

In what ways do I establish my authority as consultant in relation to project leaders when boundaries were / not permeable, as in my contrasting relationships to project leaders in the Persephone [case study 3] and ELP projects [case study 2]? How do my own expectations relate to anecdotes about staff expectations of being nurtured by their women managers?

TEXT 4
Sylvia Gherardi (1995)
Gender, Symbolism and organisational Cultures

Its Jan. 1 1998 - New Year's day - and everything feels new and pristine. I finally overcame resistance to reading and started SG, opening the book at random and lighting on chapter 3, 'The Alchemic Wedding'. Many of my dreams are about coupling in some way with a male figure; my brother, a colleague/ helper who would show me around the estate/ area in which I was working and therefore responsible, show me the eagles' nests, share the sense of danger, threat. An offer of protection or to share in the danger and learn how to protect myself/each other. Remembering the motorcycle dream, my brother driving, realising we would not make it round the corner of the mountain road, soaring over snowy fields, putting out my feet and guiding us to a gentle sliding halt, averting disaster. Wondering how to interpret these; now, reading SG, the possibility of thinking of the symbolic aspect of gender in some way. Could have done this before using Jung but this possibility seems alive again.

Key ideas:
- The alchemic wedding as metaphor for exploring a different way of thinking about gender in organisations: as a union of supreme contraries *and* process of transformation, a relation of both/ and, *and* either/ or archetypal models of femaleness and the ways in which these elicit or activate a corresponding state of maleness.
- The archetype preserves an imprint ('typos') and conveys it into a multiplicity of contingent forms; they are cultural patterns that recur

The alchemic wedding emphasises inseparability *and* separation. It symbolises moving away from dichotomous thinking, in which the way one gender is defined defines the other by default. How to move away from strategies which either attack male or female stereotypes or assert the specificity of the female.

In the world of work and organisations, cultural models of femaleness have archetypal features which fashion different patterns of womanhood, and structure different gender relationships, each with a corresponding model of maleness. SG sets out a typology using the Greek gods of virgin and vulnerable goddesses, showing their corresponding roles within the family. She gives examples of alliances that form between archetypal figures of women and men and illustrates with reference to family dynamics (pp. 82/3), and work 'couples'.

Organisations draw upon the family as a *symbolic reservoir* from which they may tap *an emotional reservoir* to exploit the association of masculinity with authority (p.92)

So how can we shift these gender oppositions? Women's dual presence in the workplace and domestic sphere has mobilised *both/and* thinking, showing how increasing numbers of men and women operate in both universes. The boundaries between the symbolic universes of man and women became more fluid; enabling us to think and do gender differently. This concept of 'dual presence' creates a mental space in which boundaries are blurred, in which the signification of female presence in the male symbolic universe must be invented, and vice versa.

The greatest danger of opposition is that it *mistakes form for substance*, that it takes as constitutive of things what is in fact an epistemological procedure for setting them in order, for talking about them, drawing distinction between them.

Reflections

How much scope is there really for women to do gender differently? How much willingness is there from men and from women to respond to women doing it differently, to do gender differently together, jointly?

What is my own investment in doing gender in oppositional ways? Am I invested in representing women in victim roles? Afraid of losing touch with representations of male power, and the material realities of oppression.

This approach does offer a way of mapping a broader spectrum of interactions between men and women than is possible from a focus on negative behaviours and 'misbehaviour' associated with equal opportunities policies; for exploring the expectations associated with the paradigm rather than on the behaviours interpreted through the paradigm. .

Reading and writing this has been an anxious process. Not being task focused is scary. Not knowing what the product will be, or whether there will be one at all- for my labours. Why am I doing this? Would it not be better to simply allow myself to drift, read novels, create a garden, learn how to paint? Decorate my house? Am I recreating a compulsion to drive myself ever onward, another challenge, and another goal, unable to let go, to simply be? Now I want to reframe the purpose of my inquiry as finding out, discovering what is the writing I want to do, in a supportive setting. What is it that seeks expression in me, and how will I express it through my writing? Who will publish it? How will I find a voice?

January 4th 1998

I've had another go at reading *Gender, Symbolism and Organisational Cultures*. I'm frustrated at how much time and concentration it demands and am still unsure what substance there is to the content. I've grasped a few general ideas - don't have energy or time for more-and feel frustrated, teased - would have liked more by now.

From Chapter 4: 'The symbolic order of gender in organisations'
The title of this chapter really excites me. Somehow it seems to express where my interest lies at the moment in making sense of what is going on in ABC. The idea that it is *how meanings are made* which is at the root of gendered power: *what story gets told and is legitimated*.

In ABC, (chapter 11), is the story of sexual harassment and of the exclusion of women who protest believed? Is there confusion among the men who perpetrate about what behaviours are legitimate, what are not? What stories do they tell of what is going on? What would happen if the focus moved to the narrative and away from the behaviour? When the battle is for one version, one narrative only is recognised as official? Could there be an approach to harassment that recognised multiplicity of meanings - yet which would set standards for behaviour?

[In chapter 11, my third case study, I show how my consultancy approach drew from these ideas].

More key ideas
'Doing gender'
SG starts the following chapter - doing gender in the workplace - with the story of how spitting moved from acceptable to unacceptable social behaviour over the course of the 16th - 18th centuries (Elias 1978: pp 288-92). She talks about gender as an activity and asks

what do we do when we 'do gender'? Is it possible to do 'one' gender ' and avoid 'second sexing' the other (p. 128)? She reminds us that the previous chapters talked about separate symbolic systems produced by and producing of gender difference.

'Institutional reflexivity'

This term refers to the interactive production of sexual difference, and to the social situations that ensure that society 'naturally' expresses the sexual division of reward and labour. Institutional reflexivity simultaneously conceals contradictions between the actual practices of sexed persons and their symbolic universes, and reveals social arrangements along gender lines.

The presence of women in the workplace breaks with the symbolic order of gender that is based on separation between male and female, public and private, production and reproduction. The co-presence of the sexes gives greater ambiguity to gender based social differentiation.

The dual presence has to be managed through 'doing gender'. This is done *both* by re-establishing the social order of gender based on male domination and the devaluation of the female presence, *and* by introducing transgression and de-legitimation of the principles on which that order is erected (p.129).

The 'results' of feminism can be read either in terms of numbers (how many women where), or in terms of *de-legitimating the beliefs that sustain power relationships between the sexes*. Like the big spittoon that was at first not concealed, then concealed, then disappeared, de-legitimated.

The rest of chapter 5 is concerned with mapping how we *do* gender:

> 'Doing gender involves using symbols, playing with them and transforming them; managing the dual presence; shuttling between a symbolic universe coherent with one gender identity and the symbolic realm of 'the other' gender. We do gender through '*ceremonial'* and '*remedial'* work [my italics] (p. 131*)*.

Courtesy work and rituals are examples of ceremonial (assertion of gender difference) and repair work (where gender order is disrupted, broken). Irony and sarcasm can be used effectively to *preserve difference without reproducing inequality*.

link to: http://www.bath.ac.uk/carpp/publications/doc_theses_links/m_page.html

What makes the work of repairing the symbolic order of gender so laborious is the *difficulty of preserving difference without reproducing inequality* (p.138).

When we speak of doing gender as an interactive activity, situationally and historically constructed, we are defining the rules and norms that regulate gender citizenship in a particular culture, and therefore determine the amount of remedial work required. This might range from play and playfulness to the open conflict and war between the sexes (p.139).

Changing the narrative
Both men and women are caught in the gender trap, and mobilise relational resources to play the game: irony as destabilisation of gender values, trust as the ability to change the frame from asymmetrical to reciprocal, embarrassment as a signal of a change in custom (p.142).

The ironist is able to switch discourses, to cast doubt on the rules and procedures which govern a discourse and the relationship between people and language, to play with categories, and to lay bare the power relationship which tie us to a gender identity (p.146), to engage in Socratic dialogue which exposes hidden contradictions in an apparently logical statement.

Finally, SG asks, could the relationships between the sexes be more equal if organisations were less rational and more emotional? Organisation cultures both express how their members feel and socialise them into feeling in a particular way; emotionality is present and necessary for work - the question is ,why it is censored out of texts on organisational life (pp. 150-60)?

Further reflections
Moving the focus of attention to what we are actively doing to de/construct gender relations is exciting. So is the idea of establishing a meta-discourse about how we do gender, finding ways of creating spaces to do this using irony and playfulness. Of course it presupposes willingness to enter into 'play' mode and not resort to punitive use of power by men - or victim mode by women. In other words, willingness to recognise the game as a game, to see the rules as open to challenge or change.

In her previous chapter, 'The symbolic order of gender', SG develops the metaphor of the woman traveller (pp. 108-122) to develop a typology of the experiences of a woman who is

the first to arrive in a non-traditional work area. She illustrates how men protected their territory and prevented women from moving into it. She stresses that women have to not only move into positions of power, but learn how to take it up when they are in them.

Her example is of a woman who through a '*new narrative self*' contested the way she had been positioned, created new alliances, and challenged demarcation of the territory as a male domain' (p.115) changing the rules and positioning herself as 'boss'. To do this she had to recognise and reject her previous positioning as someone tolerated because she was seen as temporary, moving through and acting on the authority of her father, the managing director, and use her own discretionary powers. SG describes this taking up of authority as *changing the narrative, a relational process involving redefining herself in relation to others.*

This story appeals to me as changing the narrative is an inner process as well as an external negotiation. My question is: what needs to happen in order for women to accomplish this? We need more stories of how women have done it…used irony etc. and changed the script.

January 16

There are so many questions and themes I would like to pursue. The other night I didn't go to the meeting I had been looking forward to. I simply lost the leaflet with the venue on it, found it after the meeting had started, and realised I was too exhausted to go. Or no longer willing to sacrifice my physical well being. Yet I had gone without a break all day out of sheer impatience to finish working-so that I could go. Embattled mentality determination to vanquish, prove I can get on top.

It's as if some personal struggle to win out has consumed all ability to work towards wider ends. Me the individual and her struggle to earn an income and do her work well and generate more of it and find her own satisfaction in her own work has successfully supplanted me the political activist.

This conflict between business and political goals is being played out in the tension between business and advocacy in approaches to consultancy with my feminist consortium partners [chapter 4]. In contrast when working with a male business partner the situation is clear, we are angling for business. Yet I have not worked with him before and do not know and will not know until we start whether I can trust him not to abuse his power. Will there really be space for me to work from my integrity or will he use his influence and business based credibility with the (male) senior client contact to frame the work in a way which

excludes my equalities perspective? There is an unknown, we have different perspectives. I am not expecting him to be 'on my wavelength'; I will have to be responsible for my own views and integrity.

In both I feel alternately exhilarated and afraid; am I colluding with something I can't control, deluding my self about possibility for 'subject to subject' dialogue and collaboration, when I am actually in some danger?

Does all of this deny some realities of power that seriously put me and the values for which I am allied at risk?

Subsequent Reflections

Re-engaging with this material in order to construct this chapter I am struck by the power it still holds for me, and how throughout my inquiry I continued to be stimulated by the conceptual frames offered by these texts. In these subsequent reflections I seek to signpost my use of these ideas in subsequent cycles of my inquiry, and to compensate for the limitations of the commentary I wrote at the time.

My consultancy practice had developed from feminist campaigns and local government equal opportunities practice, both of which aimed to remove structural barriers to women's inequality, and to change discriminatory behaviours. However I had not found these approaches useful in understudying barriers to feminist collaboration. To explore this, I had become increasingly interested in exploring different ways in which women *enact* and *perceive* the dynamics of gendered power, in relation to men and in relation to each other. The psychodynamic theory I had been using offered the systemic analysis I sought, but in its approach to gender was limited by its roots in Freudian and Kleinian theory and their notions of gender and sexuality. These texts offered an alternative basis for systemic analysis of the interface between internal and external worlds that acknowledged both individual choice in how gender was enacted and institutionalised power in how these choices were presented and structured.

Through engaging critically with the conceptual frames offered by these key texts I explored ways of conceptualising gendered power which sought to address agency, representation and interpretation of women's inequality in relation to gender divisions. I

loosened my hold on dualistic ways of conceptualising gender difference that underpinned oppositional strategies, and began to experiment with conceptual frames which allowed more space for doing gender differently within relationships. Through inquiry practices I introduced a more dialogic approach into my consultancy strategies.

While I did not explore further the epistemological notion of gender difference as a paradigm for 'otherness', I did take up the notion that the reproduction of gender divisions is a multi-levelled process, taking place through systems of representation, mediated by institutionalised power. I based my consultancy approach in ABC on the notion of the need for a female symbolic to affirm women in leadership roles. In my second case study I describe how I was inspired by the notion of using irony to play with gender and sexual identity, asserting identity difference while challenging inequality (chapter 11).

Finally, I take up the notion of dialogue as subject to subject v subject to object interaction in my analysis of consultancy interactions in my case studies, and conceptualise this further chapter 12.

Part 2

The following text is taken from an early draft of my research report on the experience of women managers in refugee organisations (Evelyn Oldfield 1998). It contains an overview of the literature on women in management, and was written six months after the literature reviews in Part 1 above. Permission to use this text was requested from the commissioning organisation.

Current themes in Western management research on women managers and gender relationships in organisations

What are the differences associated with men and women in leadership in organisations? How are they experienced by women and by men? What are the barriers and opportunities for women? What interest is this to organisations and their male managers?

Western research focuses overwhelmingly on white women and men and is conducted mostly by white Western researchers. Nevertheless the broad themes and dilemmas it addresses are

very similar to those described by members of the Women Managers Support Group (WSMG) and by participants at the recent seminar on compassionate leadership. Relevant findings from this research would need to be explored for their relevance and usefulness to the dialogue which it is hoped will open up between women and men.

In the following I summarise the questions asked within this research and the findings which seem relevant to the discussions of the WMSG. Full references are listed separately. As the literature is extensive, I have referred to key texts only. The summary is intended to give an overview of the literature and of the connections and linkages between questions asked by specific studies.

♦ **Do women and men *define* effective leadership and management differently?**
   ◊ In Western countries research found that both men and women managers perceive the characteristics of the ideal manager to be those they associated with the typical man but not with the typical woman. (Schein 1973 and 1975). By the late 80's studies showed that these perceptions were still held by men but no longer by women. (Alimo Metcalf 1995). Similar studies from other cultures, such as Hong Kong, and Turkey (Katrinli and Ozmen 1995) also found that male managers held more prejudicial attitudes against women than female managers did (de Lion and Suk-Ching 1995). The widely supported belief by male managers that typical male characteristics are prerequisites for effective management revealed the close coupling of management with masculinity:

> The specific image of an ideal manager varies across cultures, yet everywhere it privileges those characteristics that the culture associates primarily with men. (Adler and Izraeli 1994, p 13)

♦ **Do women exhibit different ways of leading to men *in their actual practice?***
   ◊ Some studies conclude yes, some no (see Eagly and Johnson in Vinnicombe and Colville 1995 for a summary of the literature; also de Matteo 1994; Ferrario 1991; Still 1994.
   ◊ 'One sex difference that tends to be maintained in a variety of research situations is that women were found to adopt a more participatory democratic style and men a more autocratic one' (Eagly and Johnson in Vinnicombe and Colville 1995).

Do women managers *describe themselves* as *having a different management style to men*?

◊ Studies have shown women more likely to describe themselves as transformational leaders, using interactive participatory leadership styles, and men more likely to describe themselves as transactional leaders, using a more top down style (Rosener 1990).

♦ **What are the differences *ascribed* to women managers and leaders *by researchers*?**

◊ Differences are ascribed to women and men by researchers. Gilligan's research was the first to claim that women's and men's social conditioning results in totally different sets of values and priorities and ways of approaching decision-making (Gilligan 1993). Her research has been taken up by researchers into gendered ways of knowing (Belenky et al, 1986) and management researchers such as Helgeson (1990), whose book is a good summary of examples of how some women in senior positions have built on their strengths to construct their own approach to management and leadership in their organisations:

- Women managers integrate workplace and private spheres, communicate & share information, prefer to work through networks not hierarchies; see themselves as at the centre of their organisations not on top, demonstrate caring, valuing and maintaining relationships, focus on process as well as outcome. M*ale managers* focused on ends not means, were more compartmentalised, sacrificed time with family to work time, used information to build their own power bases, saw themselves as at the top of a hierarchy or chain of command (Helgeson 1990).

- Women are more caring, men are more instrumental; women are more collaborative, men work more autonomously; women are more people oriented and more likely to understand individual needs, men will defend their teams and look after their interests; women will prioritise service delivery, men entrepreneurship (Gilligan 1993; Alimo Metcalf 1995).

♦ **Do women and men *expect* women managers and leaders to be more compassionate and caring than men?**

◊ Studies suggest that this is so, but that this is often in conflict with other qualities they associate with effective management or leadership. Graves Dumas (1985) describes how demands to be ever-present and all-caring have undermined the ability of black women managers to effectively carry out their full range of responsibilities in their leadership roles.

link to: http://www.bath.ac.uk/carpp/publications/doc_theses_links/m_page.html

♦ **Do all women *experience* similar dilemmas in how to establish credibility as leaders?**

◊ It appears so, but they adopt different strategies to deal with them, and do not necessarily identify them as related to gender (Page/Lorandi 1992; Marshall 1995).

◊ Organisations have their own cultures or assumptions about the right way of doing things and these create barriers for women in being effective as leaders (Newman & Maddock and Parkin in Itzin and Newman 1995).

◊ However there are exceptions, which draw upon traditional culture to illustrate wider concepts of leadership by female leaders honoured in minority cultures (Green 1990).

◊ Writings by black women managers demonstrate that racism creates additional barriers for black and minority ethnic women gaining access to and being effective in leadership roles and suggests that race and gender are intertwined in both barriers and strategies available to them (Bravette 1996; Hite 1996).

◊ Writings about managing diversity focus on the business advantages of encouraging organisations to create diverse workforces - gender, race and ethnicity, age, disability -in order meet demands of the market (IPD 1997).

◊ Few writers on management address the need to work with unequal power in order to create a genuinely diverse workforce. An exception is an approach which starts from recognition of unequal power between members of different social groups, using 'power balancing strategies and 'standpoint work' to 'change the lenses of organisational members':

> Understanding our own racial and gender identities is not sufficient; we must understand our inter-group interactions, how we automatically and unconsciously behave as members of our groups and the effects this has on the members of other groups (p.479).
>
> Dominant group members should examine institutional policies and practices rather than assuming there is only one way for the organisation to function efficiently, and listen to members of non dominant groups, who must continue to give voice to their realities.
>
> Calvert and Ramsey 1996: 480

♦ **Should women leaders in organisations work from their difference, or try to fit in to male defined expectations of leadership?**

◊ Increasingly research demonstrates that attempts by women to fit in are doomed to fail, and lead to burn out (Marshall 1995); women do better cultivating their own unique qualities

within leadership roles, and developing appropriate support structures to make this possible (Oseen 1997).

- ♦ **What about differences and inequalities between women?**
  - ◊ Women do not all adopt the same leadership style; they adopt different strategies for managing; not all women choose to put 'feminine' qualities forward in their management roles (Gherardi 1995).
  - ◊ Black and minority ethnic women experience double discrimination and have to contend with stereotypes based on gender and ethnic origin (Nkomo 1988).
  - ◊ While black women's experience is specific and differentiated it should not always be assumed to be different from white women or from black men. There will be similarities as well as differences depending on the contexts (Bhavnani 1994).

- ♦ **Redefining the problem - and the solutions**
  - ◊ Current research is redefining the problem - and the focus of the solutions: women have the skills - their primary need is not for more training but for men and in many cases women to 'see' women's competence and potential and to accept their authority in management and leadership roles (Adler and Izraeli 1994; Wahl 1998).
  - ◊ Interventions need to focus on opening up dialogue between women and men, and encouraging men to listen to women as different but equal within their management roles (van Beinum 1997).
  - ◊ One aspect of this dialogue is research into the links between management and masculinities; if men can find different ways of being masculine, this may help open up more ways of being managers (Collinson and Hearn 1996).
  - ◊ For this strategy to succeed male leaders of organisations must demonstrate that they recognise the value of women managers' contribution, and use their power to challenge resistance from their colleagues; the responsibility and the benefits are owned by the organisation - and not by women alone (Adler and Izraeli 1994; Opportunities 2000, 1998).

Subsequent Reflections

The women refugee managers with whom I spoke placed their experiences in the context of a wider struggle by women against male power. They also asserted the cultural and historical specificity of their dilemmas and inter-generational as well as

other differences in how these were experienced. Part of their lived reality was cultural and political displacement, and the need to defend and sustain refugee communities in the face of racism and sexism. At least one member of the group to whom I spoke placed their struggle to assert gender difference in their approach to leadership in the context of feminist social and political struggle.

In my case study I refer to the seminar where participants described gender identity as fluid, in process of redefinition. However the culture of their communities was conflictual, oppositional and heavily defended. It did not seem surprising to me that in this environment the predominant notion of 'management' and of 'leadership' was top down, heroic and male, and that while women were not perceived to be competent managers they were expected to take up caring, nurturing and peacekeeping roles. In this context it was difficult for 'women' to be 'managers' without giving up their gender identity:

> The question is, do we perceive the woman manager as a strong woman or as a strong (and genderless} person?
> Evelyn Oldfield 1998 p.16

In this overview, I drew from several research strands. One of these was research into women in management. This was concerned with women as different /or not; how woman and men enact, interpret and represent gender difference; and the specific discrimination and strategies adopted by black women managers. In my report I framed this overview within the parameters of the political strategy devised by my client. Her strategy was to assert the value of gender specific attributes associated with women's approaches to managing organisations, and on this basis to challenge male definitions of good management.

As I show in my case study, I resisted temptation to frame the research solely as a confrontation (chapter 9). Drawing from the texts I reviewed in Part 1 of this chapter, I introduced the notion that women as well as men do have choices in how to enact and represent gender relations. On this basis I appealed to men as well as women to continue to explore the variety of ways in which gender, race, ethnicity and political context interweave, and the multiple ways in which they could enact management and leadership.

Conclusions

In the context of my overall inquiry, this overview enabled me to make an important distinction between how women *enacted* leadership or management, and how this was *interpreted* by themselves, by male and female colleagues in their organisational context, and by researchers.

This distinction is central to each of my case studies (chapters 9, 10, 11). In them I explored the tension between individual and collective strategies which women managers adopted in these gendered organisational contexts, and the meaning which others invested in them. I then returned to selected research texts in order to conceptualise further my feminist consultancy practice (chapter 12). I reflect on the politics of my analysis in the 'Red Threads' which interleaf these chapters.