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GENDER AND SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT EDUCATION: EXPLORING THE MISSING LINK

Abstract

The concept of sustainability has at its heart a sense of equity and social justice, which also encompasses aspects of gender equality. The chapter focuses on explaining gender integration in management education. Integrating gender in business school curricula is difficult as it challenges the masculinist norms, which have historically shaped conceptions of management and leadership. Through a framework of threshold concepts we review a teaching intervention with first year undergraduate students, which aimed to open up gender as a responsible, sustainable management concern. We suggest that gender is a key concept for management students' engagement with sustainability and responsible management practice. Threshold concepts offers an approach to understanding how we might continue to develop interventions that enable us to work with students and facilitate their development and journey towards a transformed, irreversible understanding of their roles as future managers.

Key words: Responsible management education, sustainability, threshold concepts, gender studies, course integration

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the link between gender and sustainable management education.

Management education has been persistently questioned for failing to speak adequately to management practice (e.g Pfeffer and Fong, 2002). In the context of social and environmental crises the role of business in society is being called into question as corporations are increasingly confronted with managing and responding to expectations of a society alerted to the environmental and social risks associated with economic development (Davis and Stephenson, 2006). More recently, these critiques have focused on the role and

responsibilities of the Business School in educating many of the senior executives (Ghoshal, 2005) and have explored the unacknowledged and unresolved contradictions to produce a morally and ethically uplifting pedagogy which ‘is never neutral, but rather is inherently political in all its aspects’ (Freire, 1998, p.91). At the forefront of this re-evaluation of management education is an increased concern with sustainability which challenges the idea that management should be defined according to market principles alone because these are not the only or even the exclusive principles and beliefs that shape the comprehensibility or content of management practice (Blowfield and Murray, 2011; Henisz, 2011).

This turn towards sustainable development is notable because it challenges the construction and legitimacy of dominant logics of rationality and instrumentality, and scenarios in management (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000; Alvesson et al., 2009; Edwards and Meliou, 2015) and reflects the need for new paradigms of business thought and considerations of societal and environmental concerns. Influenced by Elkington’s (1998) model for business of the triple bottom line, more directly known as people, planet, profit, sustainability is widely accepted to incorporate three pillars: the social, the environmental and the economic, which constitute an integration of social systems, ecological and economic. Sustainability is an approach that seeks to create long- term value for companies and society, representing a shift away from a subsuming view of the economy. In this context, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (2002) specifies the commitment of businesses to work with employees, their families and the local community and society at large to improve the quality of life and thus contribute to sustainable development. A sense of equity and social justice is at the heart of this concept of sustainability, which also encompasses aspects of gender equality (Haynes and Murray, 2015). According to the World Bank, in no region of the developing world are women equal to men in legal, social and economic rights (World Bank Gender and Development Group, 2003). There is increasing

awareness that the achievement of women's equality is key to solving the challenges of development and poverty. Yet, this dimension of gender equality is often missing from sustainability debates both in business and in management education (Flynn, Haynes, and Kilgour (2015).

Our aim in this chapter is to contribute to debates in gender and sustainable management education by focusing on and evaluating a learning opportunity of an intervention we designed in order to engage students, as future leaders, with gender equality as a key issue in addressing the social justice aspect of the social pillar of sustainability. The emphasis of gender and management research includes a concern to ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for work at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life. However, despite the emphasis on the social responsibilities and obligations of leaders towards sustainable development, how to harness the positive potential of business, while at the same time containing corporate irresponsibility, presents an enormous challenge for management practitioners. Our contention in this chapter is that there is a need to evaluate current approaches to learning interventions designed to engage students and make them aware of/challenge conventional assumptions about the role and responsibilities of leaders, which may limit sustainable development. Our intervention is based upon a first year module delivered as part of a mainstream Business Management undergraduate degree (Rusinko, 2010). We are guided in our endeavour by Mayer and Land's (2005) work on threshold concepts, which represents an innovative and transformed way for management education practitioners to understand and interpret gender as an integral aspect of responsible management education. In particular, and in response to the editor's call for an evaluation of the learning opportunities of the various tools and techniques we might use, we seek to answer the following interrelated questions:

Q1. Will transformational interventions inspire students to shift from profit or external motivations toward expressing values or internal motivations? If such is the case,

Q2. How can we as educators enable them to address gender inequalities as an integral part of their management education? And,

Q3. Can threshold concepts enable us to understand how students engage with gender as a key concept in responsible, sustainable management?

This chapter presents a narrative as to how the authors integrated the concept of gender and sustainability in management education. It extends Rusinko's (2010) matrix of integration, and offers an application that illustrates how a university in the United Kingdom is integrating sustainability in management and business education, including lessons learned. The framework presented here recognizes that students may wrestle with the complexity that surrounds the concept of gender, and provides a means of bridging the knowledge/practice gap in management studies (Hibbert and Cunliffe, 2013). We begin by offering a brief literature review on gender and sustainability, followed by a discussion as to how to link these two critical contexts. Arguments are then presented as to how threshold concepts can be used to as a pedagogical approach representing potentially innovative and transformative ways of understanding, interpreting, or viewing gender inequalities in the classroom. We explain how we designed the intervention followed by insights gained from students' reflections and engagement in the course. A discussion of this exploratory framework is offered, followed by concluding thoughts on integrating sustainability and gender in the management curriculum.

BACKGROUND ON GENDER AND SUSTAINABILITY

In recent years, the wider sustainability literature has recognized both the decline in the role of the state as well as the global deregulation has led firms to play an increasingly important

role in sustainable development. Firms have a role to create and capture value, which is fundamental to economic prosperity and ensures higher societal benefits. Laszlo and Zhexembayeva (2011, p.100) argue that embedded sustainability can improve the strategic positioning of the firm, lead to new market opportunities and offer competitive advantage. Embedded sustainability is an 'incorporation of environmental, health and, social values into the company's core business with no trade-off in price or quality; it is meeting new market expectations in ways that strengthen the company's current strategy... capable of hugely motivating employees and creating loyalty in consumers and supply chain partners'. In the process of value creation though, natural resource depletion and environmental degradation can occur (Doering et al., 2002). In turn, disruption of communities, worker displacement, and issues of health and safety can be negative by-products (Stern, 2007), suggesting that firms must be socially responsive as well (Porter and Kramer, 2006).

Tracing developments within the sustainable management literature we can observe that social issues in sustainability are gradually moving to the forefront in business management (Kurucz, Colbert and Marcus, 2014). This is not without a reason; the challenges brought about by the degradation of the ecological systems have led researchers and practitioners to pinpoint increased social problems, including high unemployment and gender inequalities upon which company's very survival depends. An inefficient company, as a result, may cause poverty if it fails to generate and distribute wealth, create jobs and provide good services. Rasche, Waddock and McIntosh (2012) argue that poverty is much more than lack of income; there are multiple forms of deprivation and social exclusion at work, often based on gender, race, ethnicity and class inequalities. What this argument foregrounds is the continued and sharp segregation of the labour markets and the tendency to ignore women's rights in the various debates in the area of business, human rights and sustainability (Kilgour, 2012). Poverty as experienced by women is not just a matter of

unequal wages, but also relates to domestic and household commitments, such as childcare, maternity leave and care of the elderly, aspects that are often neglected in the corporate initiatives of firms that either do not understand or are not concerned about the connections between reproductive work, care and business and societal sustainability (Blowfield and Murray, 2011).

Pearson's (2007) work on the gendered nature of corporate social responsibility adds considerably more depth into this analysis. According to Pearson (2007) the gendered nature of the institutional context and labour markets in which the value chains operate, reflects the gendered division of labour, which is pervasive throughout all societies and a major impediment to poverty alleviation and sustainable development. Indeed, women and girls experience the challenges arising from sustainable development through disease, and hunger, the burden of unpaid work, vulnerability to conflicts and violence, water and sanitation issues, lack of political representation, and lack of education (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2010). Women are concentrated in the lower and what is considered as less skilled end of the occupational hierarchy. They are, therefore, particularly vulnerable to both structural and individual discrimination and abuse in terms of working conditions, levels of pay, insecurity of employment and harsh or undignified employment (Pearson and Sayfang, 2002). In addition, those who have a lower level of education are at higher risk of contracting HIV/AIDS (Mushunje, 2006).

This inattention to women's rights along with weak welfare models and family policies has a compounding effect on the degree to which women are able to reconcile paid employment, family obligations and work outside the family. Notwithstanding the fact that women make up the vast majority of workers in Export Processing Zones over the past 30 years, it would appear that virtually no developing state has taken measures to modify the social protection regime to accommodate and support women's reproductive roles. According

to Barrientos, Dolan and Tallontire (2001) the variability of codes of conduct that many companies adopt in managing ethically their employment relations with Southern producers exporting to European markets, has led in many cases to gender issues being overlooked or ignored. To affect the employment conditions of more insecure workers and women in particular, codes of conduct need to extend beyond international conventions, including the International Labour Organisation Conventions (ILO). For example, research undertaken in very different economies of India, Mexico, Mauritius, Zambia, South Africa and China indicates that hardly any initiatives are concerned with the regulation and provision of work-related benefits, including non-employment benefits and social provision supporting reproductive work (Pearson, 2007). Domestic responsibilities, care of children and elderly relatives in the domestic sphere, are beyond the coverage of any codes of conduct, which are by definition related to problems concerned with the workplace.

Such problems demonstrate that issues of sustainability and gender are inherently connected. Contrary to claims otherwise, in an unsustainable world with focus on economic over environmental and societal benefits women are disproportionately affected, and the historical legacy of gender is yet to be overcome (Kilgour et al, 2014; Peterson and Runyan, 1999, Marchiandani, 1999). As explained by Acker (1992, p.255) ‘these [gendering] practices and relations, encoded in arrangements and rules, are supported by assumptions that work is separate from the rest of life and that it has first claim on the worker. Many people, particularly women, have difficulty making their daily lives fit these expectations and assumptions’.

The 2030 agenda for sustainable development (<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>) highlights that one of the key targets is to achieve gender equality, and empower all women and girls. Progress in addressing these issues has been made by the Women’s Empowerment Principles (<http://www.weprinciples.org/Site/>

PrincipleOverview) that offer guidance on how to empower women in the workplace, marketplace and community. They are the result of collaboration between the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality, the Empower of Women (UN Women) and the United Nations Global Compact. The development of these principles seeks to point the way to best practice by elaborating the gender dimension of corporate responsibility, the UN Global Compact and the role of business in sustainable development. In this context, the actions of business schools play an important role in the education of future business leaders, policy-makers and decision-makers. Business schools should be leading the way to change and providing examples and best practices that can be transformative in the business world more generally.

LINKING GENDER AND SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

Management education systems are shaped by the societal context within which they operate, including the influence of institutions such as government policies, legal constraints, and market dynamics. Within formal systems of higher education, students can be understood as being socialized into a belief system and then behaving according to those beliefs (Khurana, 2007). In order to produce more responsible practitioners management educators are encouraged to be supportive of the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) initiative. PRME is a principle based global engagement platform for academic institutions following the UN Global Compact concern to engage effectively with business to progress principles in support of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption (<https://www.unglobalcompact.org/>). The principles ensure that the values and best pedagogic practices surrounding global social responsibility are incorporated into business schools' purpose, culture, educational methods, research, and stakeholder relationships (Burchell, Kennedy and Murray, 2015). Within this emphasis, integrating gender issues into Business School curricula has been a key target of PRME.

Integrating gender into business school curricula is recognized to be difficult as it challenges established norms which associate leadership and management with behaviours considered to be common or appropriate to men (Eagly and Carli, 2007) and is perceived to be far removed from the assumed masculine norm which underpins management education (Marshall, 1999; Phillips, Pullen, and Rhodes, 2014; Smith, 2000). This is because the conflation of valued management practice with masculinity (Acker, 1990) has been historically constructed and has produced a notion of ideal manager/leader, which is difficult to relate to femaleness (Ashcraft, 2011; Knights and Kerfoot, 2004). We understand gender to be socially constructed, ‘socially produced distinctions between male and female, masculine and feminine’ (Acker, 1992: 250), redefined and negotiated by individuals through everyday practices (Poggio, 2006). We therefore understand gender to be symbolic and social distinctions between people which reflect wider social and historical conditions (Alvesson and Billing, 2009), and consequently are not ‘natural, normal, or essential to the incumbents in question’, but ‘social doing[s], a mechanism for organizing’ (West and Zimmerman, 2009:114) which are discursively reproduced (Butler, 1999) and which have material consequences. Our contention is that innovations in management are propelled and supported by innovations in management education, and gender is a constructive concept for encouraging reflective practice in developing future leaders, and for dialectically challenging embedded assumptions in management practice and management education.

Ropers-Huilman (2003, p.2) argues that ‘gender takes shape in, and is shaped by, teaching, learning, and leadership practices, and in relations between students, faculty, administrators, and communities’ in as much as gender is routinely practised at work, through jobs which are not dis-embodied or gender-free (Acker, 1998). Here, we recognize the social construction of gender to be a critical threshold concept, a way of accessing challenging ideas and ways of thinking beyond disciplinary boundaries (Launius and Hassell, 2015). Clearly,

challenges in sustainability require transformation of mores and behaviour at the societal level as well as transformation in the worldview of individuals. This understanding provides an opportunity to interrogate how gendered assumptions of management can be challenged and changed through responsible and sustainable management education. Based on a content analysis of the bi-annual report of 30 PRME signatory schools in the UK, Haynes and Murray (2015) found that the extent of detail on curriculum content on gender equality issues was very thin and notably often disconnected from sustainability. Haynes and Murray (2015) conclude that this represents a seriously missed opportunity in the responsible management agenda to drive forward more egalitarian business models and behaviours.

THRESHOLD CONCEPTS AND TROUBLESOME KNOWLEDGE

Meyer and Land (2003) argue that within specific disciplines there exist ‘threshold concepts’ that lead to new and previously inaccessible ways of thinking about given topics. Giving attention to gender as a threshold concept is ‘pedagogically fertile’ (Mayer and Land, 2005, p.374) as this approach represents a potentially innovative and transformative way of understanding, interpreting, or viewing gender inequalities. Understanding a threshold concept ‘entails a reconstitution of learner’s subjectivity’ (Mayer and Land, 2005, p.21) which leads to a previously inaccessible way of thinking. Cousin (2010) suggests threshold concepts is a productive approach to investigating the student as subject rather than taking a general education theory approach.

To explore student engagement and understanding of their subject we need to identify the concepts that inform the subject and which students need to master it (Land et al, 2008). Cousin (2010) suggests threshold concept research sits in the liminal space constructed when students are introduced to the concepts they need to master for their subject, yet are struggling to comprehend. The aim is to establish a dialogue with students about their

struggles to comprehend as they learn through the recursive process of understanding/not understanding (Cousin, 2010) and recognising the emotional dimension of identification with their discipline and with the student's sense of their own capabilities (Cousin, 2006a). Engaging in a dialogue with students about their struggles, which recognizes the legitimacy of the struggle, can reduce students' anxiety, reduce plagiarism and reduce the number of students leaving university (Orsini-Jones, 2006 cited in Cousin, 2010).

Cousin (2007, p.2) proposes 'the theory of threshold concepts is a theory of difficulty that appreciates the contingent, contextual, historical and contested nature of any concept in any discipline' which suggests it is a useful framework for the exploration of gender. Developing a more nuanced understanding of gender as a construction that shapes ways of organizing work and opportunities for women and men can lead students to question fundamental beliefs and values, creating uncertainty and exposing them to what might be termed 'troublesome knowledge', one of five characteristics associated with threshold concepts (transformative, irreversibility, integrative, bounded and troublesome) (see Table 1).

[Insert table 1 – about here]

These characteristics of threshold concepts provide a framework through which the potential shift in students understanding and engagement with their programme can be explored. As a first step, it enables an investigation on the extent to which they are transformed through their studies. Meyer and Land (2003) argue this is an ontological shift as students assimilate new understandings into their biography, what they know, how they feel and who they believe themselves to be. Secondly, threshold concepts are irreversible once they are learned and understood, unless considerable effort is made to revise or reject the concepts once they have been understood. Cousin (2006a, p.136) suggests a rejection proceeds from 'an internalised understanding', which speaks to the impact of threshold

concepts once mastered. The third dimension of threshold concepts is that they are integrative, guiding students towards understanding the interrelatedness of a phenomenon, which will allow a student to see connections that had not previously been visible (Meyer and Land, 2003). Fourthly, once “conceptual space” is opened up’ for a threshold concept to define a particular disciplinary space, it is in turn *bounded* through borders with other concepts (Meyer and Land, 2005). Meyer and Land (2005) suggest there is the potential for threshold concepts to be limited by disciplinary boundaries, and Cousin (2006b) suggests there remains an important role for space to question the concepts to avoid an essentialist understanding.

Threshold concepts are fifthly troublesome knowledge. Depending upon the discipline, troublesome knowledge can appear counter-intuitive. Cousin (2006a) suggests the learner’s subject position will impact on the extent to which a threshold concept can seem counter-intuitive or alien, for example the difficulties white students may have in relation to the study of ‘Otherness’ when they are experienced in categorizing others as ethnic minority but not in recognizing their own location within the same category. Cousin (2007) draws upon Sibbett’s (2006, p.127) suggestion that knowledge can therefore be ‘nettlesome’ when it seems taboo and potentially will ‘sting’ if grasped, which can invoke a fearful and ‘intense emotional and embodied response’ (Cousin, 2007, p.2). Meyer and Land (2003) suggest that a student’s journey can include experiences of liminality, a transitional state where students may oscillate between old and new understandings as they attempt to master the subject matter. However students can become stuck in a pre-liminal space where their understanding is limited or vague as they have yet to engage fully in mastering the threshold concept (Meyer and Land, 2003).

This is not to suggest all students will experience threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge in the same way. Drawing on Bourdieu and Passeron’s (1977) concept of cultural

capital, Cousin (2006a) offers emotional capital as a mechanism for understanding the range of responses students had to their threshold concept teaching related to the topic of 'Otherness'. The argument is that students bring to the classroom a range of assets developed through familial and cultural milieu. As Cousin (2006a, p.138) suggests, one 'would argue for a broad understanding of "experiential proximity" to include family and school cultures, ethical sensibilities and political awareness as well as social positioning'. Students may bring such emotional capital to bear as they engage or struggle with troublesome knowledge in their studies. Cousin (2006a) suggests the emotional capital brought to bear by students can range from a spectator who observes without looking at themselves and recites what they believe the teacher wants to hear, to the self-reflexive learner for whom gaining an understanding of themselves through threshold concepts (such as 'Otherness') can change their life, offering new insights and fresh approaches to understanding. Students may also be 'defended learners', resistant or hostile to particular concepts, refusing to see why there is a problem, and being drawn to practical rather than cultural aspects of a programme for example. Cousin (2006a) suggests a way to respond to such resistant learners is to adopt an orientation towards recognising that everyone can experience inclusion/exclusion regardless of their social identity and apparently privileged social locations. Such an approach may engage such students and create a safe learning environment for all. Finally, students may victim-identify rather than engage critically with the subject matter, with a risk of becoming stuck rather than moving through an initial phase of awareness to 'a more nuanced understanding of self and the other' (Cousin, 2006a, p.142). There are complexities within all of these potential student responses, and Cousin's (2006a) work on 'Otherness' sensitizes us to the range of emotional responses students might demonstrate as they grapple with challenging concepts.

The concern and focus of this study is engaging students in the social pillar of sustainability through responsible management and gender, and to focus student attention and understanding on being able to understand their role in addressing gender imbalances in the workplace and society more broadly. Understanding gender as a threshold concept includes the social construction of gender and by implication an understanding of the distinction between sex and gender, the potential for multiple masculinities and femininities, and processes of privilege and oppression, grounding these concepts in illustrations from organisational life. Such topics relate well to Cousin's (2006a) work on 'Otherness' and the salience of her consideration of emotion within a threshold concepts research project.

We return to Cousin's (2010) argument that threshold concepts is a productive approach to investigating the student as subject rather than taking a general education theory approach, and draw upon threshold concepts as a means of interpreting how students engage with gender as a sustainable, responsible management issue as part of their broader management studies. Following the approach we took in integrating sustainability and gender issues in management as a new topic (Rands, 2009; Rusinko, 2010), we argue students may experience some temporality to threshold concepts – meaning any reported responses (both physical and emotional) will remain temporal to that course intervention. Based on this temporality, we believe that one of the threshold concepts (i.e. troublesome knowledge) will have an impact on the student's learning. Considering the exploratory nature of our intervention, and based on the above theoretical insights and arguments, we therefore propose the following:

H1: Engaging with gender topics as part of responsible and sustainable management discussion (integrated in a management course) can be troublesome for students.

H2: Students exposed to threshold concepts (integrated in a management course) face a potential shift from common sense understanding to discomfort.

METHODOLOGY

Design and Integration

In this chapter, we draw on qualitative data generated through interviews with first year undergraduate students in a PRME signatory school, and examine how through our teaching intervention we problematize gendered expectations and inequalities which negatively limit sustainable development. By doing this we are able to critically assess how students, as future leaders, perceive of the leaders' obligations and responsibilities in relation to gender issues in the workplace and beyond. We use Mayer and Land's (2003) framework of threshold concepts to explore gender as socially constructed practice (Launius and Hassel, 2015), and the potential of our teaching intervention to effect a positive impact on student learning of gender as a threshold concept.

How to teach gender and management has been the focus of attention in recent years. A number of pedagogical orientations have been practised in leadership and management development programmes (e.g Ibarra, Ely, and Kolb, 2013); however teaching gender and management seems to be still problematic, whether the audience consists of students or managers, as it demonstrates the problematic nature of the dominant status quo (Gerardi and Murgia, 2014; Kelan, 2013) which maintains management theory and practice as gender neutral. Despite the fact that the university in which our investigation took place is a PRME signatory and aspires to promote PRME principles through its teaching, the programme one of the authors was involved in teaching was a conventional Business Management Degree with no particular emphasis on sustainability. The lecture and seminar on gender and management were part of a first year undergraduate core module entitled 'Managing People in Organisations', and comprised of 150 students. We chose this module as we recognized

that whilst the school was committed to sustainability and PRME, not all degrees directly address sustainability, and therefore it was typical of this form of delivery.

Reviewing PRME signatory schools in the UK through a content analysis of school Sharing Information on Progress reports (SIPs), a biannual report on progress towards implementing the six Principles of PRME, Haynes and Murray (2015) highlight the extent to which gender is rarely conceived as a social justice issue related to sustainability through responsible management education. Therefore the module we explored could be considered a typical approach to teaching gender in a mainstream module (Holgersson, 2008), and through which our interest in student views of gender and responsible management could be explored. In essence, our approach represents Rusinko's (2010) Integration Matrix Quadrant I as we integrated gender and sustainability within an existing structure and through a narrower, more discipline specific focus. With respect to this Quadrant, we chose to present sustainability and gender issues in a way that was consistent with the course description, content, and learning outcomes. A major advantage of this option is that it does not require a great deal of review, coordination, or support beyond that of the involved faculty members, and resource demands are relatively modest (Rusinko, 2010: 511).

To this end, we developed a lecture and seminar activity with the aim of drawing students' attention to gender, the gendered construction of management, the consequences within organisations for both female and male organisation members and for the potential for gender as a social justice and responsible management issue to be addressed through management interventions. The lecture materials extended the key issues covered in chapter 5 of the undergraduate management text 'Organizational Behaviour and Work' which explores sexuality, sex typing and gender in the workplace. In the lecture we included a number of examples of research on gendered outcomes for women and men in work organisations, the social consequences of hegemonic masculinity. For the seminar activity we focused on

students own context we explored the impact of ‘laddism’ on campus and how it might be managed by a Student Union management team (see table 2).

[Inset table 2 – about here]

‘Laddism’, or ‘lad’ culture is a key issue raised by the National Union of Students in the UK who recognize this as a particularly oppressive form of masculinity and student culture which has developed in the UK context. The NUS report ‘That’s what she said’ suggests lad culture is a response to wider social changes as women become more visibly successful and a simultaneous ‘crisis of masculinity’ which is leading to increased sexism and misogynistic attitudes and behaviour on campus (Phipps and Young, 2012). It is acknowledged that both male and female students dip in and out of university communities associated with ‘laddism’, and that ‘laddism’ does not reflect the behaviour and identities of men as a social group, rather it reflects a particular form of masculinity, which Connell (2005) terms hegemonic masculinity, in which some men assert cultural dominance over other men and women. It is recognized that there is a degree of fluidity in the masculinities available to men which operate globally, nationally and locally (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005), yet the culture on campus around ‘contemporary “laddism” can be seen as young, hedonistic and largely centred on homosocial bonding. This often consists of ‘having a laugh’, objectifying women and espousing politically incorrect views’ (Phipps and Young, 2012, p.10). The NUS view the impact of this culture as highly damaging, and have instigated a national campaign and audit of university responses (NUS, 2015) as well as an ongoing national campaign to combat its influence on campus culture. The relevance of this activity around ‘laddism’ to our interest in gender and management as a sustainable issue is to engage students in a current, meaningful debate on gender that relates to their current experience, given that not all students will have had management experience prior to, or during their undergraduate studies.

Following the lecture students read the ‘That’s What She Said’ National Union of Students (NUS) report executive summary, and attended a seminar where they worked in groups to construct a Student Union management team response to the report, including developing an action plan (Table 3). A Student Union representative provided information about how they were responding to the NUS report, which gave students an opportunity to compare their ideas with an actual Student Union management response and discuss any differences in approach.

[Insert table 3 – about here]

Data Collection

For our intervention, we adopted an interpretivist approach. Following the lecture and seminar on gender and management we conducted semi-structure in-depth group interviews with students at the end of the semester. Group interviews can encourage participation of those who are reluctant to be interviewed on their own and enhance contribution of individuals who feel that they have nothing to say (Patton, 2005). Three groups of 6-8 students were formed; in total 22 students participated in the interviews. We selected our participants on a voluntary basis; the only criterion being to have attended the lecture and seminar. Additionally, the snowballing method was used to contact acquaintances of already participating students. The findings reported here are part of a broader project focusing on understanding gender and sustainable management education, as a basis for knowledge construction. The interviews focused on exploring students’ views on the topic of the lecture and seminar, the lecture design, and the degree to which gender as a threshold concept was experienced by students and with what variations. The interviews lasted 90 to 120 minutes each, were taped recorded and fully transcribed to include paralinguistic detail (Elliott, 2005). The paralinguistic detail was removed from quotations for inclusion in this chapter.

[Insert Table 4 – about here]

Data Analysis

The methodology underpinning our approach reflects Hibbert and Cunliffe's (2013) position that student engagement with responsible management requires reflective practice and learning from troublesome situations and experiences. Hibbert and Cunliffe (2013) articulate how threshold concepts informed teaching and learning can facilitate this journey. Interview themes therefore were initially centred on the core elements of learning through threshold concepts (see Table 4). In doing so we were struck by the emotion expressed by the students as they engaged in the group interview discussions as we explored their responses to gender as a responsible management concern. We then drew upon Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011) and Cunliffe and Coupland (2012) accounts of an abductive approach to their studies to move between reading the data and theory in a structured and methodologically structured way. Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011) drew upon Peirce (1906) as an inductive method which works through multiple readings of data and recognizes that 'knowledge is generated within the social practices of participants and researchers, it is concerned with translating observations of experience and/or participants' accounts in relation to the researcher's interests.' (Cunliffe and Coupland, 2012, p.71). From the multiple readings and reflections on threshold concepts and responsible management theory we were struck by the emotional dimension in the student's discussion and their accounts of experiences. The data presented below are not offered as an illustration of prioritized findings or conclusions; rather they are offered as a means of stimulating a discussion around the issues of gender and sustainable, responsible management education and to explore how students, as future leaders, engage with these concepts.

Preliminary Intervention Findings: Gender as Troublesome Knowledge

The theory of threshold concepts enabled us to understand and interpret the student responses to our teaching intervention on gender as a sustainable and responsible management issue.

Student's accounts offer insights into the extent to which engaging with gender as a responsible and sustainable management issue can be troublesome – thus supporting our hypothesis 1 (see qualitative feedback below). This troublesome knowledge invokes a certain amount of discomfort when it runs contrary to their previously held 'common sense' understanding of management, yet is also transformative – also supporting our hypothesis 2. Students' engagement with gender as a social construct was shaped by the prevalence of a 'common sense' or intuitive understanding of gender and difficulties in accepting that whilst gender may shape their social lives, it shouldn't (and therefore wouldn't) transfer to work organisations which had policies in place to protect against it. In the interviews students used experiences from their personal and social life to problematize their own common sense making, including experiences on campus, yet a number struggled to develop a clear understanding of how the gendered relations and expectations they experienced could be managed in the workplace. Through an 'embodiment' reading of their experiences students in our study demonstrate a shift from earlier comfortable positions as they encountered less familiar and possibly disconcerting new territory. Research on gender and embodiment or the 'lived body' has made important contributions to understanding individual experience within social and cultural contexts.

Drawing on Dale's (2005) work, Williams and Mavin (2012) suggest a shift in critical approaches to organization studies away from maintaining a Cartesian dualism separating the material world and body from the mind towards embodiment studies of social action is a key issue for management and organization studies. As Hall *et al.* (2007, p. 535) argue 'embodiment concerns the body we are and, as such, enables an understanding of the dialectical processes of identification as they unfold in particular social contexts'. From the student group interviews we identify two forms of embodied practice: emotional and physical; it was through emotional responses and experiences of the body that students

were able to articulate their experiences and through which we can see the extent to which gender is a troublesome concept that students were, in carrying degrees, able to grapple with as part of their engagement with sustainability through the responsible management agenda. In what follows we expand on these interpretations by using the participants' words. The comments illustrate students' reflections and efforts to engage with gender as outlined in the lecture and seminar activities.

Emotional Responses

Students' engagement with gender as troublesome knowledge evoked emotions in the discussion of all groups interviewed. The reactions reflected feelings of uneasiness, discontent and anger. We have interpreted this as a strong emotional investment which seems to be a precursor for a change of thinking (Cousin, 2010). The comments from group interview 1 which follow highlight the impact and extent to which students' reacted to one of the lecture activities, the Tony Porter TED talk video which presented an African American male perspective on the limiting effects of hegemonic masculinity for men:

'I got a bit teary. I got a bit upset about it'. (Group 1, R1, female)

'Yeah, me too. I was really upset'. (Group1, R4, female)

'I was really emotional'. (Group1, R3, female)

Participant 3 indicates the extent to which the video had an emotional impact on her and her boyfriend, how they felt troubled following the video activity:

'I got teary and I just kept quiet and I thought one girl sitting next to me got teary too...

and I was like well I just didn't say anything [laughter] afterward but then I got back and showed [the video to] my boyfriend... and he was really upset about it too...

[but] you know[in] his family you could cry. Like, his parents never like oppressed him from like crying or anything. He could always

express his emotions.’ (Group 1, R3, female)

Here engagement with gender appears to be an emotional affair. We might have expected students to refer to the traditional binary conception of gender that stereotypically assigns to women both competence in and a responsibility for emotional matters (Knights and Surman, 2008). Stereotypically feminine emotions, like sensitivity and empathy conveyed through crying are argued to contradict with dominant masculine norms, yet in this extract we see an example of a male connected to a participant explain how his family rejected such expectations. Such trends have been described as the masculinization of emotions, assigning stereotypically to men characteristics of interdependence and rationality (Lewis and Simpson, 2007).

The challenging nature of gender as a threshold concept is also reflected in the group 3 discussion of Porter’s TED video :

‘And the lecture, they had the TED video, the man... he nearly made me cry with such sad stories but his...the [man] box...that is how my dad used to act but I don’t have any brothers, so it was how he acted with me and my sister. So in that way it’s not just male stereotypes [towards] the men, it’s also women as well, so I didn’t get much sympathy when I was a little girl.’

(Group 3, R5 female)

Participant 3 (male) in group 3 replied to participant 5 to highlight his comfort with the idea of men expressing emotion, and the difficulties some other male students had in accepting the key message of the TED video:

‘I was pleased to listen to the other comments [of other students]. When the video ended there was, I think, there was a few guys behind me who were saying the idea of a lad crying ... it shows that he’s weak or something and personally I don’t think that’s a big a deal if you show any emotion, and it’s a natural

trait to show an emotion so it's quite interesting to listen to the opinion

on [sic] all the guys'. (Group 3, R3, male)

One of the difficulties posed by a disassociation of maleness with emotion is the consequences for who is considered a good fit for management, suggesting the dominant logics of rationality and instrumentality and scenarios in management (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000; Alvesson et al., 2009; Edwards and Meliou, 2015) persists among some students (but not all). This may limit the potential of addressing the social justice element of sustainability in classroom debates on responsible management. Sinclair (2000:84) argues male students may resist a turn away from a traditional focus on *women in management* when discussing gender, as the extant gender and management literature highlights how 'work accomplishes masculinity', and is interwoven to men's identities. However, participant 3 in Group 3 engaged with our problematizing of hegemonic masculinity and can be interpreted as being open to the multiplicity of masculinities and the place of emotion in management. Participant 2 in group 2 problematized the male dominance of senior positions in work organizations and went on to argue against a rationalist instrumentality, suggesting more emotion is needed in management:

'There's a massive male dominance at the head of organisations and if that's

kind of it's kind of pulling on my heart-strings'. (Group 2, R2, female)

'a lot of the debates were about how women are more emotional so they can't make the clear-cut decisions that need to be made, but from my personal opinion, and I...I believe that sometimes a more emotional opinion needs to be made

because of the worlds that we're living in... being more empathetic'

(Group 2, R2, female)

Some female students identified the negative impact of narrow gendered expectations, for example a 'feminine label'. For example, one participant suggested that it diminished their

effectiveness and impacted on their confidence, providing us with some insight into the strength of broader gendered social expectations and the enduring disassociation of 'feminine' with 'management':

'I feel like it affects your self-esteem, once you accept that being a specific gender affects your ability to do something instead of other factors like your actual ability, so that like as a girl you would be like 'oh I can't do that because I'm a girl'. You wouldn't even try to do that because it would never occur to you in the first place'. (Group 1, R3, female)

In turn, participants also expressed anger in response to gendered management. By using examples from Wilson's (2010) chapter one of our participants attempted to grapple with gender and the concept of gendered job segregation that continues to exist such that women more often occupy positions as carers (such as nurses, teachers, secretaries) and service workers (such as clerical, cleaners and personnel roles), or those outside the formal economy such as domestic carers:

'From the chapter we had to read beforehand I was almost feeling angry with what I was reading about hooters and Playboy bunnies and bouncers, but that woman is a person, so why treat her like the stereotype of a nurse in 'Carry On' films and stuff like that, that's not right either'.

(Group 3, R3, female)

Carry on films are British films made in 1950s/1960s which depict women in stereotypical roles, tending to highlight beauty or efficiency, but rarely contribute to the film narrative as their role contributes to a sense of social cohesion (Harper, 2000). This theme suggests that we can observe a degree of liminality (Meyer and Land, 2003) in student's understanding of gender, through their problematization of hegemonic masculinity, as they begin to assimilate new understandings into how they feel (Meyer and Land, 2003) as seen in these emotional

responses (Cousin, 2006a) and a willingness to recognize the place of emotion in management.

Physical: Bodily Differences

Physical representations of embodiment reflect those that arise from the interaction between people and illustrate the embodied effects of that interaction. This relies on an embodied relational subject that is always in connection with others (Pullen and Rhodes, 2015).

Through the following descriptions student accounts can be seen to make use of essentialist/common sense understandings of men and women according to sexual differentiation located in the different anatomy and capacities of men's and women's bodies to articulate their understanding of gender in relation to management. Given the focus of the lecture and seminar was to problematize this relation, we can see the students beginning to differentiate the terms, yet struggling as they do so, oscillating between new and old ideas (sex as tied to the body, gender as constructed) and towards liminality, (Meyer and Land, 2003):

'Because it's different to sexuality. Again, there's one that you're born with and there's one that you decide that's what you want to become... I get confused. That is my problem but yeah, there's definitely one that you choose and one that you're born with as your scientific...one.' (Group 1, R1, female)

'I would say just extending on, it is what you're born with and you don't really choose your gender so there's no option there for you, right, upon male or female.' (Group 1, R2, female)

Students can also be seen to draw upon stereotypes which resonate with dominant discourses of masculinity in their accounts, which are problematic as these masculine norms of embodiment in society tend to marginalize women. Such common sense norms of bodies

impact on the potential for relationships with the 'Other', separating and distinguishing between male and female and bodily potential. The following examples are characteristic of students' attempt to grapple with gender:

'Yeah, how women are perceived to be as opposed to how men are perceived to be...they [men] are perceived to be more dominant and strong whereas we're weak and not as powerful in any situation.' (Group 1, R3, female)

When discussing the Lord Davies (2011) report on the UK skills gap and the high attrition rate of women leaving the workplace, one student returned to a common explanation of the problem, the maternal body:

'... having babies, because that could be a huge reason as to why women leave... do you think that might be why the government are encouraging women to go back into employment after maternity leave to fill that skills gap'. (Group 2, R2, female)

Socio-cultural constructions of gender are enmeshed and enabled by relations of power and form the basis and organizing principle for organizational structures and practices. For our participants, gender inequality in the workplace becomes particularly visible through a focus upon the difficulties experienced by women. Defining the boundaries seems to be, as a result, a way that gender through the female body is rendered intelligible. To address the difficulties women experience, a legal solution of 'suing' has been proposed, as this following student explains through recounting a seminar discussion around a senior male sexually touching a junior female at a work party:

'I think it's you know, when you know that you can sue someone for actually just putting their hand on your, you know, and then it's kind of a power because we have so little power ...he was, [a] high position person and she was, again, just a normal worker and she felt like she had power, that she can actually

*do something because, sometimes you don't feel like you're powerless, [or]
you just have to put up with it, but she took the matter into her hand and
she didn't want it to happen again to set a...
a standard [for acceptable behaviour].*

(Group 1, R4, female)

In the same vein, negotiating physical distance in the context of their relationship with the 'Other' is another example of how gender is understood, explored and problematized. As one of the participants argues some circumstances bring the body to the fore and there is some debate over the sexualisation and objectification of women student's bodies in public spaces:

'... because it was the norm didn't mean it was right, so we had a quite a big discussion about [that], because we then broached the subject of ...we're out on a night out and someone touches our bum or something like that, some girls were okay with that, some girls weren't and we had a massive discussion about it.' (Group 1, R1, female)

From this theme we can interpret the students understanding of gender as being closely tied to the body, in particular the female body, in terms of physical strength, sexually objectification and the potential to see power through women's bodies when they draw upon a legislative discourse. We interpret the students as moving between a pre-liminal and liminal state in relation to aspects of gender as a threshold concept, as the close tying of gender to the female body suggests there continues to be a need for recursion (Cousin, 2010) to enable students to make stronger connections and analyse constructions of masculinity as the norm in order to continue to critique the association of masculinity and management (Acker, 1990) as expressed in theme 1. As Sinclair (2000) noted of male MBA students, the move away from a focus on women in management is difficult. We suggest this difficulty can also be interpreted in female undergraduate student accounts.

DISCUSSION

We agree with Haynes and Murray (2015) that gender in management is an important issue in addressing the social justice aspect of the social pillar of sustainability through responsible management, and we go further in suggesting it is a threshold concept to engage students in moving forward with their thinking, to incorporate this pillar into their praxis as future responsible managers.

Mainstream management is criticized for overemphasizing rationality and instrumentality (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000; Alvesson et al., 2009; Edwards and Meliou, 2015) and marginalizing affect (consider for example Hochschild's (2003) 'managed heart'). In our study, the students can be understood to be engaging with gender through the body, and problematizing the construction of gender through their experiences of affect (uneasiness, discontent and anger) and the body (bodily difference, preferable bodies and bodily violation). Dale (2005, p.655) suggests that incorporating embodied experiences shifts attention to explore 'taken-for-granted' assumptions of a "normal" body (e.g. think manager think male) (Schein, Mueller, Lituchy, & Liu, 1996) to appreciate the body as an 'active... negotiation of everyday life in relation to the material world and to the creation of social life'. Gender is thus problematized and becomes troublesome knowledge through the embodied effects of gendered interactions between students and with others. Cousin (2006a) suggests some threshold concepts (such as 'Otherness') have strong affective dimensions, and suggests a consideration of learners emotional positioning, the emotional questions such concepts raise, and students subsequent receptivity to learning. We similarly interpret gender as a concept which elicits strong emotional responses among undergraduate management students.

We interpret the students' as experiencing a liminal state (Meyer and Land, 2005), as they were starting to problematize their understanding of management through gender as a threshold concept, oscillating between previous 'common sense' and new understandings as they move towards concept mastery. However, one of the limitations of the teaching intervention was that it did not offer a further opportunity for recursiveness, for students to loop back to the concept to further develop their understanding, particularly those students who were interpreted as achieving only a pre-liminal understanding of gender.

Limitations

While we might interpret the students as having begun their journey with the social construction of gender as a threshold concept to understand sustainability through responsible management, the mode of delivery –one lecture and seminar in a general introduction to management module (Rands, 2009; Rusinko, 2010) - is limited in achieving a full articulation of gender as a threshold concept. This is particularly so in terms of the desire to achieve irreversibility and transformation in student learning. Irreversibility and transformation are important if we consider that in mainstream management programme there will be limited instances where the gendering of knowledge is surfaced and problematized and so moving on from this intervention in a state of liminality without further opportunities for recursion suggests a broader curriculum redesign is necessary, if a challenging aspiration given the mainstream focus of the degree programme. We therefore need to provide students with alternative extra-curricular opportunities to continue to develop their understanding if we want them to fully realize the social aspect of sustainable and responsible management practice for gender equity.

There were ways in which our intervention offered some potential ways in which student's mastery of gender as a threshold concept could be developed. We included a Student Union representative in the intervention who provided an overview of how the union

was responding to the NUS 'That's What She Said' report. Further engagement with Student Union Officers and Societies offer one route to providing students with support to develop their understanding of the construction of gender. We have also considered developing a blog, with updated links to current news items and links to published work on gender and management for the duration of student's degree programmes. However, these are a limited response to what Land et al (2005) contends to be the design principles which support threshold concept mastery.

We noted that whilst we attracted a number of male students to the group interviews, the main themes we explore in this chapter are issues the female students discussed in more detail. It may be that further consideration is needed to explore how male students can be encouraged to discuss and debate gender in future research on gender as a threshold concept for social justice in sustainable, responsible management. What we are unsure of is whether these students were less vocal because they remained in a pre-liminal state and had yet to fully engage in attempting to master the subject (Meyer and Land, 2003), or whether they were conflicted. Sinclair (2000, p.89) suggested in her study of MBA students, male students open up to discussing masculinities once some male students began to talk about their own experiences of the limiting effects of 'traditional corporate masculinities'. However with undergraduate students with little experience of corporate contexts, 'the undiscussability of masculinities' (Sinclair, 2000, p.88) may remain a difficult yet important issue to address. As future managers of both women and men, there is also a compelling rationale to engage male students in discussing and debating gender and encouraging 'a more nuanced understanding of self and the other' (Cousin, 2006a, p.142) which enables their engagement with gender as part of a responsible management approach and a legitimate social justice concern.

Future Research

Given the concern within the sustainable and responsible management literature to address women and girls' disadvantage, as discussed above, and the drive to develop more responsible practitioner scholars following the PRIME initiative, further work is needed to support the development of gender within mainstream business and management school curriculum. We argue that threshold concepts is a productive approach to address this need and to working with students as they engage with, struggle and develop their understanding of sustainability through a social justice approach to responsible management. Threshold concepts offers an approach to understanding how we might continue to develop interventions that enable us to work with students and facilitate their development and journey towards a transformed, irreversible understanding of their roles as future managers who address gender inequalities as an integral aspect of their responsible management practice.

Extending our approach, and for those business schools wishing to integrate and assess sustainability to higher levels; we propose investigating the extent to which different Quadrants (i.e. Ruskinko's 2010 Quadrant II – V), will report more learning impacts in regards to threshold concepts. In our case, some level of transformation was reported by the students when they narrated on their troublesome experiences in the course. Future studies can test whether different levels of integration yield different learning outcomes/impacts in regards to students' shift in transformative, irreversibility, integrative, and bounded knowledge (Cousin (2007, p.2), as we integrate gender topics in our programs. From these initial investigations, additional observations, alumni surveys (those who participated in any of the offered interventions and who hold managerial positions) and interviews could shed some light on the true lasting impacts of our sustainability integration efforts.

CONCLUSION

We started out by asking whether transformational interventions will inspire students to shift from profit or external motivations toward expressing values or internal motivations. We believe the course intervention we designed has made a decent attempt to ‘introduce’ topics which are normally not combined in a management course – gender and sustainability. We also asked how we as educators can enable students to address gender inequalities as an integral part of their management education. As first movers, and not to become faculty champions, we chose Quadrant I of Rusinko’s (2010) suggested integration matrix. We integrated sustainability and gender topics into an already existing discipline-specific course. Finally, we questioned whether threshold concepts enable us to understand how students engage with gender as a key concept in responsible, sustainable management. We chose to draw on threshold concepts as a ‘test’ theoretical framework and discovered that at least one of the five concepts (troublesome knowledge) had a shift effect in their thinking and appreciation of the new topics.

More than ever before the integrated economic, social and environmental activities of companies are becoming priority for development and competitive advantage. Our argument in this chapter is that due to sustainability imperative, business schools should move beyond rationality and instrumentality and educate the future leaders differently. Our focus is on introducing gender in management education to support and encourage business sustainability. Gender is inherent in the social justice dimension of sustainability and an important area of concern; however despite official acknowledgment, as research evidences, not much has been done to address this concern (Kilgour, 2013).

Our learning intervention was designed to introduce students to the concept of gender with the objective to make them aware of/challenge conventional assumptions about the role and responsibilities of managers and leaders, and the ways in which management and leadership may limit sustainable development. Guided by Mayer and Land’s (2003, 2005)

and Cousin's (2006a, 2006b, 2010) work, we explored gender as a threshold concept and grounded the ideas in illustrations from organizational life. Our findings demonstrate students' engagement with "Otherness", through an understanding of gender as troublesome knowledge experienced through embodied manifestations. Our intervention has a number of benefits as it teaches how an issue can be discussed from different standpoints, enables theorisation starting from personal opinion and experiences, and most importantly promotes some incremental change in students' belief systems.

Finally, in concluding this discussion, we believe that it is vital for Business Schools, especially PRME signatory schools around the world, including those in the UK, to ensure that concrete actions are taken in eliminating gender inequality, not the least of which is through curriculum (re)design. Including a perspective on gender and sustainable development when configuring management education for future leaders will bring about a more coherent approach to management practice. Business Schools can pave the way for more diverse, inclusive and egalitarian business models and thinking.

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