

Making the Impact of Gender on Business Leadership Visible: A Tool for Use in Organizations and Education

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Abstract

Women are underrepresented in business leadership and education. The issue is important to many organizations, but discussing causes and solutions can be difficult. A useful, fun, and informative exercise is presented as a tool to facilitate such discussions. The exercise can be used for training and development, kicking off a gender initiative, general planning, and executive education, as well as for working adult graduate students. It can be adapted for less experienced undergraduate and graduate students. The exercise illustrates the gender systems in which we work. An optional piece illustrates how work-family impacts this issue. Teaching aids are also presented.

That women are underrepresented in business leadership and are underpaid compared to their male colleagues is rarely disputed (e.g., Daily, Certo, & Dalton, 1999; Korkki, 2007; Ragins, Townsend, & Mattis, 1997; Work-life, 2007). Companies continue to pay for lack of equal employment opportunity compliance; most recently accusations of discrimination against women at GE has been widely covered (e.g., Brady, 2007; Deutsch, 2007). However, there is less consensus about the reasons for the persistence of these problems and what we should do about it, and there is some discomfort with addressing the underlying dynamics.

Many business organizations have made major efforts to attract, retain, and promote women (Catalyst, 1998), yet 25 years after institutions were legally compelled to correct sex discrimination, women occupied 42% of all managerial and professional jobs but only 5% of executive positions (Ragins, Townsend, & Mattis, 1998). During the decade from 1987 to 1996, there was an increase in representation of women on corporate boards; however, there was no evidence of progress in representation either in the CEO suite or in key requisite positions (Daily, Certo, & Dalton, 1999). Understanding why may be more important than ever as there is some evidence to suggest that women may emphasize the ethical components of business decision making more than do their male counterparts (Albaum & Peterson, 2006).

Gender is a powerful, but often invisible, force in determining who become the leaders of an organization. Because it is relatively invisible, it can be difficult to address or even discuss. In addition, discussions can degenerate into guilt, blame, or shame, which may actually harm women by causing resentment and may inhibit progress. This article presents a tool that I have used with considerable success to start fruitful gender discussions in organizations, in MBA classrooms, in undergraduate business classrooms, and in executive education. This exercise effectively conveys many of the core issues involving business organizations and gender because the “meat” of the exercise comes directly from the participants. I’ve found this tends to attenuate resentment or guilt and make the discussions fun. The exercise can also address how work-family concerns contribute to the challenges women face in attaining leadership positions, something that has been identified as a core gender issue (Hochschild, 1989; Williams, 2000). This article will first review the issues and then present this tool.

WOMEN’S FIT WITH MASCULINE BUSINESS LEADERSHIP

One way gender affects who becomes leaders is through the process of person-organization fit. One stream of research, for example, shows that through “ASA” or “attraction-selection-attrition,” people fit the organization more as their tenure increases (Ostroff & Rothausen, 1997; Schneider, 1987a, 1987b). Applied to leadership, ASA means that an organization attracts a certain “type” of person to leadership roles, then further ensures fit through leadership selection. In addition, through the process of attrition of leaders who either don’t work out or who find the role uncomfortable, fit is further increased. Since most management jobs, especially line jobs, are perceived to require masculine traits, women will not be seen as “leadership material” as much as their equally competent male counterparts (Eagly & Carli, 2003); indeed, research in different professions has shown that women in higher or more prestigious positions were held to a “double standard” to get there compared to their male counterparts (Lyness & Heilman, 2006; Rothausen-Vange, Marler, & Wright, 2005). Women performing equally to men may be seen to be as competent and yet receive lower ratings on leadership and likeability (Watson & Hoffman, 2004).

Eagly and Carli (2003) found that although journalists and authors of trade books assert that feminine styles are an advantage in leadership in the current era, women still suffer in others’ evaluations of them as leaders, especially in more masculine organizational contexts. Although progress has been made toward workplace gender equity, the U.S. work force still has a glass ceiling for women, a pay gap between men and women, and sex-segregated jobs and occupations. Ninety-five to 97 percent of senior managers (vice presidents and above) in

Fortune 1500 companies are men (Federal, 1997). White women earn an average of 65-75 cents for every dollar a white man earns (England, 1997). There is still segregation based on both task and rank by sex in the U.S. (Reskin, 1997). On average, women of color have even worse career outcomes (England, 1997; Federal, 1997; Higginbotham, 1997). In addition to being concerns in and of themselves, these issues may keep some women from even pursuing business careers.

Women are underrepresented in MBA programs (Anderson, 2007; Reingold, 2000; Schneider, 2001). In an editorial in the April 1999 issue of the Journal of Management Education, Diana Bilimoria spelled out the various ways in which MBA education is failing women. After noting that women do not reap as many rewards in terms of career advancement and salary levels from their MBAs as do their male colleagues, she notes:

At best, contemporary management education strives to not be gender negative, as opposed to striving to be gender positive.... Student recruiting and placement as well as management curricula continue to be heavily influenced by historically male models of success and gamesmanship. The prevailing values system underlying business education continues to reflect a male orientation that views business activity in terms of a game with fixed and wholly material objectives.

...(W)ithin the classroom, many professors in management schools seem to have little awareness of the knowledge that female students differ from male students in their experiences, ways of interaction, and developmental paths, thus needing to be interacted with in more informed ways....(Bilimoria, 1999, p. 119).

An example comes from an MBA student with seven years of experience who was recently in one of my MBA elective classes on diversity. When I asked the students in the class to fill out a form including an item asking them to state why they had taken the class, she wrote, "I've had some nagging underlying thoughts that have been on my mind (regarding my job and career) and I couldn't pinpoint them until now. (They include the effects of) being a young woman, being career-focused (and a woman), apprehension (about) having kids because of the (career) repercussions..., and dealing with (an older) white male boss." This same woman, when asked to share with the class why she had taken the class, stated verbally that she was very concerned about being taken seriously in business, and that, as a young woman, she felt that people assumed she did not fit the profile of a serious business professional.

According to BusinessWeek online data, 35% of the new full-time MBA students at 251 business schools worldwide are female and this percentage has remained stable, not increasing in a decade (Reingold, 2000). Thus, Bilimoria's argument suggests that we, as management educators, may not be serving one-third of our students as well as we could. The November 6, 2001 issue of BusinessWeek online carried an article by Mica Schneider titled, "A New Push to Pull In Women." In it, the author investigates a new partnership between universities, businesses, and nonprofits that is designed to get more women on business boards by first getting them into MBA programs. Schneider also notes that one-third of all new MBAs are women, but qualifies this by observing that "(t)he picture is bleaker at BusinessWeek's top-30 U.S. MBA programs, where just 28% of first-year MBAs are female." These authors argue that women may

not be attracted to MBA programs in the same proportion as men due to some of the reasons Bilmoria (1999) outlines (Scheider, 2001; Reingold, 2000).

Similar issues may keep women disproportionately out of the business professorate as well, leaving few female role models in MBA programs (Rothausen-Vange, Marler & Wright, 2005). In 1972, Title IX of the Education Amendments, which were modeled on the Civil Rights Act of 1964, made U.S. colleges and universities responsible for correcting the effects of past discrimination (Rosenfeld & Jones, 1987; U.S. Government, 1997). Since that time, progress toward sex equality in academe has been noted (e.g., Raymond, Sesnowitz, & Williams, 1993; Rosenfeld & Jones, 1987); however, outcomes for women and men are not yet equal (e.g., pay and promotion outcomes in Gomez-Mejia & Balkin, 1992; also see Moses, 1997). In 1995, over 20 years after the legal call for correcting sex discrimination in academe and over 20 years after the data from the classic sex inequality studies were collected, 43% of male and 20% of female faculty members were full professors, whereas 27% of male and 48% of female faculty members were assistants (Marczely, 1997); this situation is suggestive of an academic glass ceiling (Federal, 1997; see also Estrada, Kacmar, & Hasselback, 1997). In a study reported by BusinessWeek in which 1600 male and female MBAs from 12 top schools who graduated between 1980 and 1995 were surveyed, 56% said there were few role models for female students (Reingold, 2000). Addressing gender issues more openly and proactively may have positive impacts on female business students and professors.

The factors reviewed above result in a situation in which the pool of MBA-credentialed women is less than half that of the male pool. I believe we have a duty to address issues of gender at all stages in business, from undergraduate and graduate business classrooms to discussions in organizations. In addition, these discussions are good for business; as a Dell Computer director quoted in Schneider's (2001) article said, "... we're missing out on some talented people, many of them women, because they choose not to pursue business careers."

GENDER DISCUSSION EXERCISE CONSIDERATIONS AND PREPARATION

It is important to note that this exercise was developed for the U.S. business culture; however, it can be modified for other cultures. Note also, however, that some cultures do have taboos against talking about this issue directly. I have been using this exercise in executive development, MBA, business masters, and undergraduate level classes for over ten years, and it has always been very well received, but occasionally international students will comment that in their country, although there are gender issues, they cannot be addressed this directly. In addition, some subcultures within the US will be less represented in this general discussion. I have also used it in executive and professional development settings, to even greater reviews.

I have set the exercise in many different contexts. I have used it within the context of discussing individual differences in organizational behavior, human resources, and career development classes. It can be modified for other disciplines and for other classes within a business program as well. Sometimes I do the exercise when covering the topic of national and organizational cultures; we may have been discussing how differing personalities, interests, and values affect managers and management, or how they are used in human resources, or how they affect career

directions and choices. Thus, at first this exercise seems like another dealing with individual differences, and in a sense it is.

The exercise can take one and a half to three or more hours, including portions of lecture. The exercise as written here has an optional component which specifically brings out a core gender difference, that of work-family balance. The main part of the exercise can be used to discuss any difference between men and women at work, including career outcome differences, pay gap, the glass ceiling, and different (masculine and feminine) management styles, communications styles, and leadership styles, as well as feminine and masculine traits in both men and women and their effects on people in organizations.

To do this exercise as written here, you will need a large flip chart, pens, and tape, as well as a long white- or chalk- board and pens or chalk. It is essential that the instructor understand gender generally before attempting this exercise (see Appendix A for suggestions). My teaching style makes this exercise relatively easy for me. I generally run discussion oriented classes with "mini-lectures" inserted, and use cases and video examples extensively. I have found the key for me to do this exercise successfully is to focus on not getting defensive myself, and to allow all respectfully and civilly stated opinions to be heard. The exercise may be more difficult for those with a lecture-oriented teaching style or in a formal classroom.

THE EXERCISE

In the discussion below, I use “students” and “participants” interchangeably, as this exercise is effective in business classrooms and in corporate settings. However, the exercise works best with people with at least three years business experience.

Prologue—The Ideal Worker

Step 1. Ask participants to list characteristics of the ideal leader in American business, and write their answers on a flip chart sheet.

Before you begin, note that "Corporate America" shows its ideal leader profile by its actions, that is, you are asking them to create a list of traits and behaviors of workers who get promoted to leadership positions, not what companies say they want. In undergraduate, and some masters classes, I ask that at first only people with experience in corporate America contribute. Afterwards, I ask less experienced students to comment on the list created by experienced students. I do this because I find that young people without actual experience in corporate America often have a glorified or naive view of it.

I do this step at the very beginning of the session or class period, asking students to humor me and tell them that we will use it later. You might even do this step previous to the session during which you want to focus on this exercise.

Step 2. Put the list created in Step 1 aside.

Part I—Sex Versus Gender

Step 3. Write two words—“sex” and “gender”—on the board and discuss.

I usually tell students that I am NOT referring to sex the act, but the individual difference or characteristic of sex; this usually gets some laughs and breaks tension people might feel talking about the issues. I ask them to guess what I mean by sex versus gender. Usually someone says sex is a biological characteristic, and I then write that under the term "sex." I then ask whether anyone knows what I mean by gender as different from sex. Sometimes people say correctly that it is "a routine accomplishment embedded in everyday interaction" (West & Zimmerman, 1987) or "fluid culture-specific characteristics associated with one's sex." That is, gender is not a passive nor a static cultural assignment; rather it is something we enact every day. In other words, sex is a set of biological characteristics, but we "do" gender (Lorber, 2001; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Sometimes these concepts require some explaining to people who are not familiar with the concepts; I let the students do this explaining where possible.

Step 4. Ask students what the categories of "sex" are.

Answer: female and male.

Optional (advanced): Here I sometimes discuss the frequency of biologically unclear sex in babies and how different cultures handle those children and others who are not of a dichotomous sex category (Lorber, 2001).

Step 5. Ask students what the categories of "gender" are.

Answer: feminine and masculine (or woman and man; Lorber, 2001).

Optional (advanced): Again, I sometimes discuss cultures in which individuals of a third or fourth gender are revered, unlike in our own culture. For example, in some Native American cultures, persons of mixed gender were seen as having special sacred powers (Lorber, 2001).

These last two steps usually clear up any confusion about the differences between the concepts. I acknowledge that in popular usage, these terms are often treated as interchangeable, but for this class we will use these definitions from now on.

In the middle of the board is now written:

<u>Sex</u>	<u>Gender</u>
set of biological characteristics	culture specific characteristics and behaviors that are associated with sex
categories: female male	categories: feminine (woman) masculine (man)

Part II—Defining Gender

Step 6. Ask the students to list characteristics and behaviors of idealized masculinity in American culture. Explain that by ideal I mean not what they might want in a man or what they want to be like if they are a man, but what type of masculinity is reinforced by our society. Sometimes, to clarify, I ask them to think about what they think our society's "ideal man" is like.

If I sense a discomfort in the room at this point, I might say something like, "Please don't worry about being politically correct right now. I know that these are sensitive issues, but if we

can all participate in the spirit of learning, not of pursuing an agenda, I think this exercise will be fun and informative. Remember that you are not giving your own personal opinion, but what you know to be true for our society or culture."

Some common offerings from students in this step are: aggressive, independent, emotionally strong (tease this one out a bit, it usually means that "men" don't talk about emotions), physically strong, rational. Write their answers on a flip chart sheet. Sometimes I try to write personality traits and characteristics on top, behaviors in the middle, and roles on the bottom of the page. Often, characteristics related to sex roles emerge here; for example, provider. I record them on the bottom of the sheet, telling students I'll explain later why I'm writing different words in different places. I usually write items until I have a sense that participants are beginning to repeat themselves. When the list is complete, ask if anyone disagrees with any item on the list. Usually no one does, which is in and of itself a powerful statement about how strong notions of idealized gender are in our culture.

Step 7. Ask the students to list characteristics and behaviors of idealized femininity in our culture. Explain that by ideal I mean not what they might want in a woman or what they want to be like if they are a woman, but what type of femininity is reinforced by our society. Sometimes, to clarify, I ask them to think about what they think our society's "ideal woman" is like.

Some common offerings from students in this step are: emotional, nurturing, beautiful, pleasing, nice, verbal. Again, issues related to roles might emerge here, such as primary caretaker. Write their answers on a flip chart sheet as in step 6.

Step 8. Tape these lists on the board, one on either side of the sex and gender definitions and categories written in Part I.

Optional: Ask international participants to note differences in lists for their country.

Part III—How the Sexes Learn and "Do" Gender

Step 9. On the board where you have written the categories of sex and gender, draw a solid line connecting the words female and feminine and connecting the words male and masculine. Ask students how girls and women generally learn femininity and how boys and men learn masculinity.

This is usually a lively discussion with examples that students have observed. One typical example from my classes was a man who said, "I was roller-blading around the lake with my girlfriend the other day and we had a strange experience. We saw a little boy skating with his parents. He fell and started crying and the parents said things like 'You'll be okay, tough guy.' Then we saw a little girl who fell, and her parents ran up to her and said things like, 'Oh, poor baby! Are you alright?' We both commented on it to each other." They almost always bring up toy stores and the segregation of the toys by sex. Sometimes, they will talk about their own feelings when their own boys wanted dolls or girls wanted lawnmower toys. At some point, try to move the discussion from how we "do" gender to children, to how we also "do" gender as adults. For example, a man who acts "too sensitive" may be ostracized by other men.

Step 10. On the board where you have written the categories of sex and gender, draw a dotted line connecting the words female and masculine. Ask students what happens if a female has masculine characteristics.

In this discussion, students usually mention things like she is called or referred to as "butch" or a "bitch." Sometimes, students note that women with masculine qualities are somewhat admired at times, but often with a "bite" of disapproval, as in "Well, *she's* sure ambitious." If this comes up, ask which qualities are okay for a woman to have, and in which settings. A great legal case to discuss at this point is Price Waterhouse v. Hopkins (1993), in which Ann Hopkins sued Price Waterhouse for sex discrimination and won, after she was not promoted to partner. Ms. Hopkins had been told, essentially, to be aggressive in order to make partner, but then was not made partner because she was too masculine.

Step 11. On the board where you have written the categories of sex and gender, draw a dotted line connecting the words male and feminine. Ask students what happens if a male has feminine characteristics.

Homophobia always comes up here, although students may be reluctant to bring it up at first. At this point I often insert a short discussion about homophobia and how gender is closely tied in with sexuality. Also discuss why the gender lines are more rigid for men in our society (see Step 12).

Step 12. Hand out copies of the handout in appendix B.

Go over the definitions in the handout. Ask students why they think the gender differences exist. Discuss explanatory theories from biological determinism to social constructionism and explanations in between (see the "gender primers" in Appendix A for a good review of these theories). In short, biological determinists argue that biology determines behavior; for example, the fact that women give birth determines that they are more nurturing. On the other extreme, social constructionists argue that we are all capable of all of the broad range of masculine and feminine characteristics and behaviors but that some are reinforced and others are discouraged by society through gender. Biological foundationists are in between these two extremes, perhaps closer to the biological determinists; they argue that biology lays the foundations for behaviors, but that society also plays some role.

Also at this point, I note that most people in the room probably feel that they have combinations of characteristics from the feminine and masculine lists. Discuss if desired.

Part IV (Optional)—Work and Family Contributions to Gender Issues in the Workplace

NOTE: Part IV can be eliminated in a general discussion about the effects of gender in leadership or organizations, but is essential for work-family discussions, and I believe it is also important for a full understanding of gender issues in the workplace even without a specific focus on work and family issues.

Step 13 (optional). Note any family role issues that came up on the original femininity and masculinity lists from Part II (steps 6 and 7) and ask participants to add to that by creating "ideal wife/mother" and "ideal husband/father" lists.

Some common family role issues that come up in Part II (steps 6 and 7) are "primary child raiser" or "trophy wife" on the feminine list and "breadwinner" or "protector of family" on the masculine list. At this point in the exercise, I usually star (*) those on the lists from Part II

and rewrite them on a new flip chart sheet, then add the new contributions to it. After each is complete, tape it on the board just to the outside of the feminine or masculine list to which it is related (see figure below). “Family” may mean different things to women and men (see Rothausen, 1999).

You could also include roles like daughter and sister versus son and brother, but I usually don't because it broadens the discussion too much without much added value.

On the board at this point is a schematic like this:

List of ideal wife/mother (/daughter) characteristics (this step)	List of ideal feminine characteristics from part II	Space on board with sex and gender definitions and categories written from parts I and II	List of ideal masculine characteristics (/son) from part II	List of ideal husband/father characteristics (this step)
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Step 14 (optional). Ask students to say what they notice about these lists. Discuss.

Part V—Small Group Activities

NOTE: If you have not used part IV, you will probably focus on the questions in step 16, below, which are not in italics. The questions in italics are specific to the work-family aspect of the gender in organizations issue.

Step 15. Hang the list of "ideal worker characteristics and behaviors" from the prologue in the space in the middle, over top of the sex and gender definitions and categories written there.

Now on the board is a schematic like this:

List of ideal wife/mother (/daughter) characteristics from Part IV	List of ideal feminine characteristics from part II	List of ideal worker characteristics and behaviors from Step 1 in the prologue	List of ideal masculine characteristics (/son) from part II	List of ideal husband/father characteristics from Part IV
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Step 16. (Can be done in small groups or as continued large group discussion). Ask students to answer a set of questions about the five lists on the board. Questions can include any or all of the following:

- What do you notice about the feminine list versus the ideal worker list?
- What do you notice about the masculine list versus the ideal worker list?
- *What do you notice about the ideal wife/mother list versus the ideal worker list?*
- *What do you notice about the ideal husband/father list versus the ideal worker list?*
- What do our lists have to do with careers?
- *What do our lists have to do with work-family balance or issues?*
- What do our lists have to do with who rises to leadership positions in business (...in this organization)?
- What do our lists have to do with human resource practices?
- What do our lists have to do with managing people in organizations?
- What do our lists have to do with sexual harassment in organizations?

- What do our lists say about the pay gap between men and women?
- What do our lists say about the glass ceiling?

If this step has been done in small groups, I then ask each group to share their answers with the larger group, sometimes continuing discussion.

After the questions have been answered, we have usually noted as a group that the ideal American leader characteristics are masculine and that the ideal father/husband role is easy to combine with the ideal leader role, whereas the ideal feminine characteristics are very different from the ideal leader characteristics and many elements of the ideal mother/wife role are at odds with the ideal leader role. A great example of the latter is that usually on the ideal leader list is an item such as "always available to work" or "works long hours" and on the ideal wife/mother list is an items such as "always available to nurture husband and children" or "always there for other family members."

Step 17. The final question, then, is

What do these lists suggest about potential solutions to leadership gender challenges and problems in our organizations?

In organizational intervention sessions, this “final question” should really be the beginning of a dialogue that spawns programs and policies helpful to the specific challenges facing the organization.

Part V—Mini-lecture / De-briefing

In this section, I may do a mini-lecture depending on the type of class it is or a debriefing for the next steps to take in organization sessions. In classes, I may talk about how the different waves of feminism or the women's movement have led to different types of workplace interventions—from “working mothers” groups, to “women’s caucuses,” to “work-family” programs, to “work-life balance” programs, to “work-life integration” programs; note the increasing invisibility of gender in these movement labels. I may talk about the differences in career and pay outcomes for married men and married women whose spouses work or don't work (married men whose spouses don't work generally make far more money than other categories). I also talk about the differences in marital status and parental status between men and women at executive levels. See Dunn (1997), Lorber (2001), and Smith (2000) for great overviews of these issues.

Then I introduce the notion of companies changing their profile of the ideal leader and discuss obstacles and realities. Often, for example, the masculine profile has been working for the company. But has it been working as well as it could? Which aspects of the ideal leader list are critical to the organization’s success and which are just things “we’ve always done that way”?

In classes, I ask the following types of questions:

- How easy is it for women to get economic power in this gendered system?
- How easy is it for mothers to get economic power in this gendered system?
- What about men who want to know and nurture their children or elderly parents?
- Is this situation really changing? Why? Why not?
- How does this affect you?make you feel as a woman? ...as a man?

In company sessions, I might ask:

- What are examples of common company practices or policies that may have seemed gender-neutral to you before, but now you can see are gendered?

- How does that practice affect women in the organization?men?
- How does the practice or policy impact who become leaders?

Points to bring out in the discussion include the role of the full time nature of motherhood (motherhood the way we as a society often define it) and how that may be incompatible with being an ideal leader, whereas the nature of fatherhood in our culture makes being an ideal leader and an ideal father very compatible. Other points are how qualities of masculinity overlap with those of the ideal leader, and how that may affect men and women with different degrees of masculine and feminine characteristics and behaviors.

Optional Part VI—Culture

This section just mentions possibilities for adding a discussion about culture and the notions of masculine culture and feminine culture to the exercise. However, a primer on culture is beyond the scope of this article. For those with a background in culture, however, or for certain classes or organizational sessions, it can be a good theoretical frame for understanding that organizational cultures are often gendered masculine.

First, ask students to define culture. Discuss culture and subcultures in a society and in an organization. Point out how organization culture reflects the national culture in which the organization exists.

Ask about experiences of individual in subcultures in society or in an organization, or both.

Ask how new members of a culture learn the culture (e.g., children and immigrants to a national culture, new members of a work organizations). Discuss the roles of symbol, stories, heroes, which are both strong indications and function to perpetuate cultural values.

Point out that masculinity can be viewed as a culture, or that American society tends to idealize masculine culture (e.g., independence, autonomy, freedom). In corporate America, masculine traits are idealized even more (aggressive, able to work all the time because they don't have other obligations to attend to). Thus femininity acts as a marginalized subculture analogous to marginalized subcultures of minorities in a nation. Marginalized cultures are part of the main culture, but often embody the opposite of the idealized cultural values.

Potential Challenges in Doing the Exercise

Younger students often protest at some point that "things are changing in my generation; we are different." At this point I acknowledge that some things are changing and ask the class whether they think the "ideals" of our culture are changing. This usually initiates a lively discussion, which I cut off after a few minutes so that we can get back to the exercise. Usually, students point out to other students that while our ideas of what we want to be might be changing, the ideals "out there" are still very gendered. Common examples from my classes are men pointing out that "guys" tease each other, even to the point of being mean, and other guys are just suppose to "take it" or risk ostracism that often involves gender and / or homophobic ridicule. Women often point out that women who exhibit some masculine characteristics are called "bitches," whereas men with the same characteristics are admired. Media examples are also discussed here; that is, how are desirable men portrayed in the popular culture?desirable women? How are our national leaders portrayed? Are there differences between how men and women leaders are portrayed?

Occasionally, I tell stories from my experience of students who argued with me in undergraduate classes about the existence of things like sex bias and harassment, only to run into

me later and tell me that they had encountered sex bias or harassment within their first month or two of work. Sometimes students share stories of being harassed in the workplace. I do, however, also acknowledge the gains that have been made in the past 40 years, but point out that the Civil Rights Act was 40 years ago, and there are still these gender systems, as manifested by the glass ceiling.

I find that most students are very open, interested, and excited by this exercise. However, every so often I'll get a student who is a "political correctness rebel" and wants to negatively impact the exercise. The most common way this comes out is by adding characteristics that are usually thought of as "masculine" to the "feminine" list or vice versa. I usually nip that in the bud by saying something like, "Oh, that's interesting, I don't usually hear that characteristic listed as a (feminine/masculine) one. Does everyone in the class agree with (name student)?" Usually, students will overwhelmingly disagree. I then say something like, "One interesting thing about this is that individuals may perceive some differences in what characteristics are idealized in the culture. What we are trying to create here is a list that the majority of us can agree on." If I haven't already, I may insert the "culture" concept here (see optional Part VI).

One final common question as the discussion evolves is "what do we mean by the 'ideal' leader, the 'ideal' masculinity, and the 'ideal' femininity?" Again, the culture concept is useful to explain the difference between what we as individuals might want or say we want and what we as a society idealize and reward.

Fun Variations

I often use these variations with younger students and/or if there's time.

There are some great film clips that illustrate gender issues in the culture. Two I have used are the opening scene of "Flashdance" and the dancing scene in "In and Out." In this section, I summarize these clips and explain how I use them and where I use them in the exercise.

Before you start each clip, ask students who recognize the film to keep quiet until you turn off the film.

Sex versus gender film clip. After step 5, I play part of the opening of "Flashdance" that includes a scene at a construction site which shows many different workers working as the opening credits run. This is an extremely masculine scene in which the foreman and owner also talk about football and gambling in deep, gravelly voices. This footage revisits several workers doing welding and other construction work. At the end of this scene, a worker who has "Alex" imprinted on his helmet is shown again. As he takes off his face-protective helmet, we see that the extremely feminine Jennifer Beals is actually inside, and that "Alex" is a young woman.

Cue the tape to the scene after she rides her bike over the bridge and it shows the city skyline. Stop the tape after she takes off her helmet. Tell students that this is an example of the difference between sex and gender (and it's in the workplace!), play the tape, and discuss afterward if needed.

Feminine male film clip. After step 12 in which we discuss homophobia and the impact on men who are feminine, I play the dancing scene of "In and Out." This scene occurs approximately 1/3 of the way through the movie, right after the "kiss" scene in which Tom Selleck kisses Kevin Kline. In the movie, Kevin Kline plays a man exhibiting much distress about his sexuality and gender confusion; his character is a man with some feminine

characteristics who is about to get married to a woman when an ex-student publicly says he's gay. To test his masculinity, he has ordered a "getting in touch with your masculinity" self-help book and tape. This is an hilarious scene in which a man on the tape goads him into revealing his femininity while he fights against doing so. He finally loses when the music plays and he can't resist dancing.

Cue the tape to begin at the opening scene change after "the kiss" scene. It shows Kevin Kline running in and pulling something out from under his bed. Stop after the audio tape he is dancing to says, "How'd you do, pussy boy?" This is a spoof of masculinity and how desperately men want to be masculine, but also how the media associates men with feminine qualities as gay and how phobic we as a culture are about homosexuality in men; all three points are worth bringing out. I'm sure that you will find even more fun and interesting film clips to use. Please be sure to send me the good ones.

CONCLUSION

I am unable to convey effectively the fun and enlightening nature of this exercise here because so much of that comes from the students. However, comments from students when I did this exercise on the first day of an MBA elective on Gender in Organizations convey some of this enthusiasm.

"This is honestly the best first class period I've ever had." (female, 7 years experience).

"I came to this class wondering if I would stick with this class. I've gotten so interested, I can't wait to delve into it more." (female, 15 years experience)

"Thought provoking! More interesting topic than I anticipated. This will help my management career." (male, global training director, over 15 years of experience)

I encourage you to try it after doing the background reading. I have enjoyed doing this exercise in various forms with many different audiences, and have heard in student papers and in exam answers how it has impacted them. I have never had a negative response that stayed negative. If you do not feel comfortable with this exercise, I nonetheless encourage you to deal with gender and women's leadership and career issues in your classroom, so that business education and business leadership do not remain, as one BusinessWeek author (Reingold, 2000) put it, "a guy thing."

*A one-page version of an earlier form of this exercise appears as:

Rothausen-Vange, T.J. (2007). Exploring Sex and Gender Roles. In S. Sweet, M. Pitts-Catsouphe, J. Mumm, J. Casey, and C. Matz, Eds. *Teaching Work and Family: Strategies, Activities, and Syllabi*. Washington DC: American Sociological Association.

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Appendix A – Suggested Reading List

Gender primers

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