INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to contribute to current concern to develop a critical approach to management education by developing its capability to work constructively with ‘difference’. There are an increasing number of examples in practice of applying the principles of a critical perspective: questioning the assumptions which underlie both theory and practice; recognizing the authority of personal experience in the generation of ideas; foregrounding power relations and identifying vested interests; and to differing degrees, promoting ideals of emancipation and justice in the workplace.

For the most part, these aims are reflected in the selection of texts for the curricula, particularly those which apply a critical approach to management subjects (see for example, Alvesson and Willmott, 1992) or demonstrate the application of critical
perspectives - labour process, critical discourse, feminist or deconstructionist analysis - to what might be broadly defined as 'managerialist' text. Examples of such work are: the application of critical discourse analysis to management development materials (Fairclough and Hardy, 1997); poststructuralist critiques of ‘human resource management’ (Townley, 1994), of an MBA (Sinclair, 1995), and of organizational behaviour texts (Summers et al, 1997); and an analysis of reengineering from the perspective of critical theory (Willmott, 1994).

There are also accounts of introducing students to a wider range of reading than the accepted body of management literature, as illustrated for example in using fiction (Nord and Jermier, 1992) and literary criticism (Thompson and McGivern, 1996). Grey et al (1996) describe how they have encouraged management students to reflect on their professional experience, and on their experience of the course itself and on the social processes which develop within it. This also provides an example of a critical perspective informing the course design as a whole, its structures, organisation and management, as well as the nature of tutor-student relations and the amount of control exercised by students within the programme.

The intended contribution of this paper is to identify ways in which ‘difference’ might be more recognized and valued as a source of learning than we believe to be the case in contemporary management education. That rather than differences be overlooked or obscured, the learning milieu of management courses should encourage understanding of difference and support it as the basis for confrontation and change, both within the
programme and as a consequence, in the workplace. This is not to devalue examples in
management education of work designed to raise awareness of difference, (see for
example the collection of papers in special issue of the *Journal of Management
Education*, November, 1994), but to be alert to the tendency – particularly in participative
forms of education – to assume consensus.

**PERSPECTIVES ON DIFFERENCE**

By 'difference', we refer to the varying and sometimes conflicting values, beliefs and
preferences about work and work relations which people bring with them into the
educational setting and which are surfaced by the discussion and learning which goes on
there. The illustrations that follow include difference of this kind, as well as of difference
based on gender, race, and roles or status within the educational programme. The
assumption we make is that it is 'better' to work with difference in this way than to find
ways round it, both because of the opportunity it presents for learning about power and
difference, and in order to address, if not redress, inequalities within the learning
environment.

The reason for drawing attention to difference in its various forms, is an impression that
for the most part, mainstream management is more likely to respond by denying or
marginalizing it - as clearly shown for example by Sinclair's study of an MBA (1995) and
Prasad's (1997) account of the organizational ethos. Either that, or difference is
mystified through the consensual rhetoric of 'managing diversity' in which differences
are seen as problems to be solved in the interest of smoother running, more ‘effective’, organizations (see Lorbiecki and Jack, 1999 for a fuller account of this position). These obfuscations perpetuate the tradition of assumed neutrality within management and management education to which writers such as Anthony (1986) and MacIntyre (1985) have drawn attention and which a pedagogy of difference should aim to disrupt.

In education as well as in management, it is commonly said that to celebrate difference and to value diversity is an unquestionably good, because they are a source of creativity and innovation. But these maxims invariably carry the unspoken assumption that the differences in question are not of a kind which will jeopardize the goals of the enterprise or the power base which maintains them - whether in an organizational or an educational context. Creativity is restricted to means, with ends likely to be off limits. In exploring the possibilities of a pedagogy of difference, we are proposing an approach to management education which neither attempts to suppress, marginalize or assimilate difference, nor resigns students (or tutors) to becoming irreversibly distanced – as some of our later examples show.

Postmodernist thought, including within the recent ‘critical’ management studies literature, has been to draw attention to the significance of difference and the ways that people seen as representing minority views or interests either succumb to pressures to conform or are marginalised. Similarly in educational theory, and in contrast to these tendencies, there is increasing emphasis on the significance of difference and our
responses to it, drawing attention to ‘the perspectives and experiences of marginalised groups’ (Burbules and Rice, 1991: 396).

Postmodern perspectives have also provided the basis of contesting the fiction of consensus implied in propositions of more democratic forms of education. In the critique of idealised formulations for 'equal' communication (Fraser, 1994), and of the concept of community (Young, 1986), the denial of ‘difference in the sense of the basic asymmetry of subjects’ (1986:10) and the likelihood of voices of the other becoming ‘lost or silenced’ (Beyer and Liston, 1992 : 380) has been argued. Echoing a longer standing suspicion of ‘structurelessness’ from the writings of the women’s movement (Freeman, 1970), Beyer and Liston point out that:

The notion of community can and has been used by powerful individuals and groups to assimilate differences among people and to homogenize alternative perceptions, ideas, and feelings in a manner that protects their power and interests. (p. 380)

This perspective underlines the importance of examining how difference affects students’ experiences of an educational programme and the learning they gain from it. Being more aware of these processes is also of value for application in other domains – at work or in society generally because as Mouffe (1988) observes, in the wider context, conflict and division are unavoidable, ‘the reconciliation of rival claims and conflicting interests can only be partial and provisional (p. 30).

We are drawn to such arguments for a 'politics of difference' (Young, 1986) because they challenge the assumption that equal relationships can be achieved by removing or
minimizing *formal* manifestations of hierarchy. In doing so they have elevated difference (Burbules and Rice, 1991) and underlined the importance of understanding the part it plays in people’s lives. In education, writers such as Gore (1993), Ellsworth (1989) and Lather (1992) have pointed out how even educators who have claimed a ‘radical’ position have attached insufficient significance to the gendered nature of experience. Their argument has been that the Freirian school of educational practice has been limited by this deficiency, as similarly are proposals of those who have drawn on critical, particularly Habermasian theory yet failed ‘to deal adequately with distortion in communication brought about by unexamined patriarchal assumptions’ (Collins, 1991: 85). Alvesson and Willmott (1996) have developed a similar critique of critical theory in the context of management studies.

In the rest of the paper we will briefly describe our work context as management teachers and the ways our interest in working with difference in an educational setting has developed. Some examples will be described to help illustrate the range of differences involved and the dilemmas raised by them. We will then explore how the ideas of a ‘politics of difference’ (Young, 1986) might be applied to the various facets of a formal pedagogy - interpreting this in the widest sense to include literature, methods, the ethos of the programme generally and the relationships between tutors and students.
The context at UCE is a three-year part time management development Masters programme run within a business school. Described in more detail below, it takes a critical management learning approach predominantly through its process, but also to a lesser extent through content. Each year there are about 100 students, with an increasing proportion of women (35-50% in recent years), and increasing numbers of students of afro-caribbean and asian origins. The programme takes an experiential learning approach throughout, where, besides a small number of lecture inputs, students spend most of their time working collectively in action learning sets. The sets are often a source of gender, ethnic, age and occupational diversity, where issues mirror some of the patterns in organisations and society. Students are encouraged to reflect on and learn from their feelings and experiences of these power dynamics.

The most ‘content radical’ elements occur in the Masters year, with a critical reflection paper and an action research dissertation. In the former, students are asked to critically reflect on their development as a manager and are introduced to some critical ideas, such as feminism, Foucault, Habermas, and Giroux’s work on radical education. Action research is also intended as a ‘critical’ element in the course design in that it entails a collaborative approach to investigation and taking action, which involves all members as active participants. Staff take two basic, mutually supportive, consultancy roles, those of
task consultant inputting information relating to the task, and process consultant, making the participants/action learning sets aware of group process.

My interest in the idea of a pedagogy of difference grew out of working with ideas from experiential learning and the learning community approach, within a business school context, with a widely diverse student group. For many participants, the course can be immensely powerful in its impact and the students in their conversations with us, use terms like enlightenment and transformation to describe their learning. However, we are also aware that for some students their experience is more memorable for being emotionally painful and disempowering. This left me feeling uneasy and wondering to what extent this reflected inadequacies in the course model. Our interest at UCE focused on our belief that much of management pedagogy, even that which is intended to support a more critical approach, does not provide structure or educational processes adequate to the task of working with and developing an understanding of difference of social or ideological origin.

All writing, so they say, is about the self, about the themes and concerns that pre-occupy the writer, about the situation, the culture, the environment within which she is existing and which may bind her more than she can influence them. All writing is about coming to terms with inner dilemmas and external choices.

My rationale for embarking on this paper has been to try and understand some of my observations of students’ and tutors’ experiences of working with difference, in order to
better inform my approach as a management education tutor. As an Indian female University tutor, I am particularly interested in exploring how working with difference might become an acknowledged, rather than a tacit part of the management education curriculum. In my own teaching, I find myself repeatedly caught reflecting on the contradictions and tensions between my theoretical commitment to critical pedagogy and my own pedagogical practices and experiences in the culture of the University. Amongst colleagues, I have often discussed those kinds of hidden tensions and to what extent my own collusion prevents me intervening in the facilitation of difference. However, growing awareness within a diverse student group, and my own politicisation process brings new understandings of the dynamics of power relations and inequalities in-groups with reference to race and gender. The challenge of working with a diverse community on a management development programme raises important questions attached to difference and diversity in the management education domain.

The MA in Management Learning at Lancaster University

The twenty-four or so students who take the part-time MA are drawn from management education and development. Most are graduates are white, ages ranging from late 20s to late 50s, with men and women usually in approximately equal numbers. The course pedagogy is a blend of the academic tradition – with its emphasis on a critical examination of ideas – and andrology, with an emphasis on experiential learning and self-management. In the twenty years since the programme was introduced, the tutors have more or less agree on the design of the MA being an example of the ‘learning
community’ (Pedler, 1974, 1994). ‘More or less’ because there are shades of difference between tutors as to how directive they should be, and how much to validate the ideas-in-practice of the professionals on the programme, as well as the accumulating – including critical – management learning ‘orthodoxy’. The tutors also differ to some extent in the value they attach to working reflexively with the experience of the learning community as it develops – a difference usually reflected amongst the students also.

What is generally accepted by the tutors, is a value in the idea of ‘community’ as intended to encourage mutual support in learning, a willingness to learn from others’ ideas and experience - whether as students or as tutors - and to contribute in turn to their learning. As a consequence, in the course as a whole, and in the smaller tutorial groups used to support individual work for assessment, there is a degree of engagement which involves and sometimes surfaces, affinities, antipathies, different preferences for approaches to learning and to learning relationships, as well as the different values and beliefs which underpin them.

The possibility that some of these tensions have their origins in difference of a deeper significance – gender for example – is sometimes raised, sometimes worked with, and sometimes completely denied. The significance of ethnicity is openly dealt with even less, not least because students from racial or ethnic minorities being so few in number. Arguably, the ‘difference’ most readily recognised and confronted is between tutors and students, but even that is not free of ambiguity. Confusion can arise as to whether the tutors are in control (which they often seem to be) or whether they are equal members of
the community (which in some ways they are). Ultimately, given that the balance of power in assessment (which is consultative) rests with the tutors the relationships are not equal.

My interest in the idea of a 'pedagogy of difference' grew out of working with the learning community approach. Specifically, it seemed important to consider how far the learning community, as an educational device, provides real - as opposed to apparent - opportunities for participation. To what extent do student members of the community take part in the management of the community, and as a result, to what extent can it be said that they have control over the content and direction of their learning?

These questions led to literature which deconstructs community as both a social and educational ideal to reveal its more problematical aspects: the inherent tendencies to insist on allegiance to its norms and practices; and the consequent suppression or marginalization of beliefs and behaviours which oppose it. Consequently, I have been drawn to an alternative to these ideas of community in the idea of a 'politics' (Young, 1986) or pedagogy, of difference (Weiler, 1991). In their critique of mainstream and radical education, writers such as Weiler and Ellsworth have highlighted the importance of working with difference - if need be to the point of dispute.

Applying Narayan’s (1988) useful distinction – I am conscious that as a white, male, middle class university teacher, my experience of difference is as ‘outsider’ with little of an insider's experience of belonging to the minority position. This project and the
conversations around it, have the effect of adding to my appreciation, both of ways I take part in the social construction of difference - and of the ways I gain (and lose) by it.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF DIFFERENCE

Introduction

Within these illustration we wish to focus on the issues of gender, of different preferences for learning and working with others, and of race, to uncover ways in which differences surfaced in the experience of management education participants and how these differences intersected with power relations in the life of a programme.

The illustrations have been constructed by us and by students. We have tried to work collaboratively, to draw together student and tutor voices. Many of the ideas have emerged from discussions within students' action learning sets and from 'critical' reflective papers, as well as from our experiences as tutors in the programmes described earlier.

First Illustration

Issue: rethinking gender difference

This section presents an interpretation of students’ perspective on their experiences of working with difference. The illustration explores gender differences experienced through interaction, discussion and observations of this group during the past two years of the D.M.S. The illustration has been written collectively by the group in order to
capture the group’s view of what happened within this action learning set. In telling their story they have interspersed it with strands of commentary and sense making, in order to understand and work with difference.

“Managers with Attitude” In Our Own Voice

When the group first formed it consisted of eight men and two women and uppermost in our mind was to decide upon a name that aptly described the group. After much deliberation the group settled upon the name ‘Managers with Attitude’. Within a year the two female members had left the group and a female from another group was to later describe us as ‘Men with Attitude’. Within the eye of that statement lies an element of truth.

The original composition of the group was very interesting because it incorporated several strong individuals and it was clear from the start that there would be conflicts and tensions. Individuals were fighting for positions of power and domination within the group, coupled with their own hidden agenda. Males were competing against males, males against females, females against males and female against female. This made for a volatile cocktail.

When a male group member was competing against another male group member nothing was said but it was clear what was at stake, i.e. power and domination, as mirrored in any male orientated organisation and the men in the group knew instinctively what the rules of engagement were without it being stated. When the men engaged in conflict with women in the group the attitude of the men was that it was down to their unreasonable behaviour, mood swings, being too emotional, wrong time of the month, being illogical and not rational. The women felt that they were not being listened to. They were not given enough respect. And they felt that the attitude of the men meant that it was difficult to contribute and that when they did
contribute something there was an expression of surprise if they presented something that was considered good, which made them even more resentful.

In addition, when it came to delegating tasks in order to complete a project, the group often used the females as clerical support, e.g. typing.

An illustration of this is in the first year of the DMS, when we had to give presentations in front of the facilitator on a particular concept. Sally did a superb presentation on culture. After the presentation was completed the male colleagues congratulated her on a good piece of work well done. Sally interpreted the congratulations as a sign that we had not expected her to do a good presentation and was duly offended. The males interpreted this as Sally being irrational and illogical. That particular incident depicted the pattern of behaviour and interaction between males and females that was to continue for the rest of the year.

One of the fundamental questions that has to be asked is why did the female members leave the group. In order to answer this question one has to first accept the notion that sexuality within organizations exists. Outside of the context of equal opportunities organizations fail to address the issue and this is perpetuated by the neglect of sexuality within organizational theory and management theory. Indeed the course we are currently undertaking does not address this issue in any significant way and within that truth lies the sexism of such theories.

The fact that most managers who enter management courses come from patriarchal organizations, it is not surprising that when they form groups they mirror what is going on in their organization. In fact they are continuing the mode of the dominant culture. In other words the environment cultivated in the group had a strong masculine bias, which made it difficult for female members to operate within the group and the sexism that operated within this culture did not facilitate the development of the female members.
Second illustration

Issue: authority and control in participative learning groups

A group of a dozen or so, including two tutors, agreed to meet around the topic 'giving feedback'. The focus was not precise and the approach to the session unspecified – which is often the way interests develop within the ‘to be planned’ spaces within the learning community approach.

For a short while, there were questions about the focus and how to proceed. One of the group began to talk, movingly, of a fraught relationship at his place of work. A second group member - this time a tutor - described a similar situation, also involving a difficult work relationship. A pattern was developing. For these two at least, the preferred approach to 'giving feedback' was to begin with a personal account of a difficult work situation, ‘disclosing’ the feelings which the relationship had aroused in them.

As a tutor with significant experience with groupwork (more 'group dynamics', than 'personal growth'), the situation presented a familiar and potentially instructive dilemma. I was also conscious of the ways self-disclosure was sometimes used in management development to generate team loyalty and of my misgivings about this. The questions raised in my mind were about the degree of control each person was going to have over the management of the private - as opposed to public - domain in the short life of this group and in the wider context of the programme. What were the implications of self-disclosure in a setting involving assessment and where both students and tutors were present? Whose interests were being met and whose were being displaced if this way of working was to be widely accepted?

The round continued, people contributing in a similar way and seemingly happy to do so. My turn - given the unbroken sequence round the group - was coming up in two or three turns. I keenly felt the dilemma of having to choose between a growing pressure to conform as well as to support an emergent activity, and a concern to raise
the wider questions about the procedure which was being adopted without explicit consent. I thought on balance it was worth checking out how many people were happy with the way the session was developing. Did everyone feel as free to opt in as to opt out? Or in opting in, did they feel able to do so in a way they that suited them, reflecting their personal preference for where they would like to draw the public/private boundary. When it came to my turn, these were the questions I raised.

The response was initially silence, followed by a request for clarification by my tutor colleague of my point and of the purpose in raising it. After a pause the round continued without more discussion of the points I had tried to introduce. Fifteen or so minutes later came a stronger challenge, expressed with much feeling and more critical in its language. A training manager on the programme said he did not like the way the session was developing. He was angry and said he felt 'coerced'. This aroused considerable irritation and he was asked why he had come to the session if he didn't like how people were using it. His reply was that he felt he was having to resist a form of 'fascism'. The session broke up and while some tried to make sense of what had happened, others clearly seemed annoyed that a useful session had been derailed.

Third illustration

Issues: the process of being marginalised

The third illustration is a critical reflection on the perceptions and feelings of an Indian male professional in a new and predominantly white environment, namely the postgraduate Masters in Manager and Organisational Development programme. The account highlights a student’s experience of marginalisation, and how complex the emotional arena can be when a denial of social difference occurs. The following story is told in the student’s own words.
Struggling with Difference: A Personal Reflection

I found the first day of the programme to be a very frustrating, confusing and stressful occasion, mainly due to the fact that I was entering a new organisation in which I would need to forge new relationships. It was interesting to note that groups were already beginning to form, some by arbitrary interaction and some by previous recognition. I found myself waiting for acceptance by somebody, anybody, so that I would feel involved. Instead I observed a natural grouping and ‘herding’ process driven by the other white students. I was beginning to feel very lonely, isolated and devalued. Was I not good enough to join ‘their’ groups? I remember feeling an intense rage of anger, and annoyance was setting in, until I was suddenly approached by a student. I immediately calmed down and soon realised that my new organisation was to comprise of two other Asian students (the only other ones on the course). We introduced ourselves to each other and soon began a ‘bonding process’ which repeated itself over the first few weeks of the MSc programme. Returning home after that first day experience I remember noting in my learning diary, how frustrated I felt.

By the second week of the programme my group and I (3 Asian students) were hoping that we may have been able to attract any late starters to the course so that our number and composition could ‘improve’. However, this was not the case and we discovered that a couple of ‘white’ new starters had already joined other groups. At this stage we were introduced to our group facilitator, who also happened to be an Asian individual. It was at this first ‘group’ meeting that a different and somewhat worrying side to me emerged. I recall leading a discussion with the other two, and group facilitator, regarding how a group of three Asian students would be perceived by other predominantly white groups and also external organisations, in our pursuit of consultancy work.

I was very uncomfortable with the whole situation and felt almost rejected and unwanted, despite reassurances from the other two group members. In fact, at one
point during this meeting I was so emotional that I suggested that the group be dissolved and that we each attach ourselves to one of the other larger white groups. This was not appreciated by the others and so, in a fit of paranoia, I stormed out of the room and approached two other groups to ascertain whether I could become a 'member'. Both of these groups seemed surprised and stated that they would consider my request. On my return to the group meeting it was clear that the others were disgusted by my actions and felt very disappointed. My return home that night was even more stressful and emotionally charged.

At our third group meeting I was notified by the other two groups that I had previously contacted that they were still considering my request. At this point I felt angry and humiliated, by to my surprise I decided to change my strategy. My other two group members were quick to point out that I had in fact experienced a covert act of rejection, which they had previously experienced in their own organisations. Suddenly the bonding was back and we reaffirmed our commitment to complete the MSc and 'show them how good we were'. How dare they reject us, we were three experienced and talented Asian professionals who were capable and now willing to take on the world!

This new found ‘togetherness’ was reinforced some weeks later by the addition of another group member, an African lady, who shared our objectives and had also experienced rejection by white students.

**REFLECTIONS: TOWARDS A PEDAGOGY OF DIFFERENCE**

In the introduction we outlined briefly ideas which have been proposed as the basis of a ‘pedagogy of difference’, ideas which we believe offer a response to the questions raised by our illustrations and which take account of some important tensions involved in
adopting a pedagogy based on working with difference. ‘Tensions’, because for the most part they can be characterized as contradictions between to-be-avoided extremes which cannot be wholly resolved. They certainly defy simple prescription.

There are three tensions, which seem particularly significant. One is between the wish to avoid ultimate and irreconcilable fragmentation but also to resist being overwhelmed by the familiar pull to consensus and associated conformity. A second is attempting to create more democratic processes in educational designs while knowing of the hierarchical tendencies that lurk within them. A third tension, and an aspect of the second, lies in needing to reconcile a commitment to more participative approaches with the authority embodied in the academic role. These are issues with which educators who attempt a pedagogy of difference have been especially concerned and which seem worth exploring in the context of management education.

*The first tension.* of avoiding irreconcilable fragmentation yet resisting the ever present pull to consensus is perhaps reflected in the frequent use of terms like 'respect', 'understanding', 'tolerance' (see for example, Burbules and Rice, 1991: 408). Surely these are desirable responses to difference, yet on their own they seem uncomfortably close to the rhetoric of 'trust and openness' which has characterised androgy in its various forms. Weiler (1991) articulates this tension in referring to the ‘validation of difference and conflict’ but also of attempts ‘to build coalitions around common goals rather than a denial of differences (1991: 470).
In an approach to education in which differences are acknowledged, the minimum grounds for solidarity (Beyer and Liston, 1992) are a shared belief in the value from learning in the company of others - including learning about the significance of difference. A common interest in learning, even when individual purposes for learning may be irreconcilably diverse, might provide sufficient compatibility for working together, even though difference is kept in the foreground.

This possibility for engaging with difference but managing to avoid both the pressures to conform and isolating fragmentation echo Burbules and Rice’s (1991) idea of ‘non-convergent dialogue’. The question then becomes, as Fraser (1994) puts it,

would participants in such debates share enough in the way of values, expressive norms, and, therefore, protocols of persuasion to lend their talk the quality of deliberations aimed at reaching agreement through giving reasons? (1994: 86)

In practice, as in our first illustration, this might not prevent women and men spending time in separate groups, but it might support the idea of dialogue across the boundary between them. And it might make it easier to understand the nature and significance of such separation, including making sense of the discourses implicit in interpretations of behavior as 'unreasonable', 'illogical', or 'irrational'. In practice, such sense-making is seen by tutors and students at UCE as one of the eventual outcomes of the programme.

*The second tension* is in confronting the hierarchical tendencies inherent in participative methods and the prospect of democracy proving less likely to be supportive of equality in communications than critical theorists have hoped. Ellsworth (1989) challenges those
liberal educators who assume that to break away from the traditional structures of the classroom by replacing them with discussion groups, circles and community meetings, will result in equality of dialogue through mutual respect and tolerance. Arrangements of this kind are certainly a characteristic feature of the programmes at Lancaster and UCE.

Ellsworth’s observation is that in spite of the hopes of radical and critical educators such proposals are unrealistic. They fail to ‘confront dynamics of subordination present among classroom participants and within classroom participants in the form of multiple and contradictory subject positions’ (1989: 315). As the illustrations show, there is always more going on in the collective experience of the course than is ever made explicit. Even when tutors are absent, there will be less overt hierarchies based on gender, race, age, and other grounds for social status which will limit the equality with which people are able to work and talk with each other and engage in collective decision making (Reynolds and Trehan, in preparation).

The complex dynamics of open meetings suggest that simply making the case for pluralism, tolerance, and respect is not enough - as is born out by our illustrations. As an alternative to the repressive qualities of ‘open communication’ (Beyer and Liston, 1992: 380), interest groups based on values, beliefs or preferred approach to learning, or on age, race or gender, provide space for marginalised discourse and for people to gain the support they need to be able to function in the public forum. Space of this kind might need to be literal - a place to meet - or it might be created by asking whose voices are heard and whose are silenced and what makes the difference. As Lather points out, what
is being said (including by tutors) might not be as important than who is doing the saying (Lather, 1992).

*The third tension* is inherent in any critical approach to education which is committed to problematising power relations but at the same time maintains substantially the authority traditionally vested in the tutor. This is a familiar paradox in using participative, particularly experiential, methods. The session on 'giving feedback' described earlier illustrates the ambiguity in the tutors both 'taking part' and providing commentary on the group's social process. Tutors can easily mystify their power as 'facilitators' by promoting the fiction that there is equality between themselves and the students. As Brah and Hoy (1989) point out, the analysis of experience in experiential learning seldom involves attention to power relations, even though participants’ willingness to voice their experiences ‘will be mediated by power relations in the classroom’ (p.73). More generally, Ellsworth (1989) states that:

> Theorists of critical pedagogy have failed to launch any meaningful analysis of or programme for reformulating the institutionalized power imbalances between themselves and their students, or of the essentially paternalistic project of education itself (p. 306).

Similarly Weiler (1991), while acknowledging the considerable contribution Paulo Freire has made to the development of critical pedagogy, observes the absence of any positional analysis of tutor power in terms of its relation to gender or race, as if the tutor is 'transparent'.


As well as looking for ways to moderate hierarchy, it is at least important to bring to the discussion between tutors and students the nature and basis of power and authority – including an awareness that as tutors, our power 'both inside and outside the classroom, is mediated through … gender, sexuality, class and whether we are black or white (Brah and Hoy, 1989: 76). Furthermore to reflect on how imbalances in their relationships with each other and the way the authority granted to them in society is affected by these factors. What authority is granted to male as opposed to female tutors by students? How does the marginalisation of women's work in academia (see C.Hughes, 1999) affect the differential respect they receive? And do their male colleagues resist or collude in such discrimination?

But as Lather (1994) writes, to deconstruct authority is not ‘to do away with it but to learn to trace its effects, to see how it is constituted and constituting’ (p124) - including how an emancipatory approach can result in teachers emphasising their superiority by 'requiring' students to become more self-conscious. Ellsworth suggests we make a distinction between imbalances of power which are acceptable and those that are not. Acceptable, as when tutors give information or introduce methods of analysis which enable students, with tutors, to make sense of their experience, recognizing their role is also as theorists. Unacceptable as when the tutor imposes meaning on the experience which, being the student's, theirs is the authority over the issue in question.
DISCUSSION: WORKING WITH DIFFERENCE

Summary so far

In this paper we have put forward an argument for an approach to working with difference which goes further than mutual respect. The differences we addressed include those of belief, values and working preferences, as well as of gender, race and status within our programmes. We are conscious of other writers’ observations that gender and race have been largely neglected in both adult education (Tisdell, 1993) and in management education (see for example Alvesson and Willmott, 1996), limiting our understanding of the ways difference interrelates with power and inequality in educational settings. In the wider context Bilimoria (1999) has recently observed of management education that, ‘collectively we have had little impact on altering the gender bias prevalent in the larger society in general and in corporate management and leadership in particular ‘ (p.119).

It is our belief that much of management pedagogy, even that which is intended to support a more critical approach, does not provide structure or educational processes adequate to the task of understanding or working with differences of values and belief, or differences of social or ideological origin. Traditional mainstream practice ignores difference or contributes to its suppression. Alternative pedagogies, while less hierarchical and placing more emphasis on personal and professional experience, reinforce consensus, which tends to deny differences or assimilate them. Even ‘critical’ pedagogies are not immune to this criticism, for as McLaren (1999) has warned,
The conceptual net known as critical pedagogy has been cast so wide and at times so cavalierly that it has come to be associated with anything dragged up out of the troubled and infested waters of educational practice, from classroom furniture organized in a ‘dialogue friendly’ circle to ‘feel good’ curricula designed to increase students’ self image’ (p 448).

From our experience as represented by the illustrations, we would propose that *subcommunities* based on difference are of more value and more realistic than notions of community based on ‘mutual understanding’ and consensus (Young, 1986).

Indeed, critiques of ‘community’ have provided an especially useful source of ideas from which to construct a pedagogy of difference, as seen for example in Giddens’s (1994) idea of ‘cosmopolitanism’, in which people are thought of as living in ‘intelligent relationship’ through mutual appreciation of each other's integrity. Similarly, Fisk (1993) emphasizes the way in which as members of society, each of us belongs to multiple communities because of our various groupings by age, gender, race and class. From this point of view, each community is seen as a place where individuals or groups find the necessary support to enter into negotiation and dispute in the wider public domain.

The principle which underlies these proposals is that an arrangement based on multiple communities is preferable to a single communal entity because in the latter, participation *will* be inhibited by the inequalities to be found there. These critiques seem to us to provide the basis for a pedagogy of difference, of developing ‘discourse and institutions for bringing differently identified groups together without suppressing or subsuming the differences’ (Young, 1986: 23). Of equal importance is the need to be alert to ‘the
masculinist voice of abstraction and universalization, assuming the rhetorical position of “the one who knows” (Lather, 1998: 487).

**Classroom as real world**

Perhaps it would be timely to revisit the concept of ‘classroom as real world’, a sadly neglected idea because of its association with decontextualised versions of experiential learning which have predominated in both adult and professional education, diverting attention from both social similarities and social differences (Hudson, 1983; Brah and Hoy, 1989).

Johnson-Bailey and Cervero (1998: 390), in bringing together a number of authors who believe that the workings of privilege and disadvantage in an educational environment are not sufficiently understood, argue for making sense of the ways difference and inequality intersect as it develops – in the classroom. Not to do so is to collude – unwittingly perhaps – with the processes through which inequity is generated and to lose an opportunity for learning about them as parallels of ‘the power and privilege of the secular world’ (Johnson-Bailey and Cervero, 1996: 153). Either way seems inconsistent with the principles of a critical pedagogy.

Tutors are presented with choices in class to either resist or reinforce power relations which are based on difference. Tisdell (1993) summarizes these options, whether in valuing affective forms of knowledge, ensuring the texts introduced not limited to white, male authors as well as being conscious of what kind of direction and control they reflect
in their own approach to tutor-student relations. Tisdell asserts that not to resist inequalities in the classroom is to suggest that the way things are is acceptable, a point which Thompson and McGivern (1995) reinforce in their approach to confronting sexist behaviour in the classroom. Students will also have their ways of resisting or reinforcing inequalities in the day to day life of the programme through their developing relationships with the tutors and with each other.

It is also important not to distort the nature of differences in an educational setting by oversimplifying them. Ellsworth (1989) observes that for each of us ‘voice’ is a multiple construction and that as commonly used, the idea of each person having a (single) voice is a fallacy. A similar point is developed by Tisdell (1993) through her idea of ‘interlocking systems’, and hooks (1994) argues that while it has become fashionable to discuss difference, we often have no concrete examples of individuals who actually occupy different locations within structures, sharing ideas with one and other, mapping out terrain’s of commonality, connection and shared concerns. To engage in such dialogue she argues, is the simplest way we can begin as teachers and critical thinkers to cross boundaries, the barriers that may or may not be erected by race, gender, class and a host of other differences.

What then are the underlying sources of difficulty when working with a pedagogy of difference? Engaging with difference, for many, is an anxiety provoking and difficult enterprise. As Davies (1982) highlights, when the milieus for such engagement does not
just license but encourages a review of the emotional basis of experience, then the risks seem even greater. Davies argues:

It is not by accident that most people .... seem usually to prefer superficially, maybe even hypocritically harmonious relationships with their fellow human beings. No doubt that preferences exists in part because of the kind of socialisation by our society to safeguard existing institutions, and dominant ideologies (Davies 1982:184).

Vince (1996) argues that learning environments are a powerful and contained arena for viewing negotiations on autonomy and dependence. Within critical management pedagogy it is important to acknowledge socially constructed and reinforced difference with reference to race and gender and the inequalities of power which such differences can generate. As Vince articulates, active engagement with the consequences of such difference has to be an integral rather than a suppressed aspect of educational processes. From our experience working with difference can be painful and emotional and this observation is further reinforced by Vince who argues it can be both risky and pleasurable. Learning cannot take place without anxiety or critical learning without personal struggle (Hooks 1994).

However, whilst anxiety can promote learning through risk, it can also discourage learning through defensiveness, avoidance and denial. Vince believes that in experiential management education, the ways in which power affects the learning process is often avoided. The primary mechanisms of this avoidance is an unhelpful but pervasive humanistic myth that different individuals come as equals into experiential learning groups. He states, ‘As a result, despite the clear differences between people, it is held to
be possible to work together, without needing to work on the impact of difference.’ (1996: 127).

As we continue to work in a domain defined by the values of ‘middle england’, perhaps we should explore the Alison Jones’s idea of a ‘politics of disappointment’ (cited in Lather, 1998). A management pedagogy which aims to work with difference should, at the very least, generate some disconfirmation and unease for the dominant group.

**Bibliography**


