

## **The gendering of leadership in corporate social responsibility**

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### **Abstract**

**Purpose** - This paper reviews the potential gendering of leadership in the emerging field of corporate social responsibility (CSR). It explores whose voices are becoming dominant, how leaders speak, and what forms men's and women's leadership take.

**Approach** - The paper is a self-reflective inquiry, analysing observational and secondary data to explore leadership and its gender patterning. It reflects on its approach and the voice in which it is written.

**Findings** - Women and men are often differently placed to work within the emerging dominant logics of CSR. The gender patternings considered are skewed rather than clearcut. In relation to organization-based discourses and practices, leadership is dominated by white men. Some men are tempered radicals, inside-outsiders acting for change. Some women leaders question the foundations of business and global power relations, and point to fundamental gender inequalities. Whilst they are recognised figures, they are operating at the margins, self-identified as activists. Other influential women provide training in the alternative practices of leadership they advocate. Systemic theories of gendering are employed to review these findings.

**Originality/value** - Explores some of the dynamics through which leadership can become gendered, in the challenging realm of how we address ecological sustainability and global social justice.

**Keywords** Gender, Leadership, CSR, Tempered radicalism, Voice

**Paper type** Research

### **Introduction and inquiry approach**

This paper explores the potential gendering of leadership in the developing field of 'corporate social responsibility' (CSR). Many business and other organizations have begun to accept some responsibility for addressing issues of ecological damage, environmental sustainability and social justice (Holliday, Schmidheiny and Watts, 2002), and to espouse self-regulation. They have been encouraged by a complex mix of pressures from a range of stakeholders including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), by scientists becoming clear about humans' contributions to climate change and its potential irreversibility (for example Sir David King, UK Government's chief scientific adviser, 2004), by legislation and by shifting societal expectations of business.

This is a much-contested field. Yet in a relatively short time, the language of corporate social responsibility has become established. ('Corporate responsibility' is appearing as an alternative, clarifying that issues are not just 'social'.) Many companies now make annual CSR reports of their environmental and social performance to accompany financial statements. This is triple bottom line accounting (Elkington, 1997), as encouraged by the United Nations

Environment Programme's Global Reporting Initiative (McIntosh, Thomas, Leipziger, and Coleman, 2003). Some commentators question the control corporates are exercising over how CSR is becoming defined, and argue that this represents a shallow and insufficient engagement with the stark realities of climate change and significant global poverty (Christian Aid, 2004; Gray and Milne, 2004; Kennedy, 2004; Mayhew, 1997).

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment report (MA, 2005) concluded that: 'Over the past 50 years, humans have changed ecosystems more rapidly and extensively than in any comparable period of time in human history... This has resulted in a substantial and largely irreversible loss in the diversity of life on Earth' (p.1). Species extinction rates have increased dramatically, and approximately 60% of the 'eco-system services' humans rely on (including fresh water, fisheries, air and water purification) are being degraded or used unsustainably (MA, 2005). The retreat of Antarctic Peninsula glacier fronts and the accelerating melting of Arctic ice (with the possibility of ice-free summers before 2100) are taken as indicators of the speed of climate change (World Watch Institute, 2006). Alongside run global poverty and inequality. For example, 10.7 million children under the age of five die every year; more than 1 billion people survive on less than \$1 a day (UNDP, 2005).

These challenges to ecological sustainability and global social justice are important, urgent and relevant to study in relation to change and its potential management. This article takes sense within this bigger picture. The potential gendering of CSR is, of course, multi-faceted. Here I focus on questions of leadership. Whether and how women are change agents, exercising symbolic power (Hardy and Clegg, 1996) to shape discourses and practices of ecological sustainability and social justice matters. I take contributing to meaning-making as a core characteristic of leadership in this field.

A newly developing area of corporate action and study might be expected to incorporate plural voices and leaders of different kinds, respecting qualities previously typed as masculine and feminine. The analysis below suggests that CSR is becoming gendered, that leadership is largely held differently by women and by men, with the latter more dominant in defining organizational meanings, rhetorics and practices.

To explore the potential gendering of leadership in CSR, I address:

- Some emerging characteristics of CSR, as the backcloth for leadership
- Whose voices are becoming privileged and dominant
- How leaders speak
- What forms men's and women's leadership take

The associated issue of how management scholars contribute to shaping CSR and its potential gendering is only lightly addressed.

This paper was developed as a self-reflective inquiry, tracking my sense-making, in order to draw on my experience, explore elusive, nuanced issues, and show the nature and provisionality of analysis. 'Involvement of the researcher as a person' (Reinharz, 1992, p.258) is a characteristic of some forms of feminist research. 'In addition to describing the personal origins of a research question, the feminist researcher is likely to describe the actual research process as a lived experience, and she is likely to reflect on what she learned in the process' (p.258). Stanley and Wise (1993) also assert the importance of embracing involvement in feminist research. 'Personhood cannot be left behind, cannot be left out of the research

process.... and so we insist that it must be capitalized upon' (p.161). This approach is not feminist alone. Working with the 'double crisis of representation and legitimation' (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998, p.21), many qualitative researchers are adopting more reflexive methodologies. In an action research context, I have articulated self-reflective inquiry approaches and quality practices (Marshall, 2001).

Here, I make my inquiry process explicit, as a quality track and seeking to learn from the forms it takes. My thinking is sometimes associative rather than linear, raising questions rather than proving connections. Thus, this paper exemplifies one of its key themes, as I explore what voice I can adopt, a potentially gendered issue. In framing this article, I have already tussled with issues of voice. I cannot easily, nor do I seek to, de-personalise my writing. Is it not therefore 'properly academic'? Also, I have shown my concerns about ecological degradation and social justice, my 'lack' of neutrality. Is this 'daring' as Stanley and Wise (1993, p.137) advocate or academically offensive?

In this inquiry, I use my own experience and explore selected secondary data. Where space allows, I therefore *show* data rather than only *tell* about it, to allow you your own interpretation. I draw on more than ten years of watching CSR take shape and of teaching in the business and sustainability area. My base is in the UK, with some appreciation of international trends. With colleagues, Gill Coleman and Peter Reason, I launched an action research based, question-posing Masters degree in this field in 1997 (Marshall, 2004) [1]. I have also taught related undergraduate business studies and MBA courses. I am not a content expert in this multi-faceted field, but track it to bring issues, reading material, ideas and practices into inquiry-based teaching, and to select visiting speakers who contribute content expertise to course workshops.

In the next section of this paper I outline some characteristics of emerging formulations of CSR, as these provide the meaning-making context for leadership. I then review whose voices are shaping CSR, concluding that white men's voices pre-dominate. I suggest, however, that some men can be described as tempered radicals (Meyerson and Scully, 1995), inside-outsiders using their ambivalent positioning to speak for change. These explorations show some 'credentials' of potential leadership in CSR which few women are likely to have. I then consider women who are significant figures and what forms their contributions take. I suggest that they are operating in different, but significant, realms. In closing, I review the themes of gendering explored.

### **Watching CSR take shape**

It is fascinating that in ten years or less, corporate social responsibility has become something relatively clear, pointing to the environmental and social responsibilities of business (eg Holliday et al, 2002). In 1997 there was no agreed title or field of action. Then there were the raw messages and passionate voices of people at the margins, 'environmentalists' and others, seeking to gain the attention of business. Now CSR has become an accepted term, with emerging clarity about its practices, and roles for CSR professionals. There is ownership of some responsibility by businesses, for varied motivations including the benefits of eco-efficiency, protecting their licence to operate and because it is 'the right thing to do' (Dunphy, Griffiths and Benn, 2003).

I welcome the current engagement in CSR, but some of its qualities also make me uneasy. I am concerned about: how quickly apparent clarity is emerging about such contentious and complex issues; whether triple bottom line accounting as currently attempted is an adequate response to issues of sustainability (Doane, 2004; Gray and Milne, 2004); how languages and practices of accounting & auditing are establishing themselves, with paradoxical effects - what cannot be easily counted tends not to be noticed or valued (Daly and Cobb, 1990; Waring, 1988); how rational most arguments for CSR are; the predominance of white men as leaders and scholars; the implied gender-neutrality of CSR (Coleman, 2002); and more. I am also taken aback by repeated calls for '*a Business Case*' for CSR, justified in financial bottom-line terms, which assumes, paradoxically, that a reformed view of business in society should and can be argued within currently dominant values and mindsets.

If taken seriously, the issues of sustainability that prompted CSR would mean a radical review of business (Hawken, 1993; Brown, 2001). Leading social and environmental accountancy scholars conclude: 'It looks exceptionally likely that the current form of capitalism is not sustainable – it is, after all, based on private property rights, growth and expansion, competition, maximizing consumption of non-essentials, maximizing returns to shareholders and directors and so on' (Gray and Milne, 2004, p.73). As sustainability is a system concept, it would be 'profoundly implausible that an individual company could be sustainable (or responsible) in an unsustainable (or irresponsible) system' (p.73).

But as CSR becomes 'clarified', the initial issues – 'the threefold human crisis of deepening poverty, environmental destruction and social disintegration' (Korten, 1995, p.5) - are becoming disguised, co-opted into established frames such as 'the environmental bottom line'. It may, therefore, become more difficult to raise what has been missed out. (As in 'you have equal opportunities, what more do you want?!')

In systemic thinking (which recognises complex interactivities - for example Senge et al, 1994), the first solution is often a symptom of the problem. Many current CSR initiatives replicate mainstream business forms. Some do so deliberately seeking legitimacy to open up spaces for change. These are crafted, valiant, impressive and potentially valuable efforts. But are they sufficient to address the issues? We may be 'doing replication'. In relation to gender, it is tempting to let this happen, because the challenges CSR might address are more important than creating trivial gender skirmishes. But gender is thoroughly interwoven with environmental destruction and deepening poverty. Ignoring how these issues might be gendered disregards important qualities of their potential nature, as eco-feminists remind us (Plumwood, 2002; Mies and Shiva, 1993).

The trends described above are the results of, and background context to, CSR leadership initiatives. They affect the frames of mind, forms of talk and ways of knowing through which people contribute to, and position themselves in, this field. They hint at how power is configured and sustained symbolically and through everyday disciplinary practices (Hardy and Clegg, 1996). They shape contexts in which gender may be enacted (West and Zimmerman, 1991). Below I suggest that women and men are often differently placed to work within the emerging dominant logics of CSR.

## Whose voices are shaping corporate social responsibility?

In developing this paper as inquiry, at each stage I have taken an arising question and sought appropriate data sources, either secondary or my own reflective accounts, to address it. As I make choices, I give shape to what I study. There is no 'whole of CSR' to encompass, there are a myriad influences, discourses and activities. This is therefore a selective account.

I started with the impression that male voices currently dominate CSR, although not exclusively, based on my experiences of literature and conferences, and on the challenge of trying to achieve a gender balance in inviting visiting speakers to our Masters programme. This impression has been tested and confirmed in conversation with others. What data could I review to explore this further? I looked to a Reading List I gave undergraduate business studies students taking my final year elective, *Ecological Thinking and Action in Management* (February 2005). I am thus interested in meanings and practices being advocated to and taken up by organizations, in how CSR is being constructed. I create an organization-focused 'mainstream', and privilege those who write.

The first Reading List section addressing *The Changing Context of Business* (covering pressures on organizations and major advocated changes) is indicative. Given space constraints, Table I offers a selection from this List, showing all four women on it, and 22 of the 34 men. The proportion of women to men in other sections of the Reading List is lower.

**Table I: Reading List - *The Changing Context of Business***

- Brown, Lester, (2001) *EcoEcology: Building an economy for the earth*  
Elkington, John (1997) *Cannibals with forks: the triple bottom line of 21st century business*  
Hawken, Paul. (1993) *The Ecology of Commerce*  
Henderson, Hazel (1996) *Building a Win-Win World: Life beyond global economic warfare*,  
and (1999) *Beyond Globalization*  
Holliday, Charles O, Schmidheiny, Stephan, Watts, Philip (2002) *Walking the talk: The  
business case for sustainable development*  
Korten, David C (1995) *When corporations rule the world*  
Kumar, Ritu (2003) Corporate responsibility: The emerging South Asian agenda, from Shah,  
Rupesh A, Murphy, David F and McIntosh, Malcolm, *Creating trust and hope in  
organisations: Stories of transparency, accountability and governance*  
Lovins, Amery B, Lovins, L. Hunter & Hawken, Paul (1999) A Road Map for Natural  
Capitalism, *Harvard Business Review*, May-June, 145-158  
Meadows, Donella, H, Meadows, Dennis L. and Randers Jorgen (1992) *Beyond the limits:  
confronting global collapse, envisioning a sustainable future*  
Natrass, Brian, and Altomare, Mary (1999) *The natural step for business*  
Shrivastava, P (1995) The role of corporations in achieving ecological sustainability,  
*Academy of Management Review* 20 (4) 936-960  
Starkey, Richard, and Welford, Richard (2001) *The Earthscan Reader in Business and  
Sustainable Development* [3 of the 29 chapter authors and co-authors are women]  
Stiglitz, Joseph E (2002) *Globalization and its discontents*  
Zadek, Simon, Pruzan, Peter & Evans, Richard (1997) *Building Corporate Accountability:  
Emerging practices in social and ethical accounting, auditing and reporting*

This List provides some confirmation for my impression of white male dominance. It should be noted that these are also unusual people, most would be considered radical and daring in some way.

Of course these authors are partly chosen to persuade. If a former Chief Economist and Senior Vice-President of the World Bank (Stiglitz, 1997-2001), now believes international monetary policies and practices are potentially harming the world's poor, surely this view is worth attention. Perhaps masculinity also helps to confer these credentials of persuasion (Billing and Alvesson, 1993; Calás and Smircich, 1988; Fletcher, 2003). As an academic, I could be contributing to conferring that status.

To assess whether the view of gender-balance in CSR given so far is fair, I looked on Amazon.co.uk (26 August 2005), searching 'corporate social responsibility' and 'corporate responsibility'. I found 215 and 278 books, respectively. Where I could identify (i.e. excluding institutions or those giving only initials), I found 33 women out of 233 and 43 women out of 279 authors and co-authors, respectively, 14.2% and 15.4% - confirming men's predominance. There was a wide range of authors, rather than a small band of leaders. As this was a coarse-grained source of data, I did not pursue its analysis..

Scanning further afield and asking various contacts, I generated a long list of other men I might mention (such as Michael Porter and Henry Mintzberg), and some women. For example, Julia Cleverdon is Chief Executive of Business in the Community, a network of companies across the UK committed to continually improving their positive impact on society; and Jane Nelson is Director of Business Leadership & Strategy, with the (Prince of Wales) International Business Leaders Forum. These are both highly influential positions with considerable institutional power.

One CSR professional confirmed the male dominance amongst leading figures but notes that there is a more even gender balance amongst corporate practitioners, and that women predominate in sectors of CSR focused on philanthropic giving. Practitioner-oriented CSR conference speaker lists might, then, have a higher proportion of women. Although in my experience the keynote positions are filled mostly by men.

This data supports my initial impression of the gender patterning of CSR leadership, with the picture skewed towards rather than wholly dominated by male voices. I take this as legitimation enough to explore the dynamics of men and women's leadership below, as I am not arguing a clear gender divide.

### **Potential processes of gendering**

Whilst a host of factors might be at play in gendering CSR leadership, I shall highlight two key characteristic of the CSR field – the value of dominant group credentials and anxiety-containment - and relate these to 'doing gender' (West and Zimmerman, 1991; Fletcher, 2003). This section is based on my tracking of CSR and its sense-making is speculative.

As CSR implies a radical review of business, people speaking in this context need appropriate credentials to be considered worthy of attention and trust. These might come from some form of dominant group membership or alignment. Corporate success is especially impressive, conferring credentials in the world of business from which to question it. This is partly why

figures such as Sir David Browne, Group CEO of BP, and Ray Anderson of Interface Inc, the world's largest commercial carpet manufacturer (Bakan, 2004), are so compelling and iconic (Arena, 2004).

The book *Walking the talk: The business case for sustainable development* (Holliday, Schmidheiny and Watts, 2002) shows some of the processes of alignment with current business practice by which authority is claimed. It is also a forceful exercise in defining the territory and qualities of CSR. The book was extremely strongly launched. Its cover declares: 'THE MOST IMPORTANT BOOK ON CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY YET PUBLISHED'. The three authors were, at the time, Chairmen (sic) of international companies. The book is an official publication of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD). It includes 67 specifically researched company case studies. The authors debate appropriate definitions of CSR, noting the difficulties of pleasing both environmentalists and those committed to business growth. They assert that 'sustainable development is best achieved through open, competitive, rightly framed international markets that honor legitimate comparative advantages' (p.40). The book mirrors rather than resolving tensions between reform and radical change.

Few women have such strong credentials in dominant power structures from which to speak, especially to advocate for change. Women's potential to influence discourses or introduce new meanings where they will be taken up is therefore limited (Marshall, 1984). Cleverdon and Nelson, mentioned above, are two exceptions.

Another factor affecting CSR leadership is what forms of knowing are favoured or accepted as 'evidence'. As noted above, rational analysis predominates. But the issues CSR could address are also emotive rather than neutral, and working with them requires our multiple intelligences, including the emotional. From my experience of teaching, material about sustainability, global inequalities and potential changes required in business assumptions and personal lifestyles is potentially highly unsettling and challenging. Course participants often become concerned and feel, at least temporarily, powerless. Exploring agency becomes an educational issue. I wonder how uncertainty and anxiety, and associated desires for control, influence the nature of leadership in this field. I suspect that they favour those who can enact authority and containment in some way. This has traditionally been associated with masculine forms of heroic leadership and apparent rationality (Billing and Alvesson, 1993; Fletcher, 2003; Sinclair, 1998). This may favour men, and women willing to conform to male stereotypes, as leaders.

Perhaps it is appropriate, with such potentially inflammatory issues, for some men to talk to other men in an acceptable enough language. This alignment is shown for example in using notions of accounting (Elkington, 1997) and Hawken's (1993) proposed 'restorative economy'. I am also curious about what forms of identity work might be required for actors to maintain credibility in this context, and expect that it will have a masculinity dimension (Collinson and Hearn, 1996).

Whilst I welcome the contributions of many men in the CSR field, I am concerned that some tacit features of current paradigms will be replicated, even in the supposed act of radical change, if the envisioning group are relatively homogenous.

## Are some men in CSR acting as ‘tempered radicals’?

To explore the dynamics of gendering in CSR leadership further, I look at how some men demonstrate their credentials to speak for change, reviewing two examples to accompany my experience-based sense-making. It was important for me to go beyond the potentially simple conclusion of men’s dominance of CSR, to explore and respect the textures of what some influential men are doing.

Some significant male figures can be viewed as ‘tempered radicals’ using their status, sometimes achieved through success in the organization mainstream, and possibly including that conferred by masculinity, to critique business practices and advocate change. Meyerson and Scully (1995) identified ‘tempered radicals’ as ‘people who work within mainstream organizations and professions and want also to transform them’ (p.586), for example promoting diversity. They are simultaneously insiders and outsiders. Here I apply the notion to social group rather than organizational membership. ‘Tempered’ has multiple meanings. These people seek moderation, believing this the most effective route to lasting change; they have ‘become tougher by being alternately heated up and cooled down’; and they are angered by incongruities in values and perceived lack of social justice (p.586).

Such roles are inherently ambivalent. Tempered radicals can ‘remain ambivalent *and* quite clear about their attachments and identities’ (p.588). They are critics of the status quo and of un-tempered radical change. They are therefore open to criticism from both sides, to perceptions of hypocrisy, and to feelings of isolation. Tempered radicals also experience the pressures of cooptation, especially as they judge how much to compromise in order to maintain the insider aspects of their status. Meyerson and Scully outline a range of potential change strategies that tempered radicals adopt, especially that of small wins, including judging timing and picking which battles to fight.

Several influential figures in the world of CSR fit this picture. In addition, some have stories of conversion to tell, making their dual positioning explicit. They demonstrate their ‘mainstream’ credentials and reveal how they have developed alternative visions of business and its responsibilities. Here I offer two examples.

Ray Anderson, founder and CEO of Interface, eloquently tells how, in 1994, he was challenged to respond to environmentalists’ concerns about his company’s operations (Bakan, 2004). He had no response. Reading Paul Hawken’s (1993) *The Ecology of Commerce*, he encountered the phrase ‘the death of birth’, about species extinction: ‘It was a point of a spear in my chest.... it became an epiphanal experience, a total change of mindset for myself and a change of paradigm’ (Bakan, 2004, p.73). Anderson now says of corporate leaders ‘we’re all sinners’ (p.73) and points out the criminality of treating nature as unlimited and externalizing corporations’ costs. This story comes across especially powerfully, direct to camera, in the DVD documentary of Bakan’s book, *The Corporation*. It is told elsewhere in the proliferating literature that treats Anderson as an icon of potential CEO awareness on sustainability issues, and charts the many impressive actions taken by Interface (Arena, 2004). (Anderson does ask whether corporations can be sustainable.)

David Korten’s (1995) book *When Corporations Rule the World* is a hard-hitting and influential analysis of increasing global corporate power. *Prologue: A Personal Journey*



explains why he wrote it. He is aware of building his credentials to speak through this account. 'I share this detail to establish the depth of my conservative roots' (p.3). He includes his traditional business education, military service, five and a half years on the faculty of Harvard Business School, his intention to combat global poverty with 'modern business management' (p.3) and more. This sets the scene for his 'gradual awakening to the conclusion that the conventional development practice [based on economic growth] espoused by most conservatives and even liberals is a leading cause of – not the solution to – a rapidly accelerating and potentially fatal human crisis of global proportions' (p.5). Notions of 'people centred' development therefore underpin his subsequent activity as a writer and speaker working towards the 'design of a just, democratic, and sustainable planetary economic system' [2].

Being a tempered radical can be precarious, as well as exhilarating. Men in such positions might be under pressure to present an identity that maintains their right to insider status, including enacting some form of masculinity (West and Zimmerman, 1991). Do general expectations of leadership favour male authority, especially in relation to such uncertain and anxiety-provoking issues as whether climate change is significantly damaging, and business and society should fundamentally change their ways? Billing and Alvesson (1993), working with notions of gender symbolism in organizations, suggest: 'We do not just expect top executives to be physically male, we also expect them to exhibit the form/style of masculinity characteristic of upper-class males' (p.234). Are control or containment needed? Are men invited into competing as part of the play of position taking? How are they disciplined as potentially disruptive players? From my observations and some discussion with those involved, these pressures are operating. The anecdotes are not mine to tell, my interpretations of gendered identity work un-provable.

In this context, it may be challenging for tempered radicals to ally with people who are more 'different' than they are themselves. Members of the dominant group are under pressure to align with their peers in the face of those experienced as 'other' Kanter (1977).

If men need to maintain a viable identity, what work is required of women? Few women have the strong dominant group membership that some men can achieve. Are women able to do the dual job of establishing their credentials and also speaking for change? Will their 'membership' ever be assured enough (Marshall 1995)? Women, many of whom are also tempered radicals, configure their leadership within this vibrant context.

### **Where are women leaders and women's voices in CSR?**

To explore women's leadership and its qualities, I first return to my Reading List and then scan further afield. There are four women under *The Changing Context of Business* heading. Their work includes: Hazel Henderson contributing to the worldwide movement developing statistics of national well-being as alternatives to limited financial notions of Gross National Product; Ritu Kumar offering a South Asian perspective on CSR; Donella Meadows benchmarking planetary ecological limits and developing systemic thinking (Meadows, 1991); and Mary Altomare co-founding *The Natural Step* (an international movement offering a scientifically-derived framework for living within the earth's carrying capacity), in Canada. They each offer alternative perspectives on business, as listed men are doing, seeking to

influence mindsets and practices (Hardy and Clegg, 1996). These women stand alongside men, contributing in similar ways to the evolving field of CSR.

Of the few women elsewhere on the Reading List, one stands out as especially relevant to the theme of voice and style pursued in this exploration into leadership. Whilst I offer students material by men expecting it to persuade, I am unsure what response some women's contributions will provoke (sic). Under *'New Economics'* I include Marilyn Waring, a directly spoken feminist economist and goat farmer. I show students sections of a video (*Who's Counting: Sex, Lies and Global Economics*, National Film Board of Canada, 1995) based on Waring (1988). This argues that women's work and the environment are not assigned economic value in the global economy and so are not counted, valued or considered in policy-making. In an impactful 8.52 minute section Waring presents the Philippines as a microcosm of the world economy, showing, inter alia, that in conventional economic terms child prostitution is more economically 'beneficial' than subsistence farming. Waring is information-rich, and uncompromising in her messages. Her work is mostly well-received by students. But some say that her overt and repeated feminist views detract from 'her case'.

Seeking more examples, I identified two clusters of women leaders of relevance to CSR - Anita Roddick and Vandana Shiva, and Margaret Wheatley and Joanna Macy. They are 'big names' in some circles. They seem to occupy different spaces from the men reviewed earlier. This raises boundary issues for this analysis, to which I return having explored the kinds of leadership these women offer.

Anita Roddick and Vandana Shiva are powerful voices, speaking out about fundamental issues of sustainability and global justice. Both overtly address gender. Their work is not circumscribed by the boundaries of the corporate world. They address citizens, consumers, and governments, as much as business leaders.

Roddick is a businesswoman, activist, speaker, author and philanthropist. She founded The Body Shop International as a campaigning business, against animal testing of cosmetics products, for the Ogoni people of the Niger delta in their struggles, including those with Shell, promoting 'trade not aid' and more. She received the UK Business Woman of the Year Award in 1985 and The Body Shop was awarded Company of the Year by the Confederation of British Industries in 1987. She now focuses on writing, speaking and campaigning. She has strong, articulate views on sustainability and social justice, and on the gendered nature of business leadership (Roddick, 2005)

Roddick has been hailed and hounded. She tends to generate strong reactions, of one kind or another. I think she accepts this as her role in the world. She quotes, as aspiration, Gloria Steinem saying 'If I come here today, and there is no trouble tomorrow, I haven't done my job'. Her website appears on search engines as: 'Welcome to Anita Roddick.com. Get Informed, Get Outraged, Get Inspired, Get Active.' [3] After a strongly advocating, highly illustrated, speech Roddick made about Socially Responsive Leadership at St James's Palace on 29<sup>th</sup> February 2000 (to mark Will Hutton becoming CEO of the then Industrial Society, now the Work Foundation), Prince Phillip (as the Society's Patron) commented that it was like being in a room when someone threw in a hand grenade, we were unlikely to all get out unscathed. This seemed a perceptive and fitting recognition of Anita's approach.

Shiva is a physicist, ecologist, activist and author. She campaigns on environmental issues, challenging the power business organizations, the World Bank and World Trade Organization have over the lives of the world's poor. She campaigns against monoculture farming (in which a single genetic variant is grown on a large scale for standardization and economic reasons, with attendant needs for intensive pest control, risks of failure due to disease susceptibility, loss of biodiversity), against genetic modification, against intellectual property rights which threaten biodiversity and third world farmers' rights to maintain their own seed stocks, and more. She is highly aware of gender issues, pointing out that most farmers in India, her core constituency, are women. She has been well honoured internationally for her work, and is a highly respected speaker.

Shiva was one of six presenters in the annual BBC Reith lecture series *Respect for the Earth* in 2000, her title 'Poverty and Globalisation' (Shiva, 2000) [4]. (John Browne spoke on business.) Her opening paragraph shows her direct style of delivery:

Recently, I was visiting Bhatinda in Punjab because of an epidemic of farmers' suicides. Punjab used to be the most prosperous agricultural region in India. Today every farmer is in debt and despair. Vast stretches of land have become water-logged desert. And as an old farmer pointed out, even the trees have stopped bearing fruit because heavy use of pesticides have killed the pollinators - the bees and butterflies.

Shiva argues that small farmers operating from biodiversity feed vast sections of the world's population, but that their work in cooperation with nature's processes is devalued by dominant notions of market, 'development', trade, science and technology. Thus global agribusiness appropriates the rights and means to food production. She returns repeatedly to the gendered nature of these inequalities, aligning with Waring.

Women who produce for their families and communities are treated as 'non-productive' and 'economically' inactive. The devaluation of women's work, and of work done in sustainable economies, is the natural outcome of a system constructed by capitalist patriarchy. This is how globalisation destroys local economies and destruction itself is counted as growth.

And women themselves are devalued.... "Feeding the World" becomes disassociated from the women who actually do it and is projected as dependent on global agribusiness and biotechnology corporations.

Roddick and Shiva offer leadership. They are both invited to speak, but they are not 'insiders'. Roddick has achieved corporate success, but tends to be depicted, and self-defines, as 'different', a maverick. They both choose the label 'activist'. They write, but are also prominently speakers, orators. In the mainstream circles in which CSR is becoming formulated for business, they are from 'elsewhere'. Shiva is a voice from the 'majority world' (an alternative term to 'third' or 'developing' world, recognising that approximately 80% of the world's population lives in 'developing' countries, with vastly unequal access to global wealth). Roddick attributes her passionate temperament and different perspectives to her Italian background and, proudly, lack of formal business education. Roddick and Shiva are not willing for their 'otherness' to be eroded or co-opted. They could be 'choosing the margin as a space of radical openness' (hooks, 1990, p1.45). They are operating in a different form.

They challenge current foundations of business, and point to fundamental gender inequalities. Their messages are raw and confronting. They are un-moderated radicals.

Calás and Smircich (2004) argue that the rhetoric of welcoming 'feminine' qualities into management espoused in the 1990s, but since partly eclipsed, wants and accepts only some, stereotyped, qualities of the feminine, such as caring, nurturing and reconciling differences. In parallel, valued models of management have shifted to the internationally mobile leader, reasserting many traits previously typed masculine. They suggest that there are other qualities of the 'feminine' that we should value, calling for a radical change in the way we think about management and configure the global economy. They include "the frugal housewife" who does not want to fuel consumer society, and the "hysterical woman" who 'releases her emotions to cry and scream in moral indignation for the crimes against humanity that are constantly committed in the name of economic rationality' (2004, p.475). They summarise their thoughts in a job advertisement 'Seeking hysterical person'. Roddick and Shiva fit the specification, for example being 'willing to become enraged when observing worldwide exploitation' (p.476). But this style of female voice can be unsettling, may be seen as 'going too far' (the reaction of some MBA students to Calás and Smircich's proposals). This might be difficult for those positioned within mainstream business to hear. I suspect that Shiva and Roddick transgress accepted modes of speech, with emotion, and that some people recoil at their style.

I want briefly to consider a second pair of influential women – Joanna Macy and Margaret Wheatley. Both propose new, highly participative, theories of leadership to engage with current global challenges. They go beyond advocacy to offer training in the alternative ways of acting and being required. Many people find their work inspirational, enabling a sense of agency. Macy works from systemic thinking and Buddhism to offer ideas and practices to help people engage with the despair they might feel at the ecological state of the world and act with courage to help address it (Macy and Brown, 1998). Wheatley (1992) draws on 'new science' ideas to conceptualise alternative styles of leadership which are connected, fluid, locally grounded, caring, participative, life-affirming. She runs workshops developing leadership for uncertain times.

These four women's leadership is not confined within the corporate world. I initially wondered if it might be considered 'fringy' here. But it is highly relevant to the territory becoming framed as CSR, precisely because it challenges boundaries and divisions, including those between emotionally- and values-connected reasoning and rationality, and between business and society. Whilst I see many men operating in the mainstream, I see many women operating at the margins (hooks, 1990). And there are men doing this too - for example, Michael Moore, 'the gadfly of corporations' [5] with his books and films - although I see them as differently positioned because of available masculinities.

### **Closing reflections**

This analysis suggests that women and men leaders are largely differently placed in the emerging field of CSR, with differential access to influencing meanings, discourses and practices. The gender patterns identified are skewed rather than clearly demarcated.

To work further with this material, I take a systemic view of gender, seeing it as 'a complex set of social relations enacted across a range of social and institutional practices that exist both within and outside of formal organizations' (Fletcher and Ely, 2003, p.6). Gendering is, then, an integral, deeply embedded, dynamic of social orders (Acker, 1990; Hardy and Clegg, 1996), an organizing process expressed as multiplicity rather than one gender-order (Alvesson and Billing, 2002). The body matters (Acker, 1990). And gender is symbolic; prevailing masculinity or femininity does not necessarily correspond to numbers of men and women involved (Billing and Alvesson, 1993). Within gendered contexts, people create and enact gendered identities, and perceive others as doing so (West and Zimmerman, 1991).

Through the data presented here, I conclude that CSR favours masculinity, in several ways including symbolically (Billing and Alvesson, 1993). Thus (white) men CSR leaders can be seen as, awarely or unintentionally, working with their locations, using the resources of positioning and access to credentials available to them. Their dominance in CSR is therefore no surprise.

As I write this final draft (May, 2006), three men with different kinds of mainstream credibility are going public about climate change, fitting this picture. Al Gore, ex Vice-President of the USA, promoted his film on global warming - 'An Inconvenient Truth' - at the 2006 Cannes Film Festival. Environmental scientist James Lovelock (aged 86), initiator of Gaia theory, is in the media warning of *The Revenge of Gaia* (2006). Naturalist and broadcaster Sir David Attenborough (aged 80) has produced BBC television programmes entitled 'Are We Changing Planet Earth?' asking 'How could I look my grandchildren in the eye and say I knew what was happening to the world and did nothing?' (Age probably also matters.)

But men as tempered radicals need to conduct themselves with care to maintain their rights to dominant group alignment. Individuals may have to prove themselves against contextually appropriate norms of masculinity (Acker, 1990; Fletcher, 2003). Are they able to act within current systemic gendered orders and also act beyond them? 'The pervasiveness of power relations makes them difficult to resist.... Indeed, resistance often serves only to reinforce the existing systems of power' (Hardy and Clegg, 1996, p.635). Significant figures like Anderson and Korten might become post-heroic heroes (Fletcher, 2003), recapitulating rather than challenging fundamental gender patternings. If their behaviour in the service of change is interpreted by others as doing gender (West and Zimmerman, 1991), how can they conduct themselves? Can they avoid letting their access to leadership go 'to their heads'?

In this context, some women leaders seem differently placed. I have introduced Macy, Roddick, Shiva, Waring and Wheatley as influential examples. They adopt a variety of styles, some very direct, using and/or advocating multi-dimensional knowing, and overtly challenging gender power dynamics. They question the foundations of society and business. They emphasise practice.

I see them as seeking to change the context, breadth and form of debate, as much as join within it. Systemic change often requires changing the context, the influencing conditions, so that the 'same' person, in the 'same' situation behaves differently (Meadows, 1991). People acting from the margins, women and men, might not be engaging directly in meaning-making for corporate CSR, but might be affecting the context within which meaning-making happens.

I see these women as embracing their marginality and its potential (hooks, 1990). Perhaps, also, their styles of leadership are so discordant and confronting that they are not allowed fully into the mainstream. Explicit feminist messages can be 'going too far'. These women are 'doing change', addressing fundamental issues of sustainability. In some ways they too are using their location(s) in gender/power systems as resources. But, like some men, they might also be interpreted as 'doing gender', perhaps because of their connectedness to emotionality. Thus, a potentially radical move might be seen through current gender frames and collapsed back into replication (Fletcher, 2003). Whether this is happening to CSR generally is still an open question.

I would like to see many more women in the mainstream of CSR leadership. And I am glad to see women at the margins. Their work is also 'central'. In considering men's and women's different positioning, we need to review appropriate criteria to judge effectiveness. For me, one key criterion is whether CSR related leaders encourage a radical harkening to issues of sustainability and social justice, and recognition that we need to think and act differently. Underlying CSR as it is becoming formulated are significant tensions that cannot be resolved from within the landscape of business as it currently operates. Macy and Brown (1998) suggest that three kinds of action are currently needed: "holding actions" in defence of life on Earth' (p.17), 'analysis of structural causes and creation of alternative institutions' (p.19), and a 'shift in perceptions of reality, both cognitively and spiritually' (p.21). Inside-outsiders have vital roles to play. They have the potential to make sustainability and social justice issues 'mainstream', but if they do so alone this is likely to be a reduced, gender-patterned, version. Those acting from the margins are more likely to have the necessary vision for the second and third kinds of activity. In chaotic, changing times we should look outside the corporate world for direction. We need help to 'glimpse the whole' (Waring, 1988). And mutual respect between these different change positions is valuable. I hope that women are well-represented at the margins, that their voices are as powerful and multiple as those of male 'colleagues'. I wonder what directing a gender analysis there would reveal.

Is it possible to work with, but then go beyond, current gender patternings? I think a double move is required to achieve this. We first need to side-step gender-divided thinking and look starkly at issues such as environmental destruction and global poverty as our touchstone. But we then need to reassert gender as an interwoven theme of vital relevance, lest we only skim the surface. For example, I see emotional connection and engaging multiple ways of knowing as key requirements for dealing with these issues, not as discretionary or threatening elements that women bring.

I suggest, then, that gender is at issue in CSR, that it is inherent to the field and to potential leadership in multi-dimensional ways. But it is little discussed, and currently seems less discussable than climate change.

In closing, I take this opportunity to review my inquiry approach. In creating this narrative, issues of voice have been figural for me. I note the moderated tones in which I have written. Am I an aspiring tempered radical watching my tongue? I struggle with my wish to make my writing as direct as Vandana Shiva's and with the many, not so tacit, injunctions I sense against doing so. Am I still 'telling it slant' (Olsen, 1978) after all these years? I feel encouraged to translate my ideas and knowing into dominant, gender-associated, forms in order to be heard. How tolerant would an academic journal be of Shiva and Roddick's forthright tones? How are frames of legitimacy for leadership created and maintained? If

white men dominate certain sectors of CSR is this any surprise? Is this simply a mirroring of dominant notions of management, business and organizational scholarship?

## Endnotes

- [1] <http://www.bath.ac.uk/carpp/msc>
- [2] <http://www.davidkortten.org/bio.htm> - 16 May 2006
- [3] <http://www.anitaroddick.com>
- [4] <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/reith2000/lecture5.shtml>
- [5] <http://www.michaelmoore.com/>

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