Pre-Print version of: Spence, L.J. (2016) 'The Obfuscation of Gender and Feminism in CSR Research and the Academic Community: An essay'. In K. Grosser, L. McCarthy and M. Kilgour (eds) *Gender Equality and Responsible Business: Expanding CSR Horizons*. **Greenleaf Publishing: Sheffield, UK.**
Please cite using the above reference

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ABSTRACT

This is a personal essay, a narrative in the feminist tradition, on the low visibility afforded to gender-awareness and feminism in corporate social responsibility. This is considered in two respects. First in terms of the academic field itself and the role which gender plays in the systems and structures of academia, within which the corporate social responsibility and business ethics fields are embedded. The second aspect of this essay is to take a broad look at the contributions of feminist and gender studies to the content of these fields of research and pedagogy. Personal experiences are linked to the extant literature, concluding with some suggestions for the future.

Keywords: corporate social responsibility; business ethics; gender; feminism; voice; organisation studies; academia.

**The Obfuscation of Gender-Awareness and Feminism in CSR Research
and the Academic Community: An essay**

Laura J. Spence

As I sat in my undergraduate class at Bath University where I studied Business Administration in the late 1980s/early 1990s, I remember being quite fascinated by statistics on the gender imbalance in senior management roles and the gender pay gap. These were interesting sociological phenomena to me, but as a young woman who had never felt touched by any discrimination or ceiling to my ambitions on the basis of gender, to my shame I felt a kind of smug pity for those women, and relief that I was in a generation that would not be so affected.

Now, a quarter of a century later, I show my students similar charts relating to current evidence of gender disparity. In 2013 the gender pay gap in the UK was around 15+% (McVeigh, 2014[1]), with academics getting off relatively lightly. While the situation is not quite as bad as it was when I was a student, nothing has really much changed in the sense that if you are a woman you will likely earn less than a male counterpart. Worryingly, some suggest that we should not expect to see the pay gap among managers disappear this *century*[2]. But then it isn't all about the financial reward; access to opportunity remains a fundamental issue (though these are related), with it taking until 2014 for every FTSE100 company to have a woman on its Board[3] (Farrell, 2014). And men quite simply continue to get more promotions than women, the latter being considered risky appointments at senior levels (Ibarra, Carter and Silva, 2010). Let's be clear though, *my concerns are not just about gender difference* (Tronto, 1993), but an alternative lens that gender awareness brings which I have found has traction for the full gamut of business people and students as well as research. I have found feminist theory to explain empirical findings which I could not make sense of using traditional ethical theories, especially in terms of relational perspectives and care as I will discuss below. More broadly, re-reading CSR, organization and moral theory from a feminist perspective has been shown to be enhancing (see for example Held, 1990; Martin 2000; Marshall, 2007).

Definition is important here (Borna and White, 2003). A broad approach to defining sex and gender would be: sex relates to a physiology, and gender is a related concept with a cultural overlay to physiology, but involving a process of social construction. These are not dichotomous, unproblematic perspectives, and Martin (1994) argues convincingly that the more compelling perspective to take is one of power inequalities. Gender can perhaps best be understood as redefined and negotiated through practice (van den Brink and Benschop, 2012a; b). Feminism as a concept is a highly contested, often misconstrued project, has a complex history and encompasses a host of versions – feminisms - and critical accounts (Mitchell and Oakley, 1986; Thompson, 1994). I take feminism to be a political and personal commitment to women's voices, experiences and values, in the face of socialisation, institutions, systems and structures that continue to marginalise them. In practice this translates to a deep concern for gender equality in both the public and private

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[1] Statistics vary widely across studies, FT/PT, age and type of occupation, creeping up to as much as 27% in some aspects. For a good overview for the UK see Perfect (2011). The UK had its first Equal Pay Act in 1970, reinforced by the Equality Act 2006.

[2] According to research by the Chartered Management Institute, reported by the BBC (2011).

[3] In this essay I don't mention the business case for gender diversity because it is an unworthy distraction from the real issues in my opinion, barely warranting this footnote.

spheres, and is an endeavour which is as relevant for men as it is for women. More specifically for this chapter, my take on feminist perspectives on CSR is influenced by Virginia Held's work on feminist transformations of moral theory which points to the need for theory to take adequate account of the experiences of women. She draws in particular on the influences of the relation between reason and emotion, the distinction between public and private, and the concept of the self as connected to others (Held, 1990).

Meantime, I am fortunate to have a well-paid job I love as a Professor of Business Ethics. I also work part-time which in my case allows a degree of work-life balance and the chance to be closely involved in the lives of our children. There are times when family and work commitments conflict, but between two fairly flexible academic careers, a good support network and two adaptable lively kids, intractable clashes have so far been the exception rather than the rule (Carlson and Kaemar, 2000). So my own life thus far has been by some measures somewhat of a gender success story. Now mid-career, it is beholden on me to reflect more on others. My concern is especially for junior colleagues entering the academic profession, and that they understand the power inequalities in the world they are joining. I want to do something to help stack the odds in favour of equality of choice, voice, opportunity and recognition. That is my motivation for this piece.

In this contribution, I outline some of my observations on the state of play of gender in the CSR field, by which I mean the individual academics, professional academic societies, journals and conferences concerned with business and society issues. There are two main aspects to the essay. The first is the role of gender in the systems and structures of academia, within which the corporate social responsibility and business ethics fields are embedded. To a degree this updates Judi Marshall's (2007) work on the gendering of leadership in CSR. Ironically, Judi was one of my tutors at Bath University. I am proud to follow in her footsteps though only wish it were not necessary. The second aspect of this essay is to take a broad look at the contributions of feminist and gender studies to the content of these fields of research and pedagogy, mirroring somewhat an approach taken by others in looking at management and organisation studies (Broadbridge and Simpson, 2011; Martin, 2000).

Despite strong women contributors and some excellent CSR research, I unfortunately come to the conclusion that gender awareness and feminist approaches have a disappointingly low profile in CSR. Things, as people are wont to point out, are slowly changing, but I for one haven't got the patience to see the situation improve at a snail's pace. So this is my attempt to speak up, speak out and raise some of the issues as I see them through this personalised account. The style is one of a narrative essay, because so much of what I draw on has been personally experienced rather than embedded in previous scholarship, though I have made links to the wider literature. This is also entirely in keeping with feminist research and self-reflective inquiry (Marshall, 2007, p.166). None of my experiences are unique, but this topic has not been widely documented for the CSR case specifically. It is my hope that some of the claims and observations provoke thought and reflection and can be investigated more systematically in future research.

Gender diversity and awareness in the CSR academic community

I want to start this section by reflecting on two prevailing extremes in CSR research, and how they may have relevance for the academic field of study itself. First that CSR is imbued with ethical exceptionalism, and second that it is fundamentally instrumental. First, *if* corporate social

responsibility and business ethics are concerned with fairness, justice, responsibility to ourselves and others, which does not seem wildly unreasonable, then a logical extension would be an inclusive, egalitarian approach to how we conduct our scholarly activity. Indeed, some have argued that a kind of ethical exceptionalism is embedded within CSR such that arguments in and around the pursuit of social responsibility must be a moral good (Spence and Vallentin, 2013). It is not too great a stretch to imagine that the community of CSR scholars is organised with attention to good, socially responsible practice, not least including equality of opportunity, as is commonly articulated in corporate social responsibility initiatives.

Taking the second, instrumental, approach in contrast, others argue that CSR is strategic in nature and a potential source of competitive advantage (e.g. Burke and Logsdon, 1996; Porter and Kramer, 2006). In this second scenario, our scholarly activities should be strictly goal orientated in nature, designed to further the cause of individuals within it and potentially the field of CSR by association, seeking to promote its position in the panoply of academic fields and subfields. Such a focus on individual academic achievement is heavily gendered, where masculinities and male dominance are evident in terms of leadership and management (Martin, 1994). This is reflected in discourses of individualism, authoritarianism, paternalism, entrepreneurialism and careerism (Collinson and Hearn, 1994). Developing this, Van den Brink and Benschop (2012a) present convincing evidence that academic excellence is an evasive social construct that is inherently gendered, favouring men over women. We might have expected to find masculinist dominance in traditional trades such as construction (Denissen, 2010), but it is also alive and kicking in the ivory towers of academia. Martin (1994) identifies reasons for this as including: reification of the public-private dichotomy which allows for the failure to deal with the intertwined nature of home and work life; asymmetries in social relations at work which marginalize women; bias in performance assessment, especially prevalent in confidential processes; and the resilience of gendered asymmetries in faculty life.

So we have the contrasting ideas that the CSR field is ethically exceptional on the one hand – one CSR manager called it the 'feminine' side of the business[4], or just another, instrumentally driven masculinist aspect of management practice and scholarship, on the other. Unsurprisingly, in my experience both are at play. In order to engage with the most well respected, mainstream literature and protagonists, the CSR field and its inhabitants play the academic game, in which there is a "predominance of white men as leaders" (Marshall, 2007, p. 168), and engage with CSR as if it were gender neutral (Coleman, 2002, cited in Marshall, 2007). Nevertheless, I have yet to come across a CSR academic who didn't fairly openly admit to hopes and intentions to do some actual good, make a positive contribution and maybe even enable business to be more socially responsible (Tams and Marshall, 2011). Like many of my colleagues, I am hoping to make a good career out of changing the world for the better although these are not always easy goals to integrate (Winkler, 2014). Indeed, when I acknowledged to a group of CSR PhD students the need for junior scholars to be aware of journal rankings and to be a bit strategic about forging a solid foundation for their career, one well-established Professor accused me of scholarly prostitution, of selling out by putting career ambitions above the inherent work and purpose of CSR research.

So tempers can run high in our field. We can be criticised both for being activists without sufficient scholarship, and for being too instrumental in forwarding our own careers without due deference to

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[4] Personal conversation, Céline Louche. See also Larson and Freeman (1997).

achieving positive social change. I have published articles, blogs and book chapters that fall into both of these categories. Judi Marshall (2007) noted in her work on the gendering of leadership in CSR that some chose to affect change from outside of the system as activists, while others engage with the issues as a 'tempered radical' (see Meyerson and Scully, 1995), working within the problematic system to achieve lasting change (Marshall, 2007, p. 171). For now at least, I would put myself in the category of a tempered radical, signing up to all the systems and structures of academic progress yet trying to influence them for greater social justice as I go, not least in terms of gender awareness and balance in the CSR field. It isn't lost on me that I have survived and prospered thus far in the system I now try to challenge, which gives me food for thought myself. And of course while I may be a member of the *CSR* field, recruitment and promotion systems are run by administrators and academics who are probably not part of that community.

What does all this mean for gender diversity in the scholarly community of CSR? Though data on the CSR field specifically is hard to come by, Van den Brink and Benschop (2012b) have shown clearly that in an academic context, the promotion rate of women is lower than that of men across academic disciplines. From my many years of observation, this appears also to be the case in CSR, despite there being a very strong, vibrant presence of female early career researchers. That is not to say that we don't have women full professors, we do, and compared to some science fields we are awash with them. Occasionally there is pretty good gender parity at CSR events. For example, at one international workshop of senior scholars in the related sustainability field in 2014, I noticed that there were way more women than men, and was wondering how to address that in this essay which I was working on at that time. I decided to check the numbers exactly, only to discover that there were still more men than women at the event, but the near-parity of genders gave the illusion that there were a majority of women; an impression confirmed by others. Interesting, that we are so used to seeing a male majority that equity starts to look like imbalance in the other direction.

So the wider gender bias discussed at the beginning of this paper also, at an anecdotal level at least – holds true for CSR (Marshall, 2007). There are some perhaps counterintuitive exceptions. I have found that women are highly visible in the professional academic bodies, offering service to the CSR community through being on executive committees of the Social Issues in Management Division of the Academy Of Management, the Society for Business Ethics, the European Business Ethics Network, the International Association for Business in Society and the International Society for Business, Economics and Ethics (three of which I myself have served on). Some might argue that such service roles sit comfortably with women because of the traditional gendered nature of women's obligations to meet domestic service as well as employment responsibilities (Pearson, 2007). Indeed some have – contentiously - suggested that the moral person for women is one who helps and serves others (Gilligan, 1982; White, 1992). Simone de Beauvoir (1949) was more disparaging about the idea of service being associated with women. She reflected on the traditional role of women as working in the home, responsible for domestic labour i.e. domestic service, and for doing her duty in the bedroom. I can almost imagine de Beauvoir adding 'professional service' to her take on women as service providers, offering support to others through their roles on professional society boards, as well as looking after others in the home (see also Marshall, 2000).

Joanne Martin (1994) notes that in addition to the expected issues around work-life balance and the multiple roles performed by women in higher education that may divert them from personal career progression, they may also be subject to additional tasks which their male counterparts need not

perform. As a scarce commodity in senior roles in academia, women are disproportionately called upon to sit on interview panels, committees, to mentor both staff and students and all with the expectation of being sympathetic and helpful, in keeping with the anticipated practices of the female gender (see Fletcher, 1998 on relational practice at work). I myself confront this regularly, having tried to champion both mentoring and promotion-support for junior female colleagues through a School of Management Women's group at my own University, not to mention complaining formally and informally when a professorial recruitment panel was full of white men. As a result I am asked regularly to fulfil these tasks which have little if any formal recognition attached to them, but in which I personally believe. And so I prioritise mentoring and ensuring gender balance in decision-making tasks over other work but I can't – and wouldn't want to - imagine not doing so.

Outside of academia, one survey of 1,200 CSR professionals (ACRE, 2014) primarily from the UK suggests – like my recent conference – that the common impression that there are more women in CSR than men is mistaken. However, there is almost gender parity (47% female) among the ACRE study respondents. More telling figures perhaps are related to job role, where at the lowest level of Assistant/Team member, women dominate 38%(M):62%(F) in stark contrast to the Director/Head level 63%(M):37%(F). Meanwhile the average salary for women in the study declined by over £4000 between 2012 and 2014, while that for men stayed the same, perhaps due to any expansion in women's roles tending to be at the junior levels. Quite aside from the face value of these disheartening statistics, one has to wonder how companies which clearly have sufficient commitment to social responsibility to invest in it and have senior staff involved, haven't managed to turn the spotlight on that most basic of business responsibilities; fair treatment and equal opportunity within their own walls.

To conclude this section, I continue to be startled by the perverse underrepresentation of women on the platform at CSR academic or business events. So it seems that while CSR is a field in which some women can and do prosper, there remains a bias against giving voice to women at the higher levels of academia and business and in the most prestigious environments. One of my pastimes is to look at lists that crop up within the CSR field but undoubtedly elsewhere too: lists of keynote speakers, recommended reading for teaching courses, bibliographies, panellists at conferences, editorial boards, shortlists for professorships, that kind of thing. These make surprisingly interesting reading. In a field which really does have a good range of top scholars of both genders, time and again the majority (sometimes all) of the people in the list are white male (Marshall, 2007 concurs). I would love to see some decent research which identifies the extent of this – perhaps unconscious - bias and the reasons behind it (Banaji, Bazerman and Chugh, 2003).

These are my reflections and observations after 20 years in the field. Research is needed to verify my contentions for the CSR field particularly rather than the wider view on academia or business. At the beginning I introduced the idea that CSR should be different. This also needs further interrogation. From my perspective, while not all of CSR is normative in its orientation, it is a territory where moral judgments are made about appropriate behaviour in business, if only in terms of the choice of topics under its contested umbrella. To maintain some kind of integrity, those working on a topic might be expected to act consistently to it in their everyday lives. We are jarred by dissonance of the smoking oncologist, or a blasphemous vicar. I am not saying CSR researchers should be morally superior, I am not sure any of us would qualify on that count, but surely we should demonstrate a basic interest in fair treatment and social justice?

Gender awareness in CSR doesn't seem like a radical thing to expect. I don't claim that CSR is the worst field in this respect, but there is certainly more that could be done, and action is needed to change that which can be changed for the better. Some actions can be extrapolated from Martin (1994)'s earlier thoughts (see her work for further elaboration): greater care in including women's scholarly contributions; not separating gender-based research in marginal publications and conferences, but keeping them central to the CSR field; and seeking to acknowledge the private sphere in the academic life. Finally, feminist critiques of the canon of CSR research should also help promote gender awareness, which is what I turn to next.

Gender perspectives and feminist contributions to CSR research and teaching content

Much of my own research has been in small firms. After years of empirical research, I remained foxed by a lack of a meaningful theoretical lens for studying small firms, trying out a few angles such as social capital, reciprocity and stakeholder theory without feeling entirely convinced. With the benefit of hindsight I realise that I just couldn't identify one of the standard-issue, publishable theories that would work for my data (by which I mean perhaps institutional theory, actor network theory, resource-based view, theory of the firm, agency theory). And then when I was asked to give a keynote on CSR and small firms at a conference and my computer crashed the night before the event; I was stuck in a hotel room and forced to think on my feet. The rather pedestrian approach I had been planning was long, tightly referenced and detailed – and irretrievable. So I took a risk and thought with the ice-cold clarity that adrenalin can bring, and developed a more speculative talk which brought a feminist lens to understanding small business social responsibility.   At last I felt I could *explain* what was observable in small business: Small firms are characterised by informal relationships and they generally constitute a blurring of the public and the private sphere, not least when family firms are considered, which is the majority case. Furthermore, they tend to be partisan and run by one owner-manager who is both principal and agent of the firm, and for whom personal reputation and legacy are key (Spence, 2007). Above all, small firms are relational, that is, they are characterised by the relationships of which they are constituted over and above any bureaucratically determined systems, structures and roles. . Others too, particularly Von Weltzien Høivik and Melé (2009), have seen the relevance of a feminist perspective for small firms. My own ideas eventually developed into an article in which I have used a feminist lens to redraw some of the classic CSR theories and in doing so make them relevant for small firms (see Spence, 2014).

Far beyond my small firm example, the application of a feminist lens is incredibly valuable for both theory and empirical work. Joanne Martin (2000), for example, has done excellent work on this in the organization studies field, and shown how a feminist lens can re-vision concepts such as the Hawthorne effect, bounded rationality, Weberian bureaucracy and institutional theory. There is a legacy of feminist work in the wider organization studies field (e.g. Barrientos, Dolan and Tallontire, 2003; Grosser and Moon, 2005; Machold, Ahmed and Farquhar, 2009) as well as in CSR more specifically. And yet in 2013 scholars still felt compelled to ask "'Is the 'F'-word still dirty'? A past, present and future of/for feminist and gender studies in *Organization*" (Harding, Ford and Fotaki, 2013). The authors helpfully highlight the work of key feminist theorists such as Judith Butler, Donna Haraway, Héléne Cixous and Luce Irigaray, as well as pointing to bodies of feminist theory including intersectionality, the politics of recognition and the feminist reading of Greek myths and tragedies. I would love to see such specific perspectives applied to CSR.

Happily there is more research on feminist and gendered perspectives to CSR than is often realised, as this book demonstrates. But why does it continue to have such a relatively low profile, obfuscated by the mass of research which ploughs on along the same old lines? A striking example is the feminist-inspired work of R. Edward Freeman, a titan in the CSR field, whose research is among the most cited globally. A very simplistic Google-scholar search shows that books by Freeman are cited in the 1000's (e.g. 18,000+ Freeman, 1984), and even recent books in the 100s (e.g. 650+Freeman et al, 2010)[5]. Yet Freeman's jointly edited book on Women's Studies and Business Ethics (Larson and Freeman, 1997), is hard to track down at all from Europe, and registers twenty odd citations on Google scholar. In the case of journal articles the difference is less pronounced but still evident - Freeman and colleagues published two papers in Business Ethics Quarterly in 1994, - one on a feminist interpretation of the stakeholder concept (Wicks, Gilbert and Freeman, 1994: 350+ cites) and one on the politics of stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1994: 1400+ cites). More recently, the most well received work in this space is by Kate Grosser and Jeremy Moon (2005, 84 cites) on gender mainstreaming in CSR on which the current volume builds, and Ruth Pearson (2007) on gender and CSR which is published outside of the field in *Third World Quarterly* (75 cites). I would also add the Scandinavian perspective on CSR, which it has been suggested embraces a feminine approach to management, emphasising low hierarchies and co-operation, though some might view this as a sanitised version of feminism (Strand and Freeman, 2013). Another aspect which does get some airtime and should be mentioned is gender diversity on Corporate Boards, especially in relation to financial performance, though as I noted at the beginning, progress here has also been slow (e.g. Campbell and Mínguez-Vera, 2008). So there is interesting and relevant literature in the body of CSR and business ethics work, but *it is lacks visibility* and impact on the wider field.

Thus there are only limited indicators that gender studies and feminism are entering the mainstream in CSR, and they are still often marginalized. In another workshop experience, someone summarising the theories which had been discussed deleted the feminist approach from his list, despite the fact that a feminist lens had explicitly been used at least twice in the quite small workshop (interestingly one of those speakers had been robustly encouraged by a senior scholar to drop the feminist lens in favour of actor network theory). This seems to me to be a common occurrence -feminist perspectives, where they are made explicit, routinely get filtered out again. The wider management and organisation studies field, as I have indicated, is further down the track in legitimizing gender and feminist perspectives than CSR, and yet Broadbridge and Simpson noted in 2011, in their review of 25 years of gender and management research, that the position "of gender in management research is by no means secure" (p. 471). In relative terms in CSR, gender barely has a toehold. We would do well to learn from the challenges still faced by gender in the wider management research field: that there is an assumption within the wooden horse of the feminization thesis that the problem of gender has been 'solved'; that a focus on diversity may dilute the voice of women; that renewed interest in researching men and masculinities may reproduce another patriarchal 'vision' that excludes women and femininities; and that dominant notions of meritocracy and choice

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[5] Data accessed 22 April 2015. Clearly, my crude metric is citations, and perhaps that is also a masculinist measure of appreciation where a feminist lens probably would not consider citations a meaningful measurement of success, since women 'speak out' in a different way from men, though by no means all feminist or gender-aware work is by women (Broadbridge and Simpson, 2011).

promote 'neutral' criteria which contain a gender bias (Broadbridge and Simpson, 2011; Van den Brink and Benschop, 2012a)[6].

As a business ethicist, it is feminist ethics which is of particular interest to me (see Borgerson, 2007). I was introduced to this during my PhD when I sought to apply ethical theory to business practice. In 1996 when I was near the end of my doctoral studies, an article came out by Jeanne Liedtka (1996) which drew my attention to feminist morality and particularly the ethic of care. It was too late then for me to change the approach in my own doctoral research, where I had used a range of moral theory to understand business practice. But what it did draw to my attention that all the philosophers I had used were male and promoting arguably a masculinist perspective (Borgerson, 2007; Held, 2006; Nunner-Winkler, 1993), i.e. Immanuel Kant, John Rawls, Aristotle, Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill, Jürgen Habermas. By masculinist I mean principle-based contractarian understandings of morality which presume the possibility of rationality, autonomy and impartiality and promote the idea of justice. Such approaches are modelled on the experience of men in public life (Held, 2006, p.26). Virginia Held, one of the leading philosophers working on the ethic of care summarizes the contrasting characteristics of an ethic of care as meeting the needs of others for whom we take responsibility; valuing emotions alongside rationality; accepting partiality; including the private sphere as a moral terrain; and acknowledging that people are relational and interdependent. She notes that the ethic of care emerges in contrast to justice-based theories when women's experiences of morality are included as well as men's (Held, 2006). The ethic of care is an example of a feminist ethic, though is not synonymous with all feminist approaches (Borgerson, 2007; Larrabee, 1993). It draws from Carol Gilligan's research in the 1970s/80s in which she perceived 'a different voice' in moral development when girls were included in research studies (Gilligan, 1982). White (1992) has suggested that these differences help to explain gendered responses to moral dilemmas, but there are other wider implications around the nature of authentic leadership, role models and legitimate and credible behaviour in the workplace, for instance.

While it has taken some time to incorporate feminist perspectives into my own research, as soon as I started *teaching* business ethics, I was delighted to be able to introduce a contrasting perspective from the dominant world views, and – what a relief – a woman's face on my lecture slides in the form of Carol Gilligan. Others have also noted the value of the ethic of care in teaching business ethics (DeMoss and McCann, 1997; White, 1992). Some feminists have argued that the ethic of care is too associated with women and the caring professions (for a discussion see Borgerson, 2007), but I have not felt constrained by this objection, and have found it to have explanatory powers in my work when used to understand my respondents, male and female, in fact mostly male. And my students have not to my knowledge divided along gender lines around support or critique of the ethic of care.

Conclusion

Finally, I can't avoid addressing my own struggles with how and when to use the 'F' word. I have always been comfortable at a personal level with calling myself a feminist and am quite aghast to hear privileged, educated people say they are 'not a feminist'. I can't contemplate in fact what it

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[6] Taking this latter point, I know of one university, for instance, which instigated a new systematic professorial pay system based on merit after losing a court case on gender pay gap discrimination. After the first round of the new 'transparent' professorial pay reviews, the gender pay gap of professors across the university increased, leaving women still further disadvantaged. Gender biased measures in the system were happily then acknowledged and revised.

would mean *not* to be a feminist. I have flirted myself with whether feminism is the right term because it is so gender specific and - to some though not me - suggests negativity towards men. So is egalitarianism a better term? I conclude not, because it does not encompass the moral and philosophical contributions which a feminist lens continues to offer. And yet I am aware that I have struggled myself with how prominently to place the 'F' word in my work, since I have assumed that some stigma is still sadly attached (Harding, Ford and Fotaki, 2013). This is the first time, for example, that I have used 'feminist' in a title. Previously I have chosen not to, I think for pragmatic reasons of not wanting people to make snap judgements about the article, and potentially that it is not of relevance to them[7].

Certainly friends and colleagues at work, at home and in the CSR field are aware that I am conscious and vocal about the gender imbalances pointed out in the first half of this essay. Gender is of course not the only factor at play, since I am now in one of those privileged, relatively powerful positions (Pearson, 2007) from which women are often excluded. Despite on occasion being marginalized myself[8], I am conscious of being more readily visible and having a space in which to use my voice, though visibility and voice are by no means unproblematic concepts (Simpson and Lewis, 2005). Now that I am comfortably mid-career - and perhaps a feeling of security influences this – I knowingly and purposefully try to use the voice which I have by virtue of some kind of status, to *speak up!* For me this means to be ready to point out as many times as it takes when there is masculinist bias creeping in, when feminist approaches are obfuscated, when gendered language is being used[9], to try to bring in a feminist perspective when it is missing. In short, to stick my neck out a little and write essays like this. My approach has mainly been feminism by the back door, but I am reflecting on that as I write, and maybe it is time for me to step it up.

In the context of corporate social responsibility as elsewhere, issues around gender are embedded variously in power, class, race, religion, sexuality, disability, education, sexism, political and cultural traditions that have affected women and men in the private and public spheres (Pearson, 2007). There is much that needs to be done to explore what is known as feminist intersectionality (Acker, 2012). For example, the oppression evident in global supply chain exploitation (Barrientos, Dolan and Tallontire, 2003) surely has a gendered perspective but there are other factors at play too. These things are not traceable back to a single issue, but closer inspection and understanding is needed, and gender must be a prominent part of this.

Now for the caveats. As I have noted, this is a personalised account, in keeping with a feminist narrative, autobiographical tradition (see Marshall, 1997). While I have sought to reflect the literature, the essay is unapologetically from the heart at least as much as the head. I have tried to preserve some of the authentic meanderings, but as a result it wanders between levels of analysis

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[7] The editors of this book have pointed out to me that this somewhat presumes that in my mind my usual audience is (a) uninterested in feminism and/or (b) more likely to be male. I have no real evidence for either of these assumptions, and can't in all honesty find a picture in my head of to whom I am writing. That is something which I will think about more in the future. I can only say that in writing this essay, I am assuming that the reader is (a) interested in feminism and/or (b) more likely to be female. And I do detect that I am filtering my writing much less than is normally the case. Is this because I do not feel here that I am talking as an 'Other' (Marshall, 200)? Perhaps.

[8] In 2013 – twice, once in Europe and once in America – when senior scholars of which I was one were being thanked at CSR PhD events, all the male senior scholars in the room were thanked by name, but none of the women senior scholars were named on either occasion.

[9] I hope I am not the only editor in our field to send articles back to the authors for editing *before* review if they contain gendered language.

and there are many, many perspectives on feminism and gender on which I have not touched. There is a great deal of feminist literature which I have yet to investigate which would no doubt help me to develop a more nuanced critique and set of suggestions for research beyond the scope of this essay (see Borgerson, 2007; Borna and White, 2003; Tronto, 1993). My essay does not seek to offer a full literature review of CSR, gender and feminism, and that is not the intention, but such a review does badly need to be done thoroughly and conscientiously and published in full technicolour with a suitable fanfare so that it cannot be ignored. I do not intend this essay to speak *only* to women though it perhaps comes across that way. These are in no sense just women's problems nor do the solutions lie only with women. The obfuscation of gender-aware research, of a feminist perspective and of women's voices in CSR scholarship and the community is a critical issue for all of us in the CSR field and beyond.

So, what can be done? Stoic resignation, shoulder shrugging or wry smiles won't change things, nor will the acts of women alone. In terms of the roles women play in the field, the popular idea of identifying everyday sexism is something we could perhaps try to do more proactively, to keep nudging an increase in awareness of gender and women's contributions to our field. We should actively notice the work of women. Never miss a chance for giving constructive feedback or supporting and promoting a female colleague's good work. If you have some power, never accept a male-only panel, or editorial board, or such like. If you can't personally influence such things, never let them pass without comment at least and preferably complaint. At the very least, use survey and feedback forms to make your feelings known.

Just as the suffragettes promoted deeds not words, a kind of academic activism might be needed. I would encourage the use of the weapons and armoury of academia, the spoken, written and broadcast word, to maximum effect. So we need to see more publishing across the panoply of journals and books that puts gender and feminist perspectives to excellent use. Feminist approaches should also engage with the mainstream, in order to make it impossible to airbrush them out. In short, we need to foster more tempered radicals until they are radical no more, because the world around them has changed. Colleagues all need to speak up about the contribution of gender studies and feminist perspectives. This book will be a valuable resource in demonstrating sound research on gender and CSR which should be an irresistible, solid contribution to the mainstream that *has* to be heard.

Acknowledgements

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