

Does Good Leadership have a Gender?

by James Traeger

The Numbers Game

Consistent evidence of the Equal Opportunities Commission, amongst others, shows that a generation after the first round of equality and equal pay legislation, women are still well behind men in key measures of success in employment, including numbers of women at senior leadership levels in organisations. Recent reports suggest a person most likely to be discriminated in the job market is a woman with young children under 11. In leadership, women still make up a tiny minority of official leadership roles. Trevor Phillips of the Equality and HR commission said on Radio 4's *Today Programme*, 28/2/07: *'We would have to wait until my great, great grandchildren's generation for there to be equal numbers of men and women in Parliament, according to current rates of change'*.

But surely things have moved on, even if we don't think they have moved on far enough? Change in organisations on this issue over the last generation or so is self-evident. In March 1960, an article appeared in *The Ironmonger* magazine entitled 'Learning to Manage Men'. Yet the groups we meet today are very likely to have more than a 'token woman' in them. Things have moved on, even if not fast enough. So is there a problem here at all? Isn't it just a question of waiting for the wheel of change to turn, and simply finding ways of tinkering with it to get it to spin a little faster? After all, there is always the impact of new and even tougher legislation to help, such as the 'Gender Equality Duty', which came into force in April 2007. Shouldn't this further encourage women to smash through that 'glass ceiling'?

But perhaps this focus on the numbers misses another, bigger point. Perhaps we need to consider a deeper and more troubling issue of leadership, culture and dominance. This might suggest that both women and men are subjected as leaders to everyday conditions derived from gender dynamics that might be unhelpful to them and detrimental to the effectiveness of their business. This means talking about gender in leadership not just as a demographic issue but also as a set of power relations. In other words, when we talk about gender issues in leadership, is it simply about getting the numbers right, or are we asking deeper questions of business culture, styles of leadership, and what power looks like, and whether the qualities that people expect in their leaders are the same as what makes businesses run well?

Mars Wins and Everybody Loses

A recent encounter with a potential client brought this point home to me. She was a senior partner in a professional services company. I sat opposite her and she fixed me with a steely glare.

'I don't want anything pink and fluffy,' she said. 'We want to offer something that will clearly add to the bottom line.'

'I understand.' I said, which of course I did.

Gone are the days, it seemed, when men were from Mars and women from Venus. Here in front of me was the same kind of corporate animal as I am, or at least talking the same kind of language. Yet if gender has ceased to be an area of difference between men and women in business, this is not to say that she and I have both become some kind of all-in-one, androgynous animal, mid-way between male and female. It is true that women, in number terms at least, have gained a substantial foothold in the meeting rooms, if not much yet in the boardrooms of modern businesses. But in doing so, have they had to become just like men?

As Luderman and Erlandson say in their book Alpha Male Syndrome:

"Because of the popular image of the alpha male, with his powerful physical presence and tough-guy demeanour, we seldom hear the term alpha female. But a great many women in leadership positions do possess the fundamental traits that define alphas."

Is this progress? Is this the liberation that the pioneering feminists sought? And where does it leave men? You might be prompted to ask 'who cares?' to this last question, and this is exactly the point: We should care, and I do, being a man myself, and having a son who is one as well.

Why does 'Gender' mean 'Women'?

When we talk about 'gender' we usually consider it to be about 'women'. So when considering if leadership has a gender we can tend ignore a vital question: where are the men in all of this?

As a man myself, my intention has been to try and get into the foreground on this question to try and address this as a central issue of my life. Indeed I suppose this is one of the few remarkable things about me. Otherwise, you might consider me as a fairly normal, heterosexual bloke. You might ask what on earth that really means, but let me put it this way: I am not particularly into beer but I do like a lads night out. I love football, being a passionate Chelsea supporter, although oddly I received my indoctrination into the blues from my mother rather than my father. I also hide an anorak in my cupboard, which comes out should anyone start a conversation about aeroplanes within earshot of me. Again oddly, I share this eccentricity with my older brother, who is gay. Interestingly, in my experience of working for years with 'gender', the more you explore any one individual's life, the less it can be said to fall into any stereotypical category.

So although I might paint a complex and confusing picture of a life, (and it might be that who doesn't when you really look closely enough?), on the outside my behaviour can

make me appear pretty indistinguishable from the very type of man I might profess to distance myself from.

Of course I have spent so many years coming to terms with aspects of that very man that as I become (hopefully) more self-aware, I am shocked to find he still lurks within me. But since my late teens, a question has persisted, although it has been at times quite a painful one to address: *what sort of man am I?* This is about the only thing, from what I can gather, that makes me truly unusual as a man. In my experience I don't often encounter men who ask this question, at least not that explicitly or at least publicly. Indeed in my experience asking men this question, even bright, intelligent, middle class, otherwise metro-sexual men, makes them squirm. It is like showing a dog a card trick; they usually just don't know how to respond.

Generally speaking, these men I meet aren't stupid. They are often good partners, fathers and husbands, hard working and conscientious in the main. They even have emotions. Just watch *Match of the Day* if you don't believe me. So like all stereotypes, it starts to unravel when we explore it, and yet one thing persists; this inability, or at least unwillingness to address this central question itself: what kind of man am I? It's as if asking or discussing this question touches against some dark and deeply rooted taboo; like a family with a dark secret, which is why they never discuss the photograph on the mantelpiece that as a visitor you can't fail to notice.

That *is* the issue around leadership and gender all too often. In itself it is a bit of a taboo. It is not that we are surrounded by harsh chauvinism or sexism. Indeed our working culture has clearly made strides to address this and most modern organisations would consider themselves, on paper at least, pretty open-minded. It is just that people in general, and men in particular just don't want to talk about it. So if gender comes up, it means women, because in the main it becomes a discussion of whether women are 'man enough' to work at the top of organisations, or choosing to 'opt out', as if there is a game there they could join in with, or not if they choose to. Recently I heard a song by a woman called Elizabeth Cook, called *Sometimes it takes balls to be a woman!* But where do we hear men offered the same (albeit invidious) choice? Or at least a discussion about it, that doesn't polarise into New Man vs macho pig?

Sensible discussions by men about masculinity in organisations or in society more widely just aren't on the menu. Women face a 'double bind' at work; the 'damned if you do/ damned if you don't' choice to stay on the margins of the organisational power structure and risk permanent marginality, or join in and risk being considered to have 'balls'. But at least there is some acceptance that they could and should talk about it. For men the same choice persists; engage in a certain type of masculinity, a game of domination and competition, or risk being marginalized as a 'not up to it'. But the potentially dangerous thing about the male double bind is that we just don't talk about it very much. Do we just assume that men are comfortable with it? That they choose it?

Some time ago I engaged in a collaborative enquiry with a group of men into the relationship between leadership and masculinity. A group of us, all men, from a range of different organisations across the private and public sectors got together because we were

troubled by this silence that seems to emanate from and about men on the gender question. We interviewed a group of top men, including a former Chief Constable of a police constabulary, the head of a major university and the Chief Executive of a County Council. All of them, when assured of the confidentiality of the discussions, were open and honest, emotionally adept, frank and self-aware. All of them seemed to know that masculinity was an issue; that people around them very often had a certain expectation about what kind of leader they should be, which often meant 'taking tough decisions' and showing their 'authority'. All of them reported a sense loneliness alongside their determination to succeed and ambition.

Another theme that often emerged was the regret of the cost of their ambition to their relationships, particularly with their close family. What was striking about all these men, however, was their unwillingness to be seen to be talking about these issues more publicly. 'How would it look?' one said to me, 'if we were seen to be bearing our soul like this, to the wider world? And what would it look like if we top men were seen to be meeting together to discuss this type of thing?' This question seems to demonstrate the power of the boundary around a kind of 'leadership maleness', what the gender theorist Bob Connell calls a 'hegemonic masculinity'. So it's not like they couldn't talk about these things, it's that they wouldn't. The lack of discussion about what it means to be man in a leadership position, or indeed what it means to be a man at all, demonstrates the power of this taboo. It is like a collective 'don't talk to Daddy, he's busy driving'.

As an aside, if you think that the fundamentally different 'natures' of men and women predetermine their propensities to lead (or not), then I'm afraid there is a huge body of research literature that undermines your position. One book I would recommend is by Professor Deborah Cameron, Professor of Linguistics at Oxford University. In her 2007 book *'The Myth of Mars and Venus: Do Men and Women Really Speak Different Languages?'*, she systematically debunks the so-called 'natural' difference in men's and women's communication styles. Then there is Richard A. Lippa's scholarly work, *'Gender, Nature and Nurture'* (2001), which demonstrates how most of the 'truths' of gender difference that so many of us hold dear simply evaporate under statistical scrutiny. For example, only the trait of 'height' shows a persistently significant statistical difference between men and women. The fact that this overwhelming body of research evidence goes so inexorably against the grain of our 'common sense' shows just how deeply rooted the taboo of 'gender difference' really is.

Sexual Harassment – A thing of the Past?

So those who have been pushing for equality all these years may have missed something: more equal numbers don't necessarily mean that the previously powerless get a better chance to set the culture. It usually means that those who want to join in the game just have to learn to play it better than those who invented it. I come from a Jewish background so I should know. Being a successful immigrant is about being a good shape-shifter; a public face that happily fits often hides a private one that is more troubled. For women, their immigration is into the corporate world beyond the typing pool. A system of domination and subordination still thrives. It is just that some women, granted perhaps

more than before, now have a chance to join in on the winning side. Those in charge can now wear a skirt, as long as they talk as if they wear the trousers.

Working in the corporate world, I know that this can have a huge cost for the women involved; one that is very often hidden from public view. I have coached senior women in businesses, in public sector leadership, in the police. In this one-to-one situation you often become privy to things that are hidden behind the public persona. Here, they have often articulate the challenges; for example, the loneliness of being both shunned by their colleagues in the board room as well as by the mothers of their children's classmates at the school gates. (That is if they ever get the chance to be there).

It isn't just about vague discrimination either. They often talk about the veiled (and sometimes explicit) sexual innuendo or even harassment that goes covered up because it just 'goes with the territory'. One senior policewoman told me how she was touched up by a member of her police authority at a promotion board and then told when she didn't get the job that she 'should be pleased anyway as this would give her more time with her children'. These things haven't stopped happening, as many think. They have just gone underground, because on the surface it only pays to appear to be emotionally closed and steely, just like the top men are supposed to be.

This hunch that not much has changed, despite the fact that we pretend things have gone 'gender neutral' in the workplace, is backed up by the statistics. Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) research in the year 2000 suggested that half of women in British workplaces when questioned in private will report some kind of sexual harassment. Even if this has changed substantially in recent years (which is doubtful) it is unlikely that this now means that gender difference and the associated power dynamics have disappeared at work. It is much more likely, and more worrying to suggest that if this figure has changed, it is because more women may accept this type of thing as 'part of the job'.

This all points to the fact that our real behaviour, our fears and attitudes about sex and gender at work, just stays underground. As the EOC says in their guide to support organisations and individuals who face such harassment:

"...managers inform us that they lack confidence when faced with dealing with complaints of sexual harassment. Even the most experienced managers are likely to encounter difficulties when faced with complaints, partly because of their infrequency. Policies and procedures, while important, can never cover all the circumstances that can arise or the practicalities of how to handle them with sensitivity, tact and fairness."

It is such a hot potato that people find it easier, safer, perhaps less threatening to simply ignore their own experience and 'get on with it'. This is of course just what male-dominated culture has always been taught people to do with their difficult feelings. Supposedly, confronting the truth just 'makes things worse'.

From a male point of view, the situation isn't really much better, contrary to what people might think. Patriarchy requires the majority of men to feel inferior so that the top man can feel good about himself. Hence the expression banded about big companies, especially in

America: 'coming second is being the first loser'. For the majority of men, this means constantly having to prove through their toughness and sang-froid that they aren't a 'beta male'.

Metro-sexuality doesn't change things that much. The emotionally repressive man, who feels like he swallows his pride all day long, is still more likely to come home and drink too much, develop a depressive illness or even take it out on his wife or kids, whether his skin is well moisturised or not. If this wasn't the case, why is domestic violence still such an issue, costing the UK State £5.7 billion a year, according to the government's own 'Women and Equality Unit'? The only significant shift is now men are the possible victims. The 2001/02 British Crime Survey (BCS) found 19 per cent of domestic violence incidents were reported to be male victims, with just under half of these having a female abuser. Is this progress?

The trouble is that these issues form the background in the workplace yet remain taboo. We just don't want to talk about it. For men and women, it is just too risky. As a man, it can seem to me that women have the slight advantage sometimes, because at least there are such things as women's equality units there to support them. But my women friends tell me, and I believe them, that it is hard for me as a man to fully realise how far the advantages that women have, in their emotional adroitness for example, are far outweighed by the simple fact that they are damned either way; they remain an outsider, forever marginalised, or they get stuck in to the male world and risk emotional disconnectedness and the disapproval of men and women alike.

Yet I know many men who secretly envy the leeway women seem to have which explains why some women executives do so well. They can play the tough guy and still be in touch with themselves. It is an advantage in this topsy-turvy world. This is beaten out of us blokes from an early age. As a senior policeman once said to me:

"I learnt very quickly I had to lock my feelings away in order to survive in this culture. And one day I realised that I had forgotten where I left the key."

What sort of Leaders do we need?

It isn't even as if these alpha males (whether in skirts or not) make for more successful businesses. Jim Collins, in his book *Good To Great*, shows that the companies which have delivered long-term growth and outstanding investor returns for a generation or more, are not led by people who parade their victories like a Caesar, but rather by what he calls 'Level 5 Leaders', quiet, self-aware, humble, determined and unassuming people; so much so that you probably don't even know their names.

We simply need to develop people in the workplace who have the self-awareness and nous to address these issues with men and women head on, not blaming men or putting women on a pedestal (again!) but talking about it *like it is*. It wouldn't solve the problem overnight – in fact talking about things often makes them seem worse to start with, but then what happens is that we start to see the humanity in everyone, when the true stories

come out. I have done it inside the most macho cultures and it is remarkable how if you explore with people their real experience of themselves as men and women, how complex and individual they really are, beyond the stereotypes. And then you start to get teams of people who can be authentic with each other, and perform.

But this matters more than just for the bottom line. Maybe it is too late for me; perhaps my son and his generation have a chance to be different. But not unless the culture at work realises that if Mars has won, then everyone loses.

Perhaps we need to examine here what we mean by leadership. It is a term that is often used in ways that suggest we may be less certain about it than we think we are. We incite people to 'show more leadership' when this can be interpreted in many different ways, from a highly dictatorial 'step in and take charge' style to the Zen-like 'let others think they have done it themselves'. Like so many such fashionable words, it is a catch-all; meaning whatever we want it to mean at any particular time.

Amanda Sinclair, Professor of Diversity and Change at Melbourne Business school, suggests that we may deliberately keep our notions of leadership vague because this serves an 'ideological' purpose: it is suggestive of the way leaders should be, almost as if we are yearning to lead in a particular kind of way, one which never quite lives up to these expectations. She cites the research of C. Stivers, which finds that:

'In Western industrialized societies, both men and women expect leaders to be decisive, visionary, bold, and inspirational....they also tend to expect leaders to be male.'
(Stivers 1993) quoted in (Sinclair 1998, 2005 (revised)) p27.

The Followers

So whilst many of us still carry within us a relatively old fashioned idea that leadership is a 'quality' that some people have and others don't, the way it plays out in our families, organisations and society is that leadership is something to do with the relationship between the leader and the follower. So if we spend so much of our energy thinking about the characteristics of good leaders, are we barking up the wrong tree? Should we be looking at clarifying and perhaps challenging the ideas that *followers* carry? For the situation to shift for female leaders, this may help progress.

It is vital that we recognise here what Sinclair, Stivers and many others have shown is that both men and *women*, as followers in this sense, have a strong and even unconscious expectation that leader equals man. This may have two surprising and profound consequences: that the resistance to women's ascent in organisations may come from both other women as much as men and also those women who aspire to leadership may *themselves* carry an internalised sense of their own unfitness and lack of confidence about their role as a leader.

This may have a number of unfortunate consequences, and in fact there can often be observed a poisonous cocktail of behaviours, expectations and counter expectations around prominent women leaders, which don't serve them or their organisations. But once

again, lest we put too much of an onus on these women to do anything differently, we should be paying some attention to what the *followers* are doing, and how we might raise their awareness about their contribution to the system of leadership being enacted.

Two examples from my own recent practice come to mind. The first involved a coaching client who was the Assistant Chief Executive of a local authority and the second involved a woman Chief of Police.

In first case, I was working with the top team of a local authority and part of this work involved my coaching the each individual around their own leadership role. I enjoyed working with one of the people in particular; the Assistant Chief Executive, whom I found particularly keen to learn about herself and work towards improvement, even though her performance was already widely acknowledged to be pretty high.

For a consultant/coach, it is always a joy to find yourself working with someone who just values learning, plain and simple, without needing for things to be 'fixed'. We spent quite a lot of our time together exploring her relationships with her colleagues, and in particular her relationships with her colleagues on the Senior Management Team and the Chief Executive. Much of the time we seemed to return to one theme in particular: how she was perceived by colleagues to be a 'doer' someone who 'gets things done', but that she sometimes was perceived to lack 'sensitivity', even to the point where she had decided to go out of her way to talk to people, because she had been told she could be perceived as 'unfriendly'. This was taking up quite a bit of her time, and yet when we explored it further we found that she was already spending a lot of her already over-stretched energies on these relationship tasks. In particular, she described how she spent a lot of her time, 'smoothing relationships over' between the Chief Executive, Members of the Council, Senior Managers and so on.

"I feel like the cleaner sometimes!" she told me one day, *"I spend all my day getting things done and then all evening, or early morning, doing the mop and bucket work, cleaning up other people's emotional messes."*

So far from being the 'lean, mean doing machine' as she was often portrayed by others in the organisation, she was actually doing more than her fair share of the emotional labour too, but this was either not seen, or not regarded as important work (even though we know this is vital senior leadership work in the smooth running of organisations). So yes there were questions we could and did explore about how she could change her behaviour and style to have a different and perhaps more sustainable way of being, but it was also striking how powerless she felt as well about this, which for a driven and highly self-directing and emotionally mature individual was a real frustration:

"It doesn't matter what I do sometimes; if I act tough people say I am a bitch, and if I spend time building relationships, people say I am doing it manipulatively."

Once again, the power that was keeping this particular double-bind in place seemed to be in the hands of the followers.

The other example I mention above was with the Chief of a Police organisation. Again, this leader in question always struck me as a mature, self-directing and robust character. She had described to me in the course of our discussions in a rather matter of fact way deliberate bullying and discrimination she had faced at various times in her career, and that in her view this was not an uncommon experience for women in the Police.

“You just have to deal with it, and it helps to have good supporters along the way as well.”

Having worked extensively in a variety of Police organisations over the years, what is rather chilling is the commonplace nature of this type of experience; and yet the grace and resilience that is shown by the ‘victims’, who refuse to see themselves as such, is also very inspiring.

In one incident however, I was offered another clue about the nature of the double bind that senior women, or women who aspire to become more senior, may face. I was discussing the experience of work with several of her subordinates. At one point, some of them disclosed how uncomfortable they were with how ‘informal’ her leadership style was.

“She doesn’t expect you to automatically stand up when she walks in the room. She is the Chief after all. All our previous Chiefs used to expect that. She also wants you to call her by her first name when you are meeting with her. That just makes me uncomfortable. It’s as if she is taking apart all that matters to us.”

Now this was quite some leap of inference and required a little bit of taking apart in itself, but the upshot of the discussion that followed was that we agreed we would ask her, when she joined us for the rest of this meeting as was planned, what she really thought about this issue, ‘to stand or not to stand’.

“Well,” she said, once the question had been posed, “I think it is about the situation we are in. If we are in an informal setting, I am not particularly bothered whether you call me, ‘Ma’am’, or whatever you like, as long as you are respectful. And as for standing up, the same applies, and yes if we are in a formal setting I think it is fine for you to stand. The bottom line is that I would expect you to use your common sense.”

Now this seems like a perfectly reasonable answer in the 21st century, and I would doubt very much whether any modern senior police figure would vary very much from this line (and indeed I have out of my own interest, asked a few since and unsurprisingly how found their answers to be a pretty consistent with this). But for these police officers, with whom we unpacked her comments later on, it was regarded as both ‘woolly’ and ‘a chance for her to have a go at us for getting it wrong’.

If you find yourself saying, ‘She just can’t win!’, then this is exactly the point. And it might be the whole point we are missing about leadership, which for women is just particularly acute: how much of it is in the eye of the beholder.

But what is our lived experience in organisations? Here we are much more likely to see leadership as a transient thing, moving from place to place and person to person, as the nature of the task at hand changes. Yet research shows that we are most likely to ‘see’

leadership as it is embodied by certain types of people, and in particular certain types of men. This means that if we are to consider whether leadership has a gender it may be a good idea not just to consider what the leaders are like, but also what followers expect. In fact, it may be that by changing the expectations of followers, and raising their awareness about their own prejudices about what a good leader may look like, that we are better able to break the so-called glass ceiling that seems to persist in keeping women away from senior leadership positions in any numbers.

There are those that argue that 'it is a matter of time'; that after a while if things just are allowed to carry on the way they are, women will become more numerous in the boardroom. Worryingly though, the demographics don't support this argument.

According to a survey commissioned by Sarah Churchman, Head of Diversity at consulting firm PWC, (as reported on the People Management website in March 2007), in the number of female senior managers working in major UK businesses had fallen by more than 40 per cent in the last five years, according to a new survey:

"In 2002, 38 per cent of senior manager level posts in the FTSE 350 were occupied by women, but this has now [as of early 2007] sunk to 22 per cent.

The report by PWC found that although at the most senior level the number of FTSE 350 female chairmen or chief executives had grown, progress was still "painfully slow" and the number could "still be counted on one hand."

Four Phases of Progress

Amanda Sinclair goes on to talk about four phases of executive culture which are progressively more at ease with addressing the underlying issues which persist here. Combining her model with the PWC report findings suggest that as a culture, UK Leaders are a bit stuck in the less progressive phases.

Phase 1: Sinclair describes as the 'denial' phase. It is here that the absence of women at executive levels just isn't seen as an issue at the level of core business needs.

Phase 2: 'The Problem is Women': here it is seen that the problem and the solution lies with women 'adapting their style' to 'fit in' with the (male) norms that exist. Interestingly, both the local authority and Police examples I have used above seem to exemplify cultures at this level; at least as is understood by the women concerned and as is voiced in the expectations of their colleagues (men and women alike).

Phase 3: 'Incremental Adjustment': at this level the organisation starts to see there is a deeper malaise at work but that it will be solved incrementally "with one or two targeted appointments...of women who already have a track record and are not seen as 'high risk'." (Sinclair 1998, 2005 (revised) p19). Poignantly, the PWC report suggests that this is one of the strategies adopted by most of the more enlightened UK Corporations, and yet one which is not likely to sustain much real change in the long term.

Phase 4: 'Commitment to A New Culture': here "the exclusion of women is recognised as a symptom of deeper problems requiring solutions focused on the existing culture. Initiatives examine the way things are currently done and the need for 'inside-out' change."

I think it would be fair to say that UK leadership culture rarely goes as far as Phase 4 and that this phase holds particular optimism and hope, not just for women aspiring towards leadership, but for a leadership (and follower-ship) culture more adept at dealing with the particular emergencies of the 21st Century.

Because It Matters

Phase 4 implies a turning upside-down of the current approaches towards leadership, power, gender and change. It would mean that both men and women start to become more comfortable with acknowledging and talking about gender as a *shared issue*. This shared issue, according to the last of Amanda Sinclair's phases, recognises gender inequality not as a by-product of unenlightened leadership culture, but as intrinsic to it. The cultures that commit to addressing their homogenous leadership culture, with its default position to a certain type of masculinity exhibited by both men and the few women that 'make it', are recognising that this homogeneity might be a symptom of the type of company less equipped to deal with a changing world.

But perhaps there is more than just a business case here. Perhaps ultimately we may change this situation because we want to; because it *matters* to us. Personally I have been thinking and talking about gender in business, as 'my issue', for nearly 20 years and to be honest, it doesn't get any easier. It is a painful challenge, a hall of mirrors. In my view, gender is a game, with deeply-rooted rules about leaders and followers. Like all such games, the boundaries are patrolled fiercely. Added to this we can consider how it also borders the minefield of sex and sexuality, which doesn't help.

We can however be committed to disrupting its harmful patterns and injustices not because it is easy but because such a commitment matters. It is because we value diversity and in doing so we represent a more enlightened vision of leadership for its own sake. I want to be able to tell my son and daughter that they can aspire to lead without giving up who they really are. Not for the bottom line, but for this reason alone, it makes it more than a worthwhile endeavour.

In the end, a case for change can be made, but we need to consider what we believe to be worth doing, rather than what can be justified through 'rational argument'. Isn't this in itself a gender issue?

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