

Should Hong Kong women take to the boardroom or look after the children?

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Helena Morrissey










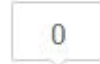

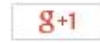




Looking at the CV of Helena Morrissey yesterday, I already felt exhausted and inferior. A top fund manager and founder of Britain's 30% Club, which pushes for more women in corporate boardrooms, she is also a mother of nine children. Nine! She is definitely a woman who has it all.

As Saturday is International Women's Day, there is a rush of activities this week promoting women's issues. Morrissey was in town to help some of these organisations, such as the Women's Foundation.

She believes other women can have it all too, at least "some of the time", as she puts it. Well, she would, given her achievements, but I am not convinced.

My wife and I have two children. Though an excellent reporter with far better memory and journalistic instincts than me, she quit her job to take care of the kids, which in itself is a full-time and far tougher job. In a truly gender-neutral and meritocratic society, it should have been the other way round with us. Thank God for traditional sexism!

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I would not be able to do this job at the newspaper while having to take care of the kids on my own. Luckily, we men never have to worry about having it all. And although to be a stay-at-home dad may be a theoretical option, it's never a real demand, not for the guys in my circles.

Practically all my old friends are in far more important jobs earning much more than me. And practically all of them say they wish they had more time to spend with their kids. Alas, they rarely do. Given the chance, I am sure they would do the same thing all over again - not spending enough time with their children and then complaining about it. And they rarely feel bad about it.

Many working women, though, whether it's the lowly office secretary or the CFO, do feel guilty for not spending more time with their kids as if they are being a bad mother/person; hence one of the reasons they worry about whether they can or cannot have it all.

Well, most normal people, men and women, can't have it all. We just don't have the energy or the drive. The only ethical answer where there is no real answer is that more mothers should be corporate chieftains while more fathers should stay at home. Or as Morrissey puts it, we need more women in the boardrooms.



MY TAKE

ALEX LO