

All Things Being Equal



by Theodore Dalrymple

It goes without saying that there should, for reasons of social justice, be full representation of all demographic groups in all human endeavors: for example, in scientific fraud. There is, apparently, a lamentable underrepresentation of women in biomedical research papers subsequently retracted because they are fraudulent in some way, such as in the manufacture of data or in the falsification of pictures.

Having a semiprofessional, semi-prurient interest in fraud and forgery, I follow—admittedly in somewhat desultory fashion—an excellent website called Retraction Watch. It is there that I read a paper that analyzed the proportion of what was once called the fair sex among the authors of retracted papers. Overall, women were only slightly underrepresented in the biomedical sphere, but slight injustice is still injustice.

Several things must be borne in mind in examining the data. There is a distinction in the authorship of scientific papers between first and last author: The first author did most of the work, and the last author was commonly the person responsible for the department in which the first author carried out the work. Then it must be borne in mind also that retractions may occur for reasons other than fraud: honest error, for example, or for reasons having nothing to do with the authors of the work.

One statistic in the paper particularly caught my attention. In a sample, admittedly small, of biomedical papers that had been retracted, 59.2 percent of those that were first-authored by men were retracted for fraud or research misconduct, while only 28.6 percent of those first-authored by women were retracted for that reason. In short, men, at least in the biomedical field, are twice as likely as women to commit fraud or research misconduct. A disgrace!

Since, of course, it is easier to commit fraud than to eliminate it, there seems to be only one possible solution to this gross disparity (all disparities being unjust, of course): the encouragement of women to commit fraud. No doubt they will need a little tuition to begin with, but I have little doubt that they will soon get the hang of it.

It is just possible that the disparity is caused by a differential in the rate of examination for fraud of scientific papers by men, but that seems a little far-fetched. No, more women scientists must learn to make up their data or forge their photographs.

Followers of the statistics of crime (I refrain in the circumstances from using the locution *criminal statistics*, in case anyone should think that it was the statistics that were criminal, though it is true that governments often manipulate them to make themselves look better than they are) will long have noticed that men are vastly overrepresented in them. I

will give but one example, for it would be tedious to belabor the point: In Britain in 2022, 93 percent of those convicted of committing homicide were men, while 72 percent of their victims were men.

Given the incapacity of modern governments to reduce the criminality of their populations as a whole, there is an obvious solution to the gross and unjust disparities that I have outlined above: namely, to encourage more women to kill more women, thus restoring the sex balance both of those guilty of homicide and of victims of homicide.

I was glad to see, on a flight across the Atlantic to the United States, that Hollywood is doing its bit to make the world a more equal, and therefore a more just, place. I don't watch films on flights, but I could not help but notice the films being watched by the passengers around me. Many of them seemed to involve athletic and muscular women wielding weapons ranging from knives to machetes to swords, from revolvers to heavy automatics, from bazookas to lasers, which they used to slaughter people (presumably bad people, luckily I couldn't hear the soundtrack) in large, indeed in industrial, numbers. The world will never be right until women are brought up to scratch in the matter of mass killings, it being inconceivable that any policy will eliminate them entirely among men.

It is essential, then, that little girls should be familiarized with Kalashnikovs from an early age, so that mass killings be rendered non-gendered, say from kindergarten age. Let them overcome what some mistakenly believe is their natural disinclination to violence; that disinclination is socially constructed, not innate, and has been part of their problem down the ages. If only they had been more vicious in the past, and not had to resort to that women's weapon, namely poison. How much better it would have been for them and everyone else if they had behaved more like men and hacked and shot their way to equality!

I remember that just before the Moscow Olympics in 1980, the semi-satirical British publication *Punch* ran a series of cartoons about the forthcoming games. One has stuck in my mind. It concerned sex tests to determine whether a female athlete was really female.

A Russian athletics official was standing in front of a tractor with such an athlete, a Tamara Press figure, and he was saying to her something like (I forget the exact wording), "You're not a woman. A real woman would have been able to change that tire in less than five minutes."

Anyone who laughed at such a joke now would be regarded as a dinosaur at best, a fascist at worst; but the aim of the thought reformers (thought reform being the main task of educators these days) is to ensure that future generations do not even realize that the cartoon was a joke. They will be like the mother of a friend of mine who, on seeing the Guinness cartoon with the legend "I've never tried it because I don't like it," said, "Yes, that's right, that's why I've never tried it."

The safest course these days is in any case to refrain from laughter, because jokes are always upsetting to someone, because the composition of human beings is 60 percent water and 40 percent eggshell.

If anyone dislikes what I have written, I retract—and apologize, of course.

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