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Corporate media in Western democracies exist not only to expand their markets and fatten the wallets of their executives and shareholders, but also to maintain social control by managing public perceptions to retain the acquiescence of the governed. The distinguished journals and periodicals of the affluent contain discourse on contending strategies for social control, all well within the mainstream of the ruling culture, but mass media — corporate media for the masses — are remarkable for their absence of analysis and substitutive reliance on almost heavy-handed pulp propaganda, in the sense of information propagating state mythology.

Often the themes are cogent to contemporary control strategies, as in anthrax scare stories functional to creating a reality in which "national security" is a plausible policy goal (and even a rational and acceptable idea). Another example might be an "investigative report," factually accurate though statistically misleading or obscuring of causality and context, on a felon who committed a murder after being paroled. Such a story may more directly relate to a contemporary push for stricter sen-

tencing policy, but it is also reliant on, and contributive to, the more perennial themes of white racial fear and fear of crime, useful, respectively, to the tacit support for an ex-nominating white supremacy, and the reliance on the state for protection from anti-social individuals.

Another construct that has been a near timeless bulwark of the state is patriarchy. Accordingly, the corporate media understand it as their function to advocate and normalize patriarchy. They were instrumental in adapting patriarchy to meet the demands of the market, particularly in allowing middle class women to be more economically mobile and productive. In the wake of that deregulation, the corporate media have conducted a backlash to ensure that the partial expansion and masculinization of the role of middle class women does not empower those women to challenge fundamental elements of patriarchy. Hence the ‘50s-reminiscent explosion of televised dramas and sitcoms depicting women finding happiness not in their unfulfilling careers but in the arms of various Prince Charmings; hence the infatuation of news media in running noire human interest stories highlighting maternal neglect leading to the death of children, or other household disasters.

Scientists, among them a sufficient number of priests for the state, have also been instrumental in rescuing the patriarchy. In her monumental book, *Backlash*, journalist Susan Faludi documents the frequent occurrence of shoddy studies, eventually or immediately disavowed by the scientific community at large, making front page and prime time coverage, without retraction, in cases when those studies said what patriarchal media wanted to hear. Examples include studies that found, falsely, that children were endangered by being sent to daycare rather than cared for in the home; that women faced likely spinsterhood if they did not get married at a young age; that marriage tended to improve the mental health of women; that divorce courts were biased in favor of women, and so on.

Reporting non-existent but self-prophesying "trends" is another favored tactic of the corporate media. In a recent example, CBS's *60 Minutes* (10-10-2004) ran a feature on the putative trend of women leaving the workforce to raise children and become homemakers. The sociologist whose study formed the basis, or rather the alibi, for the story had focused on a rather dubious sample of wealthy couples whose marriages had been announced in a prestigious paper. A majority of the women in that small and totally non-representative sample were either giving up, postponing, or forgoing careers, ostensibly for the sake of marriage and family though just as possibly to lead the lives of leisure an affluent husband could afford. This possibility was not raised by the *60 Minutes* journalist, nor was the possibility that the sociologists' study was inaccurate or misleading. Instead, the trend was assumed to be self-evident, and the journalist assured the audience that other, unnamed studies had reached similar results, though we can only assume that these other studies, if they in fact existed, were even less scientifically scrupulous than the one study that made the show.

After presenting a scientific basis, the *60 Minutes* journalist interviewed three upper-middle class white women, all of whom had left high-paying careers to raise children, and all of whom were entirely satisfied, and by all appearances fulfilled, with their decisions to do so. The story did not feature women who were satisfied with their careers, women who were unhappy with staying at home, or women who sacrificed both career and family in a search for personal fulfillment. Nor did the story feature men leaving their careers to care for children, or women living at or below the average income leaving their wage jobs (the existence of such women was never even mentioned). Instead, a business expert commented on how corporations should allow for extended maternity leave and flexible part-time for mothers. He stressed that corporations should keep qualified maternal employees in the loop and welcome them back when they are ready. These suggestions

are almost identical to some longtime demands of feminists. A critical difference is that an extended (multi-year), unpaid maternity leave is simply a compromised, watered-down maternal return to hearth and home, a temporary unemployment to allow women to serve both the patriarchy and the corporation, and not a paid absence for working, bills-paying women for the crucial periods of childbirth and early infancy. Even more glaring is the complete omission of the majority of women (including many with children and without husband) who work service sector wage jobs for corporations that could not care in the least about retaining employees several years down the road, and are adamantly opposed to any form of paid leave or benefits.

None of these realities were considered because the purpose of the *60 Minutes* story, and dozens of similar stories, is not to report reality but to recreate it, to inform our ideas of womanhood, which, in a bourgeois culture, exclude consideration of working class women, because to consider them would be to normalize them, and insodoing remove part of their motivation for material advancement along with the self-blame and alienation that justify poverty and economic exploitation.

Genetics and neuroscience are all the rage nowadays, and their absence from the ideological fortification of patriarchy would be conspicuous. The agency of these sciences is in proving biological differences between men and women, and any study that proclaims such a difference is sure to receive news coverage, with obvious financial implications accruing in the business of science, creating a self-perpetuating dynamic that fuels a veritable cottage industry of gender-traditional researchers. The use of arguments based on genetic differences and "brain chemistry" are self-consciously political, as evidenced by the frequent formulation explaining that it "used to be controversial" to assert that men and women were different (when exactly this period of gender equality flourished is never mentioned), but now genetics is proving

multitudinous and far-flung samples can only obscure our understanding of reality.

Such a manipulation requires a motivation. Substantial force is needed to mold six billion distinct points into just two averages, two norms. A mathematical understanding of the sheer metaphysical butchery involved destroys any pretense that such an average increases our understanding of reality. The purpose of conducting such an exercise is to create an idea of what is normal, to alienate and correct those who do not adhere to this norm, and to preserve gender roles and unequal power dynamics, as part of that social control system known as patriarchy. It is a psychological operation carried out most diligently by the corporate media and their misrepresentations of scientific data.

such differences (typically, not the scientists but the field of scientific study itself is personified as the active agent — though personified it is impersonal, unerring, God-like).

The purpose of demonstrating gender differences is to "prove" the validity of traditional gender roles, which serve to preserve patriarchal power dynamics. This purpose is achieved by generalizing and communicating scientific research in a way that obscures certain realities. The research itself may be sound or not, but the way it is expressed is based on several typical fallacies. The first is to confuse genetics with a blueprint for social engineering. Human beings exhibit the potential for countless genetically influenced behavioral tendencies. Any given society may decide some of these tendencies to be desirable, and others to be undesirable. If scientists discovered certain people to be genetically predisposed to commit murders, society would not hand them Get Out of Jail Free cards, but that is exactly what is expected in the case of potentially destructive patriarchal behaviors. Our society will only normalize and encourage genetically predisposed behaviors in men and women if we choose to; however, corporate media portrays the patriarchy's active and conscious self-preservation as accordance with an objective science. Furthermore, such an evolutionary conservatism misses the very point of evolution. We evolve to adapt to circumstances as they exist now. Even if gender roles provided some useful survival mechanism in the Paleolithic, we would be foolish to preserve such roles, based as they are on conditions that are no longer present. Just the sheer violence, primarily against women, children, and queer people, that is necessary to hold the patriarchy together is enough reason to evolve into more relaxed gender distinctions.

Another fallacy is that of biological determinism. Popular as the view may be in a technocratic capitalist society, biology is not destiny: people are not genetic machines whose actions are preprogrammed and predetermined. Quoting Dr. Stephen

Jay Gould, a scientist and natural historian who has devoted much of his work to challenging pop cultural misinterpretations of evolution, "We can only speak of capacities, not of requirements or even determining propensities… Moreover, what we share in common genetics can easily overwhelm what men and women might tend to do differently" (pp.263–264, *Leonardo's Mountain of Clams and the Diet of Worms*. 1998). However, corporate media and other creators of popular culture conveniently invent, without proof or even evidence, a deterministic side to genetics, with far-reaching consequences for any challenge to patriarchy. Male sexual drive becomes an excuse for rape. Female "nurturing instincts" become a reason for confining women to the home. One of the most absurd is that males' reputed talents for spatial reasoning explains the income gap, because you won't find many women in high-paying fields like aerospace engineering. Ignored are questions of why "male" fields pay better in the first place; well documented patterns of concrete wage discrimination; wage gaps within, not just across, job fields; the success of women in every form of employment in existence, and so on.

Perhaps the most deemphasized and most potent fallacy is that of essentialized averages. Statistical averages are essentialized almost universally when the corporate media present scientific research. An average is an extremely powerful statistic, because it represents the idea of normal, yet it need never actually exist. In the sample (100, 98, 2, 4), the average is 51. However, 51 is extremely atypical to the sample — one might call it abnormal, even though in its position as "average" it enjoys assumptions of normalcy. Removing our attention from inert numbers, in a human sample of hundreds or thousands of individuals, there will be genetic or behavioral averages if we quantify certain traits. Dividing our sample into male and female may likely produce different averages for each gender. However, it is possible that no one in the sample will be identical with this average, and certain that the male and female

average will fail to illustrate the full range of male and female traits within the whole sample, just as 51 fails to capture the range between 100 and 2.

Imagine that this page is a scatter plot, and every letter on the page represents a point. The position of all of these points could be mathematically boiled down into an average, but only one letter out of over 2,000 would match that average, and only a few hundred would enjoy any semblance of normality, thus construed. To present such an average as an accurate representation of all the letters on the page would be absurd, but that is precisely what the corporate media do when they present scientific research on the differences of men and women. To start with, there is a far greater degree of genetic and behavioral similarity among humans as a whole, male or female, than there is difference between the male and female average. Secondly, the distance between the male and female averages in nearly any trait will be insignificant next to the total range of difference among all people in the sample, which is to say that any one individual, regardless of gender, has a wide range of potential traits, and they may measure nowhere near their gender's average — it would not at all be abnormal for them to measure closer to the average of the other gender.

Looking again at the letters on the page, we would not notice any difference between the positions of vowels and consonants. However, if we charted them along a horizontal and vertical axis and then averaged the values, the average position of the vowels might be a half inch to the right of the average position of the consonants. To then declare that vowels tend to be to the right of consonants would be an absurd mangling of reality, with no practical basis for an increased understanding of vowels and consonants. Similarly, the broad range and unique pairings of diverse traits and behaviors among males and females make those gender categories absolutely useless for assigning social roles and behavioral expectations. To talk about averages, though they may be statistically accurate, among such