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The Negative Impact of the #MeToo Movement

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The following is adapted from a speech delivered at Hillsdale College on April 18, 2018, during a two-week teaching residency at Hillsdale as a Pulliam Distinguished Visiting Fellow in Journalism.

Our nation is about to be transformed, thanks to the #MeToo movement. I am not speaking about a cessation of sexual predation in the workplace. If that were the only consequence of #MeToo, the movement would clearly be a force for good. Unfortunately, its effects are going to be more sweeping and destructive. #MeToo is going to unleash a new torrent of gender and race quotas throughout the economy and culture, on the theory that all disparities in employment and institutional representation are due to harassment and bias. The resulting distortions of decision-making will

be largely invisible; we will usually not know of the superior candidates for a job who were passed over in the drive for gender parity. But the net consequence will be a loss of American competitiveness and scientific achievement.

Pressures for so-called diversity, defined reductively by gonads and melanin, are of course nothing new. Since the 1990s, every mainstream institution has lived in terror of three lethal words: “all white male,” an epithet capable of producing paroxysms of self-abasement. Silicon Valley start-ups and science labs quake before the charge of being all or mostly male; their varied ethnic demographics earn them no protection from the diversity racket. *The New York Times* recently criticized the board of fashion giant H&M for being “entirely white.” We can therefore infer that there are females on the H&M board, or else the *Times* would have let loose with the bigger gun: “all white male.” When both categories of alleged privilege—white and male—overlap, an activist is in the diversity sweet spot, his power over an institution at its zenith.

But however pervasive the diversity imperative was before, the #MeToo movement is going to make the previous three decades look like a golden age of meritocracy. No mainstream institution will hire, promote, or compensate without an exquisite calculation of gender and race ratios. Males in general, and white males in particular, will have to clear a very high bar in order to justify further deferring that halcyon moment of gender equity.

Hollywood and the media are already

showing the #MeToo effect. At this year’s Oscar awards lunch, the president of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, John Bailey, prefaced his remarks by noting that he was a “75-year-old white man.” Bailey was trying to get out ahead of the curve, since if he hadn’t pointed out this shameful status, feminist crusaders in the press and the industry would have done so for him. Witness actress Natalie Portman’s sneer in presenting the best director prize at the 2018 Golden Globe awards: “And here are the all-male nominees.” Such shallow bean counting is now going to become the automatic response to any perceived lack of “diversity” in entertainment.

Naturally, Bailey announced reparations for the Academy’s predominantly white male profile: henceforth it would “balance gender, race, ethnicity, and religion” in all its activities and would double its female and minority members by 2020. Needless to say, this was not enough. Outside the lunch, the National Hispanic Media Coalition protested the lack of proportional ethnic representation in Oscar nominations and acting roles.

CBS is considering only females to fill the anchor slot at *Face the Nation*, to catch up with *The Today Show*, which now has two female anchors. The Recording Academy, which oversees the Grammys, has promised to overcome the “unconscious biases that impede female advancement” in the music industry, after bean-counting complaints from *The Wall Street Journal*’s pop music critic and female music executives.

The prospect of left-wing entertainment moguls having to sacrifice their box office

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judgment to identity politics is an unalloyed pleasure, and of little consequence to society at large. But quota-izing will hardly be limited to Hollywood.

Major publishing houses are analyzing their author lists by gender and race and making publishing decisions accordingly. What books get reviewed and who reviews them will increasingly be determined according to gender and race. There are likely no major newspapers that are not tallying reporter and op-ed bylines, as well as the topics they cover, by gender and race. In 2005, professional feminist Susan Estrich posterously accused Michael Kinsley, then running the *Los Angeles Times* editorial pages, of excluding female writers. Naturally, Estrich ignored the fact that males are disproportionately interested in public affairs, as demonstrated by lopsided sex ratios among op-ed submissions and letters to the editor. Eighty-seven percent of contributors to Wikipedia are male. There are no allegedly sexist gatekeepers at Wikipedia screening out females; contributions are anonymous and open to all. But males are more oriented towards highly fact-based realms.

Diversity trainers are sensing a windfall from #MeToo. Gender, diversity, and inclusion were the dominant themes at the World Economic Forum in Davos. It was chaired exclusively by women. Windows were emblazoned with slogans like “Diversity is good for business.”

Now, however, sterile bean-counting exercises such as Estrich’s have gone in-house. In response to the #MeToo movement, *The New York Times* created a “gender editor” who presides over a “gender initiative” to infuse questions of gender throughout all the *Times*’ coverage. A recent front-page product of this #MeToo initiative covered the earth-shattering problem facing NFL cheerleaders: to wit, they have a dress code and are forbidden from fraternizing

with the players. Despite these allegedly patriarchal conditions, females are still lining up to be hired, to the puzzlement of the *Times*.

Publisher Meredith Corp. has come in for the usual criticism after buying the floundering Time, Inc. late last year. “They’re basically all middle-aged white males from the Midwest,” grumbled a *Time* staffer, who, you would think, would be in no position to complain. Dow Jones, the publisher of *The Wall Street Journal*, is offering leadership training exclusively to females to try to meet its short-term goal of 40 percent female executives.

Corporate boardrooms, executive suites, and management structures are going to be scoured for gender and race imbalances. Diversity trainers are already sensing a windfall from #MeToo. Gender, diversity, and inclusion were the dominant themes at this January’s World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. The conference was chaired exclusively by women. Windows were emblazoned with slogans like “Diversity is good for business” and “Gender equality is a social and economic issue.” CEOs shared their

techniques for achieving gender equity. It’s actually quite simple: pay managers based on their record of hiring and promoting females and minorities, as Hilton CEO Christopher Nassetta explained. Never mind the fact that by intro-

ducing irrelevant criteria such as race and gender into an evaluation process, you will inevitably end up with less qualified employees.

U.S. banks and financial institutions are facing pressure from shareholder groups to release data on the number and compensation of females and minorities in their upper ranks. Immediate punishment befalls anyone in business who has the courage to criticize this war on merit. The chief

creative officer of the advertising firm M&C Saatchi wrote last year that he was “bored of diversity being prioritized over talent.” Saatchi atoned for this heresy with a frenzy of female hirings and promotions.

Amazingly, John Williams—a white man—squeaked into the presidency of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York this April, to the outrage of the diversocrats. Don’t be surprised if he is the last to do so. “The New York Fed has never been led by a woman or a person of color, and that needs to change,” announced New York Senator Kirsten Gillibrand. Williams’ “progress,” as *The New York Times* called it, in “diversifying” senior leadership when he was president of the San Francisco Fed undoubtedly made his unfortunate race and sex more palatable to the search committee.

Facts are facts, and throughout most of music history, the greatest composers have been male. No amount of digging through score archives is going to unearth a female counterpart to Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Chopin, or Brahms. So what?

#MeToo enforcers are even going after classical music. *New Yorker* music critic Alex Ross triggered outrage against the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the Philadelphia Orchestra in February when he tweeted that they had programmed no female composers in their 2018-2019 seasons. Never mind that the CSO was even then performing Jennifer Higdon’s Low Brass Concerto—a piece commissioned by the Chicago, Philadelphia, and Baltimore orchestras—at Carnegie Hall. It is ludicrous to suggest that these institutions are discriminating against female composers, but Ross and his followers demand affirmative programming quotas.

The public radio show, *Performance Today*, ran a series of shows in March about gender and racial inequities in

classical music. At a time of diminishing classical music audiences, it is profoundly irresponsible to direct the poison of identity politics at our most precious musical institutions. Doing so only encourages potential young listeners and culturally ignorant philanthropists (I’m thinking of you, Bill Gates) to stay away. Facts are facts, and throughout most of music history, the greatest composers have been male. No amount of digging through score archives, however useful that enterprise may be for discovering unfamiliar works, is going to unearth a female counterpart to Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Chopin, or Brahms. So what? We should simply be grateful—profoundly grateful—for the music these men created.

Orchestra boards will pay penance for their own inadequate diversity by a mad rush on female conductors, whose numbers are minuscule. It was already difficult two years ago to land a U.S. conducting position for a universally esteemed white male conductor, reports his agent. Now it would be nearly impossible, the agent believes, adding: “If I had a trans conductor, I would be rich.”

Academia, the source of identity politics, will double down on its diversity quota-izing in the wake of #MeToo. A panel at the annual American Economic Association meeting in January charged that gender discrimination was pervasive in economics—an argument that fit into the “larger national examination of bias and abuse toward women in the work force,” *The New York Times* reminded readers. In March, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and Priya Satia, former diversity chair of Stanford University’s Department of History, went into diversity meltdown over a history conference that Hoover Institution Fellow Niall Ferguson had organized. Though Ferguson had invited females to speak, none had accepted. Not good



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enough, according to Professor Satia. Ferguson should have suspended the conference entirely unless he could persuade females and minorities to participate. Although Satia did not identify any scholarly gaps that resulted from the actual lineup, Stanford University was so shaken by the controversy that it issued a statement on behalf of the president and provost assuring the public that it had made its concerns about the lack of diversity known to the conference organizers.

STEM departments—departments of science, technology, engineering, and math—have been under enormous pressure from the federal government to hire by gender and race. Now they are creating their own internal diversity enforcers, notwithstanding the massive diversity bureaucracies already in place. UCLA's Engineering Department now has its own diversity dean. Audrey Pool O'Neal, the director of UCLA's Women in Engineering program, justified this sinecure with the usual role model argument for gender- and race-conscious

decision-making. "Female students let me know how much they appreciate seeing a woman of color in front of their classroom," she told the UCLA student newspaper.

Why not appreciate seeing the most qualified scholar in front of your classroom? Any female student who thinks she needs a female professor in order to envision a scientific career has declared herself a follower rather than a pioneer—and a follower based on a characteristic that is irrelevant to intellectual achievement. Marie Curie did not need female role models to investigate radioactivity. She was motivated by a passion to understand the world. That should be reason enough for anyone to plunge headlong into the search for knowledge.

Silicon Valley is a #MeToo diversity bonanza waiting to happen. It's not for nothing that the Mountain View headquarters of Google is referred to as the "Google campus"; the culture of the Silicon Valley behemoth is an echo chamber of shrill academic victimology. Managers and employees reflexively label

dissenters from left-wing orthodoxy as misogynists and racists. It is assumed that the lack of proportional representation of female, black, and Hispanic engineers at the company is due to bias on the part of every other type of engineer.

In August 2017, Google fired computer engineer James Damore for writing a memo suggesting that the lack of 50-50 gender proportionality at Google and other tech firms may not be due to bias, but rather to different career predilections on the part of males and females. He cited psychological research establishing that on average, males and females are attracted to different types of work: males to more abstract, idea-centered work, females to more human-centered, relational activities. Damore was not disparaging the scientific skills of the female engineers working at Google; he was trying to explain why there were not more of them. Nevertheless, Google accused Damore of using harmful gender stereotypes that put Google's female employees at risk of some unspecified trauma.

Google's adoption of the bathetic rhetoric of academic victimology to justify firing Damore was bad enough. But in January 2018, the National Labor Relations Board released a memo upholding Google's action on the same grounds: Damore had engaged in discrimination and sexual harassment by employing "harmful gender stereotypes." The reasoning behind the NLRB memo puts at risk the job of every academic scientist researching the biological and psychological differences between the sexes. The ideological imperatives of feminism are trumping the search for scientific truth. This is a dangerous position for a society to embrace.

The following month, a Google recruiter challenged Silicon Valley's

quota mentality by refusing to obey an edict to purge white males from consideration for entry-level engineering interviews. The recruiter alleges in a lawsuit that he was promptly fired. Google, it seems, would rather not be informed about potentially groundbreaking tech talent if it comes in the wrong color and shape.

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Such distortions of meritocracy will become even more intense following #MeToo. The mad rush of investor funding into the biotech fraudster firm Theranos was undoubtedly due in large part to the sex of its founder. Elizabeth Holmes claimed to have invented an advanced blood-testing device. Even as her claims about the largely fictitious device unraveled, investors continued to give her unqualified support. Her blue chip board boasted two former secretaries of state and James Mattis, then head of the U.S. Central Command and now Secretary of Defense. Hilariously, the #MeToo-obsessed *New York Times* opined that it was "surprising" how long Holmes was allowed to operate "before regulators stepped in." Actually, what is surprising is that they stepped in at all, given the dominant narrative that the dearth of female start-ups is due to sexism on the part of venture capitalists and regulators.

Despite the billions of dollars that governments, companies, and foundations have poured into increasing the number of females in STEM, the gender proportions of the hard sciences have not changed much over the years. This is not surprising, given mounting evidence of the differences in interests and aptitudes between the sexes. Study

after study has shown that females gravitate towards different types of jobs than men, as James Damore fatally observed. Females on average tend to choose fields that are perceived to make the world a better place, according to the common understanding of that phrase. A preschool teacher in the Bronx, profiled by *Bloomberg News*, exemplifies such a choice. She has a B.A. in neuroscience, but opted not to go to medical school so as to have an impact on poor and minority children. Her salary is a pittance compared to what she could earn as a clinical or research neurologist, but she said that pay is not her top motivation when it comes to choosing a job.

Even under the broad STEM umbrella, females seek jobs that are seen as directly helping others by a two-to-one ratio over males. Females make up 75 percent of workers in health-related jobs, but only 25 percent of workers in computer jobs and 14 percent of engineering workers, according to a Pew Research Center poll. In 2016, nearly 82 percent of obstetrics and gynecology residents were female—yet no one is complaining about gender bias against males. And in a resounding blow to the feminist narrative about bias in STEM, it turns out that the more gender equality in a country, the lower the percentage of females in STEM majors and fields. The more careers open to females, the less likely they are to choose math or science.

Finally, there is the most taboo subject of all: the non-identical distribution of high-end math skills. Males outnumber females on both the bottom rung of math cluelessness and the top rung of math insight. In the U.S., there are 2.5 males in the top .01 percent of math ability for every female in that category. This is not a matter of gender bias and cultural conditioning; gender differences in math precocity show up as early as kindergarten.

Given these different distributions of interests and skills, the only way to engineer gender proportionality in the hard sciences is to put a ceiling on male hires, no matter how gifted, until enough

females can be induced to enter the field to balance out the males. And indeed, the National Science Foundation, which has announced that progress in science requires a “diverse STEM workforce,” seems to be moving in that direction. This is undoubtedly good news for China, as it furiously pushes ahead with its unapologetically meritocratic system of science training and research. Not such good news for the rest of us, however.

The #MeToo movement has uncovered real abuses of power. But the solution to those abuses is not to replace valid measures of achievement with irrelevancies like gender and race. Ironically, the best solution to sexual predation is not more feminism, but less. By denying the differences between men and women, and by ridiculing the manly virtues of gentlemanliness and chivalry and the female virtues of modesty and prudence, feminism dissolved the civilizational restraints on the male libido. The boorish behavior that pervades society today would have been unthinkable in the past, when a traditional understanding of sexual propriety prevailed. Now, however, with the idea of “ladies and gentlemen” discredited and out of favor, boorishness is increasingly the rule.

Contrary to the feminist narrative, Western culture is in fact the least patriarchal culture in human history; rather than being forced to veil, females in our society can parade themselves in as scantily clad a manner as they choose; pop culture stars flaunt their promiscuity. As we have seen, every mainstream institution is trying to hire and promote as many females as possible. As the #MeToo movement swells the demand for ever more draconian diversity mandates, a finding in a Pew Research Center poll on workplace equity is worth noting: the perception of bias is directly proportional to the number of years the perceiver has spent in an American university. The persistent claim of gender bias, in other words, is ideological, not empirical. But after #MeToo, it will have an even more disruptive effect. ■