

Does Gender ‘Equality’ Degrade Both Sexes?

If you’ve noticed that men are increasingly getting a bad rap in today’s world, you’re not alone.

According to *Washington Post* journalist Cathy Young, men are routinely blamed for almost any habit or trait they have – whether good or bad. Such an attitude, Young says, is damaging not only to men, but for women as well:

“This gender antagonism does nothing to advance the unfinished business of equality. If anything, the fixation on men behaving badly is a distraction from more fundamental issues, such as changes in the workplace to promote work-life balance. What’s more, male-bashing not only sours many men – and quite a few women – on feminism. It often drives them into Internet subcultures where critiques of feminism mix with hostility toward women.”

Such a scenario is interesting, particularly as it mirrors a phenomenon Alexis de Tocqueville observed in mid-19th century Europe.

As Tocqueville’s famous work [*Democracy in America*](#) explains, the Europeans strove to make the sexes “not only equal but alike.” This mindset “degraded” both sexes and instilled a “certain degree of contempt” for women in men. Men, in turn, “easily submit[ted] to the despotic sway of women.”

By contrast, Tocqueville noted the deep respect and care with which American men of the time treated women:

“Thus the Americans do not think that man and woman have either the duty or the right to perform the same offices, but they show an equal regard for both their respective parts;

and though their lot is different, they consider both of them as beings of equal value."

This attitude enabled women to occupy "a loftier position" than women in European countries, and promoted what Tocqueville deemed a more truly democratic and superior approach to life.

Modern America, however, seems to have exchanged its original view of equality for that of 19th century Europe. Americans have come to believe that true gender equality can only be obtained by making men and women exactly alike.

Yet despite proclaimed advances in modern gender equality, many women are experiencing a growing insecurity and fear of assault at the hand of the opposite sex. Men, on the other hand, are noting increased psychological and verbal abuse from women. Seemingly, increased "equality" has decreased men's and women's respect for the other sex.

Is it possible that our modern quest for equality has gone farther than needed? Would we achieve better, less contentious equality between the sexes if we stopped trying to make them exactly alike?