

Does the Pill Degrade Women by Making Them Like Men?

We hear a lot of feminist messages these days about the power of women. They're breaking glass ceilings. They're working their way into science, engineering, and math. They can do anything as well as men, if not better.

All of this, of course, is largely possible because women are no longer constrained by their biological differences. Thanks to "the pill," a woman can be just like a man, with little or no chance of career derailment because of pregnancy and childrearing.

Many view this leveling of differences as a positive trend. But what many may not realize is that this new equity appears to extend beyond the professional spectrum and into the individual make-up of females.

According to a recent essay penned for the [BBC](#) by Zaria Gorvett, new research suggests that women who use contraceptives like the pill can acquire more masculine biological characteristics. This is particularly true for various parts of the brain:

"In recent years, scientists have started to realise that the brains of women on the pill look fundamentally different. Compared to women who aren't taking hormones, some regions of their brains seem to be [more typically 'male'](#)."

Gorvett goes on to explain that these brain differences often come out through unusual behaviors. Instead of being good verbally, as women usually are, "Women on certain types of pill aren't as good at coming up with words." Compared to those not on the pill, women taking certain contraceptives also struggle recognizing faces and have trouble "recognizing emotions in

others.”

On the positive side, however, women on the pill “have better spatial awareness,” a trait typically held by men, not women.

Thus, for better or for worse, the pill seems to be making women acquire masculine tendencies.

Gorvett explains why this is happening:

“According to a [study from 2012](#), 83% of US women who are on the pill are taking a version that contains progestins made from male hormones. ...

The male hormone that these pills use is a close relative of testosterone called nandrolone. A potent androgen (a hormone that influences the development of the male reproductive system), it can lead to the development of typically male characteristics.”

Viewed purely from a health perspective, such news is rather alarming. Quoting cognitive neuroscientist Belinda Pletzer, Gorvett notes:

“[W]hen athletes take steroids we call it ‘doping’ – it’s considered abuse and strongly condemned by society. But we’re happy for millions of women to take these hormones every day, sometimes right through from puberty to menopause.”

But let’s put health aside for a moment and consider the feminist implications of the pill. Instead of elevating women and proving that they are special creatures, does not this masculinization which the pill appears to bring about seem to hint that they can only be good enough only when they give up their feminine characteristics – even brains – and adopt masculine ones instead?

In essence, we seem to have given birth to the same situation

which French diplomat and political scientist Alexis de Tocqueville observed in France in the mid-19th century when [he noted](#):

“There are people in Europe who, confounding together the different characteristics of the sexes, would make man and woman into beings not only equal but alike. They would give to both the same functions, impose on both the same duties, and grant to both the same rights; they would mix them in all things – their occupations, their pleasures, their business.”

Unfortunately, the end of all this equality and erasure of difference had one effect: degradation.

Many American women have swallowed the pill and the feminist promise of equality that it sells without question. But is that something we should rethink? Is it not a degradation to so quickly give up our feminine characteristics, brains, and abilities and exchange them for those of men?