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Why Feminism Benefits Men

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For many women across Australia, Julia Gillard's 15-minute parliamentary thunderstorm against Tony Abbott was a moment of profound change in the political climate. Like a feminist goddess hurling lightning bolts at her hapless target, a giant of the patriarchy soaked and shrunken down to a dumbstruck dwarf, she stood victorious, at least for a moment. But the thrill at seeing Gillard transform into warrior princess was also shared by large sections of the male population.

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There was a realization that we all had a stake in seeing Abbott's misogynistic behaviour called out, putting into question the norms of public life it helps establish and maintain. And it is worthwhile to remind ourselves of the insight and the argument that feminism, as well as being an engine of liberation for women, is also good for men; and not just good in an altruistic, 'right-on politics' sort of way where men congratulate themselves on supporting their sisters in struggle, but in ways which directly benefit men in their day to day lives.

What I would argue here is that in addition to being the politically and ethically right thing to do, there also strong arguments for men to support feminism out of self-interest. The social change around feminist politics has enriched the lives, work and experience of both men and women, and it is worth identifying and emphasising them in the face of arguments from many in the mainstream media that feminism has 'gone too far', relying as they do on a sort of zero-sum game approach to social change: any advances for women must result in losses for men. In accepting the terms of this debate, in trying to argue against it, we have already lost: instead we must reject the premise that feminist advancement necessarily means men going backwards.

And what are these benefits? What are the differences feminism has made between, say, the era of Mad Men and now?

First, we have gained female friends. The likelihood of a man having a friendship with a woman outside a romantic one has increased incommensurably.

Second we have gained girlfriends and wives, in the sense of more empowered, knowledgeable partners with experience in as wide range of areas as us or greater. The potential for equality means the potential for more expansive relationships than ones where the woman and the man were confined to the areas of traditional gender roles.

Third we have gained children and families. The norm for the father-child relationship has changed from that of a distant and harsh disciplinarian, to an equal level of involvement in the raising of our offspring. We see our children more, we are in their lives and they are in ours.

Fourth we have been forced to learn the joys of cooking and to take a greater role around the house. This means that we have a whole new world of homelife opened up to us that we were not part of before. New skills, new languages, new tastes and sensations are now taken in as part of the daily round. More mixing of the worlds of home and work mean that there can be more meaningful talk in a relationship because both parties share knowledge about both areas.

Fifth workplaces become a whole lot more interesting and stimulating, filled with more talented and intelligent people. When half the population was excluded from working (or at least from attaining senior roles) a huge proportion of the people with the wildest imaginations and best skillsets were prevented from taking a role in the office. Now those people are here, making work more fast-paced, innovative and fun.

This is just a start of a list of the benefits that feminism has delivered to men. But it's worthwhile enumerating them to

counter the arguments that feminism, taking over the progressive agenda, has prioritised the interests of women at the expense of men. Of course this does not mean that there are instances where feminism requires men to give up and share benefits they had previously held; but its worth reminding ourselves of the wonderful new world that has opened up to us in the process.

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This story was found at: <http://www.dailylife.com.au/news-and-views/dl-opinion/why-feminism-benefits-men-20121012-27grq.html>