



GENDER EQUALITY & FEMINISM

RESEARCH BRIEF

It's 2017 and the issue of gender equality and feminism remains a controversial topic. Why is the issue of equality and freedom deemed so unattainable for both genders? What causes skepticism and why should us as individuals consider joining this movement? This research brief takes a quick look at these issues and the future of gender equality and feminism.

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Feminism. Why is this word rejected more often than not in society? Gender Equality. Why does this word leniently receive recognition in society? Besides spelling and pronunciation, how are these two words different in any way? Take a step back to consider if one of those words is more appealing to you and why. Don't focus on the word, focus on the concepts and ideas that make up each word and you will surely find that they are exactly the same.

"Gender equality is actually a way for us to get the lives we want to live." Michael Kimmel states during his Ted Talk on Why Gender Equality Is Good for Everyone – Men Included. It's crazy to think how words and notions today can be so positively beneficial and regardless of actual facts, are disregarded based on assumption and lack of acknowledgement. So, the question is, why oppose something that can liberate all individuals in society?

Arguments against feminism and gender equality range from "If you're a feminist you hate men" to "I'm a woman I don't need feminism, I have the same rights as men." The New Oxford American Dictionary defines feminism as "the advocacy of women's rights on the grounds of political, social, and economic equality to men." Whereas gender equality is defined as, "the state in which access to rights or opportunities is unaffected by gender." In a simplified form, both are movements with the same goal aiming to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression. Advocates for feminist politics understand most people do not understand the concept and take on multiple media platforms to express their definitions and opinions, resulting in the misconception and reality of the movement. Although feminism has developed strongly over the years, it has resulted in creating a hostile environment putting many people against each other. The focus of the mission has seemed to become distorted and clouded by patriarchal and stereotypical media (Hooks, 1).

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- *Michael Kimmel*

Gender roles and gender status has always been apparent in society. Men and women are placed in stereotypes to act a certain way and it is because of this that anything that challenges those expectations immediately triggers a response to defend the norms of society. For more than three generations males have grown up role expectations and although a lot has changed dramatically, the notions about what it means to be a man remains intact today. It is because of this, males tend to avoid femininity in any way possible and choose to voice strong public opinions against feminism because they fear it challenges the traditional ideology of masculinity such as, “no sissy stuff, be the big wheel, be sturdy, and give ‘em hell” (Kimmel, 105). Most men in this nation feel troubled about the nature of their identity. They remain trapped by gender stereotypes and feel insecure about expressing their true self because of the way they think they will be perceived.

As male’s cling to patriarchy they begin to see that it is part of the problem. Males are threatened by the increased class power of women in the labor force making it difficult for them to understand where they stand in society. An example Kimmel uses during his Ted Talk discussed how four angry white men believed they were being discriminated against in the workplace because women stole jobs they believed were theirs (Hooks, 71). Pushing against the traditional role of masculinity is happening but many males are still unwilling to break out of the limitations set for them causing the apparent defensiveness and anger in society today (Kimmel, 105).

Many would think that if you’re a female you’re for feminism and gender equality but the truth is there hesitation to join the movement. Females are stereotyped to be nurturing and compassionate, which makes it difficult for some to take on a movement many perceive as a strike to men. Many females are constantly cautious of their role in society and how other people view them. Like males, females would hardly choose to do something to set them apart from their gender expectation or make them an outcast to society. Many women feel if they join feminism they are going against the male gender, making them less appealing to the opposite sex. Others feel that being female is enough and there is no need to join feminism and this is mostly because feminism first began under privileged groups of well-educated white women with equal class power. Females who often refuse to participate in the movement are those who don’t acknowledge their privileged status; therefore, lack to see past their concerns, which typically don’t apply to a majority of women (Hooks, 37). Many women keep defining each other for what they are not, rather than what they are and opposition to equality will continue if they feel the need to follow gender stereotypes.

The movement for gender equality has already begun but if people understood how beneficial this transformation really is then I believe both men and women would participate freely without hesitation. Gender equality promotes a positive functioning country. Countries that adapt to a gender equal society tend to score highest on the happiness scale and a happy country is beneficial for all. Gender equality is an important aspect in the business world. It can help enhance a company’s image, boost reputation, attract media interest, and gain customer loyalty (Roberts, 960). During his Ted Talk Kimmel states, “Research by Catalyst and others has shown conclusively that the more gender-equal companies are, the better it is for workers, the happier their labor force is.” Companies have lower job turnover, higher job satisfaction and productivity. Gender equality in the workplace balances family and work life by accommodating both lifestyles with the same recognition.

One thing many people don't realize is that gender equality and feminism are beneficial to men and not just women. It promotes the type of life males and females want to live by filled with outstanding relationships and committed success. Women don't have to feel obligated to take on things because of their gender stereotypes. They can feel free to have it all with the support of men and not by themselves. Men have the opportunity to gain the intimate relationships they want by putting in quantity time of work that creates the foundation of intimacy. Men aren't just men, they are fathers, husbands, friends, and so on. This means by partaking in feminism and gender equality males can be vulnerable and reclaim parts of themselves that they feel forced to abandon (Kimmel, 110). Men and women have the opportunity to participate in campaigns such as "HeForShe" which aims to support the idea of gender equality as a human rights issue rather than a women's issue. It is through campaigns that support this movement which help change the imbalance in leadership positions and promote the engagement of men in efforts to empower and protect all gender (Nazia).

Supporting the movement of gender equality and feminism by embracing these changes can open equal social and economic possibilities, giving individuals happier and fuller lives. Men and women shouldn't resist this transition. It includes doing what is right and fair and works towards enabling policies to end sexual harassment, promote dual family lifestyles, and end the abuse or criticism men and women face in society today. Gender equality offers a world filled with nurture and love, providing everyone with the compassion and understanding they deserve.