

The Male Perspective

11 upvotes | 15 July, 2019 | by peanutbutterjams

I think this sub, or any male advocate sub, would benefit by focusing on the male perspective.

There's an assumption that because most of the people who produced 'content' in the past were men that the male perspective has pervaded our cultural media. I think this only partially true since (1) the majority of that media was produced for the primary purpose of profit, and therefore not particularly focused on explaining a certain gender perspective and that (2) men were the 'default gender' and so it was difficult to explicate a particularly male perspective since there was no sense of not-women, only a sense of just-men.

For instance, the psychological effects about the assumption, by society and yourself, that you're a meat shield for those you love. I may resent this, but if shit goes down, I know I'm throwing myself at any threat to my wife and kids, at the cost of my life if necessary. It's a coded impulse that produces a unique perspective.

Or that men get vastly less compliments than women. Being appreciated can mean the world to us. I don't think a lot of women realize this.

Or something as simple as dancing. I recently taught myself to dance and I had to work through a lot of body issues I accrued after a decade of bullying. I also had to work through feelings that I was dancing in a 'gay' or feminine way, that I had to look tough, even when expressing the sublime joy I feel when I hear certain music.

Or the effects of bullying, which is quite frankly a euphemism for the verbal, psychological and physical abuse that countless male children endure for the crime of trying to get an education while being different than dude-bros.

Male advocacy* often comes in the form of comparing men to women, or counting the ways men have it worse than women. While that's important to recognize, it's also engaging in the narrative of competitive victimization that intersectional feminism perpetuated and I strongly believe that you can't change a narrative by repeating it.

By telling our stories, we can show that men *do* face unique challenges and that these challenges affect us in unique ways. It would help to deconstruct our gender norms and explicate the ways in which they affect us. It starts a conversation that's not based on victim competition, or retribution, or anger, or resentment. It's simply "I am male, and this is how that affects me".

I have a lot of respect for the ideals behind feminism but little respect with how its tried to achieve those ideals, particularly in the past 20 years. I firmly believe the best way to resist is to find new ways in which to express the male perspective, ways which don't depend on the toxic behaviour, attitudes and assumption that have (sometimes) expressed itself in (many, but not all) feminist circles.

* I hope this sub does well, but honestly just being able to say 'male advocacy' rather than 'men's rights' is such a huge improvement that even if this sub doesn't take off, I'll always be grateful for the superior phrasing.

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Comments

serpentineeyelash[M] • 4 points • 15 July, 2019 06:19 AM

Good post, you make some interesting points. I agree with you that when men have spoken historically they were often not speaking from a particularly "male perspective".

Unfortunately I think we kind of do need to engage in the "victim competition", since that's going to continue happening with or without men's input. But that certainly does easily tend in a very toxic direction. This subreddit will try and carve out something of a middle position and we'll see how it goes.

gas_the_tradcons • 3 points • 15 July, 2019 12:46 PM

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This victim competition talk is a red flag. Men have issues that are getting ignored, and dismissing their concerns as a victim competition is very disparaging.

Men rights issues are largely legitimate and valid because they are based in reality. Men face systematic discrimination women do not.

Feminists create issues, and weaponize them to attack men. It is not even the victim competition that is the problem it is the fact women use their victimhood to accuse men of stuff they do not even do.

Razorbladekandyfan • 3 points • 15 July, 2019 12:56 PM

Yes. Men legitimately are treated like disposable utilities. There is no competition there. Just facts.

peanutbutterjams[S] • 1 point • 18 July, 2019 08:50 AM

Red flag for what?

Men have issues that are getting ignored, and dismissing their concerns as a victim competition is very disparaging.

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I didn't dismiss anyone's concerns. I actually took the time to recognize the importance of speaking about men's issues.

What's disparaging is that you misrepresented what I said in order to make your point.

You can talk about a male perspective and thereby show the challenges that men face without engaging in a victim competition. The challenges you face matter because you're a human being, not because you're a man.

Feminists create issues, and weaponize them to attack men.

Are all feminist issues weaponized fakery? If not, which ones aren't?

peanutbutterjams[S] • 1 point • 15 July, 2019 07:58 AM

Unfortunately I think we kind of do need to engage in the "victim competition",

You can't talk positive about a negative. Engaging with that narrative just legitimizes the idea that whoever is perceived to be the most victimized has power over the people who are least victimized.

Everyone's being victimized.

We're evolved animals. It's to be expected.

We can either grow as a species by helping each other out or we can continue to fight to see who's king of the blind.

If you have a group of people speaking honestly about their experiences while calling for a movement that helps *everyone* heal from the societal expectations and assumptions, how silly will the victim competition look?

It's like Aikido. You use people's momentum to create your desired result. If the ideal is about working to make a better world, then anyone who best embodies that ideal will always, *always* be successful. We will win more hearts by exemplifying the best version of 'the conversation' than we will by engaging with the worst.

yoshi_win • 3 points • 15 July, 2019 08:29 AM

Something like a victim competition is appropriate as a reply to wildly inaccurate comparisons between the genders, either now or historically. If someone believes gender issues are a one way street, listing men's unique issues as dakru did in r/rbomi/ is the best and possibly the only way to set them straight.

peanutbutterjams[S] • 2 points • 15 July, 2019 08:53 AM

I think listing men's unique issues is more an act of male advocacy than engaging in a victim competition. We can talk about how the past has hurt us without believing or expecting that the degree of pain determines how much people should care.

Instead of comparing each other's gender, we should be striving to understand each other's gender. If I feel genuine empathy for the unique challenges faced by women, I'm more likely to get genuine empathy for the unique challenged faced by men.

'Genuine' being the key word.

YetAnotherCommenter • 2 points • 17 July, 2019 02:25 AM

There's an assumption that because most of the people who produced 'content' in the past were men that the male perspective has pervaded our cultural media. I think this only partially true since (1) the majority of that media was produced for the primary purpose of profit, and therefore not particularly focused on explaining a certain gender perspective and that (2) men were the 'default gender' and so it was difficult to explicate a particularly male perspective since there was no sense of not-women, only a sense of just-men.

This is a very good point.

The basic assumption you talk about... the idea that the "male perspective" is the default normal/mainstream perspective... is very, very contestable. Just because a writer is a man doesn't mean they are necessarily writing *as a man specifically*. It isn't necessarily wrong to suggest that their experiences as a man have some impact on the text, but that doesn't mean the text itself will necessarily tell you very much about the "male perspective."

Not to mention, since the gender discussion tends to center women's voices and feminist voices (and feminism is a theory built out of the experiences of *women*), it stands to reason that by trying to grasp the "male perspective" through their *own* perspective, they'll inevitably present a selective/biased/not-impartial understanding of the male perspective... they'll produce the female-view-of-the-male-perspective, rather than the male perspective.

I will contest the legitimacy of point 1, however. For media to make a profit, it must *flatter pre-existing sentiments within the audience*. This means that media would have to, to some extent, represent the male perspective if it wants to make male characters that the specific market targeted by the media can relate to (the same is true of the female perspective and female characters). Something being commercial pop culture *doesn't* mean it will be less representative of the actual experiences/perspectives of the audience... rather the opposite is true, and we can expect commercial pop culture to strongly aim to *reflect* these experiences/perspectives. Why else do you think so many pop/mainstream/top 40 songs are about boyfriends and girlfriends? Because these are common experiences.

That said, I absolutely agree with you that men need to share their stories. Of course, not all men experience the male condition in an identical fashion, so coming up with an "overall" summation of the male condition will require the distillation of many different stories, and controlling for the impacts of other factors (ethnicity/culture, class, sexuality, etc.).

peanutbutterjams[S] • 2 points • 18 July, 2019 08:12 AM

Booyah, thanks for responding :)

Just because a writer is a man doesn't mean they are necessarily writing as a man specifically. It isn't necessarily wrong to suggest that their experiences as a man have some impact on the text,

No, especially before there was a not-man. Feminism *did* provide that, which is confirmation that freedom begets freedom.

Their male assumptions will definitely reflect the text but it's like the difference between hot peppers and basil. They weren't writing with the intention of revealing the gender assumptions with which they live, but the gender assumptions with which they live were revealing themselves. Feminist art is the former while commercial art is the latter.

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In the sense that people have to speak to their tribe, yes. You won't see openly gay characters in 50's movies...but you also won't see vulnerable men. The actual experiences of men who lived in the 50's includes feeling afraid, incompetent and vulnerable, something that was never represented in *every* single piece of media they consumed.

Commercial culture represents the stories people tell themselves. Absolutely. What it doesn't represent is people's actual experiences, particularly that of men.

Women get approbation for publicly deconstructing their gender norms. Men do not, unless it's in the context of feminism. There's no positive narrative for men talking about how gender norms have affected them, and so we don't see it reflected in our media.

Part of the reason I'm excited about this sub is that it encourages a healthier space for men to talk about their gender expectations.

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Complexity matters. I've always felt that my choice to express and talk about my emotions, was the healthiest thing I can do as a man but I've recently chatted with people who feel more comfortable, more healthy, by working through those emotions while doing something with their hands. I always assumed this 'male stoicism' was something imposed upon men and so something from which I should break free but now

I understand this is simply some people's preferred way of life.

As long as it's healthy for them and the people around them, what right do I have to tell them they should be anything but themselves?

and controlling for the impacts of other factors (ethnicity/culture, class, sexuality, etc.)

Yes, but in the context of healthier forms of discussion, it would be nice if race, sexuality, class, etc., was put forth and perceived as just one more piece of information rather than representative of an entire people. It's good information but not the only information.

[deleted] • 2 points • 18 July, 2019 12:38 AM

Another point is that just because men HAVE spoken doesn't mean no more men need to speak. We always need more male voices for the same reason we always need more female voices; there's always more people. Men don't stop needing to see themselves fairly reflected just because their parents did, assuming they even did. Identity politics is a cancer in literature and intellectual thought, used as a tool to silence people you don't like. Every single mind and perspective is unique, and therefore valuable. Censoring people based on identity is awful

peanutbutterjams[S] • 1 point • 18 July, 2019 08:52 AM

Every single mind and perspective is unique, and therefore valuable.

Preach. \o/

It's a good point. We need a constant influx of male voice to represent the constant flux of male thought.