Twitter Thread by Matthew Sheffield



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Thread: People love to rag on Nate Silver for his arrogance & they should, but he's merely an example of a larger issue that the web has made it easy to draw inferences from data without knowing the context in which it lives. 1/x

Alexander Pope's warning that "a little learning is a dangerous thing" has never been more true than an age in which we can obtain information about anything without being able to understand it.

Having data doesn't mean you can use it.

Western society has a very significant problem that expertise in one area is often conflated with expertise in others.

Men are the main culprit. We have been socialized to think we know more than we do. There are many studies showing this. Here's one: https://t.co/aVCbNTc0n6

Not only do men think we're smarter than we are, we also overestimate our own attractiveness: https://t.co/Ue7RRMR0ZB

Male overconfidence has lots of negative implications for society. The biggest is that too many men in media have amassed followings by speaking confidently about subjects they don't understand.

Nate Silver finds Donald Trump appalling, but his shtick isn't all that different.

The national media environment is heavily biased toward male overconfidence and it's a huge part of why U.S. politics are so toxic.

Instead of seeking to educate or to understand, media outlets seek conflict and debate. This influences our politics.

The numbers are undeniable that women have consistently been excluded from American political media. This was true in 2013: https://t.co/aqaKolF6XV

And also in 2016: https://t.co/2rzc7m66QK

Black, Hispanic, & Asian women are especially unrepresented in media. As my good friend @joliartist has noted, women of color are almost invisible in visual art. She's been spending the last several years making wonderful paintings to remedy this in part. https://t.co/w3CcOZVGoM

There are so many terrible second-order effects of how the media treat women's voices that we're now dealing with. 1) There's now a growing movement of "incel" men who refuse to date within their attractiveness level and instead lash out, sometimes violently, at women.

2) Research has consistently shown that women are more religious than men but media coverage of faith overwhelmingly focuses on male fundamentalists rather than the more peaceful and moderate approaches taken by women religious leaders. This is radicalizing Christian men.

3) America's inability to help boys and men have more realistic and inclusive perspectives has also made it harder for men to handle adversity. Men are less likely to welcome each other, to seek mental health, or to re-think when in trouble. It's increasing deaths of despair.

During a pandemic and economic stagnation, many men are facing it alone and are afraid to ask for help. Many don't even know that they should or that they can get it. This is terrible.

In conclusion, while it's fun to crack jokes at Nate Silver's expense, I hope we can see the larger picture.

And someone, please hire Nate's former colleague, the very talented @ClareMalone.

Thanks for reading. If you'd like to follow or retweet this, that would be just great.