

Dialogues in English 3: What does it mean to be a man in the 21st century?

PRESENTER: (*Northern accent*) Welcome to English dialogues. In 2016 three important things happened in the United States that had never happened before:

1. More women had jobs than men.
2. 30% more women graduated from university than men.
3. A majority of couples were now saying that when they had a baby would prefer to have a girl instead of a boy.

These facts are in a book by Hanna Rosin called, *The End of Men*, which makes me think it's time for Jack and Rokeby to ask themselves...what does it mean to be a man in the twenty-first century?

Vocabulary

Penis - Pene

Instead - En cambio

Gun - Pistola

Chin - Barbilla

Size - El Tamaño

The ones & The next on - Los y el siguiente

Trend - Tendencia

Beard - Barba

JACK: (*Scottish accent*) So, Rokeby...what does it mean to be a man in the twenty-first century?

ROKEBY: (*Classic English accent*) Well, the most important thing is that for the first time in history... being a man doesn't have a fixed meaning. We've been liberated from a model which we had been following for thousands of years. Now, today's men can choose to follow traditional models of masculinity if they want...or they can define a new type of masculinity or...in the case of Bruce Jenner...you can even cut your penis off and inform the world that you are a woman.

JACK: Thanks for that image, Rokeby.

ROKEBY: You're welcome.

JACK: So...what you're saying is that the question *what does it mean to be a man in the 21st century* is impossible to answer, because there's an infinite number of ways in which men can decide what it means to be a man.

ROKEBY: In theory, yes. But...let's be honest...*men*: we have unlimited capacity for fantasy but very limited imagination, so...in my opinion...there are basically five types of men in the twenty-first century.

JACK: This should be interesting.

ROKEBY: The first type is called 'the angry man'. The angry man is angry about the position of women in today's world and wants them to be submissive again. Some are older men who remember the old world, while others are young men from the extreme right of politics or religion.

JACK: Like the alt-right in the United States.

ROKEBY: Exactly. Some of them, however, became angry through circumstance; for example...their girlfriend went off with another man...or a female colleague was promoted instead of them. Basically, they feel robbed...and sometimes - but not always - **this feeling of being robbed usually extends beyond women and includes immigrants or some other social group.**

JACK: Do you really think that a man who has a bad experience with one woman can end up being angry at all women?

ROKEBY: I don't think...I know.

JACK: Really?

ROKEBY: There's a lot of websites where ex husbands share their stories and their hate. And think about the amount of men in the United States who take a gun and kill their ex...which is interesting because men are supposed to be more rational and less emotional than women.

JACK: Well, let's not start talking about the differences between men and women because that's a separate podcast. Tell me about the second type of man, instead.

ROKEBY: The second type of man is called... 'The uncertain man.' when you ask him what it means to be a man he will tell you that being a man is a key part of his identity...but can't explain why exactly. This is how they typically answers when you ask them what it is about them that makes them a man. He puts his finger to his chin and starts saying... "Mmmm...well I don't know really...I like football...but..so does my girlfriend. I like beer...but so does my girlfriend. Well...I dunno...being a man *it's just a part of you, isn't it?*"

The uncertain man is, therefore, uncertain about what it means to be a man but certain that it means something...which is very different from number 3...who has a very clear idea of what it means to be a man...

JACK: Which is?

ROKEBY: Size!

JACK: Size? You mean like...

ROKEBY: I mean...size. For this guy, size is everything...because he sees masculinity as fundamentally physical. To be a man means to have all the physical qualities that distinguish men from women...big muscles, tall, strong etc. That's why I call him "The physical man." Physical men are the ones who are driving this trend for beards...big beards because they believe in the physicality of being a man.

JACK: Well, I think I can exclude myself from that category and the two before it, which means I'll probably be the next one. So...tell us about the next type of man you've identified.

Vocabulary

Dope - Droga

Male - Macho

Sucks - Da asco / Chupa.

Bullshit - Tonterías...

Spit it out - Escupirlo ...

ROKEBY: The Lost man.

JACK: That sounds like me. Tell me more.

ROKEBY: The lost man is an ordinary guy who bases the narrative of his life on an extraordinary man who he admires. Therefore...

A young man selling dope on a street corner may identify with a famous African American rapper who also sold dope on a street corner before they were famous - all a part of his narrative that he's a gangster.

Another example: a regular policeman may see himself as a mysterious and sexy detective

that he's seen in a series. Or...a university student who's taking drugs and wants to be a writer may see himself as a young Hunter S. Thompson.

The common thing about these narratives is that they are based on an ideal man – an alpha male who's respected by other men, desired by women and living an exciting life. We call him 'lost' because he has lost contact with the reality of ordinary life and ordinary men.

JACK: And good luck to him. Ordinary life sucks. And now, if I'm not mistaken we're on number five.

ROKEBY: That's right.. "The good man".

JACK: Finally...something that sounds positive.

ROKEBY: Very positive...because the good wants society to be rich and happy and peaceful. He understands that to achieve this we need to give everybody an opportunity to contribute to the economy and politics of the country.

He sees his job as a man, therefore, to make sure that society eliminates the injustices of the past where – not only women – but lots of other groups were excluded from society. The good man sees himself in the traditional role as a protector of the community but in the style of the twenty-first century – protecting the rights of everybody in that community, irrespective of their gender, sexuality or race.

JACK: Mmmm...Rokeby, I don't want to be cynical...but isn't it a bit of a coincidence that the man you call the 'good man' seems to have a lot of your beliefs?

ROKEBY: Yes, Jack...an absolute coincidence...the classification system is 100% objective.

JACK: Hmph. No comment. So, we've reached number 5...aren't there some types of men who are missing from your list?

ROKEBY: Well...yeah...but there are certain types of men I didn't include because I didn't want to offend anybody.

JACK: Bullshit...you've spent most of your life offending people, Rokeby...so spit it out...come on

ROKEBY: Well, I think there's some men...who we'd could probably call MINOs

JACK: MINOs?

ROKEBY: Yeah...it's an abbreviation M-I-N-O. Men In Name Only. It's basically...

JACK: ...Oh Jesus, stop there...maybe you're right...let's not offend our students.

ROKEBY: Well, it's only offensive if you subscribe to all the old ideas about masculinity. Surely a MINO is *in a way* the perfect man...he's a biological male but doesn't believe in gender stereotypes. In fact...I am a MINO.

JACK: Well, I think there's a lot of women who will disagree that *a man in name only* is the perfect man. But we'll let them decide the issue in class. So...after Rokeby's admission that he's a man in name only...I'd like to thank everyone for listening... see you next week.

ROKEBY: No...wait...editor..delete that...girls...I'm a real man...really...

Pronunciation

In today's pronunciation class I'd like to focus on a simple word from the dialogue: physical. I like this word because my latin student always say the word incorrectly. They say fee-see-cal. But the i sound is not e and the 'al' is not 'AL'. The correct pronunciation is PHYSICAL - PHYS-IC-AL -PHYSICAL.

Okay, I want you to say PHYSICAL three times.

PHYSICAL - PHYS-IC-AL -PHYSICAL.

Good. Now, I'm going to do a quick test of the vocabulary from today's dialogue. I'm going to say the word in spanish...you say it in English before me.

Let's go,

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Listening questions

1. Give an example of a circumstance that can influence the 'angry man'?
2. Define 'the physical man' in your own words.
3. What self image does the regular policeman have?
4. Why is Jack suspicious of Rokeby's description of 'the good man.'
5. What does the abbreviation MINO represent?

Conversation questions

1. What type of men do women want?
2. What type of man is your father?
3. Why do women still earn less than men in the United states and other countries?
4. How important are women's rights for you?
5. How would you define a real man?