Ashley Scarpato

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Formal Assignment #3: Masculinity Redefined

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“Be a man. Stop with the tears, stop with the emotions. If you're going to be a man in this world, you better learn how to dominate and control people and circumstances" (The Mask You Live In 2015). This quote is from the film *The Mask You Live In. The Mask You Live In* “explores how our culture’s narrow definition of masculinity is harming our boys, men and society at large and unveils what we can do about it” (The Mask You Live In 2015). The way that American parents currently define masculinity is harmful to our children and needs to be changed. American parents can redefine masculinity to their sons by teaching emotions, acceptance, and confidence.

American parents can redefine masculinity by teaching their sons about emotions. At a young age males are taught that showing emotions can cause them to be viewed as weak. In saying weak I mean that males who show their emotions are viewed as lesser of men. This quote from *The Mask You Live In* is a good example “The idea of being seen as weak, as a sissy in the eyes of other guys, starts in our earliest moments of of boyhood. And it follows us all the way through our lives. Proving to other guys that we’re not girls, that we’re not women, that were not gay. We’ve constructed an idea of masculinity in the United States that doesn’t give young boys a way to feel secure in their masculinity, so we make them go prove it all of the time” (The Mask You Live In 2015). This should not be the standard that is constantly taught. Males and females are more alike than we think. Both males and females are human all humans have emotions. It’s only fair that both genders should be allowed to show whatever emotions males are feeling freely without being judged or viewed as different.

The next way that American parents can redefine masculinity to their sons is by teaching acceptance. The new definition of masculinity should include how it’s acceptable to show emotions. The parents will have to teach their sons that not everyone will agree with the new definition of masculinity and people may still judge males for showing emotions. The film states “Whether its empathy or aggression or spatial ability or verbal ability, things that a child spends their time on , that’s what they’re going to be good at” (The Mask You Live In 2015). This quote helps to show that some males don’t get to choose if they show certain emotions. If a male was taught that it was okay to cry when something made them upset or that it was okay to need a hug just because when they were younger they are going to carry this with them as they get older. A male child will think that this is normal because it’s what he has been taught since he was young. Parents need to teach their sons to accept the difference of opinion regarding showing emotions from the people around them. This quote from *The Mask You Live In* is a good example of how others may respond if a male shows any different kind of emotion “He may still do it, but the expectation is by the time he’s 10 that he’s perfected it. An if he’s 12 and he’s still crying in public, there’s a problem. Oh, my dear God, are you one of those single tear people? You are a worthless pansy-ass” (The Mask You Live In 2015). The negative talk that comes with showing emotions can be tough to hear. But if males choose to show his emotions he is going to have to accept the negative talk that comes with the emotions. To not allow those negative remarks to cause them any pain, because they have fully accepted the new definition of masculinity. One common misconception that people tend to make when they see a male crying or caring is that the male is homosexual. This stigma needs to change with the new definition of masculinity.

The final way that American parents can redefine masculinity to their sons is by teaching confidence. If the parents are going to teach their sons that it’s fine to show the emotions that they feel the males need to be taught to be confident in their emotions. Males are constantly taught that “A man has to be dominant and in charge and has control. You know, a man does everything to the extreme” (The Mask You Live In 2015). This isn’t true. Males don’t always have to be in charge and if they show emotions it doesn’t make them weak or lesser of a man. It just makes them human. Other people might argue that if a male cries in front of a female she will think lesser of him. Not all females will feel that way. Many females would actually appreciate that the male is showing an emotion that is different from anger or aggression. Males tend to use anger and aggression to hide the other emotions that they are actually feeling. Only showing two emotions all of the time because that is what males are comfortable showing makes it difficult for others to understand how they are truly feeling.

In conclusion the way that masculinity is defined needs to be changed. The current definition of masculinity doesn’t allow for males to show emotion and be confident in their choice to show emotion. The change in the definition of masculinity should start with the way that American parents define masculinity to their sons when they are young. Parents should start to teach their sons at a young age that it is acceptable to show emotion no matter what their age.

Work Cited

“The Mask You Live In - A Film From The Representation Project.” The Representation Project, therepresentationproject.org/film/the-mask-you-live-in-film/