Op-ed: The Backlash of the Media on Masculinity

By C. White on November 5, 2015

According to “Constructed Masculinity: How Much Do Media Representations Dictate Male Identity?” (Robertson 2011:88) and “The Mask You Live In” (Newson 2015), masculinity is a social construct and males in the United States (U.S.) define manhood from the media, which marginalizes them and provides restrictive representations of masculinity (Robertson 2011:88).

“Constructed Masculinity: How Much Do Media Representations Dictate Male Identity?” was written by Robertson (2011) and he debates that the media’s standard of masculinity and claim that it was reconstructed by women, who felt it needed improvement (Robertson 2011:93). Robertson argues that sitcom representatives programs are “anti-patriarchal” because they program viewers to adopt feminine gender roles from the display of “mildly feminist satire of men”. He contends that one of the media’s agenda is the creation of misconceptions, stereotypes, and new perceptions of men and masculinity. He states that media representatives, particularly sitcoms, provides masculine spoofs while sending codes to viewers that males are homosexual, weak, feminine, liars, idiots, ignorant, stupid, and inferior to women (Robertson 2011:88-91), although sitcom producers openly deny this claim (Roberson 2011:92). Robertson claims that from research on the media and emotions, 68% of male participants had the emotions of “anger, hostility, embarrassment, and anxiety” regarding the restrictive male representatives in the media. The media is identified as a tool that shapes (Newson 2015) and damages the image of males, which directly lead some males to abuse substances such as drugs or alcohol, or to become violent or depressed (Roberson 2011:97-98).

So why should we care about the media’s anti-patriarchal agenda? Why should it matter to us if the media sends codes that program viewers to become anti-male? Why should we become concerned if the media leads males to abuse substances or become violent or depressed? How may we solve the problem of negative masculine reconstruction from the media?

Well, we should care about the media’s anti-patriarchal agenda because it leads some young males to have low self-esteem and poor self-worth. Part of today’s standard of masculinity is the suppression of emotions which are directly linked to loneliness, inner pain, depression, violence, and substance abuse. Media representatives often program viewers to avoid seeking professional mental therapy to relive emotional stress and as a result, many men remain mentally and emotionally tormented. Therefore, masculinity motivates emotional damaged men to seek unproductive pleasures and practice risky behaviors such as meaningless sexual encounters, pornography, and dangerous addictions. It should matter to us if the media sends anti-male codes because many people internalize the messages, believe fiction more than reality, and then respond to men based upon stereotypes. Having wealth, power, and domination are a few of the media’s standard of masculinity, which is unattainable to most men. As a result, some men self-identify as failures.

Indeed, part of societal violence and chaos is from the influence of the media. Some media representatives send codes that gentle men are weak, homosexual, and feminine. Therefore, viewers are programed to view violent, aggressive, and hostile men as ones who are masculine and more desirable than those who are not. Women currently do not completely trust men because they are viewed as sneaky, manipulative, immature, womanizing liars. But if they avoid distractors, including the media’s misconception of men, then intimate relationships may be saved.

So my suggestion to resolve the effect of the anti-patriarchal agenda is for people to limit media contact. When bored, people should value friends and family more for entertainment and attention instead of the media’s representatives. The act will reduce and prevent stereotypes, the rate of emotional damaged men, and the amount of men who suffer from substance abuse, depression, and anger mismanagement. As a result, the American society will experience more social and psychological stability.

References

Newson, Jennifer Siebel. 2015. *The Mask You Live In.* Video/DVD. San Francisco, Ca: Kanopy Streaming*.*

Robertson, Euan. 2011, Jan. “Constructed Masculinity: How Much Do Media Representations Dictate Male Identity?. *Annual American Men’s Studies Association Conference Proceedings.* 18(88-99). doi:10.3149/AMSA.17.88