Francis Bracewell, Zahedul Islam, Florance Ebun

Professor Sabatino Mangini

ENG100

April 14, 2019

# Masculinity’s Impact on American Boys for a Positive Society

*The Mask You Live In* is a documentary produced and directed by Jennifer Siebel Newsom that explores the negativities of masculinity within the American culture. Newsom’s inspiration for the documentary originated from her getting pregnant with her son. She was quoted during an interview when she said, “It was really important to me that I could nurture a son who could be true to his authentic self, who wouldn’t always feel like he had to prove his masculinity. There’s so much loneliness, pain, and suffering when one is pretending to be someone that they’re not.” According to the documentary. We imagine the mixed views that people had after watching this documentary. However, some people saw the film as gender bias against men while some people saw the massage of this documentary as the wrong view of masculinity by female. Kimmel argues that, “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 at all time.” According to Dr. Caroline, masculinity is not organic, it’s reactive. It’s not something that just develops. It’s a rejection of everything that is feminine. This research paper will traverse masculinity and redefine masculinity as it relates to how American parents raise their sons. We believe that this documentary’s definitions toward boys and their parents are harmful to society and has the propensity to initiate violence among boys. We agreed with the film on those issues in the film that talked about boys letting out their emotions and parents are there to assure their boy the true meaning of life. Parental attention and care as well as moral orientation will positively impact the lives of boys in America.

1. Parental Attention and Care

Attention means the time or effort that you are willing to give to help someone or something because you care about that person or thing (Cambridge dictionary).

There is usually a strong bond between parents and their children that attracts concern about the wellbeing of them, especially when they are boys and begin to play with peer groups, parents worry a lot. At that period, the film suggests some parents would start talking to the boys about boldness among their peers, that they should not allow anyone to bully them or that they must not cry as boys because the society would see them as being weak. Unfortunately, some parents here in America due to busy schedule or other issues find it difficult to spend time with their boys or have personal discussions with them. Some parents are not aware of the pains the boys are facing, they feel that once their child’s material needs are met, they don’t care about their emotional needs. The lack of attention by parents, can lead boys to feel frustration or depression, and might lead boys to experience series of troubles such as drugs, crime, suicide and murder, just to mention a few. According to the documentary.

The need for parental attention and care is one of the two factors for redefining masculinity. Giving listening ears or building friendly environments would encourage the boys to open up whenever they are going through any challenges. Parents need to speak to the boys about masculinity rather than give a negative impression.

Referencing the film,

“***The* Mask You Live In in scene (18:13-20:04) “My father, we didn't really have a great relationship. His night job was drinking, he was an alcoholic. I was afraid of him. He was a mean man. He was emotionless, he didn't care about much. In his eyes, going to school wasn't the power behind what we should have been doing. It was get a good job, get a lot of women, and then you're a man. My mother was more of my striving force. She taught me that education was important. So every year on Mother's Day, of course, I would send her a Mother's Day card, but also I would send her a card on Father's Day. And I would just thank her for playing both roles in my life. The moment I found out I was going to be a father was very scary for me. I was an undergrad, and my son's mother told me she was pregnant. And we were no longer together. And I told her if she wanted I would raise him. I would take care of him. My father didn't raise me, and this is very important for me to raise my son. It's been very hard to play both roles as a mother and father for Jacksen Because I was taught that men are tough, they're strong. I spent a lot of nights crying. Because he did have feelings and I had to, you know, take care of that. And then one day, it clicked, and it clicked because Jacksen said to me, "Daddy, I'm sensitive." And I was like, "Okay...okay." So then I just started like, I started reading a lot, you know, doing Google searches on how to be sensitive and stuff like that. I started just asking him how he felt, Like how do you feel, why are you sad, are you okay? He taught me how to be more in touch With my own emotions and his as well. He would cry sometimes, I would cry with him. And I would tell him, "Daddy wasn't allowed to cry growing up, but its okay, if you need to cry, cry." It took some time for me to get there.”** Shows lack of parental care, there were disconnects between the child’s parent which led the child to become withdrawn and hide his emotions as well. In addition, after the child became a parent decided not to repeat the style of upbringing that his father raised him by. He learns how to be more sensitive to his feelings and to give him that emotional support as a father.

To buttress the point on parental attention and care, Sandi Schwartz in her article argues, “Higher self-esteem, improved academic performance, better parent-child communication, and fewer physiological and behavior problems have been linked to this type of affection. On the other hand, children who do not have affectionate parents tend to have lower self-esteem and to feel more alienated, hostile, aggressive and antisocial.” It is obvious that when a parent conbines attention and affection, boys are likely to improve their lives in every facet.

Moral Values

Another factor for redefining parental masculinity in America is moral values. According to Quora.com, Moral values such as integrity, determination, loyalty, truthfulness, honesty, giving respect to each other should be inherited by every individual as it helps distinguish between what's right and wrong, good or bad. To back up this claim, Jeff Bryant in his quotes stated that, “Parents, teach your children to express themselves. Teach them to be in touch with their emotions, to speak honestly to people, and to maintain integrity and stick by their principles in all they do. This is perhaps the highest morality you can instill.” Unfortunately, some parents do not have what it takes to instill moral values as they themselves do not have morals. One can only teach their boys morals if and only if they were thought by their parents or guidance’s.

In the documentary ***The Mask You Live In***, **shows** how a father was an alcoholic while his mother was the one who raised him and played the role of a father and mother so as to see her son become a success. His father did not have a moral value and so could not offer any to his son. Some of the reason why so many boys in America are going through pain is because some parents are not doing enough for their boys by grooming them daily with moral values. The first major assignment for redefining masculinity in boys is for parents to start re-orientating themselves about the reason and importance of moral values because you cannot teach what you do not know. Once that is done and followed ritualistically, parents will see the positive side of bringing boys up with moral values.

Conclusion

Parental attention and Care as well as moral values will help redefine masculinity positively in boys here in America. This is because parental attention and care by parents towards boys will help minimize emotional difficulties in the lives of boys as they would have close relationship with their parents. Parents will be inform about of challenges their boys face and they’re going to build confidence and be aware of the realities of life. Also, moral values will assist in shaping the lives of boys by working according to the principles of moral values which will likely lead to success in all they do. It is very important that parents check themselves and from time to time re-orientate themselves about moral values to enable them transfer same to their boys not just for themselves as a family but for the boys and the society at large.

# Works Cited

“The Mask You Live In.” Directed by Jennifer Siebel Newsom. The Representation Project, 2015. Kanopy. Web. 15 Apr. 2019. Accessed 17 April 2019.

"The Mask You Live In.” *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia.* Wikipedia, Web. January 30, 2015, [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\_Mask\_You\_Live\_In.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Mask_You_Live_In) Accessed 15 April 2019.

Sandi Schwart[z.](https://www.mother.ly/u/sandischwartz) “A Modern Lifestyle Brand Redefining Motherhood.”

[www.mother.ly/child/how-a-parents-affection-shapes-a-childs-happiness-for-life.](http://www.mother.ly/child/how-a-parents-affection-shapes-a-childs-happiness-for-life)

Accessed 17 April 2019.

https://www.rumahdesainminimalis.com/

<https://www.quora.com/What-are-moral-values>

<https://www.azquotes.com/quote/1426791> Author: Jeff Bryant