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COME 467A

Introduction

In today's society, we expect men to be manly. What does it mean to be manly? According to hegemonic masculinity, you have to possess all five characteristics. Those 5 traits are physical force, and control, occupational achievement, familial patriarchy, frontiersmanship, and heterosexuality. Hegemonic masculinity is “the culturally idealized form of the masculine character”(Glantz, 2022). If we don't see these traits in a man, we tend to look down on them, without even realizing it. Our society has made it a norm for us to believe that this is what a man should be. If a man dresses slightly more femininely, we automatically assume that they are homosexual. We have been trained for a long time on what we think a man looks like in the media. We would see men as weak if they don't possess physical force, and control. We look at men as lazy if they don't have a great occupation that could support a family. In an article, called *Idol Speculation: Queer Identity and a Media- Imposed Lens of Detection*, written by Jimmy Draper, they talk about American Idol star Adam Lambert. In the article, they mention an episode of *The View* and their opinion of Adam Lambert's sexual identity. The one host automatically assumed his sexuality by his makeup, style, and the music he sang. They also mentioned how they “think” he was openly gay, even though Lambert, himself, never confirmed. Days after the episode came out, Lambert told people to “keep speculating”. Two weeks later,

Adam Lambert, came out gay on the Rolling Stones cover. Even though he finally came out on his own terms, people still thought they had to power to discuss it. This is where my point comes in about what we think a man is. When The View hosts saw Lambert, they immediately thought he was gay, no questions asked. Realistically, It is nobody's place to comment on one's sexuality. When we see a man in makeup or different clothing, our minds automatically go to thinking one is gay. The problem in our society is taking these characteristics, and thinking this is what it should be. There is no specific outline of what a man should look, or act like. We have created this unsafe society where men cant truly express themselves without assumptions, and speculations about their manhood. Men have to face the wrath of women, but also other men for being too feminine, or not supplying enough.

Program Infomation

The show I will be presenting is a famous reality show, Chrisley Knows Best. This show goes through the lives of the Chrisley family. Todd is the father, Julie is the mother, and Savannah, Grayson, Chase, and Chole as their children. The family is based in Tennessee and shows their countryside and southern values. They were originally from Georgia, but after the show started to take off, they moved to Tennessee. The show aired in 2014 and was broadcasted on the USA network. Ever since it aired, the Chrisley fan base has kept getting bigger. Todd Chrisley, one of the main characters, is exceptionally feminine for being a male. He pays very close attention to detail regarding fashion and has an obsession with cleanliness. Since the show aired, many magazines have speculated about Todd's sexuality. In today's society when we think of men, we think of strong, straight, family men. Although Todd is a family man, he lacks the typical masculine traits that we, as a society, expect to see out of males. Since the show aired,

questions and speculations about Todd's sexuality have grown enormously. In recent years, many news articles have come out about his sexuality, and what they think about it. In 2017, the Domenick Nati show did an interview on Chrisley and brought up the alleged rumors. Todd Chrisley took that chance to set the record straight, whether people believed him or not. Chrisley also used that chance to add humor to the serious question. Todd said he was flattered that people think that he “gets it” from both sides. He also stated that for him to be disappointed by the rumors, would mean he doesn't agree with someone being gay. Although Chrisley has denounced the rumor, many people still don't believe it. They believe that he is a closeted gay man, because of his appearance, hobbies, and just the overall way he carries himself. Although Todd is male, he only meets one or two criteria for hegemonic masculinity. Todd lacks such things, this gives people, our society the idea, that there's no way he could be a straight powerful male.

Lens/Description of Approach

Hegemonic masculinity is the perception of how we see men. We embodied this perception by the media that we are surrounded by every day. Typically, in any media we see involving men, they are strong, the provider, have high power in their careers, and a family man. We often see women as the shadow in the background, as the men do all of the work for us. In the article, “*What it Means to Be a Man*”: *Examining Hegemonic Masculinity in Two and a Half Men*, they mention how the media forces this thought into our heads. They stated, “ Media representations continually reproduce masculinity according to social norms with sitcoms illustrating cultural myths about male roles that do not actually exist in the real world” (Cantor, quoted in Hanke, 1992, p.529) When we see these characters in movies or television shows, we often think that this is what a relationship or man should look like. Men who see the characters

like this can often get discouraged, and wonder why they can't be like that superhero who always saves the day or the rich CEO who has it all. A lot of times shows will tailor their characters, and scripts to what is relevant right now, and what women want in a man. In the same article previously mentioned, they stated, “ To emphasize the performance is not to suggest that identities are inauthentic, but only that identities are situated and accomplished with an audience in mind” (Riessman, 2008, p.531) The producers, and writers of any show, or movie are very meticulous in the way they script things. They look at how society is now, and what we viewers want to see.

Analysis- Physical Force & Control

Todd Chrisley has never been one for conflict or fights. Chrisley seems like a strict parent on the outside, but realistically these children go behind his back a lot of times. In season two, episode seven, Todd's son Chase gets his first tattoo. Todd has stated in previous episodes that he doesn't approve of tattoos, and he won't allow his children to have them. Chase decided to surprise his father with the new tattoo he just got. In the episode, Chase states, “If I want to get a tattoo, I'm going to get a tattoo, and I don't care what my dad thinks”. I find this example to be really relevant to Chrisley's control over his family. Todd is very conservative, and old school in the sense of his parenting. When Todd first sees the tattoo, you can see the anger in his expression and body language. He even says “ Chase you have got to be kidding me. Did you really just do that”. I believe that at this moment Todd realizes that he has no control over his family, or the decisions his children make without him. In season two, episode six, Savannah, Chase, and Grayson, all start to tattle on each other for random things they have done, that would make Todd upset. At one point Todd even says “ Stop your stupid, because I'm not in the mood

for it". I see this as also another way to try and control his children. Todd doesn't have to raise a hand or get physical with his children for them to understand his anger. Although he has little control over his family, and their actions, he also has little control over other men on the outside. Todd Chrisley would never be seen as a threat to some men, because of his demeanor, and the verbiage he uses.

Occupational Achievement

Before Todd Chrisley was a famous reality star, he started off as a real estate investor. In 2014, The Chrisleys started their now-famous reality show. As the years passed, the show seemed to be getting even bigger. The article, *Social Media Knows Best When Promoting Chrisley*, expands on the views the Chrisleys were bringing in. "Nearly 3 million viewers tuned in, up 30% from season 2. The network also scored highs in both the 18-to-49-year-old demographic and the 25-54 demo" (Lafayette, 2015, P. 26). As you can see, the Chrisleys were doing a great job at bringing the viewers in, and also keeping them entertained. When watching the show, It is very noticeable that the Chrisleys are not struggling, and live a very well-off life. In 2019, the family hit a very unexpected bump in the road. Todd and his wife Julie were being charged with 12 counts of bank, and wire fraud, tax evasion, and conspiracy. What we were watching on our television, was not what they were experiencing in real life. Todd and his wife were trying to paint this picture-perfect southern lifestyle for the cameras when realistically they weren't paying their taxes. As of the beginning of November, their three-week-long trial finally came to a bitter ending. Todd was sentenced to twelve years in prison, and his wife was sentenced to seven years. The world came crashing down on the Chrisleys. Todd is no longer a successful real estate investor or famous reality star. Todd doesn't necessarily fit the typical

masculine traits, and by the look of it tried to overcompensate for successful his career. Now, he can't fall back on that. All of the work that Chrisley has put into his work, is now irrelevant. As viewers, no one is too sure about the fate of their show, or what will happen next with the family. On November 21st, 2022, Todd, and Julie Chrisley spoke out for the first time since their prison sentence. On their podcast, *Chrisley Confessions*, Todd stated, "Yesterday doesn't matter. Today is what we have, tomorrow belongs to God because we're not promised tomorrow." The Chrisleys are taking their sentence one day at a time, and are going into their sentence positive, with their head high.

Familial Patriarchy

One trait Todd fully possess is familial patriarchy. Todd has five kids and one grandchild. His five children include Kyle, Chase, Savannah, Lindsie, Grayson, and Chloe, his granddaughter. In 2012, Kyle had a baby girl, Chloe. In 2016, Kyles's custody was taken away because of a drug addiction he was battling. Shared custody of Chloe was then given to Todd, and to Chloe's mother, Angela. That same year, Angela was arrested for filing a false application for Medicaid assistance. After that, Todd was then given sole custody of Chloe. We saw Todd on the show being a father to Chloe and treating her like his own. We have always seen Todd as the best father on screen. Kyle Chrisley wasn't his only problem child, Lindsie Chrisley has had an ongoing feud with her father for many years. Just recently the two have reconciled, and have talked about their estrangement. Part of their estrangement was caused by Linsdsie getting a divorce from her partner, with who she shared a son. Todd stated in the article, "I think there are certain lessons you have to learn on your own that other people can't teach you from their failures." (Bellusci, 2022)The Chrisleys dont have this picture-perfect family life as it has been

painted on the show. Although they aren't picture-perfect, the Chrisleys show an ideal representation of what a family actually looks like. Everybody has some sort of family problems, nobody is perfect. It's refreshing to see a “real” family on a television show that they are regular people too. Although this doesn't fit into hegemonic masculinity, It's realistic to how families truly operate.

Frontiersmanship

As I have stated so far, Todd Chrisley is not one to be known as “manly”. We see that many times in reality show. In season 4, episode 12, Todd is seen having the flu and being over dramatic about his illness. A nurse then comes over to the house to give Todd, an IV of fluids to help make him feel better. As the nurse is putting the needle in, Todd starts to scream, because of the pain. He even says “ I dont think you've given me enough medicine to numb it” As I have stated previously, as a man you are supposed to be strong and show no emotion. We see Chrisley constantly showing emotion, or being “weak” as a man. In our society, we often hear “take it like a man”, which I believe some men would say to Chrisley after watching this scene. In season eight, episode fourteen, Chrisley is seen playing a virtual reality game with his family. When Todd puts the eye set on, he sees a rat in the game. When he does, he starts to scream and run into the counter, even pushing the flowers off the counter. Chrisley is not seen as very tough, or a threat to anybody. The rat in the game is a threat to Chrisley showing that he is not the “typical” man. In another episode, season three, episode two, Todd is wanting to coach his son, Grayson, baseball team. When the whole family started to doubt him, this pushed Todd even harder to coach. Right before the game, Todd shows his family his outfit to coach in. The outfit is full of armor to protect himself, and his body during the game. In society, we are to believe that all men

love sports, and that's their passion. This is another prime example of how Todd doesn't fit the hegemonic masculinity traits that we are influenced by daily.

Heterosexuality

Since the Chrisley television show aired, there have been many speculations about Chrisley's sexuality. As I have stated, Chrisley doesn't portray the “classic” qualities of a man. For people to assume this about him, is not surprising. Todd Chrisley is seen on the show being flamboyant, and feminine. Many celebrity gossip blogs often ask “ Is Todd Chrisley gay?”, and also many viewers who watch. On Twitter, one user wrote, “I'm not calling Todd Chrisley gay but he’s feminine I don't see how his wife doesn’t see it”. Many have often questioned what his sexuality was as if it was their business anyways. Just recently in their court case, a bomb was dropped in court. Todd Chrisley's former business partner, Mark Braddock, alleges that the two had a secret affair. Braddock even testified to the court about this affair that supposedly went on for over a year in the early 2000s. Todd and Mark even started getting anonymous text messages that threatened to expose them. In an article, written by Page Six, they wrote, “Braddock testified that one text read, “Pay cash and we’ll shut up,” according to the report. He claimed he then withdrew four payments of \$9,500, totaling \$38,000, from his bank account, and gave it to Todd to pay off the blackmailer.” (Reslen, 2022). Also in Mark's testimony, he even admits to being the one to turn the Chrisleys into the FBI, because of the bitter ending between the pair. While most people were surprised by Braddock's testimony, others were more surprised that people didn't think that Chrisley was gay, to begin with. In a Tweet, one user stated “Todd Chrisley is gay....and water is wet.”. Which is saying, they saw that coming all along. Todd Chrisley has yet to denounce what his former business partner has said about him, but the

viewers aren't expecting a response to that claim for a long time.

Evaluation

Unlike many shows, *Chrisley Knows Best* challenges the status quo, and what we see as normal. In our world and mind, we see men who could care less about fashion. We see them in mismatched, and wrinkled clothes, which is unlike Todd Chrisley. We also see men as dirty, and disorganized, and women as cleaning the house. This is also another reason why *Chrisley* challenges the status quo. This show challenges more than masculinity. Chole, Todd, and Julie's granddaughter, who they have sole custody over, is an African American, which is interesting because the rest of the family is Caucasian. This also changes our view of what a "traditional" family looks like. Normally when we think of a family, the family is all one race, with children. The Chrisleys challenge the status quo also through their family structure. The family is very accepting of LGBTQ, and overall very accepting of people by their perception on the show. Normally, as a society, we think that country, people from the south, are unaccepting people, with extremely closed minds. We don't see that with the Chrisleys. We don't see Todd Chrisley getting into manly fights, or being a powerfully strong man. He is a family man who loves fashion and cleaning, the things women are supposed to love. This show changed the traditional way that we see men. Todd Chrisley challenges the theory of hegemonic masculinity. He shows that a "real" man can like all of the same things that women also enjoy. Although there are many rumors about Todd's sexuality, he still shows that he is a good caring man, who loves his family. Which truthfully should be our perception of men. As women, we often want strong, powerful men, that can protect us. As for *Chrisley*, he shows us the opposite. No, he wouldn't be able to fight someone off, but he would do his best to protect his family. We see this in the numerous

examples I have given from the show. This show teaches us that hegemonic masculinity isn't for every man. This also teaches us that we can't expect these traits out of every man that we encounter. It is rare to find a man who fits all five qualities of masculinity. Even though the assumptions about Todd's sexuality haven't been confirmed, if he was homosexual, this show would challenge the quo even more. We, as a society, dont expect a man to come out gay, while also having a wife, and kids. Back in 2015, Bruce Jenner, who is now known as Caitlyn Jenner, caused a huge stir, when she came out transgender. Caitlyn Jenner is also another prime example of challenging hegemonic masculinity. Bruce Jenner was a star Olympic athlete, so when he came out transgender, the world didn't know what to do or think. How was a man that was the face of sports, and being a “man” come out as transgender? As the years go on, many men are challenging the status quo, by showing the world that they dont have to be all of these things to be a man. As more men are coming out, as their own, society as we know is slowly starting to shift. As for mass media, the media is still forming itself into the idea of hegemonic masculinity. I believe once the media is on board with how the times are changing, and how men cant always be these tough guys, then society will start to change its way of thinking as well.

Conclusion

Todd Chrisley has shown that he is not the ideal male, and he has multiple feminine qualities. Hegemonic masculinity is extremely unrealistic for men. Men, in our society, have to constantly prove themselves of being a man, or else they are called gay. For the time Chrisley Knows Best has been on television, It has changed the viewer's thinking of what a husband, father, and man should look like. I have shown that if you dont possess the qualities of hegemonic masculinity, physical force & control, occupational achievement, Familial Patriarchy,

Frontiersmanship, and heterosexuality, you will be looked at as feminine, or even homosexual. In our society, we need more movies or television shows that are similar to Chrisleys. Chrisley has changed the game of what a family should be, and look like. As a society, we should take note of shows like this, and practice acceptance of all types of men in our real reality.

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