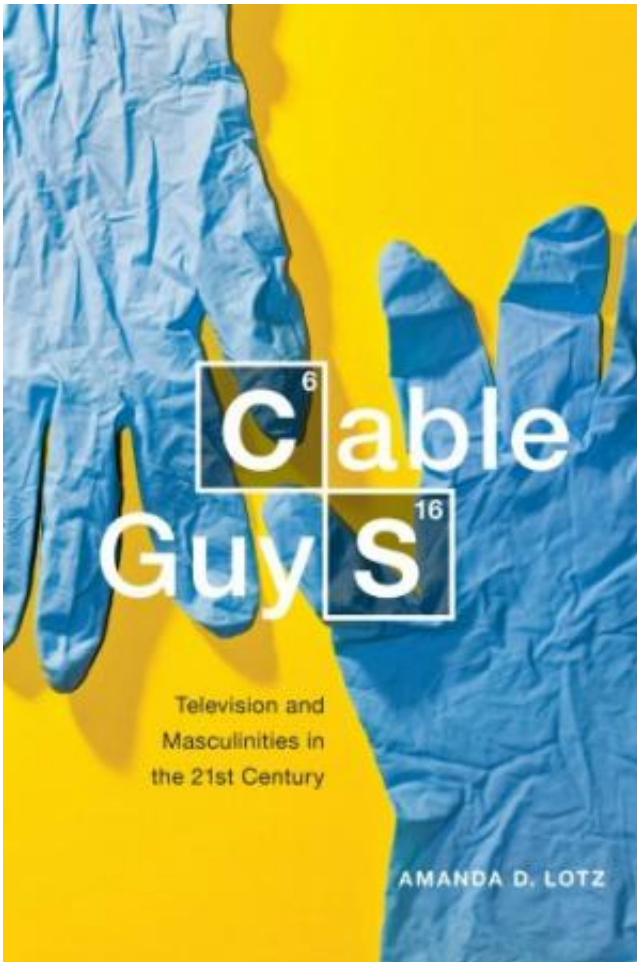


Male identity evolves on TV dramas

April 8 2014, by Jared Wadley



Male characters on television used to hold onto traditional ideas of masculinity tighter than viewers maintained their grip on remote controls.

But the gradual infusion of feminism into U.S. society and TV scripts in recent decades has changed [gender roles](#) in how men regard fatherhood and marriage, says a University of Michigan researcher.

In fact, expectations society places on men have changed the television landscape and we now see many male characters feeling perplexed about their roles, says Amanda Lotz, U-M associate professor of communication studies.

These are no longer the days when men hide behind newspapers at the breakfast table before slipping out to work and returning after their children have gone to bed. Now, TV narratives sometimes show couples following paths preferred by female characters, while at other times couples follow the path preferred by male characters. Both make choices that don't turn out well, Lotz says.

Contemporary dramas such as "The Shield," "Rescue Me" and "Sons of Anarchy" offer complicated stories about male characters struggling with expectations of men in 21st century society. Though men are now depicted in equitable marriages and as engaged, active parents, many also continue to feel an overwhelming need to fulfill a role as primary family provider.

Lotz and others discuss this as evidence of a new masculine mystique in which men are overwhelmed by the blend and new expectations about how to be "good [men](#)."

The analysis can be found in Lotz' new book "Cable Guys: Television and Masculinities in the 21st Century."

Provided by University of Michigan

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