

The Dilemma of Toxic Masculinity in Eastern and Western Societies; With Reference to the Novel “Men in Prison”

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Abstract

This paper will focus on the notion of toxic masculinity that has a lot to do with deforming the male identity figure. I am here really concerned with probing within the need of conforming with the traditional masculinity ideology in the East and the West, and how it hinders males from discovering what it means to be a male. Actually, the scope of research in this paper exceeds one culture to include both the Western and the Eastern cultures, which have proved with evidence to share many attributes. I am also revealing how this masculinity has been misinterpreted over the years to encompass weird attitudes and behaviors as suppressing emotions or masking distress or showing violence as an indicator of power. How the idea of the necessity of being “tough all the time” may affect their mental and psychological wellbeing and what is less than that could stigmatize them for being “feminine” or “weak”. In this paper, I will also try to reveal how great sector of women unintentionally feeds this ego of toxic masculinity to their sons since childhood days. By connecting all these factors to the development of the characters in Victor Surge’s novel “Men in Prison”, we are simply highlighting the psychological dimension and consequences of suppressed men. It is regarded as an unfiltered view of humanity in the early 20th century. The depraving brutality that Serge experienced behind bars is mirroring a society subduing men in various levels. I hopefully seek to break down factors that trap men in a certain framework out of which there is no escape.

Keywords

Toxic Masculinity, Cultural Ideology, Misogyny, Manhood, Victor Surge, “Men in Prison”

1. Introduction

For decades, both Western and Eastern cultures have been using the concepts of “macho” or “red-blooded” to describe the kind of hulking masculinity that men were, on some level, expected to appear within this scope. Nowadays, the world is reaping the results of feeding and exaggerating the notion of manhood that resulted into misinterpretation and emergence of “toxic masculinity”.

The American Psychological Association released its general guidelines for psychologists working with boys and men who are socialized to conform to “traditional masculinity ideology”, which it says can incapacitate them from exploring what it means to be male, about a new breed of straight male rockers who are protesting old notions of manhood.

Most researchers have defined toxic masculinity, in part, as a set of behaviors and beliefs that include suppressing emotions or masking distress, maintaining an appearance of hardness and it may include as well an indicator of power. What is really going on since so long is that the various cultures keep pushing boys to be strictly tough, otherwise they would be stigmatized as being “feminine” or “weak”. In addition, it is a shame to express your emotions openly or in public. So, we could say that toxic masculinity is the direct result of teaching boys since their childhood days with these stereotype statements fed by all sectors of society members. All these cultural lessons have been linked with aggression and violence, leaving boys and men at risk of conforming with this required image from unqualified agents or even to boys or men themselves who don't know how to cope with the manhood figure.

Statistics show that men are overrepresented in prisons, and are more likely than women to commit violent crimes and at greatest risk of being victims of violent crimes. The role of women, from my personal perspective, in this dilemma is a double edged weapon depending on their stance. In other words, when they are the caregivers of boys, they gradually, consciously or unconsciously, are feeding the ego of the hulking man in their boys' minds and souls in an excessive way, letting them to happily practice this domination on their sisters. On top of that, mothers, especially in the Eastern world, live the feeling of pomposity seeing their boys playing the role of manhood domination on themselves as well. Women in the Eastern culture, particularly from a certain society class, adore their male children as their greatest achievements and blindly start glorifying them since their early childhood days.

Unfortunately, they are partly condemned to push men to reach the level of toxic masculinity. Unlike other opinions, I personally don't think women are totally innocent from playing key roles in magnifying and blowing up the flame of such image of hulking masculinity to the extent that pushed men to the limits of exceeding the border of violence and aggression. If culture is to be blamed for framing up men in such image, men, accordingly, have been dedicated being good followers to spread out and follow up the well execution of such ideology. In fact, the man who steps up to decide how to define manhood and masculinity

for himself depends on the grounded root of society expectations from the male figure since his early childhood days.

Most apparently in Eastern communities, women in this scenario have always been the guardian figures of mocking men trying to get out of the tough figures ascribing them to feminine attributes. On the other hand, when it comes to blocking women's own favors, they start raising calls of gender equality and combating the manhood supremacy and domination. No one can deny that women have been the backbone of the whole civil rights movement since 1966. Such movements resonate with the Eastern world with similar acts from a humanitarian perspective of mankind, headed by pioneers as Hoda Sharawy, May Zeyaada and Nawal Al Saadawy.

Actually the term "toxic masculinity" has been controversial for a considerable period of time. Many conservatives allege that charges of toxic masculinity are an attack on manhood itself, at a time when men already face challenges such as higher rates of addicting drugs or committing suicide. Many progressives, meanwhile, contend that the detoxification of masculinity is an essential pathway to gender equality. Amid this heated discourse, newspaper and magazine articles have blamed toxic masculinity for certain crimes as rape, murder, mass shootings, and gang violence (Hay, 2017).

Masculinity can indeed be destructive if misused. But both conservative and liberal stances on this issue commonly misunderstand how the term toxic masculinity functions. When people use it, they tend to diagnose the problem of masculine aggression and entitlement as a cultural or spiritual illness—something that has infected today's men and leads them to reproachable acts. But toxic masculinity itself is not a cause. For several decades, as the concept has morphed and changed, it has served more as a barometer for the gender politics of its day—and as an arrow toward the subtler, shifting causes of violence and sexism (Hay, 2017).

Despite the term's recent popularity among feminists, toxic masculinity did not originate with the women's movement. It was coined in "the mythopoetic men's movement of the 1980s and 90s, motivated in part as a reaction to second-wave feminism" (Leone & Gillis, 2013). Through male-only workshops, wilderness retreats, and drumming circles, this movement promoted a masculine spirituality to rescue what it referred to as the "deep masculine"; a protective, "warrior" masculinity from toxic masculinity. Men's aggression and frustration was, according to the movement, the result of a society that feminized boys by denying them the necessary rites and rituals to realize their true selves as men.

This claim of a singular, real masculinity has been roundly rejected since the late 1980s by a new sociology of masculinity. Leone mentioned that this school of thought presents "gender as the product of relations and behaviors, rather than as a fixed set of identities and attributes." (Leone & Gillis, 2013). From other perspective, we discovered that Connell's work describes multiple masculinities shaped by class, race, culture, sexuality, and other factors, often in competi-

tion with one another as to which can claim to be more authentic. In this view, which is now the prevailing social-scientific understanding of masculinity, the standards by which a “real man” is defined can vary dramatically across time and place (Connell, 1995).

Connell and others theorized that common masculine ideals such as social respect, physical strength, and sexual potency become problematic when they set unattainable standards. Falling short can make boys and men insecure and anxious, which might prompt them to use force in order to feel, and be seen as, dominant and in control. Male violence in this scenario doesn’t emanate from something bad or toxic that has crept into the nature of masculinity itself. Rather, it comes from these men’s social and political settings, the particularities of which set them up for inner conflicts over social expectations and male entitlement. “The popular discussion of masculinity has often presumed there are fixed character types among men,” Connell stated “I’m skeptical of the idea of character types. I think it’s more important to understand the situations in which groups of men act, the patterns in their actions, and the consequences of what they do.” (Connell, 1995)

2. Discussion

Not only in the Western culture, but in many other cultures all over the world, many men have difficulty expressing emotion due to toxic masculinity. Toxic masculinity refers to actions that discourage displays of emotion, other than anger, in men while also encouraging behavior that will deem the male “dominant” in a given situation. Even as children, young boys who express feelings are compared to girls in a negative context. Some of the common responses to young males who become emotional are encountered with certain statements that could be considered as stereotype in every culture as; “Boys! Don’t cry”, “Man Up”, “Don’t be such a Baby”, “Don’t cry like a girl!”, “Be a man—get over it”, “don’t act like a girl!” all of which have negative connotations.

Regardless of one’s cultural background, one likely heard these phrases directed at himself or someone from the surroundings. Moreover, it was also highlighted from the media long years ago as one has probably noticed them in dialogue or in storylines on television shows and movies. Frankly speaking, we ourselves may be guilty reaching the level of uttering them from time to time. What really happens in reality is when a boy gets injured, crying over a painful ache or an emotional heartbreak that feels like the end of the world, and then being told to “*man up*,” instead of being gently asked what’s making you cry, how you feel about it, and what you think you can do about it. “When feelings are dismissed and gender-defining thinking is heard repeatedly, a young person learns to avoid expressing their real feelings and begins to bottle up sadness.” (Levant, 2011) Over time, such behavior can lead to a dysfunctional emotional expression and ultimately, depression.

Logically, when a young boy grows up after absorbing the negativity portrayed

by others, they often raise their own children, especially boys, the same way. Society dictates that boys be raised to believe that confidence, strength, success, and composure are the core elements of being a man, and anything “emotional” is girly or womanly, and should therefore be stifled and ignored. For this reason, symptoms of depression in men often manifest differently than they do in women. Throughout their life span, boys or even men develop symptoms of depression that may reflect as; eating disorders, erectile dysfunction, fatigue, feeling sad or angry inside but showing rage and anger to appear masculine, unable to perform daily chores, increased irritability, lack of concentration, lack of interest at work and in family or lack of sleep, or self-medication with street drugs or suicidal thoughts.

Referring to the novel “Men in Prison”, it is worth mentioning that Victor Serge himself wrote “Everything in this book is fictional and everything is true. I have attempted, through literary creation, to bring out the general meaning and human content of personal experience.” (Serge, 1969) With unflinching honesty and sometimes excruciatingly grim prose, Serge writes about his five-year journey through the French penal system. The prose is layered with searing revelations and demonstrates his talent for parsing out an incarcerated man’s primal fears. He writes of suffering a thousand daily humiliations at the hands of those in charge, which eventually led most to inhabit a dull space into which nothing could penetrate. It is here they found solace. He says, “I am free because nothing more can be done to me.” (Serge, 1969) Serge’s struggle to maintain sanity in the face of a lengthy sentence is one of his most difficult challenges, and he repeatedly, with great psychological insight, probes these existential depths.

Serge writes poetically of simple pleasures that come unexpectedly and are few and far between. “The sky! Above our heads a glittering winter sky, full of constellations, spread out its deep blacks and blues, its profusion of stars, the ripples of light in its shadowy gulfs. Had I ever understood the marvel of a simple starry sky before?”. (Serge, 1997) Serge manages to render an atmospheric perspective on prison life written in the highest literary style.

We come to see that men everywhere are raised, to some extent, in a system that promotes traditional masculinity having complicated feelings towards their own emotions. Often, they attempt to shut them off or avoid them completely. I think that this is the reason behind why men are more likely to use external methods to cope with the inward turmoil and pain caused by depression. Men often deal with depression by over-working. They also self-medicate by turning to substances such as drugs and alcohol or even over smoking as a way to avoid dealing with depression and anxiety.

Physiologist and medical doctor Sigmund Freud, who is widely regarded as the father of psychoanalysis, famously said people repress from their conscious mind what they believe are shameful thoughts. In other words, people bury what they are ashamed of. Men couldn’t express their inner thoughts as freely as women, that’s why many men express their internal conflicts by directing anger

at those around them, like their partners or children. What do all of these external “coping” methods have in common? None of them actually help men cope with, or even face, what they are actually struggling with.

It was claimed in the nineteenth century that men are behind every non-geographical disaster starting from climate change, warfare, genocide and ending with domestic violence and harassment. “Vulnerability” is a term men are trying their best to diminish from their masculine dictionary. Masculinity, argues Jukes, is like an illness acquired in early boyhood. It is, he believes, built on a “fault” created during the Oedipal crisis and is hugely destructive. “It is like two sides of a divide. One side is a boy’s relationship with his mother, and later the pressure not to be so deeply attached to the mother because it is seen as feminizing (Jukes, 2010). Regardless the culture is, all are supporting this concept to certain limits, for example, in the English community, boys could be sent to boarding schools in order to detach them from their mothers for the sake of toughen them up.

Based on this concept emerges the eventual dismissal of what are seen as feminine attributes such as intimacy, and vulnerability, and the embrace of ‘masculine’ attributes such as risk-taking, gambling, drinking and male bonding, which in turn can result in jail, divorce, alcoholism, or infidelity. Consequently, we can say that maleness and masculinity are not identical concepts; masculinity is a psychological and socially related term, whereas maleness is a biological categorization. That’s why masculinity becomes a dangerous weapon to many men who suffer, but hold themselves back from exposing their feelings of isolation, loneliness and fear. Hence the pursuit of status, power, dominance and wealth will prevail to such an extent that men will always wrongly prioritize short-term gain.

Much of male behavior, the quest for power and status, chronic sulking, workaholism, risk-taking, infidelity, are all paradoxical defence mechanisms against men’s overwhelming feelings of weakness, vulnerability and humiliation. Actually, reality proves this to be true as we may sometimes find certain male figures who relentlessly bury themselves in work, trying to find a role for themselves. They are dying for getting the feeling that they are important, worthy and needed. Ignorance kills men deep inside just as women. What aggravates the feeling is that women could reach a point where they release their suppressed emotions of sadness, pain and frustration, whereas men can’t.

This mechanism of asking for help and support is exclusive to females, while men find other ways to release disappointments as; over smoking, drug addiction, unexcused anger and other forms of violence. There are hidden wounds beneath all these symptoms. Thanks to the uncomplicated and mono layered analytical brain genes furnished in men that help them to get over life hurdles easier than women. They are being blamed for their carelessness and their wriggling out of responsibility, but the lying truth may be their helplessness and inner struggle to figure out their own way. So, masculinity is not an illness ac-

quired in boyhood, if under control, but it may go out of control due to the degree of intensity of the outer circumstances, and in which direction it is being steered.

Still, the statement that men are simply “hard-wired” to be risk-takers and competitive, believes Robertson, needs reconsideration as we are talking finally about human beings. Though they have something in common, many could have different types of personalities, in addition to the surrounding circumstances and life experiences play critical role in shaping their motivations and control their reactions (Robertson, 2015). One clear fact about men is that they are less inclined to seek help because they don't wish to reveal their vulnerability. The world problem is not masculinity itself but in the misuse and misinterpretation of masculinity that may drive men off limits in an unacceptable way. It's the positive connotation of masculinity that is constantly urges men to push the boundaries, to make better tools or to invent spaceships for reaching the moon. That's why adrenalin and testosterone need to be continuously under control, preventing them from doing stupid stuff.

The common desire of recklessness and fear of intimacy sometimes drive men to ruin their relationships with their families and their partners. Men are masters of hiding their emotions. They normally cover what they have inside their chests out of fear of being stagnated of being weak or feminine. They are likely led by the inner caveman mindset to hunt which contradicts with the role of modern civilized creatures they play the whole day. The formula may be summarized in; the more masculine a man gets, the less fit he is for intimacy. This idea has been circulated among both the western and the Eastern cultures. To a large sector of men's perspectives, being a provider is a form of masculinity. This could supersede the need for fathers to be good role models, to be present and to be willing to teach values and boundaries.

One of the most common complains everywhere in the world is that men are not good at intimacy. Intimacy is ascribed to feminine energy, and consequently anything that is feminizing is threatening to the masculine man. Alpha males and alpha females are exceptional to this rule. When they get rejected, they may become workaholics leading them to chronic sulking. This accentuates a grim fact which is that problems are caused by personality, rather than by masculinity. In other words, there are women who prefer taking risks in business, drug addicts and many other issues pertinent to male, or they might even fail in the trap of drugs or infidelity.

From my own perspective, the first step to cure such kind of toxic masculinity is that the targeted man should admit he is having a problem and seek help to have his own masculinity back in control. Saying that, life is full of extremely nice responsible men who are totally caring and behaving in a distinguishable manner. But my paper is mainly focused on those cases who go off limits falling victims to surrounding pressures of hulking man figure.

I believe there is a cure for the negative effects of masculinity that most com-

munities are not aware of. Education is the key. In other words, we could start with educating mothers before fathers to raise up their children to be accountable and responsible. Many of the Eastern mothers hold the flag of magnifying toxic masculinity in their own boys simply out of the psychological need of a male figure support they had failed to see in their own husbands. They consider their sons as the shield to protect them against the ups and downs of life. They need to value vulnerability and tenderness in little boys. On the other hand, Fathers should also learn to be more intimate with their little boys.

The fact is that men get worried about intimacy which may led to anxiety and homosexuality in their own sons, that's why they tend to be less tender and affectionate with them than with their little girls. Actually the psychological destruction occurs from an early age.

In a world of inequality and injustice, I can say that the term self- control becomes out of context, as it only targets control at the expense of someone else. The only thing that communities are successful at controlling is their geographical borders. As a consequence, homosexuals and transgenders say that manhood is toxic and traditional masculinity is harmful to society. Their approach is to delete offensive words that describe the male species such as him, he, male, and men. We heard about the statement that hatred of women is innate and inescapable within men (Magovcevic & Addis, 2008).

Attacks against men are escalating daily. An article published in the Daily Mail about the European Union deleting references to masculine words. "The European Union moved to suppress everyday phrases such as "manpower" and "mankind" and replace them with gender-neutral terms. Staff in Strasbourg were told to reduce references to "women or men" in a new rule book called Gender Neutral Language In The European Parliament. The new guidelines are aimed at EU translators tasked with converting documents between the different languages spoken and written by the 28 Member States (Kilmartin, 2005).

There are certain movements that claim changing all the terms and vocabularies that seem to distinguish between males and females. Such extreme movements and callings appeared most probably as a direct reason of the proliferation of oddities of harmful and toxic masculinity within societies. Many considered this as a radical craziness and an assault against testosterone carrying men. A person can't get this crazy by themselves. They need the help of demonic apologists. Feminists have caused a disruption in the understanding of God's design and role for the male and female. Many men are refusing this foolishness.

According to author Adam Jukes writing in GQ magazine, "There's an asymmetry in the development of boys and girls. Infant boys have to learn how to be masculine. Girls don't. Masculinity is not in a state of crisis. Masculinity is a crisis." Jukes expressed the idea in a straightforward way; "Manhood is a crisis." (Jukes, 2010) He continues, "I don't believe misogyny (hatred of women) is innate, but I believe it's inescapable because of the development of masculinity." (Jukes, 2010)

Jukes continues, “Meanwhile, the more masculine a boy is, the more he represses his feelings about women, so the more misogynistic and abusive he is likely to be.” (Jukes, 2010) Here it’s claimed that men’s hatred for women is inescapable. Accordingly, we need to reconsider the idea for several reasons, at least the unpracticality of generalizing the concept. To say the more masculine a boy is, the more woman-hating and abusive he will be is nonsense. Men don’t grow up to hate women just because they are women. Men love their mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters. The point is that our communities, the Western in general and the Eastern in particular, are trapped within lethal circles of paradoxes and contradictories.

It has been reverberated over the years that men hate women and well-received in some regions of the world. We need to stop for a moment at this controversial belief for double checking. It’s really frightening and hopefully not mentioned based on man’s bad experiences in a certain cultural context. Though, I am a woman living in an Eastern society inhabited by multinational persons and witnessing how harsh and stiff people’s emotions and feelings are framed and subdued. It’s not only a matter of code of conduct approved by community members, it’s their souls and passions as well. Governments can subdue people, but the question is that; can people subdue their feelings and emotions? After all we can’t ignore such claims as they mirror real incidents in our communities.

Media and other channels of communications have been broadcasting the notion of masculinity being toxic. For millennia, rigidity and repetition has been ingrained into male and female identities, but behind these social structures may be something more primal. Psychology presumes that men are not only biologically different, but also different in the mental and spiritual structure, fueled by culture that made men what they are.

The book’s central focus: how a revolutionary political prisoner, incarcerated during World War I, inwardly triumphs at the thought of empires crumbling in the geopolitical crucible beyond the prison bars. Relatively, the novel has a redemptive message for the political prisoner that has wider resonance. Although the prison operates as a perfect machine whilst wars, epidemics, catastrophes and governmental crises unfold outside, the political prisoner still finds space for liberation inside the prison, through its library. “In prison it is a fundamental rule of mental hygiene to work at all costs, to occupy the mind”. However:

The bulk of the Santé Prison library seems to consist of bad adventure novels, old graduation-prize books, Mayne Reid, Jules Verne, unknown and mediocre amateur novelists, probably bought by the obliging administration precisely because they are unsalable to the public. (Serge, 1969)

Despite this, though, the central protagonist concludes that, “I learned, along with these books, that the most mediocre printed page can have its value. Everything is in knowing how to read and how to make the book a pretext for meditations.” (Serge, 1969)

Another wider feature of the scope of resonances is with the writings of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci. In his own prison letters, on April 22, 1929,

Gramsci wrote that “many prisoners underestimate the prison library.” (Serge, 1969) Revealing his own emerging approach to the sociology of literature, Gramsci continued by questioning the presence of popular serial novels in the prison library and their wider social significance:

Why is this sort of literature almost always the most read and the most published? What needs does it satisfy? What aspirations does it answer? What emotions and points of view are represented in these trashy books for them to be so popular? (Serge, 1969)

The conception of space in the world of *Men in Prison* is also conveyed in at least three interrelated and interacting trajectories. First, there is a focus on the topography of the penitentiary in relation to the rise of the modern state. In conditions of modernity, the prison “successfully resolves the problem of economy in space, labour and surveillance”, writes Serge, in terms of its construction, design, and architecture. As the central protagonist of the novel relays,

I know of only one perfect and irreproachable work of architecture in the modern city: prison. Its perfection lies in the total subordination of its design to its function. A modern prison is as different from an old crenelated castle ... as today's all-powerful capitalist society is unlike the absolute monarchies of olden times, so limited in their real power. Set up in the centre of town, or in the suburbs, a modern prison feels totally secure. Behind its thin walls, its frail buildings spread out in a star-shaped pattern. (Serge, 1969)

Second, men’s conceiving of space in prison urges them to contemplate on their life incidents and what derives them to such place. Prison existence is “a voyage not into space, but into time: forty-six months of darkness to traverse. Fourteen month’s clausturation have already been covered. That was only a prelude. What will the sentence be like?” (Serge, 1969) Just as a row of poplars visible outside the prison boundary brings “a fresh wind of life from the open spaces” and light through the striated bars of the cells means that “the purity of space comes through the window in great waves”, then so too does the sequencing of temporal life.

I think of the mystery of time's passage. There are minutes and hours which have no end: the eternity of the instant. There are many empty hours: the vacuity of time. There are endless days, and weeks which pass without leaving the least memory behind them, as if they had never been. I cannot distinguish the years that are behind me. Time passes within us. Our actions fill it. It is a river: steep banks, a straight path, colourless waves. The void is its source, and it flows into the void. We, who build our cities on its banks, are the ones who raise dikes against it, who colour its waves with the beacons upraised in our hands, or with our blood. Time could not exist outside of my thought. It is whatever I make it. The instant which I fill with light is priceless, like a ray of light from a star which shines for eternity through the space it illuminates. (Serge, 1969)

Third, there is the linkage between these slices through space and time to geographical relations on a global scale. Reference is constantly made throughout *Men in Prison* to the penal colony system in French Guiana, including specific mention of Devil's Island, where convicts might even receive a plot of land to till if they behave themselves.

In the fictionalized Santé Prison—based on Serge's own five-year stretch in a French prison due to relevance to bank robberies across Paris—colonial administrators with experience of service in Senegal, as well as the Indo-Chinese and Saharan campaigns, rub shoulders with wider representatives of society, from those often associated with “crimes of passion” to thieves, pimps, gangsters and anarchists. But it is the significance of the distant thunder of artillery, the rows of helmeted ants, and the mobilization of war that can be heard through the bars of the prison on the horizon that strikes the reader the most. As France gains strength from Canadians, New Zealanders, Hindus, Senegalese and Portuguese, the monstrous nature of world war is marked by the Battle of the Falklands between Britain and Germany (1914), the defeat of the Russian army by Austro-German forces in the Carpathians (1915), and English surrender in Mesopotamia to the Ottoman Army during the Siege of Kut (1916). Empires are under siege and collapsing with all of the maps of world bloodstained. Meanwhile, the Russian Revolution awaits as “a flame that had long-awaited a spark” (Serge, 1969)

In his informative introduction to *Men in Prison*, Richard Greeman writes that the “underlying unity” in Victor Serge's novels is the at once tragic and optimistic vision that pervades the cycles of victory and defeat across the two trilogies, which he recognizes mark the “cycle of revolution” and “cycle of resistance” (Serge, 1969). My proposition in this series of posts is that a further underlying unity exists linked to the inherent spatiality of the world contained within the novels of Victor Serge as well as his poetry, memoirs, and non-fiction.

In *The Eighteenth Brumaire* [1852], Karl Marx describes the apparent defeat of revolutionary action in France by arguing that the potential for change had not been destroyed, only deferred, and that the process of transformation, although obscure, would still soon emerge again like a mole from its burrow. Indeed, as Serge also writes towards the end of his novel *Men in Prison*, “We must become termites, boring obstinately, patiently, all our lives: In the end, the dike will crumble” (Serge, 1969).

Reflecting back on the details of the novel, we clearly witness how men survive the harsh circumstances of legally suppressing their own feelings for certain misdeeds or crimes in their own societies. Probing deep into this dark matter, that thing inside men that makes them revolt against society rules and expectations, we then have to look deep into the hidey-hole of the unconscious mind.

Whether the men in the story are condemned for crimes against women or not, there is a reason that the phrase “Tell me about your mother” is shorthand for the sprawling landscape of psychoanalysis. Adam Jukes is a writer and the-

rapist of more than 40 years who, for half of that time, specialized in treating men who abused women. The author of *Why Men Hate Women* and *What You've Got Is What You Want Even If It Hurts* shares a common belief that it is the trauma of childhood and, most crucially, the relationship between a boy and his mother-figure that steers the course of male psychology (Jukes, 1998).

Regardless of the culture under scrutiny, mothers are everywhere regarded as the main care givers in the whole family. "There's an asymmetry in the development of boys and girls. Infant boys have to learn how to be masculine. Girls don't. Masculinity is not in a state of crisis. Masculinity is a crisis. Misogyny could never be regarded as innate, but it's inescapable because of the development of masculinity which is wrongly schemed and psychologically defamed.

Generally speaking, we can say that as boys "individuate" and develop a sense of self, they have to separate from their mothers when they realize that they are not like them and they cannot—in Freudian terms—possess them. This repression marks the end of the Oedipus complex. In their anxiety the boys then identify with the father and it's here that they learn about what it means to be masculine. The clichés of masculinity: being strong, fearless and competitive—above all, not being like the mother—permeate boys' lives. At this point a part of man's ego is connected with his gender as a male. It has always been connected with positive connotation.

"The internalization of misogyny is not restricted to boys—it comes out of being raised by mothers." (Sharpe & Heppner, 1991) This is what societies need to be aware of; women play a critical role in raising up boys with so many complications that might be translated later in various forms of toxic masculinities. "Because the mother is the person we are most dependent on, the rage and fear at being cut off from her or the terror of mother's disapproval leads us to repress it. Girls grow up to be mums, so they internalize misogyny. But boys don't grow up to be mums, so they feel thwarted and their power comes from feeling they can thwart back. For a boy it's so confusing." (Sharpe & Heppner, 1991)

The male child feels that to be dependent on a woman is dangerous and this makes him feel vulnerable, which, without wishing to sound like Yoda, leads to fear, which leads to sadism. That anxiety is repressed and is expressed via the unconscious as misogyny. Based on this simple fact, we have heard so many men all over the world searching for the image of their mothers in their futuristic wives. Unconsciously they are attached to the dependent woman, though they may openly show off their supply of the protective cover to women.

On top of that, Orbach and Jukes agree that the more disruptive and traumatic childhood is, the more likely it is that future behaviour will become extreme. "If you are brought up in a household that's very fractious, then what you'll seek in a future relationship is one where people are in a rage all the time because that's what 'love' means to you," (Robertson, 2015) says Orbach. "Your internal experience of an intimate relationship is one that evokes your first, your primary, love relationship, which is the one with your mother."

Science has proven that our default system of behavior and attitude is set up in our early childhood. In addition our brain is programmed to remember pain. So whenever encountered with a life hurdle got stuck in the middle of the road, we tend to reformat our mind the default system as it's simply safer for us. What is so peculiar about his technique is the fact that it is not exclusive to certain people. It's classless and transhistorical.

Practically, culture and society are the root cause of the deformation of the child's misconception of wronged masculinity. The role women play as carer and providers of this sulking unexcused masculinity is reversely reflected in men's behaviors of rage against women. The way women put their male kids ahead of their sisters is psychologically magnifying the idea of women's inner feeling of being blessed to have sons. Accordingly, those sons grow up later in life expecting the same treatment from their wives which leave their parents' house with greater aspirations of more freedom and enjoying life with an accountable husband to take good care of her. This shock from both sides may get into conflict between husbands and wives that may come to a ground of compromise for kids' sake or come to an end if both male and female have same level of stubbornness, after moving forward into long journeys of who dominates the other.

Masculinity, then, appears to be on a sliding scale, usually depending on a boy's childhood environment and trauma. All children experience negativity, with indifference or neglect at one end and physical or sexual abuse at the other, and the more painful childhood is, the more likely a boy is to emerge as "hyper-masculine" (Dworkin & Lippman, 2013). Meanwhile, the more masculine a boy is, the more he represses his feelings about women, so the more misogynistic and abusive he is likely to be. This also works in reverse, with hyper-masculine men who seem more likely to be emotionally vulnerable, even helpless.

The novel "Men in prison" reveals a very critical point about the psychological dimension of guiltiness. Most men who have been violent or nasty and jailed for crimes against women or even against society end up crying and begging for forgiveness. The issue is serious and terribly complex as the criminal turns out at a certain moment of revelation to be a victim. The case is really demanding in all communities cause I do believe that psychologically sable persons means better communication skills and less conflicts. Governments have to put plans of the psychological development of men and coach women how to embrace and implement this mechanism from a positive perspective. Genes have nothing to do with this. It's not someone else's fault, all are condemned.

So men are not innocent victims, as they gradually refuse the accountability of their standing for their ascribed roles and responsibilities, being reluctant to exert some efforts to know themselves better or even approach the dark boxes into their unconsciousness. Men are simply great fleeyers. They try to escape from every shade of shame and frustration, leaving them lying in a zone of continual denial rooted early in the childhood days. At such early age they are strategically

directed to live in the shadow of the father as their default role model, while gradually separated from the mother. Accordingly, they take masculinity as a self-defense mechanism at the threshold of teenage hood, releasing two versions of men; one is hyper-masculine, violent, childish, vain and sexually aggressive, while the other becomes indecisive, weak, feckless but caring. It's the well-balanced traditional masculinity we are after, this normal positive masculinity that enrich the strength of empowerment and decision- making. Logically leading us to this solution; if the problem starts with childhood, so does the solution. Breaking the dependence on the mother as "primary carer" is the first step. For this to happen, we need to reconsider the value of social engineering and restructuring. Mothers don't have to put their own sons on top of the family members, including their own husbands. Sons need to be treated as equal as their sisters; not superior nor inferior. Plus, fathers should also be engaged in child-rearing so that the fury and disappointment and authority is not vested only in the personality of the mother but shared between two parents.

New ways of addressing child development could mitigate against the effects of the traumas that boys and girls inevitably face. Masculinity and the misogyny it releases is relatively implicit that men themselves rarely recognize. Being masculine is simply a biological categorization; being a man is much more important than being a male, and takes effort to develop. Every male is masculine, but not every masculine is a man. Reaching such manhood status will take generations. We can't make it a perfect world, but we could make it a significantly better one.

Another dimension which has been revealed in the novel "Men in Prison" is anger as a connotation to masculine power. It is a universal human emotion that can be seen in the facial expressions of infants as young as six months. Despite this, anger is frequently misunderstood. While often perceived as an extremely negative emotion, anger has evolved as an emotion to be a natural response to challenges or threats. There is nothing wrong with experiencing anger; it is part of being human. It can, however, be managed in both healthy and unhealthy ways. The way we understand and manage anger is important to our mental health, which is in turn an important regulator for our feelings of anger.

Anger is sometimes referred to as a secondary emotion – in other words, feelings of anger may mask other underlying emotions like fear or sadness. Some research indicates that "acting out through anger and irritability may be how some men cope with depression, especially when connected to emotions of stress or shame." (Feder & Dean, 2010) Though this may be challenging for their loved ones, expressions of anger are often neglected as a symptom associated with depression, and may lead to some of these men being overlooked or misdiagnosed. Better understanding of anger, then, is vital to provide a fuller picture of men's mental health.

The way men experience and express anger may be informed, in part, by societal expectations—that is, the ways in which men have been traditionally expected to behave. These traditional notions of masculinity tend to favour strength,

stoicism, dominance and control. Though these features are not inherently negative traits, rigidly adhering to them could result in a negative impact on men's mental health and often means that men are more reluctant to express concerns about their mental health and access services. Men may also be more likely to deny that they have a mental health problem in a display of "stoicism". As a result, men may be less likely than women to seek help from mental health professionals.

As these traditional behaviours are very much linked to our culture, parents and teachers have an important role to play when supporting boys growing up. Identifying the causes behind behaviours among boys perceived as problematic, may go a long way towards nurturing healthy adult men. Anger is a natural emotion and an acceptable feeling and response to situations that threaten our survival or psychological integrity. It is healthy to express your angry feelings in an assertive, respectful way and, in certain situations, anger may be the most appropriate response. Expressing that anger is a socially acceptable emotion for men, and there is a lot of social reinforcement for being angry, it is important not to be critical of anger but rather, to try to understand the message that underlies it.

It is also a good idea to find ways to channel this energy positively to ensure that it does not have a destructive impact on yourself or others, for instance, through increased aggression. Such productive ways of channeling anger could include taking part in high-intensity sports, such as swimming, martial arts or basketball, or engaging in the arts.

We need to better understand and be more aware that anger may be a sign of an underlying mental health problem. There is a lot at stake. Population-level data demonstrate that men's mental health should be a top priority, with men in the UK being three times more likely than women to complete suicide and 72% of male prisoners experiencing two or more mental health problems. Men are also more likely to be a victim of violent crime than women (2.4% of males versus 1.3% of females), and may subsequently experience anger as an emotional reaction to their experience (Berke & Zeichner, 2016).

A report by the Men's Mental Health Forum provided a wealth of advice on how to encourage men to engage in mental health services, including the importance of using "male-friendly" language and providing a personal approach. On a broader, societal level, the report indicated that the media have a responsibility to highlight positive stories about men with mental health problems that focus on recovery and hope. The setting of services is also important to consider, "with safe, male-friendly spaces, perhaps embedded in the community, having the potential to reduce mental health stigma and tackle discrimination." (Robertson, 2015)

Men's mental health services also need to take into account the type of intervention, with activity, or "action-oriented" approaches as preferred ways to engage and sustain men's involvement. Direct, solution-focused approaches may

be better suited for men and prevent them from feeling as though they are surrendering their masculine identity. And we all have a responsibility to deal in a more holistic way with these issues of masculine identity and what it means in our cultures. Wong and Wester stated this idea in a simpler form, "It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men." (Wong & Wester, 2016) Good mental health is fundamental for boys and men in order to be able to thrive in life. If we're not tackling mental health problems in boys early, then we risk failing the next generation right at the start of their lives.

3. Conclusion

In this paper, I tried to dig deep into the problem of toxic masculinity that has been devastating all our societies in the East as well as the West. I spotted the light of the consequences of neglecting this issue, pretending that everything is ok, as it is closely related to the psychological arena. Recognizing it as a sensitive critical topic, I regarded it with its connection to hatred and misogyny crimes that destroy communities. What we discovered here is that both victims and criminals need help; each has a role to play in an integrated cycle to help live in better societies. Governments have to change their expectations and reactions. Throughout the novel "Men in Prison", we find men suffering from depression never share their feelings, because they would be mocked. The fact is that when someone is suffering from depression, sharing their feelings and emotions is necessary to help them cope with the problem. We need to be better friends, better partners and be the support that men need.

In various societies, men are bad communicators. They don't express their feelings in clear tactful ways. Hesitation is an enemy to men. They have to be trained on getting rid of their hesitation in sharing their emotions. I believe that we are still at the phase where men cannot express emotions as well as crying is regarded as astagnation of being feminine and weak. Conversely, the world has to clarify that such emotions are normal tendencies for all people, regardless of gender. Crying must not be associated with gender roles. Addressing and processing emotions is what makes us human, and crying is a fundamental emotion.

Each person is born with unique assets and challenges that affect how they grow and develop biologically, psychologically, and socially. Adult family members as well as adults in neighborhoods, schools and the broader community can facilitate a person's movement towards growth and development, and can help them face risks and challenges by helping them achieve a positive outcome. We often refer to overcoming adversity as promoting resilience.

We can change the model of masculinity by telling children that it's fine for boys to express and show emotion. Male role models can practice what they preach by expressing affection and emotion: exposing love to our children; being comfortable hugging them; showing that it's okay to cry at weddings, funerals, when they are injured, etc. Teaching boys how to express their emotions ade-

quately is the key to helping them become emotionally expressive. These lessons will have a positive effect on their life in the future. It's time that societies perceive emotional responses in men.

Depression is often a life-long illness. In most cases, long-term help may be needed to stay well, which includes sticking with treatment and developing and facilitating a plan for when symptoms return. Setbacks can happen to anyone even if you've been feeling well for a long time. Many men and women who live with depression learn to cope and are able to live fulfilling lives. Unfortunately, both life and fiction present several male clients relay painful stories about the insensitive responses they received when they confided in a loved one about their struggles with depression. Sadly, life doesn't respond to them compassionately or mercily. Harsh sarcasm has to be penalized when it comes to hurting one's own sensations or feelings. Emotional hurt is much deeper than physical injury as the body recovers biologically and tissues heal themselves overtime, but emotional heal is unseen and requires the help and support of the surrounding which normally doesn't happen. Materialistic world is moving very fast to make the human's life easier at the expense of a person's nerves and stress.

Obviously, it's easy to understand why men often prefer to keep depression to themselves—hidden from their friends and family members. Societies need to change how they see depression in men; depression is not related to gender. No man or woman chooses to live with depression. Traumatic events lead to depression, and we need to accept this fact instead of dispiriting the problem and the sufferer. The question that males are sex-focused creatures doesn't deny the fact that they go far in emotions of love and attachments to the level of being head over heels in love exactly as women do and could be in such love state for years and even for decades. No doubt they feel the same heartbroken aches of unfulfilled love and go through the same lethal circle of longing to their beloved ones.

Actually when a man is deeply connected on the spiritual and emotional level with a certain woman, he suffers so much in case he fails to marry her. While his repeated attempts to have affairs with other women would never quench his hunger and attachment to his lost beloved. So the common saying that a man has an affair with whoever he can while a woman has an affair with whoever she wants doesn't contradict with the fact that a man has feelings as soft and sensitive as a woman. Again as there are cold blooded senseless men, there are also women. It doesn't have any connection with gender.

Families, especially mothers need to build trust and encourage their boys as well as their husbands to be more comfortable sharing their emotions. Families have to avoid trivializing depression in men. They have to use empathy and provide support to male friends who are depressed. Finding the right words can be difficult and saying them can feel awkward but being willing to listen, without judgment, is often the best thing you can do for someone who is depressed. Motivate them to share their feelings and emotions with you, and when they do,

provide the moral support that they need instead of belittling them. In other words, belittling or over magnifying have to be avoided as they definitely lead to deformed, toxic masculinity. This paper doesn't dig deep into the psychological factors that might lead into disconformities in the masculine mindset and might pave the way for more research in this respect.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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