

The harmful effects of toxic masculinity



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

According to Statistics Canada, our Nation had 376, 291 live births registered in 2017, a steady decline since 2013, and a drastic decrease since 2016 where the number of live births registered was 383, 102, this is a decrease of nearly 1. 8% (Statistics Canada, 2018). In comparison, “ a total of 3, 945, 875 [live] births were registered in the United States in 2016, down 1% from 2015 (National Vital Statistics Reports, 2018).” These numbers indicate that the United States had approximately 10% more live births registered each year than Canada. 27 November 2017 was the day my life changed forever, it was the day I became a mom. I have a 10 month old baby boy for whom I care for day in and day out. He is my pride and joy. He is perfect. He is healthy, handsome, funny, smart, outgoing, adventurous, and loving. Now, writing this I cannot ever imagine him being anything other than those descriptors. However, since starting my new academic journey I have been made more aware of the harmful effects that toxic masculinity poses on society. It has become painful to think about my little boy being exposed to these standards. A set of standards that exists in our society in place for men that state they must be; violent, strong, suppress emotion, and dominate women.

Descriptors of Toxic Masculinity

“ Toxic masculinity is a [tyrannical] description of manhood, [depicting] manhood [to be filled with aggression and violence, suppressing emotions, and sex. It is in our cultural belief that manliness is when] strength is everything while emotions are a weakness. [It is] where sex and brutality are [the means] by which men are measured, [and] feminine traits [are seen as negative traits] (Jackson, 2018).” Under this heading, negative traits can be

defined as; being emotional, or expressing emotional freely, to not being overtly sexual. If you possess any of these feminine traits then your manly status will be jeopardized or be taken away completely.

Perhaps the worst aspect is that at the core of toxic masculinity lies an influence on violence. Toxic masculinity teaches that violence is the best way for men to prove their worthiness, strength and power, and it discourages them from releasing their feelings in other positive ways. An article in Sociological Images conveys

“ that American masculinity [in particular] depicts guns as a source of power. This may help explain why men have been responsible for the great majority of mass shootings in the United States. Also [points] out that men are more likely to act violent when their masculinity and male privilege are threatened. [Their] “ research does not suggest that men are somehow inherently more violent than women. Rather, it suggests that men are likely to turn to violence when they perceive themselves to be otherwise unable to stake a claim to a masculine gender identity (Bridges and Tober, 2015).”

With the nearly 10% increase of live births that the United States has over Canada, their insufficient firearm regulations, and need to conform to cultural ideas of being a man – perhaps this is reason the United States has the greatest majority of mass shootings.

Western ideals of masculinity tend to lead males to miss out on certain aspects of life including, but not limited to; nurturing relationships and expressing emotions in a positive way. “ Toxic masculinity dictates that the only emotion men can [openly] express is anger. [This expression] can

<https://assignbuster.com/the-harmful-effects-of-toxic-masculinity/>

hinder men from getting in touch with other things they're feeling.

Eventually, this can distance men from other people and keep them from developing close relationships with their [parents, friends,] partners and kids.

[A] study in the Social Psychological and Personality Science even found that suppressing emotions can lead to aggression (Nauert, 2015)."

Toxic masculinity teaches men that their identity is in their ability to exert dominance over women, and a common way for men to assert their dominance is through sexual assault and harassment. Men see sex as an important part of being a man. "Boys will be boys" is a common phrase used in our Western Culture to excuse the noisy or rough way a boy or man is behaving and saying it is normal, or accepted for them to act like this. What about the term "girls will be girls?" What comes to mind? Pillow fights, make-up and cattiness? Not one of these aforementioned feminine descriptors is physically assaulting another person on purpose and our culture allowing it. This "boys will be boys" attitude towards sex contributes not just to toxic masculinity but to letting toxic masculinity thrive. We let the damage done by toxic masculinity contribute to a culture where rape and sexual assault are permitted[, and] even encouraged (Jackson, 2018)."

Non-toxic Masculinity

What would non-toxic masculinity look like to you? Since masculinity and femininity do not really have a deep rooted meaning, a healthy masculinity or femininity is one you get to define or not identify with at all. It does not have to mean anything to you if you do not want it to. Marion Iris Young

states, “ abandoning the concept of gender for feminist theory and replacing it with the concept of lived body derived from existential phenomenology (2005).”

Historically, men have benefited from a great deal of privilege. With the vast amount of social movements occurring, these privileges have slowly been chipped away. So, while inequality is alive and well, men have also seen a gradual dissolution of privileges. From a cultural perspective, toxic masculinity can be seen as an example of a more general issue regarding changes in relations between men and women and historical transformations in gender, race, and class inequality. Intersectionality is defined as, “ the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups (Crenshaw, 1989).” The cultural construct of masculinity particularly when it turns toxic has many problematic and truly damaging consequences. At the hands of toxic masculinity everybody loses.

What we can do to change

“ Instead of teaching our boys that aggression and aggressive sexuality are somehow part of normal male development, we can instead teach them how to effectively communicate, how to identify and express their emotions in healthy ways. And also how to have a healthy understanding of sexuality that encompasses masturbation, consent, and safe sex practices (Jackson, 2018).” It is primal to integrate healthy communication skills to young boys and mean to ensure they have an outlet to express these emotions. “

Gender socialization and gender stereotyping need to cease to allow people to discover the person that are meant to be. It is important to realize that gender roles are not universal; rather, they are social constructs that vary considerably across historical periods and cultures (Quan-Haase et al, 2018).” Western civilization, specifically in Canada and the United States need to allow people to discover themselves without feeling ostracized, or discriminated against.

Conclusion

In order to gain a full understanding of the threats posed on society through toxic masculinity it is necessary to examine each aspect separately to be able to eliminate those negative traits. We need to change the way we are raising our sons, and monitor what they are being subject to via the media, the education system and other male influences. We need to be able to allow our sons to choose their own gender role. Together we can raise our boys to be healthy, happy men who engage in positive and meaningful interactions with others.

References

- Crenshaw, Kimberle () “ *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine , Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics,*” University of Chicago Legal Forum: Vol. 1989: Iss. 1, Article 8. Available at: <http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8>
- Jackson, C. (2018). *How to raise our sons without toxic masculinity.* The Good Men Project.

Retrieved on October 19, 2018, from <https://goodmenproject.com/featured-content/how-raise-sons-toxic-masculinity-chwm/>

- Joyce A. Martin, M. P. H.; Brady E. Hamilton, Ph. D.; Michelle J. K. Osterman, M. H. S.; Anne K. Driscoll, Ph. D.; and Patrick Drake, M., (2018, January 31). *Births: Final Data for 2016* . National Vital Statistics Reports, Vol. 67, No. 1, January 31, 2018. Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr67/nvsr67_01.pdf
- Nauert PhD, R. (2015). *Suppressed Emotions Can Lead to Aggression*. Psych Central. Retrieved on October 4, 2018, from <https://psychcentral.com/news/2011/03/24/suppressed-emotions-can-lead-to-aggression/24643.html>
- Quan-Haase, Anabel and Lorne Tepperman. 2018. *Real-Life Sociology: A Canadian Approach*. Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press.
- Statistics Canada. (2018, October 04). Table 13-10-0422-01. *Live Births, By Birth Weight*. Retrieved October 4, 2018, from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1310042201>
- T. B., & T. T. (2015, December 31). *Mass shootings in the US are on the rise. What makes American men so dangerous?* – Sociological Images. Retrieved October

4, 2018, from

<https://thesocietypages.org/socimages/2015/12/31/mass-shootings-in-the-u-s-what>

[makes-so-many-american-men-dangerous/](#)

- Young, Iris Marion, *Lived Body versus Gender*, A Companion to Gender Studies, (102-113), (2017). Wiley Online Library.