

Men and Social Suffering in Contemporary Lithuania¹

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Abstract

A great number of men in Eastern Europe affected by rapid social, economic and political developments suffer severe marginalization due to their age, disability, ethnicity, sexuality, class, etc. This article focuses on Lithuanian working-class men. Analyzing 20 semi-structured interviews with working class men, it asks how these men attempt to create their personal and group identities and to articulate their lives. Why are some of them unable to construct satisfactory life narratives and succumb to the feelings of depression, anxiety, insecurity and despair? I argue that the re-creation of an independent Lithuanian state in 1990 went along with the political project of normalization of the Lithuanian masculinity and even more intensive pathologization of socially marginalized male bodies. Interviews with the working class men reveal that they accept their inferior status in the world of “successful” manhood. However, the pressures of normative subjectivities imbue the corporeal identities of working-class men with depression, exclusion, anxiety and insecurity. Public marginalization of working-class men makes their attempts at hegemonic normative masculinity look like some kind of a cul-de-sac. They cope with it by adopting self-destructive practices (drinking, violence, etc.). The article concludes that the violent forms of normalization, male norms and powerlessness in Lithuanian society not only create complicit marginalized men but also produce silent inequalities, social isolation and the lack of public access.

Introduction

A few years ago, a former member of the Lithuanian Parliament Vytautas Sustauskas, in an interview for the men’s magazine “For Men Only” (*Tik vyrams*), stated:

Today men let women dominate them. I think it is a bad thing. I think that a real man must have as much masculinity as he wants to. ... That’s why I am saying that a real man has to treat his woman honestly. First of all, he has to

support her financially according to his abilities; he must give her money to take care of her appearance, for instance, to sign up for aerobics classes. It is also possible to allow her to do some social work. There are a lot of various associations for animal care and so on and so forth... However, a real man cannot let his woman dominate him... (Sustauskas 2003: 31)

The quote may seem trite, but it is symptomatic of the current gender regime in Lithuania: despite radical socio-economic and cultural transformations, it has not changed significantly. In this regime, men and masculinity are inextricably tied up with political incorrectness, an ardently anti-feminist stance and patriarchal subjectivity. These are men who inhabit positions of power and wealth and reproduce the social relationships that generate their dominance in the Lithuanian society. They openly extol practices of hegemonic masculinity that legitimize patriarchy guaranteeing, in Raewyn Connell's words, the "dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (Connell 2005: 77). The mass media and popular culture in general also produce oversimplified and one-sided discourses on men in which a flexible yet repressive norm of hegemonic masculinity embodied by a successful businessman or politician is most pervasive (Tereskinas 2001: 93-108).

However, acknowledging the hierarchical relations between different types of masculinity, it is possible to argue that a great number of men, affected by rapid social, economic and political developments, suffered severe marginalization due to their class, age, disability, sexuality and ethnicity. For them, being a post-Soviet man entailed shame, despair, and powerlessness. Although the Lithuanian welfare state has failed to provide social security and an acceptable level of wealth to many citizens and they have experienced constant political injuries and political humiliations in the country, the "inexpressive" suffering of these men has been left unacknowledged and unaddressed.

This article focuses on the masculinities of working-class men whose masculine identity is, as it will be demonstrated below, a place of suffering and misery. Without making decisive conclusions about the state of gender relations and masculinities in the post-Soviet region, the article examines the alignment of masculinity and suffering in the life narratives of working-class men. Analyzing 20 semi-structured interviews with working class men, it attempts to answer the following questions: What place do the feelings of powerlessness, shame and despair occupy in the making of post-Soviet masculinities? How do working-class

men conceptualize and express the relation of masculinity and suffering? What effects do class, inequality and deprivation have on these men?

The article consists of three parts. The first section presents statistical and survey data on men in Lithuania. The second discusses the concept of social suffering, and in the third I analyze the 20 semi-structured interviews with working-class men and focus on their life stories and the sources of their suffering.

Research Methodology

The article needs some methodological explanation. Twenty semi-structured interviews with working-class men are used in the article. The semi-structured interviews were chosen in order to reveal a wider context of the examined phenomenon and to collect comprehensive information from the primary source about the experiences of men. In this article, these interviews serve as a certain ethnographic archive of thoughts and feelings of this distinct group of men.

The informants were recruited through the snowball method. Only working-class men involved in hard manual labor were used for the interviews. Eight of them were construction workers, six were loaders, two were welders, two were window assemblers, one was a furniture assembler, and one was involved in different temporary jobs. Four of the 19 men did not have permanent jobs. The age of the interviewed men ranged from 22 to 68. The interviews were conducted in Vilnius, Kaunas, Panevėžys and Klaipėda during the period of January-September 2008. During the interviews, the working-class men were asked about their work, social position, the difficulties they encountered in life as men and employees and male roles that they attempted to perform in everyday life. The designed thematic guidelines of the interviews did not limit strictly the reconstruction of the informants' experiences and did not control their content and specific features. They only offered some direction for their narratives.

The duration of the interviews was from 40 minutes to 1.5 hours. The interviews were recorded using a tape-recorder. They were transcribed and analytical codes were created on the basis of the received information that later were redistributed to broader thematic categories. The men's behavior, gestures and bodily postures were also observed and recorded. Thus, the article presents some kind of ethnographic knowledge about working-class men's masculinity; the importance of which has been emphasized by R. Connell (Connell 2005: 34).

Social suffering, social exclusion and everyday miseries experienced by the interviewed men were a sensitive topic that made interviewing particularly difficult. The voices of the interviewed men were often muted and inarticulate. It may be argued that sometimes their opinions and answers merely elicited “presentations of the self and of everyday experience which correspond[ed] to prevailing orthodoxies” (Fowler 1996: 2). However, in analyzing the interviews, I attempted to look beyond the surface and take inconsistencies, discrepancies and contradictions in the interviews seriously.

One of the major concerns during the interviews was the disparity in positions of power between a researcher and a working-class informant. Although this social asymmetry occurred every time because the interviewer occupied a higher place in the social hierarchy of different kinds of capital, an “openness to the values and limitations of different vocabularies and understandings” (Alvesson 2002: 133) and a “relationship of active and methodical listening” (Bourdieu 1996: 19) were practiced as much as possible.

The article also uses the analysis of scholarly literature on social suffering (Bourdieu et al. 1999; Kleinman 1997; Charlesworth 2005), and gender and masculinity, and reviews the 2002, 2006, 2007 and 2008 statistical data on men in Lithuania which illustrate men’s social situation. Moreover, these foci are combined with more philosophically and theoretically informed aspects of social analysis.

Statistical Data on Lithuanian Men

Problems related to men in post-Soviet Lithuania abound. Lithuanian men experience much greater risk to their health than women. According to the data from 2006, there were five times more chronic alcoholic men than alcoholic women in the country. The same data indicate that men committed suicide five times more often than women (Women and Men 2007: 80-82). In 2006, the suicide rate for Lithuanian men between the ages of 45 and 59 was 92 suicides per 100,000 men (Women and Men 2007: 83). Lithuanian men’s life expectancy was 12 years shorter than women’s (65 and 77 years, respectively) (Women and Men 2007: 18).

Other problems are related to the predominant traditional structures of masculinity. According to one of the most important representative surveys on men and masculinities entitled “The Crises of Male Roles in Lithuania” (2002), the main features of a “normal” or “real” man emphasized by both men and women were (in order of importance): 1) his ability to earn money for his family (72% of the respondents); 2) a man’s capability to do male

housework such as home-improvement and technical jobs (67% of the respondents); 3) care and upbringing of his children (67%); and 4) his taking care of his wife (66%). Men themselves emphasized the following traits of a “normal” man: 1) his ability to earn money; 2) taking care of his woman; 3) care and upbringing of his children; and 4) his capability to do manly home-improvement jobs. It should also be mentioned that 77% of Lithuanian men subscribed to this form of masculinity by stating that they were “real” or “normal” men. Only 10% of men thought that they did not conform to this image, and 14% did not know how to answer the question. The survey demonstrated that the perceptions of masculinity and male practices in Lithuania did not diverge much from the model of traditional hegemonic masculinity based on heterosexuality, economic autonomy, breadwinning, professional success, emotional strength, and rejecting anything considered feminine (Connell 2005).

Both Lithuanian women and men considered the breadwinning role as the most important feature of a “real” man. However, this attitude no longer reflects the real situation. According to the quoted survey, in about 50% of Lithuanian families, women earned more and were the main providers (The Crises of Male Roles in Lithuania 2002). Furthermore, the 2006 data of the Department of Statistics indicate that both men and women’s employment rates have increased in recent years. The employment rate of women aged 15-64 increased from 59.4% in 2005 to 61% in 2006, and the employment rate of men increased from 66% to 66.3%. Women’s labor force activity rate was 64%, men’s, 70.5%. In 2006, 5.8% of Lithuanian women and 5.4% of men were unemployed (Women and Men 2007: 52). In 2007, the female and male unemployment rates were the same – 4.3 % (Women and Men 2008: 46).

Lithuanian men commit significantly more crimes than women. Unable to cope with social change, men often express their rage through violence against women, other men, and themselves. According to the data of the IT and Communications Department under the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania, in 2007, 2,500 women and 20,200 men were charged with crimes or misdemeanors. The average number of women suspected of criminal offences per 1,000 female population was one, while the number of men was 13. In 2007, 1,400 women and 12,600 men were sentenced by the courts. As of January 1, 2008, 96% of convicted persons in imprisonment institutions were men. In 2007, per 100,000 male population, 14 men were murdered in rural areas and 12 in urban areas; per 100,000 female population, the figures were 6 and 4 women, (rural and urban, respectively). 37 women and 200 men suffered from serious bodily injuries (Women and Men 2008: 81, 84). These

numbers indicate that men may not be the main victims of the post-Socialist transition, but their position has been as complicated as that of women.

Obviously, many of the problems enumerated here and faced by Lithuanian men are not unique for post-Soviet Lithuania. However, while we have a number of excellent research studies conducted in Western European and North American contexts (Kimmel 2006; Kimmel, Hearn and Connell 2005), there is a considerable deficit in studies of men's practices in developing countries (Cleaver 2002). In Lithuania, the lack of a strong tradition of gender studies contributes to this deficit even more.

The issues of men and masculinities in Lithuania have been largely overlooked as they have been overlooked elsewhere. The same can be said about socially excluded and marginalized men. There is almost no research on working-class men in Lithuania; they remain among the least researched and least visible social groups in the country. This same critique applies to a large part of post-Communist Eastern Europe, including Lithuania's closest neighbors – Latvia, Estonia and Poland (Stenning 2005).

Social Suffering and Masculinities

Sociology, anthropology and cultural studies have been focusing on suffering, emotion and trauma for some time (Bauman 2000; Das, Kleinman and Lock et al. 2001; Berlant 2004; Brown 1995). However, the concept of social suffering has been particularly popularized by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and his co-authors in their book *The Weight of the World* (Bourdieu et al. 1999). In it, they describe everyday miseries of the socially marginalized and expose social factors contributing to their oppression and domination. "Small miseries" produced by the dominant system can contribute to the individuals' hopelessness, despair and diminished chances to participate in the public sphere.

The notion of social suffering evokes a variety of human problems that have their origins and consequences in devastating social injuries and traumas. However, social suffering cannot be reduced to suffering caused by class-based, globalized political and economic exploitation. Pierre Bourdieu uses the word "misery" to describe not only situations related to the lack of material resources but also to the situations in which persons or social group feel excluded and marginalized. The main victims are ordinary people surrounded by the invisible structures of domination and oppression. From the first glance, their lives seem "normal." However, these "normal" lives are marked by the stories of misery, lost opportunity, contextual constraints, degraded social environments and social

relationships (Bourdieu et al. 1999: 1-5). Bourdieu speaks of “the truly metaphysical wretchedness of men and women who have no social reason for being, who are abandoned to insignificance” (Bourdieu 2000: 240). In his view, there is “no worse deprivation, no worse privation, perhaps, than that of the losers in the symbolic struggle for recognition, for access to . . . humanity” (Bourdieu 2000: 242). Thus, social suffering underlies the experiences of marginalization when people feel relegated to the edges of social life. It can be argued that such marginalization reflects a fundamental form of social suffering that comes from the loss of self-identity. According to Paul Gilroy, diverse stories of social suffering can belong to “anyone who dares to possess them and in good faith employ them as interpretative devices through which we may clarify the limits of our selves, the basis of our solidarities, and perhaps pronounce upon the values of our values” (Gilroy 2000: 230).

Both sociologists and anthropologists study the social dimension of suffering. Suffering is a social experience that affects the collectivity through a triangle of cultural meanings, collective behavior, and subjective responses (Kleinman 1999). According to Arthur Kleinman,

...suffering is social, not only because social force breaks networks and bodies but also because social institutions respond with assistance to certain categories of sufferers (categories that institutions have constructed as authorized objects for giving help), while denying others or treating them with bureaucratic indifference (Kleinman 1997: 321).

Poverty, alcoholism, violence in families and in the streets, and social tensions may be both causes and effects of social suffering. Social suffering is related not only to a larger framework of social distress, such as loss of jobs and unemployment, but also to the vulnerabilities of gender, class, age and sexual orientation.

Gendered and embodied experience of social suffering is particularly powerful. This article explores the multiple forms in which gender, class and age produce “small miseries” (Bourdieu et al. 1999), or ordinary suffering of specifically male subjects. Masculinity as a complex practice is constantly produced, consumed, regulated and performed. It is a dynamic relational process and a “structure that includes large-scale institutions and economic relations as well as face to face relationships and sexuality” (Connell 2000: 29). How does masculinity as both a “place in gender relations” and a practice through which men “engage

that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture” (Connell 2005: 71) inflict social wounds on the working-class men?

Marginalized Masculinities of the Working-Class Men

The independence of Lithuania in 1990 brought sudden economic, social and cultural changes that dethroned working-class people to a notable degree. The society of working-class heroes was replaced by a society of free entrepreneurs. The Soviet “super-hero” defying pain and striving for the leading role of the working class during the Soviet times (Kaganovsky 2008) disintegrated as a shadowy past along with the removal of most Soviet sculptures from town squares and parks.

It can be argued that, like in other Communist countries, in Lithuania the official discourse defined men largely as workers and soldiers so that “there was no place left for any other aspects of traditional (or “new”) masculinity...” (Oates-Indruchova 2006: 429). Soviets tried to constitute a compliant male subject who mimicked social norms, assumptions and values. As Libora Oates-Indruchova correctly emphasized writing on Czech communist men, masculinity was “conceived of in terms of work, discipline, and work initiative” (Oates-Indruchova 2006: 429). The official state doctrine of this society valued collective effort and physical strength as the foundation of masculinity, and thus everything that served the maintenance of this strong and heroic masculinity was highly esteemed. Adherence to this kind of masculinity brought patriarchal dividends for men while women remained subordinated and submissive to male authority. Women were not only employed but also did the biggest share of the housework (Marcinkeviciene 2008: 198-212).

During the transition period from the declaration of Independence in 1990 to the beginning of the 21st century, the existing hegemonic concept of masculinity based on the working-class ethos coming from the Soviet tradition has become increasingly marginalized in Lithuania. With the rise of a service economy that demanded more “naturally” feminine skills and emotions, the working-class male was somewhat emasculated rhetorically in the media and in policy statements.

The dethroning of a working-class hero was influenced not only by the disintegration of the Soviet state but also by the global social and economic processes of neoliberalism, financial deregulation and the atomization of workers. In the book *The Weight of the World*, Pierre Bourdieu writes about the destructuralization and crisis of the traditional working class. According to him, economic crises, industrial changes and social transformations have

left workers in the past; it seems that they have become superfluous and unable to exist and act in the contemporary world. As a social group, workers involved in physical labor have become mostly passive and hopeless. Bourdieu's recounting of the factors that led to the crisis of trade unionism can also be applied to the post-Soviet context:

...the disappearance of large factory areas, plants that brought together 4 to 5,000 workers and are now losing out to small companies with fewer than 50 employees that are always so difficult to unionize... the pervasive unemployment and the constant threat that it holds over those who have a job, driving them to submission and to silence (Bourdieu et al. 1999: 317-318).

As a legacy of the Soviet regime, there was a lack of strong trade unions and low salaries for some segments of working-class people, which, combined with their overall passivity, adds up to their sense of hopelessness, financial insecurity and bleak future.

The interviewed working-class men were neither particularly cognizant of nor comfortable reflecting on the circumstances of their lives. As much as they attempted to contemplate consciously the forces and contexts within which they acted, the working-class men's speech was still full of silences, gaps and discomfort. They did not feel confident to verbalize their lives, first of all, or their painful and traumatic episodes. They often fell silent. Theirs was silent suffering and inexpressive pain. They argued that their lives were unimportant and there was not much to be said about them. One interviewee said: "I don't know much about this." Another stated: "This conversation won't be useful." And the third asked himself: "What could I say? I couldn't say anything...." "I am an ordinary man, my life isn't special, I haven't achieved anything, I am just a simple worker," was an often repeated statement. Another reason for their silences was their fear to appear unmanly since "no real man talked of suffering." It is possible to argue that silence entrapped them in their suffering and denied their agency.

Manual labor was devalued and did not guarantee a stable income in the Lithuanian society. Some interviewees were hired illegally and did not have any social security. Thus, working-class men, particularly older ones, felt dominated and rejected by the society and relegated to the edges of social life. A 50-year-old man said that he did not have any dreams since he was too old for them: "Let younger guys dream..." Another interviewee said that employers considered working-class men "garbage" and did not respect them at all. Unlike Soviet times when "superiors at work had respected people" (Julius, 60), contemporary

bosses did not even say “hello” to them: “...now they [bosses] don’t even look at us; we are nothing to them, they can push us around as some old shoe... there’s no respect for us at all...” (Gediminas, 54). Many described how they were unjustly treated and devalued and made to feel inferior in the workplace. The interviewed men felt that their superiors often perceived and judged them in negative ways, which was the source of their anger, frustration, resentment and erosion in self-confidence. They knew that they have been marginalized and are easily replaceable. Exploitative and even emasculating labor relations affected working-class men and made them vulnerable and even ashamed.

Older men argued that during the Soviet regime people were more connected at work but currently everyone stood for himself: “I don’t feel like a team member at work, now you work only for money, not for the love of work” (Gediminas, 54). According to many interviewees, the Soviet system provided working-class people with self-esteem, security and social value. Younger men did not care much for the unity of workers but they mentioned as often as older interviewees that their work did not guarantee them financial stability and was a source of tensions, stress and constant worry.

Older working-class men talked, with a grievance, about the drastic changes in the post-Soviet society. According to Saulius (age 50), “It was a big injustice done to people, that excessive destruction of factories and everything... They destroyed them quickly, thousands lost their jobs...” (Saulius, 50). Evaldas (49) said that “...it was difficult ... to find myself, to adapt to the new system... Well, it was even more difficult to find a job; factories went bankrupt, and our professions became redundant.” The other informant stated that in the past he had held a good job and had been “respected and important.” He continued with sheer sadness in his voice: “But everything has changed, I am no longer needed; supposedly I don’t know how to do some jobs... I could learn everything but I am not allowed to try. To put it briefly, I am redundant...” (Rimas, 54). Fifty-two year-old Jonas stated that “work itself [was] a source of anxiety because it [was] so uncertain. I [was] looking for a new job but I [was] already a 52 year-old man. ... When you [went] somewhere, they promised you a job but it remained only a promise.” Most men felt that social injustices predominated in Lithuania. In an informant’s words, “there [was] no justice now, only big injustice. Now you [were] exploited much more... Previously much more depended on a person: if he didn’t like the job he could leave and find another one. There were no problems...” (Saulius, 50). Drastic change in their life conditions and the value orientations of the society made them feel redundant, isolated and asocial. Respected and valued in the past, they suddenly became secondary citizens.

One of the most important sources of their “small miseries” was their investment in conventional images of masculinity. Most interviewed men subscribed to the breadwinner ideology: “... a man is stronger and he must be a breadwinner” (Vladas, 68); “a man and only he must be a breadwinner in the family... I have been a breadwinner all my life” (Julius, 60); “I agree that perhaps a man has to be more responsible for the welfare of a family than a woman” (Tomas, 31). Although men sought to present a positive image of themselves as “real men” by emphasizing their economic responsibility to their families, several men felt that during certain periods of their lives they failed to achieve the foremost masculine ideal of a breadwinner; they could not take control of their lives because of their inability to rely on themselves as family supporters. To be supported by their wives was shameful. Some men even related the inability to fulfill the breadwinner’s role to their divorces. The ever-present threat of intermittent unemployment has left them with low self-esteem. During the times of unemployment they lost self-respect, felt emasculated and turned to substance abuse (four of the interviewed men struggled with substance abuse in the past; two were still struggling). It should also be mentioned that five of the interviewed men were divorced (31, 40, 42, 54 and 60-year-olds) and one (54-year-old) was in the process of divorce.

Thus, the interviewed men felt unworthy or ashamed of themselves not only in relation to their superiors at work, but also in their families. Shame as “a sense of failure or lack in the eyes of others,” to use Rita Fielski’s words, was provoked by the “infractions of social codes and a consequent fear of exposure, embarrassment, and humiliation” (Fielski 2005:39). The inability to live up to the expectations of society (i. e. the expectations of a self-reliant man) and to attain what constituted an “acceptable” standard of living made them embarrassed and ashamed. As one informant said, “I would like to have a normal affluent life ... but at this moment it is difficult to achieve...” (Saulius, 50). Even younger men longed for stability and security: “Well, I would like to have stability, clarity and the vision of my future... sometimes you start to think, and sadness and anxiety overwhelm you... Well, I would like stability... but I don’t feel secure...” (Tomas, 31). Manifesting itself in different ways and creating “different modes of abjection, marginalization, and self-abnegation” (Halberstam 2005: 223), shame and powerlessness were pervasive in the working-class men’s lives.

How have working-class men dealt with anxiety and shame and constructed their masculine dignity? It appeared that they have done it through the repetition of gendered acts of hard drinking, banter, and violence. All these practices have been essential for temporarily reducing the stress and trauma of everyday life: “... you know, there’s [a] saying: those who

don't drink are dangerous to society. I drink too; it is necessary to have a shot or two, I need it to restart my whole system..." (Tomas, 31). By drinking huge amounts of alcohol these men demonstrated their strength, self-control, and stamina. Through drinking they attempted to approximate hegemonic standards of masculinity. Heavy drinking for the working class men has been and remains a form of embodied masculinity construction. Injuries caused by being disrespected and humiliated by their everyday travails have been channeled into self-destructive suffering. According to several informants, they knew co-workers who lost control of their lives and drank themselves to death.

The excessive use of alcohol also served a different purpose for these working-class men. Drinking replaced other means of solidarity; it strengthened social relations within a peer group and helped men achieve recognition and authority among co-workers. Two informants mentioned that they had felt constant pressure to drink in their former jobs: "I remember how very hard it was to resist drinking; only drink, drink, drink..." (Vladas, 68). One of them left the job, and another pretended that he drank since a non-drinking man was ignored and stigmatized by others.

According to Michael Donaldson, hegemonic masculinity is about "the winning and holding of power" (Donaldson 1993: 644). In her book *Masculinities*, Raewyn Connell talks of protest masculinity of marginalized men who pick up "themes of hegemonic masculinity in the society at large" and rework them in a context of poverty (Connell 2005: 114). It can be argued that instead of questioning and fighting social inequalities and dominations, the interviewed men "reworked" them into practices of self-destruction, despair and silent suffering.

The working-class men mentioned corporeal aspects of "real" masculinity (tough, strong, fit) and talked of their bodies as the measure of their manliness. For them, the male body was a crucial vehicle for expressing gender. They equated masculinity with physical labor, strength, sports, power and good health. Muscles, endurance and potency were crucial to them. Body was a model of pronounced virility, and male muscularity naturalized physical strength and domination. Violent sports served as another way to reproduce "powerful" masculinity. One of the informants boasted that when he was younger, "he trained, lifted weights, was very strong and often would get involved in fights" (Rimas, 56). However, the interviewed older men have scarred, exhausted and worn down the bodies that symbolized their manhood. Four of them had some kind of disability; two were unable to work because of their current disabilities but hoped to return to work in the future. Their bodies reminded one of the screens on which the dramas of anxiety, insecurity and power have been projected.

In R. Connell's words, "depression and disassociation are also experiences in the flesh" (Connell 1987: 82). They developed their bodies to meet the social demands but ultimately they have become visible signs of failure.

As S. J. Charlesworth emphasized, "Through the patterns of their embodiment, people radiate significances and instantiate differences of worth that manifest a form of positional-relation..." (Charlesworth 2005: 301). Self-devaluation and self-marginalization left marks on the interviewed men's worn-out bodies. In other words, social inequalities have been somatized and domination has been naturalized through their exhausted bodies. Their class expressed itself through their flesh. Although the interviewed men avoided expressing their miseries, fears and anxieties, the uncomfortable gait of their bodies and punctuating manner of their speech were quite telling. Only the bodies of younger men exuded confidence, health and communicability. Prematurely aged faces, ill health, abused bodies, dirty hands, worn-out clothes, and the lack of confidence would characterize the rest of the men. Their appearance not only revealed their profession but also defined their place in both the labor market and social space.

Conclusion

This research, while limited in size, revealed that small miseries and marginalization powerfully define working-class men. When they talked of themselves, the oppositions between self-respect and disrespect of others, work and unemployment, and strength and weakness were most prominent. The Lithuanian society made them intensely aware of their marginalized gender and class performances. Although the interviewed men accepted their inferior status in the world of "successful" manhood, the failure to fulfill the dominant regulatory fiction of hegemonic masculinity inflicted shame and pain on them. It can be argued that the men's social suffering and exclusion was related to the loss of power: not only was the sense of powerlessness but also the inability to resist it inherently shameful for the interviewed men. Thus, the working-class men's "small miseries" can be explained not only by political instability, social disruption, physical and economic hardship but also by their subjective sense of powerlessness and despair. Stigma, indirect discrimination, isolation, depression and anxiety all contribute to ordinary suffering of these men.

The interviewed working-class men's entanglement with powerlessness, shame and despair brings to the fore the issue of male norms that have become more important in Lithuanian society with the influx of Western standards and male behavioral models. The

winner vs. loser ethos and the constant pressure to be a successful breadwinner often made the interviewed men lose their self-respect and become unable to function as self-made men because of their unstable and underpaid jobs. It can be argued that the re-creation of an independent Lithuanian state in 1990 went along with the political project of normalization of the Lithuanian masculinity and even more intensive pathologization of socially marginalized lower-class men unable to fulfill the hegemonic ideal of successful breadwinner that was not as much emphasized during the Soviet times. Violent forms of normalization and normativity of hegemonic masculinity not only create complicit men reaping the benefits of patriarchy, but also produce silent inequalities and social isolation that often result in self-destruction, violence, and substance abuse. This is particularly evident when we talk of such a marginalized group as working-class men.

The pressures of normative subjectivities imbued the corporeal identities of working-class men with depression, exclusion, anxiety and insecurity. Their attempts at hegemonic normative masculinity looked like some kind of a cul-de-sac. Working-class men coped with it by adopting self-destructive practices. It seemed that the idea of hegemonic masculinity was the last refuge of the identity of these dominated men.

It is inaccurate to equate the eradication of these men's pain with the achievement of justice. However, it is difficult to hope that in the post-Soviet cynical public sphere their social suffering will be publicly voiced or politically articulated. Their emotional wounding is largely invisible and "illegible" since the discourse of victimhood in Lithuania has been reserved mostly for women and other underrepresented groups such as the disabled or ethnic minorities (for instance, the Roma minority).

The post-Soviet state institutions do not secure the implementation of social and economic human rights and are not sensitive enough to the needs of different social groups. Furthermore, the lack of trust, responsibility and communal activity, limited solidarity, and alienation of the Lithuanian citizens – the legacy of the Communist regime – do not encourage marginalized groups and individuals to engage in civic activities. It also leads to further inequality, marginality and even discrimination of the suffering of working class men.

Notes

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