

CE QUE LE
PATRIARCAT FAIT
À L'AMOUR

VICTOIRE
TUAILLON

Transcript of the conversation between Victoire Tuillon and her guest, Carol Gilligan, co-author of « Why does patriarchy persist ? ». This interview has been published in november 2019 in Les Couilles sur la table, a Binge Audio podcast.

Victoire Tuillon

Everybody notices that there is an asymmetry between boys and girls even nowadays in the way we raised them, in what we expect from them. Can you explain how do typical boys developed psychologically nowadays ?

Carol Gilligan

Well... the really striking asymmetry -- and it's so interesting because it was noticed or at least written about first in the middle of the 19th century -- and it was when our times in development when girls and boys seemed to become more vulnerable. In other words : their resilience. Their ability to withstand stress or to bounce back from stress like an immune system : their resilience was at heightened risk. And what was noticed (it was first written about in the 19th century) was for boys. This happens in the move from early childhood to middle childhood between ages 4 and 7, where among boys at that age you see more signs of depression (I mean kind of flat emotional) and you have the sudden outbursts of attention problems, speaking problems, reading problems, out of control and learning problems... I mean anyone today who works in schools you ask : "Where do most of the school services go in elementary school ?" They say to boys no question. Girls as a group do really comparatively well, often very well up until adolescence. It's so interesting to me that no one comments on this! Nobody says "How come" ?

Victoire Tuillon

How come ? How come boys have problems between the age of four and seven ?

Carol Gilligan

What's going on ? Nobody asked. But everybody knows that when you reach adolescence that suddenly you have a sharp rise in the rate of depression among girls. And then you have eating disorders and you have cutting and you have various forms of self-destructive behavior. And here's this big fact that's been sitting in the psychology literature since the middle of the 19th century and most people speak as if this fact doesn't exist. So where my research came in was really to say : how come ? What explains this ? That boys are more vulnerable as in this four to seven, then suddenly with girls around adolescence there's a sudden heightened risk to their

resilience and then later in adolescence you see with boys again. And that's when you have a high incidence of suicide and other forms of violent behavior...

Victoire Tuillon

... against others or themselves ?

Carol Gilligan

Both ! Men commit suicide much more often than women. With my students at Harvard, we did 10 years of studies of girls development and what it came up with was : as girls reach adolescence they suddenly see this resistance in the girls as this culture of gender of dividing girls into good girls and bad girls. This culture based on a gender division of what is masculine and what is feminine and what should girls do. You see this resistance on the part of girls that led me to write about what has been called development is really better spoken about as an initiation. And that's when the word patriarchy came in : girls were resisting an initiation into patriarchy ! And that led to the question about boys. Don't boys resist too ? And so that's when I thought... wait a minute, what's happening in this four to seven year old time ? So with my then student Judy Chu, a brilliant researcher, we began to observe a group of four year old boys (in the U.S. it's called prekindergarten). And Judy followed these boys as they moved from prekindergarten to kindergarten and into first grade. This is in her beautiful book "When boys become "boys"". So here's the finding of the book : she noticed with a four and five year olds is how attentive, how authentic, how articulate and how direct these boys were with one another and with her. And over the three years of the study, she saw how they were gradually becoming more inattentive, more inarticulate, more inauthentic and more indirect with one another and with her. And she talked about how their relational presence was replaced by relational posturing or pretense. She was describing what happens when boys become "boys" or how boys are often said to be. But that's not how they were when they were four and five. And then she said : boys know more than they show. So in other words, what she saw was these little boys resisting an initiation or trying to find strategic ways to deal with the pressures as they entered school to demonstrate that they were one of the boys, in a masculinity that was defined as the opposite of and in opposition to femininity. Girls and femininity were seen to be nice. So the boys had to be mean. And these boys formed a team called the "Mean Team" and the purpose of the "Mean Team" was organized in opposition to the girls to demonstrate that you were a boy. Meaning you were not a girl and you were not gay. And the function of the "Mean Team" as one of these five year olds says was to "bother people" ! In other words you had to demonstrate that you were not nice meaning you were not like a girl you would bother people. And to be a boy you had to be a member of the "Mean Team". We'll talk about later because another former student of mine, now a colleague, Niobi Way did this study about adolescent boys and their friendships. And the book is called "Deep secrets" and I tell you the deep secret is... that boys are humans.

Victoire Tuillon

So now we talk about the boys between the age of 4 and 7. And so they learn how to be boys, according to the rules of masculinity. How does it hurt them ?

Carol Gilligan

The little boys, the level of their emotional intelligence is really stunning ! So one little five year old says to his mother : "Mama why do you smile when you're sad" ? So he's reading her smile. He realizes the smile is covering her sadness. So he's reading the emotion that's being hidden. And another five year old, whose father who had been hit by his father had vowed he was not going to do that with his children. So one day the parents are divorcing. There's a lot of tension in the house and the little boy does something and the father hits him. And the next day he says : "I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to do this. I'm going to promise you I will try never to hit you again." The little 5 year old says to the father : "you are afraid that if you hit me when I grow up I'll hit my children." So he has read what the fathers fear is. So you have to start out with boys are human beings meaning : they begin with an amazing ability to pick up the emotions in the world around them...

Victoire Tuillon

And then they lose it ?

Carol Gilligan

And then the fact is that to be emotionally intelligent and sensitive is associated with being a girl. So they have to shield it. They don't lose it. They hide it. So they have to act as if they don't care. As if they are not bothered by how they affect other people. That's like being mean. Because otherwise they are called girly or gay. So what Judy Chu writes in her book is that there is a real irony because in their desire to have relationships with the other boys and to be one of the boys, they shield the very qualities that would allow them to get close to the boys ! So in their attempt to prove they're one of the boys, they hide those qualities that are in fact part of their humanity that would allow them to have the relationships they desire. Now that's really interesting because it's saying that these little boys are up against a choice that is going to force them in the name of masculinity to lose what they desire

Victoire Tuillon

... and what they need !

Carol Gilligan

And what they need because you know more and more of the research now shows it's not only that it's what we want to love and be loved, but you know not having relationships is as bad for your health as smoking cigarettes ! Longevity, to live long, to not be sick... relationships are probably one of the most important things. And the number of men who don't have relationships (other than maybe the one love relationship or marriage or something) is much higher ! The price men are paying for this construction of masculinity is huge ! And violence is part of that.

Victoire Tuillon

Then boys become teenagers : then what happens ?

Carol Gilligan

When you become a teenager first of all you have this flood of hormones, so you have all these feelings that you haven't had before. You develop the capacity for what we call subjectivity, which is becoming self reflective : you become interested in yourself and your experience and your emotions and self-worth. And so those qualities that had been hidden in the little boys to become "boys" suddenly come to the surface again... because they're not lost, they don't disappear, they're there. So they come out again. Naobi Way in her book "Deep Secrets : Boys Friendships and the Crisis of Connection" did this study with hundreds of boys across all kinds of ethnic and race and class differences talking about the importance of their friendships with other boys. They are friendships in which they don't just watch sports or you know hang out together : they tell each other their deep secrets, their feelings. The way usually psychologists have described friendships between girls ! And the boys would say if you don't have someone to sell your secrets, you would go wacko, you'd go crazy or you would get angry or you would be lost... You need to have a friend tell your secrets to. In the course of her study, as the boys in high school went from being freshman year of high school (that's around 13 or 14 to 17-18), by the end of high school three quarters of the boys no longer had a best friend. They would say things like : "Why would I tell my secrets to anyone ?", "Why would I trust anyone ?"

Victoire Tuillon

"Why would I need anybody ?"

Carol Gilligan

"I'm not a girl." etc... Emotional intimacy had taken on a gender (feminine) and a sexuality (gay). When these older boys would describe a friendship they'd say : "No Homo". It's like : "I'm learning how to be a man. I don't need to have close friendships". Even though three years earlier, they'd said "if you don't have close friendships you go crazy you'd be angry"...

Victoire Tuillon

So at 13, most boys are conscious that they need intimate relationships and they have them ; then over the course of three years, they lose their friends. And they have what, fake friends ?

Carol Gilligan

More superficial friendships. In "Why Does patriarchy persist", Naomi Snider and I, we open our book by writing about Adam. Adam is a third year law student. In his final paper for the seminar on "resisting injustice" , he wrote his paper about his own betrayal of love and he talked about his friendship with Ali that they had been best friends. This boy Ali and Adam growing up, they played on the same soccer team. Ali was the one person outside his family that Adam told that he'd like to sing because Adam was a jock (a sports guy). When he told this to Ali that he was going to try out for a singing role in the school play, they spend the whole day making a stage with cardboard boxes cut out so that Adam would practice singing. They were really close and sharing their secrets with one another. Then Adam talks about how in 10th grade (when he was around 15), some of the girls that he knew told him what he suspected, which is that Ali was gay. Adam broke his friendship with Ali which he says now was the greatest regret of his life so far. When he was 16 or something his grandfather said to him : "Do you have a best friend ?" and Adam said : "I used to... but I don't anymore." Because he felt he couldn't be friendly with a gay boy and be recognized as a masculine (we would say jock) guy. So he gave up his love for Ali and his love for singing. In the name of masculinity.

Victoire Tuillon

Men sacrifice a lot of human needs and abilities and qualities... to preserve their masculinity.

Carol Gilligan

Yeah ! They betray what they love in order to establish themselves as masculine. It's interesting that this surprises us because then you think wait a minute : isn't this is the story of Abraham and Isaac ? For Abraham to prove his devotion to God (a

patriarcal God), he has to be willing to sacrifice his son that he loves ! Agamemnon the Greek general to get the wind to carry his army to Troy to restore Greek honor, he has to be willing to sacrifice his daughter ! So we have in our culture that men have to sacrifice love is the price for being masculine.

Victoire Tuillon

You also show in your book how girls have to sacrifice their love but in a very different way. Maybe we can just briefly sum up how girls and women have also to sacrifice a part of themselves in order to be perceived as feminine ?

Carol Gilligan

As good women or the kind of girl that people like to be with, girls have to sacrifice an honest voice and learn not to say what they really feel and think.

Victoire Tuillon

That's what they need to sacrifice.

Carol Gilligan

I'll give you one quick quote. A 17 year old girl who's the top student and very popular and has gotten says : "if I were to say what I was feeling and thinking... no one would want to be with me. My voice would be too loud." And then she says : "...but you have to have relationships." So the price for having relationships was to mute her voice (not say what she really feels and thinks) which means she couldn't be present in these so-called relationships.

Victoire Tuillon

But that's surprising because we were talking about how having close relationships and close friends is a "girly" thing. Girls tell each other secrets and they have close relationships. But at the same time they're not supposed to say what they really feel or I think ? So what is it then this feminine "friendships" .

Carol Gilligan

Well that's the right question ! The thing is that girls themselves ask that question. They're aware that if you don't say what you feel and think it's not authentic, it's a fake relationship. It's not a real relationship. And you know as the healthy body resists infection, the healthy psyche resists the initiation into patriarchy. Whatever gender you are. Because it's going to force you to sacrifice basically your desire to live in close connection with yourself and other people. If you want something that's a little bit schematic you can say : we're all as humans we're born with a voice and with the desire and ability to engage responsively with other people... With boys the voice goes into violence and with girls the voice goes into silence. Men's violence or threat of violence and women's silence maintain a patriarchal order.

Victoire Tuaillon

They work together. Women by being silent, men by being violent. Or threatening violence.

Carol Gilligan

They are responses to the initiation into a patriarchal culture which requires a sacrifice of relationship and of love in order to maintain various hierarchies (race, gender, sexuality -- you name it.) It's a sacrifice of love, for everyone, that's a huge price to pay. So the question we ask is : "Why do people pay this price ?"

Victoire Tuaillon

Exactly. Because we all need it and that we all want it. Also for girls it's OK to say and for women it's OK to say that they're looking and longing for love. But we're going to talk a bit later about love. That's something feminists have always said, and of course I agree with it - that's something that we showed again and again in the podcast : that patriarchy harms both men and women. By forcing men to act like they don't need relationships : "I'm independent. I don't need anybody. I'm not a baby. I don't need to tell my secrets to anybody. I just want sex. I don't want intimacy." That's something you hear a lot of men say.

Carol Gilligan

Oh yeah ! They get tired of women because they say women are asking "how are you feeling ? How are you ?".

Victoire Tuaillon

What you show is that somehow we all benefit psychologically from patriarchy. We pay a very high price. We sacrifice a lot of things but at the same time by not experiencing authentic, genuine love...

Carol Gilligan

We protect ourselves from loss.

Victoire Tuillon

That's a way of protecting ourselves !

Carol Gilligan

That was the big discovery that led to our book, yes.

Victoire Tuillon

I would like now to talk a bit about that. The title of your book is "Why does patriarchy persist ?" and what you say is that patriarchy is a defense against loss.

Carol Gilligan

Right.

Victoire Tuillon

... and it's so sad !

Carol Gilligan

It is so sad ! But it's so quintessentially human we give up what we want most which is love because we're so afraid of loss.

Victoire Tuillon

So we prefer not to be loved, rather than risking to lose love ?

Carol Gilligan

Because we don't think we could survive loss.

Victoire Tuillon

Maybe you can explain what you meant by this by this fear of loss .

Carol Gilligan

To love somebody, to want somebody, to want to be with somebody is to be vulnerable ! You can be hurt by them if they reject you, if they say "I like you but I really don't love you." You expose yourself to rejection, you expose yourself to loss. Maybe they will leave you, they would say : "they can't deal with this relationship". Particularly if you've been hurt before or if you've had some experience of loss and feeling helpless, you think "even though I want this I can't deal with it. I can't risk it. I just can't" Or you minimize the loss: I go back to Adam who gave up his relationship with his best friend because he didn't want to be seen as a gay boy, and he thought of his best friend is a gay boy, people will think he's gay... so he gave it up AS IF that would not hurt him. As if "Well I'm 16 now and I'm a man, when I was a little boy I had friends, but I don't need that kind of friendship anymore." And what he says at the age of 26 -- he's a third year law student now -- is : "That is the greatest regret of my life so far." Men are taught to minimize the price of the loss. People would say "oh there's so many women in the world or so many other men in the world. Anyway you're a man you can stand on your own feet you're not a baby I mean you're independent and so forth." The fact is we're all interdependent as humans. That's the reality. Or women will say : "I've been hurt by love. So now I have a job and I have an income and I can support myself. Why would I expose myself to this again ?" You're giving up something you want and you're paying a huge price.

Victoire Tuillon

So that complements the mainstream explanation of " Why Does patriarchy persist", is that when you have privilege you don't want to give it up. So patriarchy gives men a

lot of privilege right -- that's one of the explanations. But also it persists because everybody wants it to persist because it protects us against loss ?

Carol Gilligan

You know nobody does something for no reason ! Let's just take Adam again : he gives up his relationship with Ali because he's going to be a privileged patriarchal man. Because patriarchy elevates some men over other men : white men over men of color, straight men over gay men, fathers over sons, and all men over women. You want to be one of these men : you can have money and houses and cars and women. Endless women.

Victoire Tuillon

No real relationships but a lot of sex maybe.

Carol Gilligan

Or objects : you could have expensive watches, beautiful clothes, handmade suits... And for women : if you stop saying what you're really feeling and thinking if you don't say what you see and you don't listen to what you hear but you say what other people want you to say and you you know what people want you to know not what you know from your own experience... Then people will want to be with you and you will be included and everyone will want you to be their colleague or their lover. But you start to say what you really feel and think... no one will want to be with you.

Victoire Tuillon

You will be rejected and nobody will want to hang out with you. No man would love you...

Carol Gilligan

You'll be all alone. So choose ! In the Shakespeare play "The Tempest", Miranda, the young girl the daughter of Prospero, the goddesses come and they offer her honor, riches, marriage, blessing. That's what women are offered in patriarchy. You just shut up basically. Don't say what you see, don't say what you know from experience and you can have honor. Otherwise you have dishonor ; you can have riches otherwise you'll be poor. You can have marriage, otherwise you'll be all alone.

Victoire Tuillon

It also makes me think of this famous tale of the Little Mermaid. She has to sacrifice... her voice ! In order to have a man.

Carol Gilligan

Right, it's like... this is not a secret.

Victoire Tuillon

But still, without friendship, without real intimacy, one becomes crazy. Little boys know that, teenagers know that, everybody knows right. I mean we need it. But when I look around me I see a lot of men who don't experience any real intimacy with anyone. And I think they might be crazy. But at the same time they seem perfectly adapted to the world we live in. They're very successful. They make a lot of money. They say they are happy. They don't lack anything, that they're perfectly fine the way they are.

Carol Gilligan

Mm hmm.

Victoire Tuillon

And so... how can they have forgotten what they need ? How can they not feel that ? How can your theory explain this paradox of men being all alone without intimacy and at the same time saying they're perfectly happy and being successful and very adapted to the world we live in ?

Carol Gilligan

The first response to loss is protest. So you're saying why aren't these men protesting ? Our discovery was that protest is seen as "no man would protest because a man doesn't need relationships. He's capable of standing on his own two feet" ; so the protest gets shamed. It's seen as unmasculine. If the protest is ineffective, it's followed by despair and then nobody likes to live in despair. That's what you're saying

: why aren't they despairing ? Despair is followed by detachment and the replacement of people with objects. So this man says he has detached ; he's not even conscious of missing relationships. It's not in his awareness. Instead he says : "I have all the success, I have all these things, I can have almost any woman I want"... What did Donald Trump say ? "If you are enough of a star, you can grab them by the pussy." As a psychologist, I know that... what people say is only one level of what's going on. As a psychologist you know, because women's anger is seen as such a problem, you have a lot of women who say : "I'm not angry." It was really funny when I was doing my work with girls : I remember this one girl, she was Indian, she was terrific and she was talking about conversation with her mother and she said to her mom are you angry with me. And then she'd imitate the mother's voice saying "I'm not angry." She knew the mother was angry and the mother was saying she wasn't angry.

Victoire Tuillon

When I went to live in the U.S. to study, I remember one of my roommates... she couldn't tell me she didn't like some things I was doing, because she was so used to be just nice and pleasant. And I remember I asked then she was like "No. Everything is FINE." I knew something was wrong, but she could not tell me. And it happens a lot.

Carol Gilligan

I'm going to tell you back a very funny boy story the mother told me the story. So this is a mother of a five year old boy. This is my point about boys being emotionally intelligent so if you see a man who seems emotionally clueless you have to say what happened to this person anyway.

Victoire Tuillon

Because any man you see used to be a very smart and emotionally smart young boy.

Carol Gilligan

Exactly. Because we are as human beings emotionally sensitive. Yes. Now I can tell you one of the things I learned in my research : there's a cover voice and there's a voice underneath. There's a patriarchal voice that we all learn of how to navigate a patriarchal institution or environment. And then there's a human voice underneath. And my first experience of this came from a woman who I asked her to solve a moral dilemma I was doing research ; and she looked at me and she said : "Would you like to know what I think... or would you like to know what I REALLY think ?" Meaning she'd learn to think in a way that was different from the way she really thought. And she was aware of the difference. What I learned from my research is : in a patriarchal culture a

human voice gets covered by a patriarchal voice. So when you hear the patriarchal voice it's important to hear how much cultural resonance and support it has but also just to ask : where is the human voice ?

Victoire Tuillon

After reading your book I was wondering : Does love exist anywhere really ? If women learn how to be inauthentic, if men pretend that they don't need anybody then... in heterosexual couples, how does it work ? Is it real love, or is it fake love ? What is it then the relationship they have ?

Carol Gilligan

But you forget about one thing...

Victoire Tuillon

Resistance ?

Carol Gilligan

Yeah ! Unless you resist, you will not have love.

Victoire Tuillon

I would like us to discuss how we can all get out of this trap, collectively and on an individual level. How can men as adults re-learn what they have unlearned they were kids ? What can they do ?

Carol Gilligan

Hang around with four and five year old boys !

Victoire Tuillon

Is that the solution ?!

Carol Gilligan

You said how can they get back in touch with some part of themselves they lost ? And when I was doing the research with boys with Judy I observed the fathers, in the 1990s. These men were in their thirties. Some of these fathers bringing their little boys to school they were so tender with these boys and playful and so forth. So I said to these fathers: would you meet with me and talk with me about what it's like to be a father of a four and five year old boy ? So they did. We were planning to meet once ; we ended up meeting for the whole winter. At one point I said to these men : what do you see in your son that leads you to say "I hope he never loses that" ? And they said : "How emotionally out there he is. How his emotions are so available. His spunk. How lively these little boys were." And another one said : "the real joy he has in his friends." So then here was the question : as their boys grew up, they wanted their boys to hold onto these qualities but they wanted their boys to be men. So that was the dilemma for them. Could they support these qualities in their boys without exposing their boys to being beaten up or called girls, gays, or to be bullied. So I would require all men to spend some time with four and five year old boys.

Victoire Tuillon

Or girls ?

Carol Gilligan

I would ask all women to spend time with 9-10-11 year old girls to ask themselves : what do they need to do to protect these human qualities in these children ? Because a lot of these men seeing these qualities in these boys realize that they (the men) were having trouble in their intimate relationships because they felt they had to cover these qualities or sacrifice them. So first you have to recover what is inside of you but you have put out of your awareness. And that's a good way to do it. Then you have to take action in this society to change what I would say simply join the healthy resistance of the child to losing these basic human capacities, these very valuable human capacities of empathy, to keep your thoughts and feelings connected... and cooperation. You educate the resistance of the children. You don't have to import anything : it's already there! You're a parent of a child, you give the child healthy food because you want to strengthen the child's immune system ; well you have to do that psychologically because the child encounters a toxic culture which is patriarchy and you have to strengthen the child's resistance ability to resist this culture. You have to deal with the culture : you have to deal with the schools and you have to deal with all the institutions that are basically you know in a sense forcing that sacrifice.

Victoire Tuillon

How can you do as parents ? I don't have kids myself but I am listening to my friends who have children and they tell me things like : "I am trying to show my dear little boy that it's okay to be tender, it's okay to cry, it's okay to say how you feel but at same time my little boy is going to school now. And when he comes back from school is obsessed with weapons and fighting and I don't recognize him and I don't know what to do."

Carol Gilligan

You have to say it's what's going on in school is real and he has to navigate this. I mean you can't wave a wand and change the world but you can help him to figure out ways that are not too costly to navigate this. And meanwhile you can go to the school and say : "How come you're supporting a weapons culture here ?" One of the things that's amazing to me is that the teachers at schools don't intervene when girls are being for example mean to each other. The adult women get paralyzed. You would think you might say : "stop it. You can't treat people this way." or "what is this with all these weapons what are you fighting ?! Let's talk about what's going on here." If you're an educator, that's what you should be doing.

Victoire Tuillon

If you're a man, maybe you can spend more time with little boys observing them : how they're authentic, how they express their feelings. The advice for men would be too : as a man you can also become more aware of other people's emotions and feelings.

Carol Gilligan

Within you as a human being you had this ability : what happened to it ? As you get in touch with that part of yourself as a man you're going to feel your masculinity is on the line and you're going to feel maybe you're going to be shamed as a man... How do you deal with that without becoming then violent and so forth ? This change is going to expose initially men to feelings of shame about their masculinity. They achieve their masculinity by shielding their tenderness and their sensitivity, then to recover that is going to feel like they're going to lose their masculinity. So that's what you're doing Victoire, you have to talk about masculinity ! Why is masculinity defined in this binary way as the opposite of whatever is feminine or is in opposition to being feminine ? If you're going to be masculine you can't have any of the human qualities that have suddenly been called feminine like tenderness...

Victoire Tuillon

What artwork would you like to recommend to our listeners ? It could be a song or a movie painting anything.

Carol Gilligan

I want to recommend a movie. Actually I would like to recommend three movies. I have to tell you I wrote a piece called "In a different voice act 2" and it's about three movies made by men, that are showing men speaking in what I called "a different voice" meaning a non patriarchal voice. These were very interesting to me because they were made by straight men, who were living in long relationships with strong outspoken women. So I think there were men who had had to confront what we've been talking about, that masculinity, because all of these movies deal with this issue. So the first movie is Phantom Thread, by Paul Thomas Anderson. The second movie is First Reformed, directed by Paul Schrader. The third movie was Black Klansman, directed by Spike Lee.

Victoire Tuillon

Thank you very much !