Toward a Transformed Approach to Prevention: Breaking the Link Between Masculinity and Violence

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Abstract. Men are disproportionately overrepresented among both perpetrators and victims of violent crime. Scholars from the men's studies movement have documented a clear link between socialization into sterootypical norms of hegemonic masculinity and an increased risk for experiencing violence. Despite this evidence, most campus prevention programs fail to recognize the link between men and violence and use only traditional approaches to violence prevention. The most that on-campus prevention programs provide are self-defense seminars for potential female victims of rape and general campus safety measures. In this article, the author describes a comprehensive, transformed approach to violence prevention. Data from a year-long case study of Men Against Violence, a peer education organization at a large university in the South, demonstrate the feasibility of meaningfully expanding male students' conceptions of manhood and appropriate gender roles and, thus, reducing the likelihood of men's engaging in sexually or physically violent behavior.

Key Words: masculinity, men's health, peer education, violence, violence prevention

Boys and men are most often the perpetrators of interpersonal violence, including homicide, physical assaults, sexual assaults, domestic abuse, and bias-related crimes, according to a review of the literature. Similarly, men and boys are three to five times more likely than women and girls to bear weapons, thus increasing their risks for homicide and suicide. In addition, boys and men are a significant proportion of the victims of violence, including physical assaults and sexual assaults.

In the face of such evidence, a growing number of researchers and writers argue that the predominant male socialization process in the United States inculcates in boys and men a hegemonic and limiting code of masculinity that intimately links traditional male gender roles with violence and, therefore, may predispose men to be perpetrators and victims of violence. Although violence has historically been discussed in gender-neutral terms, Courtenay, as well as Katz and Jhally, believe that specialists in violence prevention must recognize the gender-related nature of violence.

Nevertheless, the vast majority of institutions of higher education fail to target college men meaningfully in primary prevention efforts (ie, specific measures that stop or reduce the possibility of violent behavior in the first place). Nor do colleges and universities address the entire continuum of campus interpersonal violence described by Roark. Instead, most institutions focus solely or primarily on sexual assault and rely on a menu of traditional approaches, including (a) risk-reduction and self-defense workshops designed for women; (b) environmental changes to make the campus safer or to reduce the availability of alcohol and other drugs used to facilitate sexual assault; (c) victim-advocacy programs and augmentation of campus judicial proceedings; and (d) single-sex or coeducational workshops that use the health belief model to correct misperceived sexual cues and debunk rape myths.

None of the first three of these approaches is a true form of prevention; labeling them as such is a misnomer. The first two approaches fail to address the agency of the sexual assault perpetrator, and the third approach intervenes after the sexual assault incident has already occurred. The fourth approach, although it forms the foundation of effective sexual assault prevention, does not fundamentally change the broader sociocultural determinants of behavior that may supersede individual attitudes, beliefs, and intentions.
By contrast, a transformed approach to violence prevention would continue to address sexual assault and would also address other prevalent forms of campus violence, including physical assaults and hate crimes. In acknowledging the gender-related nature of violence, a transformed approach would also strive to open what Allen refers to as the man box and expand the definitions of what is appropriately masculine, thus alleviating both perceived and real peer pressure that may motivate men to engage in physical and sexual aggression to affirm their masculinity. Such an approach would necessarily disassociate the heretofore "masculine" traits of agency and action from violence in all of our social institutions, including the family, school, church, workplace, and media. Finally, a transformed approach would involve and engage students—particularly men—in meaningful ways that emphasize ownership for activism and social change and would do so within the context of long-term and sustained prevention initiatives.

MEN AGAINST VIOLENCE: A MODEL FOR A TRANSFORMED PREVENTION APPROACH

The student organization Men Against Violence (MAV) is the first of its kind and scope in the United States and represents an operational embodiment of a transformed approach to campus violence prevention. MAV focuses on changing cultural and peer reference group norms, rather than on individual and interpersonal variables. The organization provides a male peer-support network that alleviates the stress and anxiety of dating relationships and everyday living, not by reinforcing narrow conceptions of masculinity, but by generating shared norms of nonviolence and communication. It expands notions of gender-role expectations on an ongoing, long-term basis in a peer group setting through two venues: (a) an explicit examination and critical analysis of hegemonic masculinity, which refers to predominant social concepts of appropriate attitudes and behaviors for men and traditional male socialization processes, and its relationship to violence; and (b) an implicit learning process, in which peer education and service learning activities serve as the conduit for developing a close-knit community of men whose guiding values represent broader, nonlimiting ideas of what is appropriate, acceptable behavior for "real men."

Through both formal (eg, guided by the advisor) and informal (eg, spontaneous socializing) interactions, members of MAV are creating a male peer culture, albeit a loose one, that supports a new masculinity—a masculinity that is inherently nonviolent. MAV challenges college men at a time in their development when gender and sexual identities are salient. It urges them to approach male–female relationships in an equitable manner, resolve conflicts effectively, overcome homophobia, develop meaningful friendships with other men, and express and manage anger or fear appropriately.

Developing the Peer Support Network

Motivated by concern about violence on campus, 15 charter members representing a cross-section of male students at Louisiana State University (LSU) came together and formulated the idea for a service organization dedicated to combating stalking, domestic violence, fighting, hate crimes, hazing, rape, and vandalism. MAV was founded in February 1995 and the group received official recognition as a student organization at LSU in April 1995. "Brother" chapters of MAV in various stages of organization have been chartered at Eastern Washington University, Idaho State University, Southern University, Southwest Texas State University, the University of Florida at Gainesville, and the University of Wyoming at Laramie.

MAV is sponsored by the student health center on campus and its advisor is a health education professional from the center. Its structure and underlying philosophy are similar to the community action model of peer education described by Fabiano in the Journal of American College Health. An executive board of 8 officers is elected each year in April and convenes weekly to provide leadership and engage in strategic planning for MAV. An advisory board consisting of 14 faculty, staff, and alumni meet on a monthly basis to provide guidance and support to the executive board. The meetings consist of a business portion followed by an educational rap session. General meetings occur roughly six times each semester and are open to all MAV members and the general campus community.

MAV training conferences each semester allow members to develop relevant skills before they engage in peer education. In addition, a leadership development workshop occurs each year in early April to facilitate a smooth transition between the outgoing and incoming executive boards. As a nonprofit organization, MAV subsidizes its own efforts by fund raising, collecting membership dues, selling T-shirts, and soliciting corporate and individual sponsorships.

Membership Criteria

Membership is open to all full-time undergraduate and graduate students; staff, faculty, and graduates may join as alumni members. As of September 1998, each of the Greek-letter social fraternities for men is mandated to have three liaison members who participate in MAV. Other students who join of their own accord represent a wide variety of academic standings, ethnic/racial backgrounds, personal interests, and student affiliations (including intercollegiate athletic teams and Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) units), making MAV indisputably the most diverse student organization on LSU's campus. Because research indicates that men are more effective in educating their male peers about violence in single-sex settings, only men are eligible to serve on the executive board. Even though women can and do join MAV, 97% of the current members are men.

MAV's purpose, as outlined in the March 1995 constitution, is "to reduce the frequency and severity of violent acts among the students, faculty, and staff of Louisiana State University" and to emphasize the special responsibility that men have in doing so. Members of MAV engage in four activity areas that form the acronym ACES:
• **Awareness** includes media efforts to increase campus and community understanding of violence and the violence culture; publication each semester of a newsletter, *Noenum Violentus*, for campus-wide distribution; and new-member recruitment.

• **Community Action** entails volunteer service projects, policy revision, and political activism; programming for other students in the areas of sexism, racism, and homophobia; rethinking masculinity; sexual, physical, and psychological violence; anger management and conflict resolution; firearm safety; "group think" and hazing; and the connections between violence and substance abuse.

• **Education** includes efforts aimed at academic classes, fraternity houses, residence halls, local K–12 schools, and regional and national conferences.

• **Support** urges MAV members to provide support and intervention for both victims and perpetrators of violence. The offices of the dean of students and the department of residential life both mandate educational interventions through MAV for those students who are on disciplinary probation for violent or aggressive behavior.

**METHOD**

During the 1997/98 academic year, I conducted a case study of Men Against Violence for my doctoral dissertation. Participants in the study, selected through purposeful, intensity sampling, were the 8 men who were the MAV executive board officers that year. Five of the study participants were White, 3 (including the President of MAV) were African American. They ranged in age from 19 to 28 years. All but 2 of the officers were born and raised in Louisiana. Of the others, I was an international student from the Netherlands; the other, although born in Houston, Texas, had spent a considerable part of his life traveling in the United States and overseas. Two of the men were majoring in international trade and finance, 2 in business, and 1 each in marketing, sociology, psychology, and political science—sociology (a double-major). The median length of membership in MAV was three semesters.

In making my analyses, I was guided by a feminist framework and adhered to ethicographic principles established by Spradley. The qualitative methodology included (a) more than 250 hours of participant observation (including a memorable 4-day trip to San Marcos to attend the regional peer education conference at Southwest Texas State University); (b) eight ethnographic interviews, varying from 90 minutes to 4 hours, with each MAV officer; and (c) document analyses of meeting minutes, letters, and newsletter articles. To protect the interests and well-being of study participants, I followed ethical guidelines outlined by Spradley. Triangulation in data collection assured greater validity in the results. After collecting the data, I conducted a cultural themes analysis in the manner described by Lincoln and Cuba and created an ethnographic record in the spirit and style of MacLeod. The data and conclusions in this paper represent only one portion of the dissertation research project.

Brannon and David’s four metaphors ("Noissy staff"; "Be a big wheel"; "Be a sturdy oak"; "Give 'em hell") for traditional, hegemonic masculinity served as a conceptual framework for the study. It is important to note that these metaphors do not describe the actual lives of the vast majority of men in the United States; instead, they define a social construct referred to as real men and suggest how such men ought to behave. Although men exhibit a multitude of masculinities, one ideal of masculinity becomes dominant and marginalizes other definitions. This hegemony is reinforced by such societal institutions as political power, mass media, and corporate culture.

With Connell’s point in mind, one must recognize two situations in which hypermasculinity—men’s overcompensation for an insecure gender identity, with a commensurate increase in aggression and violent behavior—may occur. First, men who are denied full access to typical male privileges and status because of their stigmatized race, class, or sexual orientation are likely to adhere to stricter, more extreme conceptions of traditional masculinity. Denied access through traditional routes for establishing economic and political hegemonic masculinity, these men instead “prove” their manhood by exhibiting it in extreme forms that some writers have labeled the “cool pose” in analyzing media representations of African American men.

Second, the literature indicates that men whose primary cohabitation or social affiliation is with other men tend to display exaggerated conformity to traditional male role norms. Examples of such groups of men include campus fraternities; intercollegiate and professional team sports, primarily the high contact sports such as football, basketball, lacrosse, and ice hockey; and military combat units, especially in times of war. Not surprisingly, most gang rapes that occur on campus are perpetrated by men who are active in one of these groups. Given MAV’s goal of preventing violence both directly (violence as undesirable behavior) and indirectly (violence as an expression of hegemonic masculinity), one would expect some changes in the study participants’ conceptions of masculinity as a result of their involvement in the organization. In addition, one might anticipate some parallel changes in views toward violence. The study participants did, indeed, exhibit measurable and meaningful changes in attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors relative to normative gender expectations. These changes and their relation to hegemonic masculinity, for discussion purposes, can be loosely categorized in the same manner that Gerschick and Miller did in their study: (a) rejection, in which a participant renounces dominant norms for male behavior, creates his own code of manhood, or completely deny masculinity as important in his life; (b) reformulation, in which an individual redefines traditional conceptions of masculinity in his own terms; and (c) reliance, whereby an individual remains sensitive or hypersensitive to particular aspects of prevailing gender stereotypes. This pattern is comparable to Con-
noll's triad of transforming, resisting, and reproducing hegemonic masculinity.

No Sissy Stuff: Rejection, Reformulation, Reliance

The first of Brannon and David's tenets, "No sissy stuff," teaches men to avoid behaving in any manner that can be even vaguely labeled or perceived as feminine. Indeed, Connell argues that hegemonic masculinity by necessity must be defined as nonfeminine. In childhood, boys who cry are admonished with, "Stop being like your baby sister." If a boy falls or injures himself, he might be told, "Take it like a little man." Coaches frequently use epithets like "sissy," "girlie," or "wuss" to degrade poor performance by male athletes. Boys who engage in women's sports are labeled as "queers" or "fags." And because being gay has stereotypically and erroneously been equated with being "feminine," fear of femininity is also exhibited as homophobia. That is, real boys and men are threatened by men who willingly choose, as Dworkin suggests, to fulfill roles that are traditionally reserved for women (being the receptive sexual partner). Observes Kimm:

Homophobia (which I understand as more than fear of homosexual men; it's also fear of other men) keeps men acting like men, keeps men exaggerating their adherence to traditional norms, so that no other men will get the idea that we might really be that most dreaded person: the sissy. (p127)

If men are fearful of being perceived or labeled as "gay," then they may overcompensate to prove that they are "straight." Compulsory heterosexuality—the pressure to have female sexual partners and to have sex more often—becomes a route to confirming one's manhood. In fact, says Weinberg, "The motivation for all male violence is related to males attempting to reinforce and render incontestable their heterosexual masculinity." (p16)

The testimony of the MAV officers in this study indicated that their fathers, mothers, and peers had socialized all of them into stereotypical norms of masculinity; many indicated that homophobia ensured that they adhered to this stereotypical code. Almost all of the officers reported that their involvement in an organization like MAV aroused suspicion about their sexual orientation among their peers on campus, as if only feminine men would care about violence—which historically has been framed as a "women's issue." TB, a former LSU football player, said many of his erstwhile teammates said, "Well, [MAV] is a good organization, but I'm too macho for this organization." As a result, each of the officers underwent a personal struggle to reject or reformulate hegemonic masculinity to accommodate his involvement in MAV.

The resulting defensiveness regarding their masculinity prompted a bitter struggle between the officers and me about allowing women on the executive board. As a man, Schultz observed that "it's easier to be a guy with other guys when there's a chick around. It gives you all something in common to relate to." Although I could understand the MAV officers' desire to have women on the executive board, my past experience demonstrated that the presence of women in peer education organizations allowed men to shift the responsibility for caring and serving onto the shoulders of the women. Consequently, the number of men involved inevitably dwindled, leaving only the women. After allowing one young woman to fill an interim position of secretary on the board, the officers finally understood my concerns. At their behest, the members of MAV passed an amendment to their constitution in April 1998 that mandated an all-male executive board. Said CH of their decision:

It never occurred to me until the [American College Health Association] conference in New Orleans. I saw a lot of women. And when we went to San Marcus [for the peer education conference] . . . it was very rare that you saw a guy. And so I'm thinking . . . I definitely see how [in] other organizations, if women start to take a role, then they'll take [another] job. And they'll take another one. After awhile, the guys will get less interested and less focused on it. And we'll all drop out and that's probably what woulda happened.

Clearly, the struggle to overcome homophobia and reclaim those areas of emotion and response that are typically outside of the man box is difficult. In recalling fights from his childhood and adolescence, TB said, "If you got hurt or whatever, you went home crying to your momma and you was a sissy. [But] if you took the pain and you stood out and you fought with everyone else, you were a man." In the following statement, MB recognizes the subtle, yet palpable, boundaries that are placed on his behavior and thoughts by traditional norms of masculinity:

You can witness it in every [peer education] program: there's always that one guy that thinks he's more manly than the other ones by his attitudes, not his actions. I sometimes slip—not consciously, ya know, but unconsciously. I'm not thinking the things they think. Like if a girl asks me, do I think a guy looks good, I'll say, "Yeah, he's cute." Guys take that as me being effeminate.

Yet, through interactions with positive adult male role models (e.g., advisory board members or guest speakers), some of the MAV officers began to see the importance of adopting a broader definition of masculinity, a definition that included some behaviors that may even be regarded as feminine, thus reformulating and contesting hegemonic masculinity. In response to a guest speaker at one of the general meetings, LS said,

Coach Baldwin professes you need to be in touch with your feminine side. It's a very gentle point from a man who teaches violence [laughs]. I mean, he's a football coach . . . I mean, football is war; you can look at it that way . . . and men like that—that is, a manly man . . . I mean, football is war; you can look at it that way . . . and men like that—and, being a man is to be in touch with your feminine side, your feelings . . . also, to be open-minded and tolerant.

LS's construction of open-mindedness and tolerance as feminine qualities is interesting, given MAV's consistent history of racial diversity among its membership.

Nevertheless, the traditional mandate of no sissy stuff continued to be a source of tension and anxiety for the MAV officers. They eagerly and passionately took up the cause against racism, becoming actively involved in campus
activities and events in support of racial harmony, including participation in and speaking out at the Martin Luther King, Jr, commemorative marches. Nevertheless, they continued to engage in homophbic behavior—derogatory language about gay men, belief in stereotypes about "what makes people become gay," and expressions of disgust at male homosexuality. They were also concerned about their public image as a potentially gay organization, a concern that was fueled when one officer returned from a peer education program and reported that a fraternity member had called the officers a "bunch of fairies."

Although they verbally espoused the civil rights of and tolerance for gays and lesbians, many of the officers demonstrated a reliance on hegemonic masculinity and an accompanying need to reassure themselves and others outside of MAV. "But, we're not gay," they said. Their homophobia was sufficiently palpable that the few gay and bisexual men who chose to join MAV and disclosed their sexual orientation to me, unbeknownst to the officers, eventually left the organization because of their discomfort.

In addition, whereas they verbalized their belief that women were their equals, several of the officers, particularly the African Americans (consistent with Staples' and Kimmel's observations about hypermasculinity among men of color) still engaged in the sexual objectification of women. Some of the officers frequented strip joints. Other officers still adhered to the "virgin-whore" double standard view about women's sexuality. It was rare for any gathering of the officers not to generate some references to women's body parts or vivid descriptions of personal sexual exploits. Although I recognized that some of the officers' comments were merely normal, harmless expressions of sexual interest appropriate to this stage in their lives, I also felt that such reliance on hegemonic masculinity (ie, compulsory heterosexuality) was a way to alleviate their homophobic anxieties.

In response to his fellow executive board members' bragging about their sexual exploits with women, JG said,

Some people are exaggerating... I don't think they [have] women flocking to them as much as they say they do. I mean, come on now, I'm not stupid. And I know that they stretch it a bit more than what it probably really is. To tell you the truth, a lot of guys do that.

Be a Big Wheel: Rejection, Reformulation, Reliance

Brannon and David's second tenet of hegemonic masculinity, "Be a big wheel," urges men to strive for dominance, power, wealth, and success. Real men are expected to compete to be the biggest wheel, whether in the workplace or on the playing field. In fact, sports are among the primary arenas in which men battle each other to determine who is bigger, stronger, faster, or more skilled. In this battle, winning—not simply placing—is the only option for the truly "big man on campus." It is also through sports, according to Messner, that boys become men:

... for my male peers and me, athletic competition was an unambiguously male world. It was this world of athletic competition that provided us with the major social context in which we developed relationships with each other, and in which we shaped our own identities and self-images. (p.1)

However, this all-male world also has direct implications for violence. Nelson notes that

by creating a world where masculinity is equated with violence, where male bonding is based on the illusion of male supremacy, and where all of the visible women are cheerleaders, many sports set the stage for violence against women. (p.7)

Similarly, Keen declares that men historically assert power through violence as part of their "warrior psyche."

An extension of this premise is the stereotypical expectation that truly masculine men ought to have deep voices, big muscles, and an intimidating presence. At a minimum, they ought to be physically superior to women. In fact, predominant conceptions of American masculinity assign men the role of "aggressor" and women the role of "gatekeeper" in sexual situations. Contrary to women's experiences, most men are taught to regard sexuality as a realm of danger and to view sexual intercourse as an act of conquest.

MAV officers also perceived pressure to compete and to win as a way of meeting normative expectations of manhood. Said JH of his socialization experiences,

Father, he was always, like, you better never come home [after getting] your ass kicked. If you do, you're going to get your ass kicked by me. [With my peers, it was basically] the same kind of philosophy as my dad... I played football. I played baseball. This was [the way] with all the athletes... if you got into a fight, you better win, or you better have a good showing—and that other person better be hurt pretty well.

However, as a result of his involvement with MAV, CH, another of the officers, came to a reformulation of traditional masculinity:

You may not necessarily be a coward... but sometimes you may have to look like one... so it seems like you gotta be confident in yourself a little bit more. Like if somebody's about to fight, you just gotta walk off.

JG, who struggled with managing his own anger, talked about anger's relationship to violence:

We're always talking about date rape and domestic violence and everything like that. I think a lot of it has to do with the tempers of men... I think that's the root of a lot of the [violence]... it seems like at the drop of the hat, it's like, somebody's ready to kill somebody. I mean, in bars and stuff; alcohol does contribute to some degree, but I think also it's [poor] angel management.

Essentially, JG is rejecting norms of male combativeness as an acceptable expression of anger. Similarly, LM recognizes that there are other ways to resolve conflict besides violence: "MAV has helped me to believe that being a man is about finding a way to resolve conflicts without hurting yourself or other people." Again, this represents a reformulation of traditional male gender role expectations. TB remarks,
I don’t feel the same way I felt when I was growing up—that I had to fight these guys to prove that I was a man, ya know? That I had to drink this much alcohol to prove that I could fit in and be like everyone else.

The newfound desire to separate beliefs about masculinity and aggression is echoed in this statement:

Just ’cuz you’re able to fight, lift more or do stuff like that, I don’t think that makes you a man. Knowing when to walk away . . . from like, a bad situation [like a fight or something], is [what makes you a man].

Like his peers, LS also sought an alternative to the big wheel man; at the same time, he recognized the difficulty in following such a path:

I brought up a scenario [with my fraternity brothers]; I’m walking to class and [some members of a rival fraternity] decide to attack me. What would I do? Some people would be like, “Oh, I’d fight back” or whatever, and I was saying I would let them beat me up, ’cuz to me that puts them in the wrong and [me] in the right. . . . I mean, you can’t go wrong—you did nothing. I guess it was passive resistance. But I think most people won’t—they aren’t going to believe you’re Gandhi.

Finally, if collaboration is the alternative to competition, then JH also reformulated the big-wheel expectation of traditional masculinity in another way. He observed,

When I first joined, it seemed like two people ran the whole organization. . . . And then this year . . . each one of us has a distinct role. If JG has an opinion, it gets involved. If MB has his opinion, it gets involved in the organization. I think that with all of us, we make [MAV] a lot better by using everyone’s opinion instead of just a select few.

The pressure to be a big wheel also generated some cognitive dissonance and inconsistent behavior. The MAV officers recognized the need to work collaboratively if they were to make the organization succeed, yet I distinctly perceived a competitive undercurrent in many of the interactions between the officers. They would compete over who was the most dedicated officer, who had done the most peer education programs, who was the most popular among the general membership, and who had recruited the greatest number of new members—all concerns that represented a reliance on a male gender stereotype that celebrates winning.

Reliance on a masculine norm of physical dominance—a belief that men are supposed to be bigger and stronger than women—also emerged. When asked by a fellow ROTC air force pilot if he would trust a woman to take him into battle, LM truthfully replied,

I guess that question sort of brought out feelings that were in myself, and to wonder how I really felt about women [and equal rights]. Because, man, I have to be honest. When he asked me, I was like, some of ’em I would, but some of ’em I would not. There was this lady I knew [from the base] . . . and she flew aircraft . . . that lady—I mean, excuse the term—she acted like a man. And I would have no problems with her. But . . . I met [this] female pilot and she was . . . just an inch thick, fingernails painted, and wore dresses . . . and I [just don’t know if I] would feel comfortable with my life in her hands.

Be a Sturdy Oak: Rejection, Reformulation, Reliance

"Be a sturdy oak," Brannon and David's third tenet of hegemonic masculinity, expects real men to be independent, controlled, and unemotional, as well as to reveal no vulnerabilities. In the tradition of John Wayne and the Marlboro Man, men who are sturdy oaks exude a manly air of toughness, aloofness, and rugged individualism. These men take care of their wives and children by "bringing home the bacon"; their families depend on them, but, conversely, they do not rely on others. Caring emotionally for the family and building intimate connections are tasks that are stereotypically allocated to women. A large body of research consistently indicates that men do, indeed, have fewer friendships and smaller social networks than women do. Thus, they spend less time practicing the skills needed to build those connections. The term "pussy-whipped" is frequently used as an insult for men who are perceived as letting their female partners "control" them or "have the upper hand.

Given that seeking help or advice for pain symptoms or mental distress is regarded as a sign of weakness for real men, it is not surprising that men are extremely reluctant to seek medical attention or visit a counselor. Weinberg sums up the spirit of "Be a sturdy oak" as follows:

Leading, doing, building, destroying—these are the work of Real Men who don’t do "lady" things like feeling, listening, nurturing, caring. Emotional intimacy is something many males would like to achieve, but don’t yet have the vocabulary, experience, or practice necessary to succeed. The vulnerability necessary for emotional intimacy scares most males.

In rejecting or reformulating the dominant male norm to be a sturdy oak, the officers of MAV developed many new insights about relationships and friendships—the traditionally "feminine" realm of connection and intimacy. Said LS, speaking of his father, "we never talked about anything, like, personal. I can talk about personal things with my mom, and even then it’s kind of a struggle." This training in self-isolation is an important barrier to overcome in reformulating conceptions of masculinity. Remarked JG, "I think every guy basically keeps a lot of stuff to himself—part of it because of male pride. . . . It’s also male stupidity." His sentiment was echoed by JH, who observed,

Men have walls, big time, I think. And that’s something that I thought was weird. In MAV, yeah, everybody’s gonna have their own little walls, but . . . for the most part, we’ve pretty much opened up to each other about almost anything.

JH was not the only individual for whom MAV afforded the first opportunity in his life to develop caring, meaningful friendships with other men. For the officers who were also members of social fraternities, their friendships in MAV were comparable to fraternal ties, but they felt that the emotional bonds were more significant than those found in a social fraternity. One of those officers, LS, said,

Men should be able to talk. I’ve always talked openly about all kinds of different things. But a lot of men, [they] don’t
talk openly about certain things. With my friends [outside of MAV], I can talk to them about anything, but it’s as if they’re complete strangers. The dialogue [we’re] having in MAV meetings and amongst ourselves is very open and revealing. You’re going to realize that probably if you go outside of MAV and you’re open with another man like that, they might be open, but then if they’re not, they may be like, well, okay, this is someone I can talk to. So, you’ve kind of started a chain reaction.

Nevertheless, this growing intimacy among men was not an easy bond for these MAV officers to forge, given their training in hegemonic masculinity and the power of homophobia to keep men acting like men. Of his friendships with the other MAV officers, CH observed:

It’s gone beyond, “This is my boy,” or “This is my partner” and stuff like that. It’s more [like] we got legitimate feelings for another guy. Ya know, I’m not saying you’re attracted to him [but if] something happens to this guy, it’s almost like something just happened to your brother. As [men have friends and all], but you’re not supposed to be close to any guys unless you could be gay or something like that. Nowadays, you know, I got a couple of friends like that, that... I’d do anything for ‘em if I could.

By sharing with each other, men learn that the stereotypical expectation of being a sturdy oak can be rejected and simultaneously correct a misperceived social norm.

Listen to LM:

I used to think that, ya know, you couldn’t really sit down with a bunch of guys and talk about [laughs]. Don’t let anybody know you’re scared. Don’t let anybody know you have weaknesses anyway.... But I guess I found out that a lot of guys have the same problems I have.... I used to think that, ya know, I just sit down and chill.

Even MB, who grew up with a very emotionally distant father and still struggles with issues related to domestic violence (his father hit his mother), says, “I’ve learned that communication is very important. That’s one thing that I’ve learned [from MAV and applied].”

I also observed the officers beginning to reformulate conceptions of a sturdy oak by acknowledging their vulnerability and their need for others. This is JH’s insight after conducting numerous peer education programs for coeducational audiences:

Men and women are so different in what we think each other wants that we don’t even realize that basically what we want ends up being almost the same thing. We want somebody that’s trusting, somebody that we can care for and enjoy being with.

He goes on to acknowledge,

Most times, men are seen as the person who’s supposed to go work and stuff and go make the money and come home and just sit there and do his little thing. I think that [MAV] promotes men to be active, and if we have kids, to be active and make them properly. It’s to be active in your community and help other people instead of just being a worker.

Whereas parenting and community involvement are traditionally viewed as more appropriate and natural roles for women, JH, in his reformulation, was seeing fatherhood and citizenship as essential aspects of being a man. TB expressed fond memories of volunteering at a local elementary school, during which he had one of his first opportunities to serve as an adult male model for young children:

I can remember one statement that I made during the program—it was when I told the kids that I loved them. And they didn’t understand why a stranger would stand up there saying, “I love you,” “I want you to succeed and graduate,” and “Do good things in life, take care of your family and community” and everything like that. And the principal reiterated what I said by asking, “Did y’all hear what he said?” He said he loves you, and he didn’t even know you!” And the kids were like, “Yeah!” They were like, “We love you, too!”

In fact, all of the MAV officers voiced a desire to help others and to adopt the ethic that embraces the community service that was central to MAV’s mission. This sentiment was especially salient for the three African American officers, each of whom was keenly aware of the lower life expectancy odds facing Black men as a result of their higher rates of homicide.

I also witnessed rejection and reformulation of the myth of being a sturdy oak in another context. During the course of the study, one of the officers, LM, was being battered by his girlfriend. It took a lot of courage for him to talk about it with his fellow officers, and he came to me first to express his embarrassment and shame about the situation. LM was simultaneously afraid that the others in the group would see him as less than a man because he was the “victim” in this case. He feared that they might attribute some responsibility for the battery to him and therefore consider him unworthy to be in MAV:

... it worried me how [the officers] felt about [her punching me] and how they would feel about me being part of the organization after that. I guess I didn’t really consider myself as fighting, because... I never threw a punch—actually, I didn’t even defend myself... I didn’t know why... I had tried to justify [her hitting me] by saying, “Well, her father was abusive, so it’s natural for it to be passed down.” But then I guess I convinced myself that was no excuse.

It is rare that we witness a man revealing his vulnerability in such an honest manner.

As with the first two tenets of hegemonic masculinity, reliance on being a sturdy oak surfaced, as well. The officers found it difficult to abandon their self-perceived roles as protector—defender. Although the men in this study acquired new insights about gender equality and grew to recognize the ways that men’s violence toward women is supported by institutionalized power dynamics, their desire to prevent such violence was still guided more by what I would call a chivalric, paternalistic view of women (eg, women are the weaker sex, so they need our protection) and
less by a desire to make fundamental changes in that power system.

**Give 'em Hell: Rejection, Reformulation, Reliance**

"Give 'em hell" is Brannon and David's fourth and final tenet of hegemonic masculinity and is directly correlated with violence. Real men are asked to be risk-takers, to be daring, and to be aggressive. A real man does not "stand down" if his dignity or manhood has been disrespected, and certainly no real man could allow any insult to his girlfriend or mother to go unchecked. Research indicates that twice as many boys as girls report believing that physical fighting is an appropriate response when someone insults you, steals from you, or flirts with someone you like, whereas more than three-and-a-half times more boys than girls believe fighting is an appropriate response when someone cuts in line. Interestingly, White college men from the South are most likely to start a fight if they believe that their "most valued possessions, namely [their] reputation for strength and toughness," are threatened.

Furthermore, college men who ascribe to more traditional beliefs about masculinity report higher rates of unprotected sexual activity, binge drinking, and motor vehicle accidents than their less traditional male peers. These expectations of traditional manhood also explain why boys are more likely to carry a weapon to school or to pick a fight. The give 'em hell gender role norm is poignantly and succinctly reflected in a recent television commercial by Wrangler, which touts men's jeans that come in boys' two favorite colors: black and blue.

So many of the MAV officers had been raised with the idea that real men had to raise hell. Commented TB:

... when I was living in the projects ... we did everything for money ... everything was competition. And everything was macho. Everything was you gotta be a man ... ya know, drink some of this and put some hair on your chest and all that craziness ... As far as the violence issue, it was always macho to carry a gun. It was always macho to be able to drink a certain amount of drink, ya know? And if you can beat up so many different people you were like a god [laughing]!!

Like TB, another officer, CH, had grown up picking fights with peers, even if it was only because "somebody looked at [him] funny." However, in October 1997, that old way of resolving conflicts was tested and rejected. CH had gone on a date with the ex-girlfriend of another MAV member and ended up spending a platonic night sleeping on the couch at her apartment. The other MAV member found CH at the apartment. In a fit of jealousy, he called CH out and incited him to fight by shoving him and yelling curse words at him. Because of his involvement with MAV, CH made a conscious choice to walk away that night. He said,

I couldn't tell if I was more mad because he hit me or more mad because of who he was [an MAV member] and he hit me. I haven't been that mad in a very long time ... [but] I told him I didn't wanna mess up the [MAV] image for him.

In this next statement, TB explicitly talked about rejecting the connection between taking risks and masculinity:

MAV has helped me to get rid of those old demons and realize that I can be a man without having the alcohol, without having the drugs, without having all the macho things that was installed in me by my brothers to make me out as a man. I'm a man without all those things.

On a similar note, MB reformulated maturity as it relates to manhood; he essentially implies that the give 'em hell mentality of risk-taking is a sign of immaturity, and that real men do not have to resort to those things:

In MAV, I think it's odd [but] we deal with boys: it's one of the problems. I believe if you were a man, there wouldn't be any need for MAV. Real men wouldn't get angry. Real men would know when to say "when" if they were drinking. Real men wouldn't, ya know, beat up their wives, or wouldn't sexually assault or rape.

Male gender is the best predictor of carrying weapons, which, in turn, is correlated with higher rates of accidental injury and death. JH's reaction when he saw a fellow officer pull out a butterfly knife therefore also represented a desire to reject risk-taking behavior:

Just to have a butterfly knife in your pocket ... I mean, that right there is opening yourself up for a ... violent act to happen. If you have a gun on you, you have a chance to have a violent act [happen], because you could shoot somebody. You might not intentionally mean to, but it could still happen.

Reliance on give 'em hell surfaced in a manner that I had not anticipated. Several of the MAV officers had apparently been challenged on various occasions by some of their peers with the question, "Since you're in MAV, does that mean I can hit you right now, and you won't fight back?" Thus, the issue of violence versus self-defense became an important delineation that the officers felt they needed to make. As one past officer said, "MAV isn't against self-defense; we're against violence." This continuing need to make a distinction between violence and self-defense (with the key differentiating factor being who instigated the fight) is firmly espoused by JH, who said, "You gotta defend yourself. I mean, that's just a fact of life. I mean, you can't just let someone beat you up." For JH, being beaten up was inconsistent with his beliefs about manhood—he would be letting someone disrespect him.

In general, the concept of diffusing a conflict before it escalated to physical violence was a difficult concept for almost all of the MAV officers to accept, and in this area, all of the officers except one relied on stereotypical norms of male bravado. In fact, LS described a hierarchy of violence in which fighting was less serious than rape, perhaps succumbing to the old adage that "boys will be boys." He said,

I think date rape is a worse sin than fighting. I would say rape, especially date rape—someone you know—is a great evil. Fighting though, probably because it's more common ... I would describe it as a lesser evil.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Although many theorists have identified a relationship between hegemonic masculinity and an increased likeli-
hood for both perpetrating and experiencing violence among men in the United States, this study is one of the few that assesses the impact of an educational intervention designed to break that link. As was true in the research conducted by Connell, Laberge and Albert, and Gerschick and Miller, the participants in this study continued to reproduce and rely on some aspects of hegemonic masculinity. They did so even as they reformulated and contested many of the same aspects of masculinity, indicating that the process of constructing masculinity is dynamic and complex. Given the long-term and ongoing nature of this educational intervention, there is every reason to believe that many of these changes will be lasting—particularly if these men find similar male peer support networks when they leave the university.

This study demonstrates and documents meaningful, significant changes in the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of a tight-knit group of college men in relation to violence and to traditional conceptions of manhood. These data also lend credence to Kivel’s observation that “... if we [men] have learned to be violent, we can unlearn it. And since this learning came from men, the most powerful way to learn other, gentler ways is also from men” (p96). Although the study results cannot be generalized to other universities and programs, a student organization like MAV undoubtedly provides a viable model of how higher education professionals can work toward implementing a transformed approach to preventing violence. MAV, which was developed in the pattern described by Kuh et al., is a program to foster student learning and student development that has been student-defined as much as it has been carefully crafted by a health professional.

If we are truly concerned about ending violence against women, then it is imperative that we begin working with men to prevent it. If we recognize that violence against women is part of a greater cycle of hurt and pain that encompasses violence against men, we then will labor equally to eliminate all forms of violence. If we value our male students as much as our female students, we then will abhor violence among men as intensely as we abhor violence against women.

As long as colleges and universities continue to provide only date rape seminars that focus on the individual and interpersonal variables of sexual violence without re-constructing hegemonic masculinity, as long as they care only about violence against women and attack only the correlates (eg, firearms, alcohol) but not causes of violence, the effectiveness of such interventions is very dubious. Our ultimate goal in higher education ought to be to have a positive and meaningful impact on student learning and student well-being. We must, therefore, move toward a transformative approach to preventing campus violence.

NOTES

In this article, I did not use data from the ethnographic interview with EW, who was an exchange student and had spent all of his childhood and adolescence in the Netherlands. Because the discussion deals with hegemonic conceptions of masculinity in the United States, EW’s experiences and perspectives would not be relevant. I used the correct initials of the men who are quoted in this account. They were so proud of their participation in the MAV program that they especially asked me to do so, because they wanted to read my account when the article appears in print.

For information about starting a Men Against Violence chapter, get in touch with the organization at Louisiana State University, Room 275, Student Health Center Building, Infrmary Road, Baton Rouge, LA 70803. Phone: (225) 388-5718. Fax: (225) 388-1278. (email: MAV@lsu.edu)

Web Site: www.geocities.com/MAVatLSU

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