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An invisible problem

Everyday violence against girls in schools

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Abstract

This article shows how 'normalized masculinity' and its effects are operative but invisible in public discussions of targeted violence against girls. In school shootings, dating violence and sexual harassment, boys assaulted girls who rejected them or otherwise caused the boys gender distress. Against this backdrop, the analysis situates recent school shootings, dating violence and sexual harassment on a continuum of unrecognized violence against young girls. Through a media analysis of 13 United States school shootings that took place between 1996 and 2002, it shows how gender played a significant influencing role. It then puts forward a framework for efforts to prevent violence rooted in damaging masculinity ideologies.

Key Words

dating violence • masculinity • school shooting • sexual harassment

Introduction

Scholarly accounts have been concerned with the relationship between normalized masculinities—that is, the set of expectations to which males are still often expected to conform—and violence inflicted on adult women in daily gendered life. By contrast, though, destructive gendered dynamics in girls' everyday lives—as well dramatic bursts of violence against them—

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have remained effectively invisible both within academia and in other communities where greater awareness could play a preventive role. Moreover, even where analysts have written about violence against girls, they have usually not incorporated the concept of a dominant, 'normalized' masculinity into their accounts.

This invisibility is exemplified by a distinctive pattern of violence against girls in highly publicized American crime cases that went largely unnoticed. Girls were specifically targeted in 11 of 13 high-profile school shootings that took place in the United States between 1996 and 2002. Hundreds of media reports cited the perpetrators as aiming at girls who rejected them (Blank, 1998; Fainaru, 1998; Popyk, 1998a, 1998b; Belluck and Wilgoren, 1999; Cloud, 1999). However, these same accounts often neglected to target gender as a possible cause of the incident. Instead, they focused primary explanatory attention on violence in television and music.

Why has the significance of gender in school violence generated so little attention? I argue that violence against girls is easy to render invisible because the behavior that precedes actual incidents is often perceived as normal; even after fatalities have occurred, the gendered components of crimes do not seem to register. Yet gender-biased behaviors may well start when children begin school and continue as boys become involved in sports and engage in intimate relationships.

Sexual harassment policies and other school violence prevention programs often fall short of addressing destructive aspects of 'everyday' gendered dynamics for two main reasons. First, these policies and prevention programs usually address only the most extreme manifestations of social problems. Second, a profound lack of consciousness about the extent and impact of 'normal' violence against girls—indeed, social acceptance of male hostility toward girls—tends to aid in concealing even the most dramatic incidents. For instance, on the one hand, common explanations of school violence have come to include the role of bullying (Greenfield, 1999; Hall, 1999; Tonso, 2002; Willert, 2002; Townsend, 2003). On the other, these explanations do not treat high rates of dating violence and sexual harassment as specific types of bullying (Stein, 1999).

Despite its invisibility, violence against girls remains a very real significant problem. Crime statistics show that boys under age 18 commit a great proportion of sexual offenses, including approximately 25 percent of all rapes and 50 percent of known child sexual abuse cases (Messerschmidt, 2000: 4). Statistical evidence also shows that juveniles in the United States commit more crimes today than in the past (US Department of Justice, 1994; Hatty, 2000); criminologists consider gender to be the strongest predictor of criminal involvement (Messerschmidt, 2000).

This article examines the high incidence of targeted violence that girls encounter in schools, focusing especially on sexual harassment, dating violence and, most recently, on school shootings. By making this violence visible, I hope to contribute information that will be useful to educators, social workers and other practitioners in a position to redress these

problems and to fill a glaring theoretical gap that persists in sociology, gender studies, criminology, education, social work and related fields.

Part I establishes the extent of the problem and offers a theoretical explanation of why patterns of violence against girls—which manifests itself in different forms, including sexual harassment, dating violence and school shootings—have tended to be overlooked. In Part II, I incorporate a range of theories about gender to show how the concept of normal masculinity (and masculinities) is related to these crimes. Part III articulates more specifically, via media analysis and other tools, the role of normalized masculinities in dating violence, sexual harassment and school shootings. Finally, the article points to directions for change, particularly the importance of finding new ways to conceptualize gender-responsive violence prevention initiatives.

Part I

'Boys will be boys': assessing the extent of the problem

Sexual harassment, dating violence and school shootings exist on an escalating continuum of violence against girls disguised in normalized masculinities: that is, these three types of behavior share roots in the ways that boys are taught to express and defend their masculinity through domination. When boys are rejected or otherwise frustrated by girls whom they feel they are expected to 'dominate', social pressures related to normalized masculinity expectations may incite them to commit such types of violence, all of which are intimately related.

School shootings, in which a student opens fire in school, are also referred to as 'rampages' (Newman et al., 2004). The girls who were targeted in recent rampages were heterosexually identified, and their assailants cast their motives in terms of male–female relationships. Teen dating violence is 'a pattern of repeated, actual, or threatened acts, that physically, sexually, or verbally abuse a member of an unmarried heterosexual or homosexual couple in which one or both partners is between thirteen and twenty years old' (Carlson, 2003). Increasingly, younger girls are victims in a cycle of violence not unlike that experienced by adult women in domestic violence cases. Approximately 30 percent of high school and college students report experiencing dating violence (Carlson, 2003).

Sexual harassment includes sexual comments, jokes, gestures, looks, touching, threats and grabbing and/or pinching in a sexual way (Quesada, 1998). These kinds of acts can escalate to assault, rape and even homicide (Gelles, 1998; Angel, 1999; Auster and Leone, 2001). Although boys are sexually harassed as well, according to many studies, girls are overwhelmingly the main targets of this abuse (i.e. Quesada, 1998). Research shows that more than four out of five students experience some form of sexual harassment in school (Callahan, 2000). The high incidence of such

harassment is again indicative that such behavior is perceived as normal, preventing adequate redress.

Many girls in school are accustomed to hearing boys make comments about their bodies and their sexuality; some are also being touched or assaulted. Yet, for the most part, such teasing and groping are considered to be a 'normal' part of a day in school (Quesada, 1998; Carlson, 2003). Despite long-standing societal beliefs that this behavior is innocuous, research has shown that the physical and emotional ramifications for girls can be traumatic (Reese, 1997; Quesada, 1998; Carlson, 2003).

Existing literature documents the 'boys will be boys' assumptions that accommodate sexual harassment and dating violence (Reese, 1997; Bowman and Morgan, 1998; Johnson and Johnson, 2000; Scully, 2001; Carlson, 2003). Otherwise masked signs of imminent violence are hidden in normalized masculinity expectations—'boys will be boys'—that allow daily violence to occur freely. Boys typically acquire this attitude from parents, teachers, peers and other important figures in their lives who perpetuate the widely accepted belief that boys should dominate and control girls. This construct allows dating violence and sexual harassment to escape the untrained eye (Reese, 1997; Bowman and Morgan, 1998; Johnson and Johnson, 2000; Scully, 2001; Carlson, 2003). Such a mentality also disguise the antecedents behind a significant number of school shootings, which I argue are linked intimately to dating violence and sexual harassment on a continuum of normalized masculinity that sanctions violence against girls.

While violence in general at middle and high schools has been said to be going down over the last decade (Schiraldi, 1998), the kind of violence discussed here may not be registering for reasons addressed in this article. Whether or not dating violence and sexual harassment are increasing, the incidence of such assaults, as just noted, is still disturbingly high. Indeed, in November 2000, the FBI reported that school shootings have increased since 1980 (Glassner, 1999a, 1999b; O'Toole, 2000). All this suggests that the high-profile incidents detailed here are not isolated cases but may well relate to larger trends that include a tendency to overlook gendered patterns.

Few scholarly articles analyze the fact that girls were specific targets in US school shootings of the late 1990s (Angel, 1999). Research on dating violence and sexual harassment in schools is increasing (Reese, 1997; Quesada, 1998; Carlson, 2003), yet there is no literature connecting these three phenomena. Dating violence and sexual harassment, to be sure, do not always lead to school fatalities. Yet many of the perpetrators made comments indicating that sexual harassment or dating violence were precursors in situations that eventually resulted in homicides.

By contrast, this analysis seeks to show the common antecedents of such violence in normalized social relations, specifically the inextricable link between masculinity and violence. Perpetrators of dating violence, sexual harassment and school shootings share a similar profile: they tend to be

boys who feel pressured to be hyper-masculine, powerful, dominating and violent so as to 'prove' their manhood (Davis, 2000; Hong, 2000; Scully, 2001). As Connell and Messerschmidt have argued, they also tend to be boys who seek to realize hegemonic masculinity through oppositional masculinity—and who learn through school, family and other social institutions that violence is a way to demonstrate manhood.

The aggression manifested in dating violence and sexual harassment and, ultimately, in school shootings, therefore share two common elements:

1 they are all the result of social pressures on boys to prove their masculinity by dominating girls; and
2 public reactions to all three social problems (dating violence, sexual harassment and school shootings) fail to identify gender as an explanatory factor; therefore, little has been done to mitigate the problems.

Even with the high incidence of multiple forms of dating violence and studies that show how intimate violence afflicts young teenagers, this social problem is only now receiving public attention. Teen dating violence receives little research attention, even less than even domestic violence, juvenile crime or date rape (Howard and Wang, 2003), explaining in part how a glaring pattern of violence related to girls in schools could fall so far below the radar of public consciousness.

Part II

Theories of masculinity

Sexual harassment, dating violence and school shootings are all rooted in distorted applications of the 'normalized masculinity' that is encouraged in boys at an early age. The evolutionary psychologist David Barash (2002) frames violence as a normal aspect of masculinity—a male's heightened tendency toward aggression, domination and violence. He quotes the political scientist Hans Morgenthau to explain this proclivity:

> The ultimate power of propagation explains why males in particular are often so eager to dominate, occasionally carrying their eagerness to violent extremes. We should not be surprised to find that aggressiveness is widely— and all too correctly—seen as manly and its alternative, timidity, as womanly.
>
> (Barash, 2002: B8)

Such widely accepted beliefs tend to exonerate boys who commit violent acts. For this reason, I argue that it is impossible to understand different forms of violence against girls without an analysis of how 'normalized masculinity' works to disguise and conceal certain types of violence. By extension, such an understanding is key to any effort to prevent such violence from escalating. Indeed, a related aspect of normalized masculinity that is culpable in school violence, and in particular school shootings, is

another form of sexual harassment—gay bashing—in which both boys self identified as homosexual as well as boys perceived as 'feminine' or 'weak' by others, but self-identified as heterosexual, are victims of unrelenting peer abuse (Klein and Chancer, 2000, 2006; Kimmel and Mahler, 2003; Klein, 2003).

Academic literature addresses domestic and other forms of violence against adult women in some depth (e.g. Brownmiller, 1975; Russell, 1975; Sunday and Toback, 1985; MacKinnon, 1987; Sweetman, 1998; Hatty, 2000; Scully, 2001; Chancer, 2004). Yet work on violence against young girls is limited, has only begun recently and has not yet treated the role of normalized masculinity in perpetrating violence against girls across a continuum of behaviors (Dobash and Dobash, 1998; Stein, 1999; Messerschmidt, 2000; Totten, 2001; Carlson, 2003).

Why has the problem of violence against girls been so overlooked? R.W. Connell (1995) posits a definition of multiple forms of masculinities that in one way or another normalize violence in the everyday performance of this gender identity.

Hegemonic and complicit masculinities

Hegemonic masculinity refers to the form of masculinity most legitimate in a given society; in contemporary contexts, military heroes, successful businessmen or powerful politicians may represent this type. Men who have this power embody stereotypical masculine traits such as being unemotional, tough, authoritative and controlling. Boys most clearly differentiated from women and homosexuals are classified here, at the top of this masculinities hierarchy.

Complicit masculinity is intimately connected to hegemonic masculinity in that it comprises the majority of men who do not meet hegemonic expectations of manhood, but who benefit from the subordination of women and gays. Even though they are not hegemonic, they receive a 'patriarchal dividend', according to Connell (1995), in that they reap status-power benefits just by virtue of being men.

Subordinated masculinity

Gays and men perceived as gay fit at the bottom of the ladder, where their masculinity is subordinated. Connell then elaborates a new understanding of homophobia, namely that heterosexual boys perceived as feminine can be subjugated in the same way women and gays are persecuted. 'The process is marked by a rich vocabulary of abuse, including wimp, nerd, sissy, mama's boy, dweeb, geek . . . Here too, the symbolic blurring with femininity is obvious', Connell writes (1995: 79). Similarly, in *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men*, Lynne Segal (1990) notes that homophobia is a means to keep all men in line by oppressing gay men and expressing contempt for men who express emotional qualities associated with femininity. Consequently, boys are taught to despise the

'feminine enemy within themselves' and to try to destroy any person that draws attention to these rejected aspects of their personality—that is, on some level, to hate women (1990: 158).

Oppositional masculinity

Boys who are habitually subordinated may seek other ways to define their masculinity to 'correct the subordinating social situation'. As Messerschmidt (2000: 13) has aptly observed, various forms of crime are often the result. Another form of masculinity, then, grows out of such subordinated experiences: *oppositional masculinity*, which Messerschmidt defines as the manifestation of explicit resistance and possible challenges to hegemonic forms of masculinities as well as to femininities (2000: 10). When other means of demonstrating masculinity are limited, excluded groups of males may display oppositional masculinity as a form of resistance.

In schools, for instance, Messerschmidt posits that hegemonic masculinities are demonstrated by the 'jocks and preps'; and subordinated masculinities by those referred to as 'gay', 'wimp' or 'nerd'. In turn, 'freaks' and 'tough guys'—that is, boys who for one reason or another feel unable to achieve hegemonic masculinity in the traditional sense—seek to create oppositional masculinities in a form of resistance that engages exaggerated aspects of hegemonic masculinity ideology to over-compensate for failure to meet those standards. For Connell, such masculinity might be covered by what he terms 'marginalized masculinity', which refers to men within stigmatized groups, often via race or class. Lack of power as a result of social status may cause some to seek other means to employ their patriarchal dividend, in Connell's terms. For Messerschmidt, aspects of various masculinities as such can exist simultaneously. For example, he illustrates, 'a boy who rebels against "authority" in school (oppositional) may also engage in dominating and controlling practices of girls (hegemonic)' (2000: 12).

Whether subordinate, complicit, marginalized or oppositional, social pressures to achieve hegemonic masculinity are paramount in US culture (Connell, 1995; Kimmel, 1996; Klein and Chancer, 2000; Messerschmidt, 2000; Kimmel and Mahler, 2003). Judith Butler (1990) maintains that people—in this case boys—perform gender through conventions and rituals compelled by the performance of a 'compulsory heterosexuality'. Theorists such as Connell and Messerschmidt posit that, within the hegemonic models, such heterosexuality incorporates violence against girls as a means of demonstrating power, influence, and ability to dominate.

This compulsion is externally perpetrated, reinforced through myriad social institutions including family, school and religious institutions, and finally internally enforced. In violence against girls, this pressure can be a common trigger. In sexual harassment and dating violence, the aggression implied in these acts is potentially a result of the frustration a male experiences when he is unable to get a hoped-for response. Messerschmidt

(2000) found that boys who committed sexual assault were generally insecure about their manhood and felt pressured to demonstrate their heterosexuality to prove their masculinity.

Manifesting oppositional masculinity, boys sometimes believe that the way to express their manhood is by dominating girls, by showing them 'who is boss'. Normal masculinity pressures underlying oppositional behavior have been implicated in violence against females in school shootings, domestic violence, sexual assault and public harassment (Klein and Chancer, 2000, 2006; Messerschmidt, 2000; Kimmel and Mahler, 2003; Chancer, 2004).

Messerschmidt makes an important distinction to explain why some men are more predisposed to commit violence. In a study of nine young boys (three who committed sexual assault, three who committed non-sexual assault and three who did not commit violence), the distinguishing issue for Messerschmidt was the way masculinity was defined by the boys' various social institutions, including family, school and other important socializing agents. While all of the boys found that using violence was a way to demonstrate masculinity at school, most of them also found that their parents, especially their father, supported this view. If they were threatened, the parents cautioned, the boys needed to show the offending person who was dominant. While the non-violent boys were similarly threatened, picked on or otherwise provoked, they heard different messages from other important social influences. For instance, their families suggested that the boys 'walk away' and that it was 'wholly inappropriate for a young "Man" to respond to any type of provocation with violence'. Messerschmidt writes about the non-violent boys: 'Although each boy constructed a different type of masculinity, what they produced in common is that the different types rejected violence as appropriate masculine practice' (2000: 130).

Unfortunately, alternatives to violence are not necessarily taught as a requisite of masculinity; indeed, the opposite is more often the case. Males are pressured toward a host of essentially super-human or non-human responses. Boys are discouraged from showing weakness, sadness, crying or from displaying any form of dependence. Anne Campbell argues,

> Men view aggressive or violent acts as a means to assert or maintain control over others. These violent acts are an attempt to reaffirm a positive self concept, enhance self-esteem, and reclaim interpersonal power. They are also an attempt to pacify and tame the 'disruptive and frightening forces around them'.
>
> (1993: 59)

Nature or nurture

The greatest obstacle to reversing the damaging effects of such abusive behavior is the entrenched perception that normalized masculinity includes an innate uncontrollable impulse of boys to act in sexually aggressive ways

toward girls. Socio-biologists (Daly and Wilson, 1980; Smuts, 1992) argue that domestic violence results from 'male reproductive striving'. They postulate that primates use aggression against females to intimidate and thus secure reproductive advantage; the goal is to prevent resistance to the male's mating efforts and to reduce the likelihood of females mating with other males. The implication is that violence and domination are 'natural' masculine tendencies. As Barash (2002) has written: 'Violence may or may not be as American as cherry pie, but it is as male as can be.'

Masculinities theorists and other feminist scholars instead have blamed cultural forces that support hegemonic and oppositional masculinities including a patriarchal social order and family structure. Resulting social pressures perpetuate the historical pattern of systematic violence directed against girls as well as the failure to recognize that gendered violence is a pressing social problem. Then opportunities for redress are missed, and lack of awareness often results in victims blaming themselves.

Competing explanations do not necessarily warrant different solutions. Chancer (1998) argues that the tension between nature and nurture ultimately rests on a continuum of relative emphasis. Even if socio bio logical theories prevail, proponents of such perspectives would recognize that social conditioning exacerbates these tendencies by encouraging rather than discouraging men to be aggressive, competitive and dominant. The social psychologists Robert Brannon and Deborah David (Kimmel, 1990), in their analysis of specific themes about which men are socialized toward violence, identify common threads: social conditioning prevails upon boys to be hyper-masculine, fiercely competitive, emotionally invulnerable and revengeful and violent.

Part III

Three types of violence: school shootings, dating violence and sexual harassment

This research shows how school shootings, dating violence and sexual harassment have gone practically unanalyzed—to the point of being virtually ignored—in most American media coverage. Yet issues concerning normalized masculinity were endemic to each of these problems, as I try to show here. Beginning with school shootings: the 13 incidents that took place between 1996 and 2002 attracted high-profile news coverage. Included in most accounts were statements made by perpetrators about victims that should have shed light on the motivations for the crimes. Yet my analysis of hundreds of reports related to these cases (television, radio, newspapers, online news sources, scholarly journals and books) reveals significant patterns that have not been identified previously.

First, there is substantial evidence that gender issues, including sexual harassment and dating violence, played a role in catalyzing the violence. Second, although the facts of such harassment were present in media

reports, analysis of the role of masculinity was completely absent. This begs the question of how the role of masculinity pressures could be so systemically ignored when reports of peer abuse prior to school shootings appeared repeatedly in the same articles that blamed gun control, media violence and other popular explanations. Invariably, these articles remained seemingly oblivious to antecedents that involved sexual harassment and dating violence. Clearly, pertinent gender issues are not being recognized.

I show here that patterns in the shootings are rooted in social conditioning that allows dating violence, sexual harassment and school shooting threats to be perceived as the by-products of normal, instead of violent, behavior. But, without recognition, these actions may escalate to increasingly devastating violence. Instead of responding to violence merely as if the perpetrators are deviants, early signs of violence must be seriously addressed rather than responded to as normal aspects of masculinity.

In the shootings, the boys' stated motives were manifestations of gender relationship stresses: rejection, jealousy/protection and frustration. Whether or not those actually were the motives—as the boys are not necessarily reliable sources—the fact that the boys consistently offered these explanations is evidence of a prevailing mentality that the behaviors they themselves blamed were triggers, even acceptable ones. The following vignettes expose these stated motives in the school shootings and show links to normalized masculinity. I summarize these incidents in the table, 'School shootings and relevant aspects of violence against girls', in the appendix. In the table, information is listed wherever it is available; boxes are left blank when no data was accessible. For greater clarity, table sources are footnoted independently of the central reference section.

Rejection

In five of the thirteen shootings, young boys targeted and shot girls who rejected them (Blank, 1998; Cloud, 1998; Popyk, 1998a, 1998b; Barboza, 2000). In Mississippi (1997), when asked why he killed his ex-girlfriend and her best friend, 16-year-old Luke Woodham answered that he was distraught over his break-up with his girlfriend. 'I wasn't aiming at anyone else,' he said (Barboza, 2000: A1). In Kentucky (1997), 14-year-old Michael Carneal's first shot killed a girl who was the object of his unrequited love (Blank, 1998). He also killed another girl who had refused a date with him one month earlier (Newman et al., 2004).

In Michigan (2000), a six-year-old boy shot and killed his six-year-old female classmate at his elementary school. Reports said the two were arguing and that the boy had been showing off (BBC News, 2000). The day before, the two had exchanged words; he said she slapped him. The next day, the boy pulled out a gun, pointed it at the girl, said: 'I don't like you', then pulled the trigger (Naughton and Evan, 2000).

In Arkansas (1998), 13-year-old Mitchell Johnson 'vowed to kill all the girls who had broken up with him'. He specifically targeted 11-year-old

Candace Porter, who had just ended their relationship (*New York Times*, 1998: A2). When she 'dumped' him, he worried about the effect the rejection would have on his reputation; he even threatened to kill another girl if she told anyone about the break-up (Newman et al., 2004). Two other girls who had refused Johnson's advances were also shot in his rampage (Newman et al., 2004). Andrew Golden, age 11, also recently had been rejected by his girlfriend, who was one of those wounded when he joined Johnson in the shooting (*New York Times*, 1998; Angel, 1999). The five people Johnson and Golden killed were female: four girls and a pregnant teacher. Of the wounded students, nine of ten were girls (Bragg, 1998; Klein and Chancer, 2000).

Students believed that 14-year-old Andrew Wurst was targeting his former girlfriend when he came to a school dance with a gun (Edinboro, Pennsylvania 1998). Three months before the shooting, she had broken up with him. When she rejected him, Wurst replied, 'Then I'll have to kill you' (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2003: 87). Still, he asked her to the dance, but she declined. Wurst also targeted a second girl who had laughed at him for inviting her to the dance (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2003: 87).

School shootings by boys who were recently rejected by girls is a new manifestation of a very common gender problem in American society. Some boys experience rejection by girls as an unbearable reversal of traditional roles (Efthim et al., 2001). If the rejected male does not have access to alternative coping strategies, or alternative masculinities, this can trigger violence and aggression in an effort to 'defend' one's investment in being perceived as having hegemonic masculinity. Thus, the killings of girls who rejected their assailants can be explained, though hardly excused, as an effort to reverse the effects of subordination the assailants sustained through rejection.

In one form of this dynamic, male batterers, or boys who perpetrate dating violence (discussed in greater depth in the next section) may feel entitled to exercise control (Carlson, 2003) and believe that peers support their right to inflict abuse (Lobel, 1986; US Department of Justice, 1999; Huss and Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2000). Theorists concur that the connection between hegemonic masculinity and such violence legitimizes it as a male response (Connell, 1995; Walklate, 1995; Kimmel, 1996; Klein and Chancer, 2000, 2006; Messerschmidt, 2000; Kimmel and Mahler, 2003). Martin Schwartz and Walter DeKeseredy (1997) write that the most important issue is the 'peer support men get to commit these sexual assaults'. They voice serious concern about the lack of literature linking 'male peer support and woman abuse' (1997: xv).

When Woodham shot and killed his ex-girlfriend, a group of approving peers egged him on. The leader of the group allegedly told Woodham to stop whining and 'just kill the bitch' so that he would not have to see her everyday in school (Egan, 1998: A21). Reveling in his ability to reinstate a dominant, acceptable masculine identity, Woodham declared: 'One second

I was some kind of heartbroken idiot, and the next second I had the power over many things' (Popyk, 1998a).

Student after student in Jonesboro, Arkansas, reported Johnson's threat to shoot former girlfriends. Twelve-year-old Colby Brooks reported Johnson's claim, 'I got a lot of killing to do' (Angel, 1999). Yet neither school officials nor parents nor other students did anything about Johnson or his accomplice's threats (Angel, 1999). By default and through a silence of complicity, Johnson and Golden's homicidal ideations against girls were ignored and possibly even nourished.

Jealousy/protection

In three other cases involving a combination of jealousy and territorial behavior, boys 'protected' their girlfriends by shooting boys who appeared to threaten the relationships (Blank, 1998; Bragg, 1998; Cloud, 1999; Hartocollis, 2002). In Tennessee (1998), 18-year-old Jacob Davis killed a boy who was dating his ex-girlfriend. In Georgia (1999), 15-year-old Thomas Solomon shot Jason Cheeks, a three-lettered 'jock' who teased Thomas relentlessly at school. Thomas believed his girlfriend had 'turned her charms on Jason' (Cloud, 1999). The student shooter in Martin Luther King Jr. High School in New York City (2002) also killed for revenge after two boys harassed his girlfriend. Investigators said the boy felt humiliated by the victims 'when he backed down from their challenge to fight after he defended his girlfriend's honor' (Baker, 2002: B1).

Research shows that males sometimes attribute their acts of violence to jealousy (Bookwala et al., 1992; Stamp and Sabourin, 1995; Holtzworth-Munroe et al., 1997; Sommers, 2000) and studies pertaining to intimate violence cite jealousy as a common motive for murder (Sommers, 2000). Vengeance also correlates significantly with greater machismo: an exaggerated sense of masculinity (Hutt et al., 1997; Sommers, 2000). This phenomenon sheds light on the three cases in which boys shot other boys who directly threatened their relationship with girls who were important to them. Normalized masculinity encourages men to dominate women, but also is associated with 'protecting' women who are perceived as 'belonging' to a particular man. Studies show (e.g. Eisler et al., 1988) that men tend to feel injured when they experience sexual inadequacy and overwhelming competition and/or threats from other men with regard to women they believe are theirs. Similarly, boys may believe they need to use violence when other boys threaten perceived proprietary rights.

'Difficulties' with girls

In three other cases, part of the boys' reported motivation was their general unhappiness over difficulties with girls. Two boys said they picked up guns because they were upset about a break-up, though they did not specifically target the girls involved (Fainaru, 1998; Associated Press, 1999). In Alaska

(1997) Evan Ramsey's girlfriend broke up with him just before the shooting, said '**** you!' and then disappeared (Fainaru, 1998: A1). Kipland Kinkel (Oregon, 1998) despaired over his unrequited infatuations with girls. Kinkel said of a girl he liked, 'Every time I talk to her, I have a small—of hope—[*sic*] then she will tear it right down' (PBS Video, 1999).

Dylan Klebold (Colorado, 1999), one of the two shooters at Columbine High School was so shy with girls that his parents paid him $250 to attend the Columbine High School Prom (Belluck and Wilgoren, 1999). Another student who considered himself one of Klebold's best friends said that Klebold had not asked a girl on a date since one turned him down in freshman or sophomore year. The other shooter, Eric Harris, asked three different girls to go with him to the prom; all rejected him (Belluck and Wilgoren, 1999).

In Georgia (1999), Thomas Solomon stated that he committed the shooting partly because he was angry that his girlfriend had broken up with him after two years (Associated Press, 1999). They had just had a serious argument the day before the shooting, one of Solomon's friends reported (Firestone, 1999).

Studies (Eisler et al., 1988; Efthim et al., 2001) have found that men are most apt to feel shame in situations involving task failure and sexual potency. Men typically report stress in situations that reflect physical inadequacy, emotional inexpressiveness, subordination to women, intellectual inferiority and failure to meet masculine standards of work and sexual adequacy. When men experience gender role stress, social role pressures can aggravate anger and hostility (Eisler et al., 1988; Efthim et al., 2001). Like teenaged boys, adult men often report extreme stress in situations that reflect subordination to women and failure to meet masculine standards of work and sexual adequacy. Research indicates that such gender role stress in men can produce anger and hostility (Eisler et al., 1988; Efthim et al., 2001) and social fears (Arrindell et al., 1993; Efthim et al., 2001). As men are encouraged to use violence to restore injured masculinity and thus equilibrium, violence then becomes a social norm.

Men who attack women typically feel powerless in other parts of their lives as well (Faludi, 2000). Social pressure is high to display such masculinity prowess and to differentiate as much as possible from femininity (Kimmel, 1996). Feeling powerless and concerned about their own 'masculine' prowess, men may be more likely to try to reclaim their masculinity by using violence against women or against other men who belittle them, like the 'jocks and preps' who the school shooters targeted along with girls (Klein and Chancer, 2000, 2006; Kimmel and Mahler, 2003). There is evidence that social acceptance of male domination and degradation of women is pervasive among youth populations (Carlson, 2003). Such beliefs are inextricably tied to male efforts to become socially acceptable. In such environments, then, men may consider it a right to use violence against women.

Boys and men who cross the line

If such norms are so widespread, one question becomes why some boys cross the line to dramatic violence like the school shootings and why some do not. Recent texts on school violence have argued that the school shooters crossed the line because of tendencies toward mental illness that are exacerbated by otherwise normal teasing and bullying (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2003; Newman et al., 2004). Newman et al. write: 'Downright vicious taunts and bullying (but also small slights and general ostracism) that other students would be able to brush off were unbearable to this group of seriously troubled youth' (2004: 269). Some boys who committed school shootings (Kentucky, 1997; Oregon, 1999) later reported that they heard voices (PBS Video, 1999; Newman et al., 2004).

Certainly, it is easier for society to categorize these boys as 'deviant' and unlike 'normal' boys. Yet overall this explanation of perpetrators as deviants fails. For one thing, the reported incidence of full-blown mental illness among the school shooters is too low. Even the National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2003) and Newman et al. (2004), two main proponents of the 'deviance' explanation both found overwhelmingly in their reports that most of the school shooters did *not* have a mental illness.

This may be, in part, the result of society's related tendency to relegate mental illness to invisible status. Donna Gaines (1998) writes that suicidal ideations are more common among teens than generally recognized; William Pollack (1998) also writes about vastly under-reported tendencies toward depression and suicide among boys. Because of the 'boy code', he writes, boys are compelled to appear tough and independent when they are sad or depressed. As a result of these pressures, they are less likely to report their internal pain on psychological studies or surveys.

There is a chicken-versus-egg aspect to the mental illness explanation as well. Research shows that vicious taunting can in itself cause serious emotional difficulties (Messerschmidt, 2000). Messerschmidt argues that 'peer abuse at school occurs much more frequently than previously thought' (2000: 143). Often, the results are emotionally traumatic—truancy, depression, anxiety, cutting, suicide, dropping out of school, and frequent fighting are other common symptoms. The fact that emotional stresses on boys go unnoticed is part and parcel of the urgent need to address the insidious consequences of normalized masculinity in schools.

The boys overwhelmingly cited stresses and motivations that fall firmly within normalized masculinity expectations. Given this evidence, the key question seems to be not about the underlying character of the perpetrators but why such triggers pushed them over the edge. I contend that the underlying gender stresses with which boys deal on a daily level have reached a dangerously high level in schools; and that these triggers would

not have pushed the school shooters over the edge if they were not so close to the edge in the first place.

Yet social workers and educators have failed to recognize the seriousness of the situation because of the lack of awareness of how normalized masculinity operates, and because of the invisibility of its effects in the form of sexual harassment and dating violence. If these manifestations were to be recognized, it would be clear just how many boys cross the line into low-level violence every day. The point is not that the perpetrators were deviants, but that masculinity social values normalize violence and peer abuse. In turn, rigid expectations of masculinity become unbearable to boys and dangerous for both boys and girls.

Ultimately, focusing only on the extreme cases misses the point that the operative causal factors are also present at other points along the continuum of dating violence, sexual harassment and everyday behavior where teasing also occurs. Indeed, pressure to practice hegemonic masculinity in the face of unrelenting social surveillance, as well as severe punishment for even minor aberrations, is an explosive formula with many devastating manifestations.

Dating violence

C.N. Carlson (2003) writes that 'Whether in dating violence or domestic violence, an abuser's desire for control and power over his victim is at the heart of the abuse.' Social reinforcements can either encourage or discourage psychological or socialized tendencies. Schwartz and DeKeseredy write that dating violence has become such a serious social problem that many have called the USA a 'rape culture' (1997: 2). Constant messages promote the sexual exploitation of women (1997: 7). They and other scholars (Lobel, 1986; US Department of Justice, 1999; Huss and Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2000) show that peer support and acceptance is a central organizing feature. 'Men who abuse women associate with other men who have the same beliefs, and who give them support for thinking in this way,' they write (Schwartz and DeKeseredy, 1997: 7). As seen later, institutional acceptance of violence against girls in the form of sexual harassment is pervasive, especially on school campuses (Schwartz and DeKeseredy, 1997: 7). For instance, for generations 'panty raids' were a tradition, whereby middle-class white men surrounded women's dormitories, demanding that each resident turn over a piece of intimate apparel. Burglary, breaking and entering and property damage were frequent by-products of these assaults, and yet administrators' responses tended toward the usual 'Oh well, boys will be boys' (Schwartz and DeKeseredy, 1997: 4). Schwartz and DeKeseredy allege that many such crimes are ignored because administrators have an economic interest in not drawing attention to what might be perceived as unpleasant activities. Reports in the *New York Times* concur with this analysis, recognizing that the vast majority of reported cases do not result in serious penalties (Bernstein, 1996).

Approximately 20 percent of homicides are considered the result of dating violence. Men who feel possessive over the women with whom they are involved are common themes. In one study, two-thirds of the homicides were planned, and many were preceded by intentionally abusive behaviors such as stalking (Hatty, 2000: 70). Even though the legal definition states that the lowest age of this phenomenon is 13, boys in school shootings targeted girls as young as 6 in the case of Michigan in 2000 and age 11 in Arkansas in 1998 (580CFRA News Talk Radio, 1998; BBC News, 2000). The 11-year-old said she broke up with the perpetrator because he was hitting her (Angel, 1999). As happens to many adult women, the violence escalated when she tried to separate. One reason dating violence is invisible is that people often believe that teenagers do not have serious relationships and thus minimize the problem (Carlson, 2003).

This, too, may have been evident in school shooting cases. No one seemed to notice the depth of anguish the boy perpetrators experienced after being rejected by girls. This lack of recognition, much less intervention, intensified their rage. William Pollack (1998) writes that part of this problem is the 'mask of masculinity'. Instead of the range of emotions available to women, boys are permitted only anger, and the means to control their other feelings with 'calm and cool' fronts. Punishment for male violations of traditional sex roles is generally harsher for boys than for girls. And lack of intimate relationships and connection, combined with pressure to suppress their emotions, can boil into an uncontrollable and lethal rage ultimately erupting in violence (Pleck, 1981; Pollack, 1998). In addition, a certain range of violence toward women and girls is considered normal. In one of Messerschmidt's interviews with a boy from an urban gang, the boy insisted that in certain circumstances aggressive acts against girls are not considered violence. 'When you keep a girl in check, that's the way it should be', the boy said, 'If she talks shit and you slap her down, that would not be violence' (2000: 59). The classic film, *Rivers' Edge*, opens with a teenager who just killed his girlfriend. He did not seek to excuse his behavior but instead to justify it: 'She was talking shit.'

Similarly, Schwartz and DeKeseredy argue that in our 'rapist culture' men are often taught to use violence to control women, and that rapists tend to believe that violent rape is a proper response to women who 'deserved to be raped' (1997: 21). They add,

> Only a male-dominated society that trains men to use women as objects, and that legitimizes violence as a tool to achieve personal goals with a callous indifference to the feelings of victimized others, could breed a large number of men who openly assault women they know, and, in fact, may even like.

> (1997: 22)

Recognizing the gravity and prevalence of violence against women in the United States, the United States Surgeon General in 1992 declared domestic violence to be this nation's number one health problem (Peterman and

Dixon, 2003). In 1998, the FBI still declared violent attacks by men to be the number one threat to the health of American women (Velte, 1998). Intimate violence escalating to homicide is part of this increasing health risk (Velte, 1998; Peterman and Dixon, 2003). Moreover, the age of female victims has steadily declined (Rennison, 2001). Acknowledging this sad reality, a series of Healthy People health status objectives, designed by the US Department of Health and Human Services for the years 2000 and 2010, targets women as young as 12 years old for education about the risk of physical abuse and assault by partners (Howard and Wang, 2003). As we have seen, the school shooting cases indicate even younger ages.

Sexual harassment against school girls

Just as dating violence often is explicitly or implicitly condoned, so is sexual harassment, a subset of dating violence (Carlson, 2003). In the 1992 poll, *Hostile Hallways*, 81 percent of students said they were targets of sexual harassment in school. More specifically, 18 percent were harassed by a school employee; 25 percent of girls and 10 percent of boys had been targeted by adults (AAUW, 1993). The pervasive incidence of sexual harassment in US schools has recently received more attention but also remains relatively invisible. In *Classrooms and Courtrooms*, Stein writes that from narratives, and surveys documenting sexual harassment in K-12 schools, such assault is repeatedly seen as 'tolerated, even expected, and allowed to flourish' and yet it persists as 'a pernicious, persistent, and public problem' (1999: 11). She documents three patterns that belie the typical portrait of girls as passive and/or encouraging of these behaviors, showing that the harassment is mostly public—there are often bystanders, students and school employees present, the victims often spoke out against the harassment and they often told school officials about the harassment— but that their stories were dismissed or trivialized (1999: 12).

Indeed, schools can become training grounds for adult domestic violence (Hills, 1984; Schwartz and DeKeseredy, 1997; Stein, 1999). Hills (1984) found that fraternity members, football players and other elite students are virtually encouraged to flout the law. As a result of this privileging, only five percent of victims tend to report crime, since the campus social order virtually guarantees that their claims will not be considered fairly. The tenacity of 'interventions' blaming the victim has also caused many females to resist naming sexual harassment as a problem, thus making it that much more invisible. Social institutions that deny the reality of sexual harassment reinforce these views; they, and the resulting lack of female responses to abusive behavior, become part of the problem.

When the author worked as a school counselor in a New York City public school in 1989, she accompanied a group of girls to a meeting with the Assistant Principal to try to implement a sexual harassment policy in the school. The administrator rejected the policy suggestions and dramatically stared at the girls: 'Is this leering?' he asked. 'Should this be

prohibited?' The girls met this kind of mockery repeatedly in their efforts to obtain faculty protection against escalating harassment. This has continued to be the author's experience when discussing these issues, and an indication that change may not be imminent.

In February 1992, a 9–0 landmark decision in the US Supreme Court in the *Franklin v. Gwinnett County Public Schools* case brought attention to the problem of sexual harassment in K-12 schools. Just six years later, however, in another Supreme Court case, *Gebser v. Lago Vista Independent School District*, the school district was not held liable for sex discrimination because the authorities were said not to have had 'actual knowledge of the sexual relationship between a minor female student and a male teacher' (Stein, 1999: 1). Many school harassment complaints continue to be thrown out of lower courts. The US Supreme Court did not take decisive action until 1999, affirming in *Aurelia Davis v. Monroe County Board of Education* that school districts may be held liable if school employees are deliberately indifferent to complaints of peer-to-peer sexual harassment (Quesada, 1998). This took so long because school harassment did not gain attention until well after sexual harassment among adults reached public consciousness in the *Anita Hill v. Clarence Thomas* hearings in 1989 (Quesada, 1998; Ranney, 2000; Orenstein, 2002).

Eighteen percent of students who experience school harassment report that their harasser was a school employee, such as a teacher, bus driver or counselor. Student-to-student sexual harassment is four times more common (Quesada, 1998). In one school shooting case, Carneal called Nicole Hadley nightly before he finally shot her. Her mother confirmed that Carneal 'was in love with my daughter Nicole, and Nicole had no interest in him' (Blank, 1998). Similarly to the broader category of dating violence, such harassment continues to go unrecognized, with devastating ramifications. Boys who make persistent efforts to go out with girls who say 'no', and/or who make sexual comments at girls, leer, touch or otherwise handle them are often considered normal male adolescents. Social assumptions implying that 'girls say no, when they mean yes' undermine girls' requests for the behavior to stop.

Furthermore, many girls who ask adults to intervene find that the adults refuse to take the behavior seriously (Carlson, 2003). Porter ended her relationship with Johnson after three days, telling him, 'Boys don't hit girls' (Angel, 1999). Her cousin said: 'Candace had sought out her teachers, telling them that Mitchell seemed upset and violent. She was really worried. . . but I don't think the school took any notice of it' (Angel, 1999). Again, no one took her concerns seriously. Golden, Johnson's accomplice, had also been engaged in harassment; he was known to 'hit little girls on the arms' and intimidate them by walking around with a knife strapped to his side (Newman et al., 2004).

Sexual harassment is so common in many upper-middle to upper-class rural and suburban schools that boys are often teased if they *do not* engage in this abusive behavior. For instance, at Kentucky's Heath High School,

football players teased girls in front of teachers with no consequences. They often made lewd remarks about the girls' bodies. Carneal, the 14-year-old shooter, was called 'gay', because he would not 'be mean to the girls' (Newman et al., 2004: 146). He compensated by killing three of them.

Adler et al. (1992) explain a form of this phenomenon as savoir-faire, or sophistication in interpersonal skills, which many boys use to become more popular by learning to appear socially sophisticated while simultaneously acting manipulative, domineering and controlling. They use these skills in cross-gender relations, as also played out in extreme form in the suburban Glen Ridge, New Jersey High School, where 13 boys gang-raped a girl who was considered retarded. As documented by Bernard Lefkowitz, the jocks gained social status partly by seducing and demeaning girls, bragging to other boys and passing girls along. Girls who were available were called 'animals'; and a girl who gave oral sex to a group of guys one after the other was nicknamed 'Seal'. 'Like a trained seal in the circus', one girl explained, 'doing whatever they commanded' (1997: 142). Boys who were both able to get attention from girls and also to dominate them directly improved their social status in the competitive school masculinity hierarchy.

Hatty agrees that such violence becomes a means of bonding for many boys: 'For some, violence enacted in company is the social glue that knits together the community of young males' (2000: 68). This form of bonding is considered an important part of male rites of passage; communities often absolve boys who commit sexual assault crimes, and summarily turn on the victims. In another high-profile case, Leigh, an 18-year-old girl was raped and killed by a boy who had invited other boys to take part in the rape. The community balked at cooperating to bring justice; the girl's mother said she had to leave town due to harassment as she tried to piece together the story of her daughter's rape and murder. 'It indicates the extent to which men's violence against women, including that committed by young, suburban males living at home and attending school is normative: an everyday occurrence', writes Hatty (2000: 69).

In the next section, I propose prevention strategies to effectively address violence against females, whether in the form of dating violence, sexual harassment or extreme manifestations in school shootings.

Part IV

Transforming ideology

The ideology of normalized masculinity is an important cause of violence against girls. Males who believe violence to be both their right and a means of demonstrating their manhood use it partly to foster their gender identity in their own and others' eyes. Prevention strategies therefore need to help transform beliefs about gender roles. The social construction of masculinity—that is, how men come to view themselves as Male—is

founded on the same dominant contemporary gender ideologies that have motivated some of the worst violence in history. When such thought systems are made visible, change becomes more likely, leading to the social equivalent of individual psychoanalytic insights. Contemporary social problems can be viewed as symptoms of destructive social ideologies, magnifying the problems in a given system of thought. For instance, an accepted ideology of masculinity falsely linked to biological origins tends to exonerate otherwise abusive behavior through the 'boys will be boys' refrain. To protect a socially defined Male identity, men often feel compelled to violently defend themselves against charges that they are exhibiting 'feminine' or 'homosexual' qualities and/or in defense of territorial claims to specific girls with whom they may feel attached.

Gatens in Hatty (2000) writes aptly, 'The spectacular cruelty of such crimes only serves to mask the underlying banality of a largely unchallenged structural cruelty in many of our social relations' (2000: 208). Instead, we need to look at what West (1997) calls the 'morality of care' to address what Kindlon and Thompson (1999) call the 'culture of cruelty', cautioning that everyday school and family expectations dangerously tutor a boy away from trust, empathy and relationship (Messerschmidt, 2000). Exposing the link between an ideology of masculinity and violence can help break this connection and ameliorate such recurring patterns of violence.

High-risk subcultures

Individual, aggregate and cross-cultural data reveal that the greater the degree of inequality between men and women in a relationship, community or society, the higher the rates of violence toward women (Gelles, 1998; Rennison, 2001). Among many studies, authors show that hypermasculinity-focused environments, for instance fraternities and male sports teams (especially football), tend to breed inequalities leading to violence against girls (Davis, 2000; Hong, 2000; Scully, 2001). In such communities, violence against girls in schools is considered a common ritual like bullying or hazing—whereby different forms of assault and humiliation are often imposed upon new members of an athletic team or against students who are different, young or new (Stein, 1999). Students considered gay, lesbian or otherwise 'feminine' are often targets (Klein and Chancer, 2000).

The problem is further complicated when it is argued that boys are 'naturally' aggressive. Boys who perpetrate harassment are often cast as 'sufferers of hormones run amok or as playful creatures engaging in harmless fun that is misunderstood by adults and by girls, while the victims are portrayed as "frail and whiney"' (Stein, 1999: 5). A high-profile case in Santa Clara, California—*Krengel v. Santa Clara Unified School District* (1977)—exposed this trend. The Teddie Bears was a 20-year tradition at Santa Clara High School where an all-female sports club attended varsity football games and compiled statistics for the players. When the girls

alleged sexual harassment, verbal insults and assault by the football players, the football coach, the vice principal, the principal, the super-intendent and the school board, all ignored them. The young women resigned in protest, yet still the football players were largely not disciplined (Stein, 1999: 33). This case, and many others like it, highlights how male athletes are privileged—allowed and/or encouraged to use violence against girls as a part of everyday life (Benedict, 1997; Lefkowtiz, 1997; Schwartz and DeKeseredy, 1997; Stein, 1999).

New programs, then, should target the areas that tend to produce harassment and assault toward girls and 'feminine' boys. Violence prevention initiatives are indeed beginning to target high-risk subcultures: fraternities, athletic teams and other all-male environments. Studies have consistently found that members of fraternities correlate with higher levels of participation in sexual coercion (Frinter and Rubinson, 1993; Boeringer, 1996; Lefkowitz, 1997). Studies also show that male college athletes are disproportionately perpetrators of battering and sexual assault (Crosset et al., 1996). These studies reveal that such all-male communities tend to advocate hyper-masculinity norms and expectations, and a pervasive perception of girls as objects. Therefore, interventions are increasingly directed at these organizations, but masculinities still remain largely unscrutinized. Thus, it is necessary not only to target these high-risk cultures, but also to address underlying normalized masculinity issues.

As Messerschmidt (2000) writes, the difference between tendencies toward violence and non-violence among boys is inextricably tied to the teaching of masculinities. When boys had even one strong social force advocating non-violence as part and parcel of demonstrating masculinity, the boys did not commit violence. When all the social institutions in the boys' lives preached violence as a means of demonstrating masculinity, the 'predisposition' toward violence increased. We must, then, challenge the normative values of our society. Seeing the problem purely as deviance or mental illness, as many writers do (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2003; Brooks, 2004; Cullen, 2004; Newman et al., 2004), may further mask the masculinities ideology underlying these crimes.

Prevention

Young people, parents, educators and social workers need to reappraise their beliefs about gender roles and the role of violence in gender identity and sexuality. Schools have a unique opportunity—even a responsibility—to address the issue of dating violence, sexual harassment and school shootings, and beliefs linking masculinity with violence. Schools force contact between young people, some of them dangerous, in a way that most environments do not (Carlson, 2003). We now understand how normal, everyday dynamics based on typical gender role expectations can

incite violence, which may become worse or even fatal without inter-
vention. When school officials, parents or other adult authorities do not
intervene appropriately, girls may resist reporting these crimes; further-
more, these dynamics can result in victimized girls blaming themselves for
what happens to them. When adults do not support girls in these situations,
and worse, often imply that it is the victim's fault—they inadvertently
participate in the crimes. If students must go to school where such violence
is imminent, and adults fail to intervene, the schools become complicit.

Peer violence against teenage girls, then, needs to be addressed on two
fronts. First, prevention strategies in school programs must be implemented
widely and targeted effectively. Second, these programs need to help break
the link between normalized masculinity expectations and violence. Typical
violence prevention programs tend to focus on anger management tech-
niques and education regarding the consequences of violent behavior.
Conflict resolution and mediation programs teach communication skills
and alternative ways of managing conflict. Such programs are often
effective in preventing violence, and in some cases halt escalation, but they
are limited in their ability to change deep-rooted social behaviors and
attitudes linking masculinity and violence. School-wide programs and
curricula need to help boys express themselves without relying on domina-
tion, power, aggression or violence.

Sibylle Artz and Ted Riecken began such a successful gender sensitive
violence prevention program in 1995 called The Youth Violence Prevention
Project involving students, families, educators and community members.
They stressed that the differences between how boys and girls view violence
are rooted in cultural and social influences rather than physiology. Conse-
quently, gender-neutral violence prevention programs could actually per-
petuate violence rather than decrease it, according to Artz and Riecken.
Boys, conditioned to connect violence with masculinity, need programs that
help them directly deconstruct this relationship. Otherwise, anti-violence
messages pale in comparison to the deeper and more socially pervasive
conditioning which encourages boys to use violence to demonstrate man-
hood (Artz and Riecken, 1997; Artz, 1998; University of Victoria, 1999;
Artz et al., 2000).

What is essential, finally, is a transformation of cultural consciousness
such that violence and revenge fueled by masculinity expectations are not
an acceptable social response. Then, too, peace needs to be valued more
than conflict, and masculinity and femininity need to be seen not as
diametrically opposed gender identities but along a wider continuum of
attitudes and behaviors. Programs need to address and transform these
deeply embedded social ideologies and help boys feel powerful and con-
fident through more civilized behaviors and attitudes.

It is not surprising that the underlying causes of dating violence and
sexual harassment are similar. Nor is the fact that this pattern appears in a
significant portion of the school shootings, an all-too-common fatal end to
some forms of intimate violence. What is shocking is the relative inatten-

tion paid to these patterns, and the overlooking of gender biases as an explanatory factor in school shootings, dating violence and sexual harassment alike. Yet, rendering the problem of everyday violence against girls visible can prevent future tragedies. Whether or not such aggression is 'natural' or socialized, the variable most clearly available for transformation is cultural. Society can encourage violent performances by men or, alternately, nurture in men more egalitarian and caring attitudes. Unfortunately, most social structures today embolden rather than dissuade aggressive 'masculine' behavior. Whether the origin of such behavior is nature or nurture, we have a responsibility to encourage more peaceful and cooperative attitudes from men and women and to counter historical acquiescence to male violence.

Appendix: School shootings and relevant aspects of violence against girls

Date	Location	Name	Age	Killed	Injured	Relationship with girls
2 February 1996	Moses Lake, Washington	Barry Loukatais	14	S: 2M Teacher: 1	S: 1F	
19 February 1997	Bethel, Alaska	Evan Ramsey	16	S: 1 Principal: 1	S: 2	Girlfriend broke up with him[a]
1 October 1997	Pearl, Mississippi	Luke Woodham	16	S: 2F Mother: 1	S: 7	Killed former girlfriend, Christina Menefee, and killed her best friend[b]
1 December 1997	W. Paducah, Kentucky	Michael Carneal	14	S: 3F	S: 5	Killed a girl who rejected him[c] and a second girl who wouldn't go out with him[d]
24 March 1998	Jonesboro, Arkansas	Mitchell Johnson and Andrew Golden	13 and 11	S: 4F Teacher: 1F/pregnant; 14 of 15 victims F	S: 10/9F and 1M Teacher: 1	Johnson shot ex-girlfriend, vowed to kill all girls who broke up with him,[e] threatened to kill others for speaking of break-up; shot 2 other girls who refused advances;[f] 11-year old Golden killed ex-girlfriend[g]
24 April 1998	Edinboro, Pennsylvania	Andrew Wurst	14	Teacher: 1M Popular science teacher	S: 2 Teacher: 1	Targeted ex-girlfriend whom he threatened when she broke up with him: 'Then I'll have to kill you.' Also targeted girl who laughed at him for inviting her to a dance[h]
19 May 1998	Fayetteville, Tennessee	Jacob Davis	18	S: 1M		Victim dating ex-girlfriend[i]
21 May 1998	Springfield, Oregon	Kipland Kinkel	15	S: 2M Parents: 2	S: 22	Reported considerable disturbance over rejection by girl he 'loved' before crime[j]
20 April 1999	Littleton, Colorado	Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold	17 and 18	S: 12/8F–4M Teacher: 1M Self: 2	S: 23	Both boys complained about relentless rejection by girls[k]

Date	Location	Name	Age			Notes
20 May 1999	Conyers, Georgia	Thomas Solomon	15	0	S: 6	Harassed by other students; girlfriend 'turned charms on' the jock who teased him and whom subject shot twice; depressed after break-up with girlfriend[l]
29 February 2000	Mt Morris Township, Michigan	Under age; no name available	6	S: 1F		Fight with girl[m]
5 March 2001	Santee, California	Charles Andrew Williams	15	S: 2M	S: 13	
15 January 2002	New York, New York	Vincent Rodriguez	17	0	S: 2M	'Wanted revenge on two boys who had harassed his girlfriend'; humiliated by the victims when he backed down from their challenge to fight for girl's honor[n]

Key: S = Student; M = Male; F = Female

Notes:

[a] Fainaru, Steve (1998) 'Cry for Help Went Unheeded', *Boston Globe* 8 November: A1.

[b] Popyk, Lisa (1998) 'I Knew It Wouldn't Be Right', *Cincinnati Post*. Online, 9 November.

[c] Blank, J. (1998) 'The Kid No One Noticed, Guns Would Get His Classmates' Attention', *US News and World Report*. Online, 12 October.

[d] Newman, K.S., C. Fox, D. Harding, J. Mehta and W. Roth (2004) *Rampage: The Social Roots of School Shootings*. New York: Basic Books.

[e] 580CFRA News Talk Radio (1998) 'Accused Teen Sniper's Girl Dumped Him Because He Was "Trouble"', 580CFRA News Talk Radio 29 March.

[f] Newman, K.S., C. Fox, D. Harding, J. Mehta and W. Roth (2004) *Rampage: The Social Roots of School Shootings*. New York: Basic Books.

[g] Angel, M. (1999) 'Symposium: Abusive Boys Kill Girls Just Like Abusive Men Kill Women: Explaining the Obvious', *Temple Political and Civil Rights Law Review* Spring: 283.

[h] National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2003) *Deadly Lessons: Understanding Lethal School Violence. Case Studies of School Violence Committee*, Mark H. Moore, Carol V. Petrie, Anthony A. Braga and Brenda L. McLaughlin, editors. Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, p. 87.

[i] Yellin, Emily (1998) 'Out of Violence, a Survivor and a Scholar', *New York Times* 2 June: A18.

[j] PBS Video (1999) *Frontline: The Killer at Thurston High*. Videotape—Public Television Videocassette Service. 1993–1999. WGBH Educational Foundation.

[k] Belluck, P. and J. Wilgoren (1999) 'Caring Parents, No Answers in Columbine Killers' Pasts', *New York Times* 29 June: A1; Olinger, D. and M. Robinson (1999) 'School Attack Probe Widens, Focus Falls on 3 Associates of Killers', *Denver Post* 12 May: B01.

[l] Associated Press (1999) 'Profile of Georgia School Gunman', 21 May; Cloud, J. (1999) 'Just a Routine School Shooting', *Time*. Online, 23 May.

[m] BBC News (2000) 'Schoolgirl, Six, Shot Dead by Classmates', BBC News. Online, 1 March.

[n] Baker, A. (2002) 'Police Arrest School Suspect and Detail Security Breach', *New York Times* (Late Edition—Final) 19 January: B1.

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