Why College Men Drink: Alcohol, Adventure, and the Paradox of Masculinity

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And you drink this burning liquor like your life
Your life which you drink like an eas-de-vie.

Apollinaire

Though terror speaks to life and death and distress
makes of the world a vale of tears, yet shame
strikes deepest into the heart of man.

Tomkins

Given the magnitude of the negative consequences of some college men’s drinking—for themselves and for those around them—on campuses across the nation, college health professionals and alcohol prevention educators might well wonder: “Why do college men drink?” Because most college men drink in unproblematic ways and only to be sociable, those men who drink in a way that is likely to be harmful to themselves or others are actually the central focus of this article—that is, those men “for whom drinking has become a central activity in their way of life.”

Writing from a men’s health studies perspective, I articulate what is necessarily only a tentative answer to the question of men’s problem drinking by offering a model for conceptualizing the complex connections between college men and alcohol. Men’s health studies, a subfield of men’s studies, describes and analyzes men’s experience of health, injury, morbidity, and mortality in the context of masculinity. I also suggest an answer to the companion question that immediately presents itself to us: “What can we do about it?”

Part 1 of this article discusses the connections between alcohol, men, and masculinity generally; Part 2, the cultural and developmental aspects of men in a college setting; and Part 3, conceptual and programmatic responses to the men’s problem drinking.

In general, I conclude that when college men drink, they are simply being men in college; that is the best context for understanding why they drink. I further conclude, in what is perhaps my central insight in this article, that college men’s drinking appears to be profoundly paradoxical in a way that seems to replicate a larger paradox of masculinity itself: that men’s alcohol use is related to both men’s power and men’s powerlessness. Stated most succinctly, my interpretation of a variety of evidence suggests that many college men may be drinking not only to enact male privilege but also to help them negotiate the emotional hazards of being a man in the contemporary American college.

ALCOHOL AND MASCULINITY
Drinking as a Male Domain

If we want to understand why college men drink, then we might embed drinking and college in masculinity and ask in what ways each might be seen as a specific male experience. When we look for connections between drinking, men, and masculinity, we observe that the most prominent feature on the social landscape of drinking is that drinking is a “male domain.” By male domain, I suggest that drinking is male dominated, male identified, and male centered. Men outnumber women in virtually every category of drinking behavior used in research for comparison—prevalence, consumption, frequency of drinking and intoxication, incidence of heavy and problem drinking, alcohol abuse and dependence, and alcoholism. Although most college men and women say they drink to be sociable, men are
more likely than women to say they drink for escapist or to
to get drunk.\textsuperscript{40,125}

These findings hold true for the categories of age, ethnicity, geographic region, religion, education, income, and marital status.\textsuperscript{7} Although there has been some speculation that changing gender roles may be narrowing the gap between women and men vis-à-vis alcohol, discussed by scholars as the \textit{convergence hypothesis}, research tends to reject that proposition.\textsuperscript{5}

In a classic and often-cited article, Lemle and Miskind\textsuperscript{9} asked, "Why should it be that males drink and abuse alco-
hol in such magnitude and in such marked contrast to females?" Citing empirical research that placed men mostly in the company of other men in the life course of their drinking, they suggested that drinking was a symbol of masculinity and speculated that men may drink to be
manly.\textsuperscript{9,215} They found little or no empirical evidence to
support many of the theoretical possibilities they discussed, particularly for any theories concerned with men's abusive drinking, yet they remained intrigued with the idea that men were affirming their manliness by drinking.

More recently, McCraey et al\textsuperscript{10} ask what \textit{specific} aspects of the male gender role correlate with alcohol involvement. In addition to the personality traits of instrumentality and expressiveness, they explore the traits of traditional male-role attitudes and masculine gender-role stress. For their research, traditional male role attitudes represent a "series of beliefs and assumptions that men should be in high-status positions in society, act in physically and emotionally toughened ways, and avoid anything stereotypically femi-
nine." \textit{Masculine gender-role stress} is a term used to describe the stress resulting from a man's belief that he is unable to meet society's demands of what is expected from men or the male role or from having to respond to a situation in a feminine-typed manner.\textsuperscript{10,30}\textsuperscript{11,11-121}

McCraey et al\textsuperscript{10} identify traditional male-role attitudes as the \textit{one} aspect of the male gender role they studied that predicts alcohol \textit{use} among men. Alcohol use itself correlates with alcohol problems. However, masculine gender-role stress, while statistically unrelated to alcohol \textit{use}, does predict alcohol \textit{problems} for men. (p121) In short, this study suggests that, from the point of view of masculinity or culture of manhood as a factor among many others, men \textit{qua} men might arrive at alcohol problems by two routes: one route starts at traditional male-role attitudes, passes through alcohol use, and ends in alcohol problems; another route starts at masculine gender-role stress and ends directly in alcohol problems.

\textbf{Variations on a Theme: Strain and Conflict, Shame and Fear, Depression, and the Paradox of Masculinity}

The Paradox of Masculinity

Traditional male-role attitudes and masculine gender-role stress are actually not very far apart; in some aspects, they are correlated.\textsuperscript{10,13} Their correlation reveals the \textit{contradictory nature} of masculinity.\textsuperscript{14} Reflecting upon the contradicto-

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In Pleck's role-strain paradigm, social approval and situational adaptation replace innate psychological need as the social and psychological mechanisms by which men achieve manhood. Violating gender roles (norms and stereotypes) results in social condemnation, a negative consequence experienced as sex-role strain and anxiety, a negative psychological consequence. (p145,146) At least one study has connected role conflict and alcohol use. Blazina and Watkins found that masculine gender-role conflict, in particular the factor cluster of "success, power, and competition," were significantly related to college men's reported use of alcohol.

Shame and Fear

Krugman, reflecting on Pleck's foundational work on gender-role strain, characterizes male-role strain, with its grounding in feelings of inadequacy and inferiority, as a shame-based experience. "Role strain generates shame affect as males fail to live up to the cultural and peer group standards they have internalized." (p95) The essence of shame for Krugman is "painful self-awareness" or "a judgment against the self." (p99) He advises that shame is active in both male gender-role strain and normal male socialization.

Recent research suggests that normative male socialization employs shame to shape boys' and men's behaviors and attitudes. In common and nonpathological forms, shame becomes integrated into the self and transformed into a cue that tells us when to modify our behaviors and feelings in response to shame's messages about their appropriateness. But although shame may be the powerful force to enforce boys' and men's conformity to the male role, men are less likely than women to transform shame because they find shame to be repugnant to their masculinity. Consequently, for Krugman, boys and men internalize male gender roles to avoid shame; but they also learn that dependency needs, for example, are shameful, especially under the gaze of their peer group.

Shame is related to fear. Shame can magnify fear by linking similar episodes of fear into what Tomkins refers to as a family of episodes, creating a behavioral template in which fear can be anticipated and become more pervasive. In adversarial cultures, I would include our own society generally in that category, fear and shame are conjoined, resulting in the mutually reinforcing "fear of shame" and "shame of fear." Kimmel places fear and shame at the very center of the social construction of men's identity. For him, men "fear that other men will mask us, emasculate us, reveal to us and the world that we do not measure up, that we are not real men. Fear makes us ashamed." (p131) To avoid shame, Kimmel writes, men distance themselves from the feminine and all associations with it, including mothers, the world of feelings, nurturing, intimacy, and vulnerability.

Without the transformation of shame, men learn to manage shame in other ways. Alcohol is one of the significant ways men manage shame: drinking is a "maladaptive male solution to the pressure of undischarged shame." Speaking metaphorically, Krugman observes that alcohol "dissolves acute shame" (p94). Referring to Lansky's study of shame in families, Krugman reports that alcohol, as a disinhibitor, is used by some men "to handle vulnerable and exposed states that generate shameful feelings." Krugman, citing M. Horowitz, advises that alcohol "softens ego criticism" and "facilitates interpersonal connections and self-disclosures." (p20) Drinking may also reduce fear. It seems to me that shame may also be the mechanism that leads men directly to alcohol, which is used to instill conformity to the dictates of traditional masculinity that encourage men to drink.

Depression

In addition to anxiety and shame, male gender-role strain and conflict make themselves known in the lives of men in depression. Depression is significantly related to all four aspects of gender-role conflict: (a) success, power, and competition; (b) restrictive emotionality; (c) restrictive affectionate behavior between men; and (d) conflicts between work and family relations.23 Traditional masculinity insidiously puts men at risk for depression and also masks the depression, should it actually develop.

Whereas Kaufman uses a discourse of power to explain men's unacknowledged emotions, Lynch and Kilmartin offer an alternative approach to the pitfalls of masculinity drawn from the point of view of social relations. Men's socialization encourages them to disconnect, or dissociate, from their feelings. An emotionally restrictive masculinity permits men to show their feelings only "in disguised form," and so they become "mostly unrecognized, unexpressed, and misunderstood by self and others." (p45) Men, instead, express their feelings in indirect ways, often through behavior that is destructive to themselves or others. Dissociation from feelings and destructive behavior are the two major characteristics of what Lynch and Kilmartin refer to as "masculine depression."

Heavy drinking, or binge drinking, is one of the ways some depressed men may act out, or manifest, their depression.4 Lynch and Kilmartin cite research indicating that depression is a strong risk factor for substance abuse problems. Krugman notes a study showing strong correlations between alcohol abuse and major depression, especially among men. Although they do not cite empirical evidence for it, Blazina and Watkins speculate that traditional men may "self-medicate their pain and depression with alcohol." (p461) Although research findings suggest only a possible correlation between alcohol use or abuse and depression, perhaps alcohol use or abuse may actually precede depression. Alcohol and depression are certainly connected in the lives of some men.

Alcohol and the Paradox of Men's Power

Men in our society are supposed to be powerful. According to the empirical findings of McClelland et al. when men are not powerful, they may often compensate for...
their lack of power or seek an "alternative to obtaining social power" with alcohol. Stated most dramatically by McClelland, drinking is "part of a cluster of actions which is a principal manifestation of the need for power." (p119) For this research, feeling powerful means "feeling that one is vigorous and can [have] an impact on others." (p84) But men's power motivation can be personalized (i.e., for "the greater glory or influence of the individual") or socialized for "the good of others." (p137)

According to McClelland, a few drinks will stimulate socialized power thoughts for most men, and that is one of the reasons they like to drink. Higher levels of drinking tend to decrease inhibitions and stimulate personalized power thoughts. Heavy drinking in men is uniquely associated with personalized power. McClelland says. Heavy drinking makes men feel strong and assertive and, I would argue, the way they are supposed to feel.

Drinking may be related to men's power in a more profound and paradoxical way. In the aggregate, the connection between some men and heavy or problem drinking appears to be of two sorts: (a) that which follows from simple, apparently uncomplicated, conformity to traditional masculinity—drinking simply because men are supposed to drink; and (b) that which is informed by complex, perceived inadequacy as men, either from men's own point of view, or from that of society. If they do not feel inadequate, then at least they experience a kind of doubt, or a sense of falling short of the cultural ideal of manhood—drinking because of gender-role conflicts.

This distinction may be, after all, only a conceptual, or theoretical, distinction; in practice, the two sorts of connection co-occur. I wonder if traditional masculinity does not contain within it, socially constructed over time in the course of men's history, the use of alcohol to accommodate gender-role conflict. Given the way traditional masculinity has been constructed, is not gender-role conflict of the sort described by Pleck and O'Neil and documented in the lives of the men studied by Tomkovich, Krugman, Lynch, and Kilmartin, Real, and Kimmel inherent in most men's lives? Have not men as historical agents, therefore, made provision for taking care of their own? If so, traditional masculine drinking would encompass conflicted drinking; certainly, in the culture of manhood, it does.

If heavy and problem drinking is associated with conformity, overconformity, or conflicted or strained resistance to the imperatives of traditional masculinity, why should this be the case? It would appear that drinking is a kind of fatal fault defense mechanism, or compensatory behavior. It protects men's objective power as a group, even as it reveals men's subjective powerlessness as individuals and results in a diminution of men's power, particularly through the loss of control of emotions, health, and a variety of other negative consequences.

If this is the case, then drinking would have much in common with other documented psychological defense mechanisms that correlate with male gender-role conflict. And gender-role conflict, following from either conformity or nonconformity, might itself be seen as a defense mechanism that "protects a man's sense of well-being."29 25 Like men's silence, men's drinking turns out to be in the interest of men's power, even as it disempowers individual men. And alcohol, in my view, is the paradoxical drug that is a part of the larger whole, a trope, of a paradoxical masculinity, of a paradox of masculinity. Drinking thus falls into a line of masculine icons, including body building, sexual assault, and pornography, that reveal the paradoxical nature of masculinity itself. As I review those icons, it strikes me that at those times men appear most powerful socially, they feel most powerless personally.

COLLEGE AND MASCULINITY

College Drinking

What happens when we look at college men? College students, mostly men, are among the heavy drinkers in Rorbaugh's history of drinking in early American society. Contemporary college men drink more than they did in high school and more heavily than their masculine counterparts, and the gap is widening. Men have been the primary public purveyors of alcohol to the college campus. All of the differences in drinking behavior for men and women generally hold true for college men and women.

Given today's college students' preference for alcohol, one could not really imagine most colleges void of alcohol. However, given the great variety of colleges and universities, the diversity of today's student populations, and the sweeping nature of the concerns I express in this article, most of what follows must necessarily speak primarily to an ideal type, represented for me by the relatively small, residential liberal arts college, occupied by a mostly traditionally aged student population. In the following pages, I shall discuss critical aspects of college that seem to define college men's experience and help explain much of the presence of alcohol on college campuses: adventure, adult development, and permissiveness.

College as Adventure

Green conceptualizes adventure as a domain of transgression. For Green, adventure takes shape around the themes of "eros" and "potestas"—love and power. Following Bataille, Green asks us to think about civil society "as based on the purposes and values of work, which means the denial of all activities hostile to work, such as both the ecstatics of eroticism and those of violence." Adventure lies in the conceptual space where heroes, "men acting with power," break free of ordinary restraints and "sample the repressed pleasures of sex and violence."
Although Green\(^\text{41}\) makes no reference to drinking in his essays on adventure, we can easily recognize that the terrain of adventure is the same terrain as that of alcohol: "a boy's first drink, first prolonged drinking experience, and first intoxication tend to occur with other boys away from home."\(^\text{26}\) Sports and the military are contexts for both adventure and drinking. Drinking games "are an important factor in the socialization of new students into heavy use," particularly for men.\(^\text{28p}05\) Drinking, in general, can be an adventure, insofar as it takes men through a "breach" of the social contract and into the realms of violence, sex, and other adventure motifs.

In what way might college be conceptualized as an adventure? College is not literally, or predominantly, a scene of eros and potestas. It is, however, a time and place of an imaginative assertion of manhood outside of civil society, away from home and family, where a kind of heroism is possible. By analogy, we can observe that student life in 19th-century American colleges developed outside of the civil society represented by the faculty and administration in what I would regard as the realm of adventure. Horowitz\(^23\) argues that what we think of as student life was actually "born in revolt" (p23) against the faculty and administration. It is a "world made by the undergraduates," she says. (p3)

Levine and Cureton\(^26\) find that colleges today are occupied by a transitional generation that reflects the changing demographics of contemporary American society. Horowitz's history, however, employs a simple tripartite typology of college students that is still largely applicable as a model for understanding students on many campuses in more recent times. That typology deeply resonates with my own many years of experience in student affairs: (a) college men—affluent men in revolt against the faculty and administration who created campus life as "the culture of the college man" (p32); (b) outsiders—hardworking men who identify with the faculty (p14); and (c) rebels—creative, modernist, and expressive men who conform neither to campus life nor to the faculty (p15). Horowitz\(^3\) observes that these three student types were distinctly male when they first made their appearance, but their female counterparts eventually found their place alongside the men.

Nuwer\(^26\) argues that there are historical links between traditional male undergraduate life and danger, a key adventure motif. Social interactions initiating students into various campus communities have continuously subjected college men to high risk. Acceptance by their peers is granted in exchange for successfully undertaking the risk involved. A variety of college rituals and traditions often mix danger and alcohol.\(^44\) Alcohol, itself, is associated with risk in men's lives.\(^3\) Seen this way, college and campus life become an adventure-scape, where young men (college men) imagine their manhood in a developmental moment that is socially dominated by alcohol.

Green\(^41\) identifies a number of arenas or institutions of adventure: manhood before marriage, hunting, battle, travel, sports, and politics, to name a few. Although there may be feminine variants, Green links adventure to masculinity because society gives men the freedom to "apply force to the world to assert power and identity." Adventure is an act of assertion by which men "imagine themselves" in "a breach of the social contract." (p19)

**College as a Male Developmental Moment**

Beyond seeing the sociology of college and student life organized as adventure, we must also consider the role of individual developmental psychology in the college environment. Paradoxically, just at the moment the great adventure begins, college men feel the most vulnerable. Rotundo\(^45\) observes that in the 19th century, "male youth culture" made its appearance in men's development as the vehicle for the transition from boyhood to manhood. Boys' principal developmental task was disengagement from home, which created conflict between the imperatives of worldly ambition and young men's psychological needs for attachment. Young men of Rotundo's period gathered in business districts and colleges. Wherever they gathered, a "special culture" developed to support them in a time of need. (pp56–62)

Lyman\(^46\) carries us forward from Rotundo's\(^47\) historical analysis to the present. In his essay on male bonding in fraternities, he locates college as a developmental time and place between the authority of home and family (in the high school years), and that of work and family (after graduation). He identifies college men's anger, their "latent anger about the discipline that middle-class male roles impose upon them, both marriage rules and work rules." (p157)

Their great fear is loss of control and powerlessness. Lyman concludes that joking relationships (banter, sexual humor, etc.) among men allow a needed connection without being self-disclosive or emotionally intimate, that is, with little vulnerability. Recent research on 1st-year college men has characterized their transition to college as often involving separation anxiety and loss, followed by grieving. Among the significant responses that may manifest some college men's grief, we find self-destructive behaviors, including alcohol use.\(^47\)

Shame theory advises that to avoid shame, boys need to distance themselves from their mothers because of the "considerable discomfort with dependency needs at the level of the peer group."\(^32\) College men in groups, such as Lyman's fraternity men, perceive homosexuality and intimate emotional relationships with women to be a threat to their homosocial world. Thus, men are encouraged to treat women as sexual objects, which confirms their heterosexuality, but prevents true intimacy with women.

Alcohol plays a role in men's emotional management under these conditions. Drinking remains a "socially acceptable way for men to satisfy their dependency needs while they maintain a social image of independence."\(^34\) Even as it masks those needs. For example, recent research on drinking games suggests they are actually an environmental context for drinking where a variety of students' social and psychological needs come into play.\(^49\) When men
(and women) give reasons for playing drinking games, they are likely to be “tapping into more general motives for drinking” (p.286). Alcohol may be an effective way to cope in the short term, but it is ultimately “self-destructive.”

For Nuwer, as true for Horowitz, fraternities are the quintessential emblems of traditional college life. They provide a “feeling of belonging” for students who “crave relationships and acceptance” in their college years (p.38). They are also the riskiest environments for heavy and problem drinking. Nationally, just over 80% of fraternity residents binge drink, whereas just over 40% of all college students binge. Drinking in fraternities is perhaps best understood as an extreme on a continuum of college men’s drinking, dramatizing what may be going on to a lesser extent in traditional student life among a range of men. From the point of view of men’s needs assessments, we have much to learn from the psychology of brotherhood.

**Permissiveness—Real and Imagined**

Alcohol is “one of the oldest traditions in the American college,” and alcohol-related problems have been a benchmark of campus life. Until very recently, though, college administrations have been permissive about alcohol, voicing “official condemnation tempered by tacit toleration” (p.11). Myers provides a model for “institutional (organizational) denial” of the presence (or extent) of alcohol abuse that could easily apply to college campuses nationally. In 1995, Wechsler was explicit about the widespread denial about alcohol on college campuses.

With the increase in the drinking age from 18 to 21 years and increased awareness of the dangers of alcohol abuse, colleges now “typically have policies which promote responsible drinking” and attempt the “management of student drinking and its consequences” (p.26). My own informal observations are that liability case law, awareness of the negative impact of alcohol on the achievement of educational mission, and enrollment management concerns for retention have also encouraged colleges to be more vigilant about the role of alcohol in campus cultures.

But among students, permissiveness persists, both in drinking behavior and in attitudes toward drinking. Permissiveness itself is, in part, the result of students’ own perceptions of campus norms for alcohol behavior and attitudes. With reference to the consumption of alcohol and the acceptability of intoxication, students generally perceive themselves to be in a permissive environment. In reality, the environment is not as permissive as they think. Misperceiving the norm leads students who are inclined to drink to consume more alcohol than they otherwise would drink and to perceive the norm correctly. This social norms research indicates that correcting the misperception through public information campaigns can reduce both problem drinking and binge drinking on college campuses.

How well do social norms approaches work with college men who are heavy drinkers? How are masculinity, permissive attitudes about drinking, and misperceptions of the norm related? How accurately do college men perceive their campus norms? For social norms theory and research, the heaviest drinking results from the interaction of the most permissive personal attitudes toward alcohol and the greatest misperception of the norm as more permissive than it actually is. Men as a group are the heaviest drinkers on campus. We might conclude that the heaviest drinking men have the most permissive attitudes about drinking and that they misperceive the norm at the greatest rates. But, theoretically, they should also be most susceptible to the benefits of social norms approaches.

However, in one study, the heaviest drinking college men proved to be the least susceptible to social norms interventions. From 1995 to 1998 Western Washington University implemented a campus-wide social norms approach. Although most students on the campus changed their patterns of drinking in positive ways, the “students reporting they had seven or more drinks on peak occasions [the most consumed at one time in the past month] remained virtually unchanged [at about 35%].” The most recalcitrant students at Western Washington were underage men: “nearly two thirds of the underage men still reported having seven or more drinks on a peak occasion. Only one third of the underage women reporting the same level of consumption.” In view of the significance of personal attitudes toward alcohol, permissive personal attitudes about alcohol in the group of recalcitrant underage men might have been so robust that they simply overwhelmed any other perceptions of the environment. Prentice and Miller found that men in women in their study did respond differently to corrections of misperceptions. Perhaps, in the case of at least some college men, personal attitudes about drinking and misperception of the campus norm are so inextricably linked that research and prevention work that addresses the one (personal attitudes) must necessarily be done in conjunction with the same kind of work on the other (misperception of the norm).

Perkins once characterized “the perceived male stereotype of heavy use as a misperception to which males do not need to conform.” Some college men’s misperceptions of their campus alcohol norms may be “contained” in their personal attitudes about drinking. Baer found that differences in the perception of campus drinking norms among students in different housing situations on one campus “already existed prior to college enrollment” [emphasis mine]. Certainly, if “the impact of public behavior and conversation” on campus can generate misperceptions of the norm, a lifetime of powerful messages about the connection between alcohol and manhood would produce great distortions of its own. Social norms theory, research, and strategies would be enhanced by a closer look at gender in the creation of drinking attitudes and behaviors, in possible differences in the misperception of norms, and in the social mechanisms that lie behind the actual norms. Social norms research surveys should include measures of traditional masculine role strain and should look for correlations between attitudes and perceptions of the norm and actual drinking behavior.
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In addition, surveys should replace the generic "college student" with "male student" or "female student" when asking college students about how much students are drinking and asking about their attitudes toward drinking. So, for example, we should ask, "How many drinks does a male [or female] student typically have at a party on this campus?" instead of "do students typically have" or "Is it acceptable for men [or women] to drink with occasional intoxication as long as it does not interfere with other responsibilities?" The results would have implications for norms-based prevention programs. It would make sense if, in fact, masculinity was found to predispose men to misperceive the norm because assumptions and attitudes about drinking and how drinking relates to manhood are built into masculinity. It would also make sense that the actual and perceived social norms be gender specific.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

Concrete Responses

Men, alcohol, and college are connected by the paradoxical nature of men's power. What can we do about college men's frequent, heavy, and problem drinking? Following from the model that has been developed in this essay, nothing short of radical reconstruction of masculinity and a reimagining of the college experience are likely to bring about significant change in college men's drinking. The same paradox that characterizes college men's drinking also provides a pedagogy for change. This is because, while the paradox acknowledges men's pain and powerlessness, it also discourages men from seeing themselves simply as victims, and it insists that men take responsibility for their actions.

Colleges, in collaboration with high schools and community agencies, should integrate gender awareness into alcohol education, prevention, and risk-reduction programs. For men, I recommend a comprehensive educational program that addresses four central themes in men's lives: friendship, health, life/work/family, and sexual ethics [see also, Good and Mintz].

As in the case of effective rape prevention education workshops for men, the pedagogy should be workshops that are all male, small group, interactive, and peer facilitated. Such programs have been shown to change some men's attitudes and values that are associated with the perpetration of rape. It may be that the rape prevention workshops are changing attitudes because they correct men's misperceived norm of other men's attitudes about women, or vice versa.

Attitudes and values associated with problem drinking could be similarly changed. Developing what Lynch and Kilmartin refer to as "healthy masculinity" that connects men in healthy relationships with other men, family, and intimate partners would be a succinct statement of the goal of such programming.

The transition to college is a critical juncture in the consumption of alcohol. Programming should therefore begin early in the 1st year and continue well beyond orientation week. Broad-based, fully integrated, social norms educational programs, interventions, and public information initiatives should be implemented. I would add that such programs should be gender informed along the lines I have suggested in this article. College men should understand how the paradoxical masculinity I have discussed may orient them to alcohol use and abuse.

College students should be strongly encouraged to get involved in clubs and organizations on campus, to run for office, and to be involved in sports as ways of meeting power orientation needs in socially responsible ways. Those activities themselves must have alcohol education components; otherwise, involvement could have the ironic consequence of promoting heavier drinking. Associations between men and beer in campus media should be discouraged. Given their powerful influence over men's drinking in the 1st year, the hazards of drinking games should be especially discussed in educational programming.

In general, college as adventure is a theme that should be discouraged. A "boys will be boys" permissiveness should be rejected. Recognizing and affirming that alcohol does harm, colleges must assert themselves as "moral communities" and move from permissive to restrictive stances on alcohol by first articulating what the harm is, then establishing policies to prevent college community members from harming themselves or others. Wechsler and associates recommend a comprehensive approach to alcohol use on college campuses, including scrutiny of alcohol marketing, more alcohol-free events and activities, and more restrictive policies that control the flow of alcohol on campus. Their recommendation would benefit from more deeply gendered approaches to the problem because the problem, itself, is deeply gendered.

In addition to promoting social norms approaches, preventive education, and risk-reduction education, college administrators should require that frequent violators of alcohol policy seek treatment or seek their education elsewhere. Although critics of treatment may say it addresses the symptoms and not the real problem, which is the campus culture itself, colleges must offer treatment as part of a comprehensive program for renewed campus life. Treatment should seamlessly integrate men's health studies approaches.

Unfortunately, some college men will be untouched and untouchable by education or treatment, and they must lose the privilege of attending their chosen college and be asked to leave.

Conceptual Responses

Speaking most globally about solving the problem of college men's drinking and solving the problem of the connections between alcohol and masculinity, I would paraphrase what I have previously written about the problem of rape: Our understanding of the specific act of drinking should be embedded in our understanding of masculinity. Drinking is not an isolated behavior; it is a behavior linked to larger systems of attitudes, values, and modalities of conduct in...
men's lives that constitute masculinity and men's social position relative to women. In this model, alcohol prevention work with men begins with them as men, and with men's questioning of prevailing assumptions about masculinity and what it means to be a man. I am extremely skeptical of any alcohol prevention work that proposes solutions to the problem of drinking that leave masculinity, as we know it, largely intact.  

The educational challenge, which is really the psychological and political resistance to this solution, lies in the fact that alcohol benefits men as a group, even as it injures men as individuals. Men are likely to resist this global approach because we fear losing the benefits of masculinity conferred upon the group. The path to a reconstructed masculinity or alternatives to the dominant model of masculinity that includes more variety of men's identities and experiences may look something like Helms's stage-development model for a positive racial-cultural identity for minority groups. It will not be easy getting there.

In the meantime, in our work with college men who drink, we must look to the bottom of their glasses and find the men inside. For when college men drink, they are simply being men at college, or what they perceive men at college to be. By this I mean that the most useful way to interpret their behavior is not so much in its content, but in its context—first, the imperatives of manhood, then the psychosocial particulars of college life, both of which put men at risk for drinking. Basically, at the bottom of heavy and problematic drinking among college men are the paradoxical nature of masculinity and the corresponding paradoxical nature of alcohol in men's lives. Once we know college men as men, we will know more about why they drink and what we can do about it.

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