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Reactions of Men of Color to a Commonly Used Rape Prevention Program: Attitude and Predicted Behavior Changes

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Abstract African American, Latino, and Asian first-year college men (36) saw The Men's Program, an all-male rape prevention workshop, and wrote answers to four open-ended questions to determine how men from non-white groups react to a commonly used rape prevention program. Using a multi-stage inductive analysis, participant responses fell into five main themes including reinforced current beliefs and/or no changes, increased awareness of rape and its effects on survivors, increased understanding of consent, plans to intervene if a rape might occur, and plans to change behavior in their own intimate situations. Participants mentioned specific ways in which they planned to change personal behavior, and ways in which they planned to intervene if they saw potentially dangerous situations.

Keywords Rape · Race · Prevention · Program · Men

For approximately two decades, programs have been conducted on college campuses to educate men about issues of sexual assault (Katz 2006; Lonsway 1996). Early programs were rarely evaluated, and when they were, few produced desired changes, let alone long-term change (Earle 1996). Over time, programs for men, referred to as rape prevention programs, have become increasingly effective as shown by outcomes assessment research (Anderson and Whitson

2005). Many studies identify specific populations of men on campus for evaluation studies, such as fraternity men (Boeringer 1999), athletes (Chandler et al. 1999), or first year men (Foubert et al. 2006). However men of color and their reactions to commonly used rape prevention programs have not been studied in the research literature. The present study begins to fill that gap.

An alarmingly high number of college students have experienced either rape or attempted rape at some point during their lifetime. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, 24% of college women have experienced either rape or attempted rape in their lifetime (Fisher et al. 2000); between 3 and 4% of college men also report surviving a rape or attempted rape experience on anonymous surveys (Rennison 2002; Tjaden and Thoennes 1998). With regard to perpetration, 9% of college men admit behaviors that meet the legal definition of rape or attempted rape (Ouitmette and Riggs 1998).

Many rapes that occur on college campuses involve alcohol. In roughly three out of four cases in which a male rapes a female college student, the female is intoxicated (Mohler-Kuo et al. 2004). Though the link between alcohol and sexual assault has long been studied, few have studied how race, alcohol related sexual assault, and prevention programming intersect. One reason these are important phenomena to study together is that racial groups differ in their consumption of alcohol, with greater consumption of alcohol reported by Caucasians than African Americans and Asian college students (Luczak et al. 2001; Mohler-Kuo et al. 2004; Siebert et al. 2003). These different norms for drinking between the various races may significantly impact the context in which rape occurs on college campuses. Thus, if this context is different, methods used to prevent rape may have different effects on men of color than on the majority population.

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Racial groups also differ in cultural norms besides those relating to alcohol. Though Asian, Caucasian, and African American men perpetrate sexual assault at equal levels (Abbey et al. 2006; Hall et al. 2000); Asian men tend to have the most negative attitudes toward rape victims, believe more rape myths, and are more likely than men from other races to both blame the victim for the assault and deny the responsibility of a perpetrator (Mori et al. 1995). Asian men are also less likely to condemn sexual harassment than members of other races (Kennedy and Gorzalka 2002). African-American students are less likely to call a situation “rape” that meets the legal definition. African American’s are also less likely than Caucasians to believe such situations should be reported to the authorities. African Americans are also more likely to blame the victim than Caucasians (Varelas and Foley 1998).

Furthermore, research suggests that programs to prevent rape are more likely to be effective when specifically tailored to individual ethnic groups. When culturally relevant variables are measured and included in statistical models of sexual aggression, the variance accounted for by such models doubles (Hall et al. 2005). Collectively this research suggests the necessity for measuring the impact of rape prevention programs currently in use on college campuses to help determine their relevance to students of color, given the attitudinal differences that exist among the many existing populations.

Authors of the present study sought to explore the reactions of men of color to a commonly used rape prevention program, The Men’s Program (Foubert 2005). In particular, research questions focused on attitude and predicted behavior changes regarding alcohol related sexual assault.

A review of evaluated rape prevention programs found that The Men’s Program (Foubert 2005) is the only program evaluated in the research literature to report clear, long-term change in men (Schewe 2002). This program, and earlier versions of it, has been presented to tens of thousands of men in colleges, universities, high schools, military bases, half way houses, rape crisis centers, and other community organizations throughout North America. College audiences have included men in fraternities, sports teams, residence halls, student organizations, classes, faculty and staff. Still, like other programs, its specific effects on men of color remain unknown. The present study begins to rectify this gap in the literature.

The Men’s Program was originally written based on two theories of attitude and behavior change (belief system theory and the elaboration likelihood model) and was guided in its development by research on effective rape prevention program elements. In studies of fraternity men, the vast majority of whom were Caucasian, it has been associated with significant decreases in rape myth accep-

tance and likelihood of raping and significant increases in men’s empathy toward rape survivors that remain improved for up to 7 months (Foubert 2000; Foubert and LaVoy 2000; Foubert and Newberry 2006).

Belief system theory suggests that to produce lasting attitude change, interventions must be designed to maintain people’s existing self-conceptions (Grube et al. 1994). Yet, many all-male rape prevention interventions reported in the literature are presented in such a manner that they can be perceived by men as casting them in the role of potential rapists, such as those written by Berkowitz (1994) and Davis (2000). Researchers have demonstrated that regardless of whether men have committed sexual assault, they do not perceive themselves to be potential rapists (Scheel et al. 2001). Thus, programs that overtly assume men to be potential rapists are unlikely to achieve desired outcomes, according to belief system theory. Indeed such programs rarely affect men beyond the day of the given presentation (Davis 2000; Earle 1996). On the other hand, The Men’s Program attempts to influence men by appealing to beliefs they are shown to have about being potential helpers (Scheel et al. 2001). Thus, presenters approach men as people who can provide thoughtful support to female survivors who seek their assistance after surviving rape. Appealing to this persona has shown substantial long-term success (Foubert 2000; Foubert and LaVoy 2000; Foubert and Perry 2007).

In addition to belief system theory, the elaboration likelihood model [ELM] has been helpful to rape prevention programmers. This model suggests that lasting attitude and behavior change occurs when participants are motivated to hear a message, are able to understand it, and perceive the message as relevant to them (Petty and Cacioppo 1986). Such conditions lead to a type of thinking called central route processing, whereby listeners actively process program content and are far more likely to have long-term attitude and behavior change. Applying the ELM to rape prevention has shown signs of success (Heppner et al. 1995; Foubert 2000).

The Men’s Program is an all-male workshop informed by the findings of a meta analysis of available research showing that programs presented to all-male audiences are much more likely to change men’s attitudes and behavioral intent to rape than those presented to coeducational audiences (Brecklin and Forde 2001). Research has also shown that as men increase their empathy with survivors, understand rape trauma and have more aversion to rape, they report less likelihood of raping (Schewe 2002). According to Schewe’s review, ten studies have been published that assess the effects of an empathy-based intervention on men’s attitudes toward rape and/or their behavioral intent to rape. Seven of these studies have assessed the impact of depicting a man as a survivor; three

studies depicted a woman as a survivor. *All* of the studies depicting a man as a survivor significantly improved men's attitudes toward rape and/or lowered their behavioral intent to rape. In stark contrast, *all* of the studies evaluating the impact of a program whose primary intervention method was to depict a female survivor *increased* men's rape myth acceptance; one such program even increased men's reported likelihood of sexual aggression. Therefore, presenters of The Men's Program show a video (One in Four 2000) describing a male-on-male rape experience designed to teach men how a rape experience might feel. Afterward, presenters note that the described perpetrators were presumably heterosexual and known to the survivor, as with many male-on-male rapes. This point is made clear to the audience in an effort to meet one of the program's goals: to confront any preexisting homophobic assumptions held by audience members that male on male rapes are commonly perpetrated by gay men. Instead, presenters of The Men's Program note that they are describing the more common occurrence of heterosexual perpetrators who use rape and battery to exert power and control over another male. Next, presenters make connections between a male-on-male and a male-on-female rape experience to facilitate audience members' empathy toward rape survivors. Later, men are taught how to support a rape survivor. Next, men are taught some of the basics of defining consent and hear strategies about how to confront a peer who either jokes about rape, acts in a way that demeans women, or brags about abusing women. Following that, men are taken through a guided imagery of a woman close to them who is raped while a bystander watches and does nothing. Men then brainstorm ways that they could intervene in situations where a rape is or might occur. The program itself lasts about 1 hour and is usually presented by four undergraduate male peer educators, often part of peer education groups named One in Four. Given the potential for a strong emotional impact on audience members, particularly survivors of sexual assault, several disclaimers are given to participants and appropriate resources are offered. Over time, the program has been modified in accordance with feedback obtained through quantitative and qualitative evaluation studies of mostly Caucasian students (Foubert 2000; Foubert and Cowell 2004; Foubert and Newberry 2006; Foubert and Perry 2007).

For example, a focus group study with a follow-up survey of fraternity men and student athletes has shown evidence of lasting attitude and behavior change resulting from this program (Foubert and Cowell 2004; Foubert and Perry 2007). Participants who gave feedback in these focus groups and on a follow-up survey attributed their changed attitudes and changed bystander behavior to their program participation. Fully 100% of focus group participants reported either lasting attitude or behavior change 5 months after seeing The Men's Program. Most reported both

attitude and behavior change. Focus group participants also suggested that adding material to what was then the program to address the impact of alcohol on intimate situations (Foubert and Cowell 2004).

Qualitative responses to open-ended questions and in focus groups have clarified how men make meaning of their experience with this program. Foubert and LaVoy (2000) found that 7 months after program participation, a majority of fraternity members reported lasting attitude changes of increased awareness or sensitivity toward rape. The program component mentioned most frequently as responsible was a videotape in which a male police officer describes the rape of another male officer by two male perpetrators.

More recently, Foubert and Cowell (2004) conducted focus groups with fraternity members and male student athletes immediately after they first saw *The Men's Program*. They found that participants reported increased empathy toward rape survivors, which participants attributed to seeing the aforementioned videotape. Participants also reported being more able to help survivors, better understanding consent, being less likely to tell and more likely to confront rape jokes, and being more likely to believe rape survivors' stories.

Despite the impact demonstrated in several studies done on this program, little is known regarding its effects on men of color on college campuses in the United States. Research has shown that men of color differ from Caucasians in their drinking behavior (Mohler-Kuo et al. 2004) but also in their attitudes toward rape survivors (Hall et al. 2000), their rape myth acceptance (Kennedy and Gorzalka 2002), their likelihood of labeling a situation "rape" that meets the legal definition, and their likelihood of blaming the survivor for the situation that occurred (Varelas and Foley 1998). Given these racial differences and the unexplored impact of rape prevention programs on men of color, the present study sought to begin exploring the reactions of such men to begin to build a knowledge base in this area of inquiry. Due to our desire to let such men speak for themselves and not be constrained by quantitative measures of impact, we selected qualitative methodology for our study using a constructivist paradigm (Jones et al. 2006). To begin this exploration, we focused our inquiry on two research questions.

1. Did men of color experience any attitude change, particularly regarding alcohol-related sexual assault, as a result of seeing The Men's Program?
2. After seeing The Men's Program, do men of color believe that they will behave any differently as a result of program participation, particularly in situations in which they or others might engage in sexually intimate activity under the influence of alcohol?

Method

Participants

Participants for this study were traditional age undergraduate male students enrolled at a public, southeastern university with an enrollment of approximately 5,000 undergraduate students. All first-year men at the institution were required to see The Men's Program in either September or April of their first-year, depending upon their assigned condition in a larger evaluation study. Participants for the present study were the 36 men of color who participated in this program during September of 2005. These men included 13 Asian men, 7 African American Men, 11 Latino men, and 4 mixed-race men. This constituted approximately 80% of the men of color eligible for participation at that time. All were full-time students who lived on campus, as required.

Materials

After seeing *The Men's Program* participants wrote answers to the following four open-ended questions.

1. Compared to *before* you participated in today's program, are any of your *attitudes* different today as a result of seeing the program? If so, what attitudes?
2. More specifically, are any of your attitudes toward intimate sexual activity under the influence of alcohol different as a result of seeing today's program? If so, what attitudes?
3. Compared to *before* you participated in this program, do you think you will *behave* any differently in any situation as a result of seeing the program? If so, in what way will *you* behave differently?
4. More specifically, do you think you will behave any differently in situations where *you or others* you are with might engage in intimate sexual activity under the influence of alcohol? If so, how will *you* behave differently?

Procedure

The University where the study took place required all first-year men to participate in the program being evaluated as part of new student orientation. Participation in the study by completing surveys afterward was voluntary. In return for survey completion and the agreement to complete another survey later in the year, participants were offered a \$10 gift card to a local convenience store.

Participants saw a presentation of *The Men's Program* by four thoroughly trained and experienced peer educators. Presenters were racially diverse college men, each of whom

had at least 20 hours of peer education training. Presenters began by setting a non-confrontational tone, where participants heard that they would not be blamed for rape, nor would it be assumed that they wanted to rape a woman. Participants were told, instead, they would learn how they can assist women who come to them for help after being sexually assaulted. This approach was taken to be consistent with belief system theory. Instead of approaching men as potential rapists, something even convicted rapists reject as a self-descriptor (Warshaw 1994), they were approached potential helpers of women recovering from rape, a descriptor men were likely to have (Scheel et al. 2001).

In addition, men were told about the likelihood that they knew a survivor given the prevalence of rape on college campuses and that it was likely that they would be in a position at some point to offer support to survivors. These emphases were in accordance with the Elaboration Likelihood Model to motivate participants to listen to a message they will deem as personally relevant (Petty and Cacioppo 1986). After disclaimers, an overview, and a basic review of rape definitions, presenters told the audience that they would view a videotape that described a rape situation. This tape described a male police officer being raped by two men who were depicted as violent, known previously to the officer, and heterosexual.

At the conclusion of the video, presenters noted that as with most male-on-male rape, the video they just watched depicted two presumably heterosexual men using rape and battery to exert power and control over the survivor. This portion was important because it confronted the homophobic misunderstanding some men may have that male-on-male rape is primarily perpetrated by homosexual men. Presenters then drew parallels from the male police officer's experiences to common experiences of female rape survivors. Participants were then taught basic skills on how to help a woman recover from rape. Next, presenters discussed how to define consent in intimate encounters and how to intervene as a bystander to help change social norms that condone rape. Presenters then led participants through a guided imagery of a woman close to them being sexually assaulted while another man, a bystander, did nothing to stop it. Next, participants were asked to consider what they would do in hypothetical situations in which they had the opportunity to confront another man who may be either abusing or preparing to be intimate with a woman who cannot give consent due to intoxication. Finally, participants considered what they would do in a potentially sexually intimate situation involving alcohol.

After answering questions, participants were reminded of the prevalence of rape and of the necessity for everyone to end men's violence against women.

Surveys with open ended questions were completed immediately after program participation. The open-ended

questions were analyzed using a multi-stage inductive analysis (Patton 1990). This process begins with identifying key phrases or terms used by program participants in their responses; in this case, responses to open-ended questions. Two researchers took part in this process—one who was male and one who was a person of color. The decision was made to analyze the data initially in isolation and then collectively. This decision was made so that researchers would not unduly influence each other in the coding or theme extraction process, yet the end product would benefit from their collective judgment.

In accordance with the method recommended by Patton (1990) the researchers identified key phrases and terms independently and generated lists in which 21 out of 28 words or phrases were in common. Next, researchers identified themes that helped organize participants' responses to the program in a careful approach to identify what was truly meaningful. Next, consideration of "causes, consequences, and relationships" (Patton 1990, p. 422) occurred whereby researchers attached meaning to findings and drew conclusions to help illuminate, understand and extrapolate the data. Originally, 75% of cases were independently classified into the same categories developed by the researchers. The remaining 25% were classified after lengthy interpretive discussion about the potential meaning behind the participant's comments.

Results and Discussion

A clear majority of men in this study, 72%, reported either attitude change or predicted that their behavior would change as a result of their participation in The Men's Program. Five main themes emerged from the data when the answers to the four open-ended questions were looked at on a macro level (a) reinforced current beliefs and/or no changes, (b) increased awareness of rape and its effects on survivors, (c) increased understanding of consent, (d) plans to intervene if a rape might occur, and (e) plans to change behavior in intimate situations. The first theme centered on responses from men whose perspectives were either reinforced by the program or were simply unchanged. The second theme focused on men's increased awareness of rape, often pointing to increased awareness of rape's effects on survivors. The third theme focused on men's increased understanding of consent and how this applies to intimate situations. The fourth theme detailed men's intentions to intervene in a situation where they believe a rape may occur between other people with whom they come into contact. The fifth theme focused on men's intentions to change their own behavior in intimate situations. Separate analyses by race were not attempted given the small numbers in each racial group and the fact that men of each race were relatively evenly distributed among the various themes.

Reinforced Current Beliefs and/or No Changes

Over half of the men in this study reported that either their attitudes or their behavior would remain the same after the program compared to pre-program levels, either because their behavior was already in line with the program's message or for other cited reasons. For example, one participant responded: "I feel the same way in which the rights of women are of foremost importance and in no way is rape acceptable." Another respondent described his reaction in this way: "I believe and have always believed that rape is an awful thing that is so mortifying that when I think about it I become frightened and terrified." In a similar way, another affirmed "I will and have always encouraged safety, respect and caution and to fight rape or unwanted sexual or verbal intercourse."

Others reported that their behavior would not change because, as the program encourages, they already avoid intimacy when alcohol is involved. One responded: "I don't believe that people should have sex when they're drunk." Another wrote: "Using drugs to have sex is already blocked out of my mind." Finally, others simply responded that the program led to no particular changes in their attitudes and behavior. Comments in this theme seemed to come from men who, like many men, do not ascribe to most rape myths (Payne et al. 1999), and who appear to have the personal perspectives consistent with the program's message.

Increased Awareness of Rape and its Effects on Survivors

About a third of participants reported that their awareness was increased by seeing the program. In particular, responses in this category focused on an increased awareness of rape and violence in general, or of rape's effects on victims. The respondents communicated a better understanding of the concept and act of rape. For example, a participant commented: "I find rape more frightening and powerful as a result of that video." Another stated "Yes, before I was against rape, but now I am completely against rape and all for helping those faced with it." The sharp turn represented by this statement suggests that the program was effective in helping this participant take existing anti-rape attitudes and motivating him to a stronger level of commitment to helping others.

Still other participants reported that they would be able to respond more effectively if a woman came to them after being sexually assaulted. This theme was consistent with comments reported by Caucasian fraternity men reacting to this program in an earlier study (Foubert and Newberry 2006), particularly with regard to the effectiveness of the video used in this program for eliciting desired participant attitude changes.

Increased Understanding of Consent

A common theme reported by about a third of the men in this study was that they had newfound understanding of the meaning of consent, some of whom reported being influenced not to have sex when alcohol is involved. This attitude change represents the most valuable change that could possibly result from a rape prevention program—convincing a man not to put himself in a position where he might commit rape.

Others in this category echoed these sentiments noting that consent was less valid if individuals had been drinking alcohol. A participant commented: “I think I understand ‘mental incapacitation’ more.” A second respondent indicated: “It just reinforced my attitude about being even more cautious and aware of the other party’s feelings.” Another added, “Alcohol makes everything difficult. Chances of rape are much higher.” These changes are consistent with the program’s primary goal to decrease men’s likelihood of committing sexual assault, and open new questions for inquiry—particularly how to translate this new attitude that suggests behavior will change into actual changed behavior.

Plans to Intervene if a Rape Might Occur

Given how difficult it can be to convince people to change their behavior (Brecklin and Forde 2001), we were surprised that almost half of participants reported either a greater awareness of how to intervene if they thought a rape might occur or a clear desire to act to prevent rape from happening. One man who reported an attitude change from not getting involved to “Getting involved in a situation that you suspect may be a rape is extremely important even if it (intervening) is a mistake.” Others emphasized their intent to take actions to prevent rape if the situation arose. These proactive behaviors were extended to both friends and strangers. One participant noted: “I feel that I will be more willing and able to prevent sexual assault situations from occurring.” Another participant commented: “I will try to intervene if I see a girl in an uncomfortable situation.” Still others wrote “I will work harder to stand up to abuse when I see it taking place.” Another participant added, “I will be more likely to monitor friends while/if drinking.” Reflecting newfound knowledge and techniques of how to intervene, one participant indicated: “I will be more alert as to what activity could be construed as rape.” Another respondent wrote that he would have: “More knowledge in how to act.” These changes represented a critical step toward ending rape—that of convincing men to intervene as bystanders when they see a situation in which a rape may occur (Katz 2006). What remains unknown is whether men whose comments comprised this theme would act on these new attitudes.

Plans to Change Behavior in Intimate Situations

Perhaps the most challenging type of predicted behavior change to elicit is a convincing a participant to act differently in his own intimate situations with others. Indeed, some participants in our study stated that they would alter their own sexual behavior such that they would use more caution and restraint during their own intimate encounters. For example, one said “I’ll practice more self restraint and act less impulsively.” Still others reported that they will be better able to determine in the future about whether a rape is about to occur. Another sub-group indicated that they would wait until their partner was sober or be more careful to establish clear verbal consent if they are uncertain about their partner’s level of intoxication. This predicted behavior change in intimate situations involving alcohol was particularly poignant given the strong association between alcohol and sexual assault (Mohler-Kuo et al. 2004).

Limitations and Implications

A limitation of this study was that a significant minority of men in this study stated that they were not changed by the program. About 1/2 of the total sample reported no attitude changes and about 1/4 of the total sample reported no predicted behavior changes. At first blush this could be looked upon as a serious limitation. Indeed it is concerning that so many men could not identify a way in which they thought differently after seeing the program. However, many of those who reported that they did not change in attitude did report that they now would behave differently in the future—by intervening to help prevent rape or helping a survivor in a different way. Still, a logical next question in this line of research is why more men of color were not affected by the program, and if anything could have been done in the presentation format or content to change these results.

Perhaps the most interesting finding in this study is that there was remarkable similarity among the members of the various racial groups and their responses to the questions posed by the present study. There was also remarkable consistency in the patterns of responses for members of the various racial groups falling into different themes. Furthermore, reactions of men of color in the present study reacting to The Men’s Program closely parallel the results studying the reactions of mostly Caucasian men’s reactions in prior studies (Foubert and Cowell 2004; Foubert et al. 2006).

Perhaps the material raised in this particular program is not salient enough to race to elicit race differences, or perhaps the questions asked were not sophisticated enough to detect whether members of various races had different

reactions to the program. Further research should explore how being a member of a particular race intersects with perceptions of the program being evaluated. Though the present study identifies ways in which the program evaluated was effective for men of color, it did not uncover specific dynamics of how race and rape prevention programming may intersect with regard to the perceptions of men from various races. If questions are asked in the future, it would be an improvement to ask men of color about how their particular race or racial identity affects their perceptions of the programmatic material being presented.

Conclusion

Though some respondents were unable to pinpoint a specific change in their attitudes resulting directly from program participation, many in that group simply stated that the program reinforced their existing anti-rape attitudes. Others generally described an increase in awareness and communicated an understanding of the seriousness of rape, some of whom directly tied this attitude change to seeing the video used as part of the program.

When compared to studies of Caucasian men's reactions to The Men's Program (Foubert et al. 2006), responses of men of color were remarkably similar. Both Caucasians and men of color react to the program by reporting increased understanding of rape, a greater desire to intervene when a rape might occur, reinforced beliefs, a greater understanding of consent, and plans to change personal behavior in intimate situations. Generally speaking, men of color's written responses to questions indicated that a high number of respondents felt more able to recognize and prevent rape situations after participating in the program. However, methods they would use to intervene were not specified. Interestingly, more participants reported that their behavior would change (about 3/4) than reported that attitudes would change (about 1/2). From their responses, it seems that several men were able to learn the importance of doing something active to help stop a rape from occurring in a manner that was consistent with their established, unchanged attitudes. Most of the responses involving behavior changes focused on how men would intervene when others might commit a rape rather than if they themselves were about to be at risk for acting in such a manner, such as the man who noted "I feel that I will be more willing and able to prevent sexual assault situations from occurring." More men were likely to say that they would intervene to prevent someone else from committing a rape than men who reported a willingness to change their own behavior to be sure that they themselves were acting appropriately.

Collectively, these findings generate new knowledge on how men of color react to rape prevention programs, in this

case, a program commonly used on our nation's college campuses (Foubert 2005). Participants comments suggest that the program was indeed effective in eliciting desired attitudinal, and in particular, predicted behavior change among participants. A major question remains as to whether participants who said they would intervene to prevent a rape or who said that they would be more cautious in their intimate encounters would actually follow through on those intentions.

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