



# Lifestyle Movements as Social Networks: The Connections between Everyday Politics and Larger Collective Action in an Indian Feminist Movement

Sociological Perspectives

1–17

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DOI: 10.1177/0731121418757505

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## Abstract

The sociology of social movements has often drawn a fine line between individualistic “lifestyle movements” and more politically oriented collective action. Yet, this distinction belies the fact that seemingly individualistic movements can generate cognitive maps and associational ties necessary for wider mobilization. Drawing on a qualitative study of the Indian men’s feminist movement Men’s Action to Stop Violence against Women (MASVAW), we examine how an ostensibly individualistically oriented lifestyle movement can create the potential for collective action through forging social networks of like-minded individuals who can draw on local knowledge of specific situations to quickly mobilize their peers. Through this, we contribute to the literature on social movement networks by synthesizing theorizing on lifestyle movements with theorizing on activist social networks, demonstrating how networks can shift movements between different modes of coordination, from individualistic and everyday to collective and activist.

## Keywords

social movements, lifestyle movements, gender, feminism, social networks

The sociology of social movements has traditionally focused on movements that publicly and intentionally make claims against the state or other powerful actors using tactics drawn from a society’s particular “repertoire of contention” (Gamson 1975; Goodwin and Jasper 1999; Scott 1987; Tilly 2002). Yet submerged within this history is a literature on what we might call “everyday politics” (Boyte 2005; see, for example, Aberle 1966; Auyero 2003; Blumer 1969; Cherry 2006; Haenfler 2004; Haenfler, Johnson, and Jones 2012; Scott 1987; Williams 2006). This literature highlights that “social movement action” is not always (1) publicly visible, (2) consciously and strategically organized, and (3) oriented toward claims-making against the

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state or other powerful institutions. Rather, the action of these “lifestyle movements” (Haenfler et al. 2012) often operates at the level of personal choices made by individuals about what to buy, how to talk, what to eat, how to treat people, what to wear, and so on. Members of these movements may or may not belong to a movement organization and may or may not participate in visible forms of collective action but are united by similar personal choices, behavior, and sociopolitical identities.

Yet we may ask: Have we drawn too fine of a line between “lifestyle movements” and collective action? Can seemingly individualistic sociopolitical behavior connect participants into wider mobilization? We believe that integrating the literature on everyday politics with theoretical insights from work on social movement networks helps to answer these questions. Many movements involve activists in “everyday resistance” (Scott 1987) and prefigurative politics (Epstein 1991) that are less visible than large-scale collective action but are, nonetheless, a key part of movement cultures. Drawing on work by Mario Diani (2015) on different “modes of coordination” in social networks, we argue that the associational ties and cognitive maps created through participation in everyday politics can create the potential for mobilization. As participants come to identify with a particular sociopolitical category and develop relationships with others who share that identity, they create the networks necessary to move between individualistic modes of coordination and activist modes of coordination, potentially generating sociopolitical collective action.

To explore these connections between everyday politics and collective action, we draw on a study of the Indian feminist movement Men’s Action to Stop Violence against Women (MASVAW). MASVAW is a movement that believes it is the duty of men to stop violence against women and seeks to transform the way men understand gender and relationships. Through workshops, theater, and conversation, they attempt to change men’s language, behavior, and self-understanding, concentrating on their treatment of the women in their daily lives. This personalized focus draws on local understandings of particular customs and issues to help individual men in the movement target what they can do to reduce the amount of violence and domination they inflict in their lives. While the focus of the movement is on transforming the personal behavior of individual men, there is a wider strategic dimension as well. Through building linked networks of individuals who share the identity of “gender-sensitive men,” the movement creates a collective identity base for mobilization when communities face issues around gendered violence or domination. For example, MASVAW men routinely participate in shaming men who have committed violence against women or pressuring police departments to do their due diligence in investigating sexual assault cases. In this way, what appears to be a highly individualistic “lifestyle movement” focused on everyday politics creates the networks, associations, and identities necessary for wider collective action. We turn now to exploring relevant bodies of literature to develop a theoretical perspective before moving on to examine our data to make the above case.

## **Everyday Politics: “Individualistic” and “Expressive”**

While research into social movements has predominantly focused on public protest that makes claims against established power brokers, there has been an undercurrent of scholars examining more submerged political activity since at least the mid-twentieth century. David F. Aberle (1966), for example, suggested that “alternative movements” and “redemptive movements” advocated for individual-level change, while Herbert Blumer (1969:23) posited that “expressive movements . . . do not seek to change the institutions of the social order or its objective character” but, rather, take “expressive actions” that present the group’s identity to audiences. Both theorists drew a fine line between the more individualistic actions of such movements and the more politically oriented actions of what Aberle called “reform” and “revolutionary movements.” Similarly, Elizabeth Cherry (2006:156) suggested that

traditional social movements often define success in terms of legislative changes [but] veganism, like New Age Travellers (Martin, 2002) and Straight Edge participants (Haenfler, 2004), measures its success in terms of cultural and lifestyle changes. Vegans represent a new form of social movement that is not based on legislation or identity politics, but instead is based on everyday practices in one's lifestyle.

While James C. Scott (1987) argued that "everyday resistance" could, conceivably, add up to a form of collective action even if participants lacked a shared identity, most formulations tend to view such individualistic, everyday resistance as largely apolitical, categorically separating "expressive" action and political action.

Certainly, the body of work collected under the term New Social Movement (NSM) theory has posited since the 1980s that contemporary social movements may organize in more submerged or diffuse ways, as well as focus on cultural change as their goals (see Buechler 1995). Alberto Melucci (1996), for example, has noted that identity formation is often a key goal of movement action. Yet Ross Haenfler et al. (2012) suggested several weaknesses with NSM theory. First, NSM theorists tended to continue to focus on visible actions against institutionalized targets, even as they acknowledged the role of noninstitutional targets and cultural elements in movement action. Second, and more importantly, the category of "NSM" is a "catchall," tying together "every postlabor, post-1960s, postmaterialist movement" into all-encompassing a category that practical comparison becomes difficult.

We agree that the "NSM" category, as it is often deployed, is too broad to be useful. What, then, are the tools we are left with that allow us to analyze everyday politics? Haenfler et al. (2012:6) usefully suggested the concept of "lifestyle movements" as a framework for understanding more submerged and individualistic movement activity. They identified several key ways that lifestyle movements differ from more stereotypical social movements, saying participation in lifestyle movements is "1) relatively individualized and private, 2) ongoing rather than episodic, and 3) aimed at changing cultural and economic practices rather than targeting the state" (Haenfler et al. 2012:6). In addition, they argue that lifestyle movements tend to focus on identity and organize in a structurally diffuse manner. Despite the individual-level focus of lifestyle movements, Haenfler et al. (2012:14) admitted that lifestyle movements could "serve as a bridge to direct involvement in more conventional politics."

## **Social Movement Networks: A Key Element in Collective Action**

We suggest that the sociology of social movement networks is useful for examining the process through which lifestyle movements generate wider mobilization. There are two primary ways scholars understand the network metaphor in social movements (Diani and McAdam 2003; Passy and Monsch 2014): (1) Networks represent the associational ties between individuals and organizations that make mobilization possible, and (2) networks denote the stories and cognitive maps that participants in social movements use to create identities and draw boundaries. Thinking about the intersection of these two conceptualizations of networks provides a useful analytic lens for understanding how seemingly individualistic movements mobilize participants.

It has long been a truism that social movements require associational ties between members to mobilize for a variety of reasons (McAdam and Paulsen 1993). First, movements typically recruit through existing social linkages (Marwell, Oliver, and Pahl 1988), gaining support by pulling in participants already known to existing members. Roger V. Gould (1995), for example, demonstrated that the Paris Commune of 1971 drew its numbers from neighborhood networks forged in public meetings and the National Guard. Second, social networks allow for the sharing of resources by movement participants (Krinsky and Crossley 2014; Passy and Monsch 2014). These resources can be tangible, such as money or space, or more abstract, such as information

and ideas. As an example, Mangala Subramaniam, Manjusha Gupte, and Debarashmi Mitra (2014) found that the informal and formal linkages between Indian women's grassroots activist groups with both national and international movement organizations represented a key source of resource allocation, including sharing information and providing support in passing legislation.

In addition, a number of scholars have suggested that social networks represent cognitive maps that allow members to construct identities and social boundaries. Harrison C. White (1992) and Charles Tilly (2002) understood network ties as shared narratives that give a connection meaning and directionality. As Eiko Ikegami (2001:997) stated, "Each individual carries an amalgamation of cognitive, social, and symbolic networks," suggesting that networks exist both in the relations between people, and in how we *understand* those ties and the wider cultural meaning they represent. Conceived in this way, social movements are the identities forged between people who, via their ongoing interaction, understand themselves as participating in some kind of sociopolitical collectivity together.

Taking these approaches together, Diani (2015) suggested that there are two primary dimensions that can help us understand the relational processes that happen via social networks: (1) resource allocation and (2) boundary definition. Resource allocation refers to "the whole set of procedures through which decisions are taken regarding the use of organizational resources" as well as "the processes of leadership selection and the definition of criteria for membership" (Diani 2015:15). Boundary definition, on the contrary, is about categorizing and identity-building among participants in a social network. These two dimensions vary in intensity in different networks, allowing Diani to propose a typology of different "modes of coordination of collective action." For example, in the "subcultural/communitarian" mode of coordination, participants identify strongly with a broader collective (boundary definition) but have weak interorganizational linkages (resource allocation). To be a member of a subculture or community is to *identify with a category* but often in a loose, less organizationally structured way. The social movement mode of coordination, on the other hand, involves a similarly strong identification with a collective identity but with more intense resource allocation than a subculture, creating denser interorganizational networks. Diani's typology highlights both the importance of associational ties between social actors and the cognitive maps they carry, representing the intensity of interactor connections, and the degree to which participants in a network identify with broader social categories.

## A Theoretical Synthesis: Lifestyle Movements as Social Networks

We suggest that Diani's typology provides a fruitful way to understand how the everyday politics of lifestyle movements help generate larger mobilization. Lifestyle movements would fall into the "subcultural/communitarian" category of Diani's typology as they typically require identification with a social category but lack intense resource allocation. In other words, being a part of a lifestyle movement creates networks by drawing cognitive maps and creating boundaries for participants without necessarily requiring them to participate in specific organizations. To be a vegan, for example, is to identify with the category of "vegan" and categorically distinguish between oneself and those who are not vegan, but one does not have to join a vegan movement group to claim the identity. The stereotypical view is that a lifestyle movement such as veganism would not involve the dense associative ties that generate resource sharing because of the presumably individualistic nature of dietary choice. In fact, as discussed above, the literature on everyday politics has tended to present lifestyle movements as "expressive" or "individualistic" and social movements as collective and political, furthering the idea that lifestyle movements do not generate associative ties for resource allocation.

Yet this dichotomy seems inherently problematic as everyday politics are often *taken on collectively*. Even in the examples of lifestyle movements provided by Haenfler et al. (2012), such as veganism and virginity pledgers, participants often engage with others around their issue of

choice. Vegans often eat at vegan restaurants, chat with other vegans online, and shop at vegan-friendly stores. Conversely, virginity pledgers often participate in church youth groups, attend virginity balls, and share their values with their friends. Confirming this, Cherry (2006) and Amy Adamczyk (2009) found that vegans and virginity pledgers, respectively, are more likely to maintain their lifestyle commitments when embedded in social networks of like-minded peers.

In addition, in social movement modes of coordination, the “terms of interorganizational collaboration are informal, and need to be renegotiated every time a new issue, opportunity, and threat emerges” (Diani 2015:19). Taking this notion a step further, we suggest that these negotiations can move a mode of coordination from one type to another. While members of a lifestyle movement may participate on an individualistic level, they most likely know other participants and have physical or virtual spaces in which they congregate. It is easy to imagine that a subculture with members who identify with a specific category but share few resources via associative ties could easily use their knowledge of others in their community when the field around them changed to shift into a more social movement-oriented mode of coordination when the need arose. For example, if someone in a community of vegans hears about animal testing being conducted in a nearby laboratory, they may draw on their cognitive map of the local vegan community to know how to inform other vegans in an effort to shift the mode of coordination among a segment of the community into activism. After a period of protest, they may then settle back into more individualistic action, only to shift again when a new threat or challenge emerges.

To clearly state our theoretical position, individualistic, everyday politics, what Haenfler et al. (2012) called “lifestyle movements,” typically promote adopting specific behavioral or consumption patterns. Through these practices, participants come to identify with a wider collective identity category (see Melucci 1996; Taylor and Whittier 1992) and, typically, interact with others who also identify with that category. Interaction and identification among lifestyle movement participants generate networks of like-minded peers, creating associational ties between members and drawing cognitive maps of who they are connected to through their beliefs and behavior. While the individualistic orientation of lifestyle movements typically means that the intensity of their resource allocation is low, the social networks they generate make it possible to shift into more activist modes of coordination when the field around the movement gives participants a reason to do so, such as a particular threat, and/or when the context around the network seems open to influence via collective action (see Meyer 2004). As such, lifestyle movements generate mobilization through the creation of social networks, in both the cognitive and associational sense, that allow members to shift how they relate to each other into a more activist, “social movement” mode when necessary.

To demonstrate this theoretical position in action, we examine the Indian men’s feminist group MASVAW. The seemingly “individualistic”-oriented focus of MASVAW belies that the social networks built by the group create the identities and associational ties necessary for mobilization against authorities or other social actors. We suggest that the example of MASVAW shows that, rather than seeing the everyday politics of lifestyle movements as individualistic and therefore separate from political action, it is more illuminating to see everyday politics as one mode of many through which participants in a social network may relate to each other and other social actors. Sometimes participants in a network will have lower intensity resource allocation and predominantly actualize their sociopolitical identities at the individual level. Other times, participants in the network will shift into more activist modes, drawing on their existing associational ties to respond to perceived threats or opportunities (Meyer 2004). We begin our analysis with a short background on MASVAW; then, after detailing our methods, turn to exploring how activists’ experiences are given form and direction through participation in a movement, shaping their “everyday politics,” and eventually leading to collective action.



## What Is MASVAW?

MASVAW is a network of men who are committed to making changes in their personal lives and behaviors to address violence against women (VAW). The group began in 2002 as an offshoot of a larger women's movement to get state authorities to acknowledge domestic violence as an issue of concern in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh (UP; Das et al. 2012). Subsequently, the network grew to include men associated with various community-based organizations and educational institutions, as well as men from rural communities. The founders of MASVAW believed that men play a crucial role in stopping VAW by changing their identities and behaviors, redefining themselves as gender-sensitive men (Roy and Das 2014). As such, the focus of the newly christened group "was on self-action, highlighting the need to change the self first" (Edström, Shahrokh, and Singh 2015:47). MASVAW accomplished this through hosting discussion sessions with both men and women in schools, nonprofit organizations, and workplaces (Bhandari 2008). In its early foundation, MASVAW clearly fit the definition of a lifestyle movement: It was a diffuse group aimed at ongoing, individual-level change in men's domestic behavior. When MASVAW men *did* act collectively, it was predominantly through workshops and educational events. These actions helped them generate a loose network of people interested in the topics of gender and VAW, despite the main focus of the group being self-change in the home.

MASVAW has always responded to their environment. The state of UP, where MASVAW originated, is well known for having low status for women, evidenced through high gender differentials on literacy, life expectancy, and child sex ratio, as well as high levels of VAW indicated through population-based surveys and crime records (Das et al. 2012; Edström et al. 2015). Yet UP is not monolithic, and MASVAW reflects larger changes in UP, including the growth of women-focused nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and the passage of increasingly progressive gender legislation (Das et al. 2012). As such, the focus of MASVAW's work is to continue to respond to the problems of VAW in UP as well as to play a part in the changes that are occurring through fostering greater sensitivity among men about the widespread phenomenon of gender discrimination at home and in the community through both individual and collective action.

Over time, MASVAW has gradually come to see itself as an activist organization that shares resources for collective action and provides men with tools to conduct "interventions" against VAW (Bhandari 2008). While they continue to understand individualistic solutions such as providing men with tools for expressing emotions and improving their relationships with women as their key goals, they also see challenging sexual harassment and VAW as a growing part of their agenda (Bhandari 2008; Das et al. 2012; Edström et al. 2015). In addition, MASVAW actively partners with various NGOs and nonprofits focused on women's health and equality. Through this, they have built an increasingly dense network that gives participants access to such organizations if they are interested in collective action.

MASVAW's agenda and organization made them a particularly illuminating site to examine the connection between lifestyle movements and social movements as they actively split the difference between these types of association. As Neha Bhandari (2008:22) explained,

MASVAW is an unregistered network of individuals and organisations which functions as a member based campaign. It is not a NGO project, but a movement . . . MASVAW supports and encourages its staff and members and their spouses to apply its ideology in their day-to-day life. Peer vigilance is used to apply this concept. Therefore, membership is by reference only.

This structure and orientation has a dual effect. First, it means that MASVAW has been predominantly focused on identity and lifestyle changes among the men who participate. Yet, as mentioned, because it is inherently a person-to-person organization that connects the individual participants to other MASVAW members and organizations that partner with MASVAW,

it creates dense social networks that can be mobilized based on specific needs or concerns. In addition, as quotes from MASVAW participants below will demonstrate, the members understood themselves as having a changed identity, and increasingly saw themselves as connected to women and other gender-sensitive men. In this way, MASVAW shows how the identity and behavioral change that come from individually focused movements can build up into collective action.

## Data and Method

The current paper emerges from a larger study about MASVAW members conducted by two of the authors in 2005. The overall project sought to examine, through in-depth, qualitative interviews with active participants in MASVAW, what kind of man was interested in the group, why he was interested, and what the consequences of his participation had been. The study focused on the experiences of nine highly engaged MASVAW men, each of whom had participated since the early years of the movement, to better understand intensely committed, “best case” examples of MASVAW participants. The men were sampled through a chain sampling method, starting with contacts in the movement one of the authors had already cultivated. These in-depth interviews were supplemented with interviews with other people in the men’s lives to acquire a holistic view of how the men’s behaviors have changed since joining MASVAW. The supplemental interviews for each man were with one woman (usually their wife) and one man (a friend or colleague), for a total of 27 interviews. These additional interviews allow us to speak more confidently on changes the men reported in beliefs and behavior resulting from participation in MASVAW by comparing them with statements and stories presented by people who knew them well.

A local research associate who was trained in qualitative interview techniques conducted the interviews in Hindi, overseen by one of the authors. Because the goal of the interviews, with all three categories of respondent, was to ascertain concrete details about how the beliefs and behaviors of the MASVAW men had changed through participation, the author guided the research associate on probing for details on such changes. For example, if a man commented that he now helped his wife with domestic labor, the research associate would inquire after additional details, including specific recent examples, how he felt about it, and how others reacted. In addition, the research associate asked similar questions in the supplemental interviews with the significant others in the men’s lives. These questions provided us rich insight into how the MASVAW men who participated lived out their politics in their everyday behavior, both in their home and in their communities.

The men were recruited from three locations in central and eastern UP. They ranged in age from 25 to 55. The men’s professions varied and included teachers, an NGO director, businessmen, and a farmer. Seven out of the nine women interviewed were the wives of the MASVAW participants. For the two unmarried men, we interviewed a mother and a sister, respectively. Each interviewed woman lived with the MASVAW man in question, giving her direct insight into his everyday practices. The supplemental men we interviewed were friends and colleagues referred to us by the MASVAW men as someone they had regular, close contact with over a number of years.

After the interviews were conducted, each was transcribed and translated into English by our research associate and one of the authors and then analyzed for emerging themes using a combination of inductive and deductive coding. The first author began the process by performing a round of coding that looked for emergent themes in the interviews with the MASVAW men. Then, using the research questions discussed above as a guide, the first and second authors performed a second round of coding looking for how the men both actualized their emergent politics in their everyday lives and whether or not this funneled them into more public forms of

mobilization. We draw on these two rounds of coding to support our theoretical perspective in the remaining sections of the paper.

## How Lifestyle Movements Can Generate Collective Action

How do seemingly individualistic movements generate wider collective action? Below, we address this and the other questions posed in the introduction about the connection between everyday politics and sociopolitical mobilization. We start by exploring how MASVAW men tended to have an interest in gender and/or social justice that predated encountering the movement. This often stemmed from personal experiences and commitments the men had in their lives through work or family to these issues. Then, we explore how joining MASVAW gave form and direction to the nascent egalitarian beliefs they already had, shaping their identities as “gender-sensitive men” and embedding those identities within their everyday politics. Finally, we explore how, despite appearing to be an individually focused “lifestyle movement,” the identities and networks generated through MASVAW participation created the potential for mobilization around specific issues related to gendered violence.

### *Finding MASVAW through Associational Ties*

There were two key mechanisms at work in how the interviewees come to be associated with MASVAW. First, almost all the men, along with their family and colleagues we interviewed, said the men in question were already sensitized to issues of gender inequality and social justice prior to joining MASVAW. Second, consistent with previous research, MASVAW men tended to join because they knew individuals through their existing social networks who were instrumental in pulling them into the movement.

Most of the MASVAW men interviewed reported that they were *already interested* in issues of gender, justice, and nonviolence prior to joining MASVAW. This typically happened because women in their lives had influenced their thinking on these issues, they worked in a field that exposed them to thinking about gendered violence, or both (Mogford, Irby, and Das 2015). One MASVAW participant, Neeraj,<sup>1</sup> suggested that he was always concerned with social justice, saying, “I was a little more sensitive than other people. I thought maybe it was a gift from God.” As an example, he talked about feelings of internal conflict around being told women were inferior to men. Several of the men interviewed echoed sentiments such as this, noting that they had already volunteered with or worked for antiviolence organizations before finding MASVAW. The men’s friends and family concurred with these statements. For example, a colleague of Krishan, one of the MASVAW men, said that “[Krishan] was also a social worker; he used to be concerned about social issues.” Krishan’s colleague typifies him in a way that a number of the friends and family members we interviewed spoke about the MASVAW men: They were concerned with justice, service, and helping others prior to their participation in the organization.

Yet the MASVAW men did not suggest they were wholly enlightened with regard to gender prior to joining MASVAW. Rather, they often represented themselves as having been tentative in their beliefs and behavior. They were sensitive, compassionate, and interested in justice, but lacked the language to talk about issues of gendered violence, or the framework to help them understand why they should treat women with greater respect. As such, many of the men reported having wives, daughters, or sisters who directly or indirectly challenged them to think about gender inequity. For example, one respondent named Sunil reported that he was verbally and physically abusive to his wife, Riya, going so far as to slap her shortly after they were married. However, when Riya stood up to him, it began a process of him changing his beliefs and behavior with regard to women. Sunil said that “After [his] marriage, a lot of changes have taken place,”



particularly with regard to his understandings about gender. Riya now describes Sunil as an “ideal husband” saying that both her influence and his eventual participation in MASVAW have helped him move toward gender egalitarian beliefs and behaviors.

In sum, we see in these examples that the men in question were already predisposed to challenge elements of male dominance because of experiences in their life. Some men worked in nonprofits dedicated to justice while others had women in their lives who had changed their thinking on gender. The family members and friends of the men in our study backed up these assessments, often suggesting that the MASVAW men showed inklings of later behavior prior to joining the group. Obviously, *many men* have these experiences without developing the egalitarian beliefs that members of MASVAW are expected to hold. The men we interviewed, though, proceeded to find MASVAW via their social networks and joined based on existing understandings they had of themselves.

The interviewed men predominantly encountered MASVAW through their professional settings. Many of the men were either teachers at schools where MASVAW hosted workshops or employees/volunteers for nonprofit organizations and, through this, encountered one or more MASVAW participants. For example, Sandeep, a social worker, told us that a prominent MASVAW member named Arun recruited him. Some mutual acquaintances from Sandeep’s work told Arun that Sandeep would be a good fit for MASVAW because he was already interested in gender inequality. Similarly, Harish, who is employed at an NGO, worked with a sustainable development organization called Kriti Team that had hosted MASVAW events. Through this, Harish encountered the group and began taking workshops with them. For other men, friends or family members got them involved. For example, Krishan, one of the most active MASVAW recruiters we interviewed, was invited by the head of the nonprofit his wife worked for to attend an MASVAW training session as an associate of the organization. Krishan was impressed with the organization and, in turn, recruited his younger brother to participate, as well.

The picture that emerges from the interviews are of men who were already interested in some aspects of gendered inequality and VAW, but who had not yet fully thought through what that might mean for their everyday practices. As such, many continued to participate in sexist behavior in their homes. Encounters with MASVAW participants through professional and personal networks, however, brought them into the organization and provided the men with a logic by which they could begin to actualize their embryonic beliefs about gender egalitarianism in their lives.

### *Being a “Gender-sensitive Man” in Everyday Practice*

Salient identities often draw on existing narratives, commitments, and relationships in one’s life, rather than being created whole cloth (Burke and Stets 2009). Our conversations with MASVAW activists and their significant others revealed that MASVAW took burgeoning ideas about gender that the men had and gave direction to them, allowing the men to make changes in their beliefs and behavior. Through this, each participant came to understand himself as a “sensitive man,” who both enacts this identity in his daily life and is able to spread his ideas to others.

The men interviewed tended to describe their encounter with MASVAW as a significant event that required a thorough reconceptualization of their identity and behavior. They understood these changes as necessitating a lifelong commitment to the principles of gender egalitarianism. For example, one activist, named Sandeep, commented,

[The changes in my beliefs because of MASVAW are] going to be permanent, because it’s not like an eating habit which you change without giving much thought on it. [The] thought that you will not discriminate against your partner; it’s an ideology . . . it will make certain changes which will remain forever.

Note that Sandeep focuses on the home, however, suggesting that it is about “discriminat[ion] against your partner.” The interviewed MASVAW men typically suggested their participation changed their ideas and behavior primarily with regard to their *personal identity and domestic behavior*. For example, Kapil commented that he previously refused to let his wife participate in social events outside the house but said that now “I encourage her, [saying] you go ahead, I will be with you, supporting you.” He also commented that he increasingly helps the women in his household with work in the field, adding that men typically “don’t consider [fieldwork] men’s work . . . But now we are trying to say that men and women are equal. And you should consider women’s work your work.”

The associates of the MASVAW men confirmed seeing these transitions in their lives. For example, Anjali, Neeraj’s mother, said, “when [Neeraj] joined MASVAW, he took more interest in household activities and is giving full contribution [to those] activities [such as] washing clothes, cleaning utensils, making food, all these things.” Similarly, Harish’s wife Ruhi commented that Harish used to have “hesitation” about helping out with household labor but, since joining MASVAW, helps cook and wash clothing, adding that he will even perform these actions if they have people over who might see him do work typically associated with women. These comments are representative of statements from the interviewed members of MASVAW, who often brought up the idea that participation in the group has provided them with concrete ways to actualize gender egalitarian beliefs in their homes and relationships.

These examples demonstrate the degree to which the interviewees understood the identity and behavioral changes that emerged from MASVAW participation in localized and individualistic terms. Through a process similar to the “consciousness raising” sessions of the U.S. feminist movement, MASVAW men participated in workshops and conversations designed to shift their perspective. As the men understood it, the ideological and identity changes that emerged out of these events resulted in different behavior, particularly in regard to the domestic sphere, where the men came to treat their wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters more respectfully.

In addition, the MASVAW men reported a greater desire to share their beliefs with others. For example, Harish, a teacher, stated that since joining MASVAW, he has noticed a change in how he handles encounters with sexism in public. He provided two stories to illustrate. The first was chastising young men on the train for making misogynistic comments. The second was working with men at his school to more equally share the workload with their women colleagues and to tone down their “abusive language.” He added that “This type of reaction I’m able to do because of MASVAW” but also highlighted his behavior in the home, saying, “If I want to change society, I have to start with my family. I have to be careful not to exploit my wife.” Assertions like this were common among the interviewees. Even as they insisted that their primary focus was the domestic sphere, they shared stories of challenging others around them to change their behavior.

The individualistic, domestic focus suggests that MASVAW is a typical “lifestyle movement,” given Haenfler et al.’s (2012) three conditions. MASVAW’s predominant organizing model is men coming together to discuss their feelings and experiences, and the changes men discussed focus on the home. MASVAW thus seems (1) focused on the private sphere, (2) ongoing instead of episodic, and (3) aimed at cultural practices rather than the state. Does MASVAW’s focus on changing beliefs and behavior at the individual and household level preclude wider mobilization?

### *Moving to a Social Movement Mode of Coordination*

Despite the seemingly individualistic focus of MASVAW, the movement has generated sporadic mobilization around issues of gendered violence in UP. The primary mechanism through which this has happened is by creating networks of men (as well as women) who share gender

egalitarian beliefs and can join together and organize when action becomes necessary or desirable. This happens both through forging actual associational ties and through the creation of cognitive maps that shape how MASVAW members perceive social boundaries. For example, an interviewee named Manoj suggested that a benefit of joining MASVAW was connecting with other members, both through meeting them and, more broadly, by realizing that he is not alone. Manoj said MASVAW men provided “a lot of moral support,” adding “[now] there’s some space in [my] life where people have thinking like me.” The primary form that the sporadic mobilizations organized through MASVAW took was putting pressure on local authorities when little was done to address gendered violence. As one member, Harish, explained, “MASVAW gave us a platform, made us aware, and . . . also gave us a strength . . . We are many people. If something comes across, then all of us discuss, put pressure.”

MASVAW members specifically mentioned the development of both associational ties and cognitive maps forged through their participation in helping them take action. The men often reported that they discovered volunteer opportunities with nonprofit organizations through attending events and programs sponsored by MASVAW. In addition, many of the men described a growing understanding that women were their allies and, therefore, they should be elevating women’s voices. Several men recounted stories of encouraging women to become more active in civic engagement and offering support to them as they did so. For example, Harish mentioned that he and some other MASVAW men encouraged the women of their village to come to town meetings along with their husbands and told them that the MASVAW men would support them if they did. He proudly explained that the meetings have become increasingly gender egalitarian through such efforts.

Examples of MASVAW mobilizing around particular events were frequent in the interviews with members. For example, Dhruv commented that there was a case in a village near to where he lived in which a 60-year-old man had sexually abused a young neighbor girl. Dhruv recalled hearing that there was no police investigation, stating, “the first thing is to inform all MASVAW members” so they could collectively lobby the police to take the incident seriously. He said the ultimate result was that “the authorities did the right work because of my intervention” and the man who sexually abused the young woman “was arrested [because] when there is a crowd, that creates pressure [on the police].” He specifically suggested that he both mobilized a critical mass of voices and drew on connections to the local media through his MASVAW contacts.

Nearly every interviewee presented a similar story. For example, Manoj related a story about a local woman who had been killed by two family members only to have the police close the case when the family paid them off. Manoj contacted other MASVAW members and, with their help, protested the police’s corruption, including getting in touch with contacts in the local media with the story. Eventually, the case was reopened, and the two men who committed the murder were arrested and sentenced for their crime. Manoj said the case would have never been reopened without the pressure put on the police by MASVAW and their contacts. Other men reported mobilizing MASVAW members and allies against people in their village committing acts of spousal abuse or teachers in local schools who had a reputation for sexually harassing or assaulting female students.

It is worth highlighting several elements of these actions. First, they target a variety of actors, from state authority figures (the police), to authority figures within institutions (teachers), to ordinary citizens (men committing acts of VAW). The variety of targets suggests that, like many movements, MASVAW does not have a single target (Armstrong and Bernstein 2008; Yukich 2013). Rather, they combat gendered violence in a variety of manifestations and institutions. Second, part of why they can do this is because their grassroots and decentralized organizational form means they may draw on immediate, local knowledge to mobilize quickly around particular incidents and needs (see Polletta 2002). Finally, not every interviewee provided stories of mobilization, but even Harish, a member who said he had not personally

participated in such action, commented, “we [MASVAW] are prepared to handle it if any such incident occurs. We keep discussing these things with the women who are working at the field level and also with the young boys [in the village].” As such, even members who had not participated in mobilization *recognized the potential for collective action* that MASVAW created through their cultivation of networks of like-minded people. Several members concurred, mentioning hosting discussion groups or documentary screenings on gender where they forged relationships with new, potential male members as well as women from various women’s groups and organizations.

In the above examples, we see how, despite MASVAW’s focus on identity and behavior change at the individual level, they nonetheless generated collective action. They accomplished this through creating networks of men who (1) knew each other, (2) were aware of other sympathetic actors including women and journalists, (3) were knowledgeable on local issues related to gendered violence, and (4) conceptualized themselves as part of a larger identity category of gender-sensitive men and feminist women. Almost all the men we spoke with related stories about participating in ad hoc collective action around a particular issue when necessary through these networks, despite the stated focus of the movement initially being more expressive and individualistic.

## Discussion

The men in this study show a pattern in how they understand their participation in MASVAW. They reported that they had an embryonic interest in gender egalitarian identities and behaviors, but lacked an understanding of how to put such things into practice in their everyday life. Through existing social linkages, including friends, coworkers, and family members, they discovered MASVAW and indicated that their participation in the organization provided them with a number of resources for self-change and activism. First, they reported being given a new identity of “gender-sensitive man,” realigning their self-conception. Second, they recalled being provided with new ideologies, languages, and practices related to gender that gave them ways to understand and perform their identity (Mogford et al. 2015). Finally, their participation connected them to other gender-sensitive men, as well as feminist women, building social networks in both senses of the concept discussed earlier. The MASVAW men formed more direct associational ties with contacts who shared their identity, beliefs, and behavior through meeting other participants and attending MASVAW events. In addition, the men redrew their cognitive maps in a variety of ways, identifying explicitly with other gender-sensitive men and feminists, with the various organizations that partner with MASVAW, and with women more broadly. Stories the men told, echoed by their family and associates, of increasingly doing so-called “women’s work,” encouraging women to participate in politics, and actively standing up for women in their various spheres of activity present evidence of their redrawn cognitive maps.

One MASVAW man, Dhruv, has a story of joining MASVAW and becoming aware that nicely illustrates the processes we are examining in action:

I heard from Sandeep and . . . met with Arun and he told me about MASVAW and I became interested. . . . There was a workshop on gender sensitization that was to increase the understanding. . . . There was also discussion on violence and child sexual abuse. Lots of people came from various regions and everyone shared their regional experiences and these also helped to change perspectives. . . . I never imagined that so many sexual harassment cases are in our society. This was strange for me. I was disturbed by this! I filled [out] my form through Arun and began to participate in MASVAW programs. . . . I went to meetings and supported cases. . . . And then I realized that we are doing violence against women sometimes by interrupting their rights, their life, in our family also with mother, sisters.

We see in Dhruv's comments a full story about how participation in MASVAW worked to change his identity and social networks. He was introduced to Arun, an MASVAW organizer, through an existing acquaintance, Sandeep, then attended a workshop where discussion on violence with new contacts led to a changed perspective on gender and VAW. Arun recruited him into official participation in the organization, and he began attending meetings and events. This led to changes in beliefs, behavior, and identification as Dhruv came to redefine violence, see himself as more connected to women, and alter his understanding of how to behave in the home.

Yet, the men understood these changes as focused on personal action in the home, or as about specific interactional incidents. Like Dhruv, who concludes his statement talking about the treatment of women in his family, the MASVAW men we interviewed primarily talked about feeling less self-conscious about performing stereotypically nonmasculine conduct, speaking with greater sensitivity to women, changing their domestic behavior to support their wives to a greater degree, or confronting men they heard make sexist comments in public spaces. For example, several men we interviewed spoke of feeling less embarrassed if their friends or family saw them doing things like cooking or laundry. The men were less likely to speak about wider, more organized activism. As previously discussed, this seems to indicate that MASVAW is what Haenfler et al. (2012) called a lifestyle movement. While MASVAW members certainly did meet for things like educational events and workshops, the primary focus was on ongoing behavioral change among participants.

Nonetheless, as demonstrated, every man *also* related stories of responding to specific threats, opportunities, or circumstances through mobilizing MASVAW men and their allies. These mobilizations relied on the networks the men had cultivated through participation in MASVAW. The men typically heard about the incidents they mobilized against through their associational ties to other members. For example, they described learning about cases of sexual assault or domestic violence, sexual harassment in schools, and police cover-ups of murders of women, all through contacts in MASVAW. Then, using those same contacts, the men related stories of circulating the information and building a critical mass of people to put pressure on individuals, institutions, or authorities to change their behavior. In addition, the men detailed how these mobilizations rested on identity changes that emerged out of participation in MASVAW; they needed to understand violence against women as a problem of concern by identifying more explicitly with women and understanding violence in a more holistic way to be able to mobilize around the issue.

What the case of MASVAW demonstrated is that social movements take many forms, responding to changes and threats in their environment by changing their mode of coordination (Diani 2015). The MASVAW men we interviewed experienced altered boundary definitions through their participation. By identifying with the category of gender-sensitive man, as well as with women more broadly, the men we spoke with joined a subculture of individuals who shared gender egalitarian beliefs and practices, placing them in a web of associational ties that allowed for the sharing of a variety of resources. When threats or opportunities occur that participants in the network deem important, members react by drawing on their shared identity to demand more dense resource allocation, requesting time, money, information, coverage, and so on, to deal with the situation. When the event concludes, the level of resource allocation moves back to where it was before the threat or opportunity arose.

Conceived of this way, "lifestyle movements" are less a particular *kind* of movement and more a particular *mode of sociopolitical coordination* that can easily drift into more visible forms of collective action. If individuals who identify with a lifestyle movement are able to interact with each other to develop social networks, then such communities have potential energy stored within them, waiting to be unleashed. As members of a community identify targets or respond to threats, they call on their associational ties to allocate resources in active ways, shifting their mode of coordination to more "social movement" style action. After this, the mode may shift back, with the potential for action remaining, or stay in an activist mode if the group continues to



act collectively. When MASVAW men, who predominantly act as a loosely connected network of individuals focusing on gender egalitarian practices in their own homes, identify a target, they may call upon those in their network to provide time, money, status, information, and so on, to deal with the situation. When the members are satisfied, things settle down into more individualistic action again, yet the potential for mobilization remains. As such, Diani's (2015) understanding of the network metaphor in movements represents a useful way to think about the connection between seemingly individualistic sociopolitical behavior and more visible collective action undertaken by social movements, as evidenced by the case of MASVAW.

## **Conclusion, Limitations, and Future Research**

This paper has shown that a seemingly individualistic movement generated networks that fomented wider mobilization. We found that the interviewed MASVAW members (1) had pre-movement, nascent gender egalitarian ideologies that (2) were given shape and form through participation in MASVAW, ultimately leading to identities and connections with other members that (3) positioned the participants to mobilize when they were called upon by providing them with the necessary networks in the form of cognitive maps and associational ties. In doing this, MASVAW blurred the line between what we might think of as a "lifestyle movement" focused on individual behavior and a social movement that engages in collective action.

The data above show that MASVAW's mode of coordination was fluid. Because of the experiences and social networks of the interviewed men, they had emerging ideas about gender egalitarianism prior to joining MASVAW. Finding MASVAW through their associational ties heightened the salience of these ideas and allowed them to identify with the broader category of gender-sensitive man, suggesting a broader cognitive map of allies with whom they were aligned. While, most of the time, the identification with this category was individualistic and focused on personal behavior in the domestic sphere, the cognitive maps and associational ties generated by movement participation meant that, when necessary, MASVAW men were able to use these networks to mobilize. Through sharing information and resources, along with generating numbers, MASVAW men did things like support women in their efforts to participate in government or put pressure on authorities to investigate cases of VAW. As such, while MASVAW was predominantly an individualistically focused organization, it created the necessary cognitive maps and associational ties to allow it to shift between various modes of coordination when necessary. We suggest that this process represents a key way to answer Haenfler et al.'s (2012) question about how lifestyle movements can bridge participants into wider collective action.

There are several limitations to the current study. First, the study focused on a relatively small number of highly committed MASVAW participants and their significant others in an effort to deeply analyze their entrance into feminist activism. While this provided us with rich data, it does mean that we cannot generalize to other members of MASVAW, particularly less committed participants who may or may not have had similar experiences to the men discussed in this paper. Second, following this, MASVAW is a very specific kind of organization that, from its inception, incorporated elements of both everyday politics and political activism in its operating principles. This not only makes it an ideal site to study how a social network can shift modes of coordination from individually oriented politics to wider mobilization but also means that we cannot say with certainty that the patterns we saw with MASVAW would be replicated by other lifestyle movements.

These limitations, however, point to possible avenues of future research. First and foremost, we suggest that future research on a variety of lifestyle movements could assess the degree to which the processes discussed here recur across different groups. Do vegans, for example, shift modes of coordination in the same way we saw MASVAW shifting to respond to threats and opportunities? Second, MASVAW itself has changed since our interviews were conducted. The organization has grown and become increasingly activist-oriented, engaging in more collective

action and targeted recruitment. Comparing more recent MASVAW members, who have joined the organization in a different period and perhaps through different means, with the earlier members interviewed here could help us assess the degree to which the processes we saw here are unique to the specific point at which we observed MASVAW or represent something larger about the organization.

Finally, we suggest that there may be a fruitful synthesis between what we present here and other avenues of social movement theorizing. For example, work in the political process theory model tends to posit the development of oppositional consciousness (McAdam 1982) as necessary for social movements to take advantage of either threats or opportunities (Almeida 2003; Mansbridge and Morris 2001; Meyer 2004). Conversely, research on movement abeyance structures (Taylor 1989) suggests that, when opportunities are unavailable, movement cultures may keep oppositional consciousness alive through the internal cultures of movement and movement-adjacent groups and spaces. The integration of theorizing on movement networks and lifestyle movements in the current paper connects with this work. Lifestyle movements may help to generate the “oppositional consciousness” necessary for a social network to respond to an opportunity or threats by shifting their mode of coordination. The networks forged by lifestyle movements may also contribute to the abeyance structures of activist movements by maintaining associational ties and cognitive maps that can be drawn upon when social environments become more receptive to protest. To fully tease out these connections, we suggest that both temporally varied research, examining shifts in movement activity over time, and research comparing different movement networks would be invaluable.

### **Declaration of Conflicting Interests**

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

### **Funding**

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

### **Note**

1. All interviewee names are pseudonyms.

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