"It Might Be Nice to Be a Girl . . . Then You Wouldn't Have to Be Emotionless": Boys' Resistance to Norms of Masculinity During Adolescence

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This article examines the patterns of resistance to norms of masculinity (i.e., emotional stoicism, physical toughness, and autonomy) and its association to psychological and social adjustment among boys from preadolescence through late adolescence. Semi-structured interviews were conducted longitudinally with a sample of 55 White, Black, Latino, and Chinese American boys from 6th grade to 11th grade. Our analyses indicated that boys' resistance to norms of masculinity is explicit and implicit and is prevalent during adolescence, with 78% of the boys in our study demonstrating moderate to high levels of resistance typically during the middle school years. Four trajectories of resistance over time were detected: (a) decreasing resistance; (b) stable moderate-to-high levels of resistance; (c) stable low levels of resistance; and (d) mixed patterns of resistance. White, Black, and Chinese American boys were the most likely to suggest a decline in resistance from pre- to late adolescence, whereas the Latino boys were the least likely to suggest such a decline and the most likely to suggest stable moderate-to-high levels of resistance throughout adolescence. Findings suggest that resistance to norms of masculinity enhances psychological and social adjustment for boys during adolescence and is deeply influenced by the context in which boys are embedded.

Keywords: boys, masculinity, resistance, friendships, adolescence

In response to a perceived "boy crisis," an abundance of books and articles have been published over the past 15 years aiming to understand boys and help them succeed in and out of school (e.g., Farrell, 2001; Kimmel, 2008; Kindlon & Thompson, 2000; Pollack, 1998; Sax, 2007; Sommers, 2000; Tyre, 2009; Way, 2011). Although most of the work has greatly enhanced our knowledge of the challenges that boys face, it has been limited in its ability to offer solutions because of its tendency to represent boys as passive recipients of either culture or nature. Some have argued that boys' problems result from pressures to conform to norms of masculinity (Courtenay, 2000; David & Brannon, 1976; Kimmel, 2008; Levant, 1995; Oliffe & Phillips, 2008; Pleck, 1995; Pollack, 1998; Pleck, Sonenstein, & Ku, 1994; Way, 2011) and others have argued that these problems stem from living in a culture that does not value boys' stereotypically male "nature" (Gurian, 1998, 2010; Sax, 2007). However, recent studies suggest that although boys do, in fact, live in a culture that poses numerous challenges to their healthy development, they are not simply passive recipi-

ents of culture or nature (Barker, 2005; Chu, 2014; Gilligan, 2011; Reichert & Ravitch, 2009; Santos, Galligan, Pahlke, & Fabes, 2013; Santos, 2010; Way, 2011). They also have the capacity to resist or reject particular beliefs, values, and expectations about being a boy or a man and the biological qualities commonly associated with being male. The growing body of research suggests, furthermore, that resistance or nonconformity to gendered norms is a core component of psychological and social wellbeing.

Resistance to norms of masculinity is most commonly defined as expressing beliefs or behaving in ways that counter the "boy code" (Pollack, 1998) or the code of conduct that requires boys to be, for example, emotionally stoic, a rugged individualist, and physically tough (see Chu, 2014; Chu, Porche, & Tolman, 2005; Way, 2011). Although nonadherence to gendered norms is a similar construct and could be used interchangeably with the construct of resistance, the latter emphasizes the agency of the person more than the former and is the preferred construct for this article. Examples of resistance in an American context include boys openly expressing a desire for and/or having emotionally intimate relationships with male peers throughout adolescence; expressing feelings of vulnerability with male and female peers; seeking and valuing interdependence; disliking any form of aggression; and openly challenging the accuracy of gender stereotypes that boys, for example, are not emotional or do not "need" close friendships.

Resistance to norms of masculinity, furthermore, is commonly evident in relationships with peers (see Way, 2011) and can be implicit or explicit. Implicit resistance is the challenging of such norms in an indirect or unconscious manner and is evident when

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boys speak about having emotionally intimate male friendships and the importance of such friendships. Although these behaviors and attitudes are implicitly challenging masculine norms, they are not explicitly critiquing them. Explicit resistance to norms of masculinity, by contrast, involves directly challenging or questioning such norms and expectations. An example of such resistance is when one of the boys in our study claimed that it "might be nice to be a girl, then you wouldn't have to be emotionless." This boy is directly critiquing masculine norms.

Resistance or nonconformity to norms of masculinity has also been linked to positive psychological, social, and academic adjustment (Blazina, Pisecco, & O'Neil, 2005; Chu, 2014; Cournoyer & Mahalik, 1995; Good, Heppner, DeBord, & Fischer, 2004; Gupta et al., 2013; Hayes & Mahalik, 2000; Mahalik et al., 2003; Santos, 2010; Wester, Kuo, & Vogel, 2006). According to this growing body of research, the key to helping boys thrive lies in fostering boys' resistance to masculine norms that encourage boys not to express their feelings, to engage in aggressive behavior, and to deny their desire and need for relationships. However, we are only beginning to understand the patterns of resistance to norms of masculinity among boys during adolescence, the individual variation among boys, and how patterns of resistance may be associated with adjustment.

The current article examines the patterns of resistance among boys from pre- to late adolescence (i.e., 6th grade to 11th grade), the ethnic/racial variation in such patterns, and the ways it is linked to psychological and social adjustment. The authors draw from a larger 6-year-long longitudinal, mixed method study of social and emotional development among adolescents living in an urban context in the United States (see author note). A qualitative subsample consisting of interviews with 55 Black, Dominican American, Puerto Rican, White, and Chinese American boys from a wide range of social classes was used to examine patterns of resistance.

Boys' Resistance to Norms of Masculinity

The study of resistance grows out of the recognition that children and adolescents are actively engaged in the socialization process (Anyon, 1984; Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Chu, 2004, 2014; Gilligan, 1990; Gilligan, 2011; Robinson & Ward, 1991) and respond to cultural beliefs, norms, and practices as well as to their biology. They do not simply accommodate to messages received from parents, teachers, and peers about what it means to be a girl, with its emphasis on feminine goodness and selflessness, or a boy, with its emphasis on stoicism, toughness, and independence. Boys and girls, in addition, do not merely succumb to certain elements of their biology (e.g., aggression) over others (e.g., empathy) (de Waal, 2009). Children and adolescents have the capacity and often the desire to explicitly reject those messages and values that are not good for them because, as Carol Gilligan (2011) states, "like a healthy body resists infection, a healthy psyche resists disease."

Although there have been decades of research on patterns and correlates of adherence to gendered norms among boys and men (Blazina, Pisecco, & O'Neil, 2005; Cournoyer & Mahalik, 1995; Good et al., 1995; Hayes & Mahalik, 2000; Kimmel, 2008; Mahalik et al., 2003; Pleck, 1981, 1995; Pleck, Sonenstein, & Ku, 1993, 1993a, 1994, 1994a, 2004; Wester, Kuo, & Vogel, 2006; Wong & Rochlen, 2008), the study of resistance or the ways in

which young people challenge gendered norms or expectations attitudinally and behaviorally has focused on girls and young women (e.g., Gilligan, 1990; Gilligan, 2011; Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Tolman, 2005; Ward, 1996). In their groundbreaking, longitudinal work, for example, Carol Gilligan and Lyn Mikel Brown (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 1990; Gilligan et al., 1991; Gilligan, 2011) find that girls during late childhood (i.e., 8–11 years) are able to speak freely and honestly in their relationships. They are able to stay connected to what they know and resist the cultural pressures of feminine goodness that privilege kindness over girls' honest voices. However, at the edge of adolescence, when cultural pressures to accommodate to gendered expectations intensify, girls' resistance falters and they struggle to hold on to what they know. Without support for their honest voices, girls find it difficult to continue to speak their hearts and minds (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 1990; Gilligan, 2011). To know what they know, in other words, becomes increasingly risky and their formerly honest and, thus, resistant voices become fraught with contradiction.

The small but growing body of research on resistance among boys has noted similar patterns of loss (Chu, 2014; Way, 2011). In their longitudinal studies of 145 boys, Way and her research team find that boys enter their teenage years with a tremendous willingness and ability to engage in intimate male friendships despite the masculine dictates that discourage such "girly" or "gay" behavior. Boys, they find, implicitly resist the norms of emotional stoicism, autonomy, and physical toughness in their friendships. They speak about, for example, the necessity of revealing "one's heart" to a best friend so that "you won't go wacko" and "try to kill yourself." However, as boys enter manhood, they increasingly refer to the pressures to "man up" and not be girly or gay, and their emotionally astute voices become fearful and wary. Words such as "love," so pervasive in their interviews when speaking about male friendships during early and middle adolescence, give way to expressions of sadness, anger, frustration or, simply, of not caring any longer. Boys, in other words, begin to disconnect from themselves and others in the name of "manhood" (Way, 2011).

The resistance among boys, as well as the decline in resistance over time, is also evident in Chu's studies (Chu, 2004, 2014). In her studies of adolescent boys, Chu (2004) finds that they commonly express their feelings of vulnerability and openly acknowledge their desire for intimate friendships. They implicitly resist norms of masculinity that label these behaviors as gay or girly. Similarly, in her observational 2-year research study of 4 and 5-year-old boys, Chu (2014) reports that young boys start off reading the emotional and relational world in astute ways that mirror the resistance noted among boys during early and middle adolescence. According to Chu, 4-year-olds display—along with their relational capabilities—a healthy resistance to debilitating norms of masculinity that manifest in their school and peer group cultures. Demonstrating that their alignment with norms of masculine behavior is neither automatic nor inevitable, the boys implicitly reject the norms of autonomy by seeking out the friendship and support of other boys in the classroom and defending their peers when others are bullying them. However, Chu also finds that as the school year progressed the boys grew increasingly accommodating to gendered expectations, forming, for example, "the mean team" that pits them against girls and accentuates their aggression (Chu, 2014).

Although the studies of Way (2011) and Chu (2004, 2014) are the only ones to date to examine patterns of change over time in resistance among boys, there is additional evidence of resistance to norms of masculinity in studies of boys. For example, William Pollack's research finds that adolescent boys discuss "needing" someone to talk to, relying on their friends to share their secrets, "expressing" their feelings with their closest friends, and telling each other "everything" (Pollack & Shuster, 2000). Boys have also been shown to resist masculine norms in their romantic relationships, valuing emotional intimacy over sex in these relationships (Schalet, 2011; Smiler, 2008; Tolman, Spencer, Harmon, Rosen-Reynoso, & Striepe, 2004). Smiler reports that the majority of his sample of 10th grade boys reported relational reasons for dating and having sex, including the enhancement of connection with their romantic partner (e.g., "I wanted to get to know the person better") and depth of feelings for their partner (e.g., "I liked the person more than I ever liked anyone"). Similarly, Amy Schalet (2011) finds that emotional intimacy with girls is a primary goal for the boys in her study. A handful of other researchers have also documented boys' implicit and explicit resistance to norms of masculinity in the United States and elsewhere (Barker, 2005; Edley & Wetherell, 1997; Frosh, Phoenix, & Pattman, 2002; Gough, 2001; Reichert & Ravitch, 2009).

Research has also indicated that boys' resistance to norms of masculinity is significantly associated with their psychological, social, and academic adjustment (Chu et al., 2005; Gupta et al., 2013; Hayes & Mahalik, 2000; Mahalik et al., 2003; Santos, 2010; Santos et al., 2013; Santos, Way, & Hughes, 2011). In an analysis of 400 boys from 6th through 8th grade, Santos (2010) finds that resistance to masculine norms (i.e., emotional stoicism, autonomy, and physical toughness) in their friendships is significantly associated with psychological adjustment both concurrently and prospectively. Santos and his colleagues also find that resistance to norms of masculinity in boys' friendships is associated with academic engagement (Santos, Way, & Hughes, 2011) and math achievement as measured by standardized test scores (Santos et al., 2013). In a recent cross-cultural analysis of resistance to masculine norms in the United States and China, Gupta and her colleagues find that resistance to gendered norms is associated with lower levels of depression, higher self-esteem, and higher friendship quality among adolescent boys in both cultural contexts (Gupta et al., 2013). Other researchers have also found a positive association between resistance or nonconformity to gendered norms and well-being (Blazina, Pisecco, & O'Neil, 2005; Wester, Kuo, & Vogel, 2006) and a negative association with levels of anxiety and depression (Cournoyer & Mahalik, 1995; Good et al., 1995).

Missing in the research on resistance is an understanding of the patterns of resistance from early to late adolescence, with early adolescence being a particularly important time in development to study resistance given that this is the time in which pressures to accommodate to norms of masculinity increase dramatically from childhood (Crouter, Manke, & McHale, 1995; Galambos, Almeida, & Petersen, 1990; Hill & Lynch, 1983; Huston & Alvarez, 1990). Way's work reveals the processes of resistance among high school students and Chu's work reveals the process during early childhood. No researchers to date, however, have examined such processes from pre- to late adolescence. Furthermore, little is known about patterns of resistance in ethnically diverse samples. Way found that Puerto Rican and Dominican American boys were

more likely to resist the masculine norms of emotional stoicism and autonomy, whereas the Chinese American boys were the least likely (Way, 2011). These patterns appear to result from cultural variations in the emphasis on emotional expression in relationships (see Melzi & Fernández, 2004), the meaning of different masculinities across ethnicities (see Hammond & Mattis, 2005; Pompper, 2010), and ethnic stereotypes about masculinity in the United States that makes resistance easier for boys and men in certain ethnic groups (e.g., Latinos) than in others (e.g., Asians) who are stereotyped as being more feminine (Lee, 2005; Lei, 2003). These findings indicate intersections between ethnicity and norms of masculinity (Crenshaw, 1995), but do not provide insight as to whether such intersectionality is evident during the middle school years, when the pressures to accommodate to gendered norms are particularly intense (Hill & Lynch, 1983; Huston & Alvarez, 1990).

The Current Study

Responding to the gaps in the literature, we examined: (a) the form (i.e., explicit vs. implicit) of resistance; (b) the patterns of resistance from 6th grade to 11th grade; (c) the variation in patterns by ethnicity/race; and (d) the ways in which resistance is linked to both psychological and social adjustment. Although we began our investigation with an interest in resistance across relationships (e.g., parents and peers), our interviews suggested that resistance was primarily evident in boys' relationships with their peers. Thus, the focus of our analysis is on resistance in peer relationships. We did not examine patterns of resistance in romantic relationships given that such relationships are only relevant for some students.

Method

Procedure

The data for the current study are drawn from a mixed method, longitudinal study examining contextual influences on adolescents' social, emotional, and academic development across the middle and high school years in New York City (see author note). In the first years of the study (spring of 2005 or 2006 depending on the school), we recruited participants from six middle schools that were selected based on our goals of including only middle schools (6th through 8th grade) and having an ethnically diverse sample. From our survey sample, we purposefully sampled (based on ethnicity and gender) a subgroup of students to participate in individual, semi-structured interviews. Students who participated in the interview in 6th grade were subsequently contacted in the 8th, 9th, and 11th grades to participate in additional interviews. Additionally, 12 of the boys in our study were interviewed in the 9th grade for a separate study focused on the transition into high school. The focus of the analysis in this article is only on the interview data.

All interviews were conducted by extensively trained interviewers. Interviewer–interviewee pairs were typically matched on race or ethnicity and gender to enhance levels of comfort in talking about issues related to race and gender. Interviews took place at the adolescent's home, school, or in a private interviewing space in the research lab of the principal investigators. The interview protocol

included questions pertaining to school and academics, peers and friendships, family relationships, ethnic or racial identity and socialization, gender identity and socialization, and future goals and aspirations. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. Overall, 77% of recruited adolescents returned parental consent forms, of which 78% had been given consent to participate.

Participants

For the purpose of the present analysis, we selected the boys from our interview subsample whose interviews spanned pre- through late adolescence (i.e., 6th through 11th grades) and who had three or more interviews, including an 11th grade interview. The final qualitative sample was 55 boys (170 interviews). Five boys had four waves of interview data (i.e., 6th, 8th, 9th, and 11th), and the majority of our sample (50 boys) had three interviews in 6th, 8th, and 11th grades. The final longitudinal, qualitative sample included 11 Black boys (20.0%), 18 White boys (32.7%), 13 Chinese American boys (23.6%), 8 Dominican American boys (14.5%), and 5 Puerto Rican boys (9.1%), proportions that were representative of the full qualitative sample. Next, an intensive sample of 27 boys was selected from the subsample of 55 boys to conduct in-depth narrative analyses of the patterns of resistance from early through late adolescence. We chose to focus on a smaller group of boys for the in-depth analysis because of the time-intensive nature of the narrative analysis. The intensive sample was comprised of 6 Black (22.2%), 6 White (22.2%), 5 Chinese American (18.5%), 5 Dominican American (18.5%), and 5 Puerto Rican boys (18.5%). With the remaining 28 boys who were not included in our intensive sample, we coded for the patterns that we detected in our intensive sample. This two-step process of analysis is typical of data analytic procedures in studies with large qualitative samples (Way, 2011). Although not ideal, the Puerto Rican and Dominican American students were combined into the pan-ethnic category "Latino" in our final analysis because of the small number of Puerto Ricans and Dominican Americans in our sample.

Data Analysis

The coding scheme developed by our research team for this analysis relied on techniques drawn from the Listening Guide (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg, & Bertsch, 2003) and open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) as well as the theoretical and empirical literature that suggests that boys commonly resist a specified set of three masculine norms—namely, emotional stoicism, autonomy, and physical toughness (e.g., Chu et al., 2005; Chu, 2004, 2014; Gupta et al., 2013; Santos, 2010; Way, 2011). We coded the boys' interviews along three domains of resistance: (a) resistance to emotional stoicism or evidence of being emotionally expressive with others; (b) resistance to autonomy or the expression of needing others or being interdependent; and (c) resistance to physical toughness or not liking aggression. Although we coded for each domain, we did not find each domain in each interview. Even boys who seemed resistant in one domain did not necessarily reveal evidence of resistance in all three domains. Thus, we collapsed the domains together to generate an overall code of resistance for each interview that ranged from low

resistance overall to moderate resistance to high levels of resistance. The boys whose interviews were coded as low in resistance were those who revealed few, if any, examples of resistance, regardless of the norm, within any of their relationships. Those who scored in the moderate resistance range were those who provided numerous examples of resistance to at least one of the three masculine norms in their interviews but also provided numerous examples of accommodation to these norms. Finally, those who were scored in the high levels of resistance were those who provided numerous examples of resistance to at least one of the three masculine norms throughout their interviews and few, if any, examples of accommodation to these norms. Every interview for each boy received a score of low, moderate, or high resistance to norms of masculinity. With these scores, we were able to assess change in resistance for each boy over time. In our final analysis, we chose to combine the boys who were scored as moderately resistant with those who were scored as highly resistant, as it was unclear whether the distinction between these two scores was meaningful.

An ethnically and racially diverse team of undergraduate and graduate students were assigned individual cases to code independently. Coders were trained intensively in reading for resistance to the specified set of masculine norms (i.e., emotional stoicism, autonomy, and physical toughness) in the interviews. With the subsample of 27 boys in the intensive sample, there was an 85.2% agreement in the coding of resistance trajectories, yielding an acceptable Cohen's κ of .80.

Results

The findings from our analysis revealed that resistance to the norms of masculinity is pervasive among adolescent boys across ethnicity. Of the 55 boys in our sample, 78% demonstrated moderate to high levels of resistance in at least one interview, typically in their 6th and/or 8th grade. More specifically, 71% of the boys indicated resistance to norms of masculinity in their 6th and/or 8th grade interviews; whereas only 43% indicated such resistance by their 11th grade interviews. The boys, in other words, were less likely to suggest patterns of resistance during late adolescence than during pre- or early adolescence.

Among those boys who resisted norms of masculinity, 20% resisted such norms in an explicit form, whereas the remaining resisted implicitly. Only patterns of implicit resistance, however, appeared to change over time (see Table 1). The most prevalent trajectory of implicit resistance among boys was a decline from pre- to late adolescence (34.5% of the total sample and 70% of those whose patterns of resistance changed over time). These boys were coded as moderately to highly resistant in the 6th and/or 8th grade and low resistant by the 11th grade. The second most prevalent pattern (29% of the total sample) consisted of boys who maintained stable levels of moderate to high resistance from pre- to late adolescence. The third most common trajectory (22% of the total sample) of resistance were those boys who were coded as low to no resistance from pre- to late adolescence. The fourth trajectory (14% of the total sample), labeled "mixed," were those boys who were coded as low resistance in the 6th and/or 8th grade and moderately to highly resistance by the 11th grade ($N = 4$) or a U-shaped pattern with moderate to high levels of resistance in 6th and 11th grade but

Table 1

Trajectories of Boys' Resistance by Ethnic/Racial Group for Full Qualitative Sample

Ethnic/Racial group	Trajectory categorization				
	Decrease	Stable (moderate to high)	Stable (low)	Mixed	Total
White	8	4	1	5	18
Black	4	2	3	2	11
Chinese American	5	3	5	0	13
Latino	2	7	3	1	13
Total (%)	19 (34.5%)	16 (29.1%)	12 (21.8%)	8 (14.5%)	55

Note. Dominican-American and Puerto Rican boys were collapsed into one pan-ethnic category, Latino, because the number of Puerto Rican boys in the full sample was too small ($n = 5$). Boys categorized as "mixed" in their trajectory of resistance suggested either an increase in level of resistance between 6th and 8th grades ($N = 4$) or a U-shaped pattern of resistance (i.e., decrease between 6th and 8th and a subsequent increase between 8th and 11th) ($N = 4$).

lower levels in the 8th grade ($N = 4$). Given the small size of the fourth trajectory and the fact that the patterns within this group did not reveal a consistent pattern, this fourth trajectory will not be described in this article.

Furthermore, we found ethnic/racial differences in trajectories of implicit resistance. As seen in Table 1, White, Black, and Chinese American boys were the most likely to reveal a decline in resistance over time, whereas the Latino boys (Dominican American and Puerto Rican) were the least likely to reveal a decline in resistance over time. Among those who declined in resistance, 89% were White, Black, or Chinese American. Furthermore, the Latino boys were more likely to reveal being moderately to highly resistant in the 6th, 8th, and 11th grades; whereas the Black boys were the least likely to reveal such patterns. The Chinese American boys were the most likely to reveal patterns of low resistance across all 3 years; whereas the White boys were the least likely to reveal such patterns across all 3 years.

Across the trajectories, levels of resistance appeared to be positively associated with psychological and social adjustment. Boys spoke about the need to resist norms of masculinity or to openly express their thoughts and feelings as a core part of their mental health and their ability to have close friendships. Conversely, the boys who were the least resistant in their interviews spoke of feelings of depression and isolation or of "not caring any longer." They were also the boys who were the least likely to have close friendships or close relationships with at least one of their parents. However, a subgroup of boys ($N = 11$) within the stable moderate-to-high resistors suggested that although they were resistant in their language—implicitly challenging gendered norms—they were not able to find the friendships that they wanted and they appeared to be as depressed as the boys in the stable low resistors. In other words, they were not able to experience the benefits of their resistance and appeared to have poor mental health. For the remainder of this article, we will describe our findings regarding the forms and patterns of resistance and its association with adjustment

Explicit Resistance

Although only 20% of the boys expressed explicit resistance to norms of masculinity during at least one interview, their responses reveal the masculine norms that the boys in our study resist as well as the ways in which boys critiqued such norms. For example, Louis, when asked in the 8th grade to discuss stereotypes of boys, says:

> It's kind of an image, like there's a picture of boys are supposed to be strong and muscular and protect the women maybe, like that's the image. But it's not always like that and you don't always have to live up to that.

In the 6th grade, Marco responds similarly when he speaks about the stereotype that boys should not cry: "Sometimes boys have feelings too. They gotta let it out once in a while." Diego says in the 6th grade: "A man should show his emotions like how a girl shows emotions, because it's feelings and everybody has feelings and stuff." Kyle says in the 11th grade in response to a question of what it means to be a man,

> You're not supposed to be scared or you're not supposed to be worried about something. That I believe is kind of dumb because emotions are normal. But yeah, one of the things they would say about being a man is to always pretend as if nothing bothers you, which is completely wrong in my opinion. . . . Emotions are normal, everybody has them . . . It doesn't make you less of a man if you feel any of those emotions . . . if you're scared about something or worried about something then you shouldn't be told that you're being a woman because you feel—because you're feeling those emotions.

Boys such as Louis, Marco, Diego, and Kyle both identified and challenged the veracity of masculine norms and specified why they believed it was "completely wrong" to maintain such norms (e.g., "Emotions are normal, everybody has them").

Boys who explicitly resisted masculine norms often rooted their critiques in their own experiences. For example, Trey says in the 11th grade,

> T: [People] just [think] that boys as teenagers don't care about feelings. Like there are certain ones, they don't care about a girl's feelings. I think they should be considerate of a female's feelings. . . . and considerate of their own feelings.
>
> I: So how do you know that a boy should act the way that you think that they should?
>
> T: Mm, because I act like that, I act that way.

Connor expresses a similar opinion in his 11th grade interview:

> As a man—a male—there's an expectation for you, you know, not to show emotion or, you know, be emotional and not indulge in, you know, 'sissy' things. Like, you know, cooking for example. And like it's considered odd that I'm interested in cooking.

Boys such as Trey and Connor saw the contradiction between what is expected of them and what they do themselves. Rather than pathologize themselves, they openly challenge the expectations. Although only a minority of the boys revealed explicit forms of resistance in their interviews, their responses are important as they

reveal the emotional acuity and depth of boys and their ability to see the metaphoric hand in front of their faces.

Declining Resistance

The most prevalent trajectory of change over time in patterns of resistance was that of boys who revealed evidence of implicit resistance in their 6th and/or 8th grade only to become seemingly less resistant over time. The boys in this group were overwhelmingly White, Black, or Chinese American, with only two Latino boys in this group.

An example of such decline in resistance includes John. In the 6th grade, John presents himself in his interview as a caring and "open" boy who is eager to make friends with his peers. He mentions that one of the things that he "hates" about his friendships is when "everyone argues and when it's more serious like fighting, I hate that the most." He describes how he used to be shy but has become more open and talks more than he used to with his friends. The reason he and his best friend are so close is because "when I needed help, he was always there . . . I think it is important [to have friends] . . . like it would be really silent without friends, and I would probably be arguing a lot." Underscoring the importance of talk in his friendships and its link to mental health ("I would probably be arguing a lot"), John resists the norms of manhood that devalue emotional intimacy in boys' friendships.

In the 8th grade, John continues to resist norms of masculinity in his description of his friendships:

> [My best friend] understands me . . .. Like, if I really need something, he will like know it sort of . . . I could tell him stuff and then he will like understand it. He wouldn't like tell other people. . . . If I am like quietish and everything, he would like talk to me and ask me why. His sensitivity to the emotional nuances in his friendships implicitly resists norms of masculinity.

By his 11th grade interview, John has "manned up" in his language and in his behavior. He no longer notices the details in his male friendships. Although he says that he has fewer friends this year because he has eliminated casual "hi/bye" friends, the emotional ties of his friendships seem weaker than in his earlier interviews. Asked about the negative parts of his relationship with his best friend, John says,

> He keeps joking too much . . . oh he goes like, sometimes, the last time he was like "oh you're a little bitch you don't even have a girl," stuff like that . . . I was like, oh damn. Two friends were standing with us and we were walking and he was joking about it and I was like "damn, he's going to blow my spot up." But then I realize that the two friends don't have girlfriends either. Yeah, I'm like damn.

His adoption of urban vernacular that is masculine in tone ("he's going to blow my spot up," or blow my cover), as well as his repeated insistence that this interaction with his best friend was a "joke" reveals the ways in which emotional stoicism and toughness infiltrate his friendships. In their struggle to follow the boy code, boys like John hide hurt feelings, turn betrayals into jokes, and downplay the extent to which jokes hurt.

When asked what it means to be a man, John says, in his 11th grade interview,

> Being a man is supporting yourself financially and emotionally I think. . . . Like you can, I guess, like deal with your own problems by yourself . . . when something like your life is getting tough, like I guess, it's not manly for you to go out and start crying, I guess, like it's more you need to hold it in. . . . As a man, you can't just go blabbering out all your feelings and stuff . . . I don't need to like—whenever I am sad, I don't need to go to my parents or whatever and express myself. I'm more independent. . . . Myself. I can personally handle sadness, like I get over it. But I personally don't need to talk about my feelings. . . . I just keep it in.

Wanting to sound "manly," but conveying an uncertainty ("I think . . . I guess . . . I guess . . . I guess"), John reveals a central tension for the boys in our studies. They want to "blab out all your feelings" but feel pressure to be "more independent" and "hold it in." Strikingly, John does not interpret manhood as a lack of emotionality but rather as holding your emotions "in" and not going "out and start crying."

While John doesn't directly discuss the consequences of "not talking" or of "holding it in," Diego does. In his 11th grade interview, Diego, another boy who suggested a decline in resistance over time, says that he drinks and uses drugs when he is feeling hurt or alone:

> I don't know. Like I was tired of being like this feeling alone, so like, whenever I smoke or drink, I have that mindset of being happy. Every time I drink I feel happy. . . . The only time I'll touch like drugs or alcohol is when I'm hurting or when I can't express myself or articulate my feelings for someone or toward what is happening.

Diego articulates what is most likely also true for Tom who, by his 11th grade interview, says that the biggest change for him since he was in 8th grade is that he smokes more marijuana while also telling his interviewer that he does not talk to anyone about his feelings anymore. Explaining the importance of talking about his feelings, another boy says in the 11th grade: "Because if me and my mother don't talk anymore, sooner or later like we will never talk and then soon we will have no feelings for each other." He articulates the dilemma that the boys seem to know that if they speak what they feel they may get hurt, but if they don't speak at all they will be left alone.

Stable Moderate-to-High Resisters

Although the most common trajectory of resistance over time was a decline and significantly more boys (71%) were resistant in the middle school years than in 11th grade (43%), 29% of the boys in our sample remained moderately or highly resistant from 6th to 11th grade. These boys, who were more likely to be Latino than White, Black, or Chinese American, expressed their feelings about their friends and family members, and were either willing to discuss their desire for close relationships with peers and parents or had close relationships that involved high levels of intimacy.

The boys in this second trajectory group fell into one of two subgroups. The first subgroup included those boys ($N = 11$ or 65% of this trajectory group) who suggested resistance in their language (e.g., they expressed emotional and physical vulnerability and interdependence) but were not able to find the friendships that they wanted, particularly by their 11th grade interview. The second subgroup included those boys ($N = 6$) who expressed resistance in their language and in their actions. In other words, they were able to express their emotional desires and vulnerabilities and find the close friendships that they wanted. Although the boys in both

subgroups suggested moderate to high levels of resistance in their language over time, the variability in this group lay in their ability to find the types of friendships that they sought. The boys in the first subgroup, furthermore, suggested that the association between resistance and psychological and social adjustment is more complex than expected, as many of those in the first subgroup sounded quite depressed and isolated; whereas the boys in the second group sounded the least depressed of the entire sample of boys and were the most consistently resistant in their language and their actions.

Ramon, who falls into the first subgroup, attempts suicide twice (once in 7th grade and once in 10th grade) during the 6 years of the study. Each year, he speaks about both his desire for a close friend as well as his frustration with the difficulty of finding the type of close male friend that he wants. When asked how he would describe himself in the 6th grade, he says: "I would describe myself as being like lost." Asked to elaborate, Ramon discusses how he would try to befriend a person "who doesn't know him," stating: "I would first get some information from them, how they feel about friendship and stuff. And then after I get that, like I could sort of adapt on the way they feel so I start to click with that and I start to be friends with them." His response to a question about who he is becomes a discussion of how he would adapt to become a person's friend. Ramon's responses suggest a resistance to norms of masculinity that discourage self-reflection, but they also suggest a boy with low self-confidence.

In the 8th grade, Ramon tells his interviewer that he has finally found a best friend with whom he can share "very deep kind of things." When asked about his new best friend, Ramon says,

> [H]e knows a lot more about me than anybody else and . . . he's a close friend that I understand. We're very connected with each other. I feel that I can trust him with all my secrets and he can trust me with all of his secrets; so that's how I feel about him.

Ramon's resistance to norms of masculinity is not only revealed in his discussion of the intimacy with his best friend, but also in his discussion of being a boy:

> All guys somewhat have a soft spot . . . like everybody has a good heart deep down inside and that's how I feel I guess. . . . In terms of being a boy . . . not every boy has the same feeling inside him or emotions . . . I don't know but I think guys try to hide it more. . . . Guys tend to be a little stronger when they're around other people and they don't really show their feelings by crying or anything like that . . . they try to act happy around their friends and like that and I feel a guy should just act the way they need to.

Ramon explicitly resists norms of masculinity by recognizing the "good heart deep down inside" and the need for boys and men to act "the way they need to" rather than the way they are supposed to as males. His responses reveal a newfound confidence in behaving in more honest ways than he has in the past.

By the 11th grade, Ramon no longer has close male friends and he once again sounds depressed. When asked about the "not so good parts" of his best friendship, he responds,

> It's weird because like he can be there for me but . . . he's not reliable . . . so I had a fight with my girlfriend and since he was like my only friend, I called him up, like, twice, and both times, he rejected, and he was like "nah, you can't come [over], man." For whatever reason, I mean I understand if I just can't come there because of his parents, or because of a bad parent . . . but if ever my friends were that much of

a situation where they need to leave, I would definitely be there for them. I would be "yeah sure, come over . . ." I was just like, he's my best friend, but like, I was just like, I just don't understand. I'm his best friend or whatever. But you know, he's not gonna be there all the time so I need to go to somebody else for something. I should find somebody else.

Ramon's resistance to norms of masculinity lies with his ability to articulate his disappointment and anger at a friend who wasn't able to support him in the way he wanted. However, Ramon sounds as depressed as he did in the 6th grade. Thus, it is unclear whether his ability to resist masculine norms is helping him cope with his inability to find a reliable friend.

In contrast to Ramon, Marco, who fell into the second subgroup of the trajectory of moderate to high resistance over time, sounds resistant across all 3 years of his interviews, has close friendships in each year, and seems confident and well-adjusted over time. In the 6th grade, Marco is a sensitive and astute young boy who has lots of friends and likes that his best friend helps him "understand anything" and will tell him when something is bothering him. When asked if he thinks friends are important, Marco says: "Yes 'cause when you are struggling, when you ask somebody you can have someone to trust and to know that person's gonna be there . . . . [if I didn't have friends] I would probably be really sad, lonely."

When asked what might be a good thing about being a girl, Marco says "maybe hanging out with your mom more." Although most of the boys in our study expressed their resistance when discussing their friendships, Marco's resistance is evident in his relationship with his mom as well as with his best friends. Discussing his relationship with his mom, he says: "I like it because I can talk to my mom whenever I want. I have a person that I can trust. She understands my situation so I feel good about talking with her." The intimacy between him and his mother is implicitly resistant to a culture that mocks such intimacy as signs of being a "mama's boy" (Lombardi, 2012).

In response to a question about why he thinks boys should not cry, Marco reveals his explicit resistance when he says: "because it shows how weak they are. . . . I cried the last two weeks, my grandmother died, so I cried. So sometimes boys have feelings too. They gotta let it out once in a while." Like so many of the boys in our studies, Marco realizes the limitations of masculine norms based on his own experiences of being a boy.

In the 8th grade, Marco continues to resist as he discusses his friends:

> [T]hey help me a lot, they, I can to talk to them about anything . . . probably about my family and stuff 'cause it feels like they're close and I would be able to express myself more with them than other friends . . . about like the fights and arguments and problems that I am having.

What he appreciates about his best friend this year is that

> We are able to talk to each other about a lot of things so we understand like my situation [with my parents]. And like, um, he tries to help me 'cause other friends that I have, if I have a problem they just, they wouldn't really care as much. But my best friend—he would actually talk to me about it and try to explain what was going on.

Unlike Ramon in the first subgroup, Marco has been able to find

what he wants in a friend. He not only resists masculine language in his description of his friendships, he also resists the masculine pressures to keep his friendships emotionally superficial. The importance of friendships, for Marco, is that "you know you always have somebody to talk to somebody, somebody to express yourself with."

Marco remains close to his mother in the 8th grade and says: "I think we have a good relationship because we don't fight a lot. We like to talk to each other. Sometimes I don't get to see her right after school 'cause she works a lot so it would be better if I could see her more." In addition, Marco admits to a desire to spend more time with his father, with whom he speaks infrequently despite the fact that they live together.

Marco's resistance is evident again in the 11th grade as he describes himself: "I'm caring and I love my family. I'm family oriented." He also shares that he can talk to his mom "about everything" and enjoys his relationship with his father more because he can talk to him more than he did in the past. Right at the moment when boys are supposed to become independent from their families, Marco grows increasingly close to his parents and identifies with being "family oriented."

Asked in the 11th grade about why friendships are important, Marco says: "'Cause you know if you don't have friends . . . you just feel lonely. . . . You can't talk to anybody about all your problems or your goals or anything." Marco explains that he has this view of his friends because his mother "treats her friends like family. I guess she assumes that you know a good friend is like a family member so you should treat them as if they were, like, part of the family." Watching his mother closely, Marco attributes his own resistance to hers.

The boys who were in the moderately to highly resistant trajectory group were able to articulate their feelings to their interviewers and, seemingly, to their friends and parents as well. Although most of the boys in this trajectory group struggled to find the friendships that they wanted, their open expressions of desire and vulnerability stand in direct contrast to the masculine norms that urge boys to speak without emotion.

Stable Low Resistors

The third trajectory group evident in our analysis was composed of those boys who suggested low levels of resistance in 6th, 8th, and 11th grades (22% of the sample). Although boys from all ethnic groups were represented in this trajectory group, the Chinese American boys were most likely to fall into this trajectory. These boys gave responses similar to Kyle when asked if it is important to have friends:

> No, because friends don't really get you through life. All you need is an education. If you have a very good education but no friends, even though life will be boring for you, you know that you'll have a great life. I wouldn't say great because if you didn't have any friends and you had a good education, you would get through life but would be bored and didn't have anybody to share it with. But if you had a whole bunch of friends but not a great education, you could see what would happen. You would be so social that you wouldn't have the time to get through good grades.

Kyle's privileging of academic achievement over friendship is a sign of accommodation to an American culture that promotes the same hierarchy of academic success over relationships—even

casting relationships as a hindrance to success—and often, as Kyle openly admits, leaves boys feeling alone and unsupported. Rather than seeing both achievement and friendships as simultaneously attainable, Kyle and the boys in this group suggest that they have to choose one over the other.

Kyle continues in 8th grade to downplay the importance of friendships:

> I mean it's good to have friends, it's great to have friend and friends will sometimes help you, but in the end you're going to have to help yourself because nobody's, well in most cases, nobody is going to be there for you at hard times. When you're an adult you take adult responsibilities for yourself and friends aren't going to be able to help you with everything. You're going to have to live your own life.

Preparing for the expectations of manhood where "you're going to have to live your own life," Kyle grapples with what he perceives as the consequences of manhood.

When Roy, another boy in this group of stable low resistors, is asked in his 11th grade interview about what a typical boy should act like, he says,

> R: Strong, um independent, um ambitious, outgoing, leader, leadership you can put leadership, um, determined. . . . Always be alone, trust nobody, don't let no one cross your path. . . . Oh, I'm independent cuz I'm, I'm the only guy in my house and I do things alone . . . like I'm always by myself. I don't call, I don't call others to chill.
>
> I: Yea, I mean do you think it's more important to be independent than to be connected?
>
> R: Yes, exactly I think it's more important to be independent. . . . 'Cause it's my life I have to think about myself more of the times. I was born by myself you know.

For Roy, the conventions of masculinity are laid out in stark detail. His independence, however, does not necessarily come from his desire to be independent, but rather from a belief that others cannot be relied upon. Even boys who regularly accommodated or adhered to norms of masculinity rarely indicated a desire to become masculine stereotypes. Rather, they typically framed their accommodation as a necessity rather than a goal.

Another boy in this third trajectory group, Jamal, shows a similar struggle from 6th through 11th grades with the demands of masculine norms. In his 8th grade interview, he says,

> Like you can't—like for some reason when I'm with my friends, like I can't act soft or I can't cry unless I'm hurt. Like say if like we were watching a movie—or I'm watching a movie with some of my friends, like somebody died and if I cried, they might like call me like—oh, you soft. . . . So sentimental. . . . But like—if you with a girl, like it's okay to cry.

Unlike the boys who were moderately or highly resistant, Jamal's awareness of the norms of masculinity does not lead him to challenge them but simply to accept them.

In the 11th grade, Jamal states that what he doesn't like about being a boy is that: "because we don't like showing our feelings to certain people—'cause it makes us feel sensitive. We don't like being sensitive around other people." Naming the masculine norms but also critiquing them, Jamal reveals how accommodation and resistance were often interwoven as boys struggled to stay with what they know about themselves and about other boys.

When asked what life would be like if he were a girl, he says,

> I'd probably be more emotional—I'd probably express my feelings more 'cause like females—it's okay for them to like express their feelings, but for boys, like you see on TV and stuff, you can't really express your feelings. You gotta be a tough guy.

Jamal understands the expectations for boys explicitly and implicitly critiques them but ultimately accommodates to them in his unwillingness to share his feelings with anyone.

The boys who indicated patterns of stable low levels of resistance struggled to articulate their relational desires and needs. Although there were, at times, moments of resistance in their interviews, their interviews were dominated by discussions of having to be a masculine stereotype and live a life in which they will be alone.

Discussion

Our analysis of resistance to norms of masculinity among boys from pre- to late adolescence reveals evidence that boys are acutely attuned to masculine norms, that they resist these expectations and norms in implicit and explicit ways, that resistance is more prevalent during the middle school years than during the 11th grade, and that resistance to masculine norms appears to be important for boys' psychological and social wellbeing. Our findings also suggest that implicit resistance is more common than explicit resistance and patterns of implicit resistance change over time. This latter finding, however, was likely because of the very low frequency of explicit resistance so that patterns of change were difficult to detect. The decline in resistance to norms of masculinity over time has been noted in previous research with boys (Chu, 2014; Way, 2011); as well as in research on empathy in which researchers found that students expressed more empathy and compassion in the 6th grade than in the 8th grade (Malin, Reilly, Quinn, & Moran, 2014).

Our analysis also suggest that patterns of resistance varied by ethnicity or race, with Latino youth being more likely to reveal resistance over time and Black, White, and Chinese American youth being less likely to maintain resistance by their 11th grade interviews. Our findings are similar to those of Way (2011) and Chu (2004, 2014). Boys reveal both implicit and explicit forms of resistance during the early years of childhood and adolescence, and then grow increasingly accommodating to masculine norms as they grow older.

Although we did not investigate the reasons for the decline in resistance over time, possible reasons have been described previously (see Kimmel, 2008; Way, 2011) and lie with the macro context of American hyper-masculinity (Stevenson, 2004) and hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987) that requires boys of all ethnicities and social classes to man up and follow the guy code (Kimmel, 2008) as they become men. As others have described (see Pascoe, 2005), this pressure to man up is rooted in homophobia and misogyny where being gay or girly (i.e., being emotionally expressive, needing and wanting others including close male friends) are, in American culture, on the bottom of the social hierarchy and the opposite of being a real man. The decline in resistance as boys become men is likely due to these cultural influences.

However, our data also indicated variability in both the trajectories over time as well as across ethnic groups. Not all boys who were resistant in the middle school years were less resistant during the 11th grade and not all ethnic groups were equally represented in each of the trajectory patterns. These variations draw attention to the micro contexts of development, such as homes and schools, which shape patterns of resistance among boys, as well as the macro contexts such as the ethnic stereotypes that infiltrate the micro contexts.

For example, the Latino boys, who were the most likely to report moderate to high levels of resistance and to maintain such resistance over time, were overwhelmingly first or second generation immigrants. They were, thus, less entrenched in the American value system of autonomy and independence (see Markus & Kitayama, 2010), when compared to their American-born peers and more entrenched in "Latino values" such as being emotionally expressive, interdependent, and family oriented (see Kimmel, 2000; Melzi & Fernández, 2004; Stevenson, 1988). Thus, the Latino boys in our study may have found it easier to resist the norms of emotional stoicism and autonomy than their peers who were not Latino and who were American-born.

Furthermore, the variations among Latinos, as well as the variation within and across ethnic groups and time, may have been due to the quality of parent and child relationships. Those boys who reported having at least one parent who was emotionally engaged with them and offered a safe space for them to talk freely about their thoughts and feelings were often the boys who maintained resistance over time in their friendships (see also Way, 2011). Santos finds that boys' reports of mother support from 6th to 8th grade predicted a corresponding increase in boys' reports of resistance from 6th to 8th grade (Santos, 2010). Having close relationships with parents that entail emotional expression and vulnerability appears to make it easier for boys to maintain their resistance over time.

The social hierarchy within schools may also have shaped the patterns of resistance evident in our study. Social power or rank in the social hierarchy among peers is acquired through numerous routes including playing sports, being tall, and being associated with an ethnic group that is stereotyped as cool, manly, or "American" (Lee, 2005; Lei, 2003; Pascoe, 2005; Way, 2011). Having more stereotypically manly qualities or being associated with an ethnic group that is stereotyped as being more manly, for example, results in greater social power among peers than those who do not have such qualities or who are from ethnic groups that are stereotyped as being "feminine." The consequence of such social power is that it leads to greater freedom to bend the rules of the boy code (see also Brown, Lamb, & Tappan, 2009; Pollack & Shuster, 2000). Thus, the pattern of moderate to high levels of resistance among the Latino boys may have been because of the high levels of social power of the Latino students in our study (see Way et al., 2008).

The pattern of stable low resistors among the Chinese American boys may also have been because of the confluence of ethnic stereotypes about masculinity and their status on the social hierarchy. Chinese American boys have to contend with stereotypes that put them, in an American context, at the opposite end of the Latino and Black boys in terms of manliness (Lee, 2005; Lei, 2003). This low position on the social hierarchy likely makes it much more difficult for the Chinese American students to resist

norms of masculinity—the very norms that they are stereotyped as not having—than the Latino, Black, or White students. These family and school level factors, with ethnic stereotypes playing a role in both, may lie at the root of why the Latino boys were more likely to maintain moderate to high levels of resistance than their non-Latino peers and why the Chinese American students were more likely to maintain low levels of resistance than their non-Chinese American peers.

The final pattern detected between resistance and adjustment also underscored the role of the context in shaping outcomes. Although most of the boys suggested that challenging norms of masculinity is linked to psychological and social adjustment, there was a subgroup of boys within the trajectory group of maintaining moderate to high levels of resistance over time that did not suggest such patterns. Within this group of 11 boys, it appeared that maintaining resistant language did not protect them from poor mental health and did not necessarily help them make close friendships. This finding suggests that a key part of the association between resistance and psychological and social wellbeing is having close friendships. If a boy is not able to find a friend with whom he enjoys spending time and can trust and rely on, the benefits of his resistance are not as apparent. However, it may well be that those who are resistant are more persistent in searching for a close friend than those who are not. Fostering resistance should entail not only helping boys express their feelings but also helping them to find good friendships.

Limitations and Conclusion

Although our research suggests clear patterns of resistance among boys, it is limited by its focus on boys growing up in urban environments who attend public, coed schools where resistance to norms of masculinity may be encouraged more than in more socially conservative environments. In addition, it is unclear whether boys actively resist norms of masculinity in their relationships with girls. Although boys may be willing to resist such norms with boys, they may not be willing to do so with girls. Research should explore these questions to better understand the processes of resistance and the way it's shaped by context and culture.

Despite these limitations, our analysis underscores the importance of looking at resistance to norms of masculinity among boys as a critical part of their development and their health and well-being. Although exploring the patterns of accommodation to both culture and the biological tendencies most stereotyped as male is important, examining patterns of resistance is equally important. They not only reveal critical processes in boys' development, they also help us better understand the factors that allow boys to thrive.

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