

Challenging Gender Stereotypes: Resistance and Exclusion

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The likelihood of resisting gender-stereotypic peer group norms, along with expectations about personal resistance, was investigated in 9- to 10-year-olds and 13- to 14-year-olds ($N = 292$). Participants were told about a stereotype conforming group (boys playing football; girls doing ballet) and a stereotype nonconforming group (boys doing ballet; girls playing football). Contrary to expectations from gender-stereotyping research, participants stated that they would personally resist gender-stereotypic norms, and more so than they would expect their peers to resist. However, expecting peers to resist declined with age. Participants expected that exclusion from the group was a consequence for challenging the peer group, and understood the asymmetrical status of gender stereotypes with an expectation that it would be more difficult for boys to challenge stereotypes than for girls.

Very early in life, children begin conforming to gender stereotypes and interacting in gender-segregated social groups. Children's knowledge of gender stereotypes, including choice of toys and activities, emerges during the preschool period (Martin et al., 2012), and research indicates that, even as early as preschool, interaction with teachers and peers can influence gender segregation in play and activities (Glassman, 2000; Goble, Martin, Hanish, & Fabes, 2012). Extensive evidence demonstrates that gender stereotypes guide children's preferences for activities, occupations, and career goals (Liben & Bigler, 2002; Ruble, Martin, & Berenbaum, 2006), even though young children often view adherence to gender norms to be a matter of personal choice (Conry-Murray, 2013) or a convention (Smetana et al., 2012).

In fact, challenging gender stereotypes can have costs. Acting in nonstereotypic ways is associated with peer victimization including physical, verbal, and relational aggression (Aspenlieder, Buchanan, McDougall, & Sippola, 2009), and social exclusion (Killen & Stangor, 2001; Lee & Troop-Gordon, 2011). Gender stereotypes can also limit opportunities for boys and girls, especially given their pervasiveness and the frequent instances of gender segregation in early childhood (Maccoby, 2002). Challenging gender stereotypes, for instance, by suggesting that one's peers engage in a nonstereotypic activity, can also lead to social isolation (Horn & Sinno, 2014). Insight is needed into what children and adolescents perceive to be the consequences of challenging gender stereotypes within their own peer groups. Challenges to gender norms that come from within the peer group could generate social momentum to eliminate the perpetuation of inequality and discrimination related to gender stereotypes and segregation.

Importantly, not all gender stereotypes have the same social status. Research has shown that gender-associated activities for boys have a higher status than gender-associated activities for girls (Ruble et al., 2006). It is often viewed as less desirable, for example, for boys to engage in female-stereotypic activities (such as playing with dolls) than for girls to engage in male-stereotypic activities (such as playing with trucks; Blakemore, 2003; Horn, 2008; Smetana, 1986; Zucker, Wilson-Smith, Kurita, &

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Stern, 1995); the same is true for adults. In fact, researchers have argued that while females have more barriers than males for upward movement in status, males have more restrictions when choosing nonstereotypic activities than do females given that their movement is "downward," that is, that engaging in lower status activities associated with females (Eagly, 1987; Vandello, Bosson, Cohen, Burnaford, & Weaver, 2008). What has not been examined is whether children and adolescents are aware of the asymmetry of gender stereotypes and, particularly, the consequences of desiring to engage in cross-gender activities. Developmental research drawing from social identity theory has investigated group status as well as group norms; the current study drew on this research for examining challenges and resistance to gender stereotyping.

Social Groups

Surprisingly little research, to date, has specifically examined what children think about the costs or consequences of resisting group norms held by social groups, when the norms are about gender-appropriate or gender-stereotypic expectations. Yet, children as young as 8 years of age organize themselves in groups and use norms (the practices, beliefs, and customs of a group) to define their groups (Bennett & Sani, 2008; Kwon & Lease, 2009). While group norms regulate interactions (Abrams & Rutland, 2008) and often serve as a positive and protective factor (Rubin, Fredstrom, & Bowker, 2008), group norms can also serve as a negative factor by providing pressure on children and adolescents to conform to group practices or beliefs.

Research on developmental subjective group dynamics, for example, has demonstrated that children dislike members of their peer group who challenge the peer group by deviating from the group's norms (Abrams & Rutland, 2008). This line of research has asked children to indicate their favorability toward a group deviant, which is defined as an in-group member who rejects the in-group norm in favor of an out-group norm. The findings indicate that children are unfavorable toward in-group members who deviate from the norms and, in fact, prefer an out-group member who condones an in-group norm over a group deviant.

In a recent study, children from 9 to 13 years of age viewed deviating from a group norm as acceptable when the group distributed resources unequally or violated social conventions about dress codes, but less acceptable when the group distributed resources equally or upheld social con-

ventions (Killen, Rutland, Abrams, Mulvey, & Hitti, 2013). Furthermore, research has shown that children are much less favorable toward peers who engage in nonstereotypic activities than those who engage in stereotypic activities (Lobel, Bempechat, Gewirtz, & Shoken-Topaz, 1993). In fact, given the powerful influence of gender stereotypes (Miller, Trautner, & Ruble, 2006), it is likely that resistance that conforms to stereotypes will be supported by children more than resistance that challenges stereotypes. Thus, investigating the conditions under which children support an in-group member who challenges gender-stereotypic norms and determining whether this support reflects the asymmetrical status of male and female gender stereotypes were central aims of this study.

Furthermore, previous research has not assessed whether children *expect* their peers to challenge group norms (including those about gender stereotypes). Instead, previous research has investigated how children evaluate acts of deviance which have already occurred (Abrams & Rutland, 2008). Understanding but, rather, has always established that resistance or deviance has occurred, and then asked children for their evaluations of the deviant group member (Abrams & Rutland, 2008). Understanding more about whether children will challenge the peer group, expect others to do the same, and the existence of age-related differences in the likelihood of challenging gender stereotypes provides new insight into the role that children can play in breaking the social patterns condoning gender stereotypes and gender segregation. Drawing on the literature examining moral judgments and emotions, which has documented the importance of assessing both one's own and others' perspective when making moral judgments (Arsenio, Gold, & Adams, 2006; Krettenauer, Malti, & Sokol, 2008), this study measured *both* participants' own evaluations of how likely they would be to challenge the peer group and their expectations for how likely a peer would be to do the same. Because prior research has demonstrated that adolescents show greater sophistication in distinguishing individual and group perspectives than children regarding deviating from group norms (Mulvey, Hitti, Rutland, Abrams, & Killen, 2014) and because peer groups become increasingly important for children with age (Brechwald & Prinstein, 2011), age-related findings were expected for contexts regarding gender stereotypes.

Social Exclusion

One potential harmful consequence for resisting the peer group norm is exclusion from that peer

group. Children who fail to adhere to social group norms are at risk for rejection by their peers (Juvonen & Galván, 2008; Killen & Rutland, 2011). Yet, what is not known is at what age children think that exclusion from groups for deviating from gender norms is likely. Social exclusion has significant impacts on children's academic motivation and success in school, as well as on their mental health and well-being (Buhs, Ladd, & Herald, 2006). Social domain theory provides a theoretical framework for determining whether social exclusion is viewed as an act in the moral domain, which involves issues of fairness, justice, and rights; the societal domain, which involves conventions, customs, or traditions; and the psychological domain, which involves issues of personal choice and autonomy (Smetana, 2006; Turiel, 1983). In the context of challenging one's peer group about gender stereotypes, little is known about whether peers are concerned that they will be rejected from the group because of the disruption to social group functioning or due to the unfairness of gender exclusion. One may, in fact, be excluded from a group with whom one shares group membership for not exhibiting normative (stereotypic) group behavior (in terms of gender in this context).

Thus, this study was designed to extend prior research by measuring participants' descriptive judgments about exclusion (their expectations for whether the peer group is likely to exclude the dissenting member) rather than prescriptive judgments (judgments of how okay it would be to exclude someone). One aim was to identify whether exclusion was viewed as a likely consequence for resisting the group's stereotypic norms. Previous research on moral judgments, within the happy victimizer paradigm and social domain theory, has assessed both children's descriptive and prescriptive evaluations (Gasser, Malti, & Buholzer, 2014; Keller, Lourenço, Malti, & Saalbach, 2003; Posada & Wainryb, 2008; Wainryb, Brehl, & Matwin, 2005). However, prior work on exclusion has traditionally assessed whether participants would support or condone exclusion as a consequence for a particular behavior, for instance, resisting the group norm (Hitti, Mulvey, Rutland, Abrams, & Killen, 2014). No research to date has examined whether participants think that groups would actually be likely to exclude someone because they challenge the group norm. The difference here is that while children individually reject exclusion, they may believe that groups would condone or engage in exclusionary behavior. Even if children evaluate exclusion as morally unacceptable, they may think that groups

will use exclusion as a consequence for resisting the group. Thus, it is important to assess whether children and adolescents think that exclusion will be a consequence for disagreeing with the group.

Additionally, in many situations, children and adolescents must choose between peers and only include one person in a group. Thus, in this study, we examined their expectations not only about exclusion but also about inclusion into groups (Killen et al., 2013). Do participants think that someone should be denied entry into a group because he or she disagrees with the group's choice of activity? What if someone agrees with the activity but does not share the group's gender identity? Assessing inclusion decisions enabled us to identify the relative weight that participants put on group identity (gender) and group norms in assessing who should be part of different social groups.

The framework for this study draws from theory and methodology on social judgments and exclusion, including social domain theory and developmental subjective group dynamics (Killen & Rutland, 2011). This study examined age-related differences in perceptions of resistance toward gender-stereotypic norms, distinctions regarding the individual and group perspective on favorability of a deviant member, and whether deviating from a group norm about stereotypic expectations was considered to be disloyal. In sum, this research addressed the conditions in which individuals deemed it acceptable to reject conventional gender-stereotypic expectations and how children conceptualized the costs to challenging gender stereotypes.

Current Study: Design and Hypotheses

Study Design

In this study, participants assessed groups that held gender stereotype consistent group norms (for instance, a girls' group which likes to do ballet) and groups which held gender stereotype inconsistent norms (for instance, a girls' group which likes to play football). Group norm was manipulated to directly compare evaluations of group members who deviated by advocating for stereotypic choices (when the group norm is stereotype inconsistent) and group members who deviate by advocating for counterstereotypic choices (when the group norm is stereotype consistent). This is an important comparison, as much prior research on deviance from groups indicates that children and adolescents are attuned to the nature of the norm that the group holds (Killen, Rutland, Abrams, Mulvey, &

Hitti, 2013). This design enabled us to measure age-related differences regarding the awareness of social status surrounding gender-stereotypic group norms. We hypothesized (a) that participants would expect their peers would be more likely to support resistance that conforms to stereotypes than resistance that challenges stereotypes, and that this would be reflected in their own evaluation as well, and (b) that participants would view challenging the peer group as easier for girls than for boys, reflecting the asymmetrical status of gender stereotypes.

With age, adolescents understand group dynamics and have a greater awareness of the nuances of the influence of groups. Thus, we expected that (c) adolescents may differentiate between their own and a peer’s likelihood of resistance, while younger children may not, and that with age, participants will expect peers to conform to group norms and be less likely to challenge their group.

It was expected that (d) participants would perceive exclusion to be a consequence for challenging the group. Given that social status is related to gender stereotypes, we expected that participants would perceive exclusion to be especially likely for boys who challenge stereotypes. Furthermore, (e) it was expected that participants would consider group functioning when making exclusion decisions, but that participants who thought exclusion was likely would make more references to gender stereotypes. We expected that group functioning would be a focus of participants’ reasoning, given prior research which indicates that exclusion decisions are often driven by concerns over if a group will work cohesively with an individual in that group (Horn, 2003). Finally, based on prior research indicating the importance that children and adolescents give to group norms when making inclusion decisions (Killen et al., 2013), it was hypothesized that (f) participants would be willing to include someone who did not share gender group membership, but who wanted to do the same activity, into the group.

Method

Participants

Participants ($N = 292$) included ninety 9- to 10-year-olds ($M = 9.63$ $SD = .42$), and two hundred and two 13- to 14-year-olds ($M = 13.95$ $SD = .43$) from public elementary and middle schools in the Mid-Atlantic region. Participants were approximately evenly divided by gender (52.4% female),

were ethnically representative of the United States (school demographic information identified approximately 30% ethnic minority students in the schools), and were from low- to low-middle-income schools. Only children and adolescents receiving parental consent and providing student assent completed the protocol.

The Gender Exclusion Task, which was modified from Killen et al. (2013), included two versions that varied based on if the group held a stereotype conforming or resistant group norm. The stereotype conforming and resistant group norms involved choice of social activities: football or ballet. Importantly, we were not measuring gender conformity broadly (in terms of gender identity), but rather conformity to specific gender stereotypes. Each condition included two scenarios: one for a girls’ group and one for a boys’ group. The scenarios varied in terms of the group norm (see Table 1).

Specifically, half of participants assessed a boys’ group and a girls’ group with *conformity group norms*, where the groups adhered to the stereotypes about social activities (boys who play football and girls who do ballet). The other half of participants assessed a boys’ group and a girls’ group with *resistance group norms*, where the groups engaged in counterstereotypic activities (boys who do ballet and girls who play football). For each scenario, participants evaluated a member of the group who wanted to challenge the group norm by disagreeing with or dissenting from the group’s choice of activity. This resisting member either adhered to or resisted a larger societal gender stereotype, depending on if the group conformed to the stereotype or not.

For example, for the conformity group norm, a female participant would read the following:

Now remember your group, the girls’ group, always likes to choose ballet because they say: “We like to do ballet, that’s for girls.” Kay, who is also in this group, wants to be different from the other members of your group. She thinks

Table 1
Design of the Study

Gender status of group	Group activity	Challenger’s preference for new activity
Girls’ group	Ballet	Football
	Football	Ballet
Boys’ group	Football	Ballet
	Ballet	Football

"People think football is only for boys, let's play football."

For the resistance group norm, a male participant would read the following:

Now remember their group, the girls' group, always likes to choose football because they say: "People think football is only for boys, let's play football." Kay, who is also in this group, wants to be different from the other members of their group. She thinks "Ballet is for girls, let's do ballet."

Procedure

The tasks were administered by a trained researcher in a quiet room at each participating school. Participants were given a warm-up task, which involved practicing using the Likert-type scale to be used in the survey. For 9- to 10-year-olds, the survey was read aloud by a trained researcher to small groups (3–4 participants) of participants of the same gender. For 13- to 14-year-olds, the survey was administered by a trained researcher to larger groups (25–30 participants). The necessity to read the survey aloud to the younger participants accounts for the difference in sample size between the younger and older participants. For both age groups, participants recorded their answers. Any questions the participants had were answered by the researcher. The survey took about 30 min for each participant to complete.

Measures

This study consisted of four hypothetical scenarios (each participant received two scenarios with either conformity or resistance group norms) in which a member of a group disagrees with his or her group about the group's norm. The two scenarios included either a conformity or resistance group norm and one of the scenarios was about a girls' group and one was about a boys' group (see Figure 1 for an example of the stimuli). Approximately equal numbers of male and female participants from each age group completed scenarios with conforming and resisting norms. Females received surveys with the girls' groups labeled as "your group" and the boys' groups labeled as "their group." Males received surveys with the boys' groups labeled as "your group" and the girls' groups labeled as "their group."

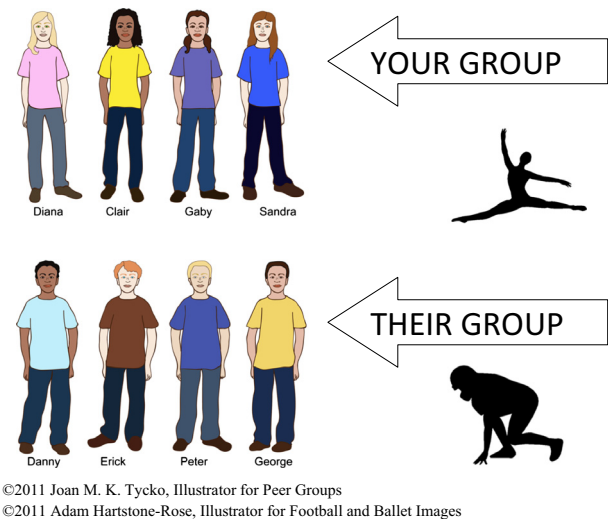


Figure 1. Example protocol illustrations.

Dependent Measures

For each scenario, the same assessments were given. The first assessment was: (a) *likelihood of resistance*: What do you think the dissenter will do? Participants had a dichotomous choice: *go along with the group* = 0 or *tell them what he/she thinks* = 1. The second assessment was: (b) *individual likelihood of resistance*: What would you do? Participants had a dichotomous choice: *go along with the group* = 0 or *tell them what he/she thinks* = 1.

After this assessment, participants were told that the dissenting member chose to tell the group his or her preferred activity. Next, participants were told that the group must decide how to respond to the deviance. Participants then assessed (c) *intra-group exclusion likelihood, dissenting member*: "Do you think the group will tell her she can't be in the group anymore?" Participants completed a Likert-type scale from 1 = *can really stay* to 6 = *really cannot stay*. Participants also completed (d) *reasoning*: "Why?"

Participants were told that the group can invite one more persons to join their group and were asked to assess (e) *intergroup inclusion preference*: "Who should the group include?" They had a dichotomous choice between someone who disagrees but is the *same gender* = 0, or someone who agrees but is the *opposite gender* = 1. Only these options were given to assess whether participants placed relatively more weight on group identity or group norm when making inclusion choices. Last, participants' awareness of gender stereotypes was assessed. For both football and ballet, participants

were asked about (f) *gender activity association*: “Who usually does X?” with the choices of boy, girl, or both provided.

Coding Categories for Justifications

A coding system was established based on extensive pilot testing and drawing on prior research (Killen, Pisacane, Lee-Kim, & Ardila-Rey, 2001; Killen et al., 2013). The coding system included two broad categories, based on social domain theory (Smetana, 2006): societal and psychological. The subcategories for societal domain were: group functioning (e.g., “The group will work better if they all do the same thing.”), inclusion of diverse perspectives (e.g., “It is good to have someone different in the group”), and gender group identity or stereotypes (e.g., “Only boys play football.”). In the psychological domain, participants cited autonomy (e.g., “It is up to her what game she wants to play.”). Justifications were also coded for the moral domain; however, they were used infrequently and, thus were not analyzed. Justifications were coded as 1 = *full use*, .5 = *partial use*, 0 = *no use* of the category, and analyses were conducted on proportional usage. Less than 5% of participants used more than one code. Surveys were coded by three trained research assistants and interrater reliability was high, Cohen’s $\kappa = .92$.

Results

Data were analyzed using analysis of variance (ANOVA) and repeated measures ANOVAs to test hypotheses for between-group differences, using age and gender as the between-group factors. The repeated measures factors included group norm (conforming or resisting group norm) or type of assessment, depending on the specific hypothesis. Follow-up tests were conducted using the Bonferroni correction to control for Type I errors. For ease of interpretation, activity refers to the challenger’s behavior. For instance, when the activity is ballet, the challenger advocates for doing ballet when the group wants to do football. Justifications were proportions of responses for each respective coding category, with the top three justifications analyzed for each question.

Analyses were conducted using repeated measures ANOVAs. The data from the resistance and inclusion measures were also analyzed using repeated measures logistic regression from the Generalized Estimating Equations feature in SPSS, as an

extra check on the data analytic plan. The results from these repeated measures logistic regressions revealed the same pattern of findings; thus, the ANOVA results are presented. Analyses for reasoning were also conducted using repeated measures ANOVAs, as reasoning was coded for *no* (0), *partial* (.5), and *full* (1.0) use of the codes. Because of the nature of these data, which are proportional but include many empty cells given that participants can choose to use or not use any of the forms of reasoning, it is effectively analyzed using ANOVAs because ANOVAs are robust to the problem of empty cells (see Posada & Wainryb, 2008, for a fuller explanation and justification of this data analytic approach). Furthermore, a review of analytic procedures for these types of data (covering 10 years in American Psychological Association psychology journals) indicated that linear models with repeated procedures (particularly ANOVA) are appropriate compared to log-linear analysis for this type of within-subjects design (see Wainryb, Shaw, Laupa, & Smith, 2001, footnote 4).

Gender Activity Association

Confirming that participants viewed the activities described as associated with gender, descriptive statistics indicated that 75.6% of the 9- to 10-year-olds and 82.6% of the 13- to 14-year-olds associated boys with football and that 85.6% of 9- to 10-year-olds and 83.6% of 13- to 14-year-olds associated girls with ballet. Furthermore, 75.8% of the female participants and 86.1% of the male participants associated boys with football and 79.1% of female participants and 89.8% of male participants associated girls with ballet.

Peer Resistance to Group Norms

In order to test the first hypothesis that participants would expect that their peers would conform to stereotypes, a 2 (gender: male, female) $\times$ 2 (age group: 9- to 10-year-olds, 13- to 14-year-olds) $\times$ 2 (group norm: conform, resist) $\times$ 2 (activity: football, ballet) ANOVA with repeated measures on the last factor was conducted. Contrary to expectations, participants expected their peers to challenge stereotypes: There was no significant group norm effect (see Table 2). A main effect for activity was found, however, $F(1, 279) = 19.35$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$, revealing that participants expected resistance in order to play football would be more likely than resisting in order to do ballet (see Table 2). This main effect was driven by an Activity $\times$ Group

Table 2
Overall Means for Each Dependent Measure

Measure	Variable type	Activity	M (SD)
Peer resistance	0 = Go along with group	Football	0.78 (0.42)
	1 = Tell them what you think	Ballet	0.63 (0.48)
Individual resistance	0 = Go along with group	Football	0.91 (0.29)
	1 = Tell them what you think	Ballet	0.76 (0.43)
Likelihood of exclusion	Likert type		
	1 = Really can stay	Football	3.06 (1.56)
	6 = Really cannot stay	Ballet	3.54 (1.67)
Inclusion decisions	0 = In-group member/disagrees about activity	Football	0.80 (0.40)
	1 = Out-group member/agrees about activity	Ballet	0.60 (0.49)

Norm interaction, $F(1, 279) = 21.79$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$, which confirmed our second hypothesis, revealing that when a girl wanted to play football, participants were much more likely to expect that she would speak up and tell her group ($M = .74$, $SD = .44$) than when a boy wanted to do ballet ($M = .43$, $SD = .50$), $p < .001$. Participants perceived no difference in rates of resistance when the group member conformed to stereotypes: Resistance was as likely for a boy who wanted to play football ($M = .80$, $SD = .39$) and for a girl who wanted to do ballet ($M = .81$, $SD = .39$). Thus, results revealed that participants expected their peers to challenge group norms, but that when advocating for a different activity also meant challenging stereotypes, they expected this to be easier for girls than for boys.

Individual Resistance to Group Norms

In order to test the hypothesis that participants would individually conform to stereotypes, a 2 (gender: male, female) $\times$ 2 (age group: 9- to 10-year-olds, 13- to 14-year-olds) $\times$ 2 (group norm: conform, resist) $\times$ 2 (activity: football, ballet) ANOVA with repeated measures on the last factor was conducted on individual likelihood of resistance. Contrary to our hypothesis, the effect for group norm was not significant: Participants indicated that they would challenge the group's norm even when that meant resisting stereotypes (see Table 2). An effect for activity was found, $F(1, 277) = 25.51$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .08$. Just as was found for peer resistance, participants were more likely to challenge the group in order to play football ($M = .91$, $SD = .29$) than to do ballet ($M = .75$, $SD = .43$). Further, an Activity $\times$ Group Norm interaction effect was found, $F(1, 277) = 24.96$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .08$, revealing that this difference was

driven by how participants evaluated challenging a group by resisting stereotypes. There were no differences between how they evaluated telling a girls' group you want to do ballet ($M = .92$, $SD = .27$) or a boys' group that you want to play football ($M = .92$, $SD = .27$): Both rates were very high. However, confirming our second hypothesis, participants were more likely to challenge a girls' group in order to play football ($M = .89$, $SD = .31$) than a boys' group in order to do ballet ($M = .59$, $SD = .49$), $p < .001$. Thus, negative stereotypes regarding boys doing ballet pervaded participants' own expectations regarding whether they would challenge their peer group.

Peer Versus Individual Resistance to Group Norms

Male Stereotypic (Football)

In order to test the third hypothesis that, with age, children would differentiate peer and individual resistance, a 2 (gender: male, female) $\times$ 2 (age group: 9- to 10-year-olds, 13- to 14-year-olds) $\times$ 2 (group norm: conform, resist) $\times$ 2 (perspective: peer, individual resistance) ANOVA with repeated measures on the last factor was conducted for the context where the challenger wanted to play football. Results revealed that participants overall were more likely to challenge the group to play football than they expected their peers to resist the group, $F(1, 279) = 8.92$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$. Further, confirming our age-related hypothesis, a Perspective $\times$ Age Group interaction was found, $F(1, 279) = 11.17$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$. Pairwise comparisons revealed that for peer likelihood of resistance, children ($M = .90$, $SD = .31$) were more likely to expect the group member to resist the group than were adolescents ($M = .72$, $SD = .45$), $p < .001$. There were

no differences between children ($M = .91$, $SD = .29$) and adolescents ($M = .91$, $SD = .29$) for individual likelihood of resistance: All participants overwhelmingly stated that they would like to challenge the group norm. Further, while children did not differentiate between their own likelihood of resistance and their expectations for how likely their peer would be to resist the group, adolescents did differentiate, $p < .001$ (see Figure 2). Thus, younger children had more difficulty distinguishing between their own perspective and the group's perspective than did adolescents.

Female Stereotypic (Ballet)

In order to assess if similar differences between individual and peer resistance to group norms were present for the female-stereotypic (ballet) activity, a 2 (gender: male, female) $\times$ 2 (age group: 9- to 10-year-olds, 13- to 14-year-olds) $\times$ 2 (group norm: conform, resist) $\times$ 2 (perspective: peer, individual resistance) ANOVA with repeated measures on the last factor was conducted for ballet. As with the male-stereotypic activity (football), results indicated that participants expected that their peers would be less likely to resist the group norm in order to advocate for doing ballet ($M = .62$, $SD = .49$) than they would be, individually ($M = .75$, $SD = .43$), $F(1, 275) = 8.76$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$.

Furthermore, just as was found for the male-stereotypic football activity, a Perspective $\times$ Age Group interaction was found, $F(1, 275) = 4.55$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$. Pairwise comparisons revealed that for peer likelihood of resistance, children ($M = .76$, $SD = .43$) were more likely to expect the group member to resist the group than were ado-

lescents ($M = .56$, $SD = .50$), $p < .001$. There were no differences between children ($M = .81$, $SD = .39$) and adolescents ($M = .73$, $SD = .45$) for individual likelihood of resistance: All participants stated that they would like to challenge the group norm. Confirming our third hypothesis, children did not differentiate between peer and individual likelihood of resistance, but adolescents did differentiate, $p < .05$ (see Figure 3).

Likelihood of Exclusion of the Challenging Member

The next set of hypotheses pertained to the likelihood that the member who challenged the group's activity would be excluded from the group because of the member's decision to resist the group norm. It was expected that participants would perceive exclusion as most likely for the boy who wanted to do ballet. In order to examine whether participants would believe that the member who deviated from their group's norm by wanting to play football would be less likely to be excluded than the challenger who wanted to do ballet, a 2 (gender: male, female) $\times$ 2 (age group: 9- to 10-year-olds, 13- to 14-year-olds) $\times$ 2 (gender stereotype norm: conform, resist) $\times$ 2 (activity: ballet, football) ANOVA with repeated measures on the last factor was conducted. Participants thought that the challenger who wanted to do ballet was more likely to be excluded than the challenger who wanted to play football, $F(1, 272) = 22.72$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$ (see Table 2).

Interestingly, this was driven by an Activity $\times$ Gender effect, $F(1, 272) = 6.30$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$, which revealed that while female participants did not differ in their evaluations of these two challeng-

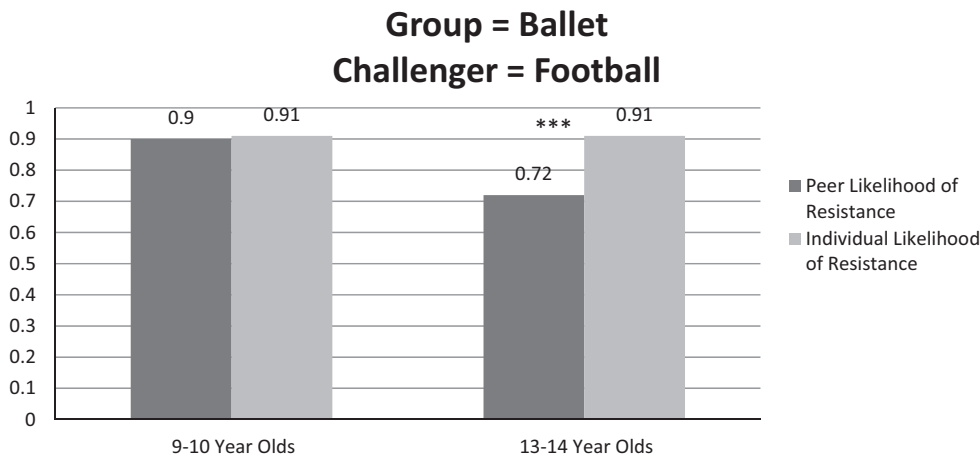


Figure 2. Proportional response to peer and individual likelihood of resistance by age group. *** $p < .001$.

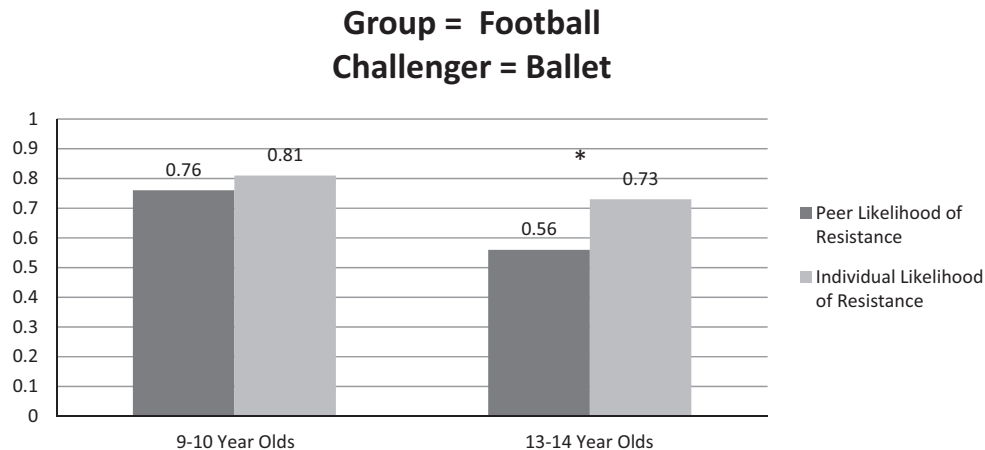


Figure 3. Proportional response to peer and individual likelihood of resistance by age group.

* $p < .05$.

ers, male participants were more likely to expect that the challenger who wanted to do ballet ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 1.72$) would be excluded than the member who wanted to play football ($M = 2.92$, $SD = 1.57$), $p < .001$. Supporting this finding, an Activity $\times$ Group Norm effect, $F(1, 272) = 17.22$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$, revealed that participants did not differ in their evaluations of the girl and the boy who wanted to play football, but that they were much more likely to expect that the boy who wanted to do ballet would be excluded than the girl who wanted to do ballet, $p < .001$ (see Figure 4). This is surprising as it documents a context in which boys are at risk for exclusion.

Justifications for Likelihood of Exclusion of the Challenger

Analyses were conducted in order to test the hypothesis that there would be differences in children's and adolescents' reasoning about the likelihood of excluding the challenger. These analyses used a dichotomous variable (yes, no) for participants who thought the challenger would be versus would not be excluded. This variable was computed using a mid-point split of 3.5 on the Likert scale for likelihood of exclusion. The top three most common forms of reasoning used by participants to reason about the likelihood of excluding the challenger who wanted to play football were group functioning, gender stereotypes and inclusion of diverse perspectives. For evaluations of the challenger who wanted to do ballet, the top three most common forms of reasoning were group functioning, gender stereotypes, and autonomy.

Likelihood of Exclusion: Male Stereotypic (Football)

In order to assess differences in reasoning about the likelihood of exclusion of a challenger who wants to play football, a 2 (gender: male, female) $\times$ 2 (age group: 9- to 10-year-olds, 13- to 14-year-olds) $\times$ 2 (group norm: conform, resist) $\times$ 2 (likelihood of exclusion: yes, no) $\times$ 3 (justification: group functioning, gender stereotypes, diverse perspectives) ANOVA with repeated measures on the last factor was conducted. This analysis revealed that participants differed in their proportional use of reasoning, $F(2, 560) = 74.61$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .21$. They used primarily group functioning ($M = .56$, $SD = .48$), with a smaller proportion referencing gender stereotypes ($M = .16$, $SD = .44$) and the inclusion of diverse perspectives ($M = .07$, $SD = .25$). All groups differed significantly at $ps < .001$. There was no difference between participants who thought the challenger would or would not be excluded. Participants primarily used group functioning. When they thought exclusion was likely, they would say things such as, "Well if he doesn't want to go along with what we are doing, why should he be in the group?" When they expected the challenger would not be excluded, they would say things such as, "He's still part of our group, even if he doesn't agree, and we all stick together."

Likelihood of Exclusion: Female Stereotypic (Ballet)

In order to assess differences in reasoning about the likelihood of exclusion of a challenger who wants to do ballet, the same ANOVA was conducted for ballet, and it revealed that participants who thought that the challenger would be excluded

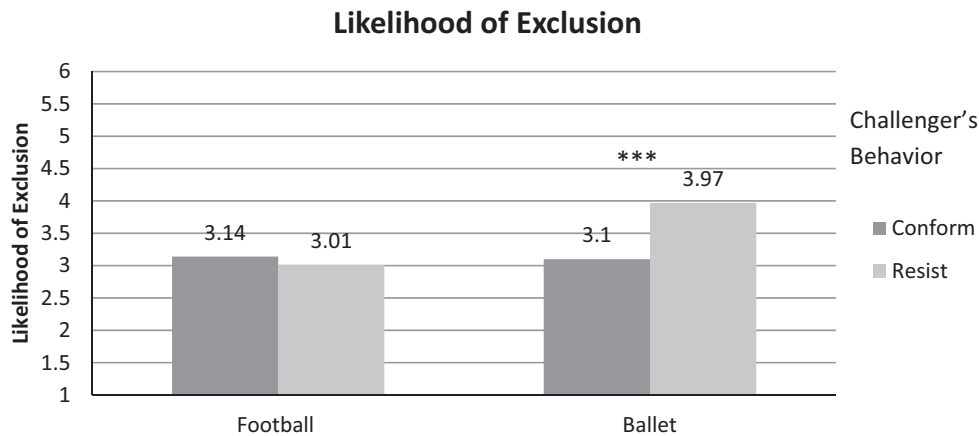


Figure 4. Likelihood of exclusion of the challenger for football and ballet.
*** $p < .001$.

used different forms of reasoning than those who thought the challenger would not be excluded, $F(2, 552) = 11.58$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$. Specifically, there were no differences in the use of group functioning; all participants frequently referenced group functioning, but participants who thought that exclusion was likely used much more reasoning involving gender stereotypes than those who did not, $p < .01$, and used much less reasoning about autonomy than did those who thought the challenger would not be excluded, $p < .05$ (see Figure 5).

Inclusion Decisions

It was expected that participants would be likely to include a gender outgroup member in the group

if that individual shares the group norm. In order to test this hypothesis, a 2 (gender: male, female) $\times$ 2 (age group: 9- to 10-year-olds, 13- to 14-year-olds) $\times$ 2 (group norm: conform, resist) $\times$ 2 (activity: ballet, football) ANOVA with repeated measures on the last factor was conducted. This analysis confirmed expectations, revealing that participants were likely to include gender out-group members, but it revealed they were more likely to include an out-group member who wanted to play football in a group that was playing football than an out-group member who wanted to do ballet in a group that was doing ballet, $F(1, 265) = 31.52$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .10$ (see Table 2). Furthermore, there were no differences based on if the group's norm conformed to stereotypes or not, or by age group or gender.

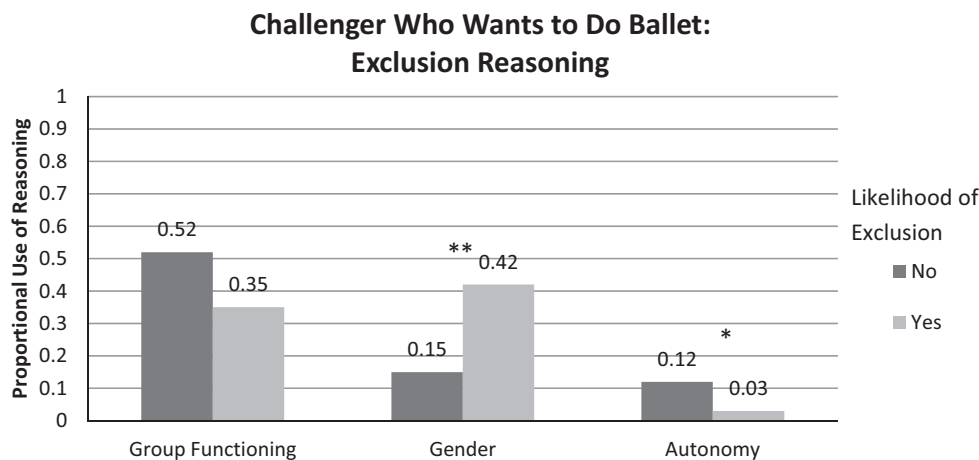


Figure 5. Reasoning about exclusion of the challenger who wants to do ballet.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Discussion

The novel findings of this study were that children and adolescents expected peers to challenge gender-stereotypic group norms and they also predicted that they would resist stereotypic norms. Despite the preponderance of evidence that indicates that children's choice of activities are highly associated with gender stereotypes, and that gender-stereotypic attitudes are often viewed as socially desirable (Ruble et al., 2006), children viewed resistance as likely, and referred to resistance that challenged as well as supported stereotypes. Yet, this study also documented age-related differences regarding the distinction between conformity to stereotypes by peers and their own expectations: Adolescents expected that their peers would conform to stereotypes more than they would individually.

Thus, with age, children made a distinction between their own viewpoint about conforming and their expectation about their peers' perspective. This was due, in part, to adolescents' beliefs that their peers would be more negatively influenced by counterstereotypic behavior and by challenging the group than would they, individually. In contrast, children were less likely to distinguish their own view from that of another individual or group. They may assume that their peers would be just as likely to resist stereotypes as they would be, which may not be accurate given research that indicates low rates of gender nonconformity among children (Sandberg, Meyer-Bahlburg, Ehrhardt, & Yager, 1993). Further, these findings reflect the social psychological phenomenon of the better than average effect found in adults, whereby individuals evaluate themselves more positively than others (Brown, 2012). The current findings suggest that this phenomenon may change developmentally.

Our hypothesis that children and adolescents would be aware of the asymmetry of desiring to engage in gender-nonstereotypic activities was supported by the findings. Children and adolescents asserted that exclusion was likely to be a consequence for challenging gender-stereotypic group norms, and especially for boys, recognizing the status associated with gender stereotypes. Previous research has indicated that boys who express an interest in playing counterstereotypic games are viewed as less popular than girls who express an interest in a counterstereotypic game (Lobel et al., 1993). The focus of this study was on group norms and when it is viewed as feasible or necessary to challenge the gender norms. In this case, the asym-

metry for gender activities was understood by 9 years of age.

The novel aspect of this study was to demonstrate that the consequences of engaging in nonstereotypic activities are exclusion. Even as young as 9 years of age children are aware of the different expectations regarding gendered behavior for boys and girls, which points to the real consequences boys face for showing an interest in typically female activities. This indicated that while it may be acceptable for girls to move up the status hierarchy and engage in stereotypically male activities, boys who move down the status hierarchy by encouraging the group to try a stereotypically female activity face are at risk for rejection from their group (Horn & Sinno, 2014).

Participants reasoned about exclusion primarily by focusing on group functioning, for instance, making reference to disruption of the group's processes or the lack thereof. Participants who said exclusion was not likely remarked that the challenger was still a part of the group and did not feel that challenging the group to engage in a different activity should result in exclusion. This indicates that children should be willing to challenge their group's norms regarding gender-stereotypic activities. For participants who did think exclusion was likely, gender stereotypes did play an important role, but participants did not focus solely on stereotypes in their reasoning. Children and adolescents do not believe that challenging the group's stereotypic norms will automatically result in exclusion. Thus, children and adolescents may very well be able to influence their peers and help to eradicate gender stereotypes.

That peers may be able to influence their group is supported by findings on inclusion in this study. Surprisingly, gender stereotypes were not a barrier when considering whom to invite to join your group. Instead, participants asserted that a group would be willing to allow an out-group member, an opposite-gendered child, to join their group playing football 80% of the time and would allow an opposite-gendered child to join their group doing ballet 60% of the time. There were differences between the male- and female-stereotypic activities, indicating that participants still perceived that female-oriented activities (ballet) should be more gender-segregated than male-oriented activities (football). Furthermore, while participants asserted that boys who challenged the group to engage in ballet would be treated the most harshly by their group, there were no differences between boys and girls who wanted to join a group of opposite-

gender children whose norm was to do ballet (or football, for that matter). Additionally, these findings suggest that future research should examine whether seeing individual children who challenge gender stereotypes by engaging in nonstereotypic activities can, in fact, change attitudes about gender stereotypes or serve as an example that normalizes nonstereotypic activities. This finding indicates that shared interest in an activity can lead to gender-mixed groups and greater inclusivity.

This is an important possibility as results indicate that changing attitudes may be more difficult in some contexts. Children's and adolescents' gender-stereotypic expectations about female-stereotyped activities such as ballet exerted a particularly strong influence on participants' judgments about when and whether children should challenge peer group norms. Participants expected that a boy who wanted to challenge his group to try ballet was the least likely to resist the group and they asserted that they would be less likely to resist the group if they were the boy who wanted to do ballet than the girl who wanted to play football. These results confirm the presence of a shifting standard (Biernat & Manis, 1994), whereby challenging gender stereotypes by moving down the status hierarchy (boys acting in stereotypically female ways) is less acceptable than moving up the status hierarchy (girls acting in stereotypically male ways).

While historically girls have encountered more societal barriers regarding exclusion (such as from participating in sports and math), boys may encounter more psychological obstacles in terms of choice of activities. For instance prior research with children and adolescents has found that boys who engage in gender nonconforming behavior are judged more harshly than are girls who engage in gender nonconforming behavior (Horn, 2007, 2008; Smetana, 1986; Zucker et al., 1995). In this study, participants who expected a challenging member to be excluded for resisting the group's gender stereotypes used stereotypes when reasoning about exclusion because of expressing a nonstereotypic activity preference. Thus, participants were attuned to differences in societal expectations and referenced assumptions underlying stereotypes. This study also documented gender differences in the exclusion measure, indicating that boys were more likely to expect exclusion for challenging either group to do ballet. These gender differences indicate that boys may be especially influenced by the stereotypes held about their own gender.

The findings provide greater understanding of children's predictions about their willingness to

challenge their group, their expectations about their peers, and their perception of the consequences of challenging the group. However, the study does include limitations. For instance, the gender-stereotypic social activities tested, football and ballet, involve gender stereotypes about recreational activities. Future research should examine a greater range of gender-stereotypic activities, such as stereotypes surrounding academic domains or occupational choices (Jacobs, Lanza, Osgood, Eccles, & Wigfield, 2002). An additional limitation is that the only consequence for challenging the group that was tested was exclusion. It is possible that children did not think that they would be excluded for challenging the group, but rather that they may be teased or shunned for a short time. It would be fruitful for future research to investigate other types of consequences for challenging the group.

Further, this study used a social-cognitive task to measure age-related differences. Future research could examine individual difference factors of the participants, such as social status. This would help identify what types of children are likely to challenge their groups and to be effective in actually changing the norms of the group. This is especially important given new research that indicates that the social status of individual peers has a direct bearing on children's judgments about the dynamics of the group (Sierksma, Thijs, & Verkuyten, 2014). Additionally, this study examined middle childhood and adolescence. An important future direction would be to examine these patterns in younger children. This extension would allow for an examination of the origins of a willingness to challenge the group. In addition to examining different age groups, it would be of interest to test for differences by ethnic or cultural group. For instance, some cultural groups may hold much stronger gender stereotypes, and thus in those cultures, challenging these stereotypes may be viewed more negatively.

The new findings indicate that children and adolescents expect that they will challenge stereotypic peer group norms, but that this expectation declines with age. Given the frequency of adult-sanctioned gender-segregated social activities, this research suggests that adults should be cognizant of messages that promote gender-stereotypic (and hence, gender-segregated) activities, with a focus on conveying messages about gender-integrated activities as well as flexibility for engaging in activities based on interest rather than gender. In conclusion, this study provides evidence that children desire more flexibility regarding gender-stereotypic group

expectations and norms, but that they are also concerned about consequences such as exclusion. Further, they understand the asymmetrical status of challenging male and female forms of gender-stereotypic activities. While gender norms are entrenched in our society, children, themselves, have the potential to serve as the agents of change by challenging stereotypes and inviting children of the opposite gender to join their social activities.

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