
Introduction

This volume brings together current empirical research on the development of adolescent boys from diverse socioeconomic, ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds. Recently, there has been a resurgence of interest in boys' lives and experiences. To some extent, this renewed interest has been inspired by the attention given to adolescent girls in the wake of the feminist movement. Through empirical studies of adolescent girls, feminist scholars have highlighted ways in which cultural constructions of gender, as well as biological manifestations of sex, shape girls' development. In turn, this body of work has informed new programs and policies—some at a national level—to help foster girls' sense of agency, broaden the scope of girls' options and opportunities for social engagement and academic achievement, and nurture girls' psychological strength and resilience. As parents, teachers, and health care practitioners have become increasingly aware of how girls' lives and experiences are inextricably embedded within their relationships to other people and to their social and cultural contexts, the question inevitably arose, "What about the boys?" Thus, researchers began to reconsider the relationships and the social and cultural context of boys' lives (Kindlon & Thompson, 1999; Pollack, 1998; Pollack & Shuster, 2000).

The research on adolescent boys' development, however, has been constrained by the same set of limitations as the research with adolescent girls (see Leadbeater & Way, 1996): it has been and is still based mostly on studies with white middle-class populations. Moreover, the findings from these studies are commonly used to generalize to *all* boys rather than serving as a framework for understanding the specific experiences of white middle-class boys. To the extent that white middle-class boys are not viewed as white or middle class but simply "boys," boys who are not white or middle class are regarded as "other," and their experiences tend to be marginalized

or neglected altogether. Although the recent discourse on boys claims to consider culture, for instance by evaluating cultural norms and ideals of masculinity, it nevertheless decontextualizes boys' experiences by failing to include the experiences of boys from diverse ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds and by ignoring ways in which cultural identities (e.g., race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and nationality) and social contexts (e.g., family, peers, and school) shape and are shaped by boys themselves. The few who have studied boys from diverse backgrounds, such as the authors in this volume, suggest that boys' experiences vary within and across cultures and contexts. Like girls, boys influence and are deeply influenced by the environments in which they develop. Thus, understanding how boys respond, experience, perceive, resist, and influence these cultures and contexts is critical to understanding their development.

Another limitation of recent discourse on boys has been the focus on clinical populations and the tendency to pathologize boys. A majority of recent books on boys' development are written by health care practitioners—counselors, therapists, psychiatrists—and focus on the clinical populations with whom they have worked (Garbarino, 1999; Gurian, 1998; Kindlon & Thompson, 1999; Pollack, 1998; Pollack & Shuster, 2000). While this work offers an important perspective on boys' development, there is a tendency in this literature to problematize that development. This pattern is also evident in research with boys of color and with poor and working-class boys, where typically the focus has been on high-risk behavior, gang involvement, and other negative behavior. Starting from the premise that there is something wrong with these boys—either inherent or acquired—research with clinical populations of boys as well as research with boys from low-income and/or ethnic minority families offers a skewed perspective that may help us to understand boys' problems but not boys' strengths, including ways in which boys resist succumbing to negative stereotypes and actively seek out ways to thrive in the midst of great challenges.

One may question the need for empirical studies on boys, given that historically the majority of psychological and developmental research had been conducted almost exclusively with all-male samples. Past studies of human development and psychology missed girls' experiences by neglecting to include females in their samples. However, past studies may have also missed capturing boys' experiences by not only ignoring the relevance of context and culture, but also employing methods of inquiry that do not

focus on boys' own perspectives. Thus, whereas girls have been historically under-represented in psychological and developmental theory, boys may have been misrepresented. In order to understand boys' development, it is important to start with boys' own perspectives and to learn what they view as the main issues, key obstacles, and central concerns in their lives. What do they value and hope for? What do they want? What are the sources of pressure and support in their lives? How do they cope with challenges? How do they experience their peers, romantic partners, family members, and school community?

One problem that results from studies that do not take boys' own perspectives into account is that their experiences are often homogenized and stereotyped and, thus, the nuances of boys' lives are not adequately represented. Stereotypes of boys—that they are not interested in intimacy, that they are primarily interested in sex, that they are emotionally stoic, and that they are more interested in autonomy than in relationships—have been repeatedly perpetuated in research on boys' development as well as in the research on adolescents in general. The research presented in this book, however, challenges such common stereotypes by listening to boys' experiences in their own words and on their own terms. Deborah Tolman and her colleagues (Chapter 12), for example, reveal how boys are interested in having close relations with girls and are not simply interested in sex. Way's chapter (Chapter 9) reveals that adolescent boys are emotionally astute and openly vulnerable when discussing their male friends, and also desire intimate male friendships in which friends "share everything." Chu's chapter (Chapter 4) draws attention to the importance of relationships for adolescent boys as they negotiate their senses of self. Each chapter in this volume suggests that boys, even white middle-class boys, may be misrepresented in research that does not take into account the voices of the boys themselves.

Gilligan (1977, 1982) suggests that it is not sufficient simply to add girls to existing paradigms based on boys' experiences, as the inclusion of female voices changes the conversation about human development and psychology in fundamental ways. Likewise, in order to resist the subsequent addition of culturally diverse boys' voices to existing paradigms based on white middle-class boys, we must start from boys' own perspectives. By including boys' perspectives—and especially by including the voices of boys of color and boys from poor and working-class families—the conversation about human development changes once again.

Studying Boys' Experiences in Context

This book presents a collection of new empirical research on adolescent boys' development in the various contexts of their lives. The authors in this book are senior and junior scholars from diverse disciplinary backgrounds, including sociology, psychology, and family studies, who adopt a developmental rather than diagnostic approach to understanding boys' experiences within their immediate relationships and their social and cultural contexts. The chapters in this book focus primarily on exploring the experiences of boys who have been excluded from the research on boys, including poor and working-class boys, ethnic minority boys, homosexual and bisexual boys, and boys who recently immigrated to the United States. The boys in this book also come from a variety of different places in the United States, such as California, New England, Chicago, Wisconsin, and New York, and outside of the United States, including Hong Kong, the United Kingdom, and Canada. The studies described in this book use a range of research methodologies—including qualitative approaches such as case studies, ethnographic observations and interviews, photographic explorations, and focus groups as well as quantitative approaches such as surveys and standardized questionnaires—to investigate boys' lives. While each of these methodological approaches has been criticized for its lack of generalizability or its inability to accurately portray the complexities of individual lives, when considered together, studies employing these methodologies present a nuanced picture of the lives of boys from different ethnic/racial, socioeconomic, and national backgrounds.

This book is divided into five parts, each of which corresponds to a critical aspect of boys' development. Part I focuses on identity development and describes ways in which boys from different backgrounds experience themselves, as males, within the contexts of their relationships and immediate sociocultural contexts. Part II focuses on family relationships with an emphasis on the ways in which they influence psychological health among adolescent boys. Part III focuses on adolescents' friendships and peer relationships with an emphasis on how adolescent boys from different cultural contexts experience their friendships and the impact of friendships on boys' psychological well-being. Part IV focuses on sexuality and romantic relationships and presents research on sexual experiences among heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual boys. Finally, Part V presents research on adolescent boys' experiences in school with a focus on

the daily experiences and meanings of schooling for culturally diverse adolescent boys.

Part I: Identity Development

In Chapter 1, Stacey J. Lee explores the intersection of ethnic and gender identity among Hmong American high school boys. Drawing on ethnographic data—including participant observations in school settings both in and out of the classroom, interviews, observations of local Hmong community events, and analyses of school documents—Lee describes the ways in which Hmong boys construct their masculinities at a public high school in Wisconsin. Lee focuses on the various expressions of masculinity among the boys in her studies that are created in response to the dictates of hegemonic masculinity.

In Chapter 2, Barbara M. Walker presents ways in which four working-class British adolescent boys see themselves, interact with others, and determine their priorities within the communities in which they live. With the aim of giving boys more control over how their lives are depicted, Walker utilizes photographs taken by the boys themselves in combination with data collected through focus groups and interviews in which the boys discussed their photographs and their meanings. The result is a unique account that portrays boys' lives through their eyes, and on their own terms.

In Chapter 3, Howard C. Stevenson explores African American boys' experiences of "hypervulnerability" and how these experiences are linked to identity development. He discusses the Black male experience of being "missed, dissed, and pissed" and the negative consequences of this experience for these boys' development and psychological adjustment. He also explores the association between family socialization experiences and hypervulnerability and suggests that family members can play a significant role in buffering the effects of being "missed, dissed, and pissed."

In Chapter 4, Judy Y. Chu examines ways in which adolescent boys negotiate their senses of self in light of cultural constructions of masculinity that manifest within their interpersonal relationships and social interactions. Focusing on a group of White, middle-class boys attending a private all-boys school, Chu suggests that boys' relational ways of being have been overlooked in recent literature on boys. Based on qualitative ethnographic

observations and interviews, Chu presents two case studies to illustrate ways in which boys, as active participants in their development and gender socialization, can mediate the influence of masculine norms and ideals on their self-concepts and subsequently their styles of engaging with and relating to others.

Part II: Family Relationships

In Chapter 5, Elena D. Jeffries examines the experiences of interpersonal trust in relationships with parents in a sample of African American, Latino, and Asian American adolescent boys from low-income families. Based on in-depth qualitative interviews collected longitudinally, Jeffries provides a thematic analysis of the ways in which trust is experienced and defined by youth, and how experiences of trust vary across relationships (i.e., mother vs. father) and change over time. Her findings suggest that the meaning of trust for adolescent boys is deeply embedded in boys' cultural context.

In Chapter 6, Daniel T. L. Shek explores the ways in which family functioning is linked to psychological and social adjustment in Chinese adolescents from poor families. Based in Hong Kong, this study uses measures of family functioning that were specifically created for Chinese samples. The study suggests that while family functioning has similar beneficial effects on mental health for both boys and girls, family functioning is linked to problem behavior only among the boys.

In Chapter 7, Darian B. Tarver, Naima T. Wong, Harold W. Neighbors, and Marc A. Zimmerman investigate the effects of father involvement in preventing suicidal ideation and suicidal risk among African American adolescent boys. The study reveals that father involvement is associated with lower levels of reported suicidal ideation and risk for African American boys, and suggests a need to gain a better understanding of the processes by which father involvement influences the lives of adolescent boys.

Part III: Friends and Peers

In Chapter 8, Niobe Way presents an overview of her qualitative research with African American, Latino, and Asian American adolescent boys. Key themes detected in her interviews revolve around experiences of intimacy,

desire, and distrust. She reveals the ways in which these experiences are woven into the fabric of boys' friendships, and suggests that the common stereotypes of boys' friendships, such as their being "activity-oriented," are not accurate representations of the ways in which boys perceive their relationships with other boys.

In Chapter 9, Xinyin Chen, Violet Kaspar, Yuqing Zhang, Li Wang, and Shujie Zheng provide a cross-cultural perspective on Chinese boys' experiences of peer relationships. Based on surveys and qualitative interviews conducted with boys in China and Canada, the authors discuss the role that peer relationships play in boys' social and psychological adjustment and how cultural norms and values and social circumstances may impact the ways in which boys perceive and experience their peer relationships.

In Chapter 10, Michael Cunningham and Leah Newkirk Meunier highlight ways in which perceptions of peers are related to bravado attitudes among African American boys. Based on a survey study set in an urban neighborhood, they explore how boys' experiences of peers in their schools and neighborhoods correspond to bravado attitudes. Their findings suggest a clear need for further exploration of how the multiple contexts of boys' lives in schools, neighborhoods, and home environments can individually and collectively impact how boys feel about themselves.

Part IV: Sexuality and Romantic Relationships

In Chapter 11, Deborah L. Tolman, Renée Spencer, Tricia Harmon, Myra Rosen-Reynoso, and Meg Striepe explore how early adolescents talk about their experiences of romantic relationships. Drawing on longitudinal interview data collected with a socioeconomically diverse group, the authors document the ways in which a heterosexual relational script shapes boys' experiences of sexuality and early romantic relationships. The authors highlight boys' responses to the expectation that males are "naturally" sexual predators. They also explore boys' perceived need to display their heterosexuality publicly and boys' struggles to negotiate the interplay between physical and emotional intimacy.

In Chapter 12, Joseph H. Pleck, Freya L. Sonenstein, and Leighton Ku present data collected longitudinally through the National Survey of Adolescent Males (NSAM) and report how patterns of sexual and contraceptive behavior among 15–19-year-old males living in the United States have

changed over time. The authors also highlight ways in which adolescent boys' heterosexual behavior and condom use are linked with issues of masculinity.

In Chapter 13, Ritch C. Savin-Williams explores the first sexual experiences of gay and bisexual boys. Drawing upon case history narratives, Savin-Williams reveals the complexities of gay and bisexual boys' first sexual experiences. His study suggests that the timing of this event (e.g., childhood or adolescence) has a significant impact on its meaning for the young person. His study also underscores the importance of examining the pleasurable aspects of same-sex sex among boys rather than simply the potentially negative consequences of unprotected sex.

Part V: Schooling

In Chapter 14, Carola Suárez-Orozco and Desirée Baolian Qin-Hilliard explore the school experiences and academic engagement of immigrant adolescents coming from China, Central America, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Mexico. Drawing from triangulated data that consider the youth's perspective as well as the teacher's and ethnographer's views, the authors consider dimensions of behavioral, social, and cognitive engagement using both qualitative and quantitative data. The authors focus in particular on reasons for the gender differences in school engagement and performance among immigrant boys and girls, with boys often doing more poorly than girls.

Gilberto Q. Conchas and Pedro A. Noguera, in Chapter 15, explore the experiences of academically successful African American students and propose ways to support their achievement. Drawing on qualitative observations and interviews, Conchas and Noguera focus in particular on examining variations in school experiences among high-achieving African American youth at a large urban high school in Northern California. Through focusing on African American male students' own perspectives, Conchas and Noguera begin to unravel what works and what does not work within the school setting.

Michelle V. Porche, Stephanie J. Ross, and Catherine E. Snow, in Chapter 16, explore the role of masculinity as a factor in boys' literacy skills and their subsequent academic achievement. Drawing from observational and interview data collected longitudinally from preschool through middle school with boys from low-income urban families, the authors suggest

that boys' gender socialization may be linked to their early literacy training and later literacy practices.

Our Goals for This Book

The overarching aim of this volume is to incorporate the experiences of boys from diverse cultural backgrounds into our current discussions of boys' development. This book is not intended to be an anthology, but rather a focused collection of current research that represents the diversity of perspectives on boys' development. Similar to Carol Gilligan's groundbreaking work on girls, we seek to include the "missing voices" in the literature on boys' development. Rather than offering simple solutions for how to fix boys or quick tips for how to raise boys, this book provides insight into ways in which boys experience and understand their lives and offers ways to move beyond stereotypical representations of them. This book is important for parents and teachers as well as researchers and practitioners who are interested in boys' development and who wish to better understand what is going on for boys so that they can better relate to and support the healthy development of the boys in their own lives.

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