Resisting and committing to schooling: intersections of masculinity and academic position
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In Western countries, discourses concerning ‘boys failing school’ are circulated in media as well as in schools. Research is conducted that offers sweeping sociological, societal or biological explanations, or context-sensitive ethnographic or social psychological and variable explanations on the relation between boys and school life. In this article the author outlines her research into boys in school, based on her empirical studies of subjectification processes in the institutionalized context of school life. The case study is ‘Ryan’, who switched schools and left a school life in which he was ‘resisting schooling’. At the new school, new possibilities were available. The analysis shows how complexly the dynamics of resisting and committing to school are intertwined with local, shifting and intersecting categories of masculinity, academic learning, race and the struggles of power within and between these categories, and also with struggles of what is pedagogically relevant.

This article is part of an empirical study in which I looked at what sort of impact switching schools had on children who moved to a ‘progressive school environment’. One focus of the study was whether this switching could contribute to a more gender-inclusive school life, and I found that this would be complicated in a culture in which ‘resisting schooling’ was a dominating endeavor. This led me to follow the details of commitment/resistance within the lived everyday experiences of the school children.

The article will examine the concept and the material-discursive practices of ‘resistance’ in school life. The optics will be to see ‘resistance’ as a position within which to be acquired (McDermott 1993), as an effect of distributions of power between and within social categories such as gender, race and pupil. This is a focus on the micro-workings of power (Foucault 1980, 2000) and on avoiding fixing the categories and the hierarchy between the categories in advance. Thereby, I will try to ‘complicate’ or challenge the possibility to think about the social conditions and practices of ‘resistance’. The analysis will elaborate on dynamics of instability, change, rupture, suture and ambiguity of lived everyday/meaning-making processes within which masculinity and academic positions are continually constituted and re-configured. I will do this through an analytical grid comprising temporality and processes of minoritization and majoritization and the intersections and inner workings of social categories.

What this analysis will pay attention to/produce is how complex and contradictory processes of majoritization and minoritization run through ‘Ryan’s’ conditions of possibility and how these processes are linked to the positions of resistance/commitment to academic life, i.e. the positionings

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within and against various categories of pupil and these categories’ intersections with sociocultural categories such as race and gender.

I will start by presenting a summary of the case. Then I will present international research on boys and masculinities in school, followed by a presentation of the concept of resistance and how this concept is re-conceptualized to be put to work in the analysis of the case of ‘Ryan’. Subsequently, I will sketch out the theoretical and methodological position – a poststructuralist position with a focus on processes of subjectification and the distribution of power, through (1) a non-additive intersectionality perspective, (2) processes of minoritization and majoritization, and (3) intersections of temporality. The rest of the article consists of the empirical analysis based on the case presented at the beginning of the article.1

Case introduction
The analysis in this article will unfold through a case based on a research project where I followed children who switched schools. The shift was a transition from a ‘traditional’ school setting into one particular ‘progressive’ school. In Denmark, where the research was conducted, school children ordinarily stay in the same school all through primary and secondary school (that is 9–10 years of schooling). However, a few schools are exclusively for the last three years of (mandatory) schooling, and my research was primarily conducted at such a school. This empirical study is qualitative and longitudinal. My research contains exhaustive fieldwork throughout a school year (the first year at the new school) and interviews and re-interviews with 12 children during that school year as they – for various reasons – switched to this particular school. The aim of conducting the research was to look at how categories are ‘stirred up’ as a result of children’s transitions between sociocultural and academic categories and positions in their old school life and conditions in the new school life.2

The schools: transitions between ‘traditional’ and ‘progressive’
I claim above that the children switched from a ‘traditional’ to a ‘progressive’ school. In this context, progressive means that project work is favored over teacher-centered work forms (which are dominant in a ‘traditional’ school setting), and the children are allowed to sit anywhere while they work – i.e. beyond the gaze of the teacher (whereas visibility is dominant at ‘traditional’ schools). Furthermore, the content/themes of the project work are guided by what the children desire to work with and on. On the one hand, this school and the types of pedagogical procedures and practices are historically conceived as ‘progressive’. At the same time, though, recent turns towards ‘neoliberal government’ might change this ‘progressiveness’, since the abilities ‘trained/obtained’ in a school system like this match the ideas of the desired workforce within ‘neoliberal management’, i.e. ‘self-improving’ and ‘self-regulating’ (Foucault 1991; Davies and Petersen 2005; Davies and Bansel 2007). For analysis of neoliberal governance in school, see for example Krejsler (2007) and Watkins (2007). To enter this particular school, students have to be admitted: approximately 250 children from Copenhagen area apply every year, and 48 children are allowed to enter. The children, thus, talk about themselves as ‘lucky’ and ‘selected’ as they enter the school.

Ryan – between ‘traditional’ and ‘progressive’
The pivotal point of the case is a boy who switched schools, supposedly to ‘try something new’.3 I interviewed him twice, once at the beginning of the school year, and once at the end of the school year. Additionally, I made observations and had conversations with him throughout the year. Ryan switched from a school life (after seventh grade) in which he was positioned as a
problematic and noisy pupil, and in which his social activity during school was organized around playing and talking about football and doing very little academic work. He had a bad report card. He was evaluated ‘below average’ in every subject apart from physical education/PE (above average) and mathematics (average). He was also rated as below average in ‘Interest in school’, ‘Maturity’ and ‘Working effort’, and the class teacher wrote about Ryan: ‘A lively, but unstructured boy’. By the end of the following school year at the new school, something had happened to how Ryan was positioned and positioned himself in terms of the category of pupil/academic achievement. This change can be seen by how he talked about his experiences with school–home conversations (SHC):

R: Before the first SHC here [at the new school. MJ] I was really nervous because I had such bad memories from SHC at my old school and I was so relieved afterwards…. The only positive thing they had to say to me at the old school was that I was really funny and charming and had a good sense of humor … they didn’t think that I worked hard enough, and I didn’t like the teachers so I didn’t care to. And so they got mad and told my parents and then they got mad as well. From fourth to seventh grade it was really shitty…. Here we have had two SHCs and they have been super-duper and without any problems, so my father gave me DKr 800 afterwards because my parents were so happy.

In the beginning of the new school year Ryan talked about his new school in positive terms and said that he was lucky to have been admitted: ‘It is a good school, you don’t want to be thrown out’ and ‘teachers are interested in you and your learning’. The school is ‘different’, ‘you don’t just sit on your fat ass and study’. A discourse of being part of a special and good and progressive school culture is working as an in- (and ex-)including force and producing a ‘we of this school’. The children were united in being ‘lucky’ and ‘selected’, and the teachers treated them with a pedagogy that centered on the children, ‘we are interested in you and what you want’. To oppose teachers and school was definitely not the cool thing to do. Ryan described how he and the other boys at his old school dominated the girls who:

…. didn’t dare to say anything because I think that the boys had a lot of power in my old class…. I think that the girls were a little frightened when the boys were fighting, like ‘we don’t want to mess with that’, so we were a little male chauvinistic.

(This story was brought up in the interview only after he had consistently established a past tense on these practices: ‘male chauvinism’ was something he did then and not in the new school life).

In both interviews, Ryan identified a type of girl at the new school that he was not used to. In the first interview, he characterized the ‘oddness’ of these girls in somewhat inclusive terms. He positively stated: ‘I don’t know, they are tougher here, you don’t want to mess with them, they tell you what they mean.’ Ryan characterized his classmates as ‘much calmer and quieter than at the old school’, and that he also ‘became calmer’. When I asked how come he had become friends with the particular boys that he had, he answered: ‘It is probably because they have had similar school lives to mine, and they are also those who are most lively, they are probably the ones who are most like me.’ Football was neither a dominant nor a prominent thing to do at the new school. What students did in their spare time was primarily ‘hang out’ or walk around in the school area while talking amongst themselves.

Throughout the school year Ryan’s attitude and practices concerning academic achievement and how he constituted masculinity and ‘pupilness’ (i.e. how to be a proper pupil; Juelskjær 2001) were somewhat fluid. At stake was how one may establish ‘high-ranking’ positioning as a boy and a pupil within this new setting, as it is not ‘cool’ to practice opposition/resistance towards school and teachers. And football is not the ‘right’ thing to do as a boy. And when are ‘committing’ to and ‘resisting’ school life positions to take up and act within – or positions that you acquire (McDermott 1993)? Ryan struggled with/between taking up new practices as a boy and
pupil, and re-appropriating well-known and (‘past’) established practices of ‘school boy’. By the end of the school year, though, there were struggles between Ryan and his friends, and a group of girls/a mixed-gender group. Ryan offered oppositional readings of girls and boys, as well as of the practices at the school. It looked as if Ryan was on the move towards a possible re-opposition position, but perhaps a modified opposition?

The coming analysis will look at what these gaps and fissures may show about the conditions of possibility of masculinities and academic positions in school.

**Constituting masculinity within school: international research context**

I have indicated above that masculinity is produced and reproduced in the intersection of school systems, pupil categories and gender in the case of Ryan. In the following analysis, additional categories and forces will enter the analysis. Before turning to the analysis, I will draw on international research on how the categories of masculinity and pupil may intersect. Wortham (2006) identifies a ‘model of identity’ concerning girls, boys and school in the US:

> Teachers and students habitually came to presuppose one widely circulating model of identity more often than all these others: ‘Girls are less troublesome, smarter and more promising than boys’. This model [Promising Girls and Unpromising Boys] circulates somewhat widely across American society and American schools, increasingly so in recent years. (Wortham 2006, 53)

In a London study of young masculinities, Frosh et al. (2002) ‘respond’ to a worry in Britain concerning ‘masculinity in crisis’ (Frosh et al. 2002, 2). In their research they found (among other things) that high status among boys was established through opposition towards adult authority and classroom learning. Such dominating masculinity functioned as social regulation amongst the boys; being academically ambitious and popular did not combine easily, and homophobia was pervasive and regulative.4 (See also Renold 2002 on homophobia. And see Weis 1990; Alpert 1991; Foley 1991; Mac an Ghaill 1994, on the dynamics of teachers, teaching and pupils’ resistance towards academic learning.)

In Denmark (where I conducted the study) a pervasive discourse concerning boys in school is a variation of what Wortham identifies as a widely circulating model in the US, one that also Frosh et al. touch upon (see also Epstein et al. 1998). In the Danish setting, it is not that the boys lack potential but that the school is unable to ‘activate’ this potential, which means that the schools fail the boys more than boys fail the school (Bjerg 2007). The dominating view is that this situation is due to a model of teaching that favors the girls’ ways of learning and not the boys’. The model of this dichotomy of girls’ and boys’ learning abilities is connected to biologists’ ideas of ‘gendered brains’ (Zlotnic 2004; Knudsen 2005), and this is linked to a model of masculinity that dictates ‘a true boy’ as someone who is livelier than girls, and ‘big-mouthed’ (Nordahl 1994; Knudsen 2005).

Finally, turning towards the school playground as a site for construction of identities, there seems to be thematic similarity across countries concerning the constitution of masculinity – football often plays a central part. Frosh et al. (2002, 11) conclude that football was a ‘key motif’ in the construction of masculinities, a ‘resource drawn upon in the construction of gendered identities, even for those young people who expressed antipathy to football’, and other studies have similar observations (Skelton 2000, 2001; Staunæs 2004; Kofoed 2006; see also Skelton 2000, for an overview of research into masculinity and football in school).

In the research field of masculinity, ‘hegemonic masculinity’ is often the term used for the conglomerate of practices of a type of masculinity that constitutes what it takes to do appropriate masculinity. It is a regulative ideal influencing both how boys think they must act to be acceptable as boys, as well as how its concrete practices are constituted and negotiated in social interaction (Kofoed 2006). The term is, though, still debated (see as examples Donaldson 1993; Wetherell...
and Edley 1999; Staunæs 2003) and other concepts have been fleshed out to refine and conduct specific analyses of masculinities and how and when a type of masculinity may be dominant in relation to other ‘sub-categories’ of masculinity, such as hypermasculinity (Staunæs 2003). I will withdraw from using the concept of hegemonic masculinity, and show the concrete elements of the doing and undoing of minoritized and majoritized positions that co-constitute the categories of masculinity within the case. (This will be elaborated further in the section ‘Theoretical perspective: approaching resistance through ‘intersectionality’.)

The concept of resistance

‘Resistance’ is an implicit or explicit nodal point within the research field of boys/masculinities in school. This nodal point is produced along with questions of ‘democratization’, ‘equality’ and ‘justice’. Let me exemplify through McFadden (1995, 296):

How … do we characterize the relationship between schools and society and how can student resistance be seen as productive or at least lead us to ask different questions about why some students resist the offers of schooling?

There is a body of work along structuralist and Marxist lines and from a point of view of class analysis (see as an example, Bourdieu and Passeron 1977), in which the school children become the sole bearers of determining structures. There is another body of work that runs counter to this: McFadden (1995, 295) writes that: ‘Work done within this framework purported to offer the possibility of education producing creative agents capable of changing social structures (Kingston 1986; Mehan 1992)’. In other words, within this perspective (as opposed to the structuralist, Marxist), school is not just reproducing oppressive social class relations of capitalism. Paul Willis’s (1977) *Learning to labor: how working class kids get working class jobs* has been, and continues to be, a pivotal point for the research field. His take was that the resistance of the ‘lads’ (the working-class school boys) towards schooling was a positive expression against the essential evils of both capitalism and patriarchy. Since then, a substantial amount of research has been done with and against the conclusions in the ‘Learning to labor’ study (see McFadden 2005 for an outline). For example, studies by Meyenn (1980), Brown (1987) and Walker (1993), show that resistance is not class based and, additionally, that success or failure at school is often a product of teachers’ perception and labeling, and children’s reactions against poor teacher methods (Mac an Ghaill 1989. Furthermore, the focus on working-class boys and schooling brought about a counter focus on working-class girls’ forms of resistance and it problematized the ‘idolization’ of ‘the lads’ (Walkerdine 1990), and also evoked discussions on what sex/gender is supposed to be the object of pity (Frosh *et al.* 2002; Kryger 1988; Nordahl and Zlotnik 2004).

Research position regarding resistance

Reading through and analytically struggling with ideas of resistance opens up for a plurality of answers to questions such as: When is something (to be read as) an act of resistance? Does resistance imply a theory of subject intentionality, or does it show itself through ‘effects’ that may be picked up and recognized as such within a discursive practice, be it a school practice or a research practice? When does the undercurrent of the analysis imply that resistance may be a positive or a destructive endeavor? Who gets to judge? The concept of resistance is not simple or fixed. Thus, it may be a productive element of the analytical endeavor to pay attention to research positions, or to what Haraway (1991) calls the ‘situated perspective’ of the researcher. Relevant in this case would be to look at how a poststructuralist feminist interest in studying the negotiations of gendered positions shaped and pushed the analysis: I wanted to study how sociocultural
categories are reworked when children switched schools to a ‘progressive school environment’ and whether this change and possible re-examination of hierarchical categories in any way could lead to more gender-inclusive and/or gender-equal school life. In the beginning, I imagined that it would be a question of what sort of masculinities might dominate in school life, and whether the dominating masculinity would include practices in which girls and non-normative boys would be harassed by the material-discursive practices of masculinity (since this was what I had seen in other studies). At the beginning of the school year I witnessed the establishing of hierarchies of categories and practices in which reworking of ‘masculinity’ as well as ‘commitment’ and ‘resistance’ took place in favor of gender-inclusive practices. Since this could be viewed as effects of ongoing positioning and repositioning within and against social categories and ‘sub-categories’, and the distribution of power within and among these categories, it called for a contextualized analytical strategy. A strategy was needed to grasp the processes of ‘minoritizing’ or ‘othering’ (Frankenberg 1993; Staunæs 2003), that is, to see how processes of minorization and majorization continuously and ambiguously reworked the conditions of possibility for the girls and boys in the new school, and how they furthermore contextualized the analytical optics of resistance. The optics will be to view resistance as a position to be acquired in (McDermott 1993) the local context – as an effect of struggles of the distribution of power, and power understood in a Foucauldian sense as ‘actions on actions’ (Foucault 2000). This implies not looking at Ryan’s ‘intentions’ concerning his school life, but analyzing how the categories within which he is positioned, and from which within a discursive space is opened to act with and against, are producing actions on other actions – with the effect of modifying and producing current and coming discursive space.

I will unfold these perspectives in the following sections.

Theoretical perspective: approaching resistance through ‘Intersectionality’

In order to analyze the case of social and academic processes that shaped Ryan in ambiguous ways as a schoolboy in the details of everyday life, I saw the use of poststructuralist analytical tools that address the processes of subjectification (Foucault 1980, 2000; Butler 1993) on a subject-level in lived everyday experiences (Wetherell and Edley, 1999; Davies 2000; Staunæs, 2003, 2005; Søndergaard, 2005; Kofoed 2006, 2007; Juelskjær 2007a, 2007b; Petersen, 2007). Foucault’s notion of subjectification is to be understood as a two-sided or doubled process, where the subject is both being subjected and submitted to contextual conditions and by taking up these conditions is (en)able(d) to act upon and within the conditions (and where ‘taking up’ means complexly and also reflected and un-reflected struggling with ‘mastering’). As effect, for example, you ‘live’ the material-discursive categories to which you are ascribed (as ‘boy’, ‘a resisting pupil’ etc.) by being submitted to and working on mastering and/or resisting elements of that very subjectification.

A poststructuralist perspective is sensitive to analysis of the subtle ways that categories condition and rework each other. Within a poststructuralist perspective, the category of masculinity, and the material-discursive practices (Barad 2007) that are (contextually) identified as ‘belonging to’ or ‘stemming from’ this category, is considered a highly complex achievement that goes on continuously with and through a range of other categories. Categories cannot be understood in isolation. They are tools of in- and exclusion, and thereby they become associated with power relations, meaning also that categories are never neutral but may ‘live’ as unmarked social positions as an effect of power relations through which the category as a category ‘disappears’ (Phoenix 2006). I will now present the theoretical and methodological platform for the analysis from three vantage points: (1) non-additive intersectionality; (2) processes of majorization and minoritization; (3) intersections of temporality.
(1) Non-additive intersectionality

‘Intersectionality’ maintains that categories do something to each other, and that power relations might affect how categories in various ways dominate other categories. The term intersectionality was coined by Kimberley Crenshaw (1989), but had long been promoted by black feminists (who, among other things, showed how the category and perspective of ‘women’ put forward by white feminists was immanently a white middle-class woman). Since then, the concept has been a ‘fast traveler’ (Knapp 2005), in terms of methodologies, disciplines, categories in focus etc. (for an overview of the research area see for example Staunæs 2003; Knapp 2005; Lykke 2005; Phoenix 2006). One branch of intersectionality studies emphasizes the structural level: Categories are often ‘added up’ analytically, thereby demonstrating multiple systems of oppression (see for example Collins 1998) within a matrix of domination. This perspective is fruitful. However, within studies with a focus on the details of social negotiations in everyday life, another approach is more ‘suited’, one that may grasp complexities and contradictions on the small scale without a predefined hierarchy of categories. Through such an approach it is possible to see how ‘inventive’ the ongoing constitutions of categories are. This position could be summed up as a non-additive intersectionality perspective (Crenshaw 1994; Brah 1996; Razack 1998; Lykke 2005), and is my first vantage point for the analysis. Staunæs (2003, 105) coins such non-additive approach:

Categories do not mingle equally…. I will further suggest examining the details of how the concrete doings and intermingling of categories work in a specific context and where and how these doings result in troubled subject positions and where they do not.

In this analysis, then, no categories are ‘background variables’, but rather social categories you ‘do’ and that ‘do you’. ‘They are tools of in- and exclusion and they are tools of positioning and of making hierarchies’ (Staunæs 2005, 154). A poststructuralist intersectionality perspective encompasses the multiplicity, heterogeneity and fluidity of the boundaries and intersections of the categories.

(2) Processes of majoritization and minoritization

The second vantage point emphasizes processes of majoritization and minoritization. When dealing with social categories within this frame of analysis, it is crucial not to consider categories within a fixed matrix of domination, since this will freeze the possibilities of the analysis whereby it is fixed, what might be understood as ‘resistance’, as well as ‘domination’. Micro-analysis shows that elements that lead to dominance in one material-discursive setting become re-contextualized and do not have same effect in another setting. The particularities rupture and instabilities are valuable entries of analysis when you try to grasp the workings of the distribution of power that condition the processes of subjectification. With an analytical grid of processes of minoritization and majoritization you are on the lookout for the concrete doings of fixings, subversions through tracing how someone gets positioned in concrete material-discursive practices.

This goes hand in hand with what is called a ‘majority inclusive approach’, where the sociocultural production of ‘the first’ is a key point of the analysis; social categories do not only count for the ‘others’, i.e. those who are non-powerful and non-privileged (Frankenberg 1993; Staunæs 2003, 2005). ‘The majority-inclusive approach is a Foucauldian approach focusing on how someone becomes un/marked, non/privileged, how these processes are produced, sustained, and subverted, and how power is part of this’ (Staunæs 2003, 11). In the scope of this article, it is crucial to be able to see the complex and contradictory processes/dynamics of majoritization and minoritization that run through Ryan’s conditions of possibility, and how these processes/dynamics are linked to the doings/processes/positions of resistance/commitment.
(3) **Intersections of temporality**

My longitudinal study focused on processes of subjectification, and temporality is built into the empirical design (interviewing and re-interviewing; hanging out with children in periods of two months with an absence of four months in the middle), as well as into the ways cuts are made in the analytical work (i.e. ‘plotting’ the analysis as ‘at the beginning of the school year’ and ‘by the end of the school year’). Needless to say, it is important to pay attention to how these temporalities are effects of the researcher’s construction. However, it provides a framing within which it is possible to pay attention to the micro-workings of power; it provides the opportunity to follow processes of sedimentation (Butler 1993) and change – fissures and re-closing of fissures that might otherwise escape the analysis. Butler writes:

> Construction is neither a single act nor a causal process initiated by a subject and culminating in a set of fixed effects. Construction not only takes place in time, but is itself a temporal process which operates through the reiteration of norms. (Butler 1993, 10)

Reiterations produce naturalizations but also ‘gaps and fissures are opened up as the constitutive instabilities in such constructions…. This instability is the deconstituting possibility in the very process of repetition’ (ibid.). Butler’s idea of temporality is an emphasis on the instability and the possibilities of exceeding discourses, i.e. making other ‘citations’ (ibid.)/discourses and subject positions possible, while at the same time she shows how ‘norms’ are ever-ongoing and provisional effects.

Additionally, as I see it, Butler’s perspective may work as a ‘reminder’ of how every citation/reiteration/constitution also ‘consists’ of and produces temporality within the ongoing processes of subjectification. Subjectification is messy, and stabilization/destabilization, continuity/discontinuity are (temporal) forces within the processes of ‘taking up’ and making one’s own the conditions of possibility of one’s existence (i.e. as described earlier regarding subjectification). Temporality becomes furthermore both about the ordering of past, present and future, and may also become the ‘hailing’ of the subject into certain – instead of other – categories and material-discursive practices. Temporality becomes a force in the constitution and subversions of power, position and categories.

In the following sections, I will put these analytical grids to work on the case.

**Positions of masculinity and academic achievement in the beginning of the school-year**

At the beginning of the new school year, Ryan was establishing himself as someone who valued learning higher than friendships, and who complied with gendered equality at the school. He insisted that though he missed his friends and the activities at the old school (i.e. playing football, sharing practices and senses of humor, opposing teachers, dominating girls), he did not want to go back to the old school. Ryan’s reflexive past-tense descriptions of his past practices of masculinity and academic positions produce temporal discursive closure and discontinuity between past school life and present school life – and past and present positions of masculinity. He is thereby discursively established as a pupil with an interest in academic improvement/progress (in agreement with/committing to the local pedagogical endeavor) and at that stage in the school year, this position accessed inclusion in the majority/dominant position at school, at that time a desired position.

Though resistance towards schooling was not an acted-out position, it did have some relevance in the social processes of negotiating friendships since Ryan became friends with the boys he described as having had similar experiences of past school life to his own. Thus, Ryan was (partly) constituted as a boy in school through inclusion within a group of boys who shared a type of masculinity and experiences of practices where their actions would dominate the class in ways...
that could be read as ‘resisting school’. There were moments in the new class when the group of boys called out each other to reaffirm the mastering of such (othered, but still majoritizing) practices. Furthermore, the marker ‘football boys’ was channeled into the academic work, as they teamed up and did project work on football, hooliganism etc.

One could say that past positions of ‘doing resistance’ intersected in the in- and exclusion processes of seeking friendships and toned a sense of commonality/sameness and provided shared meanings amongst the boys who included each other. In that sense, there are also elements of temporal continuity within Ryan’s subject positions, though the sameness that the boys shared was not transported into the ‘current’ material-discursive practices and positioning in a dominant or unequivocal way. The masculinity was blended with or held sway through practices of the dominant project of ‘doing inclusion’ in the new school life, i.e. being part of the material-discursive practices of this school project: Thereby the masculinity-constitutive elements are shaped and reformed, and thereby the distribution of power is to some extent preserved through this shaping and reformation. Had the boys continued the practices of their old school lives to the same extent as they were used to, they would have been acquired a minority position: there was no easy continuity, positions mismatched the hierarchies ascribed to the position in the ‘past’ and ‘present’.

The constituents of masculinity of Ryan and his friends are furthermore co-constituted through how the categories of girl and boy condition each other. Girls were an equal part of the ‘school we’ from the outset, and the sub-category of ‘tough’ girl/femininity that was introduced to Ryan in the new setting was a desired category amongst the girls and was a leading factor in establishing mixed-gender friendships in the new school and so boy friendships were not practiced through too severe processes of subordinating the girls.

Five months later: intersections of gender, race, academic positions and temporality

At the beginning of the school year, I applauded the fact that the possibilities of destructive and oppositional masculinity was toned down and more gender inclusive, and mutually respectful practices seemed to take place through the complex intersection of material discursive gender-producing practices in school life. Towards the end of the school year the picture was more ambiguous. Some positions (inhabited by the mixed-gender group) had begun to capture and tone/redefine the conditions of inclusion. They talked through the security and arrogance of local hegemony and it showed increasingly clearly how these processes of ‘othering’ (and the accompanying disrespect towards ‘the others’) had the effect of leaving less space for Ryan and his friends to take up inclusive positions in the progressive and positive school culture. At the same time, a turning up in the volume of a specific masculinity among Ryan’s group countered this dominance and established another landscape of domination and security within which these boys could maneuver and produce senses of self and school life, with the effect that a type of masculinity that had been loosened and ‘softened’ was re-strengthened. The analysis will focus on these dynamics.

The categories intersected in new ways and so the social positioning and the distribution of power shifted: The group of girls that Ryan called tough in the first interview was by now established as a dominant group, and an analysis of the categories that intersected in the material-discursive practices of the group showed that the dominant position had to do with how the pedagogical, ideological and political currents of the school (liberal, equality, anti-racism, ‘freedom within responsibility’ turned into pedagogical strategies such as ‘responsibility for own learning’ and ‘project work’) were mobilized and lived out within the group, and how these elements were shaped by gender. The dominant group was of mixed gender and Ryan talked disparagingly about the boys as untidy, lazy, gangling youths who smoked and were sissyish,
with long hair (this became a ‘local fashion’ and gradually more and more boys let their hair grow long). The clothing of the girls (second-hand, self-made and retrofitted and loose – ‘individualized, and ‘non[conventionally]-sexy’) was now the subject of ridicule. It is relevant to note that the girls’ style of dressing (and the long hair of the boys) was considered as an example of the school attitude/ideology: liberal, non-conventional etc. Thereby the esthetics of the children was a constituent in the distribution of power.

Ryan would, among other things, say in a derisive tone: ‘You are not exactly used to this kind of dressing.’ This ‘not exactly used to’ discursively shifts what is in- and outside (minority community/school culture versus majority society), and produces a position from which to judge the local conditions as strange and deviant from what he was ‘used to’. ‘Used to’ points at what is culturally prescriptive/dominant/normal. In the same discursive move, Ryan also establishes his past life and his positions within this scenario as the normative, and his position there as powerful in terms of the capability of normative judgment on behalf of normativity/majority.

The discursive resource of ‘past’ and ‘outside’ works on the power balances through delegitimating that which, in the local context, was read as appropriate and as majoritizing the material-discursive practices in school life.

The counter-strategies worked partly through the gender esthetics: the boys’ masculinities were rendered suspect, and the non-standard femininity was ridiculed with a hint of aggression. It is interesting how clearly the feminine esthetics of the girls did not have Ryan’s form of masculinity as its recipient. They did not position themselves as objects of what might be desire producing for ‘him’; they did not affirm that masculinity. On the contrary, they undermined constituents of this masculinity – tipping the economy of power.

Gender intersected with yet another category was mobilized in the struggles of minoritization–majoritization: Amelia was a leading figure in the ‘dominant group’ (she was for example a main producer of what it was relevant to think, politically, and excelled in the so-called individualized style of dressing etc.). She is also an Asian adoptee, and towards the end of the school year Ryan’s group called her ‘chink’ and ‘china-girl’. ‘Race and ‘racialization’ then became another element in the economy of power: The masculinity of Ryan and his friends could be built up through the highlighting of masculinity through the emphasis and intersection of ‘white and masculinity’ against ‘dark and femininity’. One may interpret the effect of these strategies in different ways. When Ryan and his friends mobilized forces of minoritizing towards Amelia and called her a ‘chink’ etc. it had an effect; it produced actions and emotions, it placed Amelia in affect and turned her conditions of possibility into an inferno of mino- and majoritizing positions, both complicated and potentially violent. But Amelia’s conditions of possibility are not the topic of this analysis, and I should add that she had strong alliances and was the epiphany of the local successful student at the social arena of the new school, and from within this particular ‘inside’ (as politically active, big-city smart and ‘self-responsible’) she drew on powerful discourses that allowed her to ridicule and minoritize the positions of Ryan and his friends.7

**Intersections of temporal (dis)continuous positions?**

The stereotyped and racist positions and discourses established an alternative gendered order within the local school life, an order to resist the local and ‘disturbing’ hierarchy. They were strategies for reordering power hierarchies, and a negotiation in favor of the order that Ryan and his friends knew from their former schools. Ryan intersected with his past positions whereby the local gendered and raced hierarchies were in some sense and some instances subverted, or at least one could analyze them as actions (on actions) towards (re)gaining the material-discursive resources available from within that majority position. I may only speculate to what degree this may have led to an experience of himself as the majority despite being
simultaneously minoritized through the rendering irrelevant of constitutive elements of his masculinity, and whether/to what degree this produced an experience of continuous and adequate dominant masculinity across time and space.

**Academic re-positionings?**

I wonder if Ryan was not in some sense moving/‘pushed’ towards partial practices of resistance against aspects of school life by the end of the school year. Ryan’s position was ambiguous in the second interview concerning the academic dimensions of school. On the one hand he positioned himself as academically relevant: School was important, one should ‘pull oneself together’, ‘the school is the door to the future’ and ‘one needs good grades’. The ways in which he spoke about the relevance of school effort, though, were through discourses that were not as locally situated; they sounded like discourses from his past school life. The local discourse of pupil effort was that academic achievement goes through ‘personal development’, and this development was considered to grow out of the pedagogical practices that were liberal and offered a lot of space for the pupils’ subjective investments in school work, as the school day was organized in terms of project work, pupil-centered issues and themes, excursions etc. Within this pedagogical order the individual pupil must ‘choose’ to make an individual effort; it is ‘up to you’ whether you work hard or not. Learning within this order is thereby also a question of assuming responsibility for self-management. In the case of Ryan, one force of integration was his relationship to the teachers at the new school. Ryan talked positively about the teachers: ‘they are calm and nice to you’ and this was in contrast to the teachers at the old school and the discipline practices there. Ryan had no antagonistic relation to authorities ‘now’, as he did at his old school, but even though he separated past and past practices, he now drew on standards from his old school in his evaluation of the present, when he said that they ‘don’t do any school work here’. He said in a somewhat derisive voice: ‘We haven’t opened a math book in three months, but I have become better at working in groups’, and in particular he said that it was not his responsibility whether he learned anything – that was up to the teachers, as they were the ones to know what was right and sufficient – and that he actually did not care whether he learned enough.

These responses show that he explicitly did not position himself as complying with the ideas of the pedagogy of the new school. He did not speak from within the ‘school we’ that demanded one subscribe to the local pedagogy as ‘special’ and ‘better’ than ‘traditional’ pedagogical strategies (which Ryan did comply with at the beginning of the school year). One possible analysis of this could also be that as Ryan evaluates the new school through the pedagogical regime and the positions of teacher/pupil at the past school, he ends up ‘misreading’ the academic codes of inclusion at the new school. The evaluations produce a position from which it becomes difficult for him to access ‘adequate pupilness’ (Juelskjær 2001) in the new school. Perhaps he misunderstands the friendliness of the teachers: They access another authority position than the traditional position (i.e. telling you what to do and monitoring your work effort) and as a pupil you are supposed to respond to this by desiring to make an effort “by yourself”, precisely because the teachers offer you the space to do so. Whatever the case, this continuation of the value system from past school life was somewhat destructive in terms of producing him as a locally intelligible/adequate pupil. It is important, though, to note that the relative distance he put between himself as an academically relevant pupil and the practices at the new school did not lead to ‘self-exclusion’, and did not lead to overt resistance towards the teaching and the teachers. Not moving into this position of in-/exclusion through resistance was a new position for Ryan. Nevertheless, he probably received bad academic evaluations: As he did not take up a position within (but somewhat against) the local premises for learning through self-responsibility, he demonstrated insufficient academic ability.
Yet, by following the movements of academic commitment and resistance within the case of Ryan, another position of resistance can be identified, and that is a resisting of neo-liberal subjectification. This would not be Ryan’s take on the position but by not taking up the self-steering and self-monitoring, he could be said to assume a counter-position, holding the teachers responsible for the pupil’s academic learning, whereas the ‘tough girls’ act as local versions of ‘good schoolgirl’. They did not ascribe authority and responsibility to the teachers, they blamed themselves for insufficient effort, or rather they blamed themselves (and ‘worked on themselves’) for being unable to manage the ‘freedom’ provided for them through the liberal attitudes of the school and the pedagogy – a school and pedagogy that they complied with.

Ruptures, gaps and fissures? Concluding reflections
In the above analysis I have tried to ‘complicate’ or challenge the possibility to ‘think’ the social conditions and practices of resistance. The has been set up to demonstrate how Ryan’s case was simultaneously enacted through mino- and majoritization in somewhat complex and conflicting ways, and that these enactments furthermore intersected with and co-constituted the processes of resistance/commitment.

My analytical strategy has been– initially – to put resistance in parentheses and instead open up processes, showing (1) movements against discursive constitution within undesirable (minoritizing) social positions and categories and (2) looking at how the processes described in the above intersected with increasing and decreasing engagement in practices of the local conditions of academic material-discursive practices. Resistance thereby becomes the effect of category constitutions and micro-workings of power, instead of being something that boys do or not do.

I used temporality as one of the analytical grids to increase the context sensitivity, or the sensitivity towards the specificity of the intersections of the categories and the distribution of power. Thus, I find that I have shown both openings and re-closings of ruptures and fissures. Furthermore, I have demonstrated processes of minoritization–majoritization as a relevant grid of analysis.

In the analysis, and while doing fieldwork and interviews, I worked with and against the desires of the researcher to identify possibilities and conditions for practices that may produce material-discursive space for less violent relations of categories. During analyzing and writing, though, I was continuously pondering what accounts I and others give on who is resisting what/whom, in this heavily politicized field of ‘boys in school’. Ryan’s maneuvers demonstrated how what may at first glance look like processes of democratization is simultaneously the workings of a local hierarchy and its processes of ‘othering’. Elements of the masculinity Ryan takes up are not appreciated locally, though at the same time in other systems of evaluation this masculinity is considered successful. By the type of analysis conducted in this article, there is no way of stating what Ryan’s intentions or his sense of self as minority or majority may be. What the analysis does provide is the insight that the question is not settled once and for all, and that Ryan might be flickering between a number of positions, depending on the practices and the discourses available and the concrete intersections of categories at play within a given material-discursive practice. And it provides insights into how these intersections and practices co-constitute the conditions of possibilities.

‘Doing adequate boy’ and ‘doing adequate pupil’ is a complex and in some instances contradictory or mutually excluding endeavor, as is also shown in much research (i.e. the article section ‘Constituting masculinity within school – international research context’). I find that this points to the need for context-sensitive analysis in order to grasp multiplicity, heterogeneity and fluidity in the subjectification processes that may and may not effect children ending up being put into the position of ‘resisting schooling’. Insights from such analysis may additionally work against
the ‘grand narratives’ of boys, school and resistance circulating in school life, media discourse and research.

Notes
1. The author would like to thank the editorial group of this issue and the referees of the article for many constructive comments and suggestions.
2. My overall analytical endeavour with this material within my PhD project is to explore the intersections of sociocultural categories, pedagogical regimes and pedagogical architecture in and across time and space, and to make an effort to explore/make spatiality, materiality and temporality analytically ‘salient’ to work as forces of constitution in processes of subjectification in everyday life (Juelskjær 2005, 2007a, 2007b).
3. As the analysis unfolds, we will hear about Ryan, Ryan, Ryan. But I must emphasize that I do not explain who Ryan is and what his aspirations in life might be. My empirical material does not allow that, and neither does my theoretical framework. ‘Ryan’ is a case of dynamics of schooling, dynamics of resisting and of accepting schooling as it is made (im)possible in social interaction, interaction which is co-constituting what and how it is possible to have liveable lives in school. ‘Resisting’ and ‘committing’ co-produce and interfere with other categories in school – and the possibilities of living and learning through/while being positioned through these intersecting categories.
4. A central research agenda for Frosh et al. was furthermore to analyse the intersections between masculinities, ‘race’ and class.
5. The analysis is based on the case that was introduced in the beginning of the article. The case will not be reintroduced at this point.
6. Of course, a lot of other processes of exclusion were going on in terms of building up friendships etc., but looking through a lens of ‘gender equality’ the positions established were somewhat positive.
7. I do not imply that the conditions of possibilities are not fierce (see for example Myong Petersen (2007) for analyses of identity processes of Asian adoptees living in Denmark). Had the analysis concerned Amelia, the dynamics of minoritizing and majoritizing would have looked different and that would to some extent have recast the story of the social positions and material-discursive practices of Ryan. Another analytically thought-provoking element in these maneuvers of re-constituting masculinity here is the possible importance/impact of heteronormativity in relation to school commitment, and that processes of heteronormativity could be something to analytically unpack much further in the analysis.

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