

**GROWING UP MALE:  
A SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL PROGRAM  
FOR GRADE 11 MALES WITH BEHAVIOURAL NEEDS  
IN A BC SECONDARY SCHOOL**

by

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We accept this thesis as conforming to the required standard

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## ABSTRACT

Male adolescents in Canada face an array of messages from society regarding the appropriate social and emotional norms for masculinity. Whether consciously perpetuated or not, the consequences of societal pressures for males to be emotionally stoic, dominant, aggressive, and to avoid association with traits more aligned with the feminine, can be linked to a number of problematic social and emotional behaviours. In schools, male adolescents who have severe social and emotional problems, known as “students with behavioural needs” or “students at risk”, are some of the most vulnerable students in schools today. Often behavioural difficulties can be displayed with various types of gendered characteristics. To meet the pressing need of helping such students, a gender-conscious 9-session intervention course was developed and implemented by the researcher for nine grade 11 male students with behavioural needs for and at a public secondary school in British Columbia. Exit interviews with participants suggest that participants enjoyed and valued the connection they gained with one another through the intervention, appreciated the chance to share their stories, and developed genuine empathy for one another. Eight participants identified specific new social and emotional insights that they felt would help them in the future, and a number described tangible ways these insights already have made a difference. Teachers and principals also reported an overall improvement in participants’ behaviours. Quantitatively, participants filled out the *Gender Role Conflict Scale for Adolescents* to self assess three variables associated with emotional health, while their teachers used the *Conners 3-TS* to assess for two variables related to social health. Only one variable, Restricted Emotionality, was found to be statistically significantly ( $p < .05$ ) from the start to end of the semester.

However, within this study's ethnographic framework, the researcher's interactions with the young men revealed their frustrations regarding their feelings of being marginalized in schools as well as the desire for their stories to be heard and respected by teachers and principals. These mixed method findings also suggest that male students with behavioural needs connect well to issues made relevant by discussing masculine gender role conflicts, and that their own journeys with understanding and redefining masculinity is complex yet necessary. Ultimately, the implications for school-based interventions for male students with behavioural needs include more awareness of masculine norms and pressures on the part of teachers and principals and the importance of relational connections with students who struggle with behavioural needs in today's classrooms.

*Keywords:* masculinity, adolescents, at-risk, behavioural issues, gender role conflict, intervention, social and emotional health, mixed methods