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**Adolescent Male Emotionality: A Mixed Methods Investigation into the Complexities of
'Being Male' Based Upon Varying Levels of Emotional Restriction**

Brendan Kwiatkowski

PhD in Education

The University of Edinburgh

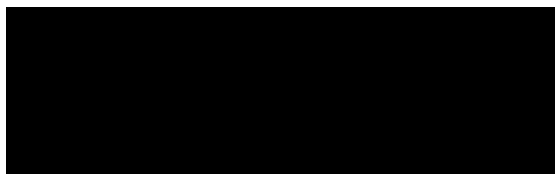
2022

Signed Declaration

I declare that this thesis is entirely composed by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, for any other degree or professional qualification. Everything presented in this thesis is entirely my own work, except where I indicate otherwise through citations and references. This research was conducted with the approval from the University of Edinburgh's research ethics board, reference number 2507.

Date: 24th of September 2022

Signature

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

Brendan Kwiatkowski

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Abstract

Males' rigid adherence to masculine norms (e.g., emotional restriction, self-reliance, toughness) is frequently implicated in many concerning intrapersonal and interpersonal-related outcomes (e.g., suicide, delinquency, violence). The pressure to adhere to masculine norms often increases during adolescence, as do many of the concerning outcomes involving males. To better understand and support adolescent males in these social and emotional-related issues, this study had four objectives based upon significant knowledge gaps. These objectives were: (a) to be positive-focused and prioritize adolescent males' own perspectives of their experiences; (b) to prise apart the complexities of masculine norm adherence and resistance; (c) to detail the specifics of adolescent males' relationships with emotional expression; and (d) to assess the epistemological and practical efficacy of integrating qualitative and quantitative methods in masculinities research.

This study implemented a novel mixed methods research design guided by the question: *To what extent do adolescent males' experiences and beliefs of being male vary, based on differing levels of emotional restriction?* To answer this, male students ($N = 170$, aged 17–19) from a school district in British Columbia, Canada, completed a screening tool, consisting of the Normative Male Alexithymia Scale-Brief Form (NMAS-BF) and a written component, to determine their relative levels of emotional restriction. Using a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, the 10 least and 10 most emotionally restricted participants were interviewed regarding their experiences and beliefs of being male. Afterwards, themes were compared between the two participant groups. All 170 participants also completed the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory-46 (CMNI-46) to measure their adherence to eight masculine

norms. Statistical analyses were conducted between these and the NMAS-BF scores to further answer this research question.

To inform the extent to which the interview and statistical findings could be integrated, it was first necessary to analyze the congruency of the data, which was guided by the question: *To what extent are adolescent males' experiences and beliefs of being male aligned across survey and interview findings?* This alignment analysis, between participants' CMNI-46 and interview responses, indicated that the level of congruency between data sets varied depending on which masculine norm was discussed. Most data were more aligned than not, but there was cause for considerable caution when drawing conclusions from several CMNI-46 subscales due to their conceptual vagueness and/or lack of relevance in adolescent males' lives. As this was believed to be the first alignment analysis in masculinities research, further alignment analyses are recommended; however, this study provides initial support that quantitative and qualitative methods measuring masculine-related phenomena can be epistemologically compatible. Concerns and practical recommendations for doing so are discussed.

In answering the primary research question, integrated results presented a deepened awareness of the complex, ongoing, and contextual nature of masculine norm adherence and resistance. Less emotionally restricted participants tended to resist more masculine norms and did so more consistently, especially regarding the norms of emotional restriction and self-reliance. Despite this, adherence to multiple norms on the CMNI-46 were more similar across all participants than expected. Both adherence and resistance to masculine norms were strategic for participants and motivated primarily by the desire to connect to others or to connect to oneself, respectively. Although some participants willingly adhered to masculine norms others did so reluctantly. Confidence was a key factor for participants who were able to resist masculine

norms; often aligning, or even adhering to some masculine norms, acted as a buffer to help resist others. As such, both adherence and resistance brought tangible benefits as well as associated costs to participants. By late adolescence, the costs for those who were more emotionally restricted appeared greater in terms of feelings of loneliness and feeling stuck regarding their emotionality. Reasons are outlined as to why some adolescent males suppress their feelings while others do not. Overall, participants' relationship with emotional expression was a defining aspect of their experiences of being adolescent males; yet this study challenges the assumption that adolescent males are not highly aware of their inner emotional experiences or that being more emotional expressive is automatically better than not. Implications for better supporting adolescent males' social and emotional wellbeing in schools and in other contexts are provided. Limitations and future areas of research are also discussed.

Lay Abstract

Expectations placed on boys and men can be harmful to them and to others. In particular, the expectation that males should restrict their emotions (e.g., do not talk about their feelings, hide feelings of sadness or worry) is linked to multiple negative outcomes for males (e.g., suicide, violence, substance use). Although adolescence is a critical period of life when the pressure for males to restrict their emotions increases, as does the number of negative outcomes disproportionately involving males, this area is under researched. There is a distinct lack of research from adolescent males' own perspectives that clearly explores why and how some resist this masculine expectation while some do not, and how much these different responses impacts their wellbeing. This study explored this area and was guided by the question: *To what extent do adolescent males' experiences and beliefs of being male vary, based on differing levels of emotional restriction?* To answer this, 170 adolescent males (aged 17–19) from a school district in British Columbia, Canada, completed a questionnaire to determine how emotionally restricted they were in comparison to the other participants. Based on their levels of emotional restriction, the extent to which all participants agreed with eight stereotypical expectations for males were compared and then the 10 least and 10 most emotionally restricted participants were interviewed about their experiences growing up male, which were also compared. Although results indicated that adolescent males of differing levels of emotional restriction had more in common than expected, the areas of difference were significant. Participants were primarily motivated to either restrict or express their emotions based on their desire to connect to others or to connect to oneself, respectively. Less emotionally restricted participants tended to resist other masculine expectations, while more emotionally restricted participants tended to follow other masculine expectations, especially the expectation that males should not ask for help. Although participants

experienced benefits from being either highly emotionally restricted or highly emotionally expressive, both came with costs. These costs appeared greater for those with higher levels of emotional restriction in terms of them experiencing more loneliness and internal conflict with trying to meet masculine expectations.

A strength of this project is that it incorporated different types of data (e.g., quantitative questionnaires and qualitative interviews), which is rare in research about masculinity due to concerns about how the types of data might conflict with one another. However, as this potential conflict has never been directly tested, this became a secondary focus of the study, guided by the question: *To what extent are adolescent males' experiences and beliefs of being male aligned across survey and interview findings?* This study provides support that the two types of data can be compatible, but not always. Practical recommendations for using different types of data together are discussed. Overall, being an adolescent male and trying to measure adolescent males' relationships with masculine expectations and emotions is complex, but this study examines and clarifies many of these complexities. As a result, this study provides many suggestions for better supporting adolescent males' wellbeing and outlines areas for future research.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In most countries, inclusive of Canada, adolescent males¹ are at a disproportionately higher risk than adolescent females for several concerning intrapersonal and interpersonal-related outcomes (American Psychological Association [APA], 2018; Farrell & Gray, 2018; Government of Canada, 2018; Statistics Canada 2022a). They are more likely to fail classes, achieve lower grades, be suspended, and be expelled than their female peers (APA, 2018; Farrell & Gray, 2018; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2017; Pollack, 1998) and they are more likely to be diagnosed with emotional and behavioural disorders (Adams & Coltrane, 2005; APA, 2018; Mac An Ghail & Haywood, 2012) or an attention-deficit disorder (APA, 2018; Kimmel, 2006; Statistics Canada, 2012). Adolescent males are more likely than adolescent females to die from suicide (Creighton et al., 2017; De Leo et al., 2013; Statistics Canada, 2022a), to partake in higher-risk activities, such as unprotected sex (Amin et al., 2018) and substance use (Government of Canada, 2018), and to be victims of violence (Mahony, Jacob & Hobson, 2017). Adolescent males are also more likely than adolescent females to commit virtually all types of crimes, including being the perpetrators of physical violence and sexual abuse (Conroy et al., 2019; Farrell & Gray, 2018; Federal Bureau of Investigation [FBI], 2019; Mahony et al., 2017; Public Safety Canada, 2012; Shakya et al., 2019). Although the gender gap in these areas often widens in adulthood, many of these disproportionate differences start to emerge during adolescence (Amin et al., 2018; Pollack, 1998; Statistics Canada, 2022a).

¹ An *adolescent*, as defined by the United Nations (2022) and the World Health Organization (2022), refers to persons aged 10–19; however, when used in this research, I am specifically referring to adolescents in their secondary school years in Canada, aged 13–19. I primarily use the terms “male” and “female” in this research to refer to anyone of any age who identifies as male or female, respectively (i.e., inclusive of transgender persons). I use the term “boys” to refer to males younger than age 13 and “men” for males 19 years and older.

Reasons for these asymmetries are open to debate. These typically stem from divergent perspectives about whether males and females have inherent, immutable essences and about the extent that biological differences, such as testosterone, result in different behaviours (Farrell & Gray, 2018; Jordan-Young & Karkazis, 2019; Kimmel, 2006; Synnott, 2009). The most prominently held view in research on males and masculinities, however, is that the way males are uniquely socialized is one of the most relevant factors, if not the single most relevant factor, to consider (David & Brannon, 1976; Kimmel, 2018; Levant, 1996; Levant et al., 2009; O’Neil, 2015; Pollack, 1998). More specifically, it is males’ adherence to certain norms of masculinity that are restrictive yet often idealized in society—such as emotional suppression, self-reliance, aggression, and dominance—that creates and/or exacerbates the numerous social, emotional, and academic-related issues involving males. Relationships between adherence to masculine norms and all the aforementioned negative outcomes concerning males have been linked extensively in research (APA, 2018; Kimmel, 2018; O’Neil, 2015). Multiple studies have also found that these socialization pressures to conform to masculine norms significantly increase during adolescence (Amin et al., 2018; Kågesten et al., 2016; Kimmel, 2018; Watts & Borders, 2005), drawing attention to how adolescence may be a significant time period for males’ development of their masculine identities.

Despite the vast amount of research connecting adherence to prominent masculine norms to many disconcerting outcomes, discussions around this are highly polarized in society (Haider, 2016; Synnott, 2009; Waling, 2019, 2022). Often feminism is at the centre of such debates (Du Mez, 2020; Farrell & Gray, 2018; Kimmel, 2006, 2012; Lingard et al., 2013; Mills, 2013), as is clearly seen in this book title: *War Against Boys: How Misguided Feminism is Harming Our Young Men* (Sommers, 2000). Here, and in other places, feminism is sometimes blamed for

feminizing males or for demonizing them (e.g., Baggs, 2019; BBC News, 2018; BBC Two, 2018; Gurian, 2006). This is in large part due to the fact that it was, and still is, feminist-informed theories of gender that most often expose and critique the role that males' gender socialization plays in negative outcomes for males as well as for females and other minoritized groups (Gardiner, 2005; Howson, 2006; Roberts et al., 2021).

Although many scholars acknowledge that feminist-critiques of masculinity have indeed contributed to an identity crisis of sorts for many males as they (re)navigate what it means to be male (Kimmel, 2013; Seidler, 1997; Waling, 2022), most scholarship within the field of masculinities views the deconstruction away from hegemonic forms of masculinity as necessary in helping better support males' wellbeing and in rectifying gender inequalities in society (e.g., Christofidou, 2021; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Kimmel, 2006; Mills, 2014). Nevertheless, even within the field of masculinities some have criticized the overabundance of negative-focused research around males and masculinities and made calls for more positive-focused research (e.g., Addis et al., 2016; Cole et al., 2021; Isacco, 2015; Synnott, 2009). There are also various opinions about how to best support adolescent males in resisting the pressures to adhere to restrictive or harmful norms of masculinity. Some advocate guiding adolescent males towards the positive aspects often associated with masculinity, such as taking responsibility and protecting others (e.g., O'Neil et al., 2013; Wilson, Gwyther, Swann et al., 2022), whereas others are inclined to avoid labelling any traits as gender-specific, in favour of emphasizing the positive qualities shared by all humans (e.g., Addis, 2010; Baldoni, 2021). Suffice to say, not only are there numerous concerns regarding adolescent males but there are also numerous perspectives, many times conflicting, about how they should best navigate being a male in the world today.

Background and Overview of Current Knowledge Gaps

My academic interest in this research area began in 2014, during my master's degree in special education, when I came across the statistic that 81% of the students in the United States diagnosed with emotional and behavioural disorders were male (Nelson et al., 2004). This mirrored the exact same percentage of students diagnosed with emotional and behavioral disorders that were male at the secondary school I taught at in British Columbia, Canada. This led me to investigate the literature for explanations. In doing so I was compelled by the body of research highlighting the role of males' masculine socialization, and with that in mind, as part of my master's thesis I created and led a yearlong social and emotional intervention for nine Grade 11 (aged 16) males diagnosed with behavioural disorders (see Kwiatkowski, 2016). For most participants this resulted in minor to modest social and emotional improvements, as reported by them and by their teachers, but overall it was received very positively by participants. By interacting with and studying adolescent males who had somewhat notorious reputations at the school, I witnessed many complexities about how they navigated their masculine identities, and I was often surprised by how receptive many of them were to talk with me and to the others about their feelings. My doctoral research builds from this experience, and in exploring the extant literature on adolescent males' masculinities, which is more thoroughly detailed in the literature review in the next chapter, I identified several knowledge gaps.

Although the adolescent years appear highly significant for males' masculine identity formation, as some researchers have suggested (e.g., Gardiner, 2002; O'Neil, 2015), this is one of the least well represented age groups in masculinities research (O'Neil, 2015; Wong et al., 2010). Moreover, little research about adolescent males captures adolescent males' own perspectives about their adolescent experiences (Way & Chu, 2004; Whelen, 2011). Relatedly,

even as there is an increase in intervention programs that aim to build adolescent males' resistance to restrictive masculine norms (e.g., A Call to Men, 2022; Children of the Street, n.d.; Next Gen Men, n.d.; Safeteen, n.d.; and Tomorrow Man, n.d.), and more research, though lagging, is being done about the effectiveness of such programs (e.g., The WiseGuyz Program [Claussen, 2017]; Rock Water Program [Edwards et al., 2017]; The Council [Liddell & Kurplus, 2014]; and Young Men Initiative [Namy et al., 2015]), results are mixed or minimal, and there remains a dearth of research on adolescent males who already do resist masculine norms (Gwyther et al., 2019; Smiler, 2014).

Relatedly, males' adherence to masculine norms is increasingly understood as more complex than simply being wholly negative or maladaptive (i.e., adhering to norms of masculinity might be helpful in resisting others; Chu & Gilligan, 2014; Way et al., 2014); however, much more research is needed that acknowledges this, as well as prisms apart these complexities (Addis et al., 2016; Bridges, 2019; Isacco, 2015). That said, one of the dominant masculine norms in which adherence is consistently implicated for numerous negative outcomes is emotional restriction—that is, not talking about one's feelings with others and/or not displaying emotions, particularly those of sadness (Chu, 2014; McQueen, 2017; O'Neil, 2015; Way et al., 2014). Adherence to this norm can have severe consequences, as expressing emotions is a fundamental factor in many things, such as in determining positive mental and physical wellbeing (Barbalet, 2002; Bauer & Mohiyeddini, 2013; Leventhal & Patrick-Miller, 2000), in determining the health of interpersonal relationships (Farrell & Gray, 2018; O'Neil, 2015), and in helping determine the positiveness of a student's schooling experience (Rogers et al., 2017; Runions, 2014). The idea that masculine socialization results in some males' difficulties expressing emotions is often operationalized in psychological research regarding males'

emotionality as “normative male alexithymia” (Levant et al., 2009; Levant & Parent, 2019), which is a concept that heavily factors into this research.

Yet given how often males’ emotional restriction is mentioned within masculinities research, very little masculinities research investigates males’ emotionality (i.e., “the degree to which an individual experiences and expresses emotions” [APA, 2022, para. 1]) from males’ own perspectives or with a high degree of specificity as to what aspect of emotionality is being investigated (De Boise & Hearn, 2017; McQueen, 2017). Part of this difficulty is that understanding emotionality is an incredibly complex, debated, and interdisciplinary endeavour (Mohiyeddini & Bauer, 2013; Panksepp, 2012), with which much sociological research on masculinities and emotions does not appreciably engage (De Boise & Hearn, 2017). This lack of conceptual clarity regarding emotions and male’s emotionality has contributed to some persistent assumptions or simplistic perspectives, such as the assertion that males are overall less emotional than females or that males becoming more emotionally expressive would be inherently transformative to gender inequalities (De Boise & Hearn, 2017; McQueen, 2017). Additionally, although the reason for why some adolescent males do not often express their emotions is frequently linked to them not wanting to be seen as weak or feminine (O’Beaglaioich, Morrison et al., 2015; O’Neil, 2015), rarely are more facets to adolescent males’ apparent lack of emotionality investigated beyond that. As such, there is a need to better understanding more precisely why, when, and how some adolescent males are able or willing to frequently express their emotions whereas others are not, as well as how connected these reasons are to masculine socialization pressures.

The gaps highlighted thus far—the need for more research that centres on the experiences of adolescent males and that investigates the complexities of norm adherence, resistance, and the

emotionality of adolescent males with a high degree of specificity—are exacerbated by a significant methodological divide in the field of masculinities. This divide is between qualitative and quantitative research approaches, but it also reflects a general lack of integration in masculinities scholarship between sociological research tending towards qualitative designs and psychological research tending towards quantitative designs (O’Neil, 2010; Wong, Moon-Ho et al., 2017). Although multiple quantitative researchers, who are all from the psychological subfield of masculinities research, continually call for more in-depth qualitative research (e.g., Addis et al., 2016; Cole et al., 2021; Cuthbert, 2015; Isacco, 2015; O’Neil, 2015; O’Neil & Luján, 2009; Wong et al., 2010), no qualitative researchers, in either sociological or psychological subfields, appear to express any need for more quantitative masculinities research. This difference is presumably due to concerns about the epistemological ability of quantitative-designed studies to accurately capture the complexities of gender, namely its fluidness and context-dependent nature (Addis et al., 2016). These concerns also likely explain why, despite calls for more mixed methods research in the field of masculinities (Addis et al., 2016; Cuthbert, 2015), mixed method studies remain extremely rare and are most often only seen in program evaluations (Kågesten et al., 2016). However, as far as I have determined, the epistemological compatibility between qualitative and quantitative findings in masculinities research has never been directly tested. This is significant as it argued that the overall lack of methodological and interdisciplinary innovation in masculinities research is preventing progress in the field (Addis et al., 2016; Bridges, 2019). Similarly, I make the case in Chapter 2 that investigating the complexities of adolescent males’ norm adherence, resistance, and emotionality may benefit greatly from utilizing the strengths from quantitative psychological measures and approaches as

well as from qualitative approaches more commonly found in sociological studies of masculinity.

The Focus of This Study: Aim, Objectives, and Research Questions

Against this background, the overarching aim of this study is to better understand and support adolescent males' social and emotional development and wellbeing, particularly in areas in which their adherence to restrictive norms of masculinity is frequently implicated in negative outcomes. Given this aim and the paucities briefly highlighted in the previous section—which will be further expanded upon in the literature review—there are four research objectives. The first is to prioritize the perspectives and experiences of adolescent males and, as much as possible, to be positive-focused. This positive focus means that this research does not just investigate the maladaptive or harmful aspects commonly associated with some forms of masculinities but focuses on resistance and on beneficial or adaptive aspects of masculinities. The second objective is to provide greater clarity regarding the complexities of adolescent males' adherence and resistance to masculine norms. The third objective is to detail adolescent males' relationships with emotional expression more precisely. The fourth objective is to assess the epistemological and practical efficacy of integrating qualitative and quantitative methods in the field of males and masculinities.

I created two research questions in response to these four objectives. They are presented here in the order that they were developed and in the order that they are prioritized in this research, which differs from the order that they are investigated and presented within this thesis. The central research question (hereafter known as Research Question 2) is: *To what extent do adolescent males' experiences and beliefs of being male vary, based on their levels of emotional restriction?* I conceived that comparing adolescent males' experiences and beliefs of being male

by their differing levels of adherence to one specific norm of masculinity—emotional restriction—would yield substantial intricacies regarding the complexities of masculine norm adherence and resistance (Objective 2) and emotionality (Objective 3). However, I also believed that isolating adolescent males' adherence to the norm of emotional restriction, as well as the subsequent comparisons, would benefit greatly from utilizing both qualitative and quantitative methods, such as interviews and surveys (Objective 4), that were positive-focused and integrated in a way that participants' perspectives and experiences were prioritized (Objective 1). As such, I selected two quantitative surveys for the quantitative component and hermeneutic phenomenology for the qualitative component, which are detailed in Chapter 3. The investigation of the compatibility of integrating the mixed methods findings was guiding by the research question: *To what extent are adolescent males' experiences and beliefs of being male aligned across survey and interview findings?* Although this was an ancillary focus, I consider this Research Question 1 because it was necessary for me to assess the compatibility between qualitative and quantitative findings before I sought to integrate them in answering my central research question (i.e., Research Question 2).

Research Design

Given all this, the research design was as follows: This current study consisted of 170 males, aged 17–19, who were students within the geographical region of a school district in British Columbia, Canada. Their adherence to the masculine norm of emotional restriction was determined based on their responses on the Normative Male Alexithymia-Brief Form (NMAAS-BF; Levant & Parent, 2019) and on three written questions designed for this study. From these two components, 10 of the least and 10 of the most emotionally restricted participants were interviewed one-on-one regarding their experiences and beliefs of being male. *Being male* is

understood as participants' experiences and beliefs growing up that are specifically related to and/or only present by virtue of participants' biological sex and/or gender identity as males. This is detailed further in Chapter 2 (p. 45). The interviews, and the subsequent analyses of these interviews were done using a hermeneutic phenomenological approach. The analyses were completed independently for each of the two groups of 10 participants and then afterwards compared. Participants with the maximally different relationships with emotional restriction were compared in order to give a heightened ability to see just how similar or dissimilar their relationships with emotions were and to more clearly prise apart any complexities regarding norm adherence and resistance. All 170 participants also completed a widely used survey assessing their adherence to eight prominent norms of masculinity called the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory-46 (CMNI-46; Parent & Moradi, 2011). Statistical analyses were conducted, primarily correlational, between participants' adherence to these eight masculine norms and levels of NMAS-BF, which quantitatively represented their levels of emotional restriction.

To answer Research Question 1, the 20 interviewed participants' responses on each of the eight CMNI-46 subscales were compared with relevant excerpts from their interview to check for their congruency. I often refer to this in this thesis as the "alignment analysis." In considering these findings, the results from the themes that I identified during the hermeneutic phenomenological analyses of the 20 interviews and the results from the statistical analyses involving the NMAS-BF and CMNI-46 measures were integrated to answer Research Question 2. As an aside, I also initially designed this research to explicitly focus on adolescent males' experiences and beliefs of school based on differing levels of emotional restriction, but this took away from the primary focus of my investigation and so is not included in this thesis.

Overview of Chapters

In this chapter I introduced the general overview of this study. I identified a research problem and four related knowledge gaps that would be valuable to investigate. I then outlined my research aim, my four research objectives, and the two research questions I created to meet my aim and objectives. I also introduced the context and design of this study and I now outline how the remaining six chapters of this thesis are structured.

In Chapter 2, I review the literature pertinent to gender, adolescent males, emotions, and methodological issues in the field of masculinities. In so doing, I identify the research gaps I noticed and how this led to the creation of my research questions. I also define how key terms, such as “being male” and “emotional restriction,” are conceptualized in this study.

In Chapter 3, I detail two key theoretical frameworks that underpin this research and my chosen methodology of mixed methods. I then justify my mixed methodological approach as well as the three methods I selected to use within this research. In the latter part of this chapter I detail the specific context of this study, the research design, participant recruitment and data collection procedures, and I outline how the data were analyzed for both research questions. I also discuss the steps I took to help ensure the trustworthiness and validity of my findings and to prioritize participants’ wellbeing and the safety of their information.

Chapter 4 is divided into two parts. In the first half of the chapter, I present the alignment analysis results for Research Question 1 and I also specify how I checked the congruency of data between the quantitative and qualitative findings. In the second half of the chapter, I discuss the correlational hypotheses I made for Research Question 2 and then I present all the results from the statistical analyses pertaining to Research Question 2.

In Chapter 5, I present the interview findings and the themes derived from the hermeneutic phenomenological analyses for answering Research Question 2. The themes identified from the 10 participants who are some of the least emotionally restricted and the themes identified from the 10 participants who are some of the most emotionally restricted are presented together so that comparisons between the two groups of participants are maximized.

In Chapter 6, I first contextualize the findings of the alignment analysis with other research and then discuss the implications and contributions to knowledge. Next, I integrate the statistical and interview findings of the previous two chapters and discuss and contextualize these to answer the second research question. Then I discuss the implications and contributions of these findings.

In Chapter 7, I present the overarching findings and significance of this research. I also explain the limitations of this current study and highlight key areas for future research. I conclude this study with a personal statement.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter I review the existing literature regarding adolescent males and masculinities, discuss how it led to the establishment of my research aim, and identify four key knowledge gaps in need of further investigation to help achieve this aim. Given the Canadian context of this study, I prioritize Canadian studies in this chapter followed by studies from the United States and other countries in the Global North.² This is particularly true when I review research pertaining to adolescent males—the primary focus of this review and thesis—but less so when I review literature that more generally relates to masculinities scholarship (e.g., male emotionality and issues of methodology); however, as the field of masculinities is generally dominated by research from the Global North (Bridges, 2019), most research cited in these discussions is still from the Global North.

The structure of this chapter mirrors my personal exploration into these topics. I begin by detailing many significant social and emotional issues concerning males and highlight the ways in which males' adherence to dominant and restrictive norms of masculinity are implicated in these issues. As this evidence led me to examine theoretical understandings of gender and masculinities, I then discuss those which inform this current research. Following this, I present the literature that convinced me of the need to specifically investigate adolescent males' masculinities and I review the existing literature that has done so. Next, I explore and discuss the literature on male emotionality as all my previous investigations pointed me towards the

² The “Global North” and the “Global South” are frequently used terms in academia to different between countries with greater economic wealth and power to those with less, respectively. Countries in the Global North include Canada, the United States, Europe (particularly Western Europe), Australia, New Zealand, Israel, and Japan. Although these terms are contested, rightly in my opinion, for their imprecision and implied homogeneity among countries of the same label (Haug et al., 2021; Müller, 2020), I prioritize research from these countries as my research focuses on dominant norms of masculinities and countries in the Global North have had huge influence on dominant discourses around masculinities (Howson, 2006). Furthermore, many of these countries in the Global North have more cultural, ethnic, and contextual similarities to Canada and accounting for contextual differences is key when investigating masculinities (Hearn, 2014). As such, I sought to minimize these differences.

centrality of understanding males' relationships with emotions. Afterwards, I present methodological divides that exist within masculinities scholarship and discuss how these potentially limit understandings of adolescent males' masculinities. In closing this chapter, I connect all the paucities I noted when reviewing the aforementioned topics to the development of this study's aim, objectives, and research questions.

The Role of Restrictive Masculinity in Issues Concerning Males

The initial impetus for studying males and masculinities for me was the variety of social, emotional, behavioural, physical, and academic-related issues disproportionately affecting and involving males. Many of these issues are linked to males' adherence to dominant norms of masculinity. In this section, I identify the issues concerning males and the dominant norms of masculinity. Then I discuss and outline how adherence to these dominant norms can become restrictive for males and contribute to the issues disproportionately affecting and involving males.

Social and Emotional Issues Concerning Males

Each of the following gender disparities outlined in this subsection are found, and are of concern, in Canada,³ the rest of the Global North, and in much of the Global South as well (Farrell & Gray, 2018; Hearn, 2014; O'Neil, 2015). In comparison to females, males (inclusive of adults and adolescents)⁴ are much more likely to be perpetrators of nearly all types of crimes (FBI, 2019; Mahony et al., 2017; Public Safety Canada, 2012; Savage, 2019; e.g., 75% of crimes in Canada in 2017 were committed by males; Shakya et al., 2019); to be sexually abusive to their

³ Each statistic in this subsection is cited with at least one Canadian source except when no Canadian specific data are available, in which case American statistics are used. For example, no Canadian data were found regarding unprotected sex statistics and some of the emotional and behavioural disorders diagnoses.

⁴ More data are available regarding adult males but each statistic in this section is cited with at least one statistic about adolescent males as well. Most of the statistics regarding Canadian adolescent males specifically refers to those between the ages of 15–19.

partners in relationships (Cotter & Savage, 2019); to be more violent towards children and youth (Conroy et al., 2019); and to stalk others (e.g., 74% of stalkers in Canada are male; Burczycka & Conroy, 2018). Males also are disproportionately the victims of violent abuse (Mahony et al., 2017), comprising 76% of all homicide deaths in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2022b).

When reviewing 10 year trends for over 36,000 adolescents in British Columbia (BC), the Canadian province where this study takes place, males were slightly, but consistently, more likely to experience physical abuse within their romantic dating relationships compared with females (5.8% to 4.2%; Shaffer et al., 2021). The authors acknowledged that this finding deviates from most other research and from police data about victimization rates (e.g., in Canada, women, in comparison to men, report more physical violence from their partners, are six times more likely to be sexually assaulted by their partners, and experience some of most severe forms of intimate partner violence [Cotter, 2021]). As such, Shaffer et al. (2021) proposed that the higher reported adolescent male victimizations rates in BC may be due a few things, including females increasingly using violence in relationships and/or because the surveys used for this study only measured less severe forms of violence (e.g., pushing, slapping) and so males might still commit more severe forms of violence. Although they admitted further research is required, they argued that, at the very least, these findings reveal that relational violence is a concern for adolescent males as well as for adolescent females. Similarly, I mention this context-specific research here to highlight that partner violence, regardless of if adolescent males are disproportionality the perpetrators or victims of partner violence, is another relevant social and emotional issues concerning males.

Worldwide, males are approximately four times more likely to die by suicide and, in Canada, males suicide rates are around three times higher than females (Creighton et al., 2017;

De Leo et al., 2013). This trend emerges during adolescence and by the ages of 15–19 adolescent males in Canada are, on average each year, just over two times more likely to die from suicide than adolescent females (Statistics Canada, 2022a). This is further significant as suicide is the second leading cause of death in Canada for that age group (Yao et al., 2019). Adolescent males are more likely than adolescent females to experience and be diagnosed with many behavioural, emotional, and mental health issues (Adams & Coltrane, 2005; APA, 2018; Mac An Ghail & Haywood, 2012), such as behavioural and conduct disorders (Reid et al., 2004). In comparison to adolescent females, adolescent males are six times more likely to be diagnosed with ADHD in the United States and three times more likely to be diagnosed with ADHD in Canada (APA, 2018; Kimmel, 2006; Statistics Canada, 2012). Adolescent males are also more likely than adolescent females to partake in higher risk behaviours, including unprotected sex resulting in higher sexual infections rates (Amin et al., 2018), as well as in behaviours such as smoking and drugs, both legal⁵ and illicit (Government of Canada, 2018). Additionally, in comparison to adolescent females, adolescent males in Canada report greater social and emotional harm from their drug usage, such as it negatively impacting their relationships, their physical health, and their increased school or work-related difficulties (Government of Canada, 2018). Relatedly, adolescent males are also more likely than adolescent females to fail classes, to have lower grades, to be suspended, and to get expelled from school (APA, 2018; Farrell & Gray, 2018; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2017; Pollack, 1998).

There would still be a need for social and emotional support for adolescent males even if all these statistics were not so disproportionate; however, these statistics accentuate the importance of providing support to adolescent males and garners attention as to the reasons why

⁵ The legal drug refers to cannabis as it was legalized in Canada in 2018.

these asymmetries exist. As mentioned in the first chapter, there are multiple perspectives about this (e.g., Farrell & Gray, 2018; Mills, 2014; Sommers, 2000; Synnott, 2009), but males' endorsement and adherence to dominant—and often restrictive—norms of masculinity, as well as society's⁶ expectation and perpetuation of them, are the main factors to consider according to most masculinities scholarship (Addis et al., 2016; APA, 2018; Amin et al., 2018; O'Neil, 2015; Pleck, 1995; Pollack, 1998; Shakya et al., 2019).

The Dominant (and Restrictive) Norms of Masculinity

Exploring the connection between issues concerning males and masculine norms requires an understanding of what these dominant norms of masculinity are and what makes them become restrictive, which I now discuss. To begin, I want to acknowledge that identifying the dominant norms of masculinity (i.e., rules, expectations, ideals for males) is not fully possible, in any definitive or objective sense, as norms can change and are subject to contextual factors (Addis et al., 2016). For example, masculine ideals may differ between Japan and Canada or even between areas in Canada. Yet, despite the room for variance, predominant norms of masculinity still endure across the Global North, inclusive of Canada, and over time. As a testament to this, O'Neil, one of the leading psychologists involved in masculinities studies in Global North contexts for the last 40 years, said to his renowned contemporary in the sociological field of masculinities studies, Kimmel, that “one of the most surprising findings...is how little these rules [of masculinity] have changed [throughout my career]” (Kimmel, 2018, p. 54). Moreover, “dominant” does not mean that the majority of men meet these norms. In fact, it is argued that only few, if any, men actually do; rather, norms are considered dominant, or hegemonic, because

⁶ I use “society” in this research to refer to the general collection of common values, interests, and traditions of people within the national community of Canada and international community of the Global North. However, these aggregate beliefs can also be reflected in individuals and in institutions (e.g., schools and the media), which are also acknowledged when I use this word in this thesis.

they hold significant power in society and in the psyche of males, such that many males strive towards these norms, regardless of their success in doing so (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Howson, 2006; O’Neil, 2015; Pleck, 1995).

In 1976, David and Brannon compiled the first list of rules that outlined four dominant norms associated within being a man in the Global North: (a) “No sissy stuff”—avoid associations that are feminine, especially homosexuality; (b) “Be a Big Wheel”—achieve a high status and have sexual prowess; (c) “Be a Sturdy Oak”—be tough and independent; and (d) “Give ‘em Hell”—be aggressive, violent, and take risks (David & Brannon, 1976, pp. 11-35; Kimmel, 2018; Plummer, 2005). Similarly, in 1996, Levant, a prominent psychologist in masculinities research, described the norms of masculinity in seven tenets:

The requirement to avoid all things feminine; the injunction to restrict one’s emotional life; the emphasis on toughness and aggression; the injunction to be self-reliant; the emphasis on achieving status above all else; nonrelational, objectifying attitudes toward sexuality; and fear and hatred of homosexuals (1996, p. 261)

Virtually indistinguishable lists of masculine norms or societal expectations that specifically apply to males have continuously been identified in the research on masculinities (Amin et al., 2018; for a review see Kågesten et al., 2016; Kwiatkowski, 2016; McCarthy et al., 2016; Pollack, 1998; Watts & Borders, 2005). Other researchers have condensed the masculine norms, for both boys and men, into three: the need to be emotionally stoic, to be autonomous, and to be tough (Chu et al., 2005; O’Neil & Luján, 2009; Way et al., 2014).

Many measures containing subscales of masculine norms have been created, particularly in the field of psychology, and have been tested for their relationships with other variables,

typically around psychological distress and wellbeing (e.g., Brannon Masculinity Scale [Brannon & Juni, 1984]; Masculine Gender Role Stress Scale [Eisler & Skidmore, 1987]; Male Role Norms Inventory [Levant et al., 1992]; and Male Role Norms Scale [Thompson & Pleck, 1986]). One of the most established and widely used scales in masculinities studies (Addis et al., 2016; Gwyther et al., 2019) is the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory (CMNI; Mahalik et al., 2003), an updated version of which I used in this research as I explain in Chapter 3 (p. 102). The original CMNI identifies and measures adherence to 11 norms: winning, emotional control, risk-taking, violence, dominance, playboy, self-reliance, primacy of work, power over women, heterosexual self-presentation, physical toughness, and pursuit of status. One of the other most widely used and empirically tested scales (O’Beaglaioich, Conway, et al., 2015; O’Neil, 2015) is O’Neil’s Gender Role Conflict Scale (GRCS; O’Neil et al., 1986), which measures four outcomes associated with adherence to dominant norms of masculinity: (a) success, power, and competition, (b) restrictive emotionality, (c) restrictive affection behaviour between men; and (d) conflict between work and family. Throughout all these lists of dominant masculine norms, one norm that is consistently represented in each is emotional restriction, which is one of several reasons why adherence and resistance to this norm became a particular focus in this current study.

Although many of these norms previously listed are framed negatively, there is increasing understanding in masculinities scholarship that not all masculine norms are inherently harmful (see Gerdes & Levant, 2018). For instance, adherence to some dominant norms may in fact have positive outcomes or have buffering effects to resist more harmful or restrictive masculine norms (Chu, 2014; Hammer & Good, 2010; Levant et al., 2018; Levant & Wimer, 2014; Shakya et al., 2019; Way et al., 2014; Wong, Moon-Ho, et al., 2017). However, most

masculinities research does not acknowledge or highlight this nuance, and, as such, there are calls to action for more new research to reflect upon and to further explore the complex mechanisms of masculine norm adherence and resistance beyond the simplistic view that adherence is necessarily problematic (Addis et al., 2010; Cole et al., 2021; Kaplan et al., 2017; Smiler, 2014). That said, many masculine norms listed in this section do suggest an inherently problematic or at least an inherently limited view of self and/or of others (e.g., suppressing emotions, power over women, fear of homosexuality). However, the wording on some of these norms may further compound the negative impression associated with these norms and with masculinity in general (Cole et al., 2021; McDermott et al., 2019).

The kind of masculinity that all these hegemonic norms represent is frequently referred to by many names, such as: traditional masculinity (e.g., Coleman et al., 2020), hegemonic masculinity (e.g., Howson, 2006), masculine ideology (e.g., Pleck, 1995), restrictive masculine ideology (e.g., O’Neil, 2015, but only sometimes is the adjective “restrictive” included); hypermasculinity (e.g., Kimmel, 2012), and, more recently, especially in popular culture and media, toxic masculinity (e.g., Elliott, 2018; Haider, 2016; Waling, 2019). Although not all these terms are completely synonymous, it has been suggested that researchers in masculinities need to refine this terminology (Addis et al., 2016). Given these choices, I prefer the term *restrictive masculine ideology*, although it is primarily the descriptor—restrictive—that I view as most essential to include. This is because restrictive most clearly specifies why and when adherence to the dominant norms of masculinity is or can become problematic, which, I would argue, best represents the complexities of norm adherence. In agreement with what other researchers have stated, a belief in or adherence to masculine norms becomes problematic when males place restrictions on themselves and/or on others and when these restrictions prevent self-actualization

or human flourishing (Chu, 2014; O’Neil, 2015). Adherence to some masculine norms—like power over women or fear or disgust of homosexuals—are inherently restrictive as they dehumanize others; however, other norms, such as emotional restriction, may be appropriate in some contexts but become restrictive when rigid adherence is practiced. I use the terms restrictive masculine ideology(ies), restrictive norms of masculinity, and restrictive forms of masculinity interchangeably throughout this research.

The Role of Restrictive Masculinity in Males’ Social and Emotional-Related Issues

Connections between males’ adherence to restrictive norms of masculinity and the litany of issues concerning males mentioned previously have been demonstrated in several ways, most clearly through correlational studies (see O’Neil, 2010, for an overview). One of the largest compilations of psychological research empirically linking these is in O’Neil’s book (2015), condensing the findings of over 350 research studies over the past 30 years that used his popular Gender Role Conflict Scale (GRCS). Multiple studies have demonstrated that males’ higher adherence to some or all of the subscales on the GRCS (*restricted emotionality; restricted affection between males; need for success and achievement; and conflict between work, school and family*) significantly correlated with having increased negative attitudes towards women (such as believing rape myths⁷), sexual violence, psychological distress, anger, depression, anxiety, suicidality, stress, shame, alcohol and substance abuse, and attachment problems in relationships with mothers and fathers. Higher scores on the GRCS have also negatively correlated with body image, satisfaction with life, and help-seeking (O’Neil, 2015). Of the four GRCS subscales, *restricted emotionality* was the most consistent subscale that significantly correlated to these other variables. This points to the substantial role that emotional expression or

⁷ An example of a rape myth is that women want to be raped or were “asking for it” based on the type of clothing they wore.

lack thereof likely has for multiple outcomes involving males, which was a key reason why adolescent males' adherence and resistance to the masculine norm of emotional restriction became a central focus of this current study.

Multiple studies where researchers artificially threaten males' masculine identities have provided further evidence connecting males' physical and sexual violence to restrictive masculine ideology. In these types of studies, the test group of male participants are told, falsely, that in the first stage of the study their results showed that, compared to the other male participants in the study, they were lower than average in adhering towards some masculine norm or ideal. Then participants are given new questionnaires or tasks, and their responses are compared with male participants from the control group. Concernedly, only two of the following studies (e.g., Dahl et al., 2015; Hunt et al., 2016) mentioned debriefing participants afterwards about the deception; however, no indication of participants' reactions were given in either. The lack of studies that did not mention debriefing participants is not only ethically dubious as participants were deceived and potentially primed towards certain thoughts or behaviours based upon a lie, but participants' reflections after being debriefed could supplement the other findings. This type of information would have likely been invaluable, especially as these types of experimental research designs are not always adept at understanding participants' motivations or contextual factors for why they responded the way they did in the study (Cebula, 2018).

In Berke et al.'s (2017) study, the males who had their masculinities threatened by being told their scores were closer to the norms of femininity than of masculinity had significantly heightened aggression levels and increased pain tolerance, but they had no change in cognitive anxiety.⁸ The unexpected lack of anxiety led the authors to speculate that perhaps aggression

⁸ Cognitive anxiety refers to one's mental ability using tertiary brain processes to access words related to anxiety as opposed to a somatic response indicating anxiety which may involve more primary-brain processes/affect.

may be a more favourable or strategic cognitive emotional response when a male's masculinity is threatened than an anxious response would be as anxiety is more vulnerable and less in keeping with the idealized masculine norms of toughness and violence. Relatedly, in Cheryan et al.'s (2015) study, males who were falsely told that they were physically weaker than other participants then claimed significantly more adherence to characteristics of dominant masculine norms, such as greater aggressiveness, height, and number of previous sexual relationships than the control group.

In a study of 89 college males in the United States, those who were told they were outperformed by a fictitious woman had increased levels of anger, concern for how others perceived them, sexism, and they ended up sexualizing the woman who outperformed them more than did the control group (Dahl et al., 2015). The researchers measured this sexualization by having participants select one of twelve cartoon avatars for their fake female teammate who reportedly scored higher than them. The only difference between the images was the amount of skin that they had exposed on the top half of their bodies. As such, the masculine-threatened males chose a significantly more skin-exposed avatar than the control group in what was seen to be in an effort to reduce the females' power while elevating or restoring their own. This is similar to how using sexist and anti-gay "humour" was seen as a strategy for some males to reclaim their sense of masculinity after it was threatened (O'Connor et al., 2017). Although, in my opinion, these are compelling findings, the strength or validity of these conclusions would be increased greatly had participants' perspectives about these dynamics been captured after they were debriefed. Still, as seen in these studies, males attempt to reclaim or establish an idolized image of their masculine identity can come at a cost for others, most often women. One study found that falsely telling a man he has lower than average testosterone makes him less likely to

support gender equality (Kosakowska-berezecka et al., 2016), and a study of gay men found that when their alignment with restrictive masculine ideology is questioned they afterwards distance themselves from more feminine-presenting gay men (Hunt et al., 2016). In one study, male participants were less likely to be prosocial bystanders and intervene when a woman (actor) was put in an uncomfortable situation (seeing sexually explicit content) if, prior to that situation, the participants were exposed to a male peer group where misogyny was first normalized (Leone & Parrott, 2019). Moreover, in a study of 30 men in the Dominican Republic (Fleming et al., 2019), who were interviewed about how their concerns about their masculine image related to their sexual behaviours and use of violence, it was found that the three most common responses participants utilized to restore their masculine image were: physical violence, emotional violence (e.g., humiliating others back), and finding a new sexual partner.

Although these studies do not directly link restrictive masculine ideology to males' disproportionately higher rates of physical or sexual violence, they do demonstrate how closely many males' identities are tied to their adherence or appearance of aligning with the tenets of restrictive masculine ideology and how, when that is questioned, it can elicit a strong emotional response that impacts behaviours, some of which are violence related. Examples of this included feelings of anger or behaviours of aggression or humiliation geared towards others, often against women. Moreover, feeling disrespected or feeling shamed are common reasons for why violence and some murders are committed (Gilligan, 2003).

Males' greater rates of mental health-related issues in comparison to females, such as depression, anxiety, and suicide, are often connected to restrictive masculine ideologies around emotional suppression and/or self-reliance. Indeed, research suggests that males are more likely than females to avoid seeking help or going to therapy for their emotional issues (Barry et al.,

2021; Berger et al., 2005; Levant, 1996; Levant et al., 2009; Richardson, Robb, et al., 2021). The interrelatedness between adherence to the norms of emotional restriction, self-reliance, and toughness can exacerbate males' emotional issues, such as how restricting emotions and being self-reliant, sometimes viewed as a demonstration of toughness, can increase feelings of loneliness in men, which in turn leads to greater psychological distress (Kealy et al., 2021; Seidler et al., 2022). Similarly, a large longitudinal study following several thousand males at four separate points from secondary school to their 30s, found that those who endorsed or adhered to norms associated with restrictive masculine ideology in secondary school (including restricted emotionality and fighting) showed higher suicide rates in their 20s and were more likely to be arrested, to complete less schooling, and to have higher drug usage than those who did not strongly adhere to those norms in secondary school (Feigelman et al., 2021). A correlational study of 829 Australian adolescent males (aged 15–18) found, using a shorter version of the CMNI scale than was used in my study, that participants' with greater adherence to either the norms of self-reliance or of violence were significantly more likely to report suicide ideation two years later (King et al., 2020).

These masculine norms are reflected in qualitative studies of men too. In a recent study interviewing men who survived their suicide attempts (Richardson, Dickson et al., 2021), many participants described not wanting to seek help because it would be seen as a sign of weakness and a source of intense shame for them, as men, to admit needing help. Similarly, in a study of 18 men who had attempted suicide found that, when interviewed about their life histories, they all had learned at a young age to suppress their emotions around sadness because it was antithetical to the ideals of restrictive masculine ideology, whereas anger could be more readily expressed as it could bolster their image towards a masculine ideal (River & Flood, 2021). Only

four of the participants in that study described being able to resist the societal pressures to conceal their emotions, but for the others, emotional concealment appeared to be linked to their suicide attempts, particularly in terms of how their increasing anger and violence led to relationship breakdowns and job losses. Again, in another study (Rasmussen et al., 2018) of suicide notes and of interviews with those who had close relationships to young men that had died from suicide, researchers determined that masculine-held beliefs were “intrinsically connected” (p. 1) to the suicides in that it contributed to their avoidance of help-seeking behaviours. However, a recent report in the United Kingdom challenges the perception that males, as a collective, do not actively seek help as it concluded that 91% of middle-aged men who died from suicide contacted a front-line agency or service in the months leading up to their death (The National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Safety in Mental Health, 2021).

Yet it is not just males’ individual adherence to restrictive masculine ideology but also society’s belief and perpetuation of restrictive masculine norms that is linked to some of the mental health concerns for males. For instance, the stigma for men to not seek help is often supported by society, and there is evidence that there is systematic bias against males in psychotherapy (APA, 2018; Mahalik et al., 2012). Moreover, society may be more unfamiliar with the types of behaviours—such as aggressiveness and avoidance of discussing problems—that could indicate that males are in need of help with their suicide ideation (Chandler, 2021; Richardson, Dickson, et al., 2021). This type of structural bias against readily recognizing males’ help-seeking behaviours is, in part, similar to why it is believed males’ depression and internal distress is more often missed and left undiagnosed compared to females’ depression and internal distress (Addis, 2008; APA, 2018; Cochran & Rabinowitz, 2003).

The Role of Restrictive Norms of Masculinity in Educational Settings

The role of restrictive masculine ideologies and adolescent males' poorer academic-related outcomes have also been outlined in several ways. Multiple studies have found that some adolescent males are more likely to hold the belief that it is undesirable to do too well in school or that some subjects, like English and Social Studies, are "more feminine subjects," and so trying too hard or being too smart in those classes is sometimes viewed as antithetical to the ideals of being male (Addis et al., 2016; Kimmel, 2018; Martino, 2000; Roberts, 2018).

Yet it is also society's endorsement of restrictive masculine ideology that is seen to impact their schooling experiences. Kimmel (2018) argued it is the collective societal belief of "boys will be boys" that ignores and even encourages behaviours in boys that can be problematic in school settings, such as expecting them to be more rambunctious. This is perhaps reflected in one study that, when asking students what made an ideal student, found boys tended to highlight good behaviours whereas girls tended to highlight having a high capacity to learn (Francis, 2000). This social normalizing of boys' external behaviours may also contribute to why male students have disproportionately higher diagnoses for ADHD as some of this could reflect males receiving overdiagnoses while simultaneously reflecting that females, who are often socialized to not externalize their behaviours (Perren et al., 2007), could be underdiagnosed (APA, 2018).

Other studies have indicated that teachers are more likely to allow male students greater control or leniency in their classrooms—in terms of the amount of linguistic and physical space males take up or are given by teachers—than teachers allow females students to have (Jovanovic & King, 1998; Jule, 2005; Walkerdine, 1989). For example, in one study (Roberts, 2018), it was observed that some teachers gave up control or were more lenient towards male students' disruptive behaviours in an effort to appease them to prevent them from "acting out" even more.

Conversely, in this same study female students were disciplined more quickly by teachers, even when they caused a much lesser disruption to the class than their male classmates. Other studies found teachers are more likely to attribute boys' achievements to their "natural" abilities and, in comparison, are more likely to attribute girls' achievements to their effort (Epstein, 1998; Kimmel, 2018; Walkerdine, 1989). This may contribute to or explain why some males during adolescence start overestimating their skills and abilities, whereas the opposite tends to happen for females, which in turn demotivates males from persisting when they do meet a future challenge in university, resulting in higher dropout rates for males (Kimmel, 2018). Yet conversely, the societal expectation that boys are naturally better in science and in mathematics has been demonstrated to have benefits as it makes male students more engaged in those subjects (Fredricks et al., 2018).

It has also been suggested that school structures offer contradictory messages to males on how to express their emotions; many times, schools seem to be structured in ways that expect and encourage male students to behave like "typical" emotionally stoic and tough boys, and, at other times, schools seem to be structured in ways that berate boys if they are emotionally insensitive and tough (Mac An Ghail & Haywood, 2012). As such, many scholars argue that schools themselves are highly gendered places that often communicate essentialist discourses on gender and that perpetuate boys' adherence to masculine gender roles (Connell, 2005; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Davies, 1989; Hamilton & Roberts, 2017; Jule, 2018; Swain, 2005; Whelen, 2011). Therefore, there are many masculine socialization forces at school likely factoring into males' disproportionate school-related concerns. However, a number of researchers say this relationship has not been explored extensively enough (Kågesten et al.,

2016; Mac An Ghail & Haywood, 2012; Watson, 2017); similarly, there is not enough research that adequately reflects the perspectives and experiences of adolescent males (Whelen, 2011).

As highlighted thus far, restrictive masculine ideologies and males' rigid adherence to masculine norms such as emotional restriction, self-reliance, toughness, and aggression are frequently linked to a multitude of issues concerning adolescent males. Again, whether it was males' increased anger to restore their masculine image or to protect against feelings of shame or anxiety, or whether it was not wanting to share emotional struggles with others despite distress, the role of emotions appeared central to many of these issues. Better understanding the interconnectedness of social constructions of masculinity to the social and emotional development and wellbeing of adolescent males is likely critical to better supporting them. This became the basis of my research aim.

Theoretical Understandings of Gender and Masculinities

The vast number of studies that connected many concerning outcomes involving males to restrictive forms of masculinity to led me to further explore the theoretical literature regarding the nature of gender and of masculinities. In this section, I review the prominent theoretical understandings of gender and masculinities common in masculinities research and specify which aspects of these inform the way I conceptualize and view gender and masculinities within this research. In so doing, I also define what is meant by "experiences and beliefs being male"—the central focus of inquiry for this study.

Gender and Masculinities as Socially Constructed

For much of modern history, gender and sex were viewed synonymously and were most often binarily reduced to male and female (Howson, 2006; Levant et al., 2009), especially in the

Global North.⁹ One of the most significant impacts with the advent and rise of feminism in the twentieth century was separating gender from sex—distinguishing gender as the social construct and sex as the biological aspects (Gardiner, 2005; Howson, 2006). In a social constructionist view, gender is seen as a relational dynamic that exists between people and within societies (Howson, 2006; Kimmel et al., 2005). As such, gender is irrelevant when confined solely to the context of the individual as it is only through being in relationships with others that a collective or comparative meaning is ascribed, thus making gender observable. Two of the main ways in which societies conceptualize gender is through the use of masculinity and femininity—labels to describe traits or characteristics typically associated with being male or female, respectively (Kachel et al., 2016; Walkerdine, 1989). Again, social constructionism rebuffs the essentialist notion that an ideal essence of masculinity or femininity exists inherently in nature without a collective understanding or a created paradigm to define what is considered masculine and/or feminine.

In contrast, biological sex does not need any relational contextualization to be observed as it is understood to exist independent of subjectivity, although there are many more biological sex categories than simply male and/or female.¹⁰ Although a social constructionist view of gender denies that sex and gender are inexorably linked, biological sex still highly correlates and can influence gender and so biological sex is often considered relevant to understanding gender (Gardiner, 2002; Howson, 2006; Levant, 1996). In the same way, I consider biological sex deeply relevant in this research; yet my study was also open to transgender males as, given the

⁹ A notable exception, especially in Canada, are Aboriginal Peoples' understandings of and respect for 2-Spirited People who transcend the male and female categories as they have both a feminine and masculine spirit.

¹⁰ Although the XY and XX karyotypes are the two most common in humans indicating a biological male and a biological female, respectively, there are several other viable karyotypes arrangements that do not biologically align with either sex and are known as intersex variations (Carpenter, 2018).

social constructionist view of gender I hold, they too have experiences of being male regardless of their genitalia or their sex assigned at birth. In this way, although gender is understood in this research to be socially constructed, the term *being male* is used in this research to encompass the possible roles that both biological sex and gender may have in impacting adolescent males' experiences and beliefs. To be more specific, being male is understood in the research as participants' experiences and beliefs growing up that are specifically related to and/or only present by virtue of their biological sex and/or gender identity as males. For example, a participant describing an experience of school-related stress is not inherently connected to being male, but it would be if that experience of school-related stress was believed to be unique or heightened because of that participants' male identity. Additionally, I specify that I am investigating both experiences and beliefs of being male to accentuate how adolescent males' beliefs about gender could vary from their experiences. For example, participants could believe that their adherence to a masculine norm is a certain way but then when describing their experiences their adherence to that masculine norm may appear quite different.

The distinction between sex and gender, primarily due to the influence of second-wave feminism around the 1970s, was instrumental for the creation of the study of men and masculinities (Howson, 2006; Seidler, 2011).¹¹ As feminist movements questioned and critiqued essentialist notions of gender and power, often in relation to men and women, feminists highlighted critical issues pertaining to men and masculinity and, in so doing, "made masculinity 'visible' in the present" (Seidler, 2011, p. 447). Said more pointedly, Gardiner (2005) claimed that "misogyny created feminist theory, and feminist theory has helped create masculinity" (p.

¹¹ "Men and masculinities" is commonly used to refer to masculinities scholarship although research regarding younger boys is included within this too. Hereafter I use the term "males and masculinities" to avoid any confusion about which ages are included.

36). What Seidler and Gardiner identified in their comments is that even though males were present and dominant in all areas of research throughout history, there remained little to no introspection or insight regarding the actual experiences or meaning of being male until gender as a construct was explored. So masculine constructions existed before feminism, but there was little to no language or lens through which to view it.

This twentieth-century shift that started viewing masculinity as something constructed rather than inherently innate or “God-given” was radical and, as was mentioned in Chapter 1, was not without its detractors (Kimmel, 2012). Yet current social constructionist perspectives of gender and masculinity are included in all the dominant discourses surrounding boys and men in fields such as: education, criminology, psychology, health, sociology, and even organizational studies (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). This proliferation proves, in part, its acceptance as a valid conceptual framework to help me investigate adolescent males’ experiences and beliefs about being male in this research.

Masculinities as Varied, Fluid, Context-dependent, Involving Power and Performative

Along with presenting this social constructionist understanding of gender, it is pertinent to highlight five related feminist-informed understandings of gender that shape how I conceive and consequently discuss masculinities. Although there are a variety of feminist theories, which are not always in agreement, these five understandings stood out to me in particular as I identified evidence in support of each of them in reviewing studies of adolescent males’ as well as in my own previous research and in personal experiences of being male. The first four of these understandings, and their relevance to this current research, suggest that masculinity is (a) varied—there are many ways to be an adolescent male, and hence there are multiple masculinities, not just one; (b) fluid—participants’ masculinities can change over time; (c)

highly context-dependent—how participants embody their masculinities can be different at school than at home or with their peer group; and (d) masculinity involves power—gender is relationally created, and different expressions of masculinities hold more or less power or social currency than do others (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Gardiner, 2005; Howson, 2006; Kimmel, 2012, 2018).

This belief that gender involves power is influenced by Foucauldian concepts which assert that power is relational, like gender, and that the use of language is a way in which dominant structures within societies maintain their power (Butler, 1988; Butler, 1986; Kendall & Tannen, 2015; Whelen, 2011). Foucault described, through his concept of the panopticon, that the most dominant systems of power do not need to exert their power forcibly over people, but rather they function by channelling people to act as systems of self-surveillance in support of the hegemonic system (Deveaux, 1994). In other words, the hegemonic system operates primarily through individuals keeping themselves and each other in conformity or in compliance with the dominant system rather than extraneously forcing people to conform or be compliant. Similar to other masculinities scholars, I have used these Foucauldian concepts as my framework to conceptualize how many of the dominant norms of masculinity function in society and are able to maintain their prominence while subjugating femininities and other types of masculinities deemed lesser because they do not meet the hegemonic ideals (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Howson, 2006; Whelen, 2011). For instance, many males feel that they constantly have to prove that their masculinities align to the hegemonic ideals, not only to themselves and to women, but also and most importantly, it is argued, to other men (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Kimmel, 2012, 2018). Power dynamics like this consistently appear in findings within masculinities research (e.g., all the studies previously presented in this chapter that artificially threatened

participants' masculinities), including my own (Kwiatkowski, 2016), and I also observed these types of masculine hierarchies and dynamics during my time as a secondary school teacher and in my own experience as an adolescent male.

The fifth important aspect of masculinity that I build upon in this research is that gender is performative; people embody and live out their gender through what they do, say, and think (Butler, 1988; Walkerdine, 1989; West & Zimmerman, 1987, 2009). This performativity can be noted in the research discussed previously, such as when men claimed greater aggression, physical stature, or sexual prowess when their masculinity was called into question (Cheryan et al., 2015) or when those who survived their suicide attempt said that they did not want to ask for help as it would be a sign of their weakness or failings as men (Richardson, Dickson, et al., 2021). These examples demonstrate how males can present or convey their level of masculinity or “maleness” to others or to themselves through a performance, irrespective of how conscious they are in doing so.

Performativity, in my view, is central to understanding why masculinities can vary, can be fluid, are context-dependent, and involve power—it involves individuals' agentic power; it is neither innate nor immutable. People are not merely passive recipients of their gender socializations, as a rigid social constructionist perspective would entail; rather, viewing gender as performative denotes that certain restrictive expressions or harmful constructions of gender can be undone (Deutsch, 2007). In this way the theory of performativity is relevant to my research in that it provides a mechanism or pathway in which harmful behaviours or negative outcomes associated with adherence to restrictive forms of masculinity can be resisted and changed at the individual level as well as at societal levels, which is at the core of my research aim. Moreover, understanding masculinities as performative informs my reflexive practices (discussed more in

Chapter 3, p. 106) regarding my interactions with participants' and theirs with me, as these are also a type of masculine performance that may be communicating something about being male. It is important to note that further discussions exist regarding performativity theory that are beyond the scope of this research (e.g., Deutsch, 2007); this includes discussions on how much of gender performativity is anchored or limited by our physical bodies and on what the consequences of that might be for transgender individuals (Schep, 2012). To this discussion I will, however, briefly reiterate the view held in the research that physical bodies and characteristics do matter and have relevance, though not necessarily so, for one's masculine identity.

My understandings of gender and masculinities presented in this section also have great relevance regarding the literature reviewed in this chapter. For instance, although the correlational studies already reviewed were well-suited for identifying relationships between adherence to restrictive masculine ideologies and to social-emotional issues, the quantitative structures of those studies with surveys are likely not as well-suited to address the fluid and contextual nature of gender, as others have argued (e.g., Addis et al., 2016). This tension is elaborated upon later in this chapter when the methodological divide in masculinities scholarship is discussed.

Adolescence: Understanding a Critical Time for Males

Although my initial interest in adolescent males' masculinities is due to my experiences as a secondary school teacher, in reviewing the literature it became increasingly apparent that investigating adolescent males' adherence and resistance to masculine norms is of particular importance. In the following subsections, I discuss the significance of adolescence for males' developing masculine identities, I highlight key aspects pertaining to the formation of their

identities, and I review current understandings of adolescent males' adherence and resistance to masculine norms. I also identify key areas where research is lacking.

Adolescent Masculine Identity Development

There is much evidence to suggest that adolescence is key to the development of males' masculine identities. To begin with, although boys experience societal pressures to conform to restrictive masculine ideologies starting from a very young age, often coinciding near the time they begin attending school (Chu & Gilligan, 2014; Pollack, 1998), these pressures intensify during adolescence and, connectedly, males' adherence to many restrictive norms, such as emotional restriction, is also seen to increase (Amin et al., 2018; Kågesten et al., 2016; Kimmel, 2018; Pollack, 2006; Watts & Borders, 2005; Way, 2004). It is also during adolescence when males' disproportionately higher suicide rates emerge (Statistics Canada, 2022a). There are also increasing male perpetration rates of sexual violence during this time (Amin et al., 2018).

Adolescence is also an important time period to understand masculinities because it is during these years when individuals' lifelong health behaviours are formed (McCarthy et al., 2016). For example, two large longitudinal studies conducted in the United States, both consisting of thousands of male participants who were assessed at four different waves from adolescence until nearing their 30s, demonstrates that masculinity-related behaviours during adolescence predict several negative health and behavioural outcomes into and during adulthood (Feigelman et al., 2021; Shakya et al., 2019). The first of these studies was previously discussed but in terms of the one not yet mentioned, Shakya et al.'s (2019) study further illustrated that those participants who were in the highest tertile for conforming to restrictive norms of masculinity during adolescence were still significantly more likely to use alcohol and drugs into

and during adulthood no matter how much their conformity to those norms decreased later in life.

Many researchers emphasize that early adolescence (ages 10–14) is key for the development of adolescent males' masculine identities (e.g., Amin et al., 2018; Chu, 2004; Kågesten et al., 2016), however others (sometimes the same researchers) note that adherence to masculine norms increases in late adolescence (ages 15–19; Amin et al., 2018; Way, 2004). It may be that early adolescence is more pivotal in terms of establishing a masculine trajectory and it is only until later in adolescence that the outcome of that trajectory is more visible. Of potential relevance is that a Canadian health survey of adolescents in 2019 found that those in late adolescence were more than twice as likely (17%) to report having fair or poor mental health than were those in early adolescence (7%; Statistics Canada, 2020), suggesting increased stressors in later adolescence. Additionally, the transition after secondary school has also been identified as a particularly difficult and desultory time for males and their development of masculine identities, a life stage Kimmel (2018) referred to as “guyland”—no longer an adolescent but not fully transitioned into mature adulthood.

Regardless of whether the focus is on early or late adolescence, a number of significant social, developmental, and biological changes all coalesce during adolescence. These include bodily changes from the onset of puberty, first sexual encounters, cognitive developments that allow for greater executive functioning skills, emotional changes like experiencing greater independence from parents, and higher overall stress and increased self-conscious awareness, all of which can contribute and interact with one's performance of their gender identity/masculinity (Kågesten et al., 2016; McCarthy et al., 2016). This has many parallels to influential educational psychologist Erikson's (1950) pioneering work in which he identified eight psychosocial

developmental stages that people have to successfully navigate through to arrive at a more holistic, purposeful life (Maree, 2021). Each stage is defined by a psychosocial crisis, and the crisis during adolescence is one of identity (i.e., knowing who you are) versus role confusion (i.e., not knowing who you are). He suggested that the outcome of this crisis, identity or role confusion, led to the next developmental stage towards either intimacy or to isolation, respectively. These ideas still influence thinking in educational psychology today (Maree, 2021), and much of the existing research on adolescent males and their masculinities contains evidence that many are in fact figuring out their masculine identities (Pollack, 2006; Waling, 2022).

Despite the developmental importance of adolescence and the implications of masculine-related beliefs during this time, masculinities research of this age group is lacking in its amount and in giving voice to adolescent males' actual experiences and perspectives of it (Chu, 2004; O'Neil, 2015; Whelen, 2011). In support of this, from a systematic review of 137 publications within the *Psychology of Men and Masculinities* journal, only 7% were with participants younger than 18 years, which was the least amount of studies for any age group except for men over 55 years of age at only 4% (Wong et al., 2010). Additionally, although I review some Canadian-based research on adolescent males' experiences later in this chapter, these types of studies are few and often dated, which, given the contextual and fluid understanding of masculinities, points to the need for further research into Canadian males' experiences of adolescence.

Key Aspects of Adolescent Male Identity Formation

Despite this pivotal age group being relatively underrepresented in masculinities scholarship, many studies still exist that highlight key aspects relevant to adolescent males' formation and navigation of their masculine identities and to their overall wellbeing. These

aspects are often interrelated, and the most prominent include school, peers, parents, sports, and media. Each of these is discussed below.

School is often central to adolescent males' masculine development and wellbeing, not just because of their implicated role in the construction of stereotypical gendered identities, as previously discussed (e.g., Whelen, 2011), or because school can be a significant source of emotional stress (Wilson, Gwyther, Swann et al., 2022), but also because schools are the primary site in which adolescents live out and test out their different identities (Adger & Wright, 2015; Paechter, 2012). For instance, schools are a source of and primary location for significant peer relationships and other social interactions, as well as the site of sports activities, which can factor heavily into adolescent males' performances of their masculine identities (Chu, 2004; Swain, 2005).

Arguably the largest theme present in research on adolescent males' masculinities is the increasingly powerful role of the peer group—particularly the male peer group—during this time period (Kågesten et al., 2016; Shakya et al., 2019, Chu, 2004; Way, 2004). Prominent Canadian academics and authors Neufeld and Maté (2013) explain that, regardless of one's gender, adolescence is often when the influence of peers can overtake the influence of parents, which they refer to as peer-orientation versus parent-orientation. For adolescent males this peer-orientation plays a vital function in their masculine identities as peers are the major way in which conformity to dominant norms of masculinities are policed and maintained. This is accomplished through frequent hierarchical measurements of theirs and others' masculine identities and by facing potential consequences if one is not deemed masculine-enough (O'Beaglaioich, Morrison, et al., 2015; Reigeluth & Addis, 2016). This policing of masculinity can be imposed through physical acts of bullying or by using sexist and homophobic insults to assert dominance over

other males who resist or are not as aligned with restrictive masculine norms (Cadieux & Chasteen, 2015; Shakya et al., 2019). However, here the importance of contextual understandings of gender can be essential because, in some settings, similar types of insults can conversely be seen to enhance and demonstrate a closeness within male friendships (McDiarmid et al., 2017; Reigeluth & Addis, 2016).

The pressure for males to prove their adherence to dominant masculine norms for their peers is illustrated clearly in two studies regarding males' heterosexual sexual experiences. One study was of adolescents (Tolman et al., 2004) and the other was of 19–25 year-olds (Lamb et al., 2018). Although the latter study is of young adult males, it is still included here given the difficulty in receiving ethical approval for studies about adolescents' sexual experiences.¹² The findings from both studies highlighted that a major way adolescent and young adult males gain respect and cement themselves as being masculine-enough in their peers' eyes is by bragging to their male peers about their sexual exploits and/or being seen as sexually skilled and experienced. In Lamb et al.'s (2018) study on sexual experiences, they interviewed male participants about their thoughts they had during heterosexual intercourse. They discovered that, during sex, many of these male participants thought less about the physical sensations of sex than they did about wanting to demonstrate their masculine prowess by performing well; several participants even described planning what they were going to tell their male friends afterwards about the sex.

Two of the most prominent researchers regarding adolescent males are Chu and Way, and each has implemented longitudinal studies in the United States centred around adolescents' relationships. Their research, in my opinion, is exemplary for its rich detail and prioritizing

¹² For example, Tolman et al. (2004) never explicitly asked participants about sex but sometimes participants volunteered it in their discussions of relationships.

participants' perspectives; Chu's (2004) research focused on an all-boys school, and Way's (2004, 2012) research focused on adolescents in urban settings. The key findings from both of their studies were that: (a) maintaining close friendships is central to adolescent males' mental health and wellbeing; (b) adolescent males have strong desires for emotional intimacy within their friendships and romantic relationships (e.g., "wishing to be truly seen and known" [Chu, 2004, p. 90]); and (c) many do experience and have such relationships. Yet, in both their bodies of work, the increasing pressure to conform to restrictive masculine ideology during adolescence is seen to directly hinder the fulfillment of those desires for intimacy and authenticity as many feel that that is at odds with the cool or tough masculine personas that they feel they also need to portray. Way (2004, 2012) also identified that as males progress through adolescence, their levels of distrust for others increased, and so, by the end of secondary school, their intimate friendships decreased but their desires for emotional intimacy did not.

Although the role of parents in adolescents' lives are seen as significant in shaping beliefs about performances of masculinity (Amin et al., 2018; Kågesten et al., 2016), the particular importance of fathers is frequently emphasized (Farrell & Gray, 2018; Kimmel, 2006; O'Neil, 2015; Watkins, 2011). Often it is fathers' physical and/or emotional absences in their sons' lives that is seen as a major component—sometimes even more than restrictive masculine ideology—for most of the negative outcomes involving boys (e.g., Farrell & Gray, 2018). There is a common debate about who is most responsible for the lack of fatherly guidance: feminism or patriarchal structures (Kimmel, 2006); but generally there is agreement that increased fatherly engagement in their sons' lives is seen as a critical step to bring about more positives in the masculine identities and lives of their sons (O'Neil, 2015; Pleck, 2010; Watkins, 2011). However, often the primacy importance of the father's relationship to their child's masculinity is

assumed more than it is investigated (Epstein & Ward, 2011), and very little has been investigated about the adolescent male's own perspectives of this relationship (see Langa, 2010, as a notable exception).

Although the role of media needs to be explored more thoroughly, it also contributes to adolescent males' masculine beliefs and experiences (Kågesten et al., 2016). For instance, in a study of undergraduate male students, it was found that watching sports TV, consuming reality TV, and reading men's magazines were all predictive of more closely adhering to restrictive masculine ideologies (Giaccardi et al., 2016). Media content depicting masculine ideals are also linked to negatively impacting adolescent males' wellbeing, such as increasing body image dissatisfaction (Slater & Tiggemann, 2014). Upon reviewing this literature on adolescents, I saw much value in further investigating the role that schools, peers, parents, fathers, sports, or media play in adolescent males' masculine-development and wellbeing, however, instead of focusing on one of these aspects, I wanted adolescent males themselves to have the freedom to focus on the aspects in which they deemed most significant, if any. As such, this is why I decided to more broadly investigate their overall experiences and beliefs of being adolescent males.

Current Understandings of Adolescent Male Norm Adherence and Resistance

Although existing research identifies school, peers, parents, sports, and media as involved in adolescent males' development of their masculine identities, the manner in which adolescent males practically navigate their adherence and/or resistance to restrictive masculine norms is much less frequently elaborated upon, especially from their perspectives. Of the limited research that does so, often it is the complexities, tensions, and contradictions of doing so that are highlighted.

These complexities and tensions are demonstrated within an article by three Canadian researchers who synthesized their multiple qualitative studies of adolescent male students (Kehler et al., 2005). They noted that in order to resist restrictive masculine norms, most male students had to still hide aspects of themselves, often for self-protection. Moreover, adhering to certain aspects of masculine ideals allowed some to simultaneously resist other norms. An example of this that the researchers described was when adolescent males would deflect from the intensity of talking about their vulnerable feelings by using jokes and humour but how doing so still enabled them to talk about their more vulnerable feelings.

The complexities, tensions, and contradictions of navigating masculinities were also observed in two related studies of Canadian adolescent males, aged 15–20, who voluntarily took part in an extra-curricular gender equality group at school (Coulter, 2003, 2009). I discuss these studies together as Coulter's 2003 paper explored the reasons why 10 participants joined the equality group and Coulter's 2009 paper described the findings of the group interviews conducted between five of these participants in order to look more deeply at the way they experienced their personal relationships with females. Although it might be assumed that, based on participants' voluntary participation in supporting gender equality, these adolescent males may be more resistant to restrictive masculine norms that endorse men's power over women, as Coulter seemingly did at the outset of her research, numerous contradictory beliefs were identified. For instance, participants generally could accept being outperformed by males but not by females, even though they recognized that as troublesome and contradictory to some of their other beliefs. Similarly, during the group interview, some participants conceded, albeit somewhat ashamedly, that they did objectify their girlfriends to a certain extent. At times they also referred to males as hypersexual and obsessed with sex, but for the most part they resisted that label for

themselves, saying that often their girlfriends wanted sex more than they did. For instance, one participant admitted that the reality of having sex was “not as fantastic as you built it up in your mind” (Coulter, 2009, p. 97). As Coulter neatly concluded, these males both actively worked against the hegemonic forms of masculinity and participated in it.

Undoubtedly adolescent males’ adherence and resistance to masculine norms is complex, is filled with tensions, and is sometimes contradictory, but beyond acknowledging the existence of these complexities, very little literature exists in which these complexities or the mechanisms adolescent males use to navigate masculine norms are more clearly understood or prised apart. One rare attempt of this was a study (Randell et al., 2016) which investigated, through a grounded theory approach, how 33 adolescent males in Sweden, aged 16–17, navigated their masculinities and emotions. The authors identified two main categories of participants’ responses to masculine norms based on where participants placed their values. The term “gender-normative masculinity” (p. 486) was used to classify participants who placed higher value on male peer group norms and the term “non-gender-normative masculinity” (p. 486) was used to classify participants who placed higher value on their personal beliefs. For participants who placed a higher value on male peer group norms, this was seen to move them either towards toughness or, contrastingly, towards sensitivity. Participants who displayed non-gender-normative masculinity were deemed as having an orientation towards “sincerity” (p. 486), which was most frequently demonstrated by their ability to express their emotions. This conceptualization is confusing, but it appears to mean that the participants who prioritized peer group norms were either tough (often enacted through sports) or emotionally sensitive, not because they were being sincere to their own values but because of the established norms of their friend group that either endorsed toughness or sensitivity. In contrast, the sincere adolescent males were described as not trying to

fit into any group norms but did things based on their personal values, but this was also most frequently demonstrated by being emotionally expressive.

There are at least two limitations of this study in my view. The first is that the authors' definition of gender-normative masculinity only referred to participants' stance toward toughness and sensitivity, and because toughness was understood by them as enacting emotional suppression and because sensitivity was understood as emotional expression (see p. 490), these two categories of adolescent males only described adolescents' relationship with the masculine norm of emotional restriction and ignored their adherence to the various other dominant masculine norms. This makes it impossible to determine if participants were gender normative or not in other areas. The second limitation is the confusing way the terms were conceptualized, particularly around the term sincere. The implication that some adolescents were emotionally sensitive because that was the norm for their peer group and not because they personally valued sensitivity, seems to me to be a reductive way to categorize one's navigation of identity. It seems exceedingly plausible that a sincere adolescent male who is emotionally expressive may be drawn to similar friends who normalize emotional sensitivity and so individual and collective values likely interplay with one another. As Paechter (2012) warned, we need to stop thinking of boys as belonging to strict categorizations, and the poor conceptualization of sincerity in this study obfuscates the contributions that can be derived from it.

The clearest example I found, in terms at prising apart patterns in adolescent males' navigation of masculine norms, is Way's work. As discussed earlier, Way highlights how adolescence is a time of males' constant negotiations with masculine norms, but what is unique about her research is that she and her colleagues have started mapping out some patterns of resistance to masculine norms (Rogers & Way, 2016, 2018; Way et al., 2014). Their specific

focus on adolescent males who resist masculine norms is highly valuable as this is particularly absent in research of adolescent males and more is needed (Gwyther et al., 2019; Smiler, 2014). Way et al. (2014) conceptualized two patterns of resistance: (a) explicit resistance, which refers to directly challenging or critiquing restrictive masculine norms; and (b) implicit resistance, which refers to indirectly or unconsciously doing something that differs from a dominant masculine norm. Although this is a helpful starting place for discussing resistance, both of their examples demonstrating these types of resistance point to the need for further investigation. For instance, an example of an explicit norm resistance was coded when a participant said, “it might be nice to be a girl, then you wouldn’t have to be emotionless” (p. 242). Even though I agree that this statement could be considered a form of masculine resistance, it seems likely to me that the participant still adheres to the norm of emotional restriction despite being critical of it. Similarly, their evidence of implicit resistance to masculine norms was when participants spoke of “having emotionally intimate male friendships and the importance of such friendships” (p. 242). Although I assume this is likely meant to be evidence of resisting the masculine norms of self-reliance and/or of emotional restriction, without knowing what was considered an emotionally close friendship, and given how much research highlights the overall significance of friendships during adolescence, I question the extent to which close friendships is strong evidence of resisting masculine norms without more detail provided. Regardless, there is much need for further research to build upon this scant literature outlining adolescent males’ patterns of resistance. Further prising apart and clarifying the complexities of adolescent males’ adherence and resistance to masculine norms can help to better understand adolescents’ relationships with masculinity-related social and emotional issues, which in turn can lead to better and more attuned support for adolescent males.

The Centrality and Complexity of Males' Relationships with Emotions

Throughout this literature review thus far, the importance of understanding males' relationships with emotions was highlighted in several ways:

- emotional restriction was one of the most consistently found norms of restrictive masculine ideology;
- males are disproportionately at risk for a number of emotional-related issues, and these include emotional behavioural diagnoses, physical violence, suicide, and substance use;
- males disproportionately cause emotional-related issues, such as violence, aggression, sexual abuse, and crimes against others; and
- males' adherence to the masculine norm of emotional restriction correlates and is linked to a number of these concerning outcomes.

As such, these led me to further examine the literature focused specifically on males' relationships with emotional expression. In this portion of this chapter, I examine the literature that provides evidence that males are socialized to restrict their emotions, discuss why that matters, and outline the complexities in investigating males' relationships with emotions.

The Socialization of Males to Emotionally Restrict

There is a wide range of evidence suggesting that males, more than females, are given messages to place restrictions on their emotionality. These messages entail which emotions to express or not express, and which ways of verbally expressing or displaying emotions are more socially acceptable and which ways are not as socially acceptable. This messaging is often seen to coincide with when boys start school, as research has found that boys of that age are already aware that expressing some emotions, especially sadness, is less acceptable for boys while

others, such as anger, are more acceptable for boys to express in comparison to girls (Chu & Gilligan, 2014; Levant, 1996; Perren et al., 2007; Pollack, 1998). This socialization pressure is epitomized by the familiar phrase: “boys don’t cry” (McQueen, 2017, p. 208).

Levant (1996) proposed a sequence in which he outlines how this socialization process of pushing boys away from or towards certain emotions can start, citing various studies in support of each point. To begin with, Levant argued that parents, both mothers and fathers, often respond differently to their sons around emotional experiences, most notably by discouraging sadness and fear. Then, as fathers take more of an interest in their children between the ages of 1–2, more socialization messages towards gender norms occurs. Afterwards, as boys enter school and continue to grow up, Levant contends that peer groups continue and reinforce restricted messages for boys around emotions. Although Levant’s proposed sequence of events is older and ignores some of the understandings of gender that I hold in this research, such as individuals’ agency and the fluid and context-dependent nature of performativity, much aligns with current sociological understandings of gender and emotions (see Schrock & Knop, 2014, for an overview). One example of how parents’ differential responses to boys around emotions can be introduced at a young age was found in a highly-cited study by Fivush et al. (2000). In it, parents discussed, with their 3-year-old child, four specific past events, each corresponding with one specific emotion (happiness, anger, sadness, or fear) and multiple gendered differences were observed. First, mothers talked significantly more than fathers did about the emotional aspect of the events while also using more emotive language. Second, the boys and girls did not differ in their discussion of the events except for the fearful event, in which boys used significantly fewer emotive words (e.g., less likely to say they were scared, frightened, or had screamed). From this, the authors concluded that these boys already knew that being scared was less acceptable

emotion for them to express having felt. Third, both mothers and fathers used more emotive language when talking to their daughters about sad events than mothers and fathers did with their sons, which may implicitly teach boys that feelings of sadness are less relevant and/or to be ignored.

Although it could be argued that males are inherently less emotionally expressive than females, indeed this is a popularly held assumption (Deng et al., 2016), it is interesting to note confounding evidence to the contrary. For example, infant boys are more emotionally reactive and expressive than infant girls in terms of their vocalizations and their displays of joy and fussiness for at least their first six months, but they become less verbally expressive than girls by age two, around the time when language is learned, and become less facially expressive than girls by age six (Levant, 1996, 1998; Levant et al., 2009). In one study of kindergarten boys and girls (aged 5–6; Perren et al., 2007), boys displayed significantly higher levels of emotional symptoms—such as depression, separation anxiety, and over-anxiousness—than girls did, as indicated by scales filled out by parents and teachers. In another study of kindergarteners (Fabes et al., 1994), boys and girls were in a room playing when they heard a baby crying through a monitor but they did not know that it was just an audio recording. Participants were monitored for their facial reactions, heart rate variance, and behaviours (e.g., speaking to the baby over the monitor and/or turning it off to not hear the crying). Results indicated that boys' bodily responses showed greater levels of distress at the crying baby and that boys were less able to regulate their emotional response. The boys were also significantly more likely than the girls to turn off the speaker, in what was seen as an attempt to avoid discomfort. Although part of this response could possibly be due to boys being less socialized to attune to babies crying than girls, these findings support the assertion that boys at ages five and six, compared to girls of that age, tend to

have higher internal levels of emotional arousal and that disengaging with the crying baby was proof of their higher distressed internal state, not proof of them merely being indifferent or less emotionally sensitive.

A similar conclusion was found in a recent and robust study (Deng et al., 2016) that assessed many facets of adult men and women's emotionality with double the sample size ($N = 79$) of the previous study. When these adult participants were shown different movie clips that were designed to each illicit one of seven different types of emotions, men's bodily responses (i.e., heart rate data) showed that for three of these clips (anger, amusement, and pleasure), they had significantly more intense emotional experiences when watching than the women did, and there was no significance difference between men and women's experiences watching the remaining four clips (horror, disgust, sadness, and surprise). However, for all these emotions, except for surprise, men were significantly more likely to self-report that they had a lower emotional experience than did the women. For the two movie clips showcasing disgust and horror, although there was no gender difference in emotional experience with heart rate data, the men still reported significantly lower levels of emotional arousal than did the women and also were significantly more likely to report enjoying those clips. These findings by Deng et al. (2016) align with the gendered messages males tend to receive throughout their lifetime, such as be strong, be non-emotional, and be tough (e.g., be able to handle gore). Therefore, this may have made the adult men in this study less inclined to honestly talk about their emotional experiences, especially if they felt what they had to say went against restrictive masculine ideology. Once again, these findings show that males' physiological emotional experiences tend to be greater than women's even if they claim they are less, which is a consistent finding in research about gender differences around emotions (see Brody & Hall, 2000, for a review;

McQueen, 2017). The research reviewed in this subsection serves to counter the notion that males are inherently less emotional than females and that there is ample evidence that masculine socialization factors convey strong messages to males that they should not readily acknowledge or express their emotions as much as females do, particularly around “negative” emotions such as sadness and fear.

Why the Pressures to Restrict Emotions Matter

The pressure or expectation for males to restrict their emotions has many consequences, foremost of which is that these messages appear to be effective. As alluded to in the many examples in the previous subsection, males are more likely than females to restrict certain aspects of their emotionality. Additional evidence for this is seen in a meta-analysis of all the literature on gender differences in alexithymia levels (i.e., having difficulties identifying and expressing feelings). Levant et al. (2009) found that in 32 studies using nonclinical samples, males had significantly more alexithymia than females in 17 studies, no gender differences in 14 studies, and females had more alexithymia than males in only one study. Although alexithymia is a clinical diagnosis, the trend of males seemingly being less able or willing to describe their emotional feelings has been conceptualized and operationalized into what is known as “normative male alexithymia” (Levant et al., 2006; Levant & Parent, 2019). This is not a diagnosis but is theorized to describe males’ emotional restriction specifically connected their socialization to suppress their emotions. A scale derived around this concept, the Normative Male Alexithymia Scale-Brief Form (NMA-S-BF; Levant & Parent, 2019), was used in this study, the reasons for which I elaborate upon in next chapter (p. 100). Higher scores of normative male alexithymia (i.e., greater emotional restriction) have significantly correlated with a number of negative outcomes for men, including lower relationship satisfaction, poorer

communication quality, and greater fears of intimacy (Karakis & Levant, 2012); it was also a strong predictor of men's poorer psychological wellbeing (Guvensel et al., 2018).

One study also determined that males who had higher alexithymia and/or higher normative male alexithymia scores processed their emotions at a slow enough rate to support the conclusion that they are suppressing their emotions rather than dissociating or repressing their emotions (Levant et al., 2014). Dissociation and repression, in comparison to suppression, are more unconscious processes related to more extreme trauma responses. Therefore this finding may indicate that most males with higher levels of emotional restriction have a higher level of awareness about their emotional restriction and capacity for expressing emotions than would otherwise be expected if their emotional restriction was due to a stronger defence mechanism of dissociation or repression. This further supports the notion that many males are indeed suppressing their emotionality rather than inherently being less emotional.

Improving males' restrictive relationships with emotional expression is commonly viewed as vital for the betterment of males' social and emotional wellbeing and for the continued efforts to achieve gender equality (Chu, 2014; de Boise & Hearn, 2017; Garaigordobil et al., 2009; O'Neil, 2015). O'Neil (2015) proposed that two of the greatest obstacles preventing males' from transitioning away from restrictive masculine ideology towards something more enriching and salubrious is their fear of femininity and of homophobia. He explained that since being emotionally expressive is associated with appearing feminine and/or gay, which are antithetical to "being a man" according to the standards of restrictive masculine ideology, this causes a boy or man to "give up parts of himself" (p. 111)—primarily emotional parts. This fracturing, I contend, is fundamentally consequential to adolescent males' social and emotional wellbeing, but the impact of which can be observed in what Pollack (1998) referred to as a

double bind for boys. The double bind he identified was that boys are encouraged, often forcefully or at risk of being bullied, to be tough and emotionally stoic, but then when they get into close, more intimate relationships, they are also expected to be warm, emotionally attuned, and sensitive—aspects that they may not have grown up to be as proficient in. A similar double bind or double standard was identified in a detail-rich and person-centred study of adolescent males in the Republic of Ireland (O’Beaglaioich, Morrison, et al., 2015). In it, participants complained about being pressured to act tough and emotionally restricted but then, because of these stereotypes, being viewed by adults and the media as defective or as “guilty until proven innocent” (p. 322). Another study (Fischer et al., 2013) indicated that the social cost for men crying publicly can be greater than it is for females, given its divergence from masculine ideals, especially in certain contexts like at work where a crying man was seen as more negative and less competent. As such, the pressure for males to restrict their emotions is seen to create internal suppression and conflict, which can have external repercussions.

One of these external repercussions of emotional restriction is believed to be related to issues of gender equality. It is reasoned that males who resist the dominant norm of masculinity around emotional restriction are likely more comfortable with femininity and homosexuality (O’Neil, 2015), and so likely reject other restrictive norms of masculinity, especially as they relate to issues of gender equality (de Boise & Hearn, 2017). Rationale for this is presumably also connected to how sociologists and feminists have long viewed females as doing more emotional work in their professional jobs and more emotional labour in parenting and in heterosexual relationships than males do (e.g., helping support and manage bosses, colleagues, children, and partners’ emotions). Therefore, the prospect of males expressing more emotions is sometimes seen as rectifying those gender imbalances (Coulter, 2003; de Boise & Hearn, 2017).

In short, more emotional expression in males is often seen in sociology as “better” for males’ wellbeing and for gender equality—but the extent to which more emotionally expression is better, or in which specific areas, is not directly tested by any research designs I found. Much of this is because most research on males’ relationships with emotions focuses on those who are emotionally restricted, not on those who are emotionally unrestricted (Gerdes & Levant, 2018). There are no studies that I am aware of that directly compare males’ wellbeing or support for gender equality based on their differing levels of or adherence to the masculine norm of emotional restriction.

Despite the magnitude and extent to which males are socialized to restrict aspects of their emotionality, there are other factors which impact a person’s ability to resist. In one study of 658 university students in the United States that assessed risk factors for having difficulty expressing or identifying emotions, remarkably found that socialization factors or having experienced child abuse was “completely mediated by the severity of maladaptive emotional ideologies” (Edwards et al., 2017, p. 270). In other words, receiving socialization messages around emotions as well as having suffered traumatic abuse, two things that have been connected to having difficulties sharing emotions, were only risk factors for alexithymia if they changed the person’s emotional ideology. “Emotional ideology” was defined in this study as what one believes to be true about emotions (Edwards et al., 2017, p. 254). This study investigated 14 beliefs participants had about emotions, which were taken from the Leahy Emotional Schema Scale II (Leahy, 2012). Maladaptive emotional ideologies were characterized by believing that some feelings were wrong to express, feeling guilt about having certain emotions, and fearing the loss of control if they let themselves express or feel their feelings. Although the researchers did not comment on or assess gender differences, it is foreseeable that males’ socialization messages around

emotions, especially fear and sadness, can align with those maladaptive emotional ideologies; yet this study by Edwards et al. (2017) highlights the agentic power of individuals to internalize or reject their socializations. As such, I became increasingly motivated to build upon this literature, from adolescent males' perspectives, and prise apart the complexities or mechanisms that enable some adolescent males to better resist the masculine norm of emotional restriction than other adolescent males.

The Challenges Investigating Emotions in Masculinities Research

At this point in discussing males' relationships with emotions there have been several emotion-related facets mentioned (e.g., emotional expression, emotional reactivity/arousal etc.) but a lack of discussion about what emotions are, as well as a lack of specificity as to what aspects of emotionality are being suppressed when referring to adherence to the masculine norm of emotional restriction. Sociologists de Boise and Hearn (2017) argued that the dearth of conceptual clarity about emotions is one of the major paucities and faults in masculinities research that investigates emotions. They argued that most studies are vague as to whether they are examining men's emotional expression as external non-verbal displays of emotions (e.g., tears), as the ability or willingness to talk about emotional experiences with others, or as physiological experience of emotional states. For instance, in the scant literature that was found discussing the intersection of boys, schooling, and emotions in Canadian contexts, emotions and feelings were interchangeably used and, though not clearly specified, appeared to refer solely to talking about their emotional experiences with others (e.g., Coulter, 2003; Frank et al., 2003; Kehler et al., 2005).

Examples of confusion with overlapping terms are found even in research that does specify which aspect of emotionality is being investigated. For instance, in Deng et al.'s (2016)

study that was previously discussed regarding adults watching movie clips to illicit an emotional response, their definition of emotional expression had nothing to do with external displays of emotions but instead referred to participants' subjective assessments of their emotional experience. This involved both a self-assessment of their physiological state as well as required them to respond to how good or bad the emotional experience felt (i.e., a form of talk). In another study, McQueen (2017) also investigated emotional expression, but here it was clearly articulated to encompass males' abilities to talk about their emotions and to express non-verbal displays of emotions, like crying. Even de Boise and Hearn's (2017) own's study critiquing the lack of clarity around emotions uses the terms "emotion" and "affect" interchangeably even though they explicitly acknowledged that significant discourse has occurred around distinguishing between affect, feeling, and emotion. To add to the complexity, a leading neuroscientist on emotions, Panksepp (2012), equated affect with "primal emotional feelings" (p. 4), a term that refers to the emotional processes at the most fundamental levels of our brains that informs secondary processes like learning and memory as well as tertiary-processes like cognition and rumination.¹³ However the term "feeling" is commonly only used in sociology and psychology to refer to one's subjective interpretations of an emotional experience such as, "I'm feeling sad" (de Boise, 2015; Frijda, 2000; McQueen, 2017). As such, being able to reflect on one's emotions requires cognitive/tertiary-processes of the brain, and therefore feelings might be more precisely understood as cognitive feelings.

The lack of set terminology to precisely describe various aspects of emotions likely stems from there being no commonly agreed definition of emotions (Frijda, 2000; Changiz Mohiyeddini & Bauer, 2013; Panksepp, 2012). There are many ongoing debates such as, (a)

¹³ It is important to note this bottom-up process of emotions just described can also influenced in the reverse order from top-down processes as well (see Panksepp, 2015)

what qualifies as a basic emotion—is disgust more akin to anger or more like a sensation like fatigue? (Panksepp, 2007); (b) does language, one of the last processes to evolve in brains, make it impossible to accurately define what emotions are? (Panksepp, 2012); (c) are emotions states or processes? (Changiz Mohiyeddini & Bauer, 2013); and (d) how much of emotions or emotionality is nurture versus nature and, depending on that answer, what are the implications for human agency? (Davies, 2011; de Boise & Hearn, 2017).

Despite the difficulty in defining emotions, Mohiyeddini and Bauer (2013) compiled six widely agreed upon attributes of emotions. Given my own understandings from reviewing the literature on emotions, I too agree with these but, as some are interrelated, I condense these attributes into four main items. As such, based on Mohiyeddini and Bauer's (2013) list, emotions (a) are essential to the human experience involving many components, such as physiology, cognition, behaviours, and expression; (b) can activate cognitive processes that in turn can trigger a different emotion, such as feeling shame and then thinking about that and subsequently feeling anger; (c) have essential social and physical functions, which are influenced by our cultures, contexts, and environments; and (d) if dysregulated (i.e., maladaptive and/or socially inappropriate ways to regulate or respond to emotions), can contribute to many psychopathologies (e.g., depression, aggression, and violence).

Given the complexity and all that is entailed with investigating emotions, there is much room for masculinities research to assess males' relationships with emotions more specifically and precisely and with greater interdisciplinary perspectives of emotions (de Boise & Hearn, 2017). In defence of sociological studies, their primary focus for investigating emotions is on how emotions function in social relationships, particularly in regards to gender equality (Hochschild, 1979, 2019; Schrock & Knop, 2014). However, the lack of specificity and

integration with psychological or biological understandings of emotions has likely contributed to persistent assumptions in public discourses as well as in some research about males and their emotions, that I mentioned previously. Namely, the assumption that males are less emotional than females (de Boise & Hearn, 2017; McQueen, 2017) or that greater emotional expressiveness is intrinsically transformational for gender equality (de Boise & Hearn, 2017).

One of the general strengths I noted within the psychological studies on males and emotions, qualitative or quantitative, is that they tended to be more precise than sociological studies as to what aspect of emotionality was being investigated (e.g., Mac An Ghail & Haywood, 2012; Randell et al., 2016; Way et al., 2014). An added benefit of studies with quantitative scales measuring an aspect of males' emotionality is that in these studies it is possible to clearly analyze the emotional construct by looking at the items on the scale. For instance, the NMAF-BF (Levant & Parent, 2019) is designed to assess one's willingness and ability to express feelings and, when I reviewed all the items in the construct, both those things are measured; however, it is evident that expressing feelings overwhelmingly means talking to others about their feelings, as there was only one item that refers to expressing affection in a way that could be non-verbal. This differs from the GRCS, which one subscale on it is also said to measure emotional expression (O'Neil, 2015); however, the items on it are more equally distributed than the NMAF-BF in terms of encompassing both talking to others as well as displaying feelings non-verbally. A final example is the *emotional control* subscale on the CMNI-46 (Parent & Moradi, 2009) that is defined vaguely as a measure of "emotional restriction and suppression" (p. 176). In analyzing the items in this subscale, it appeared to exclusively measure one's willingness to talk to others about feelings. Concernedly, none of the definitions of these measures/constructs precisely articulated all the aspects of emotions they were in fact

measuring when the individual items comprising these measures were considered. Knowing this beforehand is important, which had great relevance as two of these scales—the NMAS-BF and the CMNI-46—were used in this study.

Given the multiple aspects of emotionality discussed in this section and that my research design is structured around the norm of emotional restriction, I conceptualize “emotional restriction” in this study the following way. Emotional restriction refers to one’s willingness and/or difficulties in being able to cognitively express their emotions, including both talking to others about one’s subjective emotional experience (i.e., cognitive feelings) as well as displaying emotions non-verbally (e.g., crying, aggression). As it may be difficult to assess whether, or the extent to which, a participants’ emotional restrictions are due to willingness or inability to express, both are included in my definition. Finally, I understand that emotional restrictions may differ based on varying contexts and that an individual’s emotional restriction might be applied uniformly to all types of emotions or it might only apply to just certain ones (e.g., sadness).

Underlying Methodological Gaps in Masculinities Scholarship

In reviewing the literature regarding adolescent males’ masculinities and emotions, it became increasingly apparent to me that underlying methodological gaps in the field of masculinities scholarship existed. In this final section of this chapter, I first identify and outline the divide between quantitative and qualitative research and how that can often correspond to an interdisciplinary divide in the field. I then assess the significance of these divides, particularly for investigating adolescent males’ masculinities and their emotionality. Lastly, I discuss the lack of positive-focused masculinities research and its significance.

The Quantitative-Qualitative Divide

The main methodological gap I noticed when reviewing the literature was the divide between quantitative and qualitative approaches to studying masculinities and, relatedly, how this often corresponded to an interdisciplinary divide in the field. This interdisciplinary divide was between psychological research, which tends towards quantitative designs, and sociological research that tends towards qualitative designs (Addis et al., 2016). One of the difficulties in comparing psychological research to sociological research on males and masculinities is that the relevant psychological research is centralized within health and counselling journals (Wong, Moon-Ho, et al., 2017) whereas sociological research on males and masculinities is harder to synthesize as it can be found in variety of disciplines, such as educational research, women's studies, history, and others (Addis et al., 2016).

The two major journals representing their respective subfields around masculinities scholarship are the *Psychology of Men and Masculinities* for psychology (Whorley & Addis, 2006) and *Men and Masculinities* for sociology (Bridges, 2019). They are similarly named, and although both explicitly claim and publish interdisciplinary research of various methodological approaches, almost all the research regarding quantitative scales measuring masculinity or masculine norms I discussed in this chapter are absent from *Men and Masculinities* (two exceptions of scales published in *Men and Masculinities* that I found are the Adolescent Masculinity Ideology in Relationships Scale [Chu et al., 2005] and the New Masculinity Inventory [Kaplan, Rosenmann, & Shuhendler, 2017]; however, neither of which are widely used). Indeed, when I used a keyword search in both journals for “conformity to masculine norms inventory” and “gender role conflict scale” (two of the most common measures in masculinities research) no articles were found in *Men and Masculinities* that used the CMNI and

only one was found that used the GRCS, whereas both of those scales were each used in well over 50 articles that are published in the *Psychology of Men and Masculinities*.¹⁴ Further evidence of this divide was also supported in a meta-analysis of 78 studies using the CMNI, and all of them came from men's psychology and health related journals, the greatest proportion of which came from the *Psychology of Men and Masculinities* (Wong, Moon-Ho, et al., 2017). Of the studies cited within this literature review, the majority of quantitative studies using scales are from psychology-related research journals and the majority of the qualitative ones using interviews are from sociology-related journals. One potential reason for this is that the primary focus of psychological studies of males is with issues relating to health (Wong, Moon-Ho, et al., 2017; Wong et al., 2010), and so assessing correlations between masculine norms and health outcomes is a priority in that subfield, resulting in more quantitative studies. In support of this reason, in an analysis of 10 years of methodological trends in masculinities scholarship published only in psychology-related journals, 84.3% of studies were quantitative and overall 70.1% of those were correlational studies (Whorley & Addis, 2006).

The fact that qualitative and quantitative studies tend to be published in different fields of masculinities scholarship is not inherently problematic; however, there are indications that the two subfields are not highly integrated with one another, making their methodological divergences more noticeable and of more consequence. One such indication is that in a 10-year content analysis of research regarding psychological studies on males and masculinities, Wong et al. (2010) determined that, based on analyzing who and which disciplines were citing

¹⁴ Search results identified 118 articles published in *Psychology of Men and Masculinities* that used the original CMNI or a modified version of it, and 124 articles that used the GRCS. After I individually determined that 50 articles for each search result actually used the scale I did not continue to confirm the rest as I believed my point for the sake of the comparison was made clear.

psychological studies on males and masculinities, there were very few publications that appealed to disciplines outside of psychology, counselling, and health related journals.

Further evidence of the lack of integration between subfields is seen in Bridges' (2019) critical review of the study of masculinities published in *Men and Masculinities*. This article went through the history of the field but offers no citations or references to any prominent contributions from the psychological field of masculinities, such as to O'Neil, Mahalik, Levant, or Pleck. Not only are these each prominent researchers and creators of well-known and used scales, but Pleck and O'Neil in particular were significant contributors to masculinities scholarship early on, starting in the early 1980s, and developed two influential tangential concepts—gender role strain and gender role conflict—respectively (O'Neil, 2015; Pleck, 1981). Their research and these concepts are critical citations in psychological understandings of males and masculinities (e.g., Addis et al., 2016; Whorley & Addis, 2006; Wong et al., 2010).

Conversely, in overviews of psychological research on males and masculinities (e.g., Addis et al., 2016; Whorley & Addis, 2006; Wong et al., 2010), prominent sociologists such as Connell, Messerschmidt, and Kimmel, who are largely credited, especially Connell, for being key thought leaders in masculinities scholarship (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Howson, 2006), are frequently cited. This is not wholly unsurprising as the psychological field of men and masculinities is founded from sociological principles and understandings of gender (Reigeluth & Addis, 2016). Yet the often absence of acknowledging the psychological contributions to understanding men and masculinities within the sociological fields of masculinities scholarship is not as integrated as might be anticipated, especially given that both fields are rooted and guided by care for men and for others, such as reducing issues of violence and promoting wellbeing and gender equality (Addis, 2010; Addis et al., 2016; O'Neil, 2010, 2015; Pollack,

1998, 2006). In Bridges' (2019) critique of the progression of scholarship around masculinities, in which contributions from psychology are absent, Bridges described how the field was very interdisciplinary at its start, but as it become more popular and established it became more self-isolated from other disciplines. Perhaps this has even happened to an extent directly within masculinities scholarship as there appears to be a scarcity of research integrating sociological research and psychological research on males and masculinities, seemingly more so from sociology.

The Significance of the Quantitative-Qualitative Divide for Investigating Masculinities

The lack of cohesion between the psychological and sociological fields of masculinities, combined with the dominant methodologies represented in each, has consequences for investigating masculinities and emotions. This is perhaps especially true for research regarding masculine norm adherence and resistance, which is prominently assessed via quantitative-based measures. The strength of the hundreds of correlational studies linking masculine norms to various intrapersonal and interpersonal issues that exist in psychological scholarship on masculinities is that it has provided a rich breadth of scale to the importance of studying restrictive forms of masculinity and has more clearly highlighted a host of potentially connected and relevant aspects regarding males' adherence to masculine norms than is possible in other methodologies (Addis et al., 2016). Despite this, many have pointed out that the key weakness of this quantitative reliance is that the depths of males' adherence to masculine norms is not properly understood, or may not even be able to be accurately captured (Addis et al., 2016; Whorley & Addis, 2006; Wong et al., 2010).

Beliefs that gender is constructed, context-dependent, diverse, and fluid are still upheld across masculinities scholarship, but the way masculine norms are practically presented and

treated in quantitative research are much more positivist—presenting norms as fixed or as linearly related to other variables (Addis et al., 2016; Isacco, 2015). Addis et al. (2016) argued that scales of masculinity are not designed to capture the rapidly changing processes and contextual factors that are involved with norm adherence. In addition, Addis et al. (2016) state that most studies on quantitative norms do not account for how the scales themselves are forms of interpretation and create meaning, or how participants' adherence to certain masculine norms might even impact the way that participants think about or perceive their adherence to masculine norms when completing self-report scales. Therefore, the way quantitative research represents masculine norm adherence with a more positivist epistemology might possibly contribute to why more sociological research does not draw heavily from the psychological field of males and masculinities. For instance, a positivist approach to investigating masculinities conflicts with the way I conceptualize gender and masculinities, as outlined earlier. Indeed, Addis et al. (2010) argued that the onus is on researchers in the psychological field of males and masculinities to reorient their research as they are “significantly out of step with current approaches to understanding gender” (p. 81), the type of understanding that is found more within sociology.

That said, similar concerns are identified in qualitative sociological research on masculinities as well. For instance, Bridges (2019) argued that a widespread problem is the tendency for researchers in sociology to treat masculinities as a list of characteristics that are easily pointed to and identifiable, such as hegemonic norms. He argues that doing so egregiously ignores the most important aspect of gender—“its elasticity” (p. 28). This aligns with Addis et al.'s (2016) opinion that one of the key attributes of gender is its complexity and its ability to shift and adapt, and they argued that the psychological field of men and masculinities' inability to better grasp how to approach studying masculine norms in such a way is “why a large part of this field

has not progressed very far” (p. 95). Arguably the bifurcation between masculinities scholarship in sociology and in psychology points to a needed “truce” to the epistemological and paradigmatic “wars”¹⁵ in this field, similar to that which Goss and Mearns (1997, p. 189) pleaded for in the field of counselling.

Awareness of the limitations of quantitative studies investigating masculine norms has led multiple researchers in the field of psychology to continually call for more in-depth qualitative research (Addis et al., 2016; Cuthbert, 2015; Isacco, 2015; O’Neil, 2015; O’Neil & Luján, 2009; Wong et al., 2010). However, Addis et al. (2016) argued that even though integrating more qualitative methods to supplement the plethora of quantitative studies would be an improvement, it would be better to integrate them within the same studies, both theoretically and practically, although they add, “we view this as highly ambitious and perhaps unachievable option” (p. 95). Similarly, Cuthbert (2015) has made a specific call to action for more mixed methods research in masculinities research in which quantitative scales are followed up by interviews to assess the complexity of norm adherence.

In general, mixed methods research in the field of masculinities is exceedingly rare, which is likely due to the potential major epistemological concerns in doing so. In a meta-analysis of all research found globally ($N = 82$) pertaining to young adolescents’ (aged 10–14) beliefs about gender, only five were mixed methods, four of which were deemed low quality and three were program evaluations (Kågesten et al., 2016). One of the major conclusions from the authors of this review was how important and valuable it was to consider qualitative findings alongside the quantitative findings, yet this rarely exists within the same study. This current research, in part, responds to these calls to action for a more integrative research designs and is

¹⁵ In the context of the field of masculinities “war” is meant to be hyperbolic; perhaps paradigm “silos” or “islands” is more fitting.

specifically concerned with assessing the extent to which this is epistemologically and practically feasible. However, my main reason for integrating qualitative and quantitative methods that span sociological and psychological domains in masculinities research was to utilize the strengths of both for assessing masculine norm adherence, resistance, as well as emotionality. I justify this in the next chapter.

The Lack of Positive-focused Research

Another methodological-related divide in masculinities research is how negatively focused most of it is. More attention is given towards how males are restricted rather than ways in which they are not restricted, or towards how some forms of masculinities may be harmful rather than how some forms of masculinities may be beneficial. As such, there are multiple calls to action for more overall positive-focused research (Cole et al., 2021; Isacco, 2015; O’Neil, 2015; O’Neil & Luján, 2009; Wilson, Gwyther, Simmons et al., 2022; Wilson, Gwyther, Swann et al., 2022); yet, these calls appear to exclusively come from the quantitative-dominant field of psychology. The reason for this may be because qualitative research lends itself to detailing more complexities where positives and negatives are noted, or perhaps, as discussed earlier, qualitative researchers might not be as inclined to recommend a type of research they view as epistemologically unaligned with their understandings of gender. However, given the paucity noted earlier about the lack of studies that focus on adolescent males who are resistant to restrictive masculine norms, there is a widespread need for more positive research, whether in sociological or psychological domains or by qualitative or quantitative methods.

Cole et al. (2021) were vocal about the need for more positive research after their review of 590 articles published in the *Psychology of Men and Masculinities* between 2000–2018 found that only 15% had any positive focus. As such, they argued that most masculinities scholarship

only studies a glimpse of males' lived experiences, which they believe is one of the reasons there have not been more improvement over the years regarding males' adherence to restrictive masculine ideologies, as the field's overwhelming focus on the negative or harmful side of masculinities focusses more attention there and prevents more transformational research from happening. Cole et al. (2021) further argued that more research about positive emotions, like happiness, joy, or contentment, should be prioritized in masculinities research as increases in those have been positively correlated to many positive outcomes such as increased: resiliency, life-satisfaction, wellbeing and cognitive adaptability (Cohn et al., 2009; Fredrickson, 2001). Positive emotions may be a valuable line of inquiry because, as evidenced from the literature reviewed in this chapter, most masculinity research on emotions tends to focus on sadness, fear, and anger, which are often considered negative given their incongruency with the norms of restrictive masculine ideology (e.g., River & Flood, 2021).

Scholarship within the field of masculinities that is focused more on the positive aspects of masculinity have referred to it simply as positive masculinity (e.g., Wilson, Gwyther, Swann et al., 2022), as new masculine ideology (e.g., Kaplan et al., 2017), as hybrid masculinities (e.g., Schmitz & Haltom, 2017), as caring masculinities (e.g., Elliott, 2016) or even as healthy masculinity (e.g., O'Neil, 2010). However, even as more attention is being given to the positive aspects of masculinities, some opposition or at least caution has been voiced as well (Cole et al., 2021; O'Neil, 2010). These were primarily voiced by Addis (2010), who contended that emphasizing the positives of masculinity appeals too much to essentialist notions of gender and as the positive aspects of masculinities are likely just positives attributes of being human, that should be the focus instead.

An example that runs contrary to this advice is found in the book titled, *Re-thinking Men: Heroes, Villains and Victims* (Synnott, 2009). As the title suggests, Synnott argued that views of males as heroes, villains, or victims are the three most dominant societal perspectives towards men. He acknowledged that each view has some truth in it, but he explicitly stated that his first goal with his book was “to counter the rather unbalanced, jaundiced and misandric view of men which has become so prevalent in so much of the literature on gender and of men” (p. 4). Therefore, he intentionally focused his book on “prais[ing] men” (p. 4) as heroes. Although I strongly contend that academic masculinities scholarship that is critical of restrictive masculine ideology is not at all akin to presenting males as villains but is, in fact, guided by a high and positive perspective of males and of non-restrictive versions of masculinity (similar to Kimmel's [2006] argument), Synnott's book does perhaps show how the overfocus on the restrictive, harmful elements of masculinity can convey that males or masculinities are, in general, defective or to blame. As O'Neil (2015) identified, sometimes masculinities scholarship “fail[s] to see men as full human beings” (p. 10), which was something that I did not want my own research to do when investigating adolescent males.

Summary: Identifying the Research Aim, Objectives, and Questions from the Literature

Review

In reviewing the existing literature on adolescent males, serious ongoing social and emotional-related issues and negative outcomes concerning adolescent males were frequently connected to their greater adherence to restrictive forms of masculinities. As I delved further into the relevant literature, I identified several gaps in knowledge that merit investigation. I group these gaps into four main areas, and they are as follows.

The first is that although adolescence is pivotal for males' social, emotional, and masculine identity development, this age group is under-researched, especially with research that prioritizes their experiences and perspectives and is positive-focused. The second is that, although there is an increasing awareness of the complexity of norm adherence, much research does not reflect this and very little has tried to prise apart these complexities. There is especially scant research about adolescent males who resist restrictive masculine norms and there is even less that has tried to identify key patterns or components of resistance. The third gap is regarding emotions. Even though males' relationships with emotions are central to investigating masculinities, emotionality is complex and there is often a lack of clarity in masculinities scholarship as to what aspects of emotionality are being investigated. This leads to less precise understandings about males' relationships with emotions and contributes to many persistent assumptions about male emotionality. As such, there is a need to detail greater specifics about adolescent males' relationships with emotional expression and emotional restriction to determine the extent to which either are responses to masculine socialization pressures and the extent to which they impact adolescent males' social and emotional wellbeing, for good or ill.

Finally, the fourth gap is the lack of methodological integration and interdisciplinary efforts in masculinities research between the predominately quantitative-driven field of psychology and the primarily qualitative-driven field of sociology. This was seen to compound the previous knowledge gaps. For instance, the abundance of quantitative research creates less research that highlights participants' perspectives and not much of it is positive-focused. In addition, better understanding and mapping out the complexities of norm adherence, resistance, and emotionality may be hindered by the lack of integrated research designs utilizing the strengths of different approaches, such as the detail-laden richness of qualitative data and the

more tightly defined constructs that quantitative measures can provide. This lack of methodological integration in the field of masculinities is most likely due to potential epistemological differences between how masculinity-related phenomenon are investigated yet no research, that I am aware of, has tested this compatibility directly.

In identifying these four knowledge gaps and given the salience of addressing issues concerning adolescent males, the overall aim of my study is to better understand and support adolescent males' social and emotional development and wellbeing, particularly in areas where their adherence to restrictive norms of masculinity is frequently implicated in negative outcomes. Given that this aim is admittedly broad, I created four specific research objectives to respond to the gaps that I identified. These objectives were:

- To centre participants' perspectives and experiences and be positive-focused as much as possible.
- To prise apart the complexities of masculine norm adherence and resistance.
- To investigate adolescent males' relationships with emotional expression more precisely.
- To assess the epistemological and practical efficacy of integrating qualitative and quantitative methods in the field of males and masculinities.

To meet these objectives, I set out to investigate and compare adolescent males' experiences of being male based on differing levels of emotional restriction through a mixed-methods, interdisciplinary investigation that was person-centred and positive-focused. In this endeavour, first the epistemological compatibility of mixing quantitative and qualitative methods had to be tested, which was represented by the question: *To what extent are adolescent males' experiences and beliefs of being male aligned across survey and interview findings?* Afterwards, the second

yet main research question was investigated: *To what extent do adolescent males' experiences and beliefs of being male vary, based on their levels of emotional restriction?* All the theoretical and practical methodological decisions I made to answer these two questions and address my four research objectives are the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Methodology

As outlined in the previous chapter, the methodological decisions in this study were essential components to the questions, objectives, and overall aim of this research to better understand and support adolescent males' social and emotional development and wellbeing. I start this chapter outlining why I adopted two key frameworks to underpin this research—pragmatism, and feminist-informed theories—and I explain how they factored into my methodological choices. Next, I discuss how mixed methods research is more than just a combination of methods but is itself a methodology (i.e., in this research a method is considered akin to a measure, or a specific tool used for gathering data [e.g., a survey or an interview] whereas a methodology encompasses the paradigmatic framework and philosophical assumptions underpinning the implementation of a particular method [Lather, 1992]). I then give my rationale for choosing mixed methods and address the potential philosophical issues regarding the integration of qualitative and quantitative methods in this research. Afterwards I describe why I selected hermeneutic phenomenology as the primary qualitative basis from which I investigated the two research questions, and I justify its use within the larger mixed methods methodology. I then detail and justify the two quantitative measures selected for this research: the Normative Male Alexithymia Scale-Brief Form (NMAS-BF) and the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory-46 (CMNI-46). Next, I present the research design followed by my reflexive understandings about the topics within my research I had prior to conducting my fieldwork. In the second half of this chapter, I outline how the methodology was put into action given the context of this study. Here the procedures relating to participant recruitment, data collection, and data analysis are described. I conclude this chapter with the steps I took to ensure

high standards of quality for my mixed methods research and with a discussion of ethical considerations.

Research Paradigm: Pragmatism

All research is underpinned by a particular set of philosophical assumptions, known as research paradigms, about the nature of knowing, of knowledge, and of how best to approach research. Quantitative research, dealing primarily with numbers and statistics, and qualitative research, dealing more with words and meanings, are two traditional types of research that each represent distinct paradigms (Mertens, 2015; Plano et al., 2016). Quantitative research is philosophically grounded by paradigms that assume objectivity and generalizability, most common of which are positivism and post-positivism, whereas qualitative research is underpinned by paradigms that assume subjectivity and individuality, most common of which are constructivism and interpretivism (Morgan, 2007; Sale et al., 2002).

Despite the conflicting assumptions behind quantitative and qualitative research, research that can draw from the strengths of both has advantages and is increasingly popular (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Riazi, 2016), as I identified in my literature review in Chapter 2 (p. 77). However, in order to integrate both quantitative and qualitative components in a philosophically congruent way within one's research a different paradigm is needed—the standard for which is pragmatism (Biesta, 2010; Creswell & Tashakkori, 2007; Mertens, 2015; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). As such, I chose this paradigm as a framework for this research and the philosophical understandings within pragmatism were foundational to guiding and justifying this study's research design.

Pragmatism avoids much of the debate between positivist and post-positivist's greater belief in the objectivity of knowledge and constructivist and interpretivist's belief in the

subjectivity of knowledge by placing value in both (Biesta, 2010; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Tebes, 2012). To the pragmatist researcher, “different knowledges are simply the result of different ways in which we engage with the world” (Biesta, 2010, p . 113) and, as such, are able to answer different types of questions (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Tebes, 2012). That said, pragmatism upholds the belief that objectivity in data is never fully possible because every person’s engagement, or transactions, with the world are always unique and, accordingly, so too are peoples’ experiences of what is real (Biesta, 2010; Tebes, 2012).

As its name suggests, pragmatism has an action-oriented and practical view of knowledge and of research. As Morgan (2007) wrote, “it is not the abstract pursuit of knowledge through ‘inquiry’ that is central to a pragmatic approach, but rather the attempt to gain knowledge in the pursuit of desired ends” (p. 69). In this way, pragmatism’s focus on the practical makes it the paradigm most adaptable in incorporating a broader range of ontological and epistemological assumptions in order to achieve the goal or the mission of the research (Mertens, 2015; Morgan, 2007; Tebes, 2012). This action-orientation appeals to me given my past experiences working directly with adolescent males, which is reflected in my research aim as the purpose of addressing the knowledge gaps I identified is so that adolescent males can receive better practical social and emotional support.

Feminist-Informed Research

Alongside pragmatism, feminist-informed epistemologies, approaches to research, and theories also helped inform this study and guide its design. Although there is a plurality of perspectives as many debates occur within epistemologies, theories, and methodologies that are considered feminist, there is still a number of unifying features of feminist-informed research (Anderson, 2020; Garko, 1999; Hesse-Biber, 2012). Feminist epistemologies, in congruence with

pragmatism, uphold that subjectivity and interpretation are inherently present in knowledge production because of people's individualized contexts in the world that shapes their unique experiences (Anderson, 2020; Hesse-Biber, 2012; Lather, 1992; Longino, 2002). As such, feminist epistemologies in research are intentional in emphasizing participants' voices and their specific situatedness in the world, not only because it is a relevant part to the knowledge being produced but also because feminist research values a person-centred approach (Daly, 2019; Hesse-Biber, 2012). This quality aligned well with the paucity I identified regarding the lack of studies prioritizing adolescent males' own experiences and perspectives.

This relational aspect of feminist research also requires that researchers acknowledge their own situatedness, or positionality, and seek to recognize how that may impact their research and the interpretations they make (Daly, 2019; Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2012). Relatedly, feminist theory and research also pays specific attention to power and gender dynamics in relationships and seek to reduce unequal power dynamics within the researcher-participant relationship (Garko, 1999; Hesse-Biber, 2012). This parallels my feminist-informed understandings of gender and power as outlined in Chapter 2 (p. 43). Later in this chapter, I discuss my positionality and how I sought to reduce the unequal power dynamics between myself and the participants in this study (p. 106).

Although the initial aim of feminist research was to highlight the voices of women who were underrepresented in societal structures in order to affect societal change, which is still largely true, the focus has since expanded to prioritize all marginalized groups and voices (Garko, 1999; Hesse-Biber, 2012). Feminist theory and research has also expanded to amplify the experiences of boys and men to highlight critical issues facing males (Gardiner, 2005; Seidler, 1997; Whelen, 2011), as I attempted with this current study. Relatedly, one of the

essential tenets of feminist research is to use research not just for theoretical regurgitations or hypothetical quandaries, but also in order to bring about transformational, practical changes to systems and situations where inequality persists (Hesse-Biber, 2012). This stance is congruent to pragmatism's orientation towards action, which is central to how I hope the findings of this research are used, from helping reduce male suicides to helping promote more fulfilling and equitable intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships. These feminist perspectives of research that view knowledge production as containing subjectivity, that emphasize participants' voices and individual experiences, and that have an axiological bend towards instigating practical changes were all embedded within my research design and factored into my decisions for which methods were selected.

Mixed Methods Research as a Methodology

Mixed methods research (MMR) typically refers to research that involves a combination of both quantitative components (e.g., often numerical data involved in statistical analyses) and qualitative components (e.g., often textual or interview data involved in thematic analyses) within the same study (Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016; Riazi, 2016). In the past few decades, the standards for MMR have grown beyond just the mere inclusion of numerical data alongside written data to a point in which MMR is viewed as its own methodology that is holistically integrated within the entire research process (Biesta, 2010; Creswell & Tashakkori, 2007; Riazi, 2016). However, many MMR studies do not meet these higher standards, which is why MMR that does so is sometimes referred to as "innovative" MMR (Riazi, 2016, p. 33) or as "truly" mixed research design (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2010, p. 17) in order to differentiate it. MMR that is innovative or true, as this current research is, includes three sequential stages where quantitative and qualitative components are integrated thoughtfully: the conceptualization stage,

the implementation stage, and the inferential stage (Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016; Riazi, 2016; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Three stages of MMR are unpacked in this chapter where they align with the appropriate stage of the research being discussed. The first stage of which is in the next section.

Rationale for Mixed Methods Research

My decision for choosing MMR for this study was determined during the *conceptualization stage*, where it is the nature of the research problem that determines the appropriateness of choosing MMR, not a decision assumed by the researcher a priori (Riazi, 2016). In my case, the nature of the gaps I identified in the literature regarding adolescent males and the study of masculinities were seen as multi-faceted and both required and benefitted from integrating aspects of quantitative and qualitative research methods. For instance, Research Question 1 was created in response to the methodological divide between psychological research on masculinities that tends to use quantitative methods and sociological research on masculinities that tends to use qualitative methods, and so it was necessary to use mixed methods to answer my first research question: *To what extent are adolescent males' experiences and beliefs of being male aligned across survey and interview findings?*

Answering the second research question—*To what extent do adolescent males' experiences and beliefs of being male vary, based on their levels of emotional restriction*—created in response to the three other paucities identified in the previous chapter, was best investigated through a mixed methods approach for multiple reasons. To address the lack of research that prioritizes participants' perspectives and experiences and is positive-focused, a qualitative approach was ideal. First, it can represent much more nuance and detail into participants' experiences than a quantitative survey could, and second, most widely used

masculinity scales are not positive-focused. As such, I believed a qualitative approach was more adept at capturing the complexities regarding adolescent male norm adherence, resistance, and emotionality, as well at providing more highly detailed insights into these areas, which was needed given the knowledge gaps identified in the previous chapter.

Conversely, quantitative measures offered a distinct construct to measure and compare participants' adherence and resistance to specific masculine norms as well as to determine their respective levels of emotional restriction in a more consistent manner. This latter point was crucial as comparing participants based on their level of emotional restriction was central in being able to answer the second research question. Another benefit of using quantitative measure was that it can more readily provide data from a larger sample size in which to select the ideal participants needed for the qualitative interviews. An additional reason I wanted to incorporate quantitative methods was so that it could appeal to more people, which is sometimes referred to as the social justice rationale (Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016). For instance, my prior experience conducting research in the same school district as participated in this study (Kwiatkowski, 2016, 2019) highlighted to me how certain stakeholders and educational policy makers were drawn more towards quantitative findings from larger sample sizes to inform their opinions or actions than from qualitative findings. This bias towards valuing quantitative research over qualitative research has been noted elsewhere (e.g., Lakshman et al., 2000; Reitmanova, 2008).

Epistemological and Ontological Justifications for Mixed Methods

The widespread utility of pragmatism, which makes it the best-suited paradigm for conducting MMR, is also connected to one of MMR's greatest critiques: researchers who use pragmatism as a panacea for any potentially competing or incompatible philosophical assumptions within their MMR without considering the specific quantitative and qualitative

methods they have chosen and/or how they intend to use them (Biesta, 2010; Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2015; Riazi, 2016; Sale et al., 2002). An inherent aspect of MMR is that its design is specific unto itself, and so if researchers bypass identifying each of their unique ontological and epistemological assumptions and the potential conflicts specific to their research, then the validity of their MMR findings is much reduced, if it can even be truly considered MMR (Biesta, 2010; Riazi, 2016). This is why Biesta (2010) and others (e.g., Tebes, 2012; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2010) described avoiding paradigm labels entirely (e.g., positivism, constructivism, pragmatism), especially in MMR, because these labels are too unspecific to address which particular philosophical assumptions and tensions are actually held in the research. Biesta (2010) went on to recommend that MMR researchers must explicitly align their usage of pragmatism with their chosen methodology, ontology, and epistemology. Therefore, although this study is theoretically underpinned by the pragmatic paradigm, as previously described, I now address the epistemological and ontological beliefs I held towards the qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological method and the two quantitative measures in my research.

The epistemological stance behind every method selected for this research was that all knowledge derived contained subjective, interpretivist elements. By this I mean that even the data from the two quantitative measures with statistical analyses were not underpinned by an objectivist epistemology, as is often mistakenly assumed necessary (Biesta, 2010), but instead the quantitative findings were viewed as producing knowledge through interpretations. Interpretations, in this case, include the manner in which the creators of the surveys conceptualized the subscales and worded the items as well as the manner in which the participants interpreted the items them when responding to them. Despite this epistemological stance, these subjective realities still reveal real insights about the phenomenon being explored

(Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2015; Sale et al., 2002; van Manen, 2016), in this case, that is adolescent males' experiences and beliefs of being male.

All the findings from the different methods used within this study were viewed from a social ontology rather than a mechanistic ontology. Therefore, instead of viewing events and human actions as primarily causally related, they were viewed non-deterministically (Biesta, 2010). In other words, the qualitative and quantitative methods were used in the second research question to understand the extent of the relationship between adolescent males' emotional restriction and their experiences and beliefs being male rather than attempt to explain how levels of emotional restriction caused certain masculine experiences or beliefs, or vice versa. Aligning my epistemological and ontological beliefs regarding the integration of this study's qualitative and quantitative data, as was done in this section, relates to my fourth research objective—to assess the epistemological and practical efficacy of integrating qualitative and quantitative methods—however, here I theoretically justified how the two were viewed as compatible in my research whereas in my alignment analysis (see Chapter 4) I tested the extent to which integrating the data derived from these methods were compatible in practice.

The Selected Methods and Measures

As stated, there were three specific methods within this study's MMR design to help answer both research questions. In this section each of these are discussed and justified. The qualitative method in this study, hermeneutic phenomenology, is detailed first. The two quantitative measures that I selected were both self-report Likert-type quantitative scales from the psychological field of masculinities. I received permission from the creators of both scales (Levant for the NMAS-BF and Parent for the CMNI-46) for their use in my research, but I was not permitted to present any in their entirety according to their conditions I signed. Internal

consistency values from this study's participants ($N = 170$) are shown for each scale/subscale; item deletion did not improve any of these reliability statistics.

Hermeneutic Phenomenology

Hermeneutic phenomenology was the central research method selected for use in this MMR study as it provided the greatest in-depth view into adolescent males' experiences and beliefs about being male, and it did so in a way that was philosophically and practically aligned with the tenets of pragmatism and with the feminist-informed frameworks guiding this research. Namely, hermeneutic phenomenology was a positive, person-centred research approach that highlighted participants' experiences, was action-oriented with the potential to instigate practical changes, and had a strong awareness of power differentials and subjectivity (Arunasalam, 2018; Rogoff et al., 2018).

Hermeneutic phenomenology is a research approach used to explore the essence of a specific phenomenon in context of the lived experience of people with which the phenomenon of interest relates (Laverty, 2003; van Manen, 1990, 2016). In this study, the phenomenon of interest—what it is like to be an adolescent male—was investigated through the lived experiences of adolescent males. The term “lived experience” refers to the interplay of how humans experience a phenomenon subjectively in the moment but then also make meaning of it reflexively (van Manen, 2016). In other words, participants' lived experiences are individual, active endeavors that also require a somewhat passive observation of those endeavours (van Manen, 2016). For example, adolescent males have lived (and continue to live) their unique experiences of what it is like being male, but it is only possible for adolescent males to describe or to make meaning of their experiences of being male after a conscious reflection process. The term lived experience in hermeneutic phenomenology reflects the nature of this active and

passive dynamic. It is critical to note that despite lived experience being about individual experiences, hermeneutic phenomenology's primary focus is not participants' individual meanings of their experiences, rather it is to more broadly consider what these individual experiences reveal about the nature of the phenomenon in question (van Manen, 2016).

Hermeneutic phenomenology was developed by Heidegger and Gadamer after deviating from Husserl's classic phenomenology. The fundamental difference between the two, and the reason why I selected hermeneutic phenomenology, is that for the classic phenomenological researcher it is possible to arrive at the essence of a phenomenon whereas for the hermeneutic phenomenological researcher it is only possible to arrive at an interpretation of the essence of a phenomenon (Kakkori, 2009; Lavery, 2003; Sloan & Bowe, 2014; van Manen, 2016). Although classic phenomenology recognizes that interpretative elements of experience exist, researchers using classic phenomenology believe their biases and interpretation can be bracketed off and removed from the research as to not impact the objective truth of the phenomenon being observed (Lavery, 2003). Contrastingly, hermeneutic phenomenological researchers acknowledge that the description and analysis of lived experiences, both on part of the participant and the researcher, cannot occur without their subjective interpretations of meaning also being embedded in the process (Dowling, 2007; Lavery, 2003). This acknowledgement of interpretive elements is congruent with the pragmatist and the feminist-informed epistemologies I selected to underpin this research.

Relatedly, language plays a vital role in hermeneutic phenomenological research, for meaning is created not only when participants are recalling their experiences but also when the researcher is actively writing about it (Lavery, 2003; van Manen, 2016). As such the hermeneutic phenomenological researcher is embedded in the creation of knowledge during

research. Language is recognized in hermeneutic phenomenology as both an unavoidable layer of interpretation present in the research but also a powerful asset to the research in helping best illuminate the meaning of the phenomenon being studied (van Manen, 2016). Understanding this and knowing how to use language appropriately is necessary for achieving the standards of rigour in hermeneutic phenomenological research, which are outlined near the end of this chapter.

Although uncommon, incorporating quantitative methods with hermeneutic phenomenology, as I decided to do in this research, has been thoroughly explored by Mayoh and Onwuegbuzie (2015) and Riazi (2016). Mayoh and Onwuegbuzie (2015) highlighted that the most usual way of incorporating the two is when the quantitative component is used to help identify and select the ideal participants to interview who can best speak to the phenomenon of interest. They contend that this approach is also the easiest to theoretically justify as the data from the different methods are used sequentially so there is less of a need to account for how the data are integrated with one another. One of the quantitative scales in this research, the NMAS-BF, was used precisely for this reason as it helped find adolescent males of significantly differing levels of emotional restriction to interview. Mayoh and Onwuegbuzie (2015) and Riazi (2016) also both agreed that if the researcher is clear how the phenomenon is conceptualized as multi-layered and philosophically compatible, as was done earlier in this chapter, then a quantitative method can be included within a hermeneutic phenomenologically-dominant framework to better explore or elaborate on the phenomenon in question. This was the role of the second quantitative measure used in this study, the CMNI-46, which was used to help answer Research Question 2. Additionally, these authors agreed that quantitative components can be used to cross-examine or triangulate the hermeneutic phenomenological findings; this fits with my first research question,

which was created for the specific purpose of assessing the alignment between the survey and the interview data. As such, all the ways in which my three selected methods were mixed together have agreed upon theoretical justifications for doing so in the literature.

The Components of Hermeneutic Phenomenological Research According to van Manen

Although there is no definitive approach for researchers to follow when conducting a hermeneutic phenomenological study, van Manen's scholarship on hermeneutic phenomenology and his related guidelines are frequently relied upon and are well-respected for their high quality (Sloan & Bowe, 2014; de Witt & Ploeg, 2006). He is also known for his focus on hermeneutic phenomenology in educational research (Biography, n.d.), which is relevant to the context of this current research. There were two additional reasons why I turned to van Manen's approach for hermeneutic phenomenology. The first reason is that I appreciated his belief that educational hermeneutic phenomenology research is responsible for children's wellbeing, which is something researchers need to be aware of throughout the research process (van Manen, 2016). As such, he cautioned researchers against living the "half-life" (van Manen, 2016, p. 138), which is what he called the experience of educational researchers who separate their scholarly activities from the every day realities of the children to whom their research is supposedly committed. This prioritization of children's wellbeing aligned with the aim of my research, mirrored my ethical commitment to participants (as outlined later in this chapter), and resonated with my reasons for becoming a teacher and my reasons why I conducted this research.

The second reason why I relied upon his guidance for hermeneutic phenomenology is because I valued van Manen's articulations around the action-oriented nature of phenomenology. Because lived experiences are already focused on practicalities, such as participants' specific actions and contexts, van Manen (2016) argued that these highly contextualized findings are, in

many cases, preferable over research that produces more generalized theory, and this is because the audience (e.g., readers and educators) often want to know how theory works contextually. Furthermore, van Manen (2016) argued that hermeneutic phenomenological research is further action-oriented in that participants, researchers, and readers are explicitly encouraged to engage with and to reflect upon the phenomenon of interest for themselves; and this deep level of personal engagement can “radicalize[] thinking and the acting that flows from it” (p. 154).

For all these reasons, the six major components of hermeneutic phenomenology that van Manen (2016) outlined served as the primary guide for the hermeneutic phenomenological aspect of this study. These were: (a) turning to the nature of lived experience, (b) investigating experience as we live it, (c) hermeneutic phenomenological reflection, (d) hermeneutic phenomenological writing, (e) maintaining a strong and oriented relation, and (f) balancing the research context by considering parts and whole. Although these six components are not meant to be followed purely in chronological order as they are present and should be returned to throughout the entire research process, the first four are closely aligned with specific sequential stages of the research process and thus I identify and explain those in this chapter when the relevant research stage is also discussed.

The last two components of van Manen’s (2016) hermeneutic phenomenological approach are explained here. The fifth component, *maintaining a strong and oriented relation*, emphasized that the researcher and the research are to always remain oriented reflectively towards the phenomenon and that the voices of the participants needed to be heard and not abstracted away. My ongoing research journal about how the phenomenon was conceptualized, the interviews were structured, the participants were listened to during the interviews, the themes

were developed, and the participants' experiences were written about, was an integral part of how I addressed this component of hermeneutic phenomenology.

The sixth component, *balancing the research context by considering parts and whole*, meant that researchers have some type of set plan but remain open for their research to go with where participants' lived experiences led. This is otherwise known as the hermeneutic circle (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007), which is an ongoing process of seeing how the essential themes (i.e., the parts), connect to the phenomenon (i.e., the whole). Throughout my research process, I intentionally created space where I reflected, often in my research journal, about my ongoing understandings of the phenomenon such as after the pilot interviews, after each of the 20 interviews, and at multiple points while I was identifying themes. During these spaces I tried to let participants' stories and the text "speak," which informed my next steps and interpretations.

Normative Male Alexithymia Scale-Brief Form (NMA-S-BF)

One of the quantitative measures selected for this study was the Normative Male Alexithymia Scale-Brief Form (NMA-S-BF; Levant & Parent, 2019). Although alexithymia is a clinical term and a diagnosis used in psychology for "the inability to put emotions into words" (Levant et al., 2006, p. 212), normative male alexithymia was a concept or term that formed after many clinical observations that males tended to display mild to moderate forms of alexithymia due specifically to their male socialization process (Levant et al., 2006). This scale measured participants' limitations with expressing emotions, but it was designed and believed to capture emotional restrictions that were specifically connected to the masculine socialization process, though this connection remains untested (Levant & Parent, 2019). As such, I explored both things—the extent to which it measured participants' limitations expressing emotions and the

extent to which masculine socialization was involved—when discussing of the implications of the findings (Chapter 6, p. 278).

The NMAS-BF contained six questions with responses ranging from 1, strongly disagree, to 7, strongly agree, (6 items; $\alpha = .62$). It included questions about one's willingness and level of transparency in sharing feelings with family and friends as well as questions about one's ability to express vulnerability or warmth with others. This version was adapted from the longer Normative Male Alexithymia Scale (Levant et al., 2006), which had very good psychometric properties (e.g., Sullivan et al., 2015); however, the shorter version has superseded it, as, when comparing the two, the shorter version had stronger psychometric properties and was quicker to administer (Levant & Parent, 2019).

Although there are other scales that assess various aspects relating to emotionality (see Siegling et al., 2015, for a review of several), few are theoretically connected to measuring males' emotional expression (e.g., Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory; Mahalik et al., 2003; Gender Role Conflict Scale; O'Neil, 2015). Of these, only the NMAS-BF was solely devoted to assessing males' individual emotional restriction; the others only had one subscale that was applicable (see Thompson & Bennett, 2015, for a review of 16 scales). Therefore, the NMAS-BF was selected given its strong psychometric properties, its strong alignment with the way that emotional restriction was conceptualized in my research, its short length to administer, and its representation of the widespread knowledge of normative male alexithymia in psychological studies on masculinities (e.g., Guvensel et al., 2018; Karakis & Levant, 2012). Although this measure was negative-focused as it measures the extent to which males are restricted rather than how they are not, this was unavoidable given the lack of positive-focused scales on males' emotional expression and given that I needed to identify participants who were

highly emotionally restricted as well as those who were highly emotionally expressive in order to answer my second research question.

The authors' recommended that the NMAS-BF be used with more diverse sample groups, age being one of those dimensions (Levant & Parent, 2019). Although my participants were aged 17–19 and given that the youngest age group for the NMAS-BF previously was 19 (18 for the longer original scale), my research further contributed to research on the usage of the NMAS-BF. An early indication that the aspects of emotional restriction that the NMAS-BF measured in my participant sample were relatively complex and multifaceted, was that this scale was the only reliability score in this study that, although close ($\alpha = .6$), did not meet the reliability standard of $\alpha = .7$. This indicated that there was slightly more heterogeneity in participants' answers between items on this scale than is ideal. Fortunately, the hermeneutic phenomenological component of my research was well-suited to investigate this further. The NMAS-BF played two roles within my research design, which is discussed shortly. It was part of the screening tool for the interviews used to help measure participants' self-reported levels of emotional restriction, and it was involved in the statistical analyses looking at relationships between participants' scores on this scale and their adherence to eight masculine norms as measured by the second quantitative scale, the CMNI-46.

Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory-46 (CMNI-46)

The other quantitative measure used in this research was the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory-46 (CMNI-46; Parent & Moradi, 2009), which assessed males' level of adherence to specific masculine norms. The full measure contained nine subscales, each corresponding to an empirically grounded norm of masculinity; however, in this study the *playboy* subscale, which assessed the “desire for multiple or noncommitted sexual relationships

and emotional distance from sex partners” (Parent & Moradi, 2009, p. 176; 4-items; sample item: “If I could, I would frequently change sexual partners”) was not used. This was due to concerns over its validity (Parent & Moradi, 2011) and over its appropriateness and controversial nature for use in a school-aged population. This latter concern was informed by my previous experience conducting research in this school district (see Kwiatkowski, 2016, 2019), and the school district liaison confirmed with me that had I included the *playboy* subscale I likely would not have been given ethical approval to conduct my research. Therefore, whenever the CMNI-46 is mentioned further, it does not include the 4-item playboy subscale, technically making it an eight subscale, 42-item survey.

The eight masculine norms used on the CMNI-46 were each psychometrically distinct, and previous research found good to excellent support for the reliability and validity of each (Levant et al., 2020; Parent & Moradi, 2011). This held true for the participant sample in this study. These eight subscales, along with a sample item as per Parent & Moradi (2011), were: *winning* (6 items; $\alpha = .92$; sample item: “In general, I will do anything to win”); *emotional control* (6 items; $\alpha = .90$; “I tend to keep my feelings to myself”); *risk-taking* (5 items; $\alpha = .88$; “I frequently put myself in risky situations”); *violence* (6 items; $\alpha = .86$; sample item: “Sometimes violent action is necessary”); *power over women* (4 items; $\alpha = .76$; sample item: “In general, I control the women in my life”); *self-reliance* (5 items; $\alpha = .92$; sample item: “I hate asking for help”); *primacy of work* (4 items; $\alpha = .80$; sample item: “My work is the most important part of my life”); and *heterosexual self-presentation* (6 items; $\alpha = .90$; sample item: “I would be furious if someone thought I was gay”).

The original CMNI (Mahalik et al., 2003) had 94 items, and multiple different shorter versions have been used over the years, making it one of the most commonly used scales in

masculinity research (Gwyther et al., 2019). At the time of my research, the CMNI-46 was the shortest version still with strong psychometric properties for each subscale (Levant et al., 2020), making it preferable for use in my study. The youngest age the CMNI-46 had been tested on were college-aged males 18 years of age and up (Parent & Moradi, 2011), and so the slightly younger age of my participants was not anticipated to be a major concern.

As one of my objectives was to better understand the complexities of adherence and resistance to masculine norms, of the potential scales to use, the CMNI-46 was the most clearly focused on individuals' endorsement of and conformity around distinct masculine norms, and it also measured a wider range of the major masculine norms than did other comparable measures (Mahalik et al., 2003; Parent & Moradi, 2011; see Thompson & Bennett, 2015, for a comparison of 16 masculinity-related measures). Two of the norms measured on the CMNI-46 were desired in particular—*heterosexual self-presentation* and *power over women*—as they related to issues of gender equality. I also selected this scale as it was intentionally designed to be neutral regarding norm adherence, only focusing on their conformity to the norm, not on any distress or benefits associated with adherence to each masculine norm (Mahalik et al., 2003; Parent & Moradi, 2011). I preferred this as it was more in keeping with my objective for positive-focused research. The data from the CMNI-46 were used to help answer both research questions. Participants' responses on it were compared with their interview responses to answer the first research question, and it was used in the statistical analyses to help answer the second research question. The full overview of how the CMNI-46, NMAS-BF, and hermeneutic phenomenological methods were integrated together in this research is now discussed.

The Research Design

The second stage of MMR is the *implementation stage*, which involves strategically selecting the quantitative and qualitative methods (as per the previous sections) and deciding how to use them together to investigate the multi-faceted nature of the research problems (Riazi, 2016). There are no standard MMR designs because the reasons for using MMR are always unique to the specific research problem (Bergman, 2011; Schoonenboom, 2018); instead they are typically depicted through a standard notation that expresses the way in which the qualitative and quantitative components function together and the manner in which they are integrated in the research (Bergman, 2011; Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016).

Using these standard notations, the research design for Research Question 1—*assessing the extent to which adolescent males' experiences and beliefs of being male are aligned across survey and interview findings*—was a concurrent Qual + Quan design. The qualitative (Qual) component consisted of the data from 20 hermeneutic phenomenological interviews, which were compared (+) with the quantitative (Quan) component consisting of those same 20 participants' CMNI-46 survey responses. Only the data from the interviews of the 20 participants that were relevant to the eight CMNI-46 subscales were compared with the participants' own responses on those subscales. The use of capital letters only for the first letter (e.g., Qual + Quan) meant that I did not indicate any relative priority to either the qualitative or the quantitative components for answering Research Question 1 (Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016).

The MMR design for the Research Question 2—*the extent adolescent males' experiences and beliefs of being male vary based on their levels of emotional restriction*—was more complex as it contained multiple concurrent and sequential components, as respectively denoted by the + and → signs (Castro et al., 2010; Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016). This research design was:

Quan + Qual → QUAL + quan. The first Quan + Qual was the screening tool for determining participants' ($N = 170$) relative levels of emotional restriction, which consisted of a both a Quan component, the NMAS-BF, and a Qual component, three open ended questions requiring a written response. This written component of the screening tool did not factor into any of this study's data analyses for either research question beyond helping select which participants were to be interviewed; 10 of whom were some of the least emotionally restricted (hereby referred to as the *low ER group*) and 10 who were some of the most emotionally restricted (hereby referred to as the *high ER group*). As such, this screening tool sequentially (→) led to the data that were used to answer Research Question 2, noted by QUAL + quan. The data that were prioritized, as indicated by the use of all capital letters (Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016), came from the 20 hermeneutic phenomenological interviews (QUAL) and the secondary source of data (quan) came from the statistical analyses, primarily correlational, between the NMAS-BF scores of all participants ($N = 170$), which represented their level of emotional restriction, and their adherence to the eight subscales on the CMNI-46, which represented some of their beliefs and experiences about being male.

In outlining the research designs to both research questions as I did above, the third and final stage of MMR, known as the *inferential stage*, was also briefly introduced. It is during this stage that the data resulting from the qualitative and quantitative components are analyzed and interpreted together (Riazi, 2016). I outline the specifics of how I mixed and integrated the various data produced in this study in the data analysis section later in this chapter.

Reflexivity and Pre-understandings

The first major component of van Manen's (2016) approach to hermeneutic phenomenology, *turning to the nature of lived experience*, involves the researcher orientating

themselves and their research to the phenomenon in question. This not only requires identifying the phenomenon of interest, in this case, what it is like being an adolescent male, but it also means “questioning of the identity of the phenomenon” (van Manen, 2016, p. 41). This process of identifying and questioning involved an ongoing research journal containing reflexive notes of my interpretations, thoughts, and research decisions, as well as a pre-understanding interview conducted by educational philosopher Dr. Gert Biesta. Both of these were tools designed to expose my assumptions, biases, and understandings towards the phenomenon in question so that they do not unconsciously confound my research process or any inferences made from the findings (Groenewald, 2004; van Manen, 2016). This section continues with this reflexive-component of hermeneutic phenomenology as I declare my positionality within my research and share my pre-understandings that were most relevant for shaping my research decisions and my understanding of the phenomenon explored within my research.

I want to acknowledge that my identity and my lived experience as a Canadian, white, cis, heterosexual man with no disabilities are central components to my pre-understandings of the phenomenon I researched. I approach the topics of masculinity and emotions with considerable privilege and from a relative position of safety as I have never been the primary target of systemic or individualized instances of sexism, racism, or homophobia. My Protestant Christian upbringing with a western worldview shaped many of my thoughts relating to gender and emotional wellbeing growing up, particularly the thoughts that gender roles were distinct and inherent and that emotional wellbeing was a by-product of one’s spiritual relationship with the Christian God. Despite changing these beliefs and my best attempts to uncover, deconstruct, and expand my perspectives through geographically and culturally diverse readings and travel, I likely continue to be influenced by my western worldviews in ways yet to be explored.

Now in my early 30s, it was only in the last decade when I became conscious of how certain restrictive messages of masculinity negatively impacted my own life and contributed to my disembodiment and my stunted understanding of emotions. Therefore, I started this research with the assumption that emotional expression, or lack thereof, would similarly be a key component of participants' personal journeys navigating their masculine identities; therefore, part of why I centred my research around the norm of emotional restriction was based on my personal experience, not only based on the literature.

I initially intended to only investigate adolescent males who were some of the most emotionally expressive, as I had assumed that was healthier and that it would generate the desired positive-focused data. However, through talking with my master's degree supervisor as well as with my spouse who is a trauma therapist, I dropped any reductionist notion of emotional expression or restriction as a binary, between healthy or unhealthy, as that is laden with strong value judgements and assumptions that I wished to avoid. Moreover, emotionality can be very context dependent. Therefore, I changed my research so that in it I also investigated the least emotionally expressive adolescent males to, in part, directly interrogate my original assumption, which is also represented in the literature as discussed in Chapter 2 (p. 65). I use terms like "more emotionally restricted" and "less emotionally restricted" instead of "restricted" and "unrestricted" to be more descriptive of participants' emotional expression rather than to judge their emotional restriction into a binary category. Admittedly, "more" and "less" could still carry some value judgments for some people, and so I sought to mitigate these associations as much as possible in my writings and in the way I talked with participants throughout all my interactions with them.

Having been a secondary school teacher and boys' volleyball coach for five years in the school district where this current research took place, I had considerable insider knowledge of contextual factors relating to many participants' experiences. In these roles I was exposed to adolescent males' lifeworlds, and I have seen firsthand how varying and traumatic many of their home lives and/or school experiences have been. However, my previous role as a teacher may have added an additional layer of a power differential between myself and the participants. I sought to minimize this with participants, and I tried to do so by being honest about having grown up and taught in their school district. I also explicitly assured them that my role as a researcher was not that of a teacher and that they could ask any questions of me or use any type of language with me (e.g., swearing). I wore clothes that were casual-professional (i.e., no graphic tees) but a bit less formal than what I wore as a teacher (i.e., no buttoned or collared shirts or ties or watches), as to promote a more approachable image. Although there is not a precise protocol for what researchers should do to try to account for power dynamics, it is important that navigating these dynamics and reflecting upon them, as I have done, are part of the research process (Kay et al., 2003). Additional factors relating to power dynamics with the participants in this study is discussed at the end of this chapter (p. 134).

Putting the Methodology into Action: Context of Study

This research was conducted in a school district in British Columbia (BC), Canada. The key reasons BC was identified as a strategic and valuable location to assess adolescent males' experiences and beliefs of being male was that its provincial curriculum for both public and private schools was redesigned in 2015 to clearly articulate how educators must support the

emotional development of all students in every subject in every grade level.¹⁶ Similarly, all BC schools recently implemented the new Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity initiative [SOGI] (ARC Foundation, 2019), although it did so with some controversy (e.g., protests, particularly by religious affiliated groups; Alphonso, 2017; CBC News, 2018). SOGI is a public commitment to explicitly support LGBTQ2S+¹⁷ students, to address SOGI-related issues in the class, and to provide teachers and students with resources to support them in doing so. Given the emotion-focused and gender-conscious nature of curriculum in BC, I reasoned that my current research involving both emotions and gender was highly likely to be supported in BC and that schools in this province would be well-equipped to incorporate and to respond to any implications from my research findings.

The school district is located approximately 45 kilometers away from a major urban centre and the schools within it are a mix of rural and urban, with populations of various socioeconomic backgrounds. This area consistently votes conservative in federal elections. Although a specific breakdown of the student demographics in the school district was not available, population demographics of the catchment area from the 2016 census indicated that over 93% in the area speak only English, most people are white (78%), approximately 4% are Aboriginal, and almost 18% are a visible minority—15% of whom are Asian (Statistics Canada, 2017a, 2017b¹⁸). The school district serves around 21,000 students from Kindergarten to Grade 12 in over 40 schools. There are eight secondary schools, two of which are smaller and are

¹⁶ BC's curriculum was recognized in May 2019 by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development as one of the best in the world in their opening address in Vancouver at its Future of Education and Skills 2030 Project meeting according to attendee Dr. Allyson Jule, Dean of Education at the University of the Fraser Valley (personal communication, October 2019).

¹⁷ An acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and/or questioning, and two-spirit. The "+" indicates that this is not an exhaustive list of all the identities involving gender and sex (e.g., intersex, asexual).

¹⁸ I manually calculated the demographic statistics from compiling the necessary data from these two sources.

specialized—one for the arts and one for the fundamentals (i.e., an academic focus). Within the same geographical region there are also three independent (private) secondary schools that are all Christian affiliated.

As mentioned, I am a certified teacher in BC and taught in this district for five years; both were necessary requirements by the school district for me to conduct my research. I believed my insider knowledge would streamline my research, as I believed it would enable me to know contextual factors as well as to help me with the practicalities of conducting this research. This proved true as had I not previously known the many principals and teachers in this district who helped me enter their schools and classrooms to recruit participants, I may not have gotten the required participants. Due to the number of variables in the planned statistical analyses, the target number of participants was 165, which was 15 participants per independent variable and is a higher than the minimum standards of 10 per independent variable sometimes stated (e.g., Austin & Steyerberg, 2015; VanVoorhis & Morgan, 2007).

Participant Selection Criteria and Recruitment

Adolescents aged 17–19 who identified as male, including transgender males, and who were attending a secondary school in the school district’s geographical region were sought for participation in my research. As masculinities can be extremely context dependent, I opted to find all participants within a contained geographical region to lessen the extent that greater contextual obfuscations could arise had I expanded my participant search across all of BC or Canada. Participants also needed to be able to read and speak English to provide consent and complete the NMAS-BF, the CMNI-46 and to converse with me if selected for the in-depth interview. No participants who consented were excluded based on their English level as I was able to have short but adequate conversations with each of them during my time recruiting and

gathering consent forms at their schools. That said, several participants did ask me to define the word “subservient” on one of the items for the CMNI-46, and I explained it as “someone in a serving position to someone else.” Accommodations for reading or writing assistance for students with learning disabilities were made available and mentioned to participants, but no participant made use of that option.

Participants who fulfilled the selection criteria were recruited from eight schools—seven of the eight public secondary schools and one of the three independent schools in the geographical region of the school district. The one public school that declined involvement in my research did so over concerns that some parental groups might vocally oppose the content of my study, particularly the inclusion of the CMNI-46 subscale *heterosexual self-presentation*. Personal networks enabled me to get access to one of the three private schools in the region; however, I decided, in consultation with my contact there, that I might get more parental support if I slightly adapted the information on the forms that I gave to parents to highlight the Christian university that I had attended for my master’s degree.

After the public school district approved my research, I contacted the principals of each school via email. Most principals responded with an openness to my research but with differing needs: some wanted time to first check with their department heads, others wanted to meet me in person, and two only responded after I told them that I personally knew teachers at their schools who were willing to help me with participant recruitment. The principal of each school asked me to recruit participants in slightly different ways. Two figured out which blocks during the day would have the most Grade 12 students in them so that I could target all of those classes during only that block, to decrease the chances of me recruiting the same participants multiple times from different classes. Most of the other principals emailed all their Grade 12 teachers about my

research purpose and asked who was interested, and then left it up to me to follow up with those that replied. Other principals just told me to pursue individual teachers on my own. The independent school gathered all potential participants for me to talk to at one time.

I began my recruitment and data collection for what I called the survey component of my research in November 2019, and that continued until the end of February 2020. I typically went to one school at a time and would spend the first week at a school visiting classes and handing out the information and consent forms for them and for their parents and/or guardians (see Appendices A–D).

Most teachers wanted me to talk about my study to their entire class, but a minority of the teachers (approximately 10-15%) preferred that if the number of potential participants in each class was small, I take only those students out in the hall and explain my study to them there. This presentation usually lasted approximately 5–10 minutes, but five teachers wanted me talk longer and more generally about what doing a PhD is like. Those presentations lasted from 15–60 minutes. If I was able to speak to classroom teachers ahead of my presentation, I would ask them privately if they knew of any transgender students in their class to ensure they would be included. Regardless of if I was able to do this, when introducing my study I emphasized that it was open to anyone who identifies as male. I also gave extra consent forms to school counsellors in case students lost them, and I put up a few recruitment posters (see Appendix E) in some teachers' classrooms as a visual reminder for students.

To incentivize participants to remember to return their forms signed by their parents, regardless of whether informed consent was given, participants were entered to win one of three randomly drawn \$50 CAD online gift cards to Amazon.ca. Many participants forgot to bring their signed consent forms the first time I came back to collect them the following week.

Fortunately, every single teacher was accommodating and allowed me to check back in their class multiple times. Because I did not want students to feel pressured to participate, I only returned to classrooms if there were students who were insistent on still wanting to participate in my study but had simply forgotten. On average I returned to each class, approximately 60 classes altogether, three times each. Most commonly I would get between 2–4 signed consent forms per class I visited, and the most I ever received from the same class was 12.

In total I handed out 514 consent forms, which was only 63% of the possible Grade 12 male students who attended those eight schools, according to the estimated numbers their principals provided. This percentage was slightly inflated as it did not account for the Grade 11 male students who met all my selection criteria but were not specifically targeted unless they happened to be in Grade 12 classes. The return rate for signed consent forms was 33% ($N = 170$). The table in Appendix F separates recruitment procedures and return rates per school. The highest return rate was 100% ($n = 9$) from the public school specializing in art, whereas the lowest return rate was 8% ($n = 3$) from the independent school. This may indicate that there was a significant amount of parental caution in relation to the research topic there, as anticipated.

Data Collection for Surveys

After I returned to collect the signed consent forms, I took the consenting participants to a nearby empty classroom or sitting area and gave them the survey to complete (see Appendix G for survey example). This survey contained some basic demographic questions, the NMAS-BF scale, the three questions with written responses about emotional restriction, and the CMNI-46. Participants also completed three subscales on the survey regarding school connectedness from the Hemingway: Measure of Adolescent Connectedness (Karcher, 2011), but those results were beyond the scope of this current thesis. I directed participants to: (a) read all the written

instructions given for each component on the survey; (b) answer as honestly as possible, as I am not here to judge you; (c) try to answer every question, unless of course it makes you uncomfortable or you wish not to; and (d) do not talk to others, but if you have any questions, ask me. Most participants completed the entire survey in 10–20 minutes, with only two taking significantly longer at around 30 minutes. It was not clear to me if this was related to any learning disabilities or if they just took longer than average to consider their answers.

Participant Selection and Recruitment for Interviews

All 170 participants who completed the survey gave permission on their survey consent forms to be contacted by me if they were selected to participate in the interview stage of my research, as did their parents/guardians. The information and consent forms explained that I was looking for a diverse range of beliefs and experiences about being male and that 20 of them would be invited to be interviewed based on their answers on the survey. I did not tell them in advance that they would be specifically selected based on their responses indicating their respective levels of emotional restriction; I withheld this information to prevent them from intentionally answering any questions on the survey in a certain way to increase or decrease their likelihood of being chosen.

At the end of the survey there was one additional question where participants were asked to indicate their level of interest in taking part in an interview with me to talk more about the type of content from their surveys. They selected an option from 1 (not at all) to 10 (extremely interested). I asked this question to help gauge their level of interest in the content of the study as hermeneutic phenomenology encourages the selection of participants who are invested about the topic (van Manen, 2016). The most common response was an 8, and the overall average was 7.55, which was highly encouraging. Although it was possible the adolescents who participated

in the survey were already the most open to talking about emotions and masculinity, their expressed level of interest in speaking with me served to counter the common perception that adolescent males do not want to talk about such things.

The Screening Tool for Determining Levels of Emotional Restriction

To determine the 10 participants with the lowest levels of emotional restriction and the 10 participants with the highest levels of emotional restriction, two components of the survey were analyzed together: the NMAS-BF scores and three written questions regarding emotional restriction. The three questions were designed to complement and to extend the type of questions asked on the NMAS-BF, so that more facets about emotional restriction could be used to help identify the ideal participants to interview. It was also important to have both a qualitative and a quantitative component used to select participants so that neither type of method was wholly relied upon without some triangulation from the other, given this study's focus on integrating research methods.

The first written question was: "Do you think you express your emotions more or less than the average male your age? Explain why you think so." Participants' subjective assessment and explanation of their emotional restriction in comparison to their peers was helpful in validating or invalidating their respective rankings from their NMAS-BF scores. The second two questions were: "What emotion(s), if any, do you express the most to other people? If possible, explain why." and "What emotion(s), if any, do you express the least to other people? If possible, explain why." Their answers to these were used in part to assess how well participants were able to name and to articulately discuss their emotionality, thus demonstrating their ability to express emotions. Their explanations often provided further evidence as to the extent of their willingness or unwillingness to express their emotions (verbally or non-verbally) to others.

I went through all 170 participants' three written responses, assigning a numerical value to each based on the extent to which responses indicated higher or lower levels of emotional restriction. The maximum for all three questions that they could score was +3 or -3. A score of +3 indicated the greatest level of emotional restriction possible and a score of -3 indicated the lowest score of emotional restriction possible. The main reasons participants' written questions were given a numerical score were to easily see if their respective levels of emotional restriction according to their written statements had continuity with their NMAS-BF scores and to provide a more consistent criteria for how the written responses were interpreted. For a detailed description of how these qualitative statements were scored numerically, see Appendix H.

The continuity between the participants' scores from the two components on the screening tool were assessed by overlaying them on a graph. Although not all participants' NMAS-BF scores aligned with their written scores, most did. This was further demonstrated as the trendline for each set of scores (the NMAS-BF and written scores) almost perfectly mirrored each other. This graph is shown and explained further in Appendix I.

To select the 10 participants to be in the *low ER group*, I started at the lowest NMAS-BF score and highlighted potential candidates whose scores on their written questions suggested a high continuity with their NMAS-BF scores (i.e., scores of -1, -2, or -3), with greatest priority given to participants who had more negative integer values (e.g., -3 or -2). These participants were contacted via phone and then interview consent forms were given to them and their parents/guardians (see Appendix J for contact transcript and Appendices K-L for consent forms) through email as schools were closed at that time due to Covid-19. Once 10 of these signed consent forms were returned via email, the *low ER group* was formed. Two participants who were contacted for the low ER group opted not to participate. Without prompting, one mentioned

being too busy with music and school, and the other's parent declined even though the participant verbally expressed to me their excitement to take part in the interview and to talk about their experience as a transgender male.

This same process, except looking at the highest NMAS-BF and written scores, was done for selecting the 10 participants to be in the *high ER group*. There were two participants originally contacted in this group as well who declined to be interviewed, with no explanations given.

There was a level of subjectivity inherent in this selection process as there was more bias towards selecting participants who wrote more in their written answers as there was then more to assess. However, as mentioned, since hermeneutic phenomenology desires participants who can speak in detail about the phenomenon of interest, I saw this bias as acceptable for selecting the participants. The raw data from the screening tool used for selecting the 20 interviewed participants are presented in Appendix M.

Data Collection for Interviews

Due to school closures and in-person restrictions because of the onset of Covid-19, all 20 interviews were changed from face-to-face meetings to online meeting from my computer using Apple Messages, Skype, or WhatsApp, depending on the technological needs of the participant. The interviews were all conducted through video calls except for the interviews with two participants who did not have that ability and so these interviews were audio calls only. Two other participants preferred to keep their own videos turned off during our conversation and did so although they could see my face. The online methods of communication I employed have been increasingly used and are suggested as effective ways to conduct research interviews when face-to-face contact is not possible (Janghorban et al., 2014; Lupton, 2020).

Some studies have noted differences in interviews online or by telephone compared to face-to-face. In one such study, Irvine (2011) determined that participants talked less on the telephone. Although I was aware of this, most participants viewed the remote method used for interviews as advantageous. They expressed to me that this gave them the ability to talk longer with me than they would have had a chance to if the interviews were at their school, as originally planned. Several expressed feeling more comfortable sharing with me remotely as the computer screen provided a more agreeable distance for them. Two participants did mention that they would have preferred a face-to-face conversation with me as it would have been more personal.

Interviews lasted between 40–115 minutes, with most of them being 60 minutes. These were all recorded on an external recording device for later transcription. The average time between the initial contact for the interviews and actual facilitation of the interviews was one week. This turnaround was much quicker than initially expected but, once again, participants claimed to have had much more availability due to Covid-19 school closures at that time. Other than these practical adaptations to my field work due to Covid-19, the pandemic was not seen to influence participants' answers in ways that were relevant to the focus of this study. If it did come up in interviews, most often it was mentioned while expressing that they felt sad or that it felt unfair that the pandemic was happening in their grad year and that they were going to miss out on the social aspects of their final year of secondary school with their friends.

Data Analyses

The final stage of MMR, the inferential stage, encompasses how the qualitative and quantitative findings are integrated together. As outlined, three components were used to generate data to answer this study's two research questions: the NMAS-BF, the CMNI-46, and the hermeneutic phenomenological interviews. The findings of the latter two were used in

answering the first research question, and all three were used for the second. Before the data analyses for each research question is outlined, a few details regarding the 20 hermeneutic phenomenological interviews are described, as they are relevant to both.

The second component of hermeneutic phenomenology, according to van Manen (2016), is *investigating experience as we live it*, which referred to procuring detail-rich data regarding the phenomenon of interest in the best possible way. I believed that one-on-one interviews with 20 adolescent males was the most direct way to produce the desired detail-rich data due to the lack of research from adolescent males' actual experiences. Prior to these interviews, participants were explicitly told what the phenomenon was and were given some questions to think about in advance (e.g., Do you have any experiences that come to mind when you think of growing up being male?). This was done to increase participants' reflectivity about the phenomenon, as recommended by van Manen (2016).

Following further recommendations (van Manen, 2016), during the interviews, I did not rush participants' silences, and I strove to keep the conversation focused on how the lived experience of participants related to the phenomenon of being an adolescent male. I also tried to focus conversations on the "vividness" (van Manen, 2016, p. 65) of the experiences they were describing (i.e., their feelings, the mood, and the way their body felt) rather than on explanations or generalizations.

All interviews were semi-structured with a generalized order of questions (see Appendix N) so that the questions themselves were not priming the participants towards answering from a more stereotypical gendered lens. I did this as some research has shown that priming participants in a way that causes them to focus on their gender can alter their responses to conform more to gender stereotypes (Boschini et al., 2018; Lungwitz et al., 2018; Steele & Ambady, 2006). As

such, I started the interview with questions about their personality and about the major formative events of their life. Then afterwards I asked them if they believed any of their answers to those questions connected specifically with being male or with masculinity.

As it is important to have a good conversational relationship with participants in hermeneutic phenomenology (van Manen, 2016), I made sure that when I corresponded with participants ahead of the interview and at the beginning of each interview, I asked about their interests and their current events (e.g., the pandemic lockdowns) before I asked more specific questions related to my research. I also conducted two pilot interviews with two adolescent males aged 16 and 18 whose parents I knew; this allowed me to practice the hermeneutic phenomenological style of interview. Informed consent was given for these, and I debriefed the pilot interviews with my supervisors before I moved ahead with the participant interviews.

Data Analysis for Research Question 1

For the first research question, the 20 interviewed participants' responses on the eight CMNI-46 subscales were compared to the relevant excerpts from their interviews to determine the extent to which they agreed with one another. Although it is common for qualitative and quantitative data to be presented together complementarily, as was done for the second research question, it is much rarer to analyze the alignment between data sets. Again, I deemed this important given the methodological divide in the field I identified in Chapter 2 (p. 73). Most alignment analyses between interviews and quantitative scales occur in medical or diagnostical research, as, in those fields of research, there are more definitive agreed upon standards to measure data against (Harris & Brown, 2010), such as the criteria for eating disorders (e.g., Berg et al., 2011), mood disorders (e.g., Dodd et al., 2009), or the amount of alcohol consumed (e.g., Cutler et al., 1988). In comparison, there are no set standardized criteria for adherence to specific

masculine norms, such as winning, emotional control, risk-taking, violence, power over women, self-reliance, primacy of work, and heterosexual self-presentation, which perhaps contributes to the absence of any alignment analyses within the field of masculinities.

There were two stages in assessing the alignment of the participants' interviews with their comparable responses on each of the eight CMNI-46 subscales. The first stage was to separately code the 20 participants' data sets (the CMNI-46 and the interviews) into categories indicating how highly they adhered to each of the eight measured norms. This was done so that both data sets could be converted into common or standardized categories. The common categories were necessary to establish as this enabled me to calculate the probability any observed agreement between the questionnaire and the interview data was due to chance. I was able to calculate this by using Cohen's (1960) kappa statistic (κ), as recommended by Harris and Brown (2010). The reason I coded both data sets independently, without my knowledge of the other data sets' code, was to reduce instances of confirmation bias (i.e., knowing what a participant scored on their CMNI-46 subscale and then looking at their transcript trying to find proof of that). This coding process for each data set, which was the first stage in the data analysis for Research Question 1, is now described as follows.

Coding the CMNI-46 Scores into Low, Medium, and High Norm Adherence. The items on the CMNI-46 had four response options with four corresponding numerical values (Strongly Disagree = 0, Disagree = 1, Agree = 2, Strongly Agree = 3). I used participants' mean values on each subscale to code three levels of adherence to masculine norms. *Low adherence* represented a mean value between and including 0–1, as that value meant the participant overall disagreed with the items that would have indicated adhering to the norm. *Medium adherence* represented mean values greater than 1 but less than 2, as the only way to achieve a value within

that range was if participants agreed with some questionnaire items supporting adherence to that norm while disagreeing with others. *High adherence* represented mean values 2 or greater, as that meant the participant overall agreed with items on the subscale that supported adherence to that norm.

Coding the Interviews into Low, Medium, and High Norm Adherence. The interviews were re-read multiple times with the content of each specific subscale in mind. All excerpts pertaining to participants' adherence or non-adherence to each of these eight subscales were then highlighted. Based upon the content of these excerpts, participants' adherence to the eight subscales of the CMNI-46 were coded as either low, medium, or high adherence. An additional fourth code of *silence* was necessary in instances in which no interview excerpts regarding the content of a particular subscale were found. This happened because the interviews were intentionally not structured around the content of these eight subscales; this was done to give participants the freedom to discuss the things pertinent to their experiences of being male without priming them towards discussing certain masculine norms. Despite this, there were still many areas of overlap between methods given that the CMNI-46 was designed to measure "how men might think, feel or behave" (Parent, 2013) and given that many of the subscales were independently relevant to most participants' experiences of being male. In these cases of silence, no comparisons between data sets were possible and so were excluded from all statistical calculations regarding alignment.

In the interviews, an example of low adherence regarding the subscale *heterosexual self-presentation* was if a participant talked about their experience being called gay and described being personally unbothered by it. High adherence was coded if a participant discussed not wanting to be seen as gay and/or expressed disdain for the LGBTQ2S+ community. As with the

CMNI-46 data set, medium adherence indicated that a participant had some excerpts that supported their adherence to a norm and some excerpts that supported their non-adherence to the same norm. In that sense medium adherence may be otherwise understood as mixed adherence. An example of this code was if a participant said he did not care about being called gay but then later he discussed never wanting to be seen as gay.

If interview excerpts only partially applied to the content of a subscale without explicitly mentioning everything the CMNI-46 subscale represented, I still assigned them an adherence code based on that information, although admittedly more interpretation was involved in doing so. An example of this for the *risk-taking* subscale was if a participant talked about their interests involving many extreme sports that they got injured doing, but they did not specifically discuss their thoughts or beliefs on taking risks. In this case they would be scored as having a high adherence based on the type of behaviours they described.

Once these data sets were coded, which are all shown in the next chapter, the second stage of the alignment analysis was conducted. This first part of this stage involved using the reliability statistic to check the extent to which the alignment of codes (low, medium, and high) between data sets was due to chance or due to actual congruency. Then a more detailed round of assessing the alignment between data sets was conducted in which participants responses on each of the 42 items from the CMNI-46 were analyzed and re-interpreted alongside their interview data. This was done with my knowledge of the codes from both data sets to create a more detailed analysis and categorization of how well the two data sets aligned. This entire second stage of the alignment analysis is more fully described and visualized alongside its results in the next chapter.

Data Analysis for Research Question 2

The data used to investigate the extent to which adolescent males' experiences and beliefs of being male varied, based on levels of emotional restriction, primarily came from the 20 hermeneutic phenomenological interviews. However, this was supplemented by statistical analyses between the NMAS-BF and the eight CMNI-46 subscales. Again, here the NMAS-BF data quantitatively represented participants' levels of emotional restriction and the eight CMNI-46 subscales represented adherence to masculine norms. Together the integration of this data functioned in revealing specific ways in which adolescent males of various levels of emotional restriction had similar or dissimilar experiences of and beliefs about being male.

Thematic Analysis of Interviews. The goal of data analysis in hermeneutic phenomenology is to illuminate the hidden meaning of the phenomenon through themes that each serve to point towards the phenomenon as a whole, although never capturing the full essence of the phenomenon itself (Groenewald, 2004; Hycner, 1999; van Manen, 2016). As such, in this, the third component of van Manen's (2016) hermeneutic phenomenological approach, *hermeneutic phenomenological reflection*, I outline the process I took for identifying themes.

For my first interpretative step towards a thematic analysis of what it meant to be an adolescent male I journaled after I conducted each interview. I journaled about my initial impressions about the participant and about what I thought they shared about the phenomenon. I did the same immediately after transcribing each interview. As hermeneutic phenomenological researchers acknowledge that phenomenology is explicitly and unavoidably an interpretive endeavor, using coding software, as is used in some qualitative research, is often seen as not helpful or possible (Groenewald, 2004; van Manen, 2016). Therefore, to maintain a close familiarity with participants' experiences, I transcribed each of the 20 participant interviews

from their recorded audio files verbatim. This meant that every word was translated as is, but most stutters, repetitions of words, or filler words like “ums” were not included. Typically, this style of verbatim does not include non-verbal communication; however, exceptions were made where I did include non-words like laughing, scoffing, repetitive phrases like “I just,” long pauses, or uses of a different voice to indicate mocking or mimicking someone else. I chose to do this at times when I believed these non-words reflected something important about how to interpret the line of dialogue that preceded or followed it. In this way, the transcription process itself had an interpretative element, which made the type I used a hybrid between a naturalized and denaturalized type of transcription (Azevedo et al., 2017). I listened to each interview fully at least three times to check my transcription accuracy.

Conducting a thematic analysis in hermeneutic phenomenology is not merely about identifying the frequency of key themes in the interviews, but also about understanding what themes are essential to the phenomenon (van Manen, 2016). This is one of the more contentious aspects of hermeneutic phenomenological research—determining which themes from the data are actual themes relating to the phenomenon, known as *essential themes*, versus what themes arise that can be related to the phenomena in question but are not intrinsically so (van Manen, 2016), and these are referred to as *subthemes* in this research. To differentiate between the two, van Manen (2016) advised that if it is possible to imagine a theme not applying to some participants’ experiences of the phenomenon or if you can get rid of a theme without the phenomenon losing its meaning, then that ceases to be an essential theme. Therefore, all essential themes in this research applied to all participants within the ER group where the essential theme was identified from as I conducted separate thematic analyses for the *low ER group* and the *high ER group*. It was only afterwards that the two group’s essential themes were compared and if the

same was found in both, the two were merged. In those cases, the essential themes then applied to all 20 participants experiences being adolescent males.

From the transcripts I implemented van Manen's (2016) three approaches for coding essential themes: (a) a detailed reading approach—reading a sentence at a time asking, “What does this sentence, or sentence cluster, reveal about the phenomenon?” (p. 93); (b) a selective or highlighting approach—physically highlighting statements that are most revealing or illuminating about the phenomenon of interest; and (c) a holistic reading approach—looking at the interviews as a whole while asking what specific statements captures the essential meaning of the text. This was an iterative process; I returned multiple times to each of these three approaches, and that eventually resulted in the creation of a temporarily list of potential themes before that list was further condensed and separated into essential themes and subthemes. Again this was a separate process for each group of participants before I compared their essential themes. If there was overlap between the two groups, their essential themes were combined, even though the groups sometimes still had a related subtheme that applied more exclusively to one group than the other. This entire process was communicated to my supervisors, and they provided feedback throughout each major phase (i.e., the coding, the potential themes, and the essential themes). The process of returning to the text and refining the wording or framing of the essential themes was ongoing until I was confident no novel themes would emerge at this time. A more in-depth description of this coding process, complete with pictures and the initial lists of potential themes, are presented in Appendix O.

As mentioned, language is paramount to hermeneutic phenomenology as the process of writing itself creates meaning. *Hermeneutic phenomenological writing*, the fourth and final component of van Manen's (2016) hermeneutic phenomenology to be discussed, addresses this.

When writing, I followed van Manen's (2016) recommendations about making strong interpretations based upon powerful anecdotes about the phenomenon rather than just presenting the narrative of the interviews. This balance of interview excerpts with interpretations was important because although hermeneutic phenomenology is inherently interpretative, it does not mean that all interpretations are equal; rather, the text "always needs to aim for the strongest pedagogic interpretation of a certain phenomenon" (van Manen, 2016, p. 151). Additionally, I followed van Manen's advice on the importance of the researcher's silence in writing—knowing when to be silent allows certain anecdotes to resonate, without the need for added interpretation.

Statistical Analyses Between NMAS-BF and CMNI-46. Along with this hermeneutic phenomenological interview data, there were three types of analyses done with the numerical data from the NMAS-BF and the CMNI-46 measures ($N = 170$) that informed Research Question 2. However, before any analyses occurred, all raw data from participants' surveys were input into the statistical software, Statistical Package for Social Sciences, and were triple checked for any input errors. Afterwards descriptive analyses were conducted. I then conducted correlational analyses using Pearson's r to assess the relationship between NMAS-BF scores, which represented emotional restriction, and adherence to any of the eight subscales on the CMNI-46, which represented eight masculine norms.

For the third statistical analysis, the participants in the top and bottom 15% of NMAS-BF scores were artificially separated into two groups. The top and bottom 15% of *normative male alexithymia* scores were chosen as the cut-off percentage for analysis as that excluded all participants within the first standard deviation of the normal distribution, thereby leaving the extreme ends as desired, and, a secondary reason was that all participants selected for the interviews resided within this top and bottom 15% and so the t-test comparisons could somewhat

mimic the subpopulations in the qualitative comparisons between the *low ER group* and *high ER group*. I then conducted comparative analyses using an independent samples t-test to see if those two groups differed significantly in their responses on any of the subscales on the CMNI-46. These statistical findings and the thematic findings were woven together to make meta-inferences about how adolescent males' experiences and beliefs of being male vary, based on levels of emotional restriction; this is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

Ensuring the Trustworthiness and Validity of Mixed Methods Research

To help establish trust in the meta-inferences made from holistically considering the different types of data gathered in MMR, Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006) established seven relevant legitimation types. The term "legitimation" (p. 48) was suggested by them as a paradigm-neutral term, but it encompasses what is commonly referred to as validity in quantitative research or as trustworthiness or credibility in qualitative research (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006). Not all seven legitimations are addressed here as some, like the legitimation known as *paradigmatic mixing*, were elaborated earlier in this chapter and for brevity are not specifically presented here. The legitimation known as *sample integration* referred to being cautious about how inferences from smaller qualitative data samples and inferences from the larger quantitative samples are combined to make meta-inferences that are intended to make statistical generalizations about the larger target population. The hermeneutic phenomenological data in my research were never used for such a purpose; however, in considering this legitimation, I remained cognisant that the 20 participants were not a representative sample of the 170 participants. Rather, they comprised two subgroups. As such, I cautiously avoided extrapolating inferences from the two subgroups onto the 170 participants' statistical findings.

My meta-inferences were also externally validated by my supervisors, and this helped my research meet the requirement for the *inside-outside* legitimization. *Conversion* referred to being skeptical of meta-inferences made if researchers over-quantize the qualitative findings or make qualitative narratives from the quantitative data. I did on occasion count the number of participants who had similar findings found in the interviews, but I did this primarily to determine the essential themes and subthemes, which is a crucial part of hermeneutic phenomenology. I also did not count any frequencies for the purpose of stating those as a percentage but used frequencies to more generally describe the number of participants who shared similar experiences or beliefs. Furthermore, the danger of making narrative over-generalizations about the quantitative data was reduced as the only cautious ones I made were grounded upon the results of Research Question 1, which compared the 20 participants' alignment of data sets. Therefore, based on knowing some more detailed qualitative information about 20 participants' quantitative responses, allowed for some more plausible extrapolations onto the 170 participants' quantitative data.

The final relevant legitimization for my research was *multiple validities*. This meant that the quality of meta-inferences in my MMR was increased if each method used also adhered to their individual standards of trustworthiness or validity. For the two quantitative methods in my research, I reported the standard quantitative validity and reliability checks. For my qualitative method of hermeneutic phenomenology, I adhered to de Witt and Ploeg's (2006) framework of methodological rigour in hermeneutic phenomenology. They outlined five criteria for this based on the compilation of multiple standards of rigour as suggested by others, many of which were van Manen's recommendations (found in van Manen, 1990, 1997): (a) balanced integration—the researcher ensures participants' voices are deeply interwoven with the philosophical explanations

of how those findings apply to their respective theme when writing; (b) openness—the researcher makes it explicitly clear how all research decisions were made; (c) concreteness—the researcher writes in such a way that the reader is able to make personal and practical connections with the phenomenon; (4) resonance—the researcher create moments when writing in which the meaning of the phenomenon is illuminated powerfully by the participants' voices without additional analysis; and (5) actualization—the researcher acknowledges that phenomenological interpretations can be ongoing and do not just terminate when the study is done. I conducted my qualitative component of this research with these five criteria constantly in mind, many of which have been demonstrated in this chapter (e.g., openness and actualization); the other three are demonstrated through my writings in Chapter 5. Although MMR does have a set framework, my strong orientation to all the legitimations highlighted in this section demonstrates that this study met high quality standards for MMR and for the quantitative and qualitative methods used within that framework, which adds confidence to the trustworthiness and validity of the findings and the meta-inferences made in this research.

Ethical Considerations

Throughout my research process, I sought to embody the ethical principles from both the British Educational Research Association's (2018) ethical guidelines for education research and the Canada Tri-Council Policy Statement (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, 2018) regarding ethical research in the social sciences involving humans. A number of these principles are highlighted in bold subheadings and will be further discussed in this section. In addition to these principles, my ethical considerations were informed by writings from the field of sociology of childhood, which acknowledges children as active agents and which suggests that, as a result, research should not be done about them but rather with them (Almeida, 2011; Chou et al., 2015;

Quennerstedt & Quennerstedt, 2014). As such, I always sought to first prioritize any direct interactions or any ongoing consent processes with participants themselves, rather than with their parents or guardians, while still complying with legal and ethical frameworks.

Rigorous Ethical Review. An application for permission to conduct this study was first approved by the Moray House School of Education and Sport Research Ethics Board at the University of Edinburgh. After that, my ethics application to conduct this study was also approved at the school district and by the independent school participating in this study. The school district's approval stipulated that parent or guardian consent was also needed for all participants unless two additional conditions were met: (a) participants were 18 years old or older, and (b) their principal gave specific approval. This only happened on one occasion, with a participant who already lived primarily on his own. This stipulation of parental/guardian consent differed from the opinion of the Research Ethics Board at the University of Edinburgh. The Research Ethics Boards believed the age of the target population, 17–19, was old enough for participants to be able to provide informed consent independently and believed requiring parental or guardian consent might undermine their own agency to participate or not. I was aware of three situations where parents or guardians prevented their child from participating in this study even though these three students had wanted to participate. The students each voluntarily told me it was either due to their parents' privacy concerns or their parents' opposition to the research topic.

Informed Consent. As outlined early in this chapter, informed consent was sought from participants and from their parents or guardians at the survey stage as well as at the interview stage of the research. For participants to be fully informed before consenting to the interviews, I had to also reveal the full reason why they were selected. I told them, "I am looking to hear

about the experiences of being male from teenage boys who are some of the least and most emotionally restricted. Out of the 170 participants' scores on the survey about emotions, your answers showed that you are relatively one of the [most/least] emotionally restricted." I followed this up by asking "How does that feel knowing why you were selected for that reason?" and "Do you agree with that assessment?" Without exception all agreed with their relative level of emotional restriction as high or low, and none said that being considered one of the most or least emotionally expressive made them uncomfortable with participating in the interview. I told them to let me know if there were any second thoughts, but none did so. These conversations were completed over the phone with participants, except for two who did not have cell phones or did not answer. In those cases, I talked to their parents first and then spoke to the participant or arranged a time to call back to speak to the participant. At the end of my calls, I asked participants if they were still interested enough to be emailed the consent form, to which they all said they were. If I had not yet spoken to the parents, I always offered to speak to their parents directly, but the majority of the participants (~ 75%) preferred talking to their parents themselves. When that happened, they promised me they would let me know if their parents had any questions, two of which did. Those parents' concerns were regarding the audio recording privacy and the length of time that the data would be kept.

Once participants or their parents no longer had any questions, participants and their parents or guardians either electronically signed and emailed back to me, or they printed out, signed, scanned, and emailed back to me the interview consent form. In all cases I printed those out and deleted all those emails and pdfs from all devices permanently. There were two exceptions to this process; in these cases, due to lack of personal technological resources at home, the participants were unable to print and sign it. Accordingly, before the interviews, we

went over the specifics of the consent form with them and with their parents, and I audio recorded their verbal consent to the interview.

Sensitive Topics and Safeguarding. It was paramount to ask and monitor for ongoing consent throughout the survey and the interview processes. Given the potential for participants to talk about sensitive topics regarding emotions and life experiences related to being a male, I wanted to be careful, and given the power dynamics of their younger age and status as a student, I needed to be even more cautious. Consideration for participants' comfort and wellbeing was a large part of the reason, as stated, that the *playboy* subscale from the CMNI-46 was not included in this study.

I verbally reminded participants before the surveys and the interviews that they did not have to answer any questions that they did not want to answer and that we could stop at any point, no questions asked. I also checked in with all participants after the surveys and the interviews to see if they had any concerns, and I told them that they could let me know if in hindsight they felt uncomfortable with anything that was shared and/or if there was anything they wanted to retract. No participants did so. I also monitored their verbal or non-verbal signals throughout the interviews to look for signs of distress from any questions.

During the interviews I prefaced more personal questions with statements like, "you don't have to answer this if this is too personal," in order to remind them of their agency and to reassure them that they were not pressured to answer. Although all participants verbally expressed their comfort about our interviews immediately afterwards, I also finished each conversation telling them that after our conversation I would be emailing them a list of some free and paid support services (e.g., school counsellors, registered clinical counsellors, mental health crisis centres) to access if anything we talked about in the interview brought up something they

felt the need to process more. No participants disclosed anything about abuse or neglect that I needed to report; however, had that occurred, the plan was for me to inform their school counsellor.

Anonymity and Confidentiality. A large part of considering participants' safety was keeping their identities as protected as possible. Although it was not possible to fully disguise which participants participated in the survey as they did this openly in front of their peers and teachers in their classrooms, their data were kept confidential and anonymous from everyone except for myself as I needed to know who to contact for the interviews, based on their survey responses.

A benefit of the interviews being conducted online instead of at school was that the identities of the interviewed participants were able to be concealed from their peers and teachers. The only concern I noted with having participants interviewed from their homes was that one participant appeared not to have an ideal set-up for privacy from his family and had to change locations multiple times early on during our conversation. Fortunately, he ended up finding a private place to talk freely and no other participants showed any sign that they were concerned someone in their family might overhear them. After the 20 participants finished their interviews, all identifying information from the 170 participant survey data were removed and became fully anonymous, as my research design did not require any more potential participants to be contacted for interviews. The only exceptions were the 20 interviewed participant as their surveys needed to be compared to their interview transcripts for Research Question 1. However, their real names were removed and a pseudonym code was used instead. The key for this code was stored separately from any of their data. Information that could be easily used to identify any

of their identities in the transcripts was altered, completely removed, or not presented in the findings.

Data Management and Storage. Great care was given to protecting participants' data. Their signed consent forms and completed surveys were kept in a locked briefcase I always had with me when visiting schools, and these documents were transferred to my home office, to a locked drawer in a locked room, upon returning home each day. Like the surveys, the physical transcripts and the informed consent forms from the interviews were kept in a locked drawer, inside a locked office, in my house, and all digital copies, including the anonymized raw data from the surveys, were stored on my secure and password protected university One Drive account. Audio-recordings from the external recording device were temporarily transferred on a password-protected and secured One Drive server hosted by the University of Edinburgh, and after their transcription and analysis, in which identifying information (e.g., names and locations) was left out, the audio files were deleted from there and from the external recording device, which itself was kept in the double locked drawer.

After the study all the remaining data will be secured in long term storage through DataVault, and personal copies will be stored on an encrypted and password protected hard drive. The raw data of my surveys will be kept for a minimum of five years, to be used to validate my research findings. Each year before five years I have annual reminders on my calendar set to evaluate which data I have stored, to see if they are still necessary. Anything not destroyed by the fifth year will be destroyed at that time unless additional research that can use it has been identified. All but one of the interviewed participants said they were interested in receiving my research and when it is available online, and I will contact them via email or phone

to inform them of this. I also will share my research findings with the school district, as per their requirement.

Methodology Summary

In this chapter I detailed the extensive theoretical and practical aspects surrounding this mixed methods research study and its design. The combination of qualitative and quantitative elements in this research was critical for investigating this study's first research question: *To what extent are adolescent males' experiences and beliefs of being male aligned across survey and interview findings?* Significant space in this chapter was given to the discussion of hermeneutic phenomenology, the primary method used to generate data for this study's two research questions and used to determine how the two quantitative measures, the NMAS-BF and the CMNI-46, were integrated to help investigate the second research question: *To what extent do adolescent males' experiences and beliefs of being male vary, based on levels of emotional restriction?* Following this discussion on the way these two questions were planned, implemented, and answered, the next chapter presents the results for the first research question and the statistical analyses for the second.

Chapter 4: Data Alignment Results and Statistical Results Comparing Adolescent Males by Emotional Restriction Levels

The first half of this chapter contains the data alignment results pertaining to the first research question: *To what extent are adolescent males' experiences and beliefs of being male aligned across survey and interview findings?* The purpose of answering this question was to assess the epistemological and practical efficacy of integrating qualitative and quantitative methods in masculinities research—one of my four objectives for this research—and to inform the extent to which the quantitative and qualitative findings used to answer the second research question could be integrated. I begin this chapter with the demographic information of the 20 participants whose responses on their CMNI-46 surveys and interviews were used for this alignment analysis. Next, I outline the five categories I used to classify the degree of alignment between participants' data sets. Then the findings of the alignment analysis are presented.

The second half of this chapter contains the quantitative results for the second research question: *To what extent do adolescent males' experiences and beliefs of being male vary, based on their levels of emotional restriction?* I start this section by presenting the demographic information of all 170 participants and the descriptive statistics for their NMAS-BF and CMNI-46 variables. Afterwards I explain the hypotheses I made prior to the planned correlations between participants' responses on the NMAS-BF the eight CMNI-46 subscales. Then the results of the correlational analyses are detailed. Following this, I give the results from the t-tests I conducted comparing the average scores on the CMNI-46 subscales between participants with the highest 15% of NMAS-BF scores and participants with the lowest 15% of NMAS-BF scores.

The findings for the first research question and the quantitative part of the second research question were presented in this same chapter to keep all the data involving numbers and

statistical calculations together, and because the results to the first question had implications for how some of the statistical results for the second question were understood. These implications are elaborated upon in Chapter 6 (p. 241).

Demographic Information and Pseudonyms for the 20 Interviewed Participants

To assess the level of alignment between qualitative and quantitative methods measuring participants' experiences and beliefs being male, the relevant excerpts from the 20 participants' interviews were compared with their responses on the CMNI-46. The demographic information for these 20 participants is summarized in Table 1 below. They are grouped in this table according to which of the two groups (the *low ER group* or the *high ER group*) they were categorized into based on their level of emotional restriction, as assessed by the screening tool.

Table 1

Demographics of Interviewed Participants by ER Group

Characteristic	Number of <i>low ER group</i> participants (<i>n</i> = 10)	Number of <i>high ER group</i> participants (<i>n</i> = 10)
Gender Identity		
Male	10	9
Transgender male	–	1
Age at Time of Interview		
17	5	4
18	5	6
Grade		
11 (age range 16–17)	–	2
12 (age range 17–18)	10	8
Race/Ethnicity		
White	8	4
Asian ^a	1	4
Indian (Sikh/Punjabi)	1	–
Aboriginal	–	1
Persian	–	1
Student Status		
Canadian	9	9
International	1	1

^a Ethnicities grouped together within this category included Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese.

Most of the characteristics of both groups were quite similar. The most notable difference was that the *low ER group* was less racially/ethnically diverse than the *high ER group* (80% white

compared to 40% white). This difference was not reflective of the demographics found at the far ends of the continuum of NMAS-BF scores as all interviewed participants came from the top and bottom 15% of scores, and those subgroups had very comparable racial/ethnic demographics as is later displayed in Table 6 (p. 166). A second difference between the two groups was noted after their interviews. All participants from the *low ER group* had both biological parents living together whereas five participants in the *high ER group* had biological parents who had separated or divorced and there was a sixth participant whose mother had died. Although participants were never specifically asked about their parents' relationship status, this information was revealed in every interview. All schools that participated in this study, except for the independent school, were represented in the interviews by at least one participant, although nearly half ($n = 9$) of all interviewed participants came from the same school, four in the *low ER group* and five in the *high ER group*. This was the final school I visited, meaning that for these nine participants there was just over one month between when they completed their survey and when they were interviewed. The longest span of time between a participant's survey and subsequent interview was five months, which may have been a limitation with the alignment analysis as participants may have changed their perspectives about certain masculine norms in that time period.

Pseudonymized names are used in this research for the 20 interviewed participants, and I intentionally alphabetized them based on which group they were assigned to. Participants in the *low ER group* were given names from the first 10 letters of the alphabet, A-J, and participants in the *high ER group* were given names from the last 10 letters of the alphabet, Q-Z. The first letter their name indicates their relative NMAS-BF scores with an "A" indicating the participant who had the lowest score (i.e., less emotional restriction) and a "Z" indicating the participant that had the highest score (i.e., greater emotional restriction). I did this to easily demarcate to the reader

which ER group participants were ascribed to when participants' results are presented and discussed.

Five Categories of Alignment Between the CMNI-46 and Interview Data Sets

There were two stages to the alignment analysis for the first research question. In the first stage the 20 participants' CMNI-46 subscale scores and their relevant interview extracts were coded based on whether they indicated a low, medium, or high adherence to each of the eight norms that were measured by the CMNI-46. In the second stage the level of alignment between data sets was determined by running a statistical calculation to determine the extent to which any observed alignment of codes for a particular masculine norm was due to chance or not. This was all detailed in the previous chapter (p. 121), but the second stage of the alignment analysis also involved a closer inspection of all the relevant data so that I could indicate with more precision the extent to which participants' questionnaire responses on the CMNI-46 aligned with what they said in their interviews. This process is now explained.

During this closer inspection, participants' responses on every individual item comprising each subscale was considered and compared with their interview excerpts rather than just their overall mean scores on each subscale. I also considered the handwritten notes that a couple of participants wrote on their surveys to provide more context for a few of their responses on the CMNI-46. From this more detailed comparison of data sets, I created five categories to describe the level of alignment between the 20 participants' data sets: *agreement*, *partial agreement*, *partial dissonance*, *dissonance*, and *silence*. These alignment categorizations were modelled after those used by Tonkin-Crine and colleagues (2016) with the exception of *partial dissonance*, which I added.

Instances of agreement were identified when a participant, in their interviews, (a) discussed the exact same content as the items on a specific CMNI-46 subscale covered and (b) their responses matched. For example, Cameron scored low on all *heterosexual self-presentation* items, indicating a low adherence to that norm. In his interview he explicitly discussed not caring if people thought he was gay in a way that directly represented the items comprising that subscale. As such, I deemed these as highly congruent responses.

Partial agreements were given when (a) participants made statements in their interviews that were complementary to their responses on a particular subscale but (b) their statements did not exactly encompass what the items on that subscale asked. For example, Denver's responses on the CMNI-46 indicated a low adherence to *power over women* which seemed congruent to when he discussed valuing women in his own life and how it was unfair that men are in more positions of power in the workforce. Despite this, because Denver did not discuss any personal power dynamics with the women in his life, which was how most of the items comprising the *power over women* subscale were framed, I only considered this to be a partial agreement. Similarly, partial dissonances referred to (a) when there were statements made during the interview that were indirectly related to the content of a particular subscale and (b) these responses appeared incongruent with participants' CMNI-46 responses. For example, Aaron never specifically discussed in the interview if he would care if someone thought he was gay but he mentioned multiple times that he did not care what other people thought of him even if it made his peers uncomfortable (e.g., being okay with crying and being sensitive in public) and, as such, it seemed that he would similarly not care if people thought he was gay. However, several of his responses on the items comprising the *heterosexual self-presentation* subscale indicated he did care, at least moderately, which I considered to be partially dissonant. Instances of partial

dissonances and partial agreements needed more direct questioning to fully resolve and/or to better understand the nature or extent of the dissonance or agreement I observed.

Instances of dissonance were identified on occasions when (a) participants discussed the exact same content in their interview as the items pertaining to a CMNI-46 subscale did and (b) there was a contradiction between their responses. For example, Birjot's responses on the *heterosexual self-presentation* items indicated that he had a medium or mixed adherence to that norm, however, as will be described more extensively in the next chapter, he explicitly detailed significant measures he currently takes in his life to avoid being seen as gay, thus suggesting he had a high adherence to that norm. Therefore, as he directly discussed the content of the items within the scale and they were in conflict, I considered this to be dissonant. Lastly, the category of silence was used when the content of a particular subscale was never addressed by the participant during the interview directly or even partially and so it was impossible for me to determine the extent to which the data sets were aligned.

Although the statistical calculation based upon the three adherence codes provided a more standardized metric for assessing the alignment between data sets, this more detailed look into participants' responses on the CMNI-46 items provided more nuance and specificity as to how well the data sets aligned. Using two processes for assessing the alignment of data sets was more robust as their respective results helped to confirm or invalidate the results of either approach. All these alignment analysis results are now presented.

Alignment Results for Research Question 1

The results of the five alignment categorizations for all 20 interviewed participants' data sets are presented below in Table 2. Also depicted in this table via the colours within each cell is the degree of norm adherence (i.e., low, medium, high) each participants' data sets were

independently coded as during the first stage of analysis, which were used for the statistical calculation. Each cell is split into two. The colour on the left side of the cell indicates participants' adherence code from their CMNI-46 responses while the colour on the right side of the cell indicates the adherence from their interview responses. I added a horizontal line that divides the alignment results of the 10 participants in the *low ER group* from the 10 participants in the *high ER group* as a visual point of comparison between the two groups

Table 2

Data Alignment and Adherence Codes Between CMNI-46 Subscales and Interviews

Participant	CMNI-46 Subscales							
	Emotional Control	Self-Reliance	Violence	Heterosexual Self-Presentation	Power Over Women	Risk-Taking	Winning	Primacy of Work
Aaron	PA	A	PA	PD	S	S	PA	PD
Birjot	A	A	PA	D	PA	S	PA	A
Cameron	A	A	PA	A	PA	PA	A	S
Denver	A	PA	PA	PA	PA	S	S	S
Evan	A	A	S	PA	S	A	PA	A
Fraser	A	A	A	A	PA	PA	S	PA
Grant	A	A	A	S	PD	S	S	PD
Harrison	A	A	S	S	S	S	S	S
Ian	A	A	PA	PA	S	PA	PA	PD
Jadrien	A	A	S	PA	PA	S	PA	A
Qasem	A	PA	S	PD	PA	S	A	A
Ryo	A	A	S	S	PD	S	PA	S
Sawyer	A	PA	S	PD	PA	PD	S	PA
Thomas	A	A	S	S	S	S	S	D
Uriah	A	A	S	PA	PA	S	PD	A
Vince	A	A	PA	S	S	S	PA	S
Wataru	A	PD	S	S	PD	S	PA	PD
Xuan	A	PD	S	PA	PD	S	PA	A
Yuri	A	PD	S	S	PD	PD	S	S
Zachery	A	A	PA	S	S	PA	PD	S

Note. A = agreement; PA = partial agreement; PD = partial dissonance; D = dissonance; S = silence. Cell colours

indicate the categorization of participants' adherence to each subscale. The colour on the left side of each cell indicates the adherence code generated by a participant's mean score on the CMNI-46 subscale: green = low adherence (\bar{x} scores ≤ 1); yellow = medium adherence (\bar{x} scores between 1–2); red = high adherence (\bar{x} scores ≥ 2). The colour on the right side of cells indicates the adherence code generated from the interviews: green = low adherence; yellow = medium adherence; red = high adherence; white = silence.

Cell colours containing a single congruent colour indicated that their adherence codes I determined in the first stage of analysis matched. In these instances, the results from the closer re-evaluation in the second stage of the analysis always resulted in an alignment that I determined to be either a full or partial agreement. Instances where a cell contained two different colours, indicating a disagreement in how they were coded between data sets, were typically determined to be instances of partial dissonance or dissonance. However, there were five exceptions to this where I identified differing adherence codes to be in partial agreement upon my more precise item-by-item analysis (see Aaron's results for *emotional control* in Table 2 as an example of this, which is explained in the next section). Despite this re-evaluation, I kept the original conflicting adherence codes for the statistical calculation as to not retrospectively overinflate the number of agreements I observed.

Although the interviews were intentionally not designed to artificially highlight all the content of the eight masculine norms on the CMNI-46, I was still able to assess 107 out of 160 possible comparisons between participants' responses on both for their alignment (67%). Overall, each of the subscales had more data that aligned than differed, with 80% of all total alignments indicated a degree of agreement and only 20% indicating a degree of dissonance. Only two of all the assessed alignments (1.9%) were believed to be completely dissonant from one another as most of the dissonances observed were only partially dissonant (90%). Of all the types of agreements observed, 46% were partial agreements. The results of the alignment analysis, specific to each of the eight masculine norms, including the statistical calculations, are now presented.

Data Alignment Regarding Emotional Control

The strongest level of alignment between all data sets that could be observed in this study was for the content relating to the subscale *emotional control*. As anticipated, there was also a distinct separation between participants in the *low ER group* and *high ER group* for their adherence to *emotional control* given the similarities between that subscale and the NMAS-BF, which I used to help separate participants into the two ER groups. The sample item, representative of all the items within this subscale was: “I tend to keep my feelings to myself” (Parent & Moradi, 2009, p. 176). Nineteen of the 20 participants’ (95%) CMNI-46 codes and interview codes were independently found to be in full agreement with one another. Statistically this was almost perfect (Gwet’s AC1 = 0.95), meaning this level of alignment between data set codes was very unlikely to be due to chance. Notably, I did not use Cohen’s Kappa statistic for this subscale as the level of agreement was so high it caused the Kappa statistic to bias itself and underestimate the level of actual agreement in what is known as the “Kappa paradox” (Warrens, 2010, p. 323; Zec et al., 2017). As such, I used Gwet’s AC1 statistic instead as it is designed to overcome this paradox, it is effective in doing so, and it is interpreted in the same way as Cohen’s Kappa (Wongpakaran et al., 2013; Zec et al., 2017). The maximum value of both statistics is 1.0, which indicates perfect agreement, whereas a value of 0 indicates that any agreement observed is no better than due to chance. Any agreement for values below .39 are considered *minimal*, .40–.59 are *weak*, .60–.79, are *moderate*, .80–.90 are *strong* and values higher than that are *almost perfect* (McHugh, 2012). These standards are more rigorous than is sometimes recommended (McHugh, 2012), but I used them to help offset the inclusion of interview codes that were only indirectly related to the subscale content as these may have inflated the number of agreements observed.

I later classified Aaron's initial dissonance between his adherence codes as a partial agreement (see Table 2) when I conducted the closer inspection of his responses on each item comprising the subscale. Out of six items on that subscale, he disagreed with five and agreed with only one, but this single deviation caused his mean score to be coded as medium adherence. This item was related to how frequently he talked about his feelings with others, which he never directly discussed in his interview. Therefore, because the rest of his responses were congruent between data sets, I considered his responses on data sets to be in partial agreement. This case highlighted some of the limitations of the first coding process, which was why I believed the second, more precise layer of analysis between the two data sets was needed.

Data Alignment Regarding Self-reliance

There were many instances of agreements between data sets regarding *self-reliance* (85%) with only three of the agreements being partial agreements and no instances of silence. As such, content related this subscale was discussed in all the interviews and most of it was discussed directly. Not only did this allow for more data points to be compared for the alignment analysis but it demonstrated the subscales' relevance to participants' experiences of being male. This subscale was designed to capture a sense of "disconnection from others" (Mahalik et al., 2003, p. 14) but, based on all the items comprising this subscale, it was specifically related to measuring one's propensity towards asking for help, as seen by the sample item: "I hate asking for help" (Parent & Moradi, 2009, p. 176). Statistically, the level of alignment between data sets was considered moderate ($\kappa = .77$).

For the three instances of partial dissonance (see the *self-reliance* column in Table 2) there was strong evidence from their interviews that they did not actively seek help related to their emotional processing, however, upon re-evaluation of their interview excerpts, there was

evidence to suggest that they were able to seek academic-related help. This potentially explained the dissonances as participants may have interpreted the questionnaire items regarding help-seeking as involving more facets than just their emotional self-reliance. Additionally, I observed a trend in the data that participants who were less emotionally restricted appeared to be more okay with asking for help than those who were more emotionally restricted. This observation echoes the correlational results presented later in this chapter (p. 163).

Data Alignment Regarding Violence

The alignment of adherence codes between data sets regarding the *violence* subscale was 100% in agreement (Gwet's AC1 = 1.0); however, most of these agreements were considered partial ($n = 7$) as opposed to full agreements ($n = 2$). The reason for this was that although many participants did talk about violence in their interviews, few explicitly mentioned their beliefs about whether violence could be justified, which was the main emphasis of the majority of items within this subscale, as demonstrated by the sample item: "Sometimes violent action is necessary" (Parent & Moradi, 2009, p. 176). As such, there was less data that I could directly compare, and, in addition, this subscale had the second most instances of silence from the interviews ($n = 11$). As such, despite the perfect congruity of codes between participants' responses on data sets, there were some limitations in determining the overall alignment of responses around this subscale.

The overemphasis of items in this subscale questioning if violence can ever be necessary also likely inflated participants' adherence scores to this subscale as it was reasonable that a participant could imagine a hypothetical situation where violence could be seen as necessary even if a participant is generally opposed to violence. Fraser's responses on the two data sets appeared to demonstrate this. In his interview he told me that he would fight someone if it was

necessary to do so, but he really was not keen on violence; he quit playing rugby because he did not like unnecessarily hitting and potentially hurting people. Yet, despite his reticence for violence, his responses on the CMNI-46 indicated that he had a high adherence to *violence*. Indeed, this subscale had the most amount of high adherence scores ($n = 11$) and the least amount of low adherence scores ($n = 2$) out of any subscale; there was no discernable distinctions between the two groups.

One additional note was that Ryo likely answered one item incorrectly on this subscale as it was the opposite of all his other comparable answers on the questionnaire. This was one of only two times where I believed there was a participant error in filling out a question. As such, the observed error rate was 0.2%, which is very low and supports that the items on the CMNI-46 can be understood by a slightly younger age group than it has been used with previously.

Data Alignment Regarding Heterosexual Self-presentation

The level of observed agreement between the data sets related to *heterosexual self-presentation* was 58%, which, statistically, was minimally better than if it was due to chance ($\kappa = .34$). As such, the congruency of participants responses regarding this construct is questionable. As the name of the *heterosexual self-presentation* subscale suggests, the items in this scale asked about how important it was for participants to be seen by others as not gay, as seen in the sample item: “I would be furious if someone thought I was gay” (Parent & Moradi, 2009, p. 176). Although this subscale did not explicitly ask about participants’ opinions of other people being gay or ask about their views on homosexuality in general, I believed there to be some overlap as the language used in some of the items—like “furious”—invoked strong emotive language that for a participant to strongly agree to that statement would likely indicate a greater level of discomfort with homosexuality in general. Additionally, as adherence to this subscale has been

found to be related to antifemininity and not displaying affection with other men (Mahalik et al., 2003), participants' interview excerpts around this type of content (i.e., heterosexism and antifemininity) were used to identify partial agreements or partial dissonances if participants did not specifically discuss how they would respond if someone thought they were gay.

Jadrien, however, was a counterexample to my thinking that participants' attitudes towards homosexuality were necessarily related to their responses on *heterosexual self-presentation*. Initially I coded Jadrien's interview as low adherence because he explicitly discussed his support and respect for the LGBTQ2S+ community at his school, which appeared dissonant to the medium adherence coded from his CMNI-46 mean score. However, upon the more detailed analysis, he wrote his rationale down on his survey regarding his responses on three of the items. He wrote that he has "the self-confidence that it wouldn't bother [him]" to be thought of as gay, and at another time he wrote that he disagreed with the item's negative choice of words about how he might feel to be misidentified as gay (i.e., he would not be furious), but clarified it would be "just incorrect to my life." Therefore, given Jadrien's advocacy for the LGBTQ2S+ community discussed in his interview, it was likely that his medium adherence on this subscale was not connected to negative feelings towards homosexuality but instead reflected him caring more about being misidentified about his sexual orientation.

There were no major differences observed between participants in the *low ER group* compared to the *high ER group* except that there were more silences in the *high ER group* ($n = 6$) compared to the *low ER group* ($n = 2$). Perhaps conversations around homosexuality and femininity were more relevant to the adolescent males' experiences who were less emotionally restricted due to the relationship between expressing emotions and being seen as gay or feminine, which was often the reason why these participants brought up this topic in the

interviews. It could also be that participants in the *low ER group* were more comfortable discussing homosexuality and femininity in the interviews than participants in the *high ER group*.

Data Alignment Regarding Power Over Women

The alignment between the adherence codes regarding content related to *power over women* was 62% but statistically any agreement was essentially no better than due to chance ($\kappa = .07$). This subscale assessed participants' beliefs regarding men's roles as being dominant or superior in comparison to women's roles, with the sample item being: "In general I control the women in my life" (Parent & Moradi, 2009, p. 176). Although participants' often mentioned women in their lives and some talked about gender roles in their interviews, none explicitly talked about power dynamics with the women in their lives in the exact way that the items on this subscale did. As such, this is the one subscale where only partial alignments and partial dissonances were able to be identified.

Adherence to this subscale was also unique in that 18 of the 20 participants had low adherence and, in all five instances of partial dissonance, participants' interviews were always coded as higher adherence than their subscale scores indicated. These findings may suggest that participants answered these subscale items with a social desirability bias (i.e., knowing that having power over women is not perceived as socially acceptable) and/or with a halo effect (i.e., participants thinking they have more equal beliefs about gendered power imbalances but demonstrating more unequal ones during their interviews). Alternatively, perhaps the wording of the items for this subscale did not meaningfully connect to how these adolescent males experienced or would think about power dynamics between males and females in their lives.

Data Alignment Regarding Risk-taking

The majority of the adherence codes from the data sets regarding *risk-taking* were aligned (71%) but the statistical chance that this observed alignment was better than chance was considered weak ($\kappa = .46$). This subscale also had the most instances of silences ($n = 13$) as the interview content relating to taking risks was difficult for me to confidently assess due to the subjective nature of what one might consider to be risky or not. For instance, the original subscale was meant to be associated with measures of toughness, adventure, and violence, but was also believed to be useful for measuring aspects related to law-breaking or substance use (Mahalik et al., 2003). However, there are many more types of behaviours that can be considered risky (e.g., career risks, financial risks, social risks [e.g., public speaking], romantic risks, emotional risks) and the standards for what is risky may differ for each person (Jordan-Young & Karkazis, 2019). Moreover, the items on this subscale were very generalized and did not provide any direction on how risk-taking could or should be interpreted, as seen in the sample item: “I frequently put myself in risky situations” (Parent & Moradi, 2009, p. 176).

Only one participant, Evan, explicitly mentioned in his interview his thoughts about taking risks and so for the alignment analysis I also considered participants’ interview excerpts where they described behaviours that aligned with the original intent of the subscale around toughness, adventure, and illicit activities. For example, I considered behaviours that participants described where they could get hurt—and sometimes did—as risk-taking, whether that was their involvement in sports with higher injury rates (e.g., American football, rugby) or getting into fights. I also considered attending parties with illicit substances as risk-taking, which, given their age as minors in Canada, included alcohol. No participants discussed with me any specific illegal substances beyond alcohol. Yet, with identifying or labelling these activities as risky without

more qualitative evidence or explicit follow-up questions where each specific participant is asked about their definition of risk-taking, it was impossible for me to know whether participants would have considered these things risky for themselves. Although this subscale primarily highlights if participants consider themselves as risk-takers or not, which has the benefit of not pathologizing risk-taking, it relies on much interpretation and speculation as to what the scores on this subscale reflect. Items could be easily adapted or re-worded to better highlight and differentiate between adrenaline and thrill-seeking behaviours and risk-taking behaviours related to substances or law-breaking activities.

Data Alignment Regarding Winning

Sixty-two percent of the adherence codes between the data sets regarding the *winning* subscale agreed with one another, and statistically this was minimally better than due to chance ($\kappa = .38$). This subscale was created, and has been found, to be related to wanting to be admired, respected, successful, competitive, and physically adequate (Mahalik et al., 2003, p. 14); however, the wording of the items comprising the *winning* subscale on the CMNI-46 broadly centred around the desire to win, such as: “In general, I will do anything to win” (Parent & Moradi, 2009, p. 176). I attributed instances of partial agreement and partial dissonance to interview excerpts where participants failed to mention or elaborate upon their specific thoughts about needing to win but mentioned being competitive, usually in comments made about sports.

Aaron, Birjot, and Ian each had different codes between data sets, however upon re-examination of items, the alignment of each were categorized as a *partial agreement*. Each of these three cases likely demonstrates the difficulty I had in accurately differentiating between high adherence and medium adherence to the norm of *winning* in the interviews and putting too much, or too little, emphasis on certain excerpts. For example, Birjot was highly competitive and

focused on winning in relation to his dad or his career aspirations, which is what I based my initial code of high adherence upon. However, upon the re-analysis I found excerpts related to his involvement in sports and school where he appeared far less focused on winning, thus potentially explaining why I may have overestimated his adherence or how I and Birjot may have each focused on different aspects of winning when interpreting the subscale. As such, the overall assessment of the alignment of data sets relating to the content around *winning* I considered tentative as further elaboration by participants on how they interpreted this construct was needed.

Data Alignment Regarding Primacy of Work

The adherence codes for the final subscale, *primacy of work*, were 62% in agreement and was statistically slightly better than chance but was considered weak ($\alpha = .45$). As described with the last few subscales, this poorer alignment of this subscale may have been due to dissonant responses from participants but was likely related to the difficulty in assessing the relevant facets in the interviews that were related to *primacy of work*. The content of three of the four items on this scale were in regards to how much of a priority work is, such as the sample item: “My work is the most important part of my life” (Parent & Moradi, 2009, p. 176). The remaining item asked about having positive feelings associated with putting work first.

One of the difficulties in identifying excerpts from participants’ interviews to align with their subscale scores was not knowing what they interpreted as work. I assumed that participants without jobs interpreted work as relating to schoolwork, whereas for participants with jobs I was uncertain if they answered the questionnaire thinking equally of academic and career work or one over the other. If those participants described taking school seriously in their interviews, especially if they spoke about how their schooling related to their future careers, then those

excerpts were prioritized for determining their adherence code. When analyzing the interviews for content relating to this subscale I also looked for supporting evidence around participants' desires to be a breadwinner, have power, be competitive, and if they experienced conflict with family obligations, as these have all been found in previous research to positively correlate with greater scores on the *primacy of work* subscale (Mahalik et al., 2003).

Thomas' alignment for this subscale was the second and final case in this entire analysis that I considered to be fully dissonant. In his interview he appeared very disciplined regarding his approach to schoolwork and described being highly motivated to take specialized classes to pursue his future career as a mechanic, which I interpreted as a strong indication that he highly adhered to *primacy of work*. However, his responses on the subscale indicated that he had a low adherence to *primacy of work*. One possible explanation for this is that, in his interview, he briefly mentioned working a lot at his job at a grocery store and so may have only been thinking about that current job when answering items on this subscale rather than thinking about his schoolwork and future career goals. This points to how using the *primacy of work* subscale with an adolescent population likely needs further clarification as to whether schoolwork was considered work or not when answering the questionnaire. A minor trend that was noticed by looking at the *primacy of work* column in Table 2 was that there was twice the number of low adherences ($n = 6$) in the *high ER group* than in the *low ER group* ($n = 3$). Additional data in support of this observation were not obvious to me from analyzing the interviews but it likely reflects a statistical difference presented later in this chapter regarding a t-test finding (p. 165).

Summary of Alignment Results for Research Question 1

This alignment analysis between participants' responses on the CMNI-46 and their interviews tested the concerns in the literature over the potential incompatibility between

quantitative and qualitative findings regarding masculinity-related variables. I also conducted this analysis to help determine the extent to which the findings derived from these two methods, the surveys and the interviews, could be integrated in answering this study's second research question. Participants' responses on all eight CMNI-46 subscales had more instances of alignment than not when compared to their relevant interview excerpts and, based solely on the statistical calculations and thresholds (of Gwet's AC1 or the Kappa statistic), the strength of these alignments, in order of most aligned to least aligned, were as follows: *violence* (perfect); *emotional control* (almost perfect); *self-reliance* (moderate); *risk-taking* and *primacy of work* (weak); *heterosexual self-presentation* and *winning* (minimal); and *power over women* (not better than due to chance).

However, when considering other factors such as silences, partial alignments and the more in-depth item-by-item analyses, a more complete picture of the data alignment was seen. These are presented in order of most aligned to least aligned. I considered the alignment of participants responses relating to *emotional control* and *self-reliance* as very strong. The abundance of full agreements and lack of any silences for both subscales indicated the relevance of these topics to participants' experiences of being male and it meant there was a high number of data points that were compared, which strengthened the confidence I had in their alignment. There was also a strong degree of alignment between participants' responses regarding *violence*, although, unlike the previous two subscales, most of these were partial agreements and there were many more instance of silence, so less data points to directly compare. The alignment findings for *heterosexual self-presentation*, *risk-taking*, *winning*, and *primacy of work* were all similar in that they had statistical evidence of some actual alignment but the multiple ways those constructs could be interpreted by participants and by myself when coding them makes these

alignments more tentative. Finally, I considered the alignment for *power over women* as poor as it had no statistical evidence for alignment and there were signs of response bias on this subscale, making the results from this subscale highly suspect. Some suggestions or early implications of these alignment results were mentioned in the presentation of these findings, yet the full discussion of these results is continued in the first half of Chapter 6.

Statistical Results Comparing Adolescent Males by Emotional Restriction Levels

All participants ($N = 170$) completed two measures on the survey, the NMAS-BF and the CMNI-46, that were used in the statistical analyses for helping answer Research Question 2. The NMAS-BF represented participants' levels of emotional restriction and the eight subscales of the CMNI-46 represented participants' beliefs and experiences regarding eight masculine norms. The demographic information of the participants who participated in the survey are displayed on the next page in Table 3.

Table 3*Participant Survey Demographics*

Characteristic	Number of Participants (total $N = 170$)	Percentage (%) ^a
Gender Identity		
Male	166	97.6
Transgender Male	3	1.8
Non-Binary	1	.6
Race/Ethnicity ^b		
White	114	67.1
Asian	35	20.6
Aboriginal & White	7	4.1
Aboriginal	1	.6
Biracial	7	4.1
Indian	3	1.8
Arabic	1	.6
Persian	1	.6
No response	1	.6
Current Grade		
Grade 11	10	5.9
Grade 12	152	89.4
Grade 12+ ^c	8	4.7
Birth Year (age at time of research) ^d		
2000 (19/20)	6	3.5
2001 (18/19)	18	10.6
2002 (17/18)	141	82.9
2003 (17)	5	2.9

^a Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

^b Participants were given the option to self-identify their race/ethnicity, creating many categories. For those participants who selected “Biracial,” three participants did not specify further, one wrote “Black and White,” one wrote “Asian and White,” and two wrote “White/Mexican/Spanish.”

^c These were participants who were in a special apprenticeship program that contained students who had just graduated the previous year.

^d The exact age of each participant at the time they completed the survey was not specifically calculated as the surveys were completed over a period of four months and an exact age, considering each participants’ birthdays and when they completed the surveys, was not calculated except to ensure participants were at least 17 years of age, which they all were. It was discovered upon reassessing birthdays that one participant had turned 20 years of age a few months before they completed the survey. For this one case it was decided to include his data for all calculations.

Participants' ($N = 170$) descriptive statistics for the variable of *normative male alexithymia* from the NMAS-BF and the eight variables from the CMNI-46 are presented below in Table 4. All variables were assessed for assumptions of normality; no extreme cases of outliers were found and the skewness and kurtosis for all were within acceptable ranges (Field, 2018).

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for NMAS-BF and CMNI-46 Variables

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Skewness	Kurtosis
Normative Male Alexithymia	4.15	1.02	-.12	-.72
Emotional Control	1.67	.64	.05	-.31
Self-reliance	1.35	.77	.22	-.58
Violence	1.90	.59	-.66	.40
Heterosexual Self-presentation	1.47	.71	-.37	-.16
Power Over Women	.58	.48	.58	-.48
Risk-taking	1.51	.62	.24	-.28
Winning	1.54	.69	-.05	-.19
Primacy of Work	1.40	.63	.24	-.22

All variables above are similarly orientated in that increasingly higher scores indicated a greater adherence to that variable and decreasingly lower scores indicate a greater non-adherence to that variable. The midpoint for the first variable, *normative male alexithymia*, was 4, therefore the mean of 4.15 found in this study ($N = 170$) was near neutral. For the eight other variables from the CMNI-46 the mid-point value was 1.5 and, considering the range of their respective standard deviations, all fall within that mid-point value range except for *power over women*. The mean score for *power over women* was very low at 0.58, as was the standard deviation (0.48), indicating that most participants selected “strongly disagree” or “disagree” for all the items comprising this scale. Perhaps participants in this study were in fact strongly opposed to adhering to this norm, however, as discussed earlier in this chapter in the alignment analysis, it was possible that a social desirability bias or a halo effect skewed these results.

Correlational Hypotheses

Planned correlational analyses were conducted for the second research question to assess if and how adolescent males' NMAS-BF scores, which represented their level of emotional restriction, related to their adherence or endorsement of any of the eight norms of masculinity measured by the CMNI-46. Based on the relevant literature, I made hypotheses prior to the analysis of each possible correlations, which I now present and justify.

I hypothesized that there would be a positive correlation between scores of *normative male alexithymia* and scores on the *emotional control*, *self-reliance*, *heterosexual self-presentation*, and *power over women* subscales. I expected *emotional control* to have the greatest level of positive correlation as this subscale is described as relating to “emotional restriction and suppression” (Parent & Moradi, 2009, p. 176) and, as such, was a similar construct to the NMAS-BF. However, as pointed out in Chapter 2 (p. 72), the items on the NMAS-BF were more diverse and nuanced compared to the items on the *emotional control* subscale and so I did not expect these two variables to correlate perfectly.

I expected higher *self-reliance* scores to correlate with higher levels of *normative male alexithymia* scores because a strong relationship between higher levels of emotional restriction and reduced help-seeking behaviours have been previously found in studies with adult men (Gerdes & Levant, 2018; Parent & Moradi, 2009; Wong, Moon-Ho, et al., 2017). Moreover, higher *normative male alexithymia* scores were found to correlate with a lack of clear communication within relationships (Karakis & Levant, 2012), which may suggest a greater propensity to be self-reliant.

I expected *heterosexual self-presentation* scores to positively correlate with *normative male alexithymia* scores as *heterosexual self-presentation* has previously been found to correlate

with the similar construct of *emotional control* (Parent & Moradi, 2009). Moreover, other constructs related to emotional restriction have also been found to correlate with increased homonegativity (O’Neil, 2015). Another reason I expected this subscale to correlate significantly with *normative male alexithymia* scores was, as mentioned in Chapter 2 (p. 66), it has been suggested that males’ fear of homosexuality and fear of femininity are two major factors leading to more emotional suppression in some males (O’Neil, 2015).

For similar reasons, I believed *power over women* scores would also correlate with *normative male alexithymia* scores given the associations that expressing emotions are commonly viewed as more feminine. Another reason for my hypothesis was that more sexist views, which higher scores on *power over women* would likely indicate, can result in poorer relationships and poorer mental health (Wong, Klann, et al., 2017), which are similar outcomes that have been found in males with high levels of emotional restriction (O’Neil, 2015). Moreover, Parent and Moradi’s (2009) study found that in their sample of Canadian men there was a positive correlation between this subscale and the *emotional control* subscale.

Based on the literature, I might have expected that *violence* scores would be positively correlated with *normative male alexithymia* scores since greater scores on the *violence* subscale have been found to strongly relate to negative health outcomes—many of which were similar to the outcomes of emotional restriction (Gerdes & Levant, 2018). Additionally, it was possible that a reduced capacity or willingness to use words to express emotions might increase the potential for endorsing or partaking in physical confrontations. Yet, despite the possible relationship between *violence* and *normative male alexithymia* scores, I did not predict any correlation between these two variables due to my belief that the wording of the items comprising the *violence* subscale could possibly be interpreted by participants as standing up for injustices,

which I reasoned would confound any correlations from being observed. The content of this subscale was discussed more in-depth in the first half of this chapter (p. 148).

I expected the remaining three variables, *risk-taking*, *winning*, and *primacy of work*, would not have any significant correlations in either direction with *normative male alexithymia* scores. I reasoned that although greater risk-taking could relate to endorsing more restrictive norms of masculinity, it may also be that greater risk-taking expands one willingness to try difficult things (Lupton & Tulloch, 2002), which may include being more emotionally vulnerable with others. Therefore, I did not anticipate a clear relationship between these two variables. Moreover, previous studies have found mixed results as *risk-taking* scores have been found to have correlations with both positive and negative mental health outcomes (Gerdes & Levant, 2018; Wong, Moon-Ho, et al., 2017).

Similarly, although *winning* scores were found in one study to positively correlate with *emotional control* scores (Parent & Moradi, 2009), a meta-analysis found that greater scores on the *winning* subscale were associated with positive outcomes for mental health (Wong, Moon-Ho, et al., 2017). As such, I did not predict a correlation in either direction because although *winning* may be associated with the restrictive masculine norm of dominance, it might also relate to being more motivated to pursue emotional wellbeing. Furthermore, one study identified how adhering to the masculine norm of athleticism, which could be closely linked with the competition aspect found on the *winning* subscale, enabled adolescent males to more readily resist restrictive forms of masculinity in other areas because they were respected enough to do so (Coulter, 2003).

Lastly, I did not expect *primacy of work* scores to have any correlation with *normative male alexithymia* scores because a meta-analysis found that this subscale was not related to any

mental health outcomes (Wong, Moon-Ho, et al., 2017). In addition, even though a more recently published study did find a connection to health outcomes, some of these outcomes were positive and some were negative (Gerdes & Levant, 2018), and, as such, there were too many potentially confounding variables for me to hypothesize any significant correlation in either direction. This was especially true as I anticipated that the answers from the participants in my study might not be as consistent on this subscale compared to previous studies of adult males whose relationship with work is more clearly defined by their jobs.

Correlational Analyses

The results of the Pearson's correlations I conducted between all nine variables are presented below in Table 5. The primary focus for this research is on the first column, which presents the data assessing the relationship between *normative male alexithymia* and the eight CMNI-46 variables, as only these correlations were relevant to investigating the second research question, and, as such were planned. The remaining correlations between CMNI-46 variables presented here were exploratory and are only discussed briefly.

Table 5

Correlation Matrix Between NMAS-BF and CMNI-46 Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Normative Male Alexithymia	–							
2. Emotional Control	.71**	–						
3. Self-reliance	.55**	.50**	–					
4. Violence	.03	.07	.18*	–				
5. Heterosexual Self-presentation	.05	.09	.02	.27**	–			
6. Power Over Women	–.09	.01	.08	.33**	.39**	–		
7. Risk-taking	–.06	.09	.16*	.29**	.15*	.14	–	
8. Winning	–.08	–.00	.10	.34**	.40**	.44**	.24**	–
9. Primacy of Work	–.15	–.11	–.23**	.04	.19*	.11	.04	.18*

* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$.

Only two of the four masculine norms from the CMNI-46 hypothesized to positively correlate with *normative male alexithymia* scores did. The strongest positive correlation was with

emotional control, which was the variable most expected to correlate given that it and *normative male alexithymia* are both related to measuring emotional restriction. *Self-reliance* also had a strong positive correlation to *normative male alexithymia* scores, meaning that greater levels of emotional restriction were associated with greater levels of doing things by yourself without asking for help. This relationship follows that if adolescent males are not as able or willing to share with others about their feelings then they are less inclined to ask for assistance from other people as well. Or, said differently, if one's emotions are kept to oneself and are dealt with more privately, then it is likely other matters are dealt with similarly. Unexpectedly, neither the subscales *heterosexual self-presentation* nor *power over women* had significant correlations with *normative male alexithymia* as hypothesized; possible explanations for this are discussed in Chapter 6 (p. 230). Expectedly, all the remaining variables, *violence*, *risk-taking*, *winning*, and *primacy of work*, were not found to have any significant correlation with *normative male alexithymia* scores.

Columns labelled 2–8 in Table 5 were exploratory correlations conducted between all the eight variables on the CMNI-46. Although any interpretations of these are beyond the scope of this current research there were several significant correlations among them, particularly with *violence* and *heterosexual self-presentation*; each having significant positive correlations with four other subscales. As such, adherence and resistance to these two norms could be examined in much more detail in future research to better understand the type of relationship that exists between these and their correlating variables, especially since both of these subscales have been associated with multiple negative mental health outcomes (Gerdes & Levant, 2018; Parent & Moradi, 2011). That said, none of the correlations found in the exploratory analyses were as

strongly related as the two found in the planned analysis involving *normative male alexithymia* scores.

Comparing Norm Adherence Between Participants in the Top and Bottom 15% of Normative Male Alexithymia Scores

For the final statistical analysis for investigating Research Question 2 I separately grouped participants who had the highest 15% of *normative male alexithymia* scores and participants who had the lowest 15% of *normative male alexithymia scores*. I then compared the two group's means on the eight CMNI-46 subscales using independent-sample t-tests. This statistical analysis helped me determine if there was a lot of "noise" or obfuscations regarding CMNI-46 subscale adherence from participants within the midrange of *normative male alexithymia* scores. As such, by only looking at adolescent males' norm adherence from those at the far ends of the continuum regarding emotional restriction, it was possible to see if more significant differences emerged there. After participants with tied *normative male alexithymia* scores were included in the top and bottom 15%, both groups had 28 participants. The gender identity, ethnicity, and grade levels of the two groups are given in Table 6 on the next page, as well as the descriptive statistics regarding each of the eight CMNI-46 variables. Skewness and kurtosis stats, or other tests of normality, were not relevant to include as this data intentionally did not compare means from a normally distributed sample.

Table 6*Demographics and Descriptive Statistics Comparing Top and Bottom 15% of NMA-BF Scores*

Demographic Characteristics	Low 15% NMA scores		Highest 15% NMA scores	
	Number of Participants (<i>n</i> = 28)	Percentage (%)	Number of Participants (<i>n</i> = 28)	Percentage (%)
Gender Identity				
Male	27	96.4	26	92.9
Transgender Male	1	3.6	2	7.1
Race/Ethnicity				
White	17	60.7	18	64.3
Asian	7	25	6	21.4
White and Aboriginal	1	3.6	1	3.6
Aboriginal	–	–	1	3.6
Indian	3	10.7	–	–
Persian	–	–	1	3.6
Arabic	–	–	1	3.6
Grade				
11 (age range 16–17)	–	–	2	7.1
12 (age range 17–18)	26	92.9	26	92.9
12+ (age range 18–19)	2	7.1	–	–
Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Normative Male Alexithymia	2.60	0.38	5.63	0.26
Emotional Control	0.99	0.40	2.35	0.48
Self-reliance	0.78	0.58	1.93	0.77
Violence	1.78	0.55	1.82	0.67
Heterosexual Self-presentation	1.46	0.67	1.29	0.86
Power Over Women	0.58	0.52	0.40	0.39
Risk-taking	1.59	0.55	1.48	0.78
Winning	1.57	0.69	1.29	0.85
Primacy of Work	1.54	0.16	1.16	0.67

The results from the t-tests between the two groups yielded three masculine norms that differed significantly between the two groups. On average, participants with the highest 15% of *normative male alexithymia* scores scored greater on *emotional control* ($M = 2.35$, $SE = 0.09$) than those with the lowest 15% of *normative male alexithymia* scores ($M = 0.99$, $SE = 0.08$). This difference, -1.59 , BCa 95% CI $[-1.59, -1.11]$, was significant, $t(54) = -11.32$, $p < 0.001$, and represented an extremely large effect size of $d = 3.08$.

Similarly, participants with the highest 15% of *normative male alexithymia* scores reported greater self-reliance ($M = 1.93$, $SE = 0.14$) than those with the lowest 15% of *normative male alexithymia* scores ($M = 0.78$, $SE = 0.11$). This difference, -1.15 , BCa 95% CI $[-1.51, -$

.79], was significant, $t(54) = -6.33$, $p < 0.001$, and also represented a very large effect size of $d = 1.69$. These two differences were not surprising as they aligned with the only two significant correlational results involving the full 170 participants.

The additional masculine norm where adherence was significantly different between the two 15% groups was *primacy of work*. On average, participants in the top 15% of *normative male alexithymia* scores (i.e., high level of emotional restriction) did not prioritize work ($M = 1.16$, $SE = 0.13$) as much as those in the bottom 15% of *normative male alexithymia* scores ($M = 1.54$, $SE = 0.11$). This difference, 0.38, BCa 95% CI [0.04, 0.71], was significant, $t(54) = 2.237$, $p = 0.03$, and represented a medium effect size of $d = 0.61$. Because this difference only emerged when comparing the far ends of the spectrum regarding emotional restriction, it appears adherence to *primacy of work* is not strongly related to all levels of emotional restriction. Finally, as mentioned during the alignment analysis, this finding may reflect the observation noted that in Table 2 the *low ER group* had notably more instances of medium adherence to *primacy of work* whereas the *high ER group* had more instances of low adherence.

Summary of Statistical Results Comparing Adolescent Males by Emotional Restriction Levels

The various statistical analyses outlined in this chapter were conducted to help answer the second research question: *To what extent do adolescent males' experiences and beliefs of being male vary, based on their levels of emotional restriction?* Their results suggest that adolescent males of various levels of emotional restriction (as measured by the NMAS-BF) have more in common than not regarding their adherence to masculine norms (as measured by the CMNI-46). Out of the eight masculine norms measured, participants of various levels of emotional restriction only differed in their adherence to the norms of *emotional control* and *self-reliance*; these were both positively correlated with *normative male alexithymia* scores. The remaining six

masculine norms were found to have no correlations. Of these, the lack of correlations with *heterosexual self-presentation* and *power over women* were most surprising given previous research, however, concerns with the validity of participants' *power over women* responses may explain that null result. The only other significant difference noted was that when the 15% most and 15% least emotionally restricted participants' norm adherence was compared, adherence to *primacy of work* also differed. Here, the less emotionally restricted participants were found to conform more to the masculine norm of *primacy of work*. Further discussions and implications of the results in this chapter are found in Chapter 6 (p. 243), in combination with the discussions and implications from the qualitative results from the interviews. These qualitative results from the interviews are presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Thematic Analysis Results from Interviews Comparing Adolescent Males by Emotional Restriction Levels

In this chapter, I present the themes I identified from the hermeneutic phenomenological analysis of the interviews. The themes pertaining to the 10 participants in the *low ER group* and the themes pertaining to the 10 participants in the *high ER group* are juxtaposed throughout this chapter to help investigate the central research question of this study: *To what extent do adolescent males' experiences and beliefs of being male vary, based on their levels of emotional restriction?* The aim of answering this question was to better understand and support adolescent males' social and emotional development and wellbeing by precisely investigating the complexities of adolescent males' norm adherence, resistance, and relationships with emotionality. The demographic information of the 20 interviewed participants was previously provided in Chapter 4 (see Table 1, p. 139).

In Table 7 below, I provide a list of the essential themes (themes that appeared to be a vital aspect to every participant within the same ER group's experience of being an adolescent male) and the subthemes (themes that appeared in most participants' experiences being an adolescent male but not in all). Table 7 also indicates the order in which I present each theme in this chapter and which ER group, or groups, these themes apply to.

Table 7

Summary of Essential Themes and Subthemes for Each Participant Group

Essential Themes	Subthemes	Applicable Group(s)
1. Immersed in Masculine Pressures	Fathers as Masculine Guides and Foils	Low ER Group & High ER Group
2. Navigating Masculine Pressures	Consistently Resisting Masculine Norms ^a Consistently Adhering to Masculine Norms ^b	Low ER Group & High ER Group
3. The Importance of Emotional Safe Havens	Females as Emotional Safe Havens	Low ER Group
4. Conscious Diminishing of Own Emotions	–	High ER Group
5. Sense of Masculine Difference from Male Peers	–	Low ER Group
6. Self-reliance	The Loneliness of Aloneness	High ER Group

Note. Essential themes applied to all participants within the applicable group(s)' experiences of being male and subthemes applied to most participants' experiences of being male within the applicable group(s).

^aThis subtheme applied uniquely to the participants in the *low ER group* aside from three exceptions. ^bThis subtheme applied uniquely to the participants in the *high ER group* aside from the same three exceptions as the above note and is discussed more later in this chapter.

As I discuss these essential themes and subthemes, I also detail the findings from the interviews that I used to identify and arrive at each theme. I primarily present these findings using interview excerpts from participants that exemplified typical statements made by others, unless otherwise noted. All direct quotes from participants are italicized in this chapter for added clarity. The process for how I arrived at each theme from the interview data was described in Chapter 3 (p. 125) and is depicted further in Appendix O. Additionally, I incorporate a few subheadings within the discussion of essential themes, not to indicate a subtheme, but to organize the content of the findings pertaining to each essential theme into smaller sections for increased readability.

Theme 1 (All): Immersed in Masculine Pressures

The first essential theme—the sense of being immersed in masculine pressures—was at the forefront of all 20 participants’ experiences of being an adolescent male. This theme referred to participants’ constant exposure to socialization messages pressuring them to be, or to present themselves in certain ways. These pressures are referred to as masculine because participants believed these to be exclusively, or at least uniquely, tied to their experiences as males. There were two prominent masculine pressures that were ubiquitous to participants’ experiences and encompassed all other ancillary masculine pressures they mentioned: (a) the pressure to limit emotional expression; and (b) the pressure to portray physical and mental toughness. Every participant highlighted at least one of these, with the vast majority directly mentioning both ($n = 17$).

Many participants claimed that the pressure to restrict their emotions was the most defining aspect of being an adolescent male. Birjot explained, “*The biggest thing was emotions—actually talking about emotions. We [males] don’t really do that, I guess because it’s too soft and we need a hard shell, which kind of sucks.*” Denver’s response also typified this perspective: “*The biggest kind of male to female difference is, as a male, you’re told, ‘Don’t cry. Don’t be a girl.’*” This was further echoed by Yuri, who said, “*The way I see it is that girls...they’re allowed to show emotion. That’s normal for them but the ones the guys do is not okay.*” In particular, the kind of emotions that were “*not okay*” were feelings around sadness and hurt, which is further discussed in Theme 4 (p. 200).

The second most prominent masculine pressure for participants was to be physically and mentally tough. The next two excerpts exemplify this, the connection between physical and

mental toughness, and further reveal how this pressure was often connected to the previous pressure of limiting emotional expression:

You definitely don't want to be seen as weak or vulnerable. That's not something people would consider positive traits [for males], especially when...from a young age, when you have such a general—not misguided, just not as in-depth, just...super rough understanding of what a man is, you just want to prove that you're strong physically. That's super important. But now, that's not—it's just way more about mental toughness and what you can endure. (Zachery, high ER group)

As demonstrated here, toughness was not understood by participants as just relating to brute strength (i.e., physical toughness) but also being able to endure or overcome internal obstacles (i.e., mental toughness). These two aspects of toughness were clearly visible in Harrison's experiences growing up:

I definitely remember, like if I fell off something on the playground and hurt myself, I'd try to play it off as much as possible, even if it was something kind of concerning to me. I'd always be like, "Oh no, I'm fine, I didn't feel it." (Harrison, low ER group)

As such, his portrayal of physical toughness also required that that he exert mental toughness to overcome (i.e., ignore) any of his concerns regarding his physical wellbeing. Furthermore, portraying this toughness also required him to keep his emotions in check so that his lie of being "fine" was believable to his peers. Participants did not think any of these masculine pressures were unique to their own experiences but assumed all males were collectively immersed in these pressures because they were so embedded throughout society:

We all have this thing we've been hearing since we were little that men aren't allowed to share emotions, you have to man up and deal with things...You have to show yourself in a

specific way otherwise you're not going to line up with society's guidelines...[which are] you don't show, you don't cry, you don't show any emotions in any sense, you're supposed to act tough, you have to be strong, and you can't feel bad when you get pain or when you hurt someone. (Fraser, low ER group)

Although Fraser here separately named the pressure for physical and mental toughness (i.e., receiving pain and inflicting pain) from the pressure to shut off from emotional pain, these pressures often functioned in tandem; toughness frequently required some form of emotional suppression, and emotional suppression could be used to help convey one's toughness.

As seen in nearly all the aforementioned excerpts, participants typically described masculine pressures as outlining what they, as males, were not supposed to do or be rather than what they, as males, should do and be. For example: restrict your emotions so as not to be considered female or feminine; be physically and mentally tough so as not to be considered weak. In this way, adherence to masculine pressures was positioned in participants' lives as an antidote for undesirable outcomes, which could also be externally measured to determine how well participants aligned with the hegemonic ideals of masculinity. In turn, having more external markers of an idealized form of masculinity could provide participants with more social power, particularly among other males. Most participants ($n = 18$) spoke of how masculine pressures functioned as a form of social currency, in terms of how adhering to them would "make you cool," as seen in this exchange:

Vince: It's like you always got to be better, better than the other one [i.e., male peer].

Back to the competition thing. There's a lot of competition."

Me: Has that continued to this day?

Vince: Yeah or you gotta do certain stuff to be cool, which if you think about it, is not like good things.

Me: What kind of things?

Vince: Like smoking, stuff like that. It would make you cool if you do it.

Birjot offered a different term to describe how masculine pressures functioned as social currency amongst males: “The word ‘cool’ is like grade 1 level stuff, but I don’t know what the word is. I just say authority. My friend and I say authority.” In either case, this authority or coolness that adhering to masculine pressures created, could provide acceptance, respect, status, and connection to others. These beliefs were clear in Jadrien’s description of how he used to think about masculinity back in Grade 8:

I’ve got to be super athletic, I got to be super tough, super strong, super confident. Like these are ways I’m supposed to act. I’m seeing all my friends who are these athletes and hockey players become super popular, I’m going, “Okay, I have to act like this in order to achieve this and this.” (Jadrien, low ER group)

Although participants recognized that adhering to masculine pressures could come at a cost (e.g., doing “not good things,” using harmful substances, pretending to be a certain way to fit in), participants were also familiar with the potential costs of nonconformity. Most often, the cost identified by participants was having male friends question your status as a man. For example, Ian said that his male friends would call another male a “pussy” or a “simp”¹⁹ if they were to be emotionally expressive. Notably, these insults were associated with femininity, which often epitomized the ultimate slander that could be given to one’s manliness. The cost of

¹⁹ Colloquial slang word that is often seen as the opposite of a pimp (i.e., a simp is controlled by a woman) and is understood as something negative. As defined by Birjot, to which Ian later agreed with this definition, it is meant as an insult for when a man “praise[s] women so much and you’re just like, always at their feet.”

nonconformity was often so imbedded in participants' experiences of being male that they often described policing their own level of manliness before anyone else had the chance to. For example, Harrison was interested in "*acting and singing*" while growing up but never explored or tried it because he knew that it was "*odd*" for boys to be into that. These excerpts demonstrate, in part, the extent of participants' immersion in masculine pressures as they were hyper aware of how their behaviours could potentially be interpreted by others and could reflect poorly on their masculinities.

However, what was considered an ideal of masculinity could change depending on differing contexts. For instance, two participants mentioned how they thought overachieving at school would reduce their masculine currency among their male peers whereas many other participants did exceedingly well at school and never mentioned that relating to any dynamic of masculinity. An excerpt from Evan epitomizes the sense of how pressures of masculinity were a de facto part of adolescent males' experiences. As he struggled to find words to explain what the masculine pressures actually were, he finally said, "*It's hard to explain it. It's just like—a man!*" Although this was a very non-specific definition, it still communicated a powerful idea of how intertwined one's adherence to masculine pressures were to one's masculine identity.

Sources of Masculine Pressures

Many participants, like Uriah, believed these masculine pressures were so embedded throughout society that they were in "*everything*," however, participants' experiences revealed three dominant sources of masculine pressures: peer groups, media, and fathers. Participants' relationships with fathers were identified separately as its own subtheme and is discussed in the next section as there were multiple facets involving fathers relating to many participants' experiences and beliefs of being male beyond just being a source of masculine pressures.

Peer groups, the most frequently discussed source of masculine pressures, were identified in the previous discussion of how adherence to masculine pressures functioned as a form of social currency amongst males. Notably, nearly half of participants ($n = 8$) specifically identified the ages of 13–15 as when the pull towards masculine pressures was most intense for them; often this coincided and was discussed in relation to their transition into secondary school. Perhaps this suggests that masculine pressures thrive when the social landscapes around adolescent males are newly changing and when fitting-in with peers is more uncertain.

The next major source of masculine pressures that participants identified was the media, whether it was social media, movies, books, or magazines in grocery stores. As Sawyer explained,

It's like in things like TV and movies and books. The male is always considered a big, strong, buff guy and like strong, and stoic, well-rooted...In the stories, the male is always portrayed as the shoulder to cry on, or sometimes it's like that. I think I personally resonated with that. Like in the beginning it was just a little bit I resonated with that, like "Oh, that's cool." Then I started doing that a bit more and relating with the stories a bit more and then just so on and so on and so on. (Sawyer, high ER group)

Not only did Sawyer identify media as a source of masculine pressures but also conveyed how it was a powerful medium that impacted his understanding around masculinity that grew as his exposure to it increased. Sawyer also mentioned that although social media was more recently showing a lot less restrictive examples of masculinity, he still sees “*twice as many people*” in media embodying the stereotypically restrictive masculine traits.

Despite participants describing masculine pressures as being taught to them explicitly, regardless of which source, every participant but one, Xuan, described these pressures as

primarily being implicitly communicated to them. One exemplary experience of this was when Harrison reflected on how he had, for a time, internalized the belief that males were not as emotionally expressive as females:

I've only been to a couple of funerals in my life but every time I tend to see all my male relatives tend to be kind of just straight-face, paying their respects, not that much emotion. Whereas typically my female relatives are just overwhelmed with emotion. So that kind of solidified it in my mind that males tend to be more reserved and not show their emotions. (Harrison, low ER group)

In this way, a crucial part of being an adolescent male for these participants was paying attention and being vigilant to what the normal or acceptable male behaviours were around them, which, again, were primarily communicated to them via peers, the media, and their fathers.

Fathers as Masculine Guides and Foils

The last major source of masculine pressures participants mentioned were their fathers, however, fathers were just as frequently mentioned by participants as helping them resist masculine pressures. Participants' multi-faceted relationships with their fathers was identified as its own subtheme as 18 of the 20 participants expressed that their experiences of being male were profoundly influenced by their fathers. This role of fathers in participants' experiences being male was often described in contrasting ways. For some, their fathers were guides or templates of the men they wanted to become whereas for others their fathers served as a foil to highlight areas in which they did not want to become like their fathers. Some fathers guided participants towards the previously identified masculine pressures:

He was very masculine, I'd say in that he didn't really show his emotions around me, or his kids for that matter...and I think that passiveness towards emotion sharing, especially

with their own family, and me looking at him...kind of imprinted on me as a younger kid that, for some reason, it wasn't okay, or you shouldn't share your emotions with anyone at all. (Ryo, high ER group)

This sentiment, that fathers were the authority that participants looked up to for determining what being a man meant or looked like, was shared by others. As Yuri said about his stepdad's masculinity, "So, well if he's doing that [i.e., restricting his emotions], and I don't see anything wrong with him, then it must be okay."

Similarly, fathers' masculinities also guided other participants away from masculine pressures. Jadrien explained how his construction-worker dad, who had "traditional masculine parts to him but also kind of newer masculine types as well," offered him a tangible example of resistance:

My dad especially was very considerate of who I am and...[I know that he's] not going to impose anything on to me. Even he's not like the traditional man, like he watches soap operas and stuff like that. He's definitely not super masculine and I think that—I see that and go: I don't have to be what this is supposed to be, what masculinity is supposed to be, I can be what masculinity actually is through what his masculinity is. (Jadrien, low ER group)

Another example of this was Fraser who discussed how his dad modelled a type of masculinity that embraced emotional expression and was an instrumental guide in teaching him emotional regulation techniques to employ when he felt overwhelmed.

Although many participants looked to their fathers as masculine guides, whether towards or in contrast with the predominant masculine pressures, others looked to certain aspects of their fathers as a foil to the men they wanted to be. This was most poignantly seen in Zachery's

answer to what he thinks it means to be a man: *“I think it’s everything my dad kind of lost.”* He elaborated about how his father used to come home from work:

He’d be so happy to see us, he’d bring me something, whether candy, or [a] bike. He definitely cared and invested his time, teach [sic] me how to do certain things. I feel like that’s definitely fizzled out now [after the divorce] where he’s, to a certain extent, just given up on people’s opinions of him. Which, in a way is a good thing, but in another way just has ruined his and my mom’s relationship in the sense where he just doesn’t care. And I just look at him, when he’s not understanding, when he’s not compassionate, when he is loud, or angry and mean and just a dick. I definitely look at that and you know, if there’s one thing I want, it’s to never be like him. (Zachery, high ER group)

Here Zachery’s reflections highlighted how his father transitioned from being a source of joy and connection to one of pain and disconnection, the latter of which he wants to avoid at all costs.

More typical examples representing participants who viewed their fathers as masculine foils was Cameron and Birjot, who highlighted only a single aspect of their fathers’ masculinities that they did not want to emulate—their father’s relationship with emotions. Cameron’s father had not pursued emotional growth in the same way Cameron felt he himself had, and he acknowledged, *“that makes it more difficult for me to connect with him.”* Birjot too critiqued his father’s limited emotional capabilities, but he did want to emulate his father financially:

My goal is to match or even surpass his yearly income so I could just—see like that’s where it comes in—so I can be the man of the house, so I can actually make him retire and I could surpass his income. (Birjot, low ER group)

Some participants’ fathers exemplified the type of men they wanted to be, for some their fathers exemplified the type of men they did not want to be, and sometimes it was a bit of both,

as seen by Birjot. Regardless, fathers were often communicating messages about masculine pressures to their sons and helping them navigate their masculine identities. There were no discernable differences in the types of these father-son relationships between participants in the *low ER group* and participants in the *high ER group*. The only thing I noted was that there was overall less physical proximity with biological fathers for participants in the *high ER group* as five of them lived primarily with their mothers as the result of their parents' separation/divorce.

Theme 2 (All): Navigating Masculine Pressures

The second essential theme pertaining to all participants' experiences of being adolescent males was their need to actively navigate the masculine pressures they encountered. The findings in this study suggest that they navigated this by adhering to and/or resisting the predominate masculine norms. Masculine pressures and masculine norms are used somewhat interchangeably as the two predominant masculine pressures—limit emotional expression and portray physical and mental toughness—were masculine norms in their own rite. When participants' adherence and/or resistance is discussed in this section, it refers specifically to these two pressures/norms, unless otherwise specified.

Two subthemes were identified that best described participants' navigation of the two predominant masculine pressures in either one of two ways: (1) *consistently resisting masculine norms*, or (2) *consistently adhering to masculine norms*. Aside from three exceptions, the first subtheme best described the response to masculine pressures of participants in the *low ER group* and the second subtheme best described the response of participants in the *high ER group*. Although all three participants who were exceptions aligned to the masculine norm of emotional restriction in a way that accurately matched their group label, when it came to their overall perspective in navigating masculine pressures, Uriah and Qasem's responses fit better within the

first subtheme whereas Grant's fit better within the second. These exceptions highlight how navigating masculine pressures was an ongoing process for participants that, despite having two distinct subthemes, involved fluidity and nuance within each. For example, participants categorized in the first subtheme still described experiences of adhering to some masculine pressures at times, just as some participants categorized in the second subtheme described experiences of resisting certain masculine pressures. I chose the adjective, "consistently," for naming both subthemes to represent this complex and ongoing nature of resistance and adherence while still acknowledging that participants generally had one of two different approaches in which they navigated masculine pressures.

Consistently Resisting Restrictive Masculine Norms

The nine participants in the *low ER group*, plus Qasem and Uriah ($n = 11$), all described being at point in their lives where they were now consistently able to resist the masculine pressures to adhere to restrictive masculine norms. This was especially true regarding the pressure to emotionally restrict. Qasem and Uriah were the exception to this, yet, even they, alongside all the other nine participants, were critical of this and other masculine norms that required them and other males to be a certain way. One basic but still demonstrative example of this was from Uriah, who thought that the expectation that men should not cry was "*really dumb*." What differentiated Qasem and Uriah's relationships with emotional restriction from the rest of the participants in the *high ER group* was that they both claimed their emotional restriction "*wasn't really related to masculinity*" (Qasem) but rather from relational traumas. This dynamic is detailed in Theme 4 (p. 200).

Given the extent to which participants described being immersed in masculine pressures, it was unsurprising that it took time and effort for these 11 participants to be able to resist them

consistently. This journey was well-articulated by Fraser who had always felt free to be emotionally expressive at home but admitted he used to try to conform to masculine norms while at school:

If I ha[d] emotions I would try to hide it...I have to try to have a flat face and try to hide emotion [at school] so no one knows anything, and I look like I'm perfectly fine because that's how we're supposed to be. (Fraser, low ER group)

Eventually his mask of emotional inauthenticity at school became too much for him and he felt he had to change, although change was a gradual process:

Fraser: That mask at first, it felt like—when you have the mask on, you're wanting to take it off so you can be the way you are at home. But, as you slowly learn to deal with your emotion, you realize the mask has been fading all through that time to the point where you don't even realize you have it on anymore.

Me: In the sense that the mask itself isn't there, or you forget that you're wearing the mask?

Fraser: The mask is not there anymore. You've opened yourself up more to the point where your home life is your life outside also.

In this subtheme, other typical examples of resisting masculine pressures to become more authentic to one's identity included Uriah, the only transgender participant interviewed, who described it taking years of intentional personal growth to become confident enough to reject the pressure to be athletic or strong and figure out his identity for himself. He reported that he now accepts that he is “*more of an artistic type*” of person and enjoys the freedom of wearing nail polish in public. Similarly, Harrison hid his “*empathetic*” nature from others for years as he feared judgment that his male peers would consider his empathy to be feminine. It was only

recently, in the past year, that he claimed to have started expressing that part of himself and, to his relief, found that *“nobody’s actually reacted in a negative way to it.”*

The only participant categorized in this subtheme who did not describe at least a somewhat difficult or gradual journey towards resisting masculine pressures was Evan. He felt he always could be as emotionally expressive in any situation as he wanted to be and that he *“didn’t think twice of it [the masculine pressure to be tough].”* Regarding his response to this masculine pressure of physical toughness, he explained, *“I just went with it...because I’ve always been strong.”* As such, he was unique in that he did not claim to feel *pressured* by that masculine norm because he naturally excelled in that area.

Despite all participants in this subtheme feeling and describing experiences of being able to currently resist masculine pressures consistently, for some it was difficult to articulate precisely why or how they had gotten there:

Maybe I realized the possible harm, but also I realized the repercussions on your personality. I don’t want to be the way I see some of the people in that culture being, I don’t know. I think I’ve always thought that. It might be kind of a slow, kind of snowball effect of events. (Denver, low ER group)

Yet despite some attribution uncertainty, the key elements in resisting masculine pressures for these 11 adolescent males appeared to be most evidently related to (a) their desire to be true to themselves, and (b) having the confidence to do so. These two factors were interrelated as it often took confidence to step into their own masculine identities as opposed to others’ expectations of their masculine identities. This dynamic is demonstrated by Jadrien here:

I think as I grew through high school, I think I realized I don’t really need to show off my masculinity. I grew more confident in who I was as a man and I think by choosing not to

rely on other people, like other people's popularity or masculinity, I kind of grew my masculinity, I would say. (Jadrien, low ER group)

Jadrien was not the only participant whose confidence to step into his own understanding of masculinity increased throughout secondary school, starting around or shortly after age 14. Ian's increased confidence that helped him resist masculine pressures happened at a similar age but, for him, his confidence was connected with the physical changes brought on by puberty when he was "*kind of slimming down, getting taller*" and "*a really pretty girl*" showed interest in him. Similarly, Aaron, who was bullied in school for many years, talked about how confidence came with his huge growth spurt around that age: "*[It] gave me a little bit more confidence because I was bigger, I could kind of hold my own.*" Therefore, with more physical confidence came a sense of more social confidence that helped him better resist the masculine pressures that he wanted to resist, particularly around emotional restriction. This aspect of having some parts of your internal identity align with some external ideals of masculinity (e.g., being strong, athletic, good-looking), which in turn, helps to resist masculine norms, was similarly seen in Ian's, Aaron's, and Evan's interviews.

Athleticism was likely a relevant factor in most of these 11 participants' abilities to consistently resist masculine norms, as seven participants described being athletic and playing sports as an important aspect of their identity. The reasons they gave for being involved in sports were never for the sake of adhering to a masculine norm or because they felt the masculine pressure to do so, rather they played sports for their own enjoyment and to fit with their own sense of identity. Therefore, not only may alignment with some ideals of masculinity increase participants' overall confidence to resist masculine norms, but perhaps by aligning with some

masculine ideals they were provided greater social power to resist other masculine norms (e.g., emotional expression) and receive less judgment from peers for doing so.

Even though these 11 participants all critiqued and were frequently able to resist masculine pressures, resistance to masculine norms was complex and ongoing. For instance, Cameron described being undeterred by the negative comments he has received over the years asking if he was gay:

It just doesn't affect me. Some of these comments—it's the equivalent of somebody talking about what the weather is like. It's just something they're talking about. It doesn't reflect anything about me and if it did, then it also doesn't matter. (Cameron, low ER group)

Moreover, he introduced me to the term “*homey-sexual*,” saying that he and his male friends at school, who are all heterosexual, are comfortable showing affection to each other and will sometimes even kiss each other on the back of the neck by surprise for fun. Yet, despite being comfortable with playful affection among his friends, he said that among his peers “*it's still like an undesirable thing...to act like that—to act flamboyant would be the word.*” This revealed that even a “*homey-sexual*” group of adolescent males still avoided certain behaviours so as not to be perceived as gay unless perhaps if it was done in a joking manner. Even though Cameron appeared able to resist that pressure for himself, he gave no indication that he was speaking up and challenging that norm within his group of friends.

Out of all participants who consistently resisted masculine pressures, Birjot appeared to feel the greatest sense of current tension between resisting and adhering to masculine norms. He lamented that “*it [i.e., the pressures to be masculine] just sucks honestly*” on 15 separate occasions during our interview. Although he strongly critiqued and resisted many masculine pressures that he said were especially prevalent within his Punjabi peer group culture (e.g.,

smoking, drinking, drugs, leading multiple girls on, and flexing wealth), he expressed feeling a level of resentment that many of his female peers seemed to prefer males who adhered more to those pressures. Moreover, he told me about a recent experience that left him trying to adhere to the masculine norm of heterosexual self-presentation, which came at the cost of his authenticity as well as his enjoyment:

I can't really be myself I guess. If I don't show that masculine side then apparently I'm not a man, or I'm acting like a child. I guess I'm just gonna say it— my sister even says, "Oh you're acting gay." But I'm like... "Listen I'm not, I'm just acting goofy, but if it's like that I'll just change." And the next day, the next following weeks, I just started acting more masculine because that kind of affected me. We did talk about it and she was "Oh, I'm just joking." "Yeah whatever," I say, "I'm just messing around like I'm joking too." But it's just that standard that you have to be an uptight, big, strong guy that just has to be always...you can't show any side of yourself where you're just like comfortable.

(Birjot, low ER group)

Although all participants comprising this subtheme critiqued masculine pressures, the object of their critique when talking with me was always the restrictive norms of masculinity, never men or maleness in general. Jadrien, however, was the only one who clearly put this into words:

I'm proud and comfortable to be a guy...Oh yeah, there's been some negative parts to being a guy, some negative pressures, [but] there's also been so many positives in being a man...I'm proud to be a man but I'm also proud to be a man who's able to learn more and become not just a good man, but a good human being. (Jadrien, low ER group)

Jadrien's emphasis on becoming a "good human being" more than "just a good man" analogously captures the collective experience of all participants able to navigate masculine

pressures through consistent resistance—their focus was on becoming and being their authentic selves more or above any prescriptive notions from external sources as to what their identity as males was supposed to be or look like.

Consistently Adhering to Restrictive Masculine Norms

In contrast to the 11 participants discussed above, the remaining eight participants in the *high ER group*, plus Grant ($n = 9$), navigated masculine pressures most often by adhering to them. This was particularly regarding the two most prominent masculine norms previously identified: emotional restriction and physical/mental toughness. Grant was the one exception to this in that he was very emotionally expressive as he talked to his parents on the phone every day; often about his struggles of feeling lonely and having difficulties making friends in Canada. Yet, there appeared to be a level of cognitive dissonance as he believed that “*it’s not mannish*” to complain about having problems in your life. As such, Grant’s ability and willingness to be emotionally expressive did not appear to be an active act of resistance against masculine pressures as characterized by participants’ experiences in the previous subtheme.

Of these nine participants that consistently adhered to masculine pressures, there were some who demonstrated much more of a willingness in doing so, whereas others were much more reluctant or conflicted about it. One such example of what I referred to as *willing adherence* was Yuri, who reported that he deliberately donned a masculine posture of positivity and embraced his role as a “*super jokey, super goofy, just fun to be around*” person, which was in accordance with his understanding of what a man should be like:

Yuri: Yeah, I think it’s [i.e., happiness] the easiest one [i.e., emotion] to portray. You know, put the mask on of being happy. I think that’s the easiest one, so I’ve just always stuck to it.

Me: Has putting the mask on been helpful for you?

Yuri: Yeah it has, because in my four years of high-school I've forgotten about my super emotional self and I've accepted the mask as being me. I know that sounds bad, but in the grand scheme, I think that's a good thing because I'm more likeable, less susceptible to emotions you know? I've kind of like rewrote myself in a way, but not really. I kind of tricked myself into believing I'm happy all the time so I must be happy. I've fully moved over to being the happy guy.

Me: And that feels genuine for you now?

Yuri: It feels more genuine than when I first started out, like I'm sad but I'm portraying myself as happy, and I'm making jokes but I don't feel in a joking mood. (Yuri, high ER group)

Even within this example of willing adherence to masculine norms, there still seemed to be indications of tension in doing so as Yuri described having to continually convince himself of the benefits of forgetting about his emotional susceptibility. Furthermore, he had yet to fully achieve that state of forgetfulness as, even after four years, he still could readily articulate that process to me. Evidently, he remained aware to some extent that a part of him still was “*sad*.” Other typical excerpts of willing adherence were previously seen in the subtheme regarding fathers, such as Ryo who observed the inexpressive emotionality of his father and internalized the message that this is what men are supposed to be like. As such, adherence was the logical step on their maturation journey to becoming men.

Participants who demonstrated what I termed as *reluctance adherence* to masculine norms, tended to be critical of masculine norms but, at the same time, did not see many viable alternatives and so continued to adhere. Of these, Sawyer spent the most time pointing out the

problems with masculine norms, as demonstrated when he was defining his idea of toxic masculinity:

I like to think about it as this idea of there is such thing as the perfect male. Like, "This is the peak specimen, this is the best you can be, strive to be this." Like this tall, buff, intelligent, all these things that are good...like is mentally stable, has only good days, wears a smile every day, big, strong, willing to help, like all these ideals of what society thinks the perfect male is. All of those projected onto one person who shouldn't exist, and doesn't, but that the idea of "Hey, I can be someone like that, let me try to be that." That idea is what I think toxic masculinity is. (Sawyer, high ER group)

Yet, despite expressing the unwinnable, or even "toxic" dynamic of never being able to fully achieve any idealized masculine standards, he admitted still striving to adhere to them, explaining, "That's what other people are into, like the big, burly guys so I want to be liked, so I want to be what people like, and what people like is these big, burly perfect dudes."

Regardless of whether participants were more willing or reluctant to adhere to masculine pressures, their primary reason for doing so was for acceptance and/or to be seen as cool, which can be observed in every excerpt presented thus far in this subtheme. However, there was much more complexity in how adhering to masculine norms functioned for these participants beyond acceptance. For instance, Vince discussed the importance of having physically tough friends "so they can protect you against other people." He then shared a story of the time his friend supported him and was willing to fight, if necessary, against some other male peers at school who were pressuring him to vape. This example demonstrates how adherence to masculine norms can accomplish many things simultaneously: it can strengthen the bond between an adolescent male and his friend, it can prevent bullying or social ostracization, it can offer

protection from other males, and it can help adolescent males' resist other behaviours associated with masculine pressures, such as vaping. Another example of how the outcomes of adhering to certain masculine norms were complex was seen with Zachery. He described being severely bullied throughout elementary school and responded to it with violence:

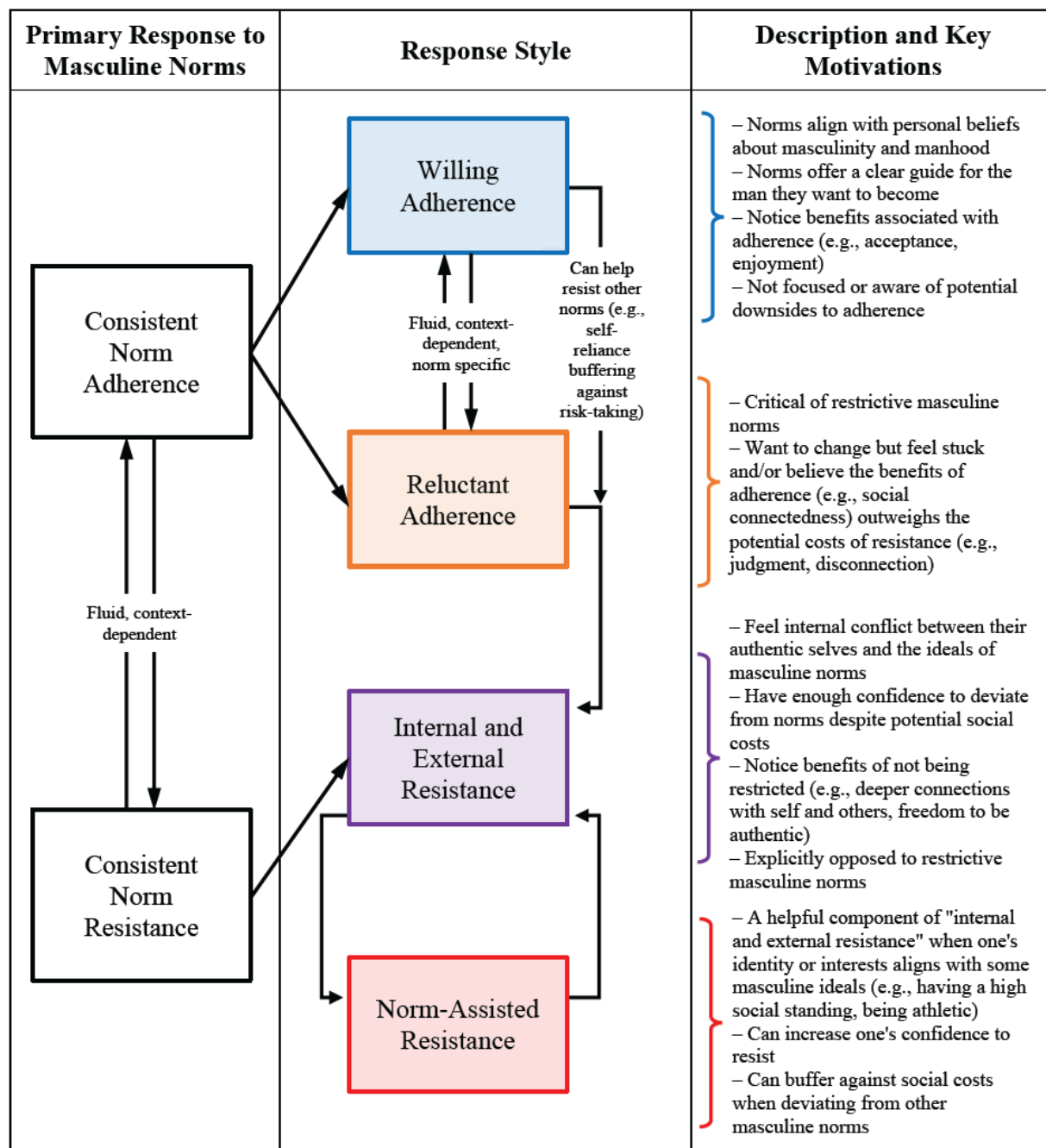
"I'd clap back, make sure no one thought I was weak or something, make sure no one could mess with me. And sometimes I'd just escalate into fights. I'd say I got into two fights a year for five years." (Zachery, high ER group)

Despite Zackery telling me that his propensity for violence is much lower now, he spoke positively about how adhering to the masculine norms of violence and toughness allowed him to at least maintain his own personal sense of strength during a period in his life that was extremely difficult. Similarly, Thomas' strong adherence to the beliefs that, as a man, he should be self-sufficient and deal with all his problems (emotional or otherwise) on his own, helped him be "*pretty resistant*" to peer pressures around taking illicit substances. In this way, as in the previous subtheme, navigating masculine pressures cannot be fully categorized as adherence or resistance as not only were masculine pressures constantly navigated by all 20 participants and influenced by various contexts, but because adherence to some masculine norms were even seen at times to provide resistance to others.

All 20 participants described that navigating the masculine pressures they encountered was an essential aspect of being an adolescent male, regardless of their level of emotional restriction. For the 11 participants who consistently resisted the predominant masculine norms, most of the *low ER group*, their need for authenticity was paramount in doing so. For the nine participants who consistently adhered to masculine pressures, most of the *high ER group*, their need for acceptance from others was foremost. For these latter participants, some viewed this as

transactional; increased connection with others for decreased connection with certain aspects of their own identity, whereas others believed that adhering to masculine pressures was the pathway towards the masculine identity that they should be aiming towards. The generalized patterns of participants' adherence and resistance to masculine norms and their key motivations for doing so that were described in this section are summarized below in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Patterns of Adolescent Male Masculine Norm Adherence and Resistance

Although many complexities and nuances were observed in participants' navigations of masculine pressures, there were also key response styles and differences in motivations that could be distinguished and clarified. The implications of these findings and the interactions between adherence and resistance as depicted in Figure 1 are explored further in Chapter 6 (p. 266). Even though the two general approaches to navigating masculine pressures—consistent resistance and consistent adherence to masculine norms—did not fully distinguish between the experiences of participants in the *low ER group* from those in the *high ER group*, their beliefs and approaches regarding emotional expression did contrast drastically. These differences are highlighted in the next two essential themes, one for each ER group.

Theme 3 (Low ER Group): Importance of Emotional Safe Havens

An essential part of being an adolescent male for the participants in the *low ER group* was the importance of having emotional safe havens. The term I created, “emotional safe havens,” refers to the figurative space these participants all had in their lives with specific people with whom they were able to be emotionally vulnerable with without fear of being judged. All the participants in the *low ER group* described many benefits that came from experiencing emotional safe havens and they all viewed them as significant aspects of their lives. There was considerable variance in how long these participants had experienced emotional safe havens; some described having had one with their parents for as long as they could remember and others described only really experiencing an emotional safe haven within the past year. What participants described sharing in their emotional safe havens was centred around their mental and emotional struggles which, more specifically, were primarily about “*the pressures of school or the pressures of...social life*” (*Jadrien, low ER group*). It was clear from participants that what

was shared in these safe havens was vulnerability and, as such, they did not express these feelings with just anyone.

In all cases, the foundation for emotional safe havens was trust. Ian's interview excerpt demonstrates this and was representative of the other participants' perspectives: "*I'm very particular about who I share that kind of stuff with, I have to trust them, and I have to know that they trust me.*" Similarly, Evan mentioned: "*I don't open up to a lot of people until I get to know them really well... it takes a while for me to open up, you have to be like the right person. You know, I'm not just going to spill myself to just a random person.*" Establishing this type of trust most often correlated with the length of time participants knew someone, as seen in Evan's excerpt above, but not exclusively so. In these instances, the people with whom participants could be vulnerable with more quickly than others were females. This dynamic is returned to shortly as it is the focus of the next subtheme.

Nine of the 10 participants expressed the ability to share about their emotional struggles with at least one, if not both, of their parents. Yet nearly all participants preferred having emotional safe havens with their friends. Birjot was the only participant who was opposed to talking to either parent "*about personal stuff.*" This was evident during our interview as, at times, he felt he had to whisper and physically move locations to ensure that his parents could not overhear our conversation. Birjot was also the only participant in the *low ER group* who expressed that there were obstacles he had to overcome before entering his emotional safe havens: "*In the beginning it's always awkward.... yeah it's like in the beginning it's just that masculine barrier. I don't know the word for that, we just have to get past that and then we can get comfortable.*" Fortunately, Birjot and his closest friend developed a strategy of using a game to combat this:

We just play games like “Never Have I Ever”²⁰ and we have to elaborate on it, and then it gets really deep. Like sometimes we talked about—like he even said, “Never have I ever been suicidal” and I’m like—I say, “Yes” and then elaborated on it. Like it got really deep. It builds a huge connection in between us and our bond gets bigger and it gets really cool. (Birjot, low ER group)

For all the other participants in the *low ER group*, sharing with their chosen people seemed to be a normalized part of their experience; when they needed to talk to someone they could and would. Evan, who had emotional safety with “two really close [male] friends” as well as his girlfriend, explained his typical way of accessing his emotional safe havens: “Emotionally like if I’m having a crappy day I’ll tell them [i.e., his close friends], but...[I’ll] keep it to myself till I get home, call somebody or text somebody.” Besides Evan here, and Grant, who talked to his parents on the phone every day, no other participant specifically mentioned or were asked how often their emotional safe havens were conducted with technology (e.g., texting, or phone calls). The examples from the other participants always described face-to-face interactions and, most often, tended to be with females.

Females as Emotional Safe Havens

Six of the 10 participants in the *low ER group* explicitly stated that it felt easier and safer to share their emotions and their personal struggles with females as opposed to males, and at least eight participants’ emotional safe havens were composed of more females than males—most often participants’ girlfriends and/or mothers. Two participants did not explicitly mention their preference either way and Jadrien did not think gender was a factor in determining his

²⁰ A game where one person says something they have never done and then the other people playing the game who have done that thing lose a point or must respond in some way, depending on the version played.

emotional safe havens. Grant was the only participant who claimed it felt safer to share with males, yet he never provided an example of doing so and it seemed to conflict with what he said about his mother being an amazing emotional support for him. A potentially contributing factor to this subtheme was that six participants in the *low ER group* mentioned that they currently had girlfriends, compared to only two participants in the *high ER group* who mentioned having a girlfriend, which raises the possibility that having a girlfriend increased the likelihood that participants experienced an emotional safe haven.

The six participants who believed that females were preferable to have emotional safe havens with—four of whom stated that they had girlfriends—were unified in their reasons why, as represented here:

They're just more open, more empathetic. I don't feel like I need to hide anything, I can just be myself.... Women have this vibe about them where you feel like you can be more open, it's just more comfortable. There's nothing intimidating, I guess that's one of the main reasons. The intimidation's completely gone, even though there shouldn't be any.
(Fraser, low ER group)

Even Evan, who also had two close male friendships, still believed females were generally better to talk with because “*they're more caring, they'll listen. They'll actually put an effort into listening.*” In this way, females appeared to be safer to share with because they were removed from the normative male peer culture and so would be less likely to pressure or judge them for expressing their emotions. Although these six participants all expressed great appreciation for the females in their lives who were safe enough to express emotions with, what remained unclear was the extent to which these were reciprocal relationships of mutual listening and care or

whether the females were expected to do more of the emotional work within these emotional safe havens.

None of this meant that the six participants who felt more comfortable sharing their emotions with females did not have close male friendships too, but a couple of participants did describe their close male friendships as different and more focused on “*the happy side of life*” (Fraser, *low ER group*). For example, Harrison would share different (i.e., less vulnerable) types of emotional content with his male friendships:

Stuff that’s just kind of annoying, that kind of aggravates you through the day...I’d be more inclined to share with maybe some of my guy friends, whereas something’s that’s a lot more personal or maybe more real, I might be more inclined to share with a girl.
(Harrison, *low ER group*)

Here, Harrison also reveals how he categorized and gendered specific emotions, with anger being more normalized to share amongst males but was still considered a less “*real*” emotion to share with others.

Females were not just the primary people most participants in the *low ER group* would share with, but they were often the ones who had the most profound impact on them embracing their own emotions. For instance, Cameron said that his own emotional growth journey started when he was 10 years old and witnessed his mother’s emotional growth, which “*trickled through*” to him about the importance of needing to express and feel his emotions. For Ian, it was only after his female friend offered him support a year ago, when he was struggling with a decision, that he became convinced of the importance of emotional safe havens—because he had experienced firsthand how much that had helped him.

The Benefits of Emotional Safe Havens

As with Ian, all 10 participants described the benefits that came as a result their emotional safe havens. Whether it was for feelings of solace and comfort, like Grant mentioned with his parents, or how it allowed Birjot to bond closer with his friend, participants most frequently described a combined sense of physical and emotional/mental relief that came from sharing something vulnerable with someone. In the following excerpt, which typified other participants' reflections as to the benefits of talking about feelings, Ian also accurately identifies two of three major obstacles preventing participants in the *high ER group* from opening up (which are discussed further in the next essential theme):

I felt really, it like lifts the weight almost because I feel like one reason a lot of guys don't share their feelings—besides the judgement issues of it—is they don't want to burden anyone else with their problems. Like they feel like they should handle it themselves. I've felt like that way before, but it feels like—it lessens the load when you talk about it with someone. (Ian, low ER group)

Cameron articulated several other practical benefits of emotional safe havens:

I think even just psychologically it's been beneficial [i.e., expressing his emotions] because when my dog died and, somewhat more, like 4 months ago, I broke up with my girlfriend. At the time it was like super helpful that I was emotionally open because I was able to just cry and cry and fully experience the things that my body and my mind needed to experience. And it was great because I have had like very few, if any, ill effects coming forwards from that. For example, with my dog, I just never think about him and I think part of it is because I went out there and sat with him and had this really strong emotional experience and I was able to release all of the sadness that I had so it hasn't

come back too much. And I don't really feel too sad if I think about him. And the same thing with my girlfriend. It was a really difficult experience and I made sure that I went through all that difficulty in the time it was happening. I didn't try to stop myself from crying or stop myself from reacting and so I think that it frees me up, like now I'm not burdened. I have just a lighter weight on my shoulder sort of thing. So that's actually just practically useful. (Cameron, low ER group)

Although Cameron described having safe havens with other people elsewhere in his interview, in this excerpt he described how he could also be his own emotional safe haven. The benefits of being his own emotional safe haven gave him space to feel his feelings by himself and allowed him to process and move through those two difficult emotional experiences with a sense of release or completion rather than feeling stuck or like he needed to avoid the emotional distress.

This essential theme highlighted the ways in which participants in the *low ER group's* willingness to express their emotions, primarily through talking to others, was a key part of their experience as adolescent males. Given the masculine pressures they faced to limit their emotional expression, expressing their emotions was often a calculated endeavour. Sometimes a lot of time was needed for trust to build, sometimes emotional safe havens were better with females, or, as demonstrated in the following excerpt by Birjot, sometimes they needed to be ready to cut off their emotional expressiveness as the situation demanded. Here, Birjot was discussing his ability to be either emotionally “*soft*” (i.e., vulnerable) or “*hard*” (i.e., tough):

Yeah, I can bring both out at any time, whatever I have to. I switch up whenever I have to. When I'm with family, hard shell as in I don't want to talk about anything but whenever I'm talking with my friends [I switch]—I can't switch from hard to soft, I kind of have to go down. But from soft to hard, I can go right away. (Birjot, low ER group)

This conveyed a sense of fragility as well as sacredness to being emotionally vulnerable; it needs the right environment and people to emerge. Cameron furthered this sense of sacredness, saying, *“To be emotionally susceptible...it’s kind of like living. It’s feeling. You know what I mean? So it’s funny that we try to suppress that.”* Of course, this was not a humorous kind of “funny” to Cameron but rather a curious or tragic one because it hinders, in his opinion, a fuller experience of living. However, as Cameron stated, being *“emotionally susceptible”* also invoked a sense that there were risks involved with expressing emotions. These risks were articulated well by the participants in the *high ER group*; just as participants in the *low ER group*’s experiences of being adolescent males were profoundly connected to their relationships with emotional expression, the same was true for participants in the *high ER group*.

Theme 4 (High ER Group): Conscious Diminishing of Own Emotions

Unique to the 10 participants in the *high ER group*’s experiences of being adolescent males was having gone through a conscious process of diminishing their emotions from others and was now something they consistently did. This “diminishing” referred to how participants did not readily share their feelings with others and how they generally downplayed their emotional experiences, particularly when it involved sadness, hurt, or depression. Sometimes participants identified this diminishing themselves, such as Vince admitting what happens when his friends say something hurtful: *“I’d show it as [if] I didn’t care, but I truly did,”* whereas other times I noticed participants’ tendencies to downplay their emotional experience during our interviews. One such instance occurred after Zachery had just told me about how meaningful his longest-term friendship with his *“best, best friend”* had been. He expressed a continued longing at the loss of their closeness over the past couple of years but insisted, *“I’m not sad about it;”* referring both to how he felt at the time they started drifting apart as well as how he currently

feels. Although it was fully possible that “sadness” was not the accurate word to describe how he had felt or currently feels, he went out of his way to specifically disidentify with that emotion while still communicating to me a deep sense of sadness about that situation with his friend.

The word “conscious” in the name of this essential theme highlights how all 10 participants in the *high ER group* were aware of when their emotional diminishing started and that they were still doing it. They each remembered being more emotionally expressive at earlier points in their lives but recalled an event or a combination of factors that precipitated a change. For Wataru and Xuan this change happened suddenly after they each failed to pass their placement examinations in their birth countries that they told me, if they had passed, would have sent them on a trajectory towards a prestigious university and a respectable future career. For six participants their emotional diminishing was, in part, connected to changes with their parents’ relationships: five involving divorce and one involving death. Sawyer described how the impact of his parents’ divorce tempered his emotionality:

“[It felt like being] punched in the face. Like “Oh, here’s, like, it’s the real world!” So, I think that moment has led to me being a bit more grounded in reality. Like, “Hey, the world’s not sunshine and rainbows. There’s actually a few shadows behind me.”

(Sawyer, high ER group)

This was a typical sentiment expressed by the other participants who had experienced their parents’ divorce. For Thomas, whose mother had died several years ago, described her as an “*extremely*” safe person for him to talk to about his emotions but said:

After that [her death], I sort of felt like I’ve less been able to talk to people about it [i.e., his emotions]...I don’t know. I guess that’s sort of shaped it a bit [i.e., his views on emotional expression], but I wouldn’t say that it’s shaped how I feel about everything.

The thing that's definitely shaped me the most is all the role models I've had and things like that. (Thomas, high ER group)

Therefore, even though Thomas did not believe that the loss of his mother was the only, or even main factor impacting his diminished emotionality, he, as did all the other five participants whose birth parents were not together, identified those events as contributing factors to their more restricted emotionality.

The fact that participants were all cognizant of main events and factors surrounding their diminished emotions meant they did not believe that their current levels of emotionality were simply a reflection of the way they inherently were. Although some participants believed that they, as males, should be more emotionally restricted than females, they appeared to know that their agency was involved in making sure that happened. This was clearly demonstrated by Yuri who, in keeping with his understandings of being a man, was actively in the process of trying to maintain a high level of emotional restriction:

When I was younger, I was always taking risks. When we were riding bikes, and we see a hill, I'm the first one to jump it, and I'm the first one to get hurt. Recently, I just don't take those risks, because it risks showing emotion...and apparently a man can't show emotion. Like I went snowboarding with school, and I think I'm a pretty good snowboarder, but I don't go my full limit because if I'd wipe out and would be hurt or showing emotion, I've learned like, that's not cool, so I just try to avoid it entirely. (Yuri, high ER group)

Although other participants described masculine pressures towards taking physical risks and disregarding their bodies, for Yuri, the greater risk was if he expressed “not cool” emotions that he might not be able to control. As seen here, participants with higher levels of emotional

restriction viewed expressing their full range of emotions in some way as problematic. Another, but less typical, example of how emotions were seen as problematic was with Xuan who wondered whether he had become depressed after failing his placement exam a few years ago. He feared to explore whether he does or not as that could cause unwanted ramifications: “[it] will maybe be the reason I go back home and I just don’t want to go back to my country.”

Reasons for Diminishing Emotions

In contrast to the participants in the *low ER group* describing how important it was to share their emotions with others, the participants in the *high ER group* expressed the opposite—it was important for them not to share their emotions with others. Their reasons for diminishing their emotions from others always involved at least one of the following three reasons: (a) fearing judgement from others; (b) fearing burdening others; and/or (c) as a pre-emptive protection strategy based on past experiences to avoid pain (i.e., fearing loss). Participants attributed masculine pressures as being directly connected to the first two of these reasons.

Seven participants said their fear of judgement—motivated and/or exacerbated by the masculine pressure that males should not be emotional—led them to diminish their emotions. Most often participants feared judgment from other males, as discussed in Theme 1, like Thomas, who imagined that if he shared his emotional struggles with any of his male friends they would probably dismiss it and say, “*Come on, just deal with it.*” However, some participants feared judgement from others irrespective of their gender. Yuri thought his whole family would “*probably ridicule [him]*” and Wataru “*was really crazy scared to share*” his emotions with anyone as he believed “*it was just going to crumble almost everything.*” By “*everything,*” he was referring to his belief that he would lose the friends that he had tried so

hard to make the past few years as he thought they would not want to be around someone with difficult emotions or, what he called, his “*negativity*.”

Despite these seven participants in the *high ER group* describing the fear of others’ judgement as the reason for diminishing their emotions, no one mentioned a specific experience where they had been judged for sharing their emotions. Certainly, they may have experienced judgement for their emotions and just not shared it with me, but this was noteworthy in comparison to how most of the participants in the *low ER group* had described specific examples where they had experienced judgment for their emotional expressiveness (e.g., Birjot, Cameron, Fraser being called gay, Ian being called a simp). The lack of tangible examples of being judged for their emotionality that participants in the *high ER group* gave could indicate that their emotional diminishing was quite effective at preventing them from experiencing judgement.

Five participants described diminishing their emotions because they cared deeply about the emotional wellbeing of other people in their lives and did not want to burden them with their own problems. This was deeply connected participants’ understanding of masculine norms such as, protecting others, being stoic, and being a “*shoulder to cry on*” (Sawyer, *high ER group*) rather than being the one crying on someone else’s shoulder. Vince remembered this feeling of hiding his own emotions to care for others started around the age of 10 when his grandma died. He recalled not reaching out to his parents because of their own grief: “*they were going through the same thing, so I didn’t want to, I guess, bring it up at the moment. I just stayed quiet, I didn’t really explain it or say how I thought and felt.*” Another typical example of the fear of burdening others was expressed by Zachery who thought “*it’s super selfish just to relieve your emotional baggage on someone.*” He elaborated:

You, yourself, have your own problems. There is like a little benefit you may give me for listening and maybe understanding, or maybe being empathetic...[but] most of the time I find isn't worth the—not the trauma, but the burden, I may have put on you. Maybe you think about that later in the day, maybe in the middle of dinner, maybe the food's good but you can't appreciate it because, "Man, that guy's got it tough." (Zachery, high ER group).

His immediate reframe that sharing emotions equals “*emotional baggage*” appeared to indicate a highly negative view towards emotions considered uncomfortable or distressing. Furthermore, although he acknowledged that there can be a benefit to sharing emotions, he maintained that doing so is unfair for the other person’s enjoyment. In this way, for these five participants in the *high ER group*, not sharing their emotions with others demonstrated a high level of care for their friends and family. This perspective was in strong contrast to all the participants in the *low ER group* who believed that sharing their emotions with someone demonstrated having a high level of care and value for that person.

The third reason participants diminished their emotions, also mentioned by five participants, was to pre-emptively protect themselves from further pain. Four of the five participants who described this had experienced emotional closeness with someone they loved and trusted but, due to some sort of relational loss or trauma, they did not feel safe getting that close to someone again. Uriah described the before-and-after impact on his emotionality when his mom left him for a period of his life while growing up:

I used to be out there a lot, used to be able to go and make friends no problem. After that, I kind of stopped wanting to make friends because I was so used to my mom leaving every once in a while that I didn't want anyone else to. (Uriah, high ER group)

Similarly, Ryo said the “*huge reason [he] can’t really openly talk to people*” was because a few years ago a significant long-term parental figure in his life was discovered to be lying and stealing from his family for years—this betrayal destroying his sense of trust in people. Sawyer’s relational loss happened when his “*very deep friend*” in elementary school suddenly moved away. Sawyer told me he had five metaphoric levels of emotional vulnerability but since the experience of his friend moving away he said that he does not let anyone get beyond a level three. If anyone happens to get past that level of emotional vulnerability with him then he thinks, “*Okay, that’s enough. Let’s push you back.*” Qasem differed from the other four participants in that his emotional diminishing for self-protection was not due to first having experienced a closeness with someone. His explanation was that he was bullied a lot in elementary school and would get very angry, which escalated the severity of the bullying he received. Therefore, when he switched schools, he intentionally used that as an opportunity to become emotionally stoic to reduce the level of bullying he might experience, which, according to him, appeared to work and so he has maintained that ever since.

Out of the three reasons participants diminished their emotions, it was most difficult to determine the extent to which emotional diminishing as a pre-emptive self-protection strategy was connected to masculine pressures. Some participants thought that these may be connected but could not specify how. Part of their difficulty may have been because these participants also cited at least one of the other two reasons why they diminished their emotions and so it may have been hard to completely view one reason in isolation from the others. Uriah and Qasem were the exceptions in that they believed that their emotional diminishing as a pre-emptive protection strategy did not have anything to do with masculine socialization pressures.

The Cost and Conflicting Feelings Around Emotional Diminishing

Regardless of the reason(s) participants diminished their emotions, some identified that there was a cost in doing so. Sawyer recognized how his pattern of concealing his emotions made it difficult for him to know how to express or even understand his emotions despite wanting to:

I want to change it, but I don't really know how. Right now, it's like "Oh, you're allowed to be emotional." Okay, hoooww?... Sure, I'm allowed to cry, yayyy [sarcastic]. Yay for me when I cry. Like when am I going to cry? Like, yes, I am emotional...but how does that help me because I've already tuned out emotions, kind of. Not fully...I don't know what to do. Because I want to be there. (Sawyer, high ER group)

Therefore, while diminishing his emotions was advantageous for him for a time, it had become problematic, and he was realizing he needed support. Zachery too identified that diminishing his emotional needs for the sake of supporting his mother and sister in the aftermath of his parents' divorce might have negative consequences for him in the future:

[B]ecause maybe I've stored something (i.e., a feeling) from before that I wasn't able to—not necessarily act on, but fully understand and cope, so maybe I'll overreact to something specific later, even if it's just tiny. (Zachery, high ER group).

When I commented on how much awareness he seemed to have about himself, he replied: “*I try, but sometimes I do think, 'What if I didn't know anything?' How sick would that be? If you just weren't aware?*” Although emotional ignorance was sometimes attractive to Zachery as it likely would provide some relief to painful and distressing feelings, the reality was that all participants in the *high ER group* were highly conscious of their inner emotional worlds and the trajectory of their emotional expressiveness throughout their lives.

The cost of emotional restriction was particularly high for Ryo. Shortly after his parents' divorce, around the start of Grade 7 (ages 12–13), Ryo limited his emotional expression and started having symptoms of depression. He diminished those symptoms for years, explaining, *“the thing is at the time I didn't really notice it, well I did, but I just thought it was hormones in the midst of puberty, so I didn't really pay attention to it.”* However, these symptoms pointed to something greater, which he only realized recently after being hospitalized after a suicide attempt. Ryo described the interplay between masculine pressures and emotional diminishing and the impact they had on his mental health in the following way:

I think for the masculinity part, for the general, I just heard that part, the stereotypical ones, right? Men shouldn't show emotions, men don't cry, etcetera. But I think as a kid, and biologically it—we're just ingrained with that. So...towards my more depressive states and during that time, as well as the divorce, I didn't show any emotion or really express any for that matter. I think in some cases, just not expressing anything can eventually amount to a greater consequence...especially for like my mental health. (Ryo, high ER group)

Despite feeling supported by everyone in his life and talking to therapists and his girlfriend more now since his suicide attempt, he still admitted feeling conflicted about being vulnerable with others: *“Deep within me I know it's okay to cry and show emotion but I just prefer not to because it makes me feel too—like I have a weakness.”* This sentiment was emblematic of other participants in the *high ER group's* conflicted feelings with sharing their emotions. One example of this was demonstrated by Thomas when he answered how he felt after he shared his emotions with one of his closest female friends:

I don't know? It's weird. I guess it's like a good feeling knowing that she's always somebody I can go to, but then there's also that little side feeling where it's like, "Hey, what if you're just annoying them or what if they're not interested at all and like listening?" (Thomas, high ER group)

His relief of sharing is tempered by the nagging discomfort of wondering if anyone truly does genuinely care enough about his problems to listen to them. Despite this, most participants ($n = 9$), like Thomas in the above excerpt, still mentioned having at least one person in their lives with whom they could share some level of emotional vulnerability with; yet, these types of conversations were reported to be infrequent and limited in terms of how much emotional depth was discussed. There were, however, two participants in the *high ER group* who recently had a positive experience of being more emotionally vulnerable than was usual for them. Vince described how it felt after his girlfriend tried, successfully, to get him to share about his emotions:

It's felt really good. Yeah, it's felt really good [smiling/laughing]. There was no judgement or anything...that's probably why I'm slowly sharing with her, it's cause I'm trusting that judgement won't be there. (Vince, high ER group)

Similarly, the only person Xuan sometimes discusses his emotions with is an online friend he met this past year playing video games. Being able to share with his friend, Xuan said, *"it makes me less stressful...a lot of kind of relief because before that I didn't have anyone to say it to. It was pent up in me I guess."* Perhaps with time and further trust, these two participants' willingness to enter emotional safe havens with people will become more common, especially if they keep on experiencing the benefits after doing so.

By actively choosing to diminish their emotions, specifically emotions involving sadness, pain, and depression, participants in the *high ER group* believed they were saving themselves from potential pain (e.g., from judgment, from bullying, or from future disconnection) and/or believed that they were preventing other people from potential pain (e.g., not feeling burdened by hearing their “negative” emotions). These beliefs were almost always directly connected to participants’ understandings of masculine pressures and what being a man should look like. From these findings it appeared that the participants in the *low ER group* viewed their emotional expression as a movement towards their authenticity, whereas often the participants in the *high ER group* viewed their emotional expression as exposing their vulnerability; something that might be used against them or others.

Despite these 10 participants’ various journeys with emotional expression that resulted in having high levels of emotional restriction, there was strong evidence that they wanted emotional guidance along the way. Nine participants in the *high ER group* mentioned that one of, if not the biggest need for change in schools was to have better emotional education. A typical example of this was demonstrated by Yuri: “*One thing I would like to see changed [in schools] is definitely the emotions...that definitely confuses me, like for sure, like 100% confuses me more than girls even—and I know nothing about them!*” Seven participants in the *low ER group* said the same, perhaps suggesting that the desire to better understand emotions was an important, but underdeveloped aspect of most adolescent males’ experiences, regardless of their levels of emotional restriction. Despite most interviewed participants ($n = 16$) wanting better emotional guidance, this and the previous essential theme highlighted significant ways in which participants’ relationships with emotionality diverged depending on their level of emotional

restriction. These emotional differences between the two ER groups related to the final two distinct essential themes, which are now discussed.

Theme 5 (Low ER Group): Sense of Masculine Difference from Male Peers

The final essential theme I identified to capture the experiences of participants in the *low ER group* involved how they all felt that something about their way of being an adolescent male was different compared to most of their male peers. Eight participants reported that their greater propensity or willingness to share and express their emotions with others, in comparison to their male peers, was a key factor for why they felt unique or different, as exemplified here:

I feel like my perspective is a bit unique because most guys—like I don't want to classify myself as a popular guy but I will just for the sake of saying that—usually the quote unquote “popular” people are like your stereotypical men. They're just like good-looking, tall, they don't really talk about shit like emotions or whatever, they just don't care. But I'm kind of different because I'm willing to talk about that, I just found it a bit unique. (Ian, low ER group)

Similarly, Cameron expressed: *“I'm probably a bad example of the teenage male experience because I think that like I've been really, really, really lucky to receive an emotional education kind of from my home life, which has been really helpful.”* As these examples highlight, the mere fact that they were willing to talk about emotions and/or grew up receiving an *“emotional education”* was enough for them to believe that there was a discernable separation between theirs and the average experience of an adolescent male. In both of these specific instances, Ian and Cameron mentioned their masculine difference to me at the end of their interviews to put a disclaimer over everything they had previously shared as they believed their experience was too

far from the average adolescent males' experience to be of much use to me (I assured them this was not the case).

There were only two participants in the *low ER group*, Denver and Grant, whose experiences of feeling different than their male peers were not explicitly connected to their greater emotional expressivity. What made Denver feel distinct from his male peers was that he “do[esn't] try and get involved in being the alpha male.” This was noteworthy for Denver because he played in a highly competitive hockey league where he reported that this type of alpha behaviour was predominant. Grant's sense of feeling different from his male peers was less clear given the number of cultural and situational factors related to his coming to Canada, but he described an ongoing difficulty making friends and expressed to me that he did not know why. This likely contributed to why he told me he wanted to go to the gym more “to get some muscles” like the other males around him and why he thought he “need[ed] to be a little bit more tougher.” Like Grant, other participants in the *low ER group* viewed their difference as having negative aspects as it had, at times, created a sense of disconnection from their male peers. For instance, Fraser described that he used to be “very lonely” feeling like he was the only emotionally expressive male in his friend group. Fortunately, for him and for the others, this sense of loneliness that was connected to feeling emotionally different from male peers was mitigated over time by having emotional safe havens. As Ian said, “I know I always have others to turn to, but if I didn't have that, then I would feel pretty alone.” Therefore, because the majority of participants' emotional safe havens were with females ($n = 8$), it was plausible that for many, their higher than average emotional expressiveness was simultaneously a source of disconnection from their male peers and a source of connection with their female peers.

Despite some participants mentioning moments of loneliness based on feeling different, no participants in the *low ER group* currently viewed their emotionality as problematic. Instead, it was the restrictive pressures that prevented more of their male peers from being more comfortable sharing their emotions that they viewed as problematic. This was part of the reason why seven of them wanted better emotional education in schools, not just because it would have been more helpful for them, but because it would be helpful for their male peers. As Fraser expressed, *“I wish every day we could find some way to break that [masculine pressure of emotional restriction] because we have this stereotype that we’re not allowed to share emotions.”*

The final aspect of this essential theme to unpack was that even though eight participants in the *low ER group* felt their willingness to express their emotions differentiated them significantly from their peers, many pointed out that they did not believe that their male peers’ internal experiences of struggles and hardships were that different from theirs. As Jadrien noted: *“based on the experiences of some of my other teenage male friends, it would probably be that I think a lot of them are struggling more than they kind of show.”* Similarly, Aaron thought he was not necessarily more sensitive than any other males but rather he was just confident enough to show his sensitivity. Birjot also mentioned that many of his male friends can express their emotions but need to get high or drunk in order to do so, unlike him. Even Fraser, who still thought he was inherently more empathetic and emotionally expressive than most other males his age, had recently realized there are many more males like him than he previously thought: *“I’ve talked to a few guys who I’ve realized are more of an emotional type and I realize that...I’m not the only one who’s very emotional and felt they had to hide it.”* Overall, most participants in the *low ER group* ($n = 8$) appeared to understand that their emotional differences from other

adolescent males were primarily just differences in how they external expressed their emotions, not in how they internally experienced emotions. Perhaps their experiences of learning to consistently resist the masculine norm of emotional restriction, while also knowing how pervasive the pressures to do so were, helped give them insight and/or an assumed understanding that most of their male peers who presented as more emotionally restricted were going through similar things they had experienced. Although there were many ways for adolescent males to express their masculine identities, participants in the *low ER group* felt that their way of performing their male identities was notably different than the norms around them. Yet, with the likely exception of Grant, they no longer felt long-term feelings of loneliness due to this difference. Discussions around loneliness were also relevant to the final essential theme for the *high ER group*.

Theme 6 (High ER Group): Self-reliance

An essential part of participants in the *high ER group*'s experiences of being adolescent males was their self-reliance when navigating through life's stressors. This self-reliance, as described in this theme, was not a direct reflection of the number of relationships participants had in their lives, rather, it referred to how these 10 participants managed most, if not all, major obstacles, emotions, and decisions independently or without help. Significant components of this theme were already visible in Theme 4 as a foreseeable outcome of consciously diminishing one's own emotions was that many of the obstacles or decisions participants faced were kept hidden from others too.

The crux of this theme was captured by the refrain heard throughout their interviews, but here was said by Vince, was: "*I deal with it myself.*" This notion, and the action that flowed from it, was most often connected to participants' belief in and adherence to certain masculine

norms, primarily that men should be self-sufficient, be skilled at finding solutions, and not burden other people with their own problems. These beliefs likely factored into why Thomas questioned whether people do honestly care about his problems:

If I'm like, "Hey, I'm having trouble with this, could you help me figure this out?"....They probably don't really want to hear that right now or they probably don't care that much about what's going on so I focus on things myself and get things done myself. (Thomas, high ER group)

Here, Thomas' self-reliance seemed to be somewhat protective as well as doing things alone without asking for help prevented him from ever having to find out whether people do in fact care about his problems.

Independent Problem-Solvers

Despite all participants in the *high ER group* being largely alone when navigating through tough or taxing problems or emotions, they demonstrated a high capacity to independently find solutions that provided tangible results relevant to their circumstance. For instance, when Thomas went through a difficult breakup and felt "*everything was starting to fall apart,*" he realized he needed to do something after he noticed his grades were dropping: "*Alright, I've got to find a solution to this and then I sort of distanced myself from everybody, I guess, and I focused on how can I fix this? How can I get better?*" Although he did not outline exactly what he did to "*fix this*" or "*get better,*" he did report that "*[he] figured it out*" and that his grades did get back up. It was unclear to me whether Thomas' solution was focused just on the declining academic marks or whether it was more holistically focused on "*everything*" that was falling apart in his life (i.e., his emotional wellbeing). Regardless, his tendency to not seek

guidance was shared by his fellow participants in the *high ER group*. Yuri too described having an academic “*wake-up call*”:

I was like playing games one time and I was waiting for a game and then it just hit me, like “Dude, stop playing the game. Do some homework.” And I was like, “Oh yeah! I should be doing homework or I’m not going to graduate.” It was like super random because it was out of the blue. (Yuri, high ER group)

Once again, after his personal revelation, he described being able to make the necessary changes to solve his problem without the need for others. Uriah, one of only two participants in the *high ER group* who expressed consistently resisting most masculine norms, had professional counselling support available to him but preferred to figure out how to best address his current-day issues and past traumas by himself:

“I went through a lot of counselling and counselling didn’t exactly do much for me, so I had to try and figure out a way of doing it [i.e., healing] on my own...I did a lot of journaling throughout everything. So my whole process was to look back at all of my journals, re-read through all of them up until the present point and re-evaluate what I had thought in that process. And then try and answer my own questions with what I know now to kind of ease myself into the fact that maybe it wasn’t as bad as I thought it was. (Uriah, high ER group)

Uriah said that going through this process allowed him to feel more confident and care less about what others around him thought. This, and the previous example with Thomas, also highlighted how some participants, when given the choice, preferred to independently solve their problems whereas for others it was unclear to what extent it was more that they were just used to doing things alone rather than having a strong desire to do things alone.

Occasionally, external factors appeared to be needed in order to support participants in their ability to solve their problems independently. Wataru initially tried to figure out how to cope with all his difficult emotions by playing his electric guitar to “*escape from reality*” after failing his placement exam. However, it was only after his family moved to Canada, giving him a renewed opportunity to pursue education again, that allowed him to be “*able to cope by [him]self emotionally.*” Therefore, without his circumstances changing it was unlikely that his coping mechanism of musical escapism was going to sustain his ability to manage his emotions long-term. That said, his coping mechanism was likely still helpful at managing his feelings until his circumstances could change.

Although most of these examples demonstrate how participants generally felt their independent problem-solving strategies were effective, Wataru’s experience highlighted the potential limitations or risks of being self-reliant. If participants’ personal strategies were not successful enough without external input, there was danger in them becoming stuck, which could result in more dire consequences for their wellbeing. For example, Ryo managed to downplay his depressive symptoms for years while never reaching out for help but was now acknowledging the shortcomings of this strategy of avoidance and independence and how it contributed to his suicide attempt.

The Loneliness of Aloneness

Despite participants in the *high ER group* navigating through life’s obstacles alone—and most reportedly managing it quite well—at least eight participants’ experiences of being self-reliant involved feelings of loneliness at times. For some this was a near constant feeling, as reflected in Wataru’s response to my question: “What is it like being a teenage male?” to which he replied, “*You feel lonely very easily.*” Like Wataru, participants’ sentiments of loneliness

were most often expressed in relation to navigating through their struggles without guidance and in keeping their emotions from others. The irony of participants feeling emotionally disconnected from others was that two of the main reasons participants did not readily share their emotions with others—fear of judgement and fear of being a burden—were both in attempts to build and maintain positive connection with others. But even when participants believed their approach to emotional restriction worked effectively for maintaining their friendships, most participants ($n = 9$) expressed longing for something more in their relationships; although most were conflicted about that desire ($n = 6$). An example of a participant who was not conflicted in this was noted in Vince’s answer when asked if he would want to be more emotionally vulnerable with his male friends: *“Yeah, I do wish that we could do that one time, or just have a deep conversation. Just even once would be nice.”* Moreover, the third reason participants did not share their emotions—as a pre-emptive protection strategy to avoid further pain—was often a direct response to experiencing the pain of abandonment and loneliness brought on by someone close to them leaving them. In this way, all three reasons participants gave for diminishing their emotions were connected in some way to aloneness (i.e., being alone) and loneliness (i.e., feeling alone). Perhaps the reason why at least some of the nine participants in the *high ER group* desired more emotional guidance from schools was motivated by their feelings of emotional loneliness.

Xuan’s feelings of loneliness became evident during our interview when he discussed an experience where he asked his parents directly for some guidance and they avoided answering him altogether. In contrast to this experience, he went on to share a significant moment when he came to Canada: *“So a teacher of mine asked me—like he was the first adult person, not the first ever teacher, like in real life, that asked me, ‘Are you doing well?’”* Perhaps the moment where

Xuan's loneliness was highlighted most was his longing for physical connection, claiming that it was normal in his birth country to be unaffectionate:

Xuan: I want someone to hug me, not as a greeting, but to hug me. [pause] Not as a greeting.

Me: Just as a hug? Yeah.

Xuan: Yeah, as a hug, not a greeting.

This clarification that he did not just want an inadvertent or polite hug but rather an intentional hug directed at him likely spoke to the extent of the physical and social isolation he felt.

Although three participants in the *high ER group* explicitly said that, most of the time, they preferred being alone, like Sawyer who enjoyed school closures due to Covid-19 because he did not like exerting energy to talk to his friends, they also each contradictorily noted the value in having others more deeply involved in their lives. Continuing with Sawyer as an example, who rarely let people go beyond his metaphorical level 3 depth of conversation, told me at the end of our interview that our conversation together was at a level 4 depth. Normally this would be too much for him but instead he described it as:

It's nice. It's like, "Okay, there's somebody else going yes, that is a thing, that is valid."

Not just me going to myself, "Hey, that's a good thing to think about." Plus you have questions that I don't have and also, another person they're able to be like, "Okay you're starting to ramble, let's continue keep this thread intact as we're going." When I'm doing this in my head, it's kind of everywhere, it's all a big mess so when I talk to someone else about it, I can kind of grab a hold of that one string and talk about it and keep it straight.

(Sawyer, high ER group)

In much the same way, although participants in the *high ER group* most frequently chose to be self-reliant when navigating through life, most participants also felt some loneliness associated with this, or at least recognized that as a limitation of being self-reliant. That said, being self-reliant was also empowering. Most participants' felt they could solve most, if not all of their problems on their own and, for many, it aligned with what they thought men should be like. It is important to emphasize that this essential theme did not mean that the 10 participants in the *high ER group* had no meaningful and/or close relationships with people in their lives. That was untrue for all, but it meant that a defining aspect of their experiences as adolescent males was journeying through much of life's struggles and decisions by themselves.

Interview Results Summary

The results of the thematic analyses of the interviews with participants the *low ER group* and participants in the *high ER group* suggested there were many overlapping experiences and beliefs of what it was like being a male, but also distinct differences. Regardless of participants' levels of emotional restriction, Theme 1 highlighted how all participants' experiences of being male involved being immersed in an environment that pressured them towards masculine norms, namely, to restrict their emotions and to be physically and mentally tough. These pressures predominantly came from peers, media, and fathers, although fathers were also just as likely to be examples of how to resist masculine pressures.

The first trend where participants' levels of emotional restriction appeared to play a role in different experiences of being male was seen in Theme 2. Here, most of the *low ER group* tended to consistently resist restrictive masculine norms whereas most of the participants in the *high ER group* tended to consistently adhere to them. For participants that resisted, having confidence and some part of their identity align with some ideals of masculinity appeared

helpful; for participants that adhered, some tended to do so willingly as it aligned with their ideals of masculinity and others were more reluctant, but they felt that their options were limited.

Themes 3 and 4 highlighted the stark differences in how participants in the *low ER group* and *high ER group*, respectively, viewed and approached their emotions. The *low ER group* viewed their emotionality as part of their authentic identity and found it beneficial to share their emotions with others in their lives, particularly females; the high ER group largely viewed their emotionality as problematic or as something that needed to be dealt with independently and so, for the most part, concealed them from others. In particular, they concealed emotions relating to sadness, hurt, distress, and depression.

Theme 5 highlighted how participants in *low ER group's* tendency to express their emotions and share their struggles with others, while helpful, also did make them feel like their way of being an adolescent male was rather unique compared to their male peers. In contrast, Theme 6 highlighted how participant in the *high ER group's* tendency to navigate their emotions alone also translated into how they were generally much more self-reliant as they navigated through life. This had benefits but many expressed feelings of loneliness. The next chapter focuses on the discussion of these findings and those presented in the previous chapter in regards to how they answer this study's two research questions.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Implications

In the two previous chapters all the quantitative and qualitative results pertinent to answering this study's two research questions were presented. In Chapter 4, the first research question—*To what extent are adolescent males' experiences and beliefs of being male aligned across survey and interview findings?*—was investigated by comparing 20 adolescent males' interview responses about being male to their responses on the CMNI-46 regarding their adherence to eight masculine norms. The level of alignment between these data sets were determined using both a reliability statistic and a detailed comparison of participants' responses on each CMNI-46 item to what they said in their relevant interview extracts.

Chapter 4 also contained the statistical analyses that I conducted to help answer the second research question: *To what extent do adolescent males' experiences and beliefs of being male vary, based on their levels of emotional restriction?* For this investigation all 170 participants' levels of emotional restriction were determined by their scores on the NMAS-BF, which, in combination with their scores on the eight subscales of the CMNI-46, were used to run descriptive and correlational analyses as well as to run t-tests that compared differences in norm adherence between participants with the highest and the lowest 15% of NMAS-BF scores. In addition, Chapter 5 contained the results of the hermeneutic phenomenological thematic analysis of both the 10 least emotionally restricted participants (*low ER group*) and the 10 most emotionally restricted participants (*high ER group*) who were all interviewed about their experiences and beliefs of being male.

In this chapter, the key findings from this study are contextualized within the existing literature and are discussed in relation to how they answer each of the two research questions. First, the alignment analysis results for Research Question 1 are discussed, and this discussion is

followed by the theoretical and practical implications of those findings. Next, the results of Research Question 2, in which adolescent males were compared by their levels of emotional restriction, are discussed. Then, the theoretical and practical implications of those findings are detailed. I structured this chapter using the two research questions as a framework to address the first research question had implications for the decision to combine the quantitative and qualitative components in answering the second research question and, relatedly, to acknowledge that the statistical results, outlined in Chapter 4, had not yet been integrated holistically with the hermeneutic phenomenological findings, discussed in Chapter 5, for answering the second research question as was necessary for an innovated mixed methods research study (Riazi, 2016) such as this one (see Chapter 3, p. 90).

The aim of answering both research questions was to better understand and support adolescent males in their social and emotional development and wellbeing. More specifically, I created four research objectives to address specific paucities that I identified in the existing literature that appeared to hinder that aim. These objectives were: (a) to prioritize the perspectives and experiences of adolescent males and, as much as possible, to be positive-focused; (b) to provide greater clarity regarding the complexities of adolescent males' norm adherence and resistance; (c) to detail adolescent males' relationships with emotional expression more precisely; and (d) to assess the epistemological and practical efficacy of integrating qualitative and quantitative methods in masculinities research. Throughout this chapter I return to these objectives, particularly when discussing the contributions to knowledge and the implications that have to do with each objective.

Discussion for the Alignment Analysis Between CMNI-46 and Interview Data (Research Question 1)

As highlighted in the literature review in Chapter 2 (p. 79), employing mixed methods within masculinities research is exceedingly rare, and when it is done it is usually in studies evaluating programs or interventions (Kågesten et al., 2016; e.g., Kwiatkowski, 2016). This paucity led to calls for more research that thoughtfully integrates both quantitative and qualitative components so that the strengths of each might be used together to provide a more full and clearer picture of the complexities of masculinities than either approach could do on its own (Isacco, 2015; Kågesten et al., 2016). However, there were also philosophical concerns over the extent to which findings from quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches measuring gender-related phenomenon were compatible (Addis et al., 2016). As such, I conceived that a helpful, if not necessary, first step towards integrating mixed methods more holistically within studies on masculinities (as was desired for Research Question 2) was to elucidate the epistemological and practical efficacy of doing so (Objective 4) by assessing the alignment of the findings derived from a quantitative self-report survey to the findings derived from a qualitative interview analysis. Comparing the alignment of qualitative and quantitative data is rare in many research fields (Harris & Brown, 2010; Sale et al., 2002), and this research is believed to be the first within the field of masculinities to directly compare participants' survey responses to their interview responses. As such, there are many important findings and implications to discuss.

It is worth reiterating that the interview questions were intentionally not structured around the content represented by each of the eight CMNI-46 subscales used. This allowed conversations to develop organically into areas that participants felt were key to their

experiences of being male rather than to be artificially primed towards talking about more stereotypical male topics. Although this had benefits, which are discussed later, it did reduce the number of comparisons between data sets that could be assessed for alignment (e.g., 34% of all data points were not able to be compared). These silences were unevenly distributed among the eight subscales, affecting the strength of the statistical calculations used for some subscales to check whether the alignment observed between data sets was due to chance. The other consequence of not structuring interview questions specifically based on the CMNI-46 items was that close to half of all agreements between data sets I identified were partial agreements (46%) and almost all dissonances between data sets were partial dissonances (90%). In other words, many excerpts from the interviews related to the content of each subscale but did not overlap directly or fully with all the items comprising each subscale, thus introducing more subjectivity when assessing the alignment between methods.

These are common issues with alignment analyses, which is why having interviews tightly aligned to the content of the survey measure used is highly recommended (Harris & Brown, 2010). However, for the previously stated reasons of desiring less rigidly structured conversations for assessing the phenomenon of being male, and because this is the first alignment analysis that is believed to have ever been done for any masculinity-related measure, this limitation was knowingly accepted. It was also accounted for, in part, by using a higher statistical standard of measuring alignment than is sometimes used (McHugh, 2012).

The Strength of Data Alignment Varied by Subscale

At a cursory glance the alignment results suggested that there was an overall alignment between data sets given that there were substantially more total instances of agreements than dissonances between CMNI-46 and interview data (4:1) and only two instances overall between

data sets that were identified as being fully contradictory to one another as opposed to being only partially dissonant. However, when factoring in the statistical metric used to estimate the likelihood that these observed alignments were real and not due to chance, a process recommended by Harris and Brown (2010), the number of silences and partial agreements, as well as my more-detailed inspection of each item within each construct, the degree to which the survey and interview data aligned varied greatly depending on the subscale. As such, the alignment for each of the eight CMNI-46 subscales needed to be considered separately.

As an overview, survey and interview data relating to the *emotional control*, *self-reliance*, and *violence* subscales were considered to have the highest levels of congruency, especially the first two; the data relating to *risk-taking*, *primacy of work*, *winning*, and *heterosexual self-presentation* were more alignment than not, but each had notable issues leading to more cautiousness when interpreting those subscale results; and the data relating to *power over women* was not reliably aligned at all. Reasons for this are now discussed.

Strong Data Alignment: Emotional Control, Self-reliance, and Violence

There was strong survey and interview data alignment regarding the content pertaining to three subscales on the CMNI-46: *emotional control*, *self-reliance*, and *violence*. Two things especially set apart the alignment analysis for *emotional control* and *self-reliance*. The first was that all the interviewed participants discussed experiences that directly overlapped with the content of both these subscales. As such, there were no instances of silence in the interview data and the least number of partial alignments, which strengthened the confidence of the alignment analysis as there was clearer data in the interviews to code from and more data points to compare.

The second difference about these two subscales was that they had the fewest codes out of all subscales that indicated a medium/mixed adherence to their norm. Perhaps more extreme responses in surveys and interviews, in this case indicating either a low or high adherence, are more easily or reliably coded in comparison to medium/mixed adherences as those arguably contain less definite or even contradictory responses from which to code. *Power over women* also had very few codes of medium/mixed adherence but the validity of those results was highly questionable, as is later discussed.

According to the statistical calculation, data from the two methods regarding *emotional control* were nearly perfectly aligned, and, by contrast, data regarding *self-reliance* were considered moderate due to three instances of alignment I identified as partial dissonance. However, these three cases could all potentially be resolved if I better understood how those participants interpreted the items comprising this subscale that referred to their ability to ask for help. For instance, although these three participants were, according to what they each said in their interviews, extremely self-reliant in their personal and emotional lives, and I coded them as such, their interviews did contain examples of them being able to ask teachers for academic help. Therefore, because participants' responses can be heavily influenced by the memory that is most quickly drawn upon, preventing them from considering all the relevant information (Knäuper et al., 2016), these three participants may have more readily recalled a recent experience in which they asked a teacher for help as evidence of their help-seeking ability (which it is to an extent) but then may not have considered their propensity to ask others for help in non-academic domains. Indeed, as participants read in the instructions for the CMNI-46, "it is best if you respond with your first impression" (Parent, 2013, p. 2). As such, further follow-up questions with these three participants about how they interpreted that subscale may have resolved their

instances of partial dissonance as it may have simply been due to our lack of shared understanding about self-reliance. My difficulty in not knowing exactly how participants interpreted items for each subscale has been identified elsewhere as one of the challenges in using self-report measures (Knäuper et al., 2016; Meinck et al., 2022).

I was able to identify one study that conducted an alignment analysis through which the researchers were able to resolve instances of dissonance after better understanding participants' interpretations (Schmidt et al., 1996). The researchers of this study interviewed 215 female homicide offenders and at the beginning of the interview asked them short self-report questions about the nature of their role in the homicide before going on to discuss that in detail during the rest of the interview. From this, 24 participants seemingly had inconsistent responses between what they said at the beginning and what they said during their interviews; however, after analysing the interviews from participants' perspectives, only one was seen to remain inconsistent. Although much more research like this is needed, there is potential that seemingly conflicting data can be resolved.

The *violence* subscale was unique as, according to the reliability statistic, the alignment was perfect. However, most of the matches were partial agreements, and just over half of all data for alignment was considered silent. As such, I still considered the survey and interview data to be strongly aligned regarding violence but less so than the previous two subscales, as there was significantly more interpretation needed for me to code the interviews and there were less data points to compare. One further issue with the *violence* subscale was whether it measured a type of violence that was relevant to participants' lives or to discussing issues related to masculinity. For example, despite the large number of silences, violence was discussed in many more of the interviews but the items in this subscale were largely constructed around whether violence could

be justified or not, which many participants did not discuss. This highlights the importance of Meinck et al.'s (2022) argument that any self-report construct for children or adolescents should be extensively tested in pilot studies with the target population so that the relevance of the construct can be assessed.

Additionally, although the *violence* subscale was intended to measure participants' "proclivity for physical confrontations" (Parent & Moradi, 2009, p. 176), I contend that the nature of these physical confrontations would largely be assumed by readers to refer more to uncontrolled or unjustified instances of aggression rather than justified violence. My reason for this is that when violence and masculinity are discussed together it is usually in relation to things like physical and sexual abuse and homicides (e.g., Elliott, 2018; Salazar et al., 2020; Waling, 2019). In defence of the CMNI-46, the scale is intentionally designed to focus on adherence to each norm without emphasizing any maladaptive properties associated with that norm so that it can be used more flexibly in studies to correlate to other maladaptive, neutral, or adaptive variables (Mahalik et al., 2003; Parent & Moradi, 2011). Although this was one of the reasons I selected the CMNI-46 for use in my study, the type of violence that this subscale measured could be made clearer, especially from just the name. Moreover, as seen in the alignment analysis regarding *violence*, participants' experiences with violence were not effectively captured by the items in this subscale, calling into question the extent to which, by itself, the neutrality of this subscale yields helpful results without additional correlates or context. This connects to Farrell et al.'s (2000) recommendations after their analysis of multiple adolescent self-reported measures of aggression, drug use, and delinquent behaviours. They asserted that measures assessing these behaviours were much too broad and needed to be separated into more tightly defined domains where new scales could be created to assess those domains separately. Therefore, the CMNI-46

subscale *violence* might be more helpfully broken down into violence that emerges specifically from a desire to protect or defend others, sometimes referred to as white knighting (Ruiz, 2016), violence that emerges from a lost sense of power or fitting-in, and violence as a form of hobby (e.g., mixed-martial arts, boxing). Some suggestions for improving the relevance of items in this subscale for measuring adolescent male's propensity towards violence while still trying to not overly focus on the maladaptive aspects of violence are: "I use violence to solve problems;" "Violence is not my last resort;" "I use violence more than I have to;" "I respond to violence with violence;" and "In uncertain situations I prepare myself to be violent, just in case."

Tentative Data Alignment: Risk-taking, Primacy of Work, Winning, Heterosexual Self-presentation

The alignment of data around the subscales of *risk-taking*, *primacy of work*, *winning* and *heterosexual self-presentation* were all statistically better than chance but, according to the statistical thresholds (see McHugh, 2012), the first two were considered weak and the last two were considered minimal. As was the case with the *violence* subscale, these subscales all had several instances of silences; however, when I compared the data sets, I found that these subscales, unlike the *violence* subscale, each had multiple instances of dissonance.

The difficulty with assessing the alignment for three of these subscales, *risk-taking*, *primacy of work*, and *winning*, was that each construct lack specificity and, as such, could not be confidently identified in participants' interviews. For instance, risk-taking is a notoriously difficult construct to assess (Jordan-Young & Karkazis, 2019), and the items comprising the *risk-taking* subscale did not specify what behaviours were considered risk-taking (e.g., could being emotionally vulnerable be considered risky). Similarly, the items on the *primacy of work* subscale did not differentiate between schoolwork or working at a job, and several participants

discussed both in their interviews. Often these participants had different relationships with their schoolwork versus their jobs, and so focusing on one over the other often would generate different interview codes for the analysis. This likely contributed to this subscale being tied for having the most cases of dissonance, as I tended to code primarily based on their schoolwork. I coded *winning* in interviews mostly according to participants' discussions around competitiveness; however, this may have overfocused on competitiveness regarding sports and may have overlooked any competitiveness participants may have had in academic or non-sports related activities (e.g., videogames), as neither of these were ever mentioned in interviews. As such, asking participants explicitly for how they interpreted these three subscales would have been extremely helpful for this alignment analysis.

It is important to emphasize that these weaker alignments around these three subscales did not necessarily mean that the CMNI-46 did not accurately capture participants' experiences or beliefs regarding these constructs, but rather that what they did capture was perhaps too non-specific to be particularly valuable for drawing conclusions without either: (a) better understanding how adolescent males interpret things like risk-taking, work, or winning, or (b) having more tightly defined domains that the construct is measuring.

Unlike the previous three constructs, the construct of *heterosexual self-presentation* was tightly defined, but I also considered the alignment of data as tentative due to the number of silences, indirect (i.e., partial) comparisons, and inconsistencies between participants' responses on data sets. Some of the instances of dissonance may have been due to the social desirability bias, which is commonly observed regarding sensitive topics—such as in discussions around sexuality—where the honesty of participants' admissions is decreased due to not wanting to go against social conventions (Krumpal, 2013; Tourangeau & Yan, 2007). Therefore, as it was

known that all school districts within the whole province of BC explicitly support the LGBTQ2S+ community (ARC Foundation, 2019), some participants may not have felt comfortable answering honestly about their feelings around being considered gay if they felt their responses were counter to a LGBTQ2S+ affirming position. Perhaps because conversations around *heterosexual self-presentation* were broached during the interviews in a less direct way (often they would bring it up) than was done in the survey, some participants may have shared more honestly about that topic (e.g., I never explicitly asked in the interviews “How much would you care if someone called you gay?”). This may explain why some participants’ adherences to this norm were coded as higher based on the interviews. That said, a few of the dissonances were in the reverse direction, meaning their interviews were coded as lower than their responses on the survey indicated. This may have also been due to social desirability bias, except that these participants perhaps felt more pressure during our face-to-face interview to appear more unperturbed about topics relating to homosexuality in case I might judge them. As such, they may have answered more honestly on the survey when no one was observing their responses.

Although social desirability bias may have accounted for some dissonances, it was also likely that many instances of dissonance for this subscale were due to an assumption in my coding of interviews in which I assumed that excerpts indicating a high acceptance or support of the LGBTQ2S+ community would likely correspond to them personally not caring if they were referred to—incorrectly or not—as gay. Based on the alignment results this did not seem to always be true as two participants who vocally supported the LGBTQ2S+ community still did not want to be considered gay themselves. That said, examples of non-support for the LGBTQ2S+ community in the interviews did always match with those participants having a higher adherence on the *heterosexual self-presentation* subscale.

This dynamic of some participants having outward support for others' sexual orientations but still caring about not being seen as gay would be valuable to explore further. This may have parallels with research about internalized homophobia (e.g., Rowen & Malcolm, 2002; Tskhay & Rule, 2017), or it may reflect the fact that everyone in a society or culture that has homonegativity is, to an extent, going to reflect aspects of that homonegativity (Russell & Bohan, 2006). Alternatively, perhaps it connects more with one's general distaste in being misidentified or wrongly labelled, irrespective of what that label is about.

Poor Data Alignment: Power Over Women

Lastly, the alignment of data for the *power over women* subscale was the poorest observed, which was statistically no better than due to chance. Besides being tied with the *primacy of work* subscale for the highest cases of dissonance, what set the results on this subscale apart from all the others was the lack of variation in participants' subscale scores—almost all indicated low adherence. This, combined with the fact that in all cases of dissonance participants' interviews were coded as having greater adherence to this norm than did their surveys, suggested a strong likelihood of a social desirability bias or a halo effect (i.e., perceiving oneself more favourably) factoring into participants' survey responses whereas imbalanced beliefs about gendered power dynamics were more visible in the interviews through our indirect conversations. It was likely that participants knew it was socially unacceptable to admit to controlling women, regardless of whether they did or did not control women. A much more extreme example that I could find that perhaps parallels this was how men with a history of perpetrating sexual violence were just as accurate in defining and knowing what rape was as were those without a history of perpetuating sexual violence²¹ (Siegel et al., 2021). It could also

²¹ To be clear, I am not using this example to suggest that any participants in this study were sexual violent but using it to demonstrate that people can know what is acceptable or not regardless of their actions.

be that participants did not answer dishonestly on the subscale but rather did not view their beliefs of or behaviors with women as accurately represented by the items comprising this scale and so did not connect to the way items were phrased (i.e., they would not describe their behaviours or beliefs towards women as controlling). Moreover, difficult or unusual wording on surveys about sensitive issues can also result in less honest or accurate answers (Tourangeau & Yan, 2007), and there was one item on this subscale that used the word “subservient,” which was a source of confusion for some participants ($n \sim 20$) who asked me what it meant while they were completing the survey. As such, that may have also reduced the fidelity of responses on this subscale. In addition, this study’s results for the *power over women* subscale reflects another study that found the subscale *power over women* is less precise than the other CMNI-46 subscales in measuring what it claims to measure (Levant et al., 2015).

Perhaps because public discourse and awareness about gender power dynamics has developed and increased substantially in the time since the CMNI measure was first created in 2003 (e.g., the #MeToo movement) there is need for an updated subscale. Some suggested items that may provide more detail and better connect to adolescent males’ relationship with women and/or beliefs about power dynamics within gender roles are: “A man should lead in a relationship with a woman;” “Men tend to make better decisions than women;” “Men should be the head of their household;” and “I don’t think women are lesser than men but I think men are better suited to positions of power in society” (this last example demonstrates the use of "forgiving" wording in the question, which can result in more honest answers; Tourangeau & Yan, 2007, p. 874).

Implications from the Alignment Analysis (Research Question 1)

I conducted the alignment analysis to assess the epistemological and practical efficacy of integrating qualitative and quantitative methods in the field of males and masculinities—my fourth objective. From these alignment findings I identified several key theoretical and practical implications. I first discuss the epistemological implications of mixing methods in masculinities research, followed by my practical recommendations in doing so. I then discuss the implications of the alignment analysis results for my investigation of Research Question 2.

Epistemological Implications of Mixing Methods in the Study of Masculinities: Compatible but with Cautions

The main theoretical implication from the alignment findings between participants' interview and CMNI-46 responses involves the concern over the epistemological compatibility between quantitative and qualitative approaches and, relatedly, whether quantitative scales of masculinity can accurately capture the fluid and context-dependent nature of gender (Addis et al., 2010; Addis et al., 2016). Based upon the pioneering results of this study's alignment analysis, I suggest that with two essential caveats, quantitative and qualitative findings in the field of masculinity can be compatible (not merely complementary) and that there is great need for more frequent integration of methodologies, particularly for masculinities research relying solely on quantitative methods. The basis for there being compatibility between methods is justified by three CMNI-46 subscales demonstrating a strong congruency with relevant interview extracts and by four subscales having tentative levels of alignment, which likely would have been considerably higher had the interviews been specifically structured to align with the content of each subscale and had participants' interpretations of those subscales been better understood. For these reasons caution is also urged, particularly for quantitative-only research, due to

concerns about some subscales' relevance and imprecise constructs potentially obscuring the validity of interpretations drawn from their usage.

The first caveat relating to the compatibility of quantitative and qualitative research between the CMNI-46 data and the interview data is the need to consider each separate subscale/construct separately, as not all are equal. As demonstrated in this research, each subscale had unique alignment findings as well as many subscale-specific complexities to consider when interpreting their results. As such, the utility or value derived from using total CMNI-46 scores to communicate generalities about participants' conformity to masculine norms is highly suspect. Therefore, despite the fact that the creators of the various CMNI versions prioritized the subscales above the total CMNI scores, they and others still support the use of total scores (e.g., Levant et al., 2015; Mahalik et al., 2003; Parent & Moradi, 2009; Parent et al., 2011); I suggest, based on this study's findings, these total scores should never be used. Although this recommendation was based on findings specific to the eight subscales on the CMNI-46, it is also foreseeable that with other self-report scales of masculinity that contain multi-dimensions (i.e., can be broken down into subscales), these subscale scores should be prioritized above their conglomerate scores or values. Again, the reason for this was that there was so much nuance and complexity seen within adherence to each masculine norm investigated in this study that there is a greater need for more specific and precise scales, not less (which is similar to what was recommended in Farrell et al., 2000). Indeed, the investigation of this research question was, in part, a response to the calls to action for survey research to better reflect the complexities of norm adherence (Addis, 2010; Kaplan et al., 2017; Smiler, 2014) and to be more positive-focused (Cole et al., 2021). To this end, the findings from the alignment analysis demonstrate that of central importance to being able to capture the complexities of norm

adherence is having highly precise scales that are easily interpreted. For example, creating more subscales that break down violence into specific facets of violence will better address these complexities, which, in turn, will likely also lead to more positive-focused research regarding norm adherence as the benefits of adhering to certain facets of violence (e.g., perhaps the willingness to endure or withstand violence in the face of social injustices) will be more easily prised apart.

The second caveat in claiming that quantitative and qualitative methods can be epistemologically compatible for assessing aspects pertaining to masculinity is that researchers need to do their own analysis of the content of each subscale, item by item, so that their interpretation of the content that the scale is claiming to measure can be clearly defined and more accurately operationalized in the research. Possible questions to reflect upon and account for within one's research are: "How was the construct interpreted by those who originally constructed the scale?" "How is it interpreted by researchers using it?", "How are participants themselves interpreting the items?", and "How might readers interpret the subscales?" Accounting for these questions helps researchers and readers avoid assumptions about what a scale claims to measure, versus what it might actually assess. For example, this study's finding that the subscale *risk-taking* had no correlation with *normative male alexithymia* scores may impress upon readers, depending on their interpretation of risk-taking, that teenage boys' emotional expressiveness has nothing to do with their sense of adventure or their interest in extreme sports. Yet, if considering the original intent of the construct, which was believed to be related to adventure but also to violence, law-breaking, and substance abuse behaviours (Mahalik et al., 2003), this understanding could easily lead to the interpretation that teenage boys' emotional expressiveness has nothing to do with their likelihood of breaking the law or using

drugs. Moreover, the most common way in which risk-taking is measured in the literature is regarding one's propensity for financial risks (Jordan-Young & Karkazis, 2019), and, as such, that might lead to the interpretation that teenage boys' emotional expressiveness has nothing to do with their likelihood of taking financial risks. However, since risk-taking is never defined on the CMNI-46 for participants, the extent to which any of these conclusions may or may not be valid is dependent upon knowing how participants interpreted risk-taking when answering the measure or upon having to rely on some other correlating variable to offer more precision.

By acknowledging the interpretivist elements involved in using scales, researchers can address and minimize epistemological concerns between quantitative research that tends towards positivism—presenting masculine norms or traits as fixed—which is often at odds with social constructionist understandings of gender (Addis et al., 2016; Isacco, 2015) because it requires viewing quantitative scales as containing interpretive elements and thus aligning them more with constructionist understandings of gender. This echoes and perhaps provides a tangible example to demonstrate Biesta's (2010) argument about how to account for different epistemologies in mixed methods research. He argued that merely combining different epistemologies within research as they are is “obviously not possible” (p. 102), and so it becomes the question of which epistemology to endorse within one's research that must transcend any specific method within the research. Following this advice, I pre-emptively acknowledged this within my research in Chapter 3 (p. 92), and the findings in this alignment analysis confirmed the practical necessity of doing so.

Although some researchers may want to instead conform the qualitative interview method to a positivist epistemology, similar to what some authors have contended for in mixed methods research within health care (Sale et al., 2002), I do not think this is possible within

masculinities research without undermining the current predominant understandings of gender, and thus I agree with Addis et al. (2010) that the onus is more on researchers of psychological studies of males and masculinities, particularly quantitative studies, to reorient themselves accordingly. To be clear, lots of psychological researchers on males and masculinities have social constructionist views of gender, but this can be at odds with how scales are practically presented and treated in gender research, which can sometimes still be the case in sociological research too (Bridges, 2019). Based on the alignment results, I reiterate the calls (e.g., Biesta, 2010; Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006; Riazi, 2016) for mixed methods researchers to explicitly address the epistemological integration of their methods within their research beyond nominally citing pragmatism as the solution in which incompatibilities are reconciled.

Practical Recommendations for Mixing Methods

These theoretical implications just outlined lead into two practical recommendations for mixing methods. The first is, as much as is possible, researchers should make full scales openly available for viewing so that constructs and items themselves can be analyzed for clear interpretations as to what the construct measures. This will increase the trustworthiness of implications drawn from any results and is in keeping with best practices in the “Open Science movement” (van Dijk et al., 2021, p. 139) for transparency in research. For context, in this study the CMNI-46 and NMAS-BF scales were both only made available to me after I contacted the authors and signed their permission forms so I could use them.

The second practical recommendation for mixing methods is for extensive piloting and/or some level of follow-up questions to help determine how participants’ interpreted subscales. One possibility is to include open-ended responses at the end of surveys (e.g., “What do you consider to be risk-taking? Is that how you answered those questions on the previous survey?”). These

recommendations echo those made by Willis and Artino (2013) regarding medical surveys and by Meinck et al.'s (2022) after their systematic review of dozens of self-report scales that measure violence against children and adolescents, which indicates that the need to account for the subjectivity of participants' interpretations is not a need that is unique to using the CMNI-46. More specifically, Willis and Artino (2013) outlined an evidence-based method for how to interview participants to determine whether survey questions measure what was desired, and Meinck et al. (2022) concluded that extensive piloting and/or focus group discussions should always be done to ensure content validity of the measure with the target population. This current study extends these recommendations to also include alignment studies, as the interpretation of survey items is critical to how the interviews are coded for comparisons.

The findings of the alignment analysis in this study also demonstrated which norms of masculinity, and to what extent, were most relevant to adolescent males' experiences being male based upon how much, and in what ways, participants discussed them in their interviews (as reflected by the number of silences and partial alignments for any given subscale). This was a key benefit of not explicitly aligning the interview questions around the subscales. Aspects connected to all scales were relevant to their experiences, but other than *self-reliance* and *emotional control*, the items on the other CMNI-46 subscales did not often best reflect the ways in which participants chose to talk about those topics. To further test this, participants would need to be more explicitly asked about the relevance of these subscales (once again through pilot studies or follow-up questions) or, alternatively, subscales might need to change to become more relevant to adolescent males. I offered a couple examples of new items for doing so earlier in this chapter.

Even if quantitative and qualitative methods are only integrated in mixed methods studies for complementary purposes to highlight different aspects of the phenomenon in question (e.g., Reams & Twale, 2008; Salazar et al., 2020), and some have argued that that is the only possible way the two can be integrated (Sale et al., 2002), it is still beneficial to better understand how participants interpreted the survey questions. The reason for this is that it strengthens the confidence of any implications that are drawn from the results and it more clearly highlights the extent to which the two methods are addressing complementary facets of the phenomenon. For example, if I had done this, I would have better known how most participants interpreted the items relating to *risk-taking*, *primacy of work*, or *winning*, and would have had more confidence and specificity in stating conclusions from their correlational results that were used to complement the interview findings in answering the second research question.

Implications of the Alignment Analysis for Research Question 2

This discussion leads to the reason why I conducted the alignment analysis prior to answering the second but core research question—because I wanted to assess the extent to which the survey and interview data could be integrated holistically. The high fidelity between data sets for *emotional control* and *self-reliance* gave me confidence in knowing what those subscales represented in those 20 participants' lives so that the 170 participants' correlational results involving those subscales could be more readily integrated with the qualitative findings. I also had relatively higher confidence in drawing conclusion relating to the *violence* subscale than the remaining five subscales—the main stipulation for myself was that I acknowledged that this subscale involves beliefs around justified acts of violence as opposed to violence associated with uncontrolled aggression. Although there was more alignment than not for the four subscales of *risk-taking*, *primacy of work*, *winning*, and *heterosexual-self presentation*, there was not much

evidence from the alignment analysis for me to confidently draw conclusions from their correlational or t-test results on how to integrate those results together with the interview data without relying on significant subjectivity. As previously discussed, this had to do with the broad range in which the items in these subscales could be interpreted. Given the poor alignment regarding the *power over women* subscale and the suspected evidence of participants' bias on their survey answers, all statistical results from this subscale were ignored for answering the second research question.

Implication Summary of the Alignment Analysis

The intent of this alignment analysis between the CMNI-46 survey data and interview data was not to prove or disprove the benefits or disadvantages of either qualitative or quantitative approaches in masculinities research but to assess the extent to which the quantitative and qualitative divide in the field could be bridged. Although pragmatism offers much to the field of mixed methods, based on the alignment findings, I contend (as have others, e.g., Biesta, 2010; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004) that great attention is still needed to address the philosophical compatibilities of methods within one's research. This can get even more complicated when facets of gender are being analyzed given its vast complexities (Addis et al., 2016), as was demonstrated in this study. In attempting to bridge the quantitative and qualitative divide, I presented the novel findings from this study and my recommendations for how surveys and interviews can be integrated more holistically in the hopes of pushing research in the field of masculinity forward by more unproblematically utilizing the strengths of both and by inspiring more innovative research designs in studying males and masculinities.

As this was believed to be the first alignment analysis in the field of masculinities, the ways in which I determined the alignment using adherence codes, five categories that described

the type of alignment, and consistency statistics serve as a practical model for future alignment analyses. Overall, more alignment analyses with the CMNI-46 and other widely used masculine scales are needed to help further assess the extent to which the methodological gaps in the field can be bridged. I echo all the practical recommendations for alignment analyses as put forth by Harris and Brown (2010), namely that the interviews should be tightly aligned with the constructs, the construct should be clearly defined, and the alignment should be assessed with the use of a consistency statistic.

Discussion for Comparing Adolescent Males by Emotional Restriction Levels (Research Question 2)

Informed by the findings of the alignment analysis, the results from the thematic analysis of the interviews presented in Chapter 5 and the statistical analyses between the NMAS-BF and eight CMNI-46 subscales presented in Chapter 4 are integrated together here to answer the second research question: *To what extent do adolescent males' experiences and beliefs of being male vary, based on their levels of emotional restriction?* The discussion and contextualization of the key findings are divided in three sections according to the (a) similarities; (b) emerging differences (it is primarily in this section where the statistical analyses regarding norm adherence are discussed); and (c) stark differences between adolescent males of varying levels of emotional restriction.

Similarities Between Adolescent Males of Varying Levels of Emotional Restriction

Although profound differences were identified across the interview and statistical findings when comparing adolescent males' experiences and beliefs of being male based upon varying levels of emotional restriction, there was also much that was in common. From a young age, all participants were exposed to many of the same masculine pressures and had similar

experiences and beliefs as to where those pressures came from and how those pressures were communicated to them. Most participants also attributed special significance to the role of their fathers in their understandings and experiences of being male. These aspects were captured in the first essential theme, *Immersed in Masculine Pressures*, and in the subtheme, *Fathers as Masculine Guides and/or Foils*, and are discussed in this section.

Two core masculine pressures were identified: the pressure to limit emotional expression and the pressure to be physically and mentally tough. The first was the expectation that males do not talk about their feelings and that they suppress outward displays of emotions, particularly those deemed more negative or undesirable, such as those associated with sadness and pain. The second pressure of toughness typically involved a physical component like strength, aggressiveness, or athleticism, as well as a mental component like being self-reliant, confident, dominant, persistent, or demonstrative of the ability to endure physical or emotional pain. Both these two predominant masculine pressures were reminiscent of the masculine norms identified in previous studies with this age group (see Chu et al., 2005; O'Neil & Luján, 2009; Way et al., 2014). For example, Chu (2014) identified three main masculine norms for boys, "tough, stoic and independent" (p. 253), which were essentially the same as those identified in my study. The only pressures/norms that appeared notably absent from participants' accounts (except Birjot's) was anything in relation to sexual prowess, which was unexpected given its common representation in other lists of masculine norm (e.g., Amin et al., 2018; David & Brannon, 1976; Levant, 1996). It may have been that participants did not feel comfortable talking to me about content related to sexuality; however, in my previous research, adolescent males did tell me that they felt the pressure to be "smooth with the ladies" (Kwiatkowski, 2016, p. 74).

All participants viewed these masculine pressures/norms, whether they were critical of them or not, as intending to offer guidance as to how to become a socially acceptable or an ideal version of a man. Therefore, just as the first known list of masculine norms/pressures ever collated was presented as a list of rules (David & Brannon, 1976), the two core masculine pressures/norms in this study provided a pathway for participants to fit in with others, a way to gain social power, and, perhaps most importantly, a way for them to not be ostracized. If participants' behaviour deviated too far from the expectations set out by the two core masculine norms, then it was a real possibility they could be excluded by their peers and/or subjected to sexist or homophobic remarks to question their status as a man. These types of costs for non-conformity are found extensively in other research (Cadieux & Chasteen, 2015; O'Beaglaioich, Morrison, et al., 2015; Reigeluth & Addis, 2016) and aligns with Pleck's (1995) model of Gender Role Strain, in which he postulated that there were idealized versions of masculinity and manhood that males are socialized to strive towards with potentially severe negative consequences if they failed to meet those ideals. In this study, the fear of social exclusion was seen as a powerful and restrictive mechanism in adolescent males' lives that allowed masculine pressures to persist and flourish, particularly at school.

The significant increase in and intensity of masculine pressures around early adolescence (ages 13–14) that many participants described echoes much of the literature that identifies that age as a critical time period for masculine socialization pressures (Chu, 2004; Kågesten et al., 2016; Rogers et al., 2021; Way et al., 2014). Although some research suggests that pressures continue to increase from early to late adolescence (Amin et al., 2018; Rogers et al., 2021), others suggest the opposite (Marcell et al., 2011), and my current research offers no clear consensus as both types of patterns were identified by participants. It could be that after the

increase of pressures around the ages of 13–14, these pressures become normalized over time so that by late adolescence males are not as conscious of the intensity of masculine pressures regardless of if those intensities have changed or not. Alternatively, as was noted from at least three participants' experiences, it could be that the transitions involving puberty and progressing through to secondary school created much instability around social contexts and confidence levels that may exacerbate the intensity of masculine pressures during early adolescence. However, by late adolescence males may have found more consistent friend circles and/or had more time to develop their identity and self-confidence so they had more ability to resist those pressures, as was seen with many participants in this research, especially those in the *low ER group*. In other words, more time may allow some adolescent males to better resolve their major psychosocial developmental crisis for that life stage, as per the theory of psychosocial development (Erikson, 1950; Maree, 2021).

Regardless of if masculine pressures increase or decrease during adolescence, the findings of this study amplify the overall importance of the adolescent years for males' developing relationship with their masculine identities. The findings also point to how schools are specifically situated during this pivotal time-period in masculine development as the main site in which participants explore their gender identities, as seen elsewhere (Adger & Wright, 2015; Swain, 2005). Although school systems and teachers have been implicated in the perpetuation of masculine norms (Hamilton & Roberts, 2017; Jule, 2018; Mac An Ghail & Haywood, 2012; Whelen, 2011), these sources of masculine pressures were rarely mentioned by participants and were relatively insignificant in comparison to the three main sources of masculine pressures, which were: peers (primarily male peers), the media, and fathers. All of these sources are well represented in the literature, although many times mothers are included as

pressures rather than just fathers (Amin et al., 2018; Kågesten et al., 2016). Most often the masculine pressures from the media were seen to involve pressures around physical appearance (i.e., muscularity), which may reflect the connection between media consumption and males' body image issues, as has been found in other studies (Agliata & Tantleff-Dunn, 2004; Slater & Tiggemann, 2014). Although males' consumption of media that contains sexual content is also often a focus of conversations about masculinity (Orenstein, 2020), arguably echoing the results of some studies that note greater rates of consumption correlate to greater sexist or objectifying attitudes in males (Hegarty et al., 2016; Mikorski & Szymanski, 2017; Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2013), participants in this study never discussed any sexual content of media. This absence likely reflects the sensitive nature of that topic and, as such, may need further research.

The key findings around fathers in my research supports the literature that highlights the role that fathers can play in the masculine socialization process for their sons is complex and varied (Levant et al., 2018). Sometimes fathers were examples of the men participants wanted to emulate, whether that was towards restrictive forms of masculinity, as is found in some research (Casselmann & Rosenbaum, 2014; Epstein & Ward, 2011), or towards expansive and less rigid gendered beliefs, as is also found in other research (Halpern & Perry-Jenkins, 2016). One finding that may be a novel contribution to the literature on fathers and adolescent sons is that even though many participants looked up to their fathers as a model of masculinity, just as many looked at their fathers, or just specific attributes of their fathers, as an example of the men they did not want to be like. Most often these participants critiqued their fathers' stunted relationship with their emotions and how that impacted their fathers' interpersonal relationships. These reasons appeared to connect and affirm DeFranc and Mahalik's (2002) finding that the greater the gender role conflict of the fathers (one aspect of which is greater levels of emotional

restriction) the more likely that the sons feel detached in their relationships with them, which was exactly what a couple ($n = 2$) of these participants' in my study explicitly described. Despite the small sample in my research, the fact that there was no observable pattern between the type of masculinity the father espoused and the participants' relationship with restricted emotionality demonstrates how even though fathers had significant roles in participants' understandings of masculinity, the sons' agency appeared more important—at least by late adolescence. This, as well as two participants' fathers barely factoring into their experiences or beliefs about being male, challenges the absolute notion some hold that fathers are essential to forming their sons' masculinities (for an overview of this debate see Levant et al., 2018).

In relation to how participants navigated these masculine pressures they faced, other important similarities than those mentioned in this section were noted, namely: (a) all participants' journeys navigating masculine pressures were ongoing, complex, filled with tensions, and had associated costs (some calculated, others not); (b) the statistical analyses indicated that participants, regardless of their level of emotional restriction, had more similarities than differences in their adherence levels to the eight norms of masculinity that were measured on the CMNI-46; and (c) the desire for connection transcended all participants' experiences and beliefs. However, despite these commonalities, divergent trends in these areas based on adolescent males' levels of emotional restriction also emerged, which is why they are discussed in the following sections.

***Emerging Differences Between Adolescent Males of Varying Levels of Emotional Restriction:
Norm Adherence and Resistance***

This transitional section between the more clearly defined similarities and differences in participants' experiences and beliefs of being male based upon their differing levels of emotional

restriction focuses on participants' navigation of masculine pressures in terms of their adherence and resistance to masculine norms. Although separate trends regarding adherence and resistance to masculine norms was observed based on participants' levels of emotional restriction, this was not categorically so, as three participants deviated from the rest of the participants in their ER group. This inability to neatly separate participants based on their levels of emotional restriction affirms the fluid and context-dependent nature of navigating one's gender identity (Bridges, 2019; West & Zimmerman, 1987) and also underscores how adherence to masculine norms is complex and multi-faceted (Addis et al., 2016; Cuthbert, 2015), as is resisting masculine norms (Chu, 2014; Way et al., 2014). This complexity was seen within each of the separate quantitative and qualitative findings as well as in integrating both components to answer the second research question, as is now discussed.

The correlational analysis of all 170 participants indicated that NMAS-BF scores, which represented their level of restricted emotionality, only significantly correlated with two of the eight masculine norms measured, indicating more areas of similarity than not. Notably, the two positive correlations with NMAS-BF scores—*emotional control* and *self-reliance*—had large effect sizes and were both highly corroborated by the hermeneutic phenomenological findings. These norms are detailed further in the next section as they represent profoundly contrasting experiences and beliefs of adolescent males based on varying levels of emotional restriction.

When norm adherence levels between the top and bottom 15% of all NMAS-BF scores were compared, only one more significant difference emerged regarding norm adherence to *primacy of work*. This result suggests that adolescent males who had very low levels of emotional restriction were more likely to focus on work than those who had very high levels of emotional restriction. Since *primacy of work* scores can be beneficially related to motivation and

health promotion behaviours, as Gerdes and Levant (2018) concluded in their review of multiple studies, perhaps the participants who are some of the most motivated towards work are generally more motivated towards personal growth in other areas and view emotional expression as an important part of that journey. Although this relationship between NMAS-BF and *primacy of work* had a medium effect size, this difference was not noted in the interview analyses. This may have been due to the ambiguity of that construct, as I mentioned in discussing the alignment analysis, or it may have been that participants did not feel their relationships with work at their age were important to their experiences or beliefs about being male and so did not talk about it at length in their interviews.

Of the six norms that had no significant correlations with NMAS-BF scores, *power over women* and *heterosexual self-presentation* differed from the hypotheses I made in Chapter 4 that higher adherence to these norms would correlate with higher levels of emotional restriction. This was surprising as correlations with both these variables have been found in previous research (Parent & Moradi, 2009) and because males' fears of being associated with femininity and homosexuality are notable reasons why some males refrain from expressing their emotions (O'Neil, 2015; Way et al., 2014), which was even attested to by multiple participants during their interviews in this current study. As such, the lack of correlations regarding *power over women* was likely explained by participants' biased/dishonest responses and/or by the lack of relevance of how the items comprising the construct were worded, as previously discussed (p. 233). The lack of positive correlation between *heterosexual self-presentation* scores and NMAS-BF scores is harder to explain without further investigation, but it likely shows the complexities of norm adherence and resistance. For instance, as was demonstrated in the interviews, the fear of being associated with homosexuality was a relevant factor as to why some participants tended not to

share their emotions, but it was not always the case. It could be that participants who were more emotionally expressive were hyper aware that, as such, they might already be considered more feminine or gay, and so, because of that, were keen to avoid any further associations with those labels. Therefore, there are potentially competing reasons that neutralized any differences around adherence to this norm based on participants' levels of emotional restriction. Another explanation could be that the social desirability bias or the halo effect resulted in participants not scoring their propensity to avoid homosexual connotations as precisely or honestly. However, based on my investigation of this possibility during the alignment analysis, as described earlier in this chapter (p. 230), I did not find enough evidence to support or to challenge this notion.

That lack of differences in participants' propensity for violence as captured by the *violence* subscale was predicted (see Chapter 4, p. 160), even though it went against other findings (e.g., Gerdes & Levant, 2018). This, combined with the mean scores for this variable being the highest (i.e., this norm had the highest level of participant adherence out of all eight norms that were measured), offers support to my assessment that most items comprising this subscale referred to justified violence, which I believed would invoke a high rate of adherence despite participants' lower propensities for violence in other areas. Indeed, some participants who avoided violence in their lives, as described by them in the interviews, scored highly on the *violence* subscale. The reason for this discrepancy may be that there is a difference between enacting violence in real life and pontificating about hypothetical scenarios of justified violence. As such, the ability to draw clear implications or interpretations about participants' relationships with violence based on their overall high adherence to the *violence* subscale is limited beyond saying that most adolescent males in this study believe violence can be justifiable and that they would be willing to be violent if necessary.

Lastly, I predicted that NMAS-BF scores would not correlate to the norms of *risk-taking*, *winning*, and *primacy of work* due to the mixed results involving those variables found in previous studies (Gerdes & Levant, 2018; Wong, Moon-Ho, et al., 2017). However, the lack of differences here may also add weight to my argument from the alignment analysis that interpreting the items on these scales was highly subjective and needs to be more refined in order pick up on any differences that might actually exist relating to these variables.

Addressing Tensions Between the Mixed Methods Results Regarding Norm Adherence. Although the statistical findings from all 170 participants' quantitative data suggested that adolescent males of differing levels of emotional restriction have more in common with their adherence to masculine norms than not, the second essential theme from the interview analyses, *Navigating Masculine Pressures*, suggested there were significant differences in norm adherence between participants based on their levels of emotional restriction. For instance, I identified that almost all participants in the *low ER group* ($n = 9$) tended to consistently resist the pressures to adhere to masculine norms whereas the majority of participants in the *high ER group* ($n = 8$) tended to consistently adhere to them. Therefore, before these qualitative findings are discussed more in the next subsections, I account for this seeming incongruity regarding norm adherence.

To begin with, most of the noncorrelating norms measured in the statistical analysis via the CMNI-46 did not closely overlap with the two core masculine pressures/norms identified or discussed in the interviews. Relatedly, many of the norms measured by the CMNI-46 were not often identified in the interviews as masculine pressures that participants experienced (e.g., *winning*, *primacy of work*, or *power over women*). As such, the assessment of norm adherence and resistance in the interviews was specifically centered on the norms that participants' felt

pressured towards (i.e., emotional restriction and physical and mental toughness), which highlights how not all norms of masculinity have equal, or any, pressures associated with them, at least not with certain populations or in certain contexts.

Another possible explanation for the apparent discrepancies between findings could be related to how the CMNI-46 was found in one study to distinctly measure participants' conformity of behaviours to masculine norms as opposed to their endorsements of those masculine norms (Levant et al., 2015), which differed from my interviews as both conformity and endorsement of masculine norms were included in determining participants' overall tendencies of adherence or resistance. This explanation is questionable though as, despite Levant et al.'s (2015) findings, the instructions of the CMNI-46 specify this is a measure of both behaviours and beliefs (Parent, 2013), which other research has also confirmed (Thompson & Bennett, 2015).

Lastly, despite the potential tension between how the qualitative and quantitative findings can be interpreted to depict participants' norm adherence, participants' adherence to the two predominant norms identified in the interviews were highly congruent with the statistical findings. For example, the subscales on the CMNI-46 that most closely paralleled the main norms identified in the interviews—limiting emotional expression and exuding physical and mental toughness—were *emotional control* and *self-reliance* (an aspect related to presenting oneself as tough), and these were all largely different between participants of varying levels of emotional restriction in both the statistical and interview analyses. Arguably, the *violence* and *risk-taking* subscales also may have had some parallels to the norm of physical and mental toughness, but the utility of those constructs were questioned, as I previously discussed. Therefore, given all these reasons, any seeming incongruity in norm adherence based on levels

of emotional restriction is likely due more to differences in methods not always capturing or measuring the same things rather than inconsistent results. This does, however, demonstrate the complexities of measuring masculine norm adherence and point to why contextual pieces are sorely needed (Cuthbert, 2015), to which alignment analyses can be of immense value.

Important Components of Resistance. For participants in the interviews—primarily those participants in the *low ER group*—who consistently resisted the pressures to adhere to the two predominant masculine norms, two things were central: their need to be authentic, which generally meant not hiding parts of themselves from others; and having the confidence to do so. This aspect of authenticity supports O’Neil’s (2015) assertion that restrictive masculine pressures cause boys to fragment aspects of themselves, as this was what all participants who now consistently resisted these masculine norms described in my study. These participants all had, at one time or another, restricted their authentic identities due to masculine pressures; however, this proved to be too high of a cost for them to continue. An implication of this finding is that resistance to masculine norms emerges from a place of exposure to masculine pressures, not from managing to avoid ever having experienced them. There was one exception to this—Evan, who maintained that he could always be himself at all points throughout his life because he always had enough confidence to do so. However, this may be related to the fact that he, and the majority of the others ($n = 7$) who consistently resisted masculine pressures, particularly those who were in the *low ER group*, aligned with masculine ideals around athleticism, as they were involved in sports, which they often cited as important aspects to their identities and experiences growing up.

Participants’ athleticism was seen to have had a helping or buffering effect assisting them in resisting masculine pressures in two related ways as their athleticism and physical confidence

through sports increased their overall confidence socially. This was most predominately notable for those who cited major growth spurts during puberty ($n = 2$), which was seen to help them gain social standing and become confident enough to be more authentic, especially with greater emotional expression. This illustrates how a part of gender identity development can be connected with how one embodies their bodies (Paechter, 2012) and may build upon a previous finding from a study with young children that having more assertiveness (i.e., confidence) prevented emotional problems in children (Groeben et al., 2011). In turn, being athletic appeared to assist participants' resistance of other masculine pressures by allowing them to deviate from other masculine norms—namely being more emotionally expressive and vulnerable—with fewer negative social consequences because they were physically recognized as meeting the masculine ideals, so their manhood was not deeply challenged by others. This dynamic highlights a critical distinction, as noted elsewhere (Archer, 1989; Chu, 2014), between someone's interests or identity aligning with a stereotypical masculine norm versus their endorsement of that norm. For example, the participants in this study who resisted and appeared to adhere to some masculine norms, especially regarding strength and athleticism, did not endorse them as masculine ideals but expressed valuing those aspects for themselves and genuinely enjoying those things.

Having a form of masculine privilege with athleticism has been noted before, but sometimes in the context of highlighting how that privilege contributes to more hegemonic norms of masculinity (Burns & Kehler, 2014). In this study, athletic privilege was seen as helpful in resisting hegemonic norms of masculinity—particularly around emotional restriction. This finding supports the notion that conformity to some masculine norms is not inherently negative or restrictive and may in fact be beneficial, as is noted elsewhere (Chu, 2014; Cuthbert, 2015). This finding likely also relates to why previous studies that found gay–straight alliances in

schools only significantly reduce bullying if straight males who are popular are also involved (Micali, 2005) or to how a star male athlete joining a school group for gender equality prevented the other boys in the group from being made fun of (Coulter, 2003), because privilege provides power, which can be used in a variety of ways. This finding also aligns to one of the three things that has been identified in the literature to help adolescent males resist masculine norm—having high social status/power (Chu, 2014; Way et al., 2014). The other two things Chu (2014) and Way et al. (2014) identified as important to helping adolescent males resist masculine norms were being exposed to more expressive and diverse cultures and people, which was not deeply observed in this research; and having close relationships, which was a key factor in helping many participants in the *low ER group* be more emotionally expressive. However, it is important to clarify that participants who consistently adhered to masculine pressures also described having close, meaningful relationships with others, albeit with less emotional closeness and frequency than the *low ER group* in terms of shared vulnerability. Despite these potential factors in assisting participants' abilities to resist masculine norms, all participants who consistently resisted masculine norms ($n = 11$) attributed their resistance to an internally led process.

Important Components of Consistent Norm Adherence. For the participants who consistently adhered to masculine pressures, mostly the *high ER group*, there were two different categories of adherence: those who willingly adhered (i.e., it aligned with their beliefs of what males were supposed to be) and those who reluctantly adhered (i.e., felt stuck and/or thought it was better than any alternative). For those in the latter category, their desires to be connected or accepted by others (e.g., peers, family members, society) appeared to be a key motivation for their adherence, and, as such, that made them more willing to accept the costs associated with overriding their parts of themselves that felt in conflict with some masculine norms. Several of

these participants seemed on the precipice of wanting to be less restricted yet felt unable or uncertain about how to do that. Again, these findings highlight how powerful adolescent males' desires to orient their behaviours to those of their male peers was, which aligns with Neufeld and Maté (2013) concept of peer orientation. This finding also resembles the Foucauldian notion of the panopticon where individuals, rather than institutions, primarily carry out their own self-silencing and policing of others' behaviours (Deveaux, 1994), which, in this case, was participants' adherence to hegemonic masculine norms.

Yet participants' adherence to masculine norms was highly complex, as participants often experienced benefits from their adherence. Some of these benefits were as follows: (a) adherence to masculine norms helped some participants feel a greater sense of social connectedness at school; (b) being physically tough and having the capacity or willingness to defend yourself from fighting and/or having friends willing to stand up and fight for you was seen to preserve one's self-worth and to prevent bullying (although not always); and (c) adhering to the norm of self-reliance helped some participants be independent enough that they could stand up to peer pressures. This points to the fluidity between norm adherence and resistance, which builds upon Chu's (2014) conclusion from her research with boys that their adherence to masculine norms is highly adaptive and strategic for their contexts. Furthermore, as Brown (2010) pointed out in her research on authenticity, people generally are not fully authentic or inauthentic; rather, people go in and out of authenticity at certain times. In the same way, adolescent males' adherence and resistance to masculine norms should not be understood in maxims of inauthentic versus authentic; rather, authenticity may be a useful marker from which to interrogate males' personal perspectives of if, when, and to what extent their adherence to a masculine norm becomes restrictive for them.

Research from the sociology of childhood that recognizes how a child's agency interacts with a combination of biological, psychological, social, and cultural contexts (Almeida, 2011; Quennerstedt & Quennerstedt, 2014; Šagud, 2015) is a helpful lens for understanding adolescent males' adherence and resistance to masculine norms as observed in this study. In much the same ways, participants' choices of adherence and resistance are influenced by the environment around them, but they are not passive to the masculine socialization pressures they are immersed in. Each participant in this study appeared to choose to navigate masculine pressures in a way that either adhered to or resisted masculine, even if some felt stuck in process. Moreover, almost all participants ($n = 19$) described experiencing some tension with learning to navigate masculine norms in their lives. Additionally, many complexities were observed with participants' adherence and resistance of masculine norms, such as how adherence and aligning with some masculine norms helped participants resist others. Yet, despite these similarities, different patterns of norm adherence and norm resistance were noted between most participants in the *low ER group* and most participants in the *high ER group*. The final section now turns to discussing the two stark differences between participants in the two groups that accounted for significant differences in their experiences and beliefs of being adolescent males.

Stark Differences Between Adolescent Males of Varying Levels of Emotional Restriction

The two major differences between adolescent males' experiences and beliefs of being male, based upon their varying levels of emotional restriction, revolved around their relationships with emotions and their ways of being in the world in relation to others. The first difference was captured in the interview analysis through the essential themes of *Importance of Emotional Safe Havens* for the *low ER group* and *Conscious Diminishing of Own Emotions* for the *high ER group*. The second difference was present in the final essential themes of *Sense of*

Masculine Difference for the *low ER group* and *Self-reliance* for the *high ER group*. Evidence of these two differences were also present in the quantitative component of this study by the positive correlations between NMAS-BF scores and the *emotional control* and *self-reliance* subscales, respectively.

Contrasting Relationship with Emotions. Participants in both the *low ER group* and *high ER group* had very different behaviours and beliefs around expressing their emotions. Participants in the *low ER group* talked about their feelings with others for a combination of interrelated reasons, which I list in no particular order: (a) it physiologically and cognitively felt positive for them to do so; (b) it alleviated feelings of emotional aloneness as it connected them with another human being; (c) it helped them problem solve/gain perspective on a situation; and (d) doing so was a part of living authentically. These benefits of talking about one's feelings are closely related to those that have been identified in the existing literature, such as: feeling less alone, feeling less stress, experiencing quicker recovery times from intense or traumatic situations (Berry & Pennebaker, 1993; Lepore et al., 2000; Nils & Rimé, 2012), feeling that your experience is validated (McCarthy et al., 2021), and believing it connects you with more deeply with life as every action requires emotional involvement (Barbalet, 2002).

The participants in the *low ER group* expressed their vulnerable feelings (e.g., sadness, distress, as well as school and relationship stressors) with people whom they trusted. Participants tended to prefer talking to peers over their parents and the majority ($n = 6$) preferred talking to females (e.g., friends, girlfriends, and mothers) over males because females were deemed less judgmental and better listeners. This finding reflects other research that suggested that it falls more on the females in relationships to primarily encourage and support males' emotions (Coulter, 2003; De Boise & Hearn, 2017). As such, this calls into question whether participants'

propensity towards female-led emotional safe havens sometimes contributed to more essentialist or reductive notions of gender along the lines of: “females are innately nurturing, and males are not”; or “female peers are good for talking about feelings whereas male peers are good for having fun.” Additionally, given that studies have shown that females tend to talk using more emotional words than males (Goldshmidt & Weller, 2000; Levant et al., 2009), perhaps part of the reason why participants preferred female emotional safe havens is because females are more practiced in these types of conversations due to their socialization pressures, just as participants were more discouraged from talking about some emotions due to theirs, as is also evidenced in other research (Levant et al., 2014).

In contrast to the *low ER group*'s relationship with emotions, the adolescents in the *high ER group* did not often, or at all, share their vulnerable feelings with others for a combination of the following reasons: (a) fearing judgement from others—being seen as weak or lesser; (b) fearing being a burden—negatively impacting the person who is listening; and (c) pre-emptively protecting themselves from emotional pain, due to past experiences of emotional closeness that ended abruptly/traumatically (e.g., death, divorce, moving away). Even though participants in the *high ER group* understood there might be some benefits to expressing their emotions, these were believed to be minimal in comparison to the potential costs just identified. To this point, depending on the person with whom one chooses to share emotions with, these three costs could all be legitimate fears. For instance, some research has found that the benefits of sharing one's emotions with someone else depends, at least somewhat, on the responder's ability to respond in a helpful, validating way (Pauw et al., 2019; Zech & Rimé, 2005), which may not always be the response given.

These first two reasons listed for why participants did not readily talk to others about feelings, which were the most cited, were directly connected to masculine pressures. For instance, participants who feared judgement did so because they did not want to be seen as unmanly or weak; participants who feared being a burden did not want to be seen as needy or bothersome, when the masculine ideal is that men should be the ones in control and helping others. The third most common reason for not expressing emotions—as a pre-emptive protection strategy—was not connected to masculine pressures, although it might be possible that those who had suppressed their emotions due to relational traumas/losses were not aware of how masculine socialization pressures exacerbated their level of emotional restriction as well. To my knowledge, neither of the latter two reasons (e.g., being a burden or trauma-related reasons) have been clearly accounted for in previous masculinities research on adolescent males' relationships with emotional expression. That said, fear of burdening others has been linked to men's avoidance of help-seeking for suicide ideation (Richardson, Dickson, et al., 2021), and the literature on trauma validates the hesitancy of participants who have shut down their emotional vulnerability due to past experiences of loss and trauma, which is represented well by the first half of the axiom: "Trauma blocks love. Love heals trauma" (Anderson, 2021, p. xvii). This axiom acknowledges how critical, yet difficult, connecting with others can be for those who have experienced traumas.

Another key finding regarding the most emotionally restrictive participants was that their suppression of emotions was a conscious process. As such, there were no participants who believed they were inherently emotionally unexpressive, rather they knew when and why they had become more emotionally restricted. Not only does this finding demonstrate that these participants were keenly aware of their own emotionality but it also helps refute prevalent

essentialist notions in society that males are inherently less emotional than females (Deng et al., 2016). One of the core motivations of all participants' beliefs around whether to share their emotions or not, regardless of levels of emotional restriction, was to connect with others. For some, expressing their emotions was a source of connection with others and with themselves, whereas for others, suppressing their emotions was believed to be important for maintaining positive connections with others.

Contrasting Ways of Being in the World in Relation to Others. The final key difference between adolescent males of varying levels of emotional restriction was centered around their different experiences and beliefs of being in the world in relation to others. This was captured in the last two essential themes: *Sense of Masculine Difference* for the *low ER group* and *Self-reliance* for the *high ER group*. Participants in the *low ER group's* sense of masculine difference was primarily attributed to their openness in expressing their emotions in comparison to their male peers. Some even felt that their ability express emotions compromised the value of their experiences they had shared with me about being an adolescent male because they thought their experience being male was so far removed from the average adolescent male. Their feelings of being set apart from their peer group due to their more expressive relationship with emotions amplifies just how significant the masculine norm of emotional restriction was believed to be in adolescent males' lives. Besides the difference of emotions, one participant thought his refusal to be an alpha male (i.e., arrogant, dominating) separated him from his male peers. In comparison, another participant did not know why he felt different; however, his solution was to adhere more to the norms of physical and mental toughness. As such, all their differences were connected in some way to their expressions of masculinity. This latter participant described the greatest feelings of loneliness of all participants in the *low ER group* but, for all others, any sense of

loneliness due to their masculine difference was temporary (often highest during earlier adolescence) or was greatly minimized, if felt at all, as they all had deep connections with people through their emotional safe havens. This temporary aspect of loneliness due to norm resistance may offer some hope for adolescent males, especially those in this study and in other studies (e.g., O'Beaglaioich, Morrison, et al., 2015) whose primary concern with violating the hegemonic norms of masculinity is experiencing loneliness due to social ostracization.

Most of the participants in the *low ER group* ($n = 8$) had also begun to realize that likely many more, if not all their male peers, were more emotional than they externally showed. As such, there appeared to be a dawning awareness that they were not so alone or different from other males as they had sometimes thought. Their revelation concurs with much research on boys and adolescent males that despite the various masks of masculinity they all might wear, if those are put aside they all have much in common, including their emotional sensitivities (Chu & Gilligan, 2014; Coulter, 2009; Orenstein, 2020; Way et al., 2014).

The final theme I identified that captured participants in the *high ER group's* experiences of being male, further corroborated by the quantitative results, indicated that being more emotionally restricted corresponded with greater self-reliance. This greater propensity to self-reliance distinctly defined participants' ways of navigating through the world in relation to others. A close connection between not sharing one's emotions and also not asking or seeking help has been seen in the literature many times before (Gerdes & Levant, 2018; Parent & Moradi, 2009; Wong, Moon-Ho, et al., 2017). In this study, participants' self-reliance went beyond just not talking about their feelings with others but meant that these participants described primarily choosing to go through most of life's stressors and problems alone, regardless of the number of friends they had. For the most part, these participants were effective

problem solvers as their proclivity for independence often did result in changes that fixed or solved their situation. This again illustrates how adherence to norms is not inherently negative and how something like self-reliance, which has been found to have negative outcomes (Chu, 2014), still should not be wholly pathologized. That said, despite participants' adaptive ability to solve problems by themselves, some also described getting stuck and not knowing how to change or solve their situations without external circumstances changing.

This primary cost for participants' independent engagement with the world was that many felt lonely ($n = 8$), which was captured by the subtheme *Loneliness of Aloneness*. This connection between concealment of emotions and distress leading to loneliness has been noted elsewhere (Kealy et al., 2021), but this study further highlights the “messiness” or paradoxical nature of adherence to restrictive norms of masculinity as adherence can simultaneously help participants feel connected and accepted by others while also making them feel more lonely and emotionally disconnected from others. Even though the experiences of adolescent males who were some of the least emotionally restricted and some of the most emotionally restricted paralleled each other in terms of participants describing instances of feeling alone due to how they navigated masculine norms, the costs of this—by late adolescence at least—appeared to be much more prominent and present in the lives of participants in the *high ER group* than those in the *low ER group*. The most drastic cost related to not asking for help was seen with Ryo, who had recently attempted suicide. Although there is evidence that many males do seek help for their suicidal ideation (The National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Safety in Mental Health, 2021), Ryo described never sharing his feelings or reaching out to anyone for help leading up to his attempt, which he believed was connected to his beliefs about masculinity. This instance links to the existing literature connecting self-reliance, loneliness, and emotional restriction as all

relevant factors relating to suicides (Richardson, Dickson, et al., 2021; Richardson, Robb, et al., 2021). In this section, the similarities, emerging differences, and stark differences in participants' experiences and beliefs of being male based upon their varying levels of emotional restriction were highlighted using both the quantitative and qualitative findings. As such, the second research question was answered and the implications of these findings are now discussed.

Implications from Comparing Adolescent Males by Emotional Restriction Levels (Research Question 2)

The implications from the findings of this second research question are primarily considered and structured in relation to the overall aim and the four objectives of this study. To summarize, the research aim was to better understand and support adolescent males' social and emotional development and wellbeing by prioritizing participants' perspectives and being positive-focused (Objective 1); by providing greater clarity about the complexities of adolescent males' norm adherence and resistance (Objective 2) and about their relationships with emotional expression (Objective 3); and by assessing the efficacy of integrating qualitative and quantitative methods in masculinities research (Objective 4). In this section there is no distinct subheading regarding the implications for Objective 1 as this objective was a commitment to my research approach rather than an object of inquiry, although I do share my reflections on this in the conclusion chapter. I start this section by discussing the implications regarding better understanding adolescent males' adherence and resistance to masculine norms (Objective 2), which is then followed by the implications surrounding the emotionality of adolescent males (Objective 3). Next, I detail the practical implications of how to use the knowledge related to Objectives 2 and 3 to provide better support for adolescent males. Lastly, I discuss some methodological implications (Objective 4) from investigating Research Question 2. Even though

Objective 4 was the focus of the first research question, the way in which this second research question was investigated by isolating and comparing participants based on their adherence to a single masculine norm was novel for the field of masculinities, and, as such, there were methodological implications in doing so.

Implications From Understanding Adolescent Males' Adherence and Resistance to Masculine Norms (Objective 2)

Better understanding the complexities around masculine norm adherence and resistance is critical, not only because there have been various calls to action to do so in academia (Addis et al., 2016; Bridges, 2019; Isacco, 2015) but also because the public discourse on males and masculinities is deeply polarized and severely lacking nuance (Synnott, 2009; Waling, 2019). The complexities found in this study suggest that adolescent males' adherence versus resistance to masculine norms should not be understood as healthy versus unhealthy, or as good versus bad, but rather should be understood as strategic or, at the very least, understandable given the beliefs, experiences, and/or contexts of the individual. That said, just because adherence and resistance are both strategic for adolescent males in their navigations of being male, they do not appear to be equal in terms of the benefits and costs associated with each. Yet the key is identifying when adherence to a particular masculine norm is, or becomes, negative. Chu (2014) described this point as when a boy must distort themselves to outside pressures "that conflict with or compromise [their] personal values and beliefs" (p. 254). To articulate this further, I contend that, based on the experiences of participants in this study, adherence to masculine norms becomes harmful when it disconnects males from their authentic selves, when it disconnects them from authentic relationships with other people, and when it places restrictions on others' authenticities as well. This definition may be helpful to identify which masculine norms are

inherently more problematic than others and why that is the case. For example, adhering to the norm of dominance, however minor, necessarily places restrictions on others whereas adherence to the norm of athleticism does not necessarily cause any of those three things (i.e., cause disconnection from self, from others, or restrict other people).

One of the paucities I identified in the literature was the need to bring clarity to the complexities of masculine norm adherence and resistance. I deemed this as especially important for identifying adolescent males' patterns of norm resistance as this was almost non-existent in the literature, apart from Way's urban-based research in the United States, primarily with boys of colour (Rogers & Way, 2016, 2018; Smiler, 2014; Way et al., 2014). In this effort, the findings from the second research provided detailed data from which I could offer clarity into the complex interactions between norm adherence and resistance. I mapped these out and depicted them visually in Figure 1 (p. 192) in the previous chapter. Although this figure is meant to depict generalized patterns, it is important to note that the data informing it were based upon 20 participants' responses to the two most prominent masculine pressures/norms they described experiencing: emotional restriction and physical and mental toughness. A novel contribution to theoretical understandings of masculine norm adherence and resistance from this research was the way adherence and resistance response styles were conceptualized (see middle column in Figure 1). The differentiation I identified between a willing and a reluctant response style for adherence is an important contribution for prising apart the complexities of norm adherence as the motivations underpinning those responses was seen to vary considerably. As such, research that only looks at norm adherence without considering the individual's motivations might miss key insights and lead to erroneous or less generous interpretations of participants' behaviours (e.g., understanding that many adolescent males might not agree much, if at all, with the

masculine norms they are enacting). Therefore, if researchers account for adherence response styles within their research, it may lead to more transformative and more positive-focused studies.

Similarly, how the response style of resistance was conceptualized is another unique contribution to the field. To my knowledge, only Way et al. (2014) have ever tried to categorize adolescent males' resistance to masculine norms, which they identified as implicit and explicit resistance. Their definition of implicit resistance referred to males whose behaviours did not align with masculine norms but were unaware or silent about opposing masculine norms directly. I did not identify any examples of participants in my research resisting masculine norms in this way as participants were so embedded in masculine pressures that they were all very conscious of when or if their navigation of those pressures diverged from the norm. Similarly, Way et al.'s (2014) definition of explicit resistance only referred to participants who voiced critiques of masculine norms, which was inadequate to precisely describe participants' responses to masculine norms as seen in my research. If I had used Way et al.'s (2014) criteria for explicit resistance, all the participants in this study who reluctantly adhered to masculine norms would be categorized as resisting masculine norms. This highlights the necessity for further dialogue and considerations around the criteria as to what is deemed as resistance to masculine norms. This is especially important as programs and research to increase males' resistance to masculine norms are increasingly being prioritized (e.g., Gwyther et al., 2019; Ratele, 2015; Wilson, Gwyther, Simmons et al., 2022) but the parameters around what actually constitutes norm resistance remains far less clear (Gwyther et al., 2019). As such, my research findings regarding my second objective contribute significantly to this effort. I will note that the authors of a recently published study of young adult males (Nielson et al., 2022) identified a subtype of norm resistance they

called “activist gender norm resistance” (p. 6), which referred to males who did not just resist masculine norms but also explicitly sought to challenge gender-based inequalities in their interactions with others (e.g., calling out sexist and homophobic behaviours). Although I did not find any interview excerpts that explicitly demonstrated this type of resistance in my study, this “activist” aspect of resistance may a useful lens to further explore the nuances of resistance as at least one participant in my study was actively trying to encourage or challenge his male friends to express their feelings more.

The nuances of norm adherence and resistance also raises important considerations for the ways in which they are discussed. Based on my findings, there are at least four terms/concepts that are relevant to differentiate between: conformity, endorsement, alignment, and adherence. Although some researchers distinguish norm conformity from norm endorsement by stating that conformity refers to behaviours aligning with the norm and that endorsement refers to believing in a norm (Levant et al., 2015; Rogers et al., 2017), other research appears to conflate norm conformity with norm adherence, which entails a level of norm endorsement (e.g., Chu, 2014; Smiler, 2014; Way et al., 2014). For instance, the CMNI-46 has conformity in its name, and yet it is a measure of both behaviours and beliefs (Parent, 2013), which, to me, suggests adherence. Therefore, to avoid this confusion with the use of conformity I tended to use the term alignment, which did not involve any norm endorsement, and used conformity and adherence interchangeably in this research. I also viewed norm endorsement (i.e., belief) as a critical component for a participant to be considered to adhere to that norm, which was why the participants who were athletic and aligned with a masculine norm but did not endorse it were considered as having a resistant response style (see Figure 1). All this points to the need for more conceptual clarity in the field for terms regarding masculinity norm adherence and resistance.

Implications From Understanding of Adolescent Males' Relationships with Emotional Expression (Objective 3)

Many intricacies about adolescent males' relationships with emotional expression were identified from the findings that challenge many common assumptions about the nature of this relationship. One assumption that is challenged is the belief that adolescent males do not want to talk. For example, when I was developing my research, multiple academics and lay people voiced concerns to me that it would be an extremely difficult, if not an impossible task, to get adolescents males to talk to me, let alone asking the most emotionally restricted adolescent males to talk and, on top of that, getting them to talk about their experiences with emotions. However, this did not prove to be difficult for me. All participants shared vulnerable insights and reflections about their lives with me, irrespective of their level of emotional restriction, which perhaps points to the limitations of binary constructs around something as multi-faceted as emotionality. In many ways, I felt that participants in the *high ER group* shared more vulnerably with me in terms of them discussing more sensitive topics, such as how they were impacted by their parents' divorces or traumas. Perhaps because participants in the *low ER group* had emotional safe havens, they had less of a need to share deeply with me, whereas for participants in the *high ER group*, talking to someone about more vulnerable topics was a rarer opportunity and so shared more as a result. Regardless of if one group shared more readily than the other, my research shows that even some of the most emotionally restricted adolescent males want to talk, and readily do so, especially if they do not feel judged or if they are not made to feel like a burden. Further evidence that indicated participants' openness and receptibility to talking and learning about emotions was that nearly all interviewed participants wanted more and better emotional education in schools.

A second assumption that is partially challenged by the findings in this study is the belief that adolescent males are not as emotional and/or aware of their emotions and inner worlds as females are (Deng et al., 2016). Although my research did not compare participants' emotionality with females' emotionality, the part of this assumption about adolescent males not being emotionally aware was refuted by: (a) by how clearly participants, "even" those in the *high ER group*, were able to articulate their relationships with emotions, such as what, when, and why they suppressed their emotions; and (b) by how participants described thinking extensively about theirs and other peoples' emotionality, such as participants who did not want to burden others with their emotions, which suggests a high degree of sensitivity to others' emotional states. Arguably, participants in the *high ER group* were more conscious of their emotions than those in the *low ER group* were as they were more concerned with the potential consequences of "accidentally" expressing their emotions and they were far better at communicating to me why they were emotionally restricted than the participants in the *low ER group* could communicate why they were not emotionally restricted.

These two assumption about adolescent males not being that willing or able to talk about emotions has been noted by others, and yet, each time it has been refuted (Chu & Gilligan, 2014; Kwiatkowski, 2016; Orenstein, 2020; Smiler, 2014; Way, 2004; Way et al., 2014), as it was also in this research. As such, expectations around adolescent males' propensities for talking and approaches to encourage adolescent males to talk more about their feelings need to be re-evaluated and likely need to adapt to meet adolescent males where they are at. This is very similar to the critique that mental health services need to better adapt their approaches to actively draw and attain more males, rather than just expecting or hoping that more males will engage (Seidler et al., 2018). Even though the validity of these two assumption about males'

relationships with emotions has been questioned by other research (De Boise & Hearn, 2017), the novelty of my current research is that it disproves these assumptions even for the most emotionally restricted adolescent males, unlike the previously cited literature that challenged these assumptions for males more generally.

The emotion-related findings in this study also have important implications regarding the extent to which greater emotional expression is considered “better” for adolescent males and for others (i.e., issues pertaining to gender equality). As mentioned previously, both adherence and resistance to the norm of emotional restriction were strategic and had potential costs associated with either response; however, greater costs were associated with greater adherence. Participants who were not as willing or as able to talk about their feelings with others described more instances of loneliness, emotional distress, and/or feelings of being stuck in their problems than did participants who were highly emotionally expressive. In contrast, some of the major benefits of having emotional safe havens described by participants in the *low ER group* were experiencing greater feelings of connectedness, with self and others, and having guidance through life’s problems. Participants in the *high ER group* were all aware that they have disconnected from emotional parts of themselves, and, although this was often seen by them as preferable, it appeared difficult for many of them to attribute this to their feelings of loneliness as, paradoxically, they often viewed their emotional suppression as helping foster or maintain social connections with their peers. However, it is well understood that having a connection to one’s self and having emotionally close relationships with others are critical attributes and determinants of healing and wellbeing (Anderson, 2021; Chu, 2014; Way, 2012;). Furthermore, in Brown’s (2010) extensive grounded theory research of thousands of participants, Brown evaluated that “we [as people] cannot selectively numb emotions, when we numb painful

emotions, we also numb the positive emotions.” (p. 70). In considering all this, although adolescent males’ who do not readily share their emotions should not be pathologized for not wanting to do so, there are greater costs associated with rigid adherence to that norm, highlighting the importance of being able to resist restrictive masculine ideology.

Another implication from the second research question was that greater emotional expressive was not a “silver bullet” for gender equality. In other words, the assumption that males being more emotionally expressive is better for rectifying issues of gender inequality (De Boise & Hearn, 2017) was not supported by the findings in this study. An example of this assumption, described by Kimmel (2018), is when people assume that if only males could go to therapy and talk about their emotions, then harmful expressions of masculinity would cease to exist (e.g., physical, and sexual violence). Not only did Kimmel believe this to be unrealistic, he viewed it as a fallacy to attribute all maladaptive and harmful aspects associated with masculinity as caused by a lack of males talking about their emotions. In much the same way, although the findings in this research indicated that emotional expression certainly had benefits for participants, none of these benefits appeared connected in any way to having more equitable gender relationships. For example, instances of discomfort and comfort with the LGBTQ2S+ community and with females’ equity were visible in interviews that spanned across participants from either the *low ER group* or the *high ER group* without any notable trend. This lack of differences between the two groups was also reflected in the statistical data indicating levels of emotional restriction had no bearing on adherence to *heterosexual self-presentation* and to *power over women*, although the validity of responses on the latter were highly questionable. Admittedly, participants’ beliefs around social issues relating to gender equality were not extensively investigated in this study, but, of the facets that were, there were no observable

differences between some of the least and some of the most emotionally restricted adolescent males. Again, although being more emotionally expressive counters some negative aspects of restrictive masculine ideology, emotional expression, by itself, does not undo all the harmful aspects associated with restrictive forms of masculinity, such as the subjugation of others (Howson, 2006; McDermot et al., 2019).

Practical Recommendations for Supporting Adolescent Males and Addressing Gender-related Inequalities

There are many practical recommendations for better supporting adolescent males and for addressing issues relating to gender inequalities, based upon the findings from the second research question. First, the interviewed participants voiced a clear call to action for schools and for teachers to provide more and more relevant emotional education. I second their call and suggest that social and emotional programming needs to be gender conscious given how profoundly masculine pressures were seen in this research to shape participants' relationships with their emotions and with others. In other words, gender conscious programming would consider how socialization factors uniquely shape males' and females' experiences growing up and how these factor into their social and emotional relationships (Kågesten et al., 2016). As such, it is likely that the endeavor of Canadian provinces to help develop the emotional capacities of all their students (e.g., BC Ministry of Education, 2018; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2022; Québec Ministère de l'Éducation, 2015) is deeply flawed, given the little to no evidence I found that factors relating to gender socialization are considered in their curricular documents.

Some specific suggestions for gender conscious programming are to incorporate information and discussions around the key findings in this study, such as: (a) the factors

enabling some boys to talk (e.g., confidence, emotional safe havens, desire to not hide); (b) the factors hindering some boys from talking (e.g., fear of judgment, fear of being a burden, as a pre-emptive protection strategy); (c) the potential benefits and costs of expressing emotions (e.g., feeling physiologically better, helping gain perspective on a situation, living more authentically, but might feel different or ostracized from your male peers); (d) the potential benefits and costs of not being emotionally expressive (e.g., less potential for peer ostracization, can prevent feelings of awkwardness or shame, develops problem solving skills, but can lead to aloneness, maladaptive problem solving, and suppression of one's authentic emotions); (e) the emphasis on the commonalities among males (e.g., all desirous for connection, similar experiences of masculine pressures and tensions, all, except one, remember putting on emotional masks at some point in their lives); and (f) the focus on when adherence to masculine norms becomes harmful.

This final point is particularly important to emphasize in programming as participants' adherence to the norms of emotional restriction and self-reliance were done for adaptive and strategic purposes—especially at the time they started to adhere—and many participants did receive genuine benefits from doing so (e.g., having social groups at school, being able to solve problems independently). As such, encouraging male students to resist masculine norms without acknowledging this nuance of when adherence is problematic will likely lose credibility with students as it will not match their own experiences of being male. Moreover, gender conscious programming that is unattuned to the lived realities of boys could lead to some feeling judged for their restrictive masculine beliefs and behaviours, and given that fear of judgement is a main reason why many participants in this study did not share their feelings with others, it is unlikely more judgement or shame will rectify that in any meaningful ways. This discussion contributes to the debate about whether programming for male students should focus mainly on the positives

of masculinity or whether that is counterproductive and teaches more gender essentialism (O'Neil et al., 2013; O'Neil & Luján, 2009; Wilson, Gwyther, Swann et al., 2022). From these findings in this study, I think it is important to be explicit about when and why certain forms of masculinity can be harmful without eschewing personal accountability for males' roles in harm, when necessary, but, at the same time, I believe it is crucial to not pathologize boys or masculinities either. Although only one participant in this study told me he felt like boys/masculinities were pathologized at school; this has been found in other research as well (Kwiatkowski, 2016; O'Beaglaioich, Morrison, et al., 2015).

The goal of talking about all these suggested topics openly with male students is to pull back the veil of restrictive forms of masculinity. Just as participants in the *low ER group* had a dawning realization that they are more like other males their age than they previously thought, it is hoped that having discussions out in the open will encourage more awareness and attention to the ways in which males may have been, or currently are, suppressed and restricted. This may catalyze positive transformations and identity formations as males could perhaps think more intentionally about the type of relationship they want with masculinities. This desired effect is similar to one Kimmel (2018) described of a college campaign in the United States that effectively reduced the amount of binge drinking on campus by merely exposing students to the actual statistics of what the average student drinks, which was far lower than many students expected. In the same way, if masculine pressures thrive based on the panopticon power of peer groups at schools, as was seen in this study, then exposing the system for what it is could be a powerful unifying approach between males. In this effort, the content within Figure 1 could be a powerful visual resource for students to interact with and discuss.

As much as all these suggestions may help support adolescent males' social and emotional development, the fact that most participants picked up masculine pressures implicitly likely indicates that one of the most effective ways of building adolescent males' resistance to restrictive forms of masculinity is through positive role models, perhaps especially through positive male role models, as has been indicated elsewhere (Farrell & Gray, 2018; O'Neil et al., 2013; O'Neil & Luján, 2009). This necessitates that teachers who teach social and emotional content—which in BC is supposed to be all teachers—need to be evaluating their own relationships with gender norms and the impact that socialization pressures may have had, and may continue to have, on their relationships with emotionality and with others.

Even if these recommendations are followed, targeting boys' social and emotional growth may do little to address gender-related inequalities such as sexism or heterosexism unless those are specifically targeted as well. The reason for this is because the findings in this study supported the interpretation that emotional expressiveness was not as closely linked to transformative gender relations as has been assumed (e.g., De Boise & Hearn, 2017; Kwiatkowski, 2016; O'Neil, 2015). Therefore, a key component for designing and implementing programs might be to ask, "How much is improving adolescent males' social and emotional wellbeing the priority versus addressing issues of social justice and gender equality?" Some recommend that all these aspects relating to masculinity can be addressed in the same program (O'Neil & Luján, 2009), yet others recommend only targeting emotional restriction and self-reliance (Way et al., 2014), as it may be too unrealistic to address the totality of all the facets of masculinity (Smiler, 2014). It is my position that, in either case, it should be a well thought out decision from the outset. It might also be beneficial for programming to target the middle school years or earlier as that is when masculine pressures were most reported to increase and to be the

strongest; however, that time period might be when participants' buy-in to the programming is harder as well. Another recommendation based on the findings of this research is that intentionally involving males of high social standing might be particularly effective at promoting and encouraging others to be less emotionally restricted as well as at promoting gender equality within their social contexts, as is reflected elsewhere (Chu, 2014; Smiler, 2014).

Although many of these suggestions are framed in the context of a school setting, these insights can be applied and be adapted for several different contexts as supporting adolescent males are relevant to many, such as for parents, for counsellors, and, of course, for boys and men themselves. In clinical settings, mentioning some of these findings may resonate with male clients as to why they may be hesitant in the first place to seek help through therapy, and it might be a starting place for exploring some of their earlier experiences growing up. For example, given that all highly emotional restricted participants in this study remembered when and why they started diminishing their emotions, and although it remains to be seen as to whether those participants will forget about their emotional selves when they are older, clients or male readers of this dissertation could reflect or journal about if they remember when (or if) they started diminishing their emotions. Additionally, as seen in this study, males' relationships with their fathers may also prove a valuable starting place for males to explore and to reflect on their relationship with masculinity, emotionality, and others. This has also been suggested by others who work with males (Baldoni, 2021; Farrell & Gray, 2018).

Implications for Using Mixed Methods Screening Tools, Normative Male Alexithymia, and the CMNI-46 (Objective 4)

Although the alignment analysis was primarily focused on providing methodology-related implications for the field of men and masculinities, the investigation of the second

question contributed further to these discussions. The combination of using a survey measure, like the NMAS-BF, as well as three open-ended questions regarding emotionality as a screening tool was untested in masculinities research but proved effective in selecting the ideal participants who were at either extreme end of adhering to the norm of emotional restriction. This was evidenced most clearly by two contrasting essential themes regarding emotions for each of the two groups of participants. I highly recommend using both a quantitative and a qualitative component of the screening tool as their alignment helped to affirm the results of the other (see Appendix I). Having a form of cross-confirmation is likely particularly important when measuring emotion-related phenomena as people are not always accurate judges of their own emotional abilities on self-report measures (Keefer, 2015; Lichev et al., 2014). Using a previously constructed and tested quantitative scale such as the NMAS-BF provided a strong basis in which to rank participants' relative levels of emotional restriction but, because there are so many aspects to emotionality that can get confounded (De Boise & Hearn, 2017), the written questions provided a much higher degree of specificity from which I could better select the ideal participants. For example, a couple of participants who had low scores on the NMAS-BF (i.e., relatively emotionally unrestricted) indicated, on their written responses, that they were able to easily emote joy or anger when playing sports. However, emotional expression, as defined in this study, also included being able to talk about your feelings with others and, as such, I could select participants accordingly.

This complexity of prising apart aspects of emotionality connects to two important implications for the concept of normative male alexithymia. To recall, this concept refers to some males' difficulties in being able or willing to express their emotions which is theorized as being due to their masculine socialization, although this has never been tested. The reason for

this, according to the creators of the scales measuring normative male alexithymia (Levant et al., 2006; Levant & Parent, 2019), is because no scale on masculine socialization currently exists; however, due to the mixed methods design of my study, the interviews did provide insights into this relationship. This theory was largely supported by the results of this study as the two main reasons participants did not express their feelings, fear of judgement and fear of burdening others, were believed and observed to be directly influenced by masculine socialization pressures. In contrast, masculine socialization played no discernable role for participants who had difficulties expressing their emotions due to relational traumas/losses, meaning the NMAS-BF is unlikely to differentiate between that type of emotional restriction and the kinds that are due to masculine socialization.

The second implication is about how normative male alexithymia is conceptualized, particularly as the usage of the clinical term “alexithymia” specifically emphasizes males’ abilities to express emotions rather than their willingness (Levant et al., 2006). Although a couple of participants noted feeling unable to express their emotions, by far most participants in the *high ER group*’s limitations with emotions had much more to do with their willingness to do so. As a result, future literature on normative male alexithymia should more clearly emphasize that. This aspect of normative male alexithymia has been criticized in the past, and even though Levant et al. (2009) clarified that they are not claiming that high levels of normative male alexithymia means males are unable to express their emotions, part of normative male alexithymia is still conceived as connected to men’s inability to describe or even be aware of their emotions (e.g., Levant & Parent, 2019, p. 224), which did not accurately describe the participants I interviewed with high NMAS-BF scores. However, it could be that this is an age-dependent finding. For example, perhaps if participants from the *low ER group* and the *high ER*

group maintain their current relationship with emotional expression/restriction, then in adulthood more palpable differences between their abilities (not just willingness) to express their emotions might be seen, as those who were more emotionally expressive would continue to have increased opportunities to discuss and develop greater language to express their emotions experiences than those who were not. Finally, the reason why participants' ($N = 170$) scores on the NMAS-BF did not meet the reliability standard for internal consistency as identified in Chapter 3 (p. 102) was likely due to the many nuances and complexities, as highlighted here by the qualitative findings, of trying to measure emotional restrictedness with the NMAS-BF.

A final practical implication is that the NMAS-BF and the CMNI-46 can likely be readily used with participants as young as 17 years of age. Although this age is within the suggested threshold that participants be at least 16 years or older for using a scale that has not specifically been validated for use with adolescents (Keefer, 2015), this study still offers support that both of these measures were understood by a younger age group than either the NMAS-BF or CMNI-46 have been known to have been used with previously. The only suggestion for implementing the CMNI-46 with this age group, besides the need to address issues of subscale relevance and clarity of the CMNI-46, is finding an alternate word for "subservient" on one of the items.

Implication Summary from the Comparison of Adolescent Males

The investigation of the second research question was central to my study's aim. In the process, many key findings provided clarity to the complex nature of masculine norm adherence, resistance, and emotionality. As such there were many theoretical and practical implications for better understanding and supporting adolescent males' social and emotional development and wellbeing. In addition, the mixed methods interdisciplinary nature of this research question highlights important practicalities about integrating mixed methods in the field of masculinities.

The final overview of this research, its limitations, and key areas for further research are detailed in the final chapter.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This research addressed four gaps that I identified in the literature—gaps that impact our ability to understand and support adolescent males’ social and emotional development and wellbeing. These four gaps were: (a) a lack of research that prioritizes adolescent males’ perspectives and is positive-focused; (b) a lack of research that prisms apart the complexities of masculine norm adherence and resistance; (c) a lack of research that precisely details adolescent males’ relationships with emotional expression; and (d) a lack of methodological (i.e., quantitative and qualitative) and interdisciplinary (i.e., sociology and psychology) integration in masculinities research, which I viewed as compounding the three previous paucities. As such, I created an interdisciplinary mixed methods research design in which I first determined adolescent males’ levels of emotional restriction and then, based on their varying levels, I investigated and compared their experiences and beliefs of being male and I did so to elucidate the complexities of masculine norm adherence, resistance, and emotionality. In this effort, I selected person-centred and positive-focused methods and measures as much as was possible given the first research gap I identified. In addition, I conducted an alignment analysis between participants’ responses on the qualitative method to their responses on one of the quantitative methods; I completed this analysis to help determine the epistemological and practical efficacy of integrating mixed methods within masculinities research.

One hundred and seventy male secondary students aged 17–19 from a school district in British Columbia, Canada, participated in this study. To determine their levels of emotional restriction—one’s willingness and/or difficulty in being able to express one’s emotions through talking and non-verbal displays—each participant completed a screening tool consisting of the NMAS-BF (Levant & Parent, 2019) and three open-ended questions about their proclivity for

expressing their emotions, which required written answers. Participants also completed the CMNI-46 (Parent & Moradi, 2009) that measured their level of adherence to eight masculine norms: *emotional control*, *self-reliance*, *violence*, *heterosexual self-presentation*, *power over women*, *risk-taking*, *winning*, and *primacy of work*. Responses from the two components of the screening tool were used jointly to determine participants' relative levels of emotional restriction, and 10 of the least emotionally restricted participants and 10 of the most emotionally restricted participants were interviewed using a hermeneutic phenomenological approach regarding the phenomenon of being an adolescent male. This phenomenon referred to any past or current experiences and beliefs that participants felt were connected to their biological sex and/or gender identity as males.

Participants' relevant excerpts from these interviews were then compared with their responses on each of eight subscales from the CMNI-46 to check for their congruency. This, referred to as the alignment analysis, was guided by Research Question 1—*To what extent are adolescent males' experiences and beliefs of being male aligned across survey and interview findings?* These findings were presented in Chapter 4. Afterwards, the primary focus of the research was explored, guided by Research Question 2—*To what extent do adolescent males' experiences and beliefs of being male vary, based on their levels of emotional restriction?* In answering this, the 20 interviews were analyzed, and essential themes regarding what it means to be an adolescent male were identified using a hermeneutic phenomenological approach as outlined by van Manen (2016). This was done separately for the 10 least emotionally restricted participants and for the 10 most emotionally restricted participants, and then these analyses were compared. These findings were presented in Chapter 5. In addition, statistical analyses involving all 170 participants' NMAS-BF scores and their scores on the eight CMNI-46 subscales were

conducted (i.e., descriptive and correlational analyses, and t-tests comparing the means on the CMNI-46 subscales between participants in the top and the bottom 15% of NMAS-BF scores) to supplement the hermeneutic phenomenological findings in answering the second research question. These quantitative findings were presented in the second half of Chapter 4. In this concluding chapter I summarize the overarching findings and highlight this study's overall theoretical and practical contributions to masculinity-related fields. I then discuss the limitations of this study and make recommendations for future research. This is followed by the final conclusions and my final statements.

Summary of Key Findings

The overarching findings to better understand and support adolescent males' social and emotional development and wellbeing are summarized together in this section. There were two predominant masculine pressures that participants had to navigate: the pressure to limit their emotional expression, particularly around sadness, and the pressure to be both physically and mentally tough. These pressures came from many sources, most significantly from their male peers, and the intensity of these pressures most often coalesced for participants at the ages of 13–15. Fathers also played a significant role in participants' masculine identities. Some participants wanted to emulate their fathers' masculinities and just as many participants wanted to diverge from the way their fathers navigated their masculinities. Although participants' adherence and resistance to masculine norms were seen in this study to be fluid, context-dependent, and ongoing, many of these complexities were able to be prised apart. Some participants consistently adhered to masculine norms willingly (i.e., it aligned with their beliefs about what males/they should be like) whereas others did so much more reluctantly (i.e., critiqued masculine norms but felt stuck or thought that the consequences of non-adherence would be too high). The key

motivation behind participants' masculine norm adherence was to maintain connections with others and/or to connect with what it meant for them to become a man.

There were two important factors for those participants who consistently resisted masculine norms: an internally motivated desire to connect to their authentic selves that was made difficult by restrictive masculine norms and having the confidence to be able to do so. Being athletic sometimes appeared to assist in resisting masculine norms, but this relationship would need more intentional investigation in future research. All but one of the participants in the *low ER group* consistently resisted the two predominant masculine norms, and all but two of the participants in the *high ER group* consistently adherence to the two predominant masculine norms. Based on the statistical analyses, participants' greater levels of emotional restriction did correlate with greater adherence to the norms of *emotional control* and *self-reliance*, but no correlations were found with the other six measured norms: *winning*, *risk-taking*, *violence*, *power over women*, *primacy of work*, and *heterosexual self-presentation*. Only when participants who were at the far ends of the continuum of emotional restriction were compared (the highest and the lowest 15% of NMAS-BF scores) did participants' adherence to *primacy of work* also differ, suggesting that less emotionally restricted participants had greater adherence to that norm. All these qualitative and quantitative findings together suggest that although adolescent males' levels of emotional restriction factors considerably in participants' navigation of the main masculine norms they felt pressured towards, there are many other masculine norms in which this relationship is not noted.

Despite some commonalities, participants' divergent relationships with emotional expression profoundly shaped their experiences of being male. For participants who were less emotionally restricted, having emotional safe havens with close, trusted people with whom they

could talk about their feelings of sadness or distress without fear of judgement was an important part of their lives. Participants were motivated to express their emotions because they did not want to restrict their authentic selves and because they experienced tangible benefits in doing so, such as: it lifted a weight off their shoulders, it helped them gain perspective on a situation, it helped them get to know themselves and their emotions better, and it fostered emotionally close connections with other people. Just over half of these participants felt more comfortable to share with females because they experienced females as better listeners and as less judgemental when compared to their male peers.

In contrast, participants who were highly emotionally restricted consciously suppressed their own emotions from others—particularly feelings of sadness and distress—for one or more of the three following reasons: (a) they feared judgement from others, particularly their male peers; (b) they feared burdening others with their problems; and (c) they wanted to pre-emptively protect themselves from potential pain by not getting emotionally close to people in case those relationships might end traumatically, which they had experienced before. The first two reasons were directly connected to masculine socialization pressures but the third was not, and all were seen as strategic responses to avoid experiencing or causing distress. Participants in the *high ER group* were highly conscious of their emotionality, and all remembered a time earlier in their lives when they were more emotionally expressive and when that started to change.

Participants' relative propensities for talking about their feelings impacted their felt sense of being in the world. Participants who were the least emotionally restricted felt their relationship with emotions made them distinct or unique from the average adolescent male. Although this had sometimes led to experiences of loneliness, primarily in early adolescence, this was mitigated by their emotional safe havens. For participants who were the most emotionally restricted, their

sense of being in the world was one defined by self-reliance—they were independent problem solvers who generally navigated through life’s stressors and events alone. This finding was reflected in both the qualitative and quantitative data. Although this independence was sometimes beneficial and even helped some participants to resist negative peer pressures, their self-reliance also could have costs. One cost was that being self-reliant was a detriment when, or if, participants were unable to solve their problems by themselves and so experienced long periods of emotional distress until their circumstances changed externally or with some outside support. Another cost of self-reliance appeared to be that most participants in the *high ER group* ($n = 8$) expressed a sense of loneliness in their lives. There was often tension as these participants expressed conflicted feelings about wanting to express more but not wanting to burden other people, or questioned whether expressing their feelings would really help them, or felt stuck and did not know exactly how to start sharing more with others. Although participants’ emotional expressiveness factored into significant difference regarding their experiences and beliefs being male, almost all participants stated that the biggest change to schools that they wanted was more and better emotional education.

The key findings from the alignment analysis comparing interviewed participants’ eight CMNI-46 subscale responses with their relevant interview extracts found that the level of alignment depended on each subscale. There was strong data alignment between the content relating to the *emotional control*, *self-reliance* and *violence* subscales, tentative data alignment regarding the content relating to *risk-taking*, *primacy of work*, *winning*, and *heterosexual self-presentation*, and poor data alignment regarding the content relating to *power over women*. The primary reason for the tentative data alignments was that the items comprising those CMNI-46 subscales were too ambiguous and could be interpreted by participants in several plausible ways.

Another contributing reason was that those constructs, or the way the items within it were presented, were not deeply relevant to the participants' experiences and beliefs of being male, and so there was much less direct data to rely on for comparisons. The reason for the instance of poor data alignment was likely due to social desirability bias or the halo effect when participants responded to the *power over women* items. These results support that quantitative and qualitative findings in masculinities research can be integrated if each specific subscale's compatibility is considered independently, which has further practical implications for researchers, especially quantitative researchers; these are summarized in the next section.

Summary of Key Implications

The key implications of this study are summarized into those relating to the complexities of adolescent males' masculine norm adherence and resistance (Objective 2) and of their relationship with emotional expression (Objective 3), which were prised apart in this study. Then the key methodological implications are summarized, such as those relating to prioritizing participants' perspectives and being positive-focused (Objective 1) and those regarding the epistemological and practical efficacy of integrating qualitative and quantitative methods in the field of masculinities (Objective 4).

The specific details pertaining to adolescent males' norm adherence, resistance, and emotionality that were identified in this research have many implications for better understanding and supporting adolescent males in their social and emotional development and wellbeing. This research confirms that adolescence is a pivotal time period for males' relationships with masculinity and that adherence and resistance around the masculine norm of emotional restriction factors significantly in their experiences of being male. However, comparing adolescent males by their levels of emotional restriction challenged many common

assumptions about adolescent males and their emotionality, such as: (a) greater emotionally expressiveness is, by itself, transformative for gender-related inequalities—there was no evidence of that in this study; (b) highly emotionally restricted males were less sensitive than emotionally expressive males—there was no evidence in support of that; (c) adherence to the norm of emotional restriction is inherently negative or maladaptive and resistance to that norm is better—although adherence did often have greater associated costs, such as loneliness and greater disconnection from participants’ authentic emotional parts, both adherence and resistance to emotional restriction, and any other masculine norms, were always highly strategic, provided tangible benefits, and were attempts or methods for participants to maintain a sense of connection to one’s self and/or others. As such, the notion of “better” remained a limited concept to use when considering participants’ perspectives and their contexts for why they restrict their emotions.

Many of the findings from this study can be used to better respond to and design programs, tools, and resources for adolescent males’ that more deeply and authentically reflect their realities and their experiences growing up and being male. This has particular relevance for schools in BC, where this study took place, as social and emotional learning is, at least nominally, a focus in every subject area and grade level. These and similar efforts for social and emotional learning need to be gender conscious and would benefit greatly by understanding and incorporating the key findings from this research, such as the patterns of norm adherence and resistance (see Figure 1, p. 192), as well as the motivations, benefits, and costs associated with emotional expression and emotional restriction. The findings of this research also significantly contribute to the lack of research on understanding adolescent males who already resist

restrictive masculine norms. Furthermore, this study points to the value of investigating the complexities of navigating masculine pressures/norms and of prising these complexities apart.

Investigating and understanding the complexities of masculine norm adherence, resistance, and emotionality was only strengthened by using a person-centred research methodology, such as hermeneutic phenomenology. Centering adolescent males' experiences and perspectives in this study not only enabled the intricacies of masculine norm adherence, resistance, and emotionality to be prised apart, but these complexities could also be visualized within participants' contexts. This was seen as valuable in much the same way as Rogoff et al. (2018) argued, saying that it is essential that knowledge and theories are guided by lived experiences because it grounds the knowledge and theories in the contextual realities of the participants. This also has implications for more positive-focused research as using a more person-centered and context-rich approach, such as hermeneutic phenomenology, was seen in this study as helping to foster a more compassionate understanding of adolescent males' adherence to restrictive masculine norms than would be the case had I only used survey results. For example, learning that some participants who strongly adhered to the norm of emotional restriction did so because they did not want to burden others or because of past traumas highlights their care and their sensitivity—neither of which should be pathologized, as I have argued throughout this thesis. In this way, I see immense value in more positive-focused masculinities research and suggest that person-centred, complexity-rich research is essential to this effort.

My experience conducting the alignment analysis for this study has important implications for conducting quantitative research in the field of masculinities, as a major obstacle for me was that nearly half of the eight CMNI-46 subscales lacked clarity around the construct

they were measuring. As such, they were too ambiguous for a researcher to reasonably know how participants interpreted the questions, thereby limiting the value of those results. Therefore, I contend that the largest concern for using quantitative scales in masculinities research is assessing if they are highly precise about the facet of masculinity they are measuring and that researchers better understand how their sample population may have interpreted the items. To help do this, I first recommend that the creators of masculine measures make their scales and items readily available, such as publishing them on the Open Science Framework (Center for Open Science, 2022), so that they can be clearly seen and analyzed to prevent any false impressions between what they claims to measure and what they actually do measure. Second, I recommend that the creators of the scales and the independent researchers using those scales do pilot or follow up interviews or some form of assessment with some participants to get a more accurate understanding of how participants interpreted certain aspects of the subscales. This is particularly important for when independent researchers are using a scale with a population or in a context that differs from the samples used for the scale development. Third, I recommend that further alignment analyses are conducted with other widely used masculinity scales. These will not only strengthen the level of interpretation drawn from quantitative research that uses them, but it also builds further evidence regarding the epistemological and practical compatibility of integrating mixed methods research in the field of masculinities. This is important as it can allow for more innovative and more interdisciplinary approaches to investigating questions about masculinities, as seen in this study. For example, the novel mixed methods design of this study was effective at helping me select the desired participants to be interviewed and comparing participants, based on their maximum variation to a norm of masculinity, was a highly advantageous approach for investigating and identifying the nuance that I sought.

Limitations

There were several limitations to this research. A potential but intentional limitation regarding the alignment analysis—which I acknowledged previously—was that I did not structure the interview questions directly around the eight masculine norms measured on the CMNI-46. Although this decision resulted in fewer comparisons between data sets and it introduced more subjectivity into the coding process for the alignment analysis, I did this so that when investigating the second research question—the primary focus of this study—participants were not artificially guided towards discussing any masculine norms that they would not have otherwise deemed relevant to their experiences and beliefs of being male. Another limitation was that I was the only researcher who coded the interviews for the alignment analysis, which introduced more subjectivity. I minimized this by coding the interviews without knowing what the codes of the CMNI-46 were so that I could not, consciously or unconsciously, manipulate the codes of the interviews to align better or worse with the CMNI-46 codes. The reason I did not have another coder was due to limitations in time and resources given the scope of this research. Moreover, as this was believed to be the first alignment analysis in the field of masculinities, it largely served as a proof of concept for the types of considerations needed when integrating mixed methods in this and in future research. To that end, the results from the alignment analysis did point to the need for more alignment analyses in the field of masculinities, and these should include interviews that are tightly structured around the content of the quantitative scales and should involve multiple researchers who code the interviews. There were also some limitations involving the written component of the screening tool for determining participants' levels of emotional restriction. The first was that my scoring process (see Appendix H) for helping select participants to interview may have overlooked those who did not write much on their written

answers as I had little to no evidence upon which to judge their level of emotional restriction upon. Therefore, it could be that some participants' lack of elaboration in their written answers was evidence of their difficulties in expressing their emotions, but my scoring process did not account for that. Moreover, participants may have had a learning disability, and even though I mentioned writing and reading accommodations were available if asked, none did, which also could have meant that male students with learning disabilities were less likely to participate in my research. The second limitation with the written component was how difficult it was, at times, to interpret participants' explanations about their emotional expression due to the multifaceted nature of emotions, as outlined in Chapter 2 (p. 69) and as further evidenced by the results of this study. For example, when a participant says something like, "I do not feel sad so I don't express sadness that much"—is it because he is genuinely happy most of the time, is he avoidant of any sadness he might have, or is he unaware of what sadness may feel like? The third limitation regarding the written component of the screening tool was that I should have clarified better as to what was meant by "express your emotions." I meant this to encompass both talking about one's feelings and displaying one's feelings; however, based on the majority of participants' responses referring to only about their propensity to talk about their feelings, I should have more clearly separated these two components of emotionality into different written questions so that both aspects of emotionality were more equally addressed. As such, there may have been more emphasis on the screening tool about participants' willingness to talk about their emotions rather than their willingness to display their emotions. Although these three limitations with the screening tool demonstrate the difficulties and complexities in assessing the least and the most emotionally restricted participants, the participants who were ultimately selected for the interviews, as evidenced in our conversations together, were effectively screened.

A limitation with my participant interviews was that, despite my prior intentions, the focus of conversations about emotions centered around more negative emotional experiences, such as sadness or fear, rather than happiness or joy. Although this focus was very much participant-led and reflected a great deal about their experiences of being male, upon reflection I wish I had inquired more intentionally about their experiences and their relationships with positive emotions. Doing so may have been another rich facet of emotionality to explore and elucidate, especially given my objective for my research to be positive-focused. Since the quantitative surveys were administered prior to the interviews, it was also possible that some participants' interview discussions were primed towards discussing certain topics. I do think there was some priming towards discussions around emotionality, but not directly because of the order of administration but because participants were briefed ahead of the interviews that they were selected based on their relative propensity to express or not express their emotions. This may have influenced the essential theme of *Sense of Masculine Difference from Male Peers* the most, for if the participants in the *High ER group* were not told they had higher levels of emotional expression they might not have talked as much about that in the interviews. I do not think the completion of the survey before the interviews primed participants towards other topics given that many participants did not talk directly or at all about the content relating to many of the CMNI-46 subscales, as evidenced by the number of silences and partial alignments identified in the alignment analysis.

Relatedly, another notable area that was left unexplored in this research was around participants' experiences and beliefs around sex or pornography. Although I did not intentionally ask questions about these things due to ethical considerations (see Chapter 3, pp. 102, 134), males' sex-related attitudes and behaviours are often seen as deeply relevant to discussions

around restrictive forms of masculinity (e.g., Dahl et al., 2015; Fleming et al., 2019; Levant, 1996) and around adolescent males' experiences of being male (e.g., Coulter, 2009; Lamb et al., 2018). As such, further research in this area is recommended, especially in relation to emotional restriction.

Another limitation to consider was in regards to the diversity of my participants as the field of masculinities often underprioritizes representing diverse ethnic, racial, sexual-orientations and gender identities (Roberts & Elliott, 2020). Although the participants in this study were predominantly white, there was more racial representation than what is found in the surrounding demographics of the area where this research was conducted. Regardless, participants' race or ethnicity was not seen to factor significantly, or at least explicitly, into most ($n = 17$) of their experiences and beliefs of being male, which was unexpected given how significant race often is in males' formations of their masculine identities (Curry, 2017). Perhaps I could have asked participants in the interviews explicitly if they thought their race or ethnicity played an important role in their experiences and beliefs of being male. I also did not know how representative my research was of differing sexual orientations as I did not ask any questions about this given privacy and ethical considerations. If participants ever discussed a romantic relationship in their interviews, it was always indicative of heterosexuality. I did seek to explicitly include transgender participants in this study and one of the interviewed participants was transgender. I assumed that his gender identity would be a large part of his experience of being male; however, he never brought it up in the interview and neither did I, as I wanted to follow his lead. Perhaps his gender identity was a normalized part of his experience being male such that it felt unnecessary to mention separately. Upon reflection, I do not know the extent to which my tendency to not ask about specific diversity-related questions in the interviews was

more ethical than asking them outright (considering the participants' younger age) or whether it was more of a missed opportunity as it would have been valuable to have had more specific representation and insights into these dynamics in my research as race, sexual-orientation, and gender identity can have significant relevance when discussing issues relating to social and emotional wellbeing (e.g., Cotter & Savage, 2019; Rogers & Way, 2016; Walton, 2006).

My use of hermeneutic phenomenology in this study deviated from convention in that two groups of participants' experiences were compared with each other, as was essential to the overall aim and objectives of the study. Such comparisons are not typical in hermeneutic phenomenology as the goal is not to pit peoples' experiences against each other but to elucidate the meaning of lived experiences (van Manen, 2016). Therefore, the comparison of the *low ER group* to the *high ER group* compromised this philosophical stance, which was a consequence of having the hermeneutic phenomenological aspect of this research being situated within the larger mixed methods framework and design. As such, to some it might be more precise to say that I used a generic qualitative method and analysis that was deeply informed by a hermeneutic phenomenological approach rather than say that I used a hermeneutic phenomenological approach.

A practical limitation for my data collection was that, even though I had just enough participants to meet the standard for the type of statistical analyses I conducted, had I included Grade 11 students who were still 16 years of age, I could have gotten significantly more participants for my study without much more effort or time. For instance, most of the classes I went to were combined Grade 11 and Grade 12 courses, and many times they had more Grade 11 students in them who were 16 years old than they had had students who were 17 years old. Initially I had made this age cut-off as I had wanted to target late adolescence; however, upon

reflection I still think that Grade 11 students who were 16 years of age would not have compromised or significantly altered that effort. In addition, I found out during data collection that a new and shorter version of the CMNI-46 was created and released, called the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory-30 (Levant et al., 2020), which I would have used had it been available. I also did not preregister my study, for example, with the Open Science Framework (Center for Open Science, 2022). This is an online repository for researchers to detail their research questions, hypotheses, recruitment strategy, planned measures and planned analyses. Although this did not directly limit my research, it is considered good practice to preregister research as it increases openness and transparency in the research process and would have allowed me to make my research and materials available to others, as was one of my recommendations from the alignment analysis. However, open research practices are still relatively new, and I did not learn of them until after I conducted my fieldwork and analyses.

Future Research

Many of my suggestions for future research tie in with the implications or limitations previously discussed. For me, the most urgent future research revolves around providing practical support for young people. In this effort, it is imperative to consider the recommendations of this research in the design and the assessment of gender conscious social and emotional programs and gender equality interventions. In light of how many participants wanted schools to have more and better emotional education, a similar direction for further research is to see if and to what extent social and emotional curriculum in BC and in other regions is being integrated throughout grade levels and if any of it is gender conscious. This research could also then gauge teachers' and students' experiences and perspectives of it. Furthermore, given my desire to transcend the polarized nature of conversations around gender

and having faced some opposition from a few parents regarding my research, it could be valuable to present a talk about the non-pathological and nuanced findings and implications drawn from this study to key stakeholders within a community—primarily parents and educators—in which their perspectives and receptiveness to conversations relating to gender are assessed before and after the presentation. Doing so may increase the likelihood that gender conscious social and emotional programming will have more widespread support in classrooms and may identify potential barriers or key areas of adult resistance.

Beyond these more practical avenues for future research, several findings within this study highlighted areas where academic knowledge could be furthered. As mentioned previously, some would be: (a) to investigate adolescent males' relationships with positive emotions; (b) to investigate adolescent males' experiences and beliefs of being male with underrepresented populations; and (c) to pursue more mixed methods and interdisciplinary research within masculinities. More specifically, a similarly structured study as this one that is centred around participants' adherence to the masculine norm of violence or heterosexual self-presentation rather than emotional restriction may be a valuable lens from which to prise apart further complexities of masculinities and may offer clearer insight into gender-related inequalities. The reason for this is that in the exploratory correlations conducted between the NMAS-BF and the CMNI-46 subscales (see Table 5, p. 163), *violence* and *heterosexual self-presentation* correlated with the greatest number of other masculine norms. Moreover, because support for gender-related issues, as measured in this study, was not clearly seen to be related to one's level of emotional restriction, a future study that compared adolescent males' masculinities who were selected based on their support for gender equality would be another way to explore that relationship more directly. I also invite researchers to test, expand, or refine the patterns of

adolescent male norm adherence and resistance that I identified with the participants in this study (as presented in Figure 1, p. 192) with other populations of males.

I also believe it would be valuable to replicate a similar study as this, but for those who identify as females. It would be particularly valuable to investigate adolescent females who are highly emotionally restricted to compare their experiences with participants in this study to better determine the role and magnitude that socialization pressures have upon adolescent males' levels of emotional restriction and to better understand if reasons for suppressing emotions transcends gender. A study like this would also be beneficial to find out adolescent females' perspectives and experiences, if any, of being emotional safe havens to adolescent males, as a way to determine the extent to which these are mutually beneficial. Similarly, this study could be replicated with an older adult male population to assess how similar or dissimilar reasons and experiences around emotional restriction and expression are reflected during a different life stage and if older males who are more emotionally restricted do forget about their emotional selves.

Another potential area to explore more fully is the impact or circumstances surrounding divorce/separation on adolescent males' masculinities as there was a great differential between participants who had divorced/separated parents in the *high ER group* ($n = 6$) and the *low ER group* ($n = 0$). I did not ask any questions surrounding the context of participants' divorces/separations, such as how agreeable their parents' divorces were, but given that multiple participants were deeply and negatively impacted by those divorces, research around this topic may help offer more specific social and emotional supports for boys during and after their parents' divorces/separations.

Further areas to explore in future research involve the methodology-related findings in this study. For instance, conducting further alignment analyses with widely used measures in

masculinities research and having pilot or follow up interviews or open-ended responses at the end of questionnaires to know how participants interpreted them could strengthen the interpretations from quantitative data and could further bridge the methodological divide in the field. Additionally, the results from these alignment analyses and the supplementary qualitative data could then be used to update or develop new scales and subscales to be more precise and more relevant to experiences of their target population. For example, in this study the items on the CMNI-46 subscale *power over women* did not appear to represent the way adolescent males thought about gendered power dynamics with women in their lives and, as such, could be updated with my suggestions (see p. 234) and then tested with this population. Although the suggestions for future research that I mention in this section are not exhaustive, all of them are related to better understanding and supporting males' wellbeing and/or addressing gender-related inequalities, as was the motivation for this current study.

Conclusion and Researcher Statement

This research prised apart the complexities of adolescent males' adherence and resistance to masculine norms as well as the complexities of their relationships with emotional expression to better understand and support adolescent males' social and emotional wellbeing and development. These complexities were investigated through a novel mixed methods research design in which participants' experiences and beliefs of being adolescent males were compared based on their differing levels of emotional restriction. In response to other research gaps that I identified when critically reviewing the extant literature, this comparison of adolescent males was done in a manner that prioritized participants' experiences and perspectives, was positive-focused, and integrated both qualitative and quantitative methods. The lack of methodological integration in the field of masculinities and the concerns over the epistemological compatibility

of doing so led to a second investigation in this study wherein I assessed the extent to which participants' responses on a quantitative measure of masculine norms (the CMNI-46) aligned with participants' responses in their interviews.

In investigating these—the comparison of adolescent males based on their levels of emotional restriction and the alignment of responses between qualitative and quantitative methods—the findings suggest that there is indeed much nuance, intricacy, and tension involved in adolescent males' navigations of being male and in expressing emotions, and there are also challenges in researchers trying to accurately measure and assess them. Yet, more importantly, the findings in this study also supports that—with attention and care—these complexities can be better detailed, understood, and addressed while still recognizing the fluidity and context-dependent nature of gender and identity. Given the highly polarized discourses surrounding masculinities in Canada and elsewhere (BBC News, 2018; BBC Two, 2018; Du Mez, 2020; Waling, 2022), alongside the growing efforts to increase adolescent males' resiliencies to restrictive forms of masculinity (Gwyther et al., 2019; Wilson, Gwyther, Swann et al., 2022), better understanding the complexities of adolescent males' relationships with masculinity and emotionality, and then incorporating this knowledge clearly into these discourses and efforts, may be incredibly helpful in transcending some of this polarization and in creating transformational changes to the social and emotional issues facing and involving many adolescent males. Moreover, my novel mixed methods design raises important methodological considerations and possibilities that, in turn, may contribute to more interdisciplinary and positive-focused research as well as to more innovative research designs that propel research in the field of masculinities research in helpful ways that can better address and instigate practical changes.

As with the tensions seen in how participants navigated masculine pressures, there were multiple other tensions visible in this research, such as: the tension of trying to map out the complexities of something that is as fluid as gender, the tension of trying to integrate qualitative and quantitative approaches and findings, as well as the tension between understanding and addressing sociological issues related to restrictive masculine ideologies but also understanding how these exist within the context of the individual and vice versa. Yet, just as this research is filled with tensions, it is also filled with invitations to the reader—invitations to assess one’s assumptions of adolescent males and emotionality, invitations to reflect on one’s own relationship with socially constructed messages regarding masculinities and emotions, and invitations to change that relationship if necessary or desired.

This research, much more than I initially realized, became such an invitation for me. There is a sentiment that, to an extent, all research is “me-search” (Altenmüller et al., 2021, p. 2) as the topic of inquiry is of personal relevance to the researcher in some way. Although I began this research knowing that it was motivated by my past experiences, my investigation of this research topic held up a figurative mirror that helped me look more deeply into my own life. Participants’ stories and experiences often gave me words to better make sense of my own experiences, as well as they sometimes challenged my assumptions and biases that I thought were already fully exposed. I want to conclude this thesis with one example of this—not because my internal process is so valuable to make note of, but because, as van Manen (2016) warned, I do not want to live the so-called half-life and to be so far removed from the participants that I claim my research is helping, especially when the reality was that I was profoundly impacted by the participants in my research.

I am someone who, according to the way emotional restriction was conceptualized in this research, would likely be categorized in the *low ER group*. However, very early on during my interviews with participants—especially those whose screening tools responses delineated them as more emotionally restricted—I realized that a part of me still held a deep-rooted hierarchical belief from childhood that being more emotionally vulnerable makes someone (i.e., me) somehow better than those who are not (which I know is counter to the prominent belief that less emotionality is better for males). The faultiness of my belief contributed to much of my own emotional introspection and growth during my doctoral journey. I realized that sometimes my propensity to talk about my feelings with others is a defence mechanism allowing me to remain more cognitive about my feelings rather than an opportunity to actually stay with the potential discomfort of feeling my feelings. In many ways, I am learning to be my own emotional safe haven—a place where I can express myself freely and respond to myself with self-compassion and curiosity rather than self-judgement, not because I do not want or need others, but because that is where I feel this research is inviting me.

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Appendix A

Participant Information Sheet

This appendix contains the four-page brochure given to potential participants during the recruitment phase.



How confidential and protected is my data?
 Your data will be processed in accordance with Data Protection Law. All information collected about you will be kept strictly confidential unless you give written permission otherwise, or required by law (e.g. you disclose harm about self or about others). Once the 20 participants are selected for an interview, the remaining names on the survey will be turned into a unique participant number and transferred anonymously to a secure, encrypted and password-protected computer. If you take part in the interview, and consent to being audio recorded, all recordings will be destroyed once they have been transcribed. All names and any possible identifying information from these interviews will be changed or removed permanently so that you or people you mention cannot be identified. Your data will only be viewed by the researcher/research team. Your consent information will be kept separately from your responses and all paper records will be stored in a locked filing cabinet.

What will happen with the results of this study?
 The results of this study may be summarised in published articles, reports and presentations. Quotes or key findings will always be made anonymous in any formal outputs unless we have your prior and explicit written permission to attribute them to you by name. Anonymous/de-identified information may also be kept indefinitely for future research.

Who can I contact?
 If you have any further questions about the study, please contact the lead researcher, Brendan Kwiatkowski.
 Email: [REDACTED] or phone [REDACTED]

If you wish to make a complaint about the study, please contact:


Dr. Marlies Kustatscher (Supervisor) [REDACTED]	Data Protect Officer University of Edinburgh dpo@ed.ac.uk
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CAN YOU HELP ANSWER THE QUESTION:
"What do male teenagers think about school, emotions and what it means to "be a man?"

Read inside for the details you need to know about participating in this research study

RESEARCH BEING CONDUCTED BY
 BRENDAN KWIATKOWSKI
 [REDACTED]@[REDACTED]
 FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH



What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to better understand what it is like to be a teenage male in school so that schools, and society-at-large can better support boys.

Why have I been invited to take part?

You have been invited to participate in this study because you are close to finishing your teenage years and can reflect on your experiences throughout them. The Langley School District and [insert school name here] and the University of Edinburgh have also approved this research.

Do I have to take part?

No – it is entirely up to you. If you do decide to take part, please keep this information sheet and complete the **COLOURED** Consent Form to show that you understand your rights in relation to the research, and that you are happy to participate. In order to participate you will also need consent from one of your parents/guardians.

What if I want to withdraw from the study?

If you do decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. (Your parents can also withdraw you from the study). There are no consequences for not taking part or withdrawing early. If you decide to withdraw please contact me at the earliest opportunity. On specific request we will destroy all your identifiable answers, but I will need to use the data collected prior to your withdrawal, and to maintain our records of your consenting participation.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

By sharing your experiences/beliefs in this research, you will be helping Brendan and the University to better understand relevant issues relating to teenage boys so that schools and the rest of society can better meet males' academic and emotional needs. Another benefit, just for returning your signed consent form (and your parent's/guardian's), whether agreeing to participate or not, you will be entered in a draw to win 1 of 3 \$50 Amazon gift cards.

What will happen if I decide to take part?

There are two parts to this research, a survey and an interview, but most likely you will only be part of the survey.

The survey: You will be asked to complete a survey during class at a time agreed to by your teacher. This survey will take between 10-20 minutes and will ask you to indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with statements regarding beliefs about emotions, masculinity and school. There are also a couple of questions that require short written responses.

The interview: Of the approximate 200 participants who complete this survey, I will identify around 20 boys whose written responses indicate that they would offer insightful and diverse perspectives to talk further with about the topics of emotions, masculinity and school. If you are selected, I will contact you and your parents via email or phone to ask if you are willing to participate in a confidential one-on-one interview (40-60 minutes). If you and they agree to this, an additional consent form will need to be signed by you and your parent/guardian and the location and date of the interview will then be arranged.

Are there any risks associated with taking part?

There are no significant risks associated with participation in the survey. If you do participate in the interview, the questions aren't designed to be intrusive or about sensitive-subject matter but in the case you feel some emotional discomfort from the interview, counselling support services through the school and elsewhere will be outlined. Again, please note that you do not have to answer any questions you don't want to, and you can share as much or as little as you would like about each question.

Appendix B

Parent/Guardian Information Sheet

What Do Male Teenagers Think About Emotions, Masculinity and School?



Parent/Guardian Information Sheet

Principal Investigator: Brendan Kwiatkowski

Email: [REDACTED]@[REDACTED]

Tel: [REDACTED]



Dear Parents and Guardians,

I am a teacher in the Langley School District but I am also currently a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Edinburgh. For my Ph.D. research, I am conducting a study on adolescent males' (ages 17-19) beliefs about emotions, masculinity and school.

Aims of the Research

I'm looking at emotions, masculinity and school because there are many social, emotional and academic concerns relating to boys during adolescence. I hope that your child's participation in my research can provide valuable insights for schools in how they can better support male students, particularly through their teenage years.

The Langley School District and all participating high schools, including [insert specific school name here], and the University of Edinburgh, are all familiar with and have given me permission to conduct this research and to contact you and your child. Parental/guardian consent and your child's consent are both needed in order for them to participate.

What will happen if you decide your child can take part?

They will be asked to complete a survey during one of their classes [in December] at a time agreed to by their teacher. This survey will take between 10-20 minutes and will ask them how strongly they agree or disagree with statements regarding beliefs about emotions, masculinity and school. There are also a couple of questions that require short written responses. Your child can opt out of completing the questionnaire at any time, with no consequence, and they can choose not to answer any specific questions that they would prefer not to.

I hope approximately 200 adolescent boys will complete this survey, and from this, I will identify around 20 boys whose written responses indicate that they would offer insightful and diverse perspectives to talk further with about the topics of emotions, masculinity and school. If your child is selected, I will reach out to contact you and them via email or phone to ask if they are willing to participate in a confidential one-on-one interview (40-60 minutes). If you and they agree to this, an additional consent form will need to be signed by you and your child and the location and date of the interview will then be arranged.

What will happen to information that is collected during the study?

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with you and your child's permission, or as required by law (e.g. disclosures of harm to self or to others). Your child's name will be on the survey in order for me to contact the 20 participants for follow-up interviews, but as soon as this is done, names on the survey will be turned into a code and their anonymized answers will be transferred to a secure, encrypted and password-protected computer.

If your child participates in the interview portion of the study, those interviews will be audio recorded so that a transcript can be made. These audio recordings will be temporarily stored on an encrypted and password-protected computer and will be immediately deleted after being transcribed. All names and any possible identifying information from these interviews will also be changed or removed permanently so that your child cannot be identified.

This information (from the survey and from the interviews) will be used by me for the purposes of completing my Ph.D. and informing educators and the public how to better understand and support adolescent males. All anonymized and de-identified data will be securely stored indefinitely and may be used for further academic publications.

Potential Risks and Discomforts

Everything will be done to ensure that the wellbeing of your child is prioritized throughout the process. I do not anticipate any significant risks for participants answering the survey but I do know that beliefs around masculinity can be controversial. The purpose of my research is not to judge or place values on these beliefs, but instead to describe what these beliefs are.

For those that are interviewed, the questions are not designed to be intrusive or sensitive and participants can decide not to answer any questions that they feel uncomfortable about. In the unlikely event emotional discomfort arises and further support is needed, counseling support services through the school and elsewhere will be outlined.

Will I be told the results of the study? You can request feedback about the results of the study by contacting me (Brendan) using the details on this form.

Compensation? Just for returning the consent forms signed, whether agreeing to participate or not, your child will be entered in a draw to win 1 of 3 \$50 Amazon gift cards.

Your child's participation in this study is completely voluntary and consent can be removed at any stage of the process by you or by them without consequence.

What next? If you give permission for your child to participate, please initial and sign the respective forms below and return it to school with your child. You can also request an electronic copy of this information from me and print it out and return it to school with your child.

Please contact me if any further information is needed. If you have a complaint about this study you can contact my supervisor or the Data Protection Officer (contact information below).

Warmly,

Brendan Kwiatkowski

Dr. Marlies Kustatscher (Supervisor)

University of Edinburgh



Tel: +44 131 651 6256

Data Protection Officer

University of Edinburgh

dpo@ed.ac.uk

Appendix C

Participant Consent Form for Survey



Participant/Student Consent Form for Survey

Please read each statement in turn. If it is true for you, please initial the box next to it. There are two copies of this form. The COLOURED one is for you to fill out and return as soon as possible and the second copy is yours to keep.

- | | Please Initial Box |
|---|---|
| 1. I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for the above study. | <input style="width: 80px; height: 40px;" type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. I have been given the opportunity to consider the information provided, ask questions and have had these questions answered to my satisfaction. | <input style="width: 80px; height: 40px;" type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I, or my parents/guardians, can ask to withdraw me at any time without giving a reason and without consequence. | <input style="width: 80px; height: 40px;" type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I am prepared to fill out a survey during class on the subject of emotions, masculinity and school. | <input style="width: 80px; height: 40px;" type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I agree that I and my parents/guardians may be contacted afterwards to ask if I would be willing to be interviewed about my beliefs on emotions, masculinity and school. | <input style="width: 80px; height: 40px;" type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. I understand that my name will only ever be seen by the researcher for the sole purpose of being able to make contact for a potential interview and that afterwards all survey data will be completely anonymized. | <input style="width: 80px; height: 40px;" type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. I understand that my anonymized data will be stored for a minimum of 5 years and may be used in future ethically approved research. | <input style="width: 80px; height: 40px;" type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. I agree to take part in this study. | <input style="width: 80px; height: 40px;" type="checkbox"/> |

Name (please print)

Date

Signature

Contact info for potential follow up interview and/or to be entered in draw for gift card

Email address: _____ **Phone number:** _____

THIS PART BELOW IS FOR THE RESEARCHER'S USE ONLY

Name of person taking consent

Date

Signature

Appendix D

Parent/Guardian Consent Form for Survey



Parent/Guardian Consent Form for Interview

Please read each statement in turn. If it is true for you, please initial the box next to it. There are two copies, one for you to keep and the other is for you to sign and return as soon as possible.

- | | Please Initial Box |
|--|---|
| 1. I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for the above study. | <input style="width: 80px; height: 40px;" type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. I have been given the opportunity to consider the information provided, ask questions and have had these questions answered to my satisfaction. | <input style="width: 80px; height: 40px;" type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. I understand that my child's participation is voluntary and that I, or my child, can ask to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without consequence. | <input style="width: 80px; height: 40px;" type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I am prepared for my child to be interviewed on the subject of emotions, masculinity and school. | <input style="width: 80px; height: 40px;" type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I give permission for what my child says to be audio recorded and included in this study but understand their names will not be mentioned and any potentially identifying information will be removed or changed. | <input style="width: 80px; height: 40px;" type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. I understand that if my child discloses serious information about harm to self or others, the researcher must notify the proper authorities according to school district procedures. | <input style="width: 80px; height: 40px;" type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. I understand that my child's anonymized and deidentified data will be stored for a minimum of 5 years and may be used in future ethically approved research. | <input style="width: 80px; height: 40px;" type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. I agree for my child to take part in this study. | <input style="width: 80px; height: 40px;" type="checkbox"/> |

Name of person giving consent (please print)	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____

THIS PART BELOW IS FOR THE RESEARCHER'S USE ONLY

Name of person taking consent	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____

Appendix E

Participant Recruitment Poster



**Chance to win 1 of 3
\$50 gift cards for
Amazon.ca**

**WANTED:
MALE RESEARCH
PARTICIPANTS
(AGE 17-19)***

To help answer the question:

*What do male teenagers think about
school, emotions and what it means
to "be a man?"*

INTERESTED? TO FIND OUT MORE
CONTACT BRENDAN KWIATKOWSKI

@
OR ASK THE COUNSELLING OFFICE FOR
MORE DETAILS

*BY THE END OF 2019



Appendix F

Recruitment Methods and Rates Per School

Table F1 in this appendix displays the various methods and rates per each of the eight schools in which participants were recruited from to participate in this study. In total, there were approximately 820 Grade 12 male students, and of these, I spoke to and handed out 514 consent forms and received 170 of them signed.

Table F1

Participant Recruitment Methods and Rates Per School

School Identifier Code	Recruitment Method	Approximate Number of Grade 12 males	Number of Consent Forms Distributed	Number of Signed Consent Forms Returned
Orange	Went to all the Grade 12 classes in the same block/period	90	76	34
Rainbow	Only went to the classes of teachers who were interested in having me	110	67	14
Green	Went to all Grade 12 classes in the same block/period	136	70	31
Blue	Only went to the classes of teachers who were interested in having me	100	43	17
Red	Went to two teachers' classes who taught nearly all the Grade 12 students	120	114	32
Pink	Only went to the classes of teachers who were interested in having me	200	95	30
Yellow 1	Only went to the classes of teachers who were interested in having me	24	9	9
Yellow 2	Talked to all male Grade 12 students	40	40	3

Appendix G

Participant Survey Example

This appendix contains the survey that 170 participants completed in this study. Three components of this survey, the NMAS-BF (Levant & Parent, 2019), the CMNI-46 (Parent & Moradi, 2011), and the Hemingway: Measure of Adolescent Connectedness (which did not factor into this current thesis, Karcher, 2011) are not displayed here as per the authors' conditions of my use of these scales. Where each of these measures was found in the survey is indicated in square brackets below.



The University of Edinburgh

Name: _____

Survey: What Do You Think About Emotions, Masculinity & School?

Date of birth: _____

Gender (circle one): Male / Female / Non-Binary / Transgender male / Other: _____

Race/ethnicity (circle as many as apply): White / Black / Asian / Bi-racial / Aboriginal /
Other: _____

Current grade: _____

Grade you started attending this school: _____

PART 1 DIRECTIONS: [NMAS-BF instructions and scale retracted here]

Short Answers (you can answer in point form or in 1-2 sentences)

7. Do you think you express your emotions more or less than the average male your age?
Explain why you think so.

8. What emotion(s), if any, do you express **the most** to other people? If possible, explain why.

9. What emotion(s), if any, do you express **the least** to other people? If possible, explain why.

PART 2 DIRECTIONS: [CMNI-46 instructions and 8 subscales retracted here]

PART 3 DIRECTIONS: [The Hemingway: Measure of Adolescent Connectedness]**ALL DONE! THANK YOU 😊**

How interested are you in being interviewed further regarding these topics of emotions, masculinity and school? (Circle a number on the scale below)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Not at all interested ←—————→ Extremely interested

Appendix H

Applying Numerical Scores to the Written Answers on the Screening Tool

This appendix details, using examples, how the three written questions on the screening tool were scored. For the first question (“Do you think you express your emotions more or less than the average male your age? “Explain why you think so”) if they wrote that they expressed emotions “more” or “less” than other males their age, then I scored these as -1 or $+1$, respectively. If they wrote, “the same as other males,” then they received no score. For this first question they could also get another point, in either direction (e.g., $+$ or $-$), if they expanded upon their answer in a way that offered further evidence for them being more or less emotionally restricted. For instance, if a participant wrote, “I share my emotions more than the average boy my age (-1) because I can talk with my mom about anything (-1),” then their overall score for that question would be -2 because they demonstrated a specific example of their ability to express their emotions with someone else. If they wrote, “I share my emotions more than the average boy my age (-1) because I’m moody (0),” they would not score any additional point for their explanation as they did not provide a specific enough example. If they wrote, “the same as other boys (0), which isn’t a lot ($+1$)” they would receive $+1$ overall for the first question as their expanded response indicated they have some general restrictions in expressing emotions.

Participants could receive an additional $+1$ or -1 point on the two remaining questions (“What emotion(s), if any, do you express **the most** to other people? If possible, explain why”; “What emotion(s), if any, do you express **the least** to other people? If possible, explain why”). Statements that exemplified how points were scored for these last two questions were: “I don’t think I should show my sad emotions because it would be weak ($+1$)” and “I need to share my anger as it is not good to keep it bottled up (-1). Although points were not determined based on

which emotions participants identified for these questions, on the rare occasion that participants listed things that were not emotions but were instead topics (e.g., “talking about my job”), I interpreted these as indicative of having difficulties identifying emotions and I scored these as +1. There were a few times when a participant’s score on the first question countered their score on the final two questions. For example, if a participant wrote they were less emotionally expressive than their peers (indicating a + score) but then on the other two questions they discussed how they can fully express their emotions to a select few people (– score). This likely demonstrates how participants’ interpretation of being more or less emotionally expressive can differ, highlighting a limitation in the screening tool and scoring process as discussed in Chapter 7.

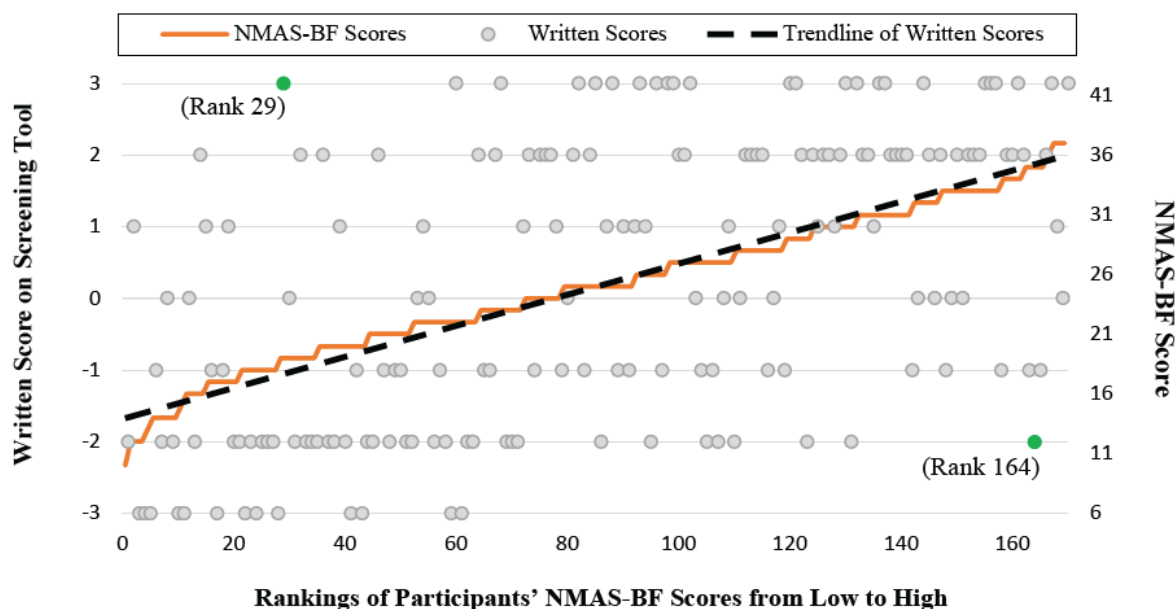
Appendix I

Comparing the Two Components of the Screening Tool

In this appendix I explain Figure I1 where I overlaid participants' written scores with their NMAS-BF scores on a graph to determine if there was any congruency between the two components on the screening tool to help justifying using both the written scores and the NMAS-BF scores together to select the ideal participants to be interviewed.

Figure I1

Participants' Written Scores Compared to NMAS-BF Scores from Low to High



Note. This figure compares the alignment between participants' written scores and their NMAS-BF scores from the screening tool. The x-axis ranks all 170 participants' NMAS-BF scores from lowest to highest. The red line "NMAS-BF Scores" depicts this ranking with their actual NMAS-BF scores as seen on the right y-axis. The gray data points plotted from the left y-axis indicates the sum of participants' scores from their three written questions—the more negative integer indicating less emotional restriction and the higher integer indicating greater emotional restriction. The black dashed line shows the general trend of written scores across all 170 participants. The two data points identified with a green dot (Rank 29 and Rank 164) demonstrate the most extreme cases at either end of the continuum of participants whose written score value indicated dissonance with their NMAS-BF score.

I expected some inconsistencies between the two components given that participants could expand greater upon their emotionality in their written answers, likely introducing greater nuance to their written scores. However, even though some instances of dissonance were observed in Figure I1 (e.g., Rank 29 and Rank 164), most participants had written scores that generally aligned with their NMAS-BF scores. This was most clearly demonstrated by the trendline for written scores (black dashed line) almost perfectly mirroring the relative rankings based on participants' NMAS-BF scores (red line). This indicated that there were many more instances of greater negative integer scores on the left side of the graph—aligning with lower NMAS-BF scores—and more instances of greater positive integer scores on the right side of the graph—aligning with higher NMAS-BF scores. As such, Figure I1 provided evidence that the two components of the screening tool assessed overlapping, or at least related, aspects of emotional restriction, justifying the use of both to select the ideal participants to interview.

Appendix J

Example Scripts for Participant and Parent/Guardian Contact for Interviews

Script on the Phone to Participants. Hello, my name is Brendan Kwiatkowski and I am the researcher from the University of Edinburgh who is doing research on what teenage males think about school, emotions, and masculinity. Is now a good time to talk? If you recall you already did a survey for me in one of your classes. Yes, well I'm calling you now as you are one of 20 participants that I think would be very valuable to interview. I would like to interview you about your schooling experience, what you think about emotions, and what you think about masculinity. The reason why I am asking to interview you specifically is that I'm hoping to interview some participants who enjoy and find it easy to share their emotions with others, and I'm hoping to interview some participants who do not enjoy sharing their emotions as much. Your survey responses indicated that you [tend to/tend not to] share your emotions as much as the other participants did. Do you think that's accurate? So because of this, I think your perspective would be extremely valuable to help schools to better understand teenage boys—which is the goal of my research. Before I continue, do you have any questions or clarifications so far? As to what my research is about or why I selected you? From what you heard so far are you potentially interested in being interviewed?

[I can talk to your parents or if you prefer you can/I've already talked to your parents] and both of you will need to sign another consent form before I'm allowed to interview you. Do you by any chance know if you still have the information booklet that I gave you? It outlined the details of my study and how I am going to protect your identity and for how long I will keep the data. If not, no worries, I will send you another one through email if that works for you. I want to clarify that your interview will just be between me and you and that any names or identifying

information you share will be removed. Also, your parents aren't allowed to see your results unless you give permission for them to see it. The only exception of course is I have to notify the school if there is harm going on to you or to others that you tell me about.

Still interested? The next step would be making sure your parents/guardians are onboard, getting the consent forms to you and getting them signed, and then to plan on the time and method of the interview. Since the pandemic has closed everything down, we could do Facetime, Skype, phone etc., whatever is easiest for you. Okay, so I'm going to email over the consent forms to you and your parents. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you or your parents/guardians have any questions. Remember you can pull out of this study at any time, and I will be in touch through email or phone as to the next steps, if any are needed. Thank you for your time.

Script on the Phone to Parents/Guardians. Hello, my name is Brendan Kwiatkowski and I am the researcher from the university of Edinburgh who is doing research on what teenage males think about school, emotions and masculinity. Is now a good time to talk? If you recall you signed a consent form, as did your child, for them to participate in a survey, which has already been done. I'm calling now to ask you, and your child, if they would be interested in taking part in being interviewed further about the topics of school, emotions, and masculinity. There were 170 participants who completed the survey but your child was one of 20 to be selected based on two reasons: The first is that your child indicated they would be interested in being interviewed, and secondly, I'm hoping to interview some participants who enjoy sharing their emotions with others and I'm hoping to interview some participants who do not enjoy sharing their emotions as much. Your son's survey responses indicated that he tended to towards the [former/latter], and [did/didn't] like to share his emotions to other people. I believe that

because of this, his perspective on his schooling experience and his ideas around masculinity would be extremely valuable to help schools better understand teenage boys—which is the goal of my research. Before I continue, do you have any questions or clarifications?

If you are interested in him potentially being interviewed, provided that he is still interested as well, are you comfortable if I email you the consent form and then you and him e-sign it and email it back to me? Do you by any chance know if you still have the information sheet that your son brought home when you signed the first consent form? It outlined the details of my study and how I am going to protect your child's identity and for how long I will keep the data. If not, no worries, I will send you another one through email if that works for you. [I already had this conversation with your son/I'm going to have this conversation with your son, may I speak with him?]. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions in the meantime. Remember you can pull out your child of this study at any time and I will be in touch through email or phone as to the next steps, if any are needed. Thank you for your time.

Appendix K

Participant Consent Form for Interview



Participant/Student Consent Form for Interview

Please read each statement in turn. If it is true for you, please initial the box next to it. There are two copies, one for you to keep and the other is for you to sign and return as soon as possible.

- | | Please Initial Box |
|--|---|
| 1. I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for the above study. | <input style="width: 80px; height: 40px;" type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. I have been given the opportunity to consider the information provided, ask questions and have had these questions answered to my satisfaction. | <input style="width: 80px; height: 40px;" type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I, or my parents/guardians, can ask to withdraw me at any time without giving a reason and without consequence. | <input style="width: 80px; height: 40px;" type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I am prepared to be interviewed on the subject of emotions, masculinity and school. | <input style="width: 80px; height: 40px;" type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I give permission for what I say to be audio recorded and included in this study but understand my name will not be mentioned and any potentially identifying information will be removed or changed. | <input style="width: 80px; height: 40px;" type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. I understand that if I disclose serious information about harm to self or others, the researcher must notify the proper authorities according to school district procedures. | <input style="width: 80px; height: 40px;" type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. I understand that my anonymized data will be stored for a minimum of 5 years and may be used in future ethically approved research. | <input style="width: 80px; height: 40px;" type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. I agree to take part in this study. | <input style="width: 80px; height: 40px;" type="checkbox"/> |

Name of person giving consent (please print)	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____

THIS PART BELOW IS FOR THE RESEARCHER'S USE ONLY

Name of person taking consent	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____

Appendix L

Parent/Guardian Consent Form for Interview



Parent/Guardian Consent Form for Interview

Please read each statement in turn. If it is true for you, please initial the box next to it. There are two copies, one for you to keep and the other is for you to sign and return as soon as possible.

- | | Please Initial Box |
|---|--------------------------|
| 9. I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for the above study. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. I have been given the opportunity to consider the information provided, ask questions and have had these questions answered to my satisfaction. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11. I understand that my child's participation is voluntary and that I, or my child, can ask to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without consequence. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12. I am prepared for my child to be interviewed on the subject of emotions, masculinity and school. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13. I give permission for what my child says to be audio recorded and included in this study but understand their names will not be mentioned and any potentially identifying information will be removed or changed. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14. I understand that if my child discloses serious information about harm to self or others, the researcher must notify the proper authorities according to school district procedures. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15. I understand that my child's anonymized and deidentified data will be stored for a minimum of 5 years and may be used in future ethically approved research. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 16. I agree for my child to take part in this study. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Name of person giving consent (please print)	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____

THIS PART BELOW IS FOR THE RESEARCHER'S USE ONLY

Name of person taking consent	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____

Appendix M

Screening Tool Data for Selecting the Participants to be Interviewed

This appendix contains Table M1 which displays the raw data and the assigned scores of the written component of the screening tool for the participants with some of the highest and lowest NMAS-BF scores. All participants who were interviewed were selected from the data in this chart. Participants whose identification numbers are crossed out were contacted for interviews but they or their parents/guardians did not consent and numbers that are bolded indicate that this participant was interviewed in this study.

Table M1

Screening Tool Data for Participant Interview Selection

Data for Participant Interview Selection for High ER Group					
Participant Number	NMAS-BF Score	Written Score	Written Response Question 1	Written Response Question 2	Written Response Question 3
154	37	3	Less. I try to seem happy all the time to avoid expressing negative emotions because it makes me uncomfortable.	Happiness, it's easy to fake without people questioning it.	Sadness, annoyance, anger, I don't know how to express it well and I don't like to talk about it.
122	37	1	I think I express them pretty consistent with other males. Sometimes more, other times less. but normal I think.	When I do express emotion, I express happiness.	I don't express a lot fear or try not to especially around girls.
126	37	1	I feel like I express my emotions maybe a little more but I don't explicitly say that those are my emotions but rather things that are suppressed in society.	I usually express anger and joy in certain scenarios when they are the most prevalent.	I express happiness the least because it's hard for me to express and because I'm not happy with my life.
128	36	3	I don't think I do as I am not very vocal about my emotions because I think that's not what a "man does" so I tend to keep my emotions bundled up, if I recall correctly I don't think I have told any family member my feelings.	Joy & happiness only to make it seem I ok.	Sadness and frustration. Sadness because I feel it not ok for a "man" to feel this way.
160	35	2	Not really, I do think I tend to put on a facade when interacting with other people. At the same time, I don't know if other men do that more than me so it's ambiguous.	Showing interest or being neutral. Most of the time I don't have any expression and "showing interest" is a tool for persuasion.	I would say anger. For me, anger does not solve any problem and at the same time, escalate more conflict.
29	35	-1	More, my mom is a youth care worker and I usually feel ok with showing emotions around her because I know she can help me work through them.	Anger sometimes, but only if someone is really getting on my nerves. Most of the time I try to be happy.	Sadness and fear. It can be hard to be around people who are always sad or who refuse to try new things. I like to be with people so I don't show those emotions.
114	35	-1	I think that I can express my emotions when on my own or	Stress is the easiest for me because I believe people can	Affection? I find it difficult to express feelings and care to

			with very close friends but never with multiple people.	relate and understand my feelings easier when I vent.	others. (example) if someone was going through something tough I don't know how to express care to them
107	35	-2	I think I express my emotions more than the average male around my age. I think this because I made sure to normalize sharing my feelings with my close friends.	I usually express either anger towards others or compassion/love to close friends and my girlfriend	I almost never express happiness or just mediocre feelings.
138	34	3	I believe I express them less than the average male because I almost never open my feelings up to everyone. I also don't feel as though my emotions are that important. I just feel as though men have been perceived as the type of human who is strong and willing to take the hits and not open up to others, because that's considered weak.	I usually express happiness and joy, because I feel this makes other people happy and joyful. I feel as though other peoples happiness is more important than mine.	I rarely show my sad emotions and hurt ones because I don't feel as though men should feel like this.
71	34	2	I think I express my emotions less than the average male in my age. I am not too sure why but I think it is because I don't fit in well.	I don't know but when I am around people I try to be respectful and funny, which makes me feel happy I guess.	I avoid expressing my vulnerabilities and hopelessness as much as I can. I do not want to be a burden for people who I care the most.
103	34	2	No I don't really tell others how I feel. So below average.	That I love them like to my girlfriend or parents.	When I am sad or angry. I don't want people thinking something wrong or worried or feel weak.
155	34	2	I think its pretty general, I mean in my friend group which really only includes my best friend but we have only had a serious emotional talk twice out of like 3 years of friendship.	Anger mostly, I've always just kinda been like just have a few momentary seconds of sadness then just before I cry I get mad cause I almost cried. I find its a way of protecting myself from showing too much.	Happiness and just caring in general I don't see the point in showing it as clearly as someone usually would normally cause I grew up in a not so like affectionate home its just shown subtly.
125	33	3	I think I express my emotions less than the average male because I was raised to keep my emotions to myself.	I express happiness to other people because I don't want to be seen as someone who is sad all the time.	Sadness, I don't want to seem weak or lesser.
131	33	3	I think I express my emotions less than the average male my age. I lack the ability and confidence to share what I am feeling.	I express happiness and contentment most to other people because people will accept happiness for what it is and not question it.	I express sadness, pain, and fear the least to other people because when they see you like they want to know the reason for those emotions and I do not want to tell people that.
144	33	3	Less. I have trouble communicating my feelings because I view it as a waste of time. I find that keeping them to myself spares the trouble and embarrassment, especially when I get pitied.	Humour...? If that counts. I find that it comes naturally to me, and I don't have to actively force it.	Sadness, anger. (just negative/gloomy feelings in general) I can't stand the attention I receive. The person hearing it may care and try to sympathize but that approach makes me feel too vulnerable, and the looks of pity I get is embarrassing and unneeded.
34	33	3	I would say I express my emotions less than the average male. Because, if I want to solve a problem or answer a question, I want to use my intellect more than my emotions I also am horrible at dealing with more emotional problems.	I would say anger or frustration. I often get heated in a debate or an argument, so I tend to show those emotions more but I also smile a lot or be happy because I spend time with friends and I enjoy being with them.	I ten to show sadness the least. I don't like being a burden on someone and so showing sadness will create a situation where I'm forced to talk about my emotions and create an unwanted dilemma.

Data for Participant Interview Selection for Low ER Group					
Participant Number	NMAS -BF Score	Written Score	Written Response Question 1	Written Response Question 2	Written Response Question 3
448	10	-2	Probably more, I'm at an arts school that has a fairly close community, and my family is totally awesome.	Happiness, I am happy most of the time.	Probably sadness, only since I am not sad very often.
39	12	1	I think I express my emotions more. Usually when I play sports, I'm emotional.	Happy. Because if other people will be happy by me. I'll be happy more.	Sadness. I don't think other people help me a lot. I meant I should do everything by myself.
124	12	-3	I think I express my emotions more than the average male because if something bothers me I will say something about it. I feel most guys bottle it up.	not any in particular I'm pretty upfront.	Not any in particular I usually say what's on my mind.
136	12	-3	In the past year, "more" than the average male my age because I think about the importance of life and how it is too short to not express feelings.	Happiness. I always say "life's amazing" and I explain why to the person I'm talking to so I can make them think twice about their current mood and catch my positive vibes.	Anger or frustration. I never show my frustration towards anyone as I feel that our relationship will be weakened and awkward for the next little while.
98	13	-3	I think more! All the time I hug my friends and tell them that I love them, and I discuss my emotions fully at least with my mom. The other thing to consider though is that I've lived a privileged life thus far so I have very little (to none) negative emotions that require courage in expressing.	LOVE and HAPPINESS! I just happen to be a very loving and happy guy like I mentioned in the last question. I have no trauma and am open and genuinely happy so I am insanely lucky that way.	Anger, dislike etc. I reckon that everybody has a tough enough lot to take a lifetime to sort out (at least), so I usually have no feelings of ill will towards anyone even if I disagree with their actions etc. I think everyone deserves love.
72	14	0	I tend to express myself to people I know well enough or I generally just boldly honest to people because I think not being totally honest can cause more problems sometimes.	My happiness and excitement is what I shared commonly amongst my friends.	Sadness I would say I express the least because apart of me don't want to make my friends and family worry about me and I just keep it to myself to become stronger from sad things.
12	14	-1	I think I have a better control of my emotions than my peers. However with a close one I generally have no problem disclosing what I feel.	Happiness, excitement. Because a good way to lead people and have them feel good is to use your own positivity and energy to set the mood.	Anger, because expressing anger the moment I feel it is the worst possible way to deal with an anger-inducing situation.
24	14	-2	I express my feelings more than most. This is because I have very close friendships.	Happiness and stress/frustration because right now there are many stressful things happening - But I am overall happy. I do get frustrated with people though.	Anger, I try not to feel angry because it is very unnecessary for most times.
145	14	-2	I believe I express them a bit more than the average male when I'm having a bad day I enjoy talking to someone about it it makes me feel better.	I think I express the most emotions when I'm happy because it is the easiest to talk about	When I'm having a rough day it is the hardest to talk about so sadness
146	14	-3	I feel that I express my emotions at lot more because I feel that I'm more sensitive than the average male	How to deal with situations. I think that would be sympathy because I care a lot about other people.	The least we express to people would be anger because I don't like to get angry at people.
159	15	-3	I think I express my emotions more than the average male in my age because I talk to my parent on the phone just about everyday and I don't like to keep thing to myself.	When I'm upset I like to talk to people about it because that way it make me feel a lot better after I said it out loud.	When I feel really proud of myself I don't usually express to other people because I don't enjoy show off to people
38	16	2	Less than my age male. I don't like to bring my emotions out like anger.	Positive and happy, I don't want to ruin anyone other's mood because of my emotions.	I don't like to show that I am scared of something or under confident.

53	16	1	I don't believe I express my emotions more than an average male. I usually don't show them depending on who I'm around or what its about.	The emotions I express the most is just common things like how there day was and I try to be nice.	The emotion I show the least is when I'm sad or mad. I try to keep calm even when someone is being annoying. I try to avoid them or to stop.
14	16	0	I think I am capable of expressing my emotion more than the typical guy based on the fact that I am not afraid to speak my truth.	I express frustration and any sadness the most because those are really the emotions that concern me	I don't like to pass on any aggression or anger because that typically passes over time.
25	16	-2	More because I've been told in the past that I'm a very expressive person by others.	Probably appreciation and affection because I usually tend to show the stronger emotions more clearly and those are often my strongest.	Anger and frustration because usually if someone has made me angry it's not worth making a scene as opposed to letting myself cool off and calm down.
94	17	1	Probably less considering I am usually happy and don't have many things that bug me.	When I'm mad I like to tell people how I'm feeling or if I'm upset at someone for something they did I will confront them.	When I'm scared...I feel like I shouldn't tell people when I'm scared. But if it's a large enough matter with the right person I won't hesitate.
41	17	-1	I feel that I express my emotions more because many males my age don't like talking about emotions but it doesn't really bother me to talk about them.	Probably happiness because I enjoy trying to make others happy.	Probably jealousy or sadness because I try not to burden people with my emotion and when you talk about sad emotions it tends to make others sad.
83	17	-1	Slightly more than average (as I see it). I'm definitely more openly emotional/emotionally honest than a lot of the people I know.	Passive frustration, I rarely get actively angry. I'm much more frequently irate than enraged. I generally try to express excitement. I say excitement because truly joyful experiences weren't very common. I cry at movies a fair bit.	As mentioned above, rage. I usually try to keep feelings of stress or insecurity to myself.
132	17	-2	More so than average male. Believe it's important to express wants/desires. Otherwise containing emotions builds up to worse feelings.	Happiness, helps connect w/ others and spread positivity.	Sadness, I don't enjoy seeking sentiment w/ people I'm not very close to. Anger, I can get very angered which can cause poor communication/relations when imposed on others.
162	17	-2	I believe I share my emotions more because I don't feel embarrassed if I compliment someone or show affection. Others may feel that their emotions are bottled up.	To my friends I'll share exciting stories that happened recently. I'll discuss how my family annoys me to my friends. Lastly, school pressures or school successes. Happiness such as laughter.	Personal problems like anger because it is not their responsibility to carry my troubles. I only show love towards my family and close friends but, I care for everyone in my life.
76	17	-3	I think I express a lot more than the boys my age because of the support system I have (mainly female).	I typically express any emotion but it is usually happy or hurt. When I'm hurt that's all I could think about so I usually need to vent.	I express angry or confidence the least when I'm genuinely angry, I keep it to myself. It's hard for me to show anger when I'm directly angry at them.
84	18	-2	I think I express my emotions more than the average male, as I am open when talking to my friends about how I am feeling.	If I am feeling sad or not happy with something, such as a test grade.	I rarely express if I am upset with a certain person. If I am upset with someone, I usually keep it to myself.
113	18	-2	I think I expression my emotions a lot but just to few people I trust the most. I try to be the most neural with all the other and this includes my parents.	Love; I like that the people I really like and that are so much important to me know how much I love them.	Humility. I think I tend to believe too much in my self and I don't admit that I'm not actually good in everything.
120	18	-2	I think I express my emotions more just because of my mom and she's taught me to express my emotions because if you don't you have everything bottled up inside and that's not healthy. I do tell my friends, not all but some	Probably like humour or happiness cause I'm quite insecure or sad or made about things and laughing it off helps.	I'd say sadness because it's very revealing and people see it as being weak so it's hard for me to be sad or cry in front of friends or family.

			friends my feelings and I'm pretty open.		
143	18	-2	I think I express my emotions more than the average male my age because the use of social media and what we're exposed to on it can change our feelings and make us feel differently.	Friendship/relationships issue, I think that's what everyone can relate the most, everyone can probably give help/advice under that situation.	Probably family issues, I think that's more personal than other.
74	18	-3	More. I am lucky to have close friends (both male and female) that can be an outlet for my emotions. Specifically this yr. (Grade 12) have been able to be open w/my mental and emotional thoughts.	Joy, happiness, love/affection/care/kindness, stress, isolation, sadness. I'm like most people (esp. teens), I experience both good emotions and bad ones and thankfully I have friends that care about both (and I care about theirs as well).	N/A

Note. Crossed out numbers indicated this participant was contacted but they or their parents/guardians did not consent for them to be interviewed

and bolded participant numbers indicate that participant did consent and participate in the interview.

Appendix N

Example Interview Questions

This appendix contains a general guide of the structure and kinds of interview questions I asked participants. Interviews were semi-structured and, in general, participants' answers to Question 3 and Question 4 would open many discussions around emotions, masculine pressures, relationships with peers, and school experiences that were often interspersed with one another. Near the latter portion of the interviews I asked questions specifically relating to their relationship with school, which, for the most part, ended up being beyond the scope of this current study.

1. How would you describe yourself (i.e., your main traits or qualities)? Can you give a tangible example of each of those things?
2. What would you describe as the most shaping events of your life that have made you who you are? Can you explain how they practically have impacted you?
3. Based on what you described as your main qualities and main formative experiences, do you feel like that the fact that you are male has any connection with those things? Do you feel like masculinity had anything to do with those qualities? Explain.
4. What is it like being a teenage male? What specific experiences or memories stand out to you about being male? Is there a guy culture you've experienced, if so, what are some experiences of that?
5. Do you feel like there's pressure, or has been pressure, in your life to "be a man"? Share an example/experience if you can.

6. Do you think your definition of being a man is different than what society expects a man to be? If so, how? If applicable, do you feel the pressure to match up to societal expectations?
7. Do you think that being a male influences your relationship with emotions? If so, can you describe/recall an experience that demonstrates this?
8. How do you describe emotions? I mean do you think they are helpful? Hurtful? Necessary? Unnecessary? etc. Can you think of an experience that demonstrates your answer?
9. How would you describe your experience of school? (e.g., primary, secondary school)
10. How would you describe your experience of being a boy at school?
11. Do you think being a boy has impacted your experience of school? Do you have any specific memories about your school experience that specifically relates to being a boy? (i.e., boys versus girls).
12. What do you enjoy/dislike about school? What experiences stand out to you that you really liked/disliked about school? What's the best thing about school? What's the worst thing about school? What is the biggest improvement schools could make?
13. Do you think school has impacted your life? (Positively or negatively or a mix). If so, which areas the most (teachers, extra-curriculars like music, sports, the learning/knowledge itself, friends). What do you recall being the most impactful about each?
14. Do you recall being taught anything about emotions in school? If so, how/what was it taught?

15. If you're comfortable and can remember, can you tell me about a specific experience at school when you felt a strong emotion? (e.g., happy, sad, angry, scared)
16. If my research is about trying to understand what it's like to be a teenage male, specifically around masculinity, do you feel like there's something that comes to mind that you haven't had a chance to express? Anything from our conversation you would want to clarify or emphasize?
17. Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix O

Process for Identifying Themes from the Interviews

This appendix details further how I identified essential and auxiliary themes from the 20 participant interviews. I started coding the interviews with the detailed reading approach and wrote down what each sentence or group of sentences said about the participant's experience of being an adolescent male. This process was done with sticky notes on transcripts in my home office as depicted in Figures O1 and O2 below (e.g., masculinity is a growth journey).

Figure O1

Example of Using a Detailed Reading Approach to Generate Initial Codes for Themes

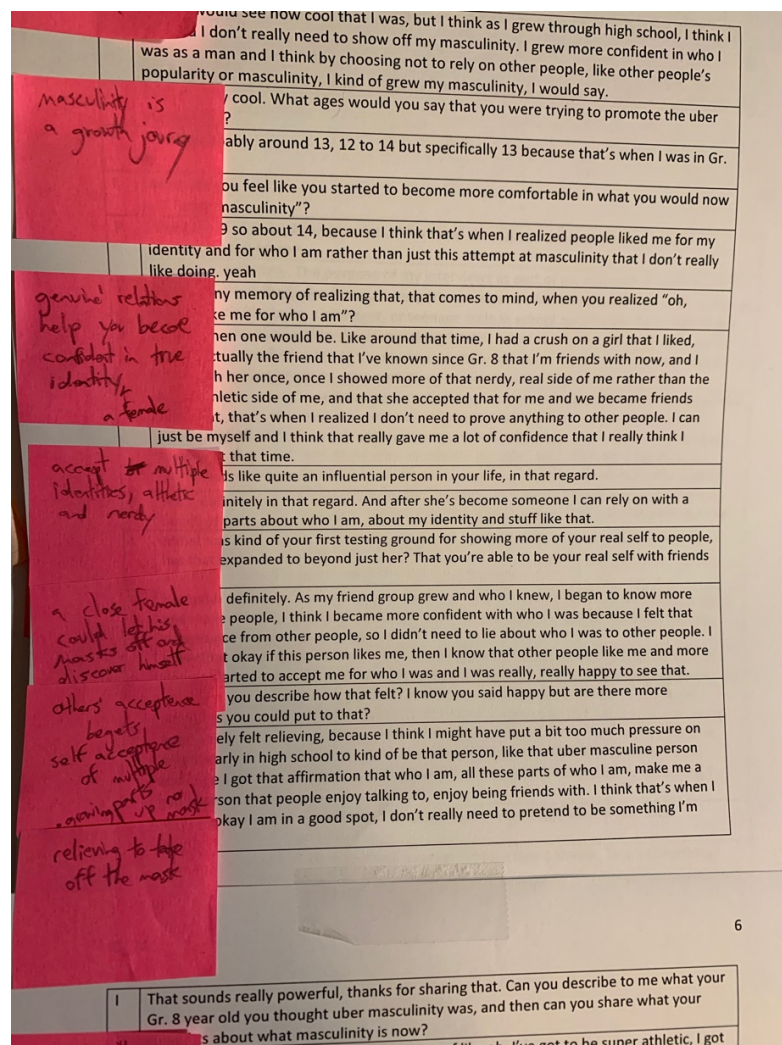


Figure O2

Example of the Detailed Reading Approach in Process



After the detailed reading approach I used the holistic approach, where I read the interview in its entirety and then summarized the main sentiment(s) regarding being an adolescent male. For example, from Zachery's interview I wrote, *"pick your battles, don't have to fight or get riled up, but be a protector and act selflessly for others. Minimize one own's pain for the benefit of others. Bring happiness, lightness, be a fun-loving guy."* From Birjot's interview I wrote, *"the pressures to be a male and pressures on males (especially romantically with females) are intense and unfair and a constant battle waged internally. There's a conflict."* Next I re-read the interview using the selective reading approach and highlighted key phrases that seemed to resonate strongly with the phenomena in question. For example, Wataru's response when asked what is it like being a teenage male, said, *"It's really hard to commit to people, yeah. You feel lonely very easily."* I returned to each transcript multiple more times, particularly in adding/refining the codes I developed during the detailed reading approach.

Once this was completed for all 10 interviews in one of the ER groups, I journaled about which themes I thought becoming common from the data. I then went through all the codes I generated while using the three approaches and compared them between all 10 participants

within the same ER group and removed redundancies. As trends were identified, I created a list of potential themes. For example, these initial themes for the *low ER group* were:

1. Keen awareness of the pressures/expectations of masculinity (Tensions)
 - a. Able to critique and separate from
 - b. Able to critique but only partially separate from/masks
2. Need for emotional safe havens
 - a. Females as safe havens
 - b. Peers as safe havens
3. A sense of uniqueness/difference than peers
 - a. A sense of longing
4. Importance of the relationship to dads with masculinity
 - a. Dads as mentors/wanting guidance (role models)
 - b. Dads as non-examples
5. A two-edged relationship with the world of sports & athletics
6. A commitment to personal growth and the importance of confidence

I then journalled about this shorter list with a mindmap of how they related to the phenomena and returned to the transcripts yet again with this short list of themes to see if they resonated with each and every participants' experience of being an adolescent male in their respective ER group. This was often when the auxillary themes were seperated from the essential themes if they did not apply to all participants' experiences within their respective ER group. Again, I discussed themes with my supervisors throughout this process and they gave input on my potential themes, especially in refining and/or renaming them to better reflect the phenomenon of being an adolescent male according to participants' interview data.