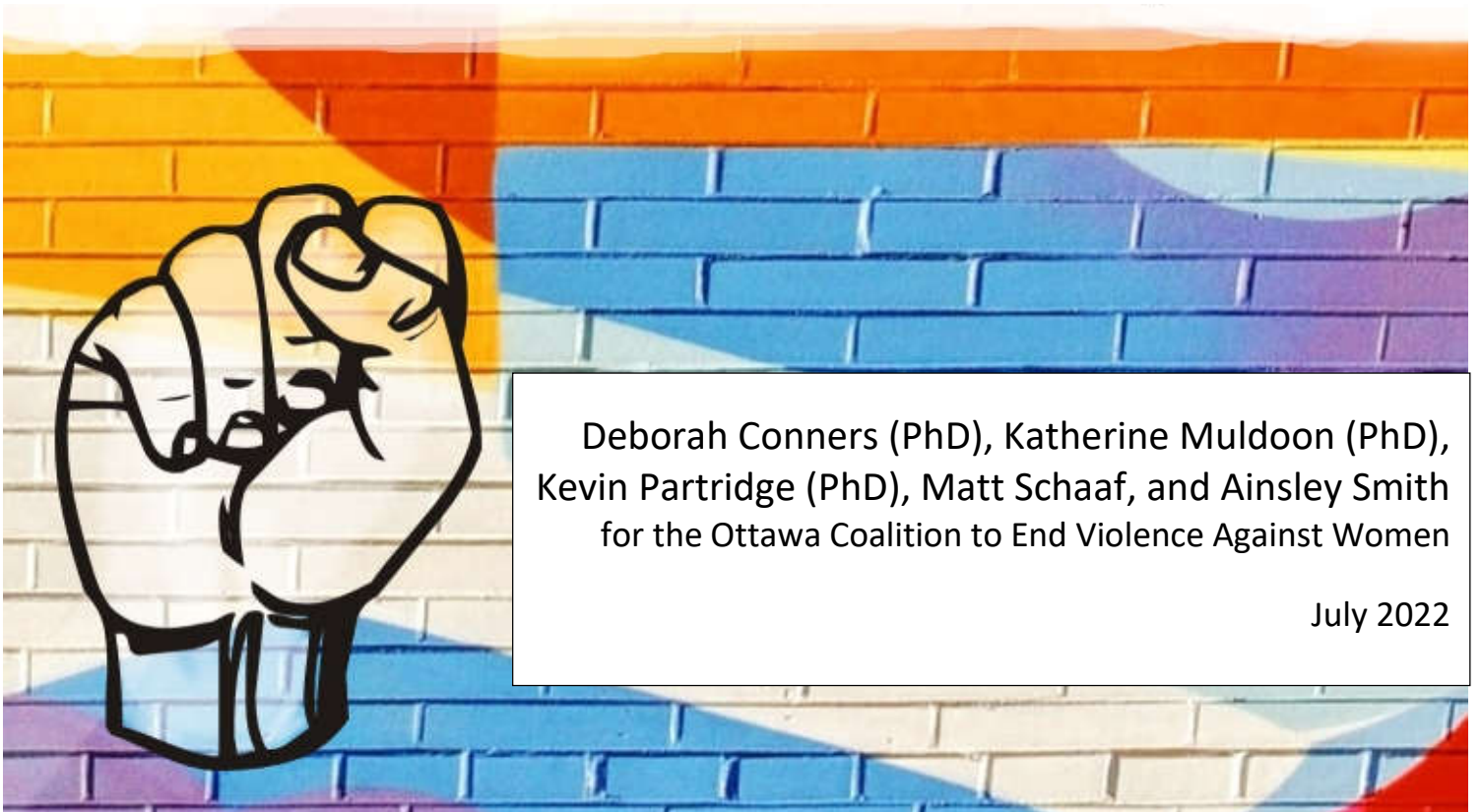




# **Newcomer and racialized youth opposing Gender-based Violence: Evaluating the MANifest Change Model**



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## SUMMARY

Several decades of feminist work to engage men as allies in addressing violence against women and girls has resulted in more attention to the role that men can play in the reduction of gender-based violence (GBV). This attention has led to the development of theoretical frameworks, program design and program evaluations, such as those of the White Ribbon Campaign, showing varying but promising results. Recent social media movements such as *#MeToo* have underscored the importance of engaging a broader audience in conversations regarding GBV and have brought ally-building programs into further prominence. It has become increasingly evident that men and boys are essential stakeholders in creating solutions to prevent GBV and that programs for men as allies will play an integral role in reducing and preventing GBV.

As part of increasing efforts in this area, the Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women (OCTEVAW) began developing the MANifest Change program to engage men and boys in GBV prevention in 2009. MANifest Change is a trauma-informed, strength-based approach designed to support young men to identify and safely intervene in situations of GBV. In 2018, immigrant-serving agencies and sexual assault centres in four Ontario cities adapted the MANifest Change model in a collaborative project called Young Men Leading Change (YMLC). Each agency brought significant prior experience in working with youth and/or GBV prevention programming. YMLC included 24 hours of programming, generally in weekly 2-hour sessions, and was designed to provide young racialized and immigrant men with the opportunity to explore how they might act as allies in reducing and preventing gender-based violence. Together, peer leaders (Youth Facilitators) and program staff (Adult Allies) focused the program on the experiences of racialized and immigrant youth, particularly Black and Muslim youth, who face many stereotypes, including that they are more violent or threatening than their white counterparts. These stereotypes are rooted in interlocking forms of oppression and discrimination – particularly anti-Black racism and Islamophobia.

This paper presents the findings of a research project to evaluate the effectiveness of the YMLC program, examining how the adapted MANifest Change model affected gender roles, willingness to help, and motivations and barriers to help in situations of GBV. Participants completed quantitative questionnaires both before and after the YMLC project. The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic brought both disruptions and opportunities to the administration of the program and the evaluation, as programs and evaluation tools moved online. Four qualitative research questions were added to the survey in year two and provided narrative support to the statistical findings. Analysis of the results identified a significant decrease in harmful beliefs surrounding domination-based gender role attitudes, a significant increase in willingness to help, and small non-statistically significant changes in motivations and barriers to intervening in situations of GBV, indicating that the YMLC program was successful in supporting young men to identify GBV and act in its prevention. This evaluation supports the presentation of further iterations of the program and further evaluation to continue to build the evidence-base showing the effectiveness of the MANifest Change model.

# INTRODUCTION

## Background

Gender-based violence (GBV) is an ongoing challenge in our society and has increasingly gained attention from social media movements such as #MeToo and #TimesUp. Several decades of feminist work to engage men and boys have demonstrated that they can play a significant role in reducing the burden of GBV on society (White Ribbon Campaign, 2012; Jewkes et al., 2015). However, as a group, men and boys are often not active participants in the movement to reduce male violence against women and girls, non-binary people, and other men and boys. Studies have shown that many men want to support the movement toward gender equality (Promundo-US, 2019), however barriers remain, and clear roles for men and boys in the reduction of violence, and specifically violence against women and girls, remains an important area for attention and advancement. Recognizing the potential to address this gap, anti-violence advocates across the country are developing models and programs such as MANifest Change to help men and boys understand gender role stereotypes, identify the social power imbalances that underpin GBV, and play an active role in GBV prevention.

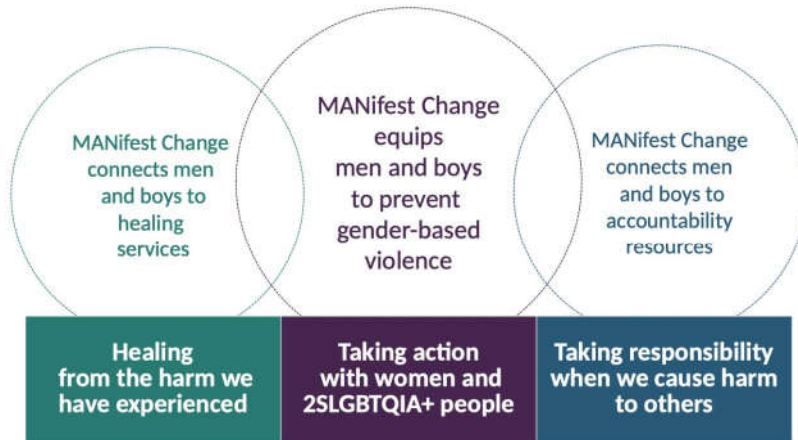
This report builds knowledge in this area, presenting research evaluating a project called Young Men Leading Change (YMLC). From 2018-2021, YMLC built on the MANifest Change model to empower men to take action in GBV prevention and act as allies to women and 2SLGBTQIA+ people striving for gender equality.

## Embedding the MANifest Change model in the YMLC Project

Programming developed by frontline anti-violence feminists to engage men in the prevention of violence is an ongoing inquiry into what women and gender diverse survivors of GBV ask of men and boys in their communities. How do we engage men in ways that address survivors' safety, justice, and healing needs? How are the needs of women and gender diverse survivors connected to more safety, justice, and healing for men? The MANifest Change model is one response to these questions.

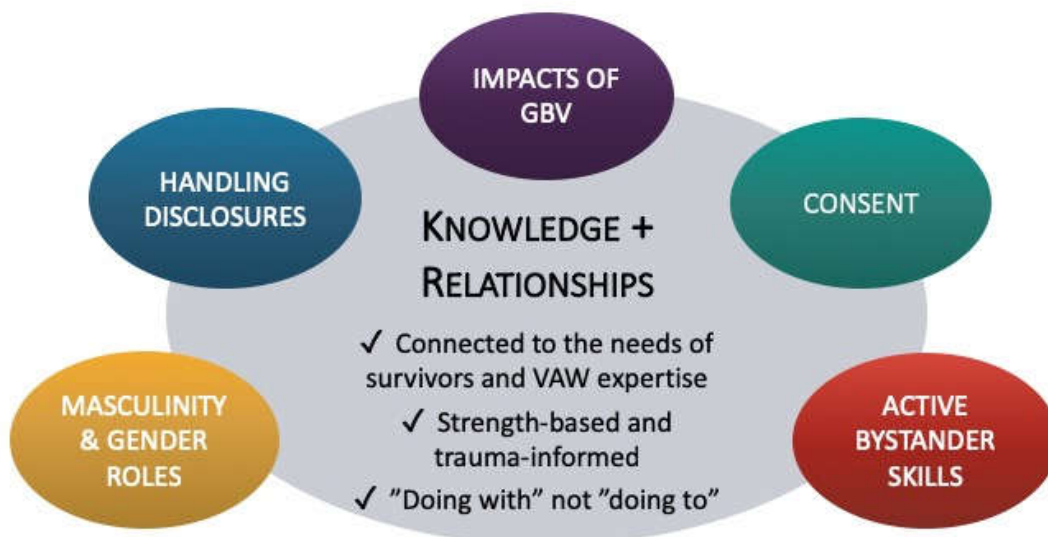
MANifest Change is a trauma-informed, strength-based approach to engaging men and boys to reduce and prevent gender-based violence. It recognizes that male violence disproportionately affects women and girls and 2SLGBTQ2IA+ people; men and boys also experience high levels of violence, often (but not exclusively) from other men. Rigid gender roles and gendered social power imbalances help explain GBV from an intersectional framework that also considers race, economic status, health, immigration status and other factors.

MANifest Change is primarily designed to work with men and boys to act in solidarity with women and gender-diverse survivors. It is built around the expertise of women and gender-diverse anti-violence advocates. The model acknowledges men's experiences of receiving harm and violence and encourages help-seeking and peer support. MANifest Change is not designed to address specific incidents in which men cause harm but identifies community resources that support accountability and taking responsibility for harm caused.



The program takes place over approximately 24 hours, generally in 12 weekly sessions, and is implemented in schools, community programs, campuses, and workplaces with the goal to empower men to take an active role in GBV prevention. MANifest Change Facilitators invite men to discuss their own perspectives on a variety of topics and engage with feminist perspectives on the same. For many men, this is the first time they have had the opportunity to discuss these topics with other men: what does it mean to be a man (examining gender roles, unearthing different healthy ways of expressing masculinity, identifying pressure to express masculinity in ways that dominate self and others)? How do we understand the roots of victim-blaming and societal tolerance of GBV? What can we learn about the physical, social, emotional, spiritual, and financial impacts of GBV on survivors, and on society more broadly? How do people learn to negotiate sexual consent? Can we learn to recognize common situations of GBV, and consider how to intervene safely and effectively as a bystander?

## THE FIVE MANIFEST CHANGE CONVERSATIONS



This program differs from traditional teaching methods by relying on facilitated discussion, interactive learning activities, storytelling by community advocates, and participant-led community projects designed to raise awareness of men's role in preventing GBV.

YMLC adapts the principles of the MANifest Change model to address the experiences of racialized and immigrant young men. Together, peer leaders (Youth Facilitators) and program staff (Adult Allies) focused the program on the lived experience of Black and Muslim youth, who face many stereotypes, including that they are more violent or threatening than their white counterparts. These stereotypes are rooted in interlocking forms of oppression and discrimination – particularly anti-Black racism and Islamophobia.

The YMLC project responds to a Public Health Agency of Canada-commissioned review of existing programs which found a significant lack of 1) programming involving immigrant boys and men in reducing violence against women and 2) evaluation of men and boys' GBV prevention programs (Minerson, et al., 2011). YMLC sought to address both gaps.

YMLC was implemented with funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation and ran from April 2018 to August 2021 in Peterborough, Kitchener, London, and Ottawa. Three hundred and thirty-two young men participated in the project in 23 groups. Each YMLC group was adapted and delivered by local facilitators with expertise in youth leadership, immigration and settlement, and gender-based violence prevention. In this way, the MANifest Change model was integrated into the local agencies' existing programming.

The participating organizations included the Kawartha Sexual Assault Centre's *MENding* program in Peterborough; the Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Centre and the Sexual Assault Support Centre of Waterloo Region's *Male Allies* program; the Muslim Resource Centre for Social Support and Integration and Anova's *Man/Made* program in London; the Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization and the Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women.

In each region, program staff (Adult Allies) supported young men to step into the role of Youth Facilitators. Youth Facilitators expanded their pre-existing leadership skills and adapted the MANifest Change model to be relevant to their cultural and geographic communities. These 37 Youth Facilitators engaged 295 additional young men in group work to develop knowledge, commitment, and skills for violence reduction. Putting these skills into practice, the young men designed and implemented their GBV awareness-raising actions to reach 89,971 community members with positive messages about gender equality and the need for men to actively prevent GBV.

## **Objective**

The objective of this report is to evaluate the effect of the YMLC program with newcomer and racialized youth regarding gender roles, willingness to help and motivations and barriers to help in situations of GBV.

## METHODS

### Setting and study design

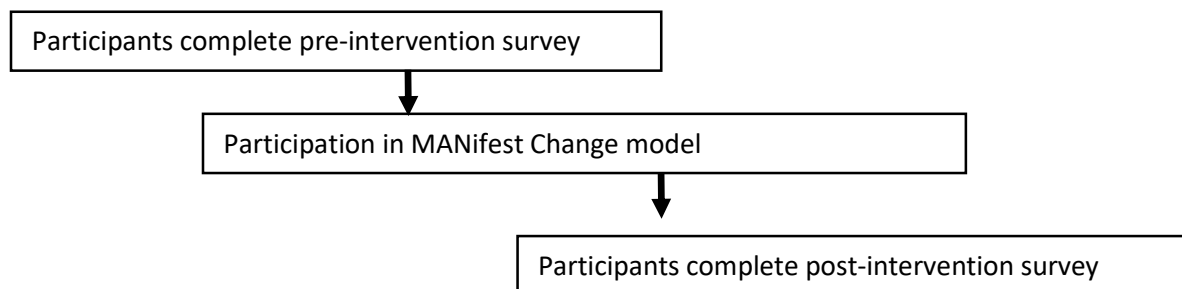
Two distinct research activities were undertaken to evaluate the MANifest Change model embedded in the YMLC project. The first was composed of questionnaires handed out to participants in the YMLC groups both before and after they went through the program. These questionnaires included both quantitative and qualitative questions. The second was two focus groups with Youth Facilitators of the YMLC groups that were analyzed using qualitative methods.

The questionnaires were distributed to participants in four cities: Ottawa, London, Kitchener-Waterloo, and Peterborough. Depending on the city, four to nine groups took place with local community partners both in person and online. During the pandemic, there was also one fully online group that gathered participants from across Ontario.

The participants were racialized and newcomer young men from high schools, post-secondary programs, or community drop-in programs. Recruitment took place through teachers, university administrators, and community-based social support groups. Participation in the program was voluntary.

This study was a prospective observational study using a pre/post analysis designed to evaluate the direct effect of the MANifest Change model on norms and behaviours related to GBV. See Figure 1 for study design.

**Figure 1:** Participant Study Design.



The survey questionnaires were filled out online or on paper. In one case, the participants had the option to use either, but not both. The initial set of surveys did not include any qualitative questions; however, four qualitative questions were added at the end of year two of the project. For this analysis, we made no distinction between the different versions of the surveys and recoded as appropriate to ensure that the results of each survey matched all the other surveys.



## Quantitative Measurements

Questionnaires measuring gender roles, willingness to help, and motivations and barriers to help in situations of GBV were given to participants both before and after the YMLC group. Scales used in the questionnaires were adapted from previous academic work on GBV.

See Table 1 for details regarding survey scales.

**Table 1:** Scales included in surveys

	Scale 1: Male Role Attitudes	Scale 2: Bystander Behaviour: Risky Situations	Scale 3: Decision Balance
Scale reference	Pleck, Sonenstein & Leighton (1993)	Cares, Banyard, Moynihan & Warner (2014)	Koon (2013)
Variable measured by scale	Gender roles	Willingness to help	Motivation and barriers to help
Scoring method	The score was calculated by summing the response values across all items.	The score was calculated by summing the response values across all items.	The score was calculated by subtracting response values of the 6 barriers items and adding values of the 5 motivation items.
Minimum and maximum score	The lowest possible score was 8, indicating a traditional male role attitude, the highest score was 40, indicating an egalitarian gender role attitude.	The lowest possible score was 13, indicating willingness to help in GBV situations, the highest score was 65, indicating unwillingness to help in GBV situations.	The lowest possible score was -25, indicating high motivation and low barriers to help in GBV situations, the highest score was 19, indicating low motivation and high barriers to help in GBV situations.
Example scale items	“It bothers me when a guy acts like a girl” 1 2 3 4 5	“I express concern to a friend if I see their partner acting in jealous ways and trying to control her” 1 2 3 4 5	“I will feel like a leader in my community if I intervene” [Motivation] 1 2 3 4 5
Assumptions or conclusions	Normative gender roles are socially constructed and shape men's behaviors in heterosexual relationships.	Bystander intervention is an important means of preventing sexual and relationship abuse.	There is no significant effect between conformity to masculine norms and choices of bystander intervention.

## **Statistical Analyses**

All data analyses were conducted in SPSS 20. Continuous variables (scales) were compared using averages and standard deviations (SD). Categorical variables were displayed with frequencies and percentages. For each scale, the minimum and maximum scores for the participants are presented.

To maximize the number of participants included in the analytic sample, missing values in scales were substituted with averages for the values present. Analysis of the missing values showed them to be missing at random so inserting an average for missing values allows us to maximize all available data.

There were some cases where entire groups did not complete sections of the survey. In these cases, the data from the filled-out portions was used, and the cases were dropped from the analysis of the other portions. The result is that the *N* or total number of participants varies for different scales.

Paired T-tests were used to test for significant differences before and after the MANifest Change intervention. Correlations were also used to test the relationship between the three scales. A 95% confidence interval was used, which means that if the significance is less than 0.05, the test is showing a relationship that is unlikely due to chance. This is a common level of testing in the social sciences and program evaluation.

## **Qualitative Design**

Two forms of qualitative data collection were used in the research project. The first was the addition of four questions to the survey in year two of the project. The second was the use of two focus groups in year three, collecting the views of Youth Facilitators in the program on changes experienced by program participants.

## **Questionnaires**

Participants were offered the opportunity to provide responses to each scale in their own words as part of the survey for year two and three of the project. One qualitative question was included for the male role attitudes scale and the bystander behaviour scale, and two questions for the decision balance scale.

All participants did not respond to both the pre- and post-program research questionnaire. The majority of participants added comments when they had the opportunity but not all. The number of participants who commented declined from the first to the third scale. One of the reasons for this decline may be that some of them may not have had time to fill out the complete survey.

The qualitative analysis of each question coded the data for concepts relevant to the question being asked. Words included those related to how participants saw themselves in terms of gender, how they approached difficult situations, and the factors that would impact on their ability to act. They also included concepts dealt with in the program, such as consent, safety, gender, boundaries, understanding the impacts of trauma on individuals and communities, and self-awareness. Themes emerged through multiple use of specific words (e.g., respect) or the identification of different approaches relating to attitude, behaviour, motivation, or barriers.

## **Focus groups**

Two focus groups of between one- and one-half hours were conducted online with a total of eight Youth Facilitators to gather their insights into the program outcomes. These focus groups occurred in the third year of the project. Each meeting was attended by three or five Youth Facilitators, the program



manager, and the focus group facilitator. Semi-structured interview questionnaires guided the conversation; points that were not included in these guides but were brought up independently by the Youth Facilitators were also explored.

The Youth Facilitators were based in Peterborough, Ottawa, London, and Kitchener. Some of them had been involved in the project since it began, and others had come to it more recently. Among them were high school students, post-secondary students, and young professionals. Many of the students also had jobs in addition to attending school. They had lived in Canada anywhere from three to ten years and came from countries in the Middle East, Africa and Asia and spoke several languages other than English. The groups they led were generally conducted in English. Other languages were also used depending on who was present and whether it was helpful to translate ideas presented in English into other languages.

## RESULTS

### Sample and demographic characteristics

Questionnaires were completed at the beginning of the program and near the end or shortly after the program was completed. They were identified by city, group number, date of birth and mother's initials.

In total, 190 participants filled out questionnaires and 39 of these completed both pre- and post-program questionnaires. These 39 participants are the focus of this analysis. Reasons that questionnaires may not have been completed by participants include program leaders not handing out both questionnaires, participants missing the session when the questionnaires were presented, or participants dropping out or joining groups after they had begun. We only collected enough identifiable information to match up some of the pre and post questionnaires and did not have details of all participants in each group. Therefore, we cannot state what percentage of participants completed questionnaires.

The largest number of responses were from Kitchener-Waterloo. The details of the responses by city are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Surveys by city or area

Location	Frequency	Percent
Ottawa	8	20.5
Peterborough	5	12.8
Kitchener-Waterloo	22	56.4
London	4	10.3
Total	39	100.0

Some other demographic details were asked of each participant, including age and the level of schooling. The question about the level of schooling was not specific enough and appeared to provide invalid data. For instance, many participants who defined themselves as students and whose age was appropriate to be in high school checked the initial box that said they had completed high school. For this reason, we do not include the schooling information.

Age was filled out by all 39 of the participants who filled out pre and post questionnaires. Table 3 shows the ages of participants. The average age is 16.15, and the standard deviation is 1.11.

**Table 3: Age of respondents**

Age	Frequency	Percent
14	1	2.6
15	12	30.8
16	11	28.2
17	11	28.2
18	3	7.7
19	1	2.6
Total	39	100.0

**Quantitative analysis**

**Analysis of paired pre and post responses (n=39)**

Table 4 shows the different N values that occur because of sections of the surveys that were not completed by some individuals. Notably, many people did not complete the third section that measured the Decision Balance. This may have occurred because some groups did not have sufficient time to fill out the complete the questionnaire.

**Table 4: Paired samples statistics**

	Pre or Post	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum Score	Maximum Score
Male Role Attitude	Pre	39	19.38	4.74	10	30
	Post	39	23.38	4.17	14	32
Bystander Behavior	Pre	38	31.94	8.08	15	48
	Post	38	26.92	7.87	13	43
Decision Balance	Pre	34	-1.96	4.11	-10	5
	Post	37	-1.83	4.00	-13	5

Table 5 tests the relationship between the mean scores before and after participating in the program. It shows that changes in the mean of the Male Role Attitude and of the Bystander Behavior are statistically significant. There were no statistically significant changes in the Decision Scale.

**Table 5: Paired samples test**

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 Male Role Attitude Scale	-4.00	4.99	.80	-5.62	-2.38	-5.00	38	.000
Pair 2 Bystander Behavior Scale	5.01	8.77	1.44	2.09	7.94	3.48	36	.001
Pair 3 Decision Scale	-.13	4.48	.78	-1.72	1.45	-.17	32	.865

### Correlation between scales

In addition to the t-test to compare the means of the scales based on whether the survey was filled out pre- or post-participation in the program, we tested the correlation between the three scales for all the questionnaires that were filled out (Tables 6 and 7). This test helps us determine if a change in one scale is correlated with a change in another scale when participants are filling out the surveys. Because some of the surveys were incomplete, the number of responses included in these calculations varies according to the scale. We can see this in the Descriptive Statistics table that accompanies the Correlation matrix. The test of significance is measured in only one direction (1-tailed) because we are only interested in a decrease of the first scale or increase of the second and third scales.

In table 7, see significant correlations between the first and second scale and the second and third scale but we see no correlation between the first and third scale. Changes to scores on the Bystander behavior scale are associated with changes to scores on both other scales but changes of scores on the Male Role Attitude are not associated with changes in the Decision Balance score. Of course, correlation is not indicative of causation, but it is a strong indicator that there are statistically significant relationships between the scales.

The test for correlation between the three scales also showed that the Decision Balance scale did not correlate with the Male Role Attitude scale, but there was a significant correlation with the Bystander Behavior scale. This is similar to what Koon (2013) observed in his work using this scale. It may be useful to use another scale or alter the current scale to measure motivation and barriers to intervening in GBV. Given the overall lack of significance of the Decision Balance results, this correlation does not say anything about the changes in attitudes of the participants.

**Table 6:** Means of survey sections filled out

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Male Role Attitude	22.6837	5.04907	229
Bystander Behavior	29.6610	9.40799	223
Decision Balance	-2.4252	4.79638	206

**Table 7:** Correlations of three scales on survey

		Male Role Attitude	Bystander Behavior	Decision Balance
Male Role Attitude	Pearson Correlation	1	-.158*	-.038
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.018	.587
	N	229	223	206
Bystander Behavior	Pearson Correlation	-.158*	1	.436**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.018		.000
	N	223	223	206
Decision Balance	Pearson Correlation	-.038	.436**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.587	.000	
	N	206	206	206

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

## Qualitative analysis

### Participants

Of the thirty-nine questionnaires which had a matching pre- or post- questionnaire, twenty-three included the qualitative questions. The qualitative analysis focused on these twenty-three questionnaires. The comments on the questionnaires showed changes in the participants' male role attitudes, bystander behaviours and decision balance (motivation and barriers to act) that reinforce the findings of the quantitative data analysis.

On the male role attitude scale, the question, "What does it mean to be a man?," was answered by ten participants on the pre- survey and ten on the post, with six participants responding on both the pre- and the post-group surveys. The responses showed more traditional male role attitudes in the pre-group surveys than in the post. For example, one pre-program participant explained that being a man means *"to be more wise than girls;"* his post-program response was *"to respect others the way they respect you,"* representing a meaningful change in perspective. Another participant entered the group without a clear sense of what it means to be a man, saying: *"To 'act' like a man is like a grey area since there is nothing really that defines on how a man should act."* His post-program response gave a powerful and grounded articulation that demonstrated his awareness of the program goals: *"Someone who can be a role model and be themselves even in public."* Overall, there was an increased sense of relationality in the responses from the pre- to the post- surveys. Some pre- surveys addressed the question of what it means to be a man with phrases such as *"to lose your virginity," "just a human," "a grown male," "biologically born with a penis."* Only one post-program survey contained a reference to biological definitions (*"a mature male"*); post-program comments spoke more consistently of interactions with others, with phrases such as *"you have to be nice", "tough, respectful and decent at all times," "role model," "be themselves," and "ability to talk about one's feelings,"* being introduced. Also visible was consistency in the answers of specific participants between the pre- and the post- surveys, with one participant referencing the ability to protect others and several speaking of maturity, in both pre- and post. The most often used phrase referenced respect; a similar number of pre- and post- surveys contained references to respectful engagements with self and others (Pre = 4; Post = 5).

The bystander behaviour scale attracted fewer responses from participants. Participants were asked to identify “other difficult situations” (beyond those offered in the quantitative questions) that they would be willing to get involved in and how they would help. In the pre- and post-group questionnaires, comments identified a similar range of situations involving sexual harassment or abuse, bullying or violence. Differences between the pre- and post- were apparent in the interventions offered; in the pre-surveys three participants offered interventions that involved giving directives: *“If a woman needs my advice... I would gladly help;”* *“I would tell my friend how their relationship is not healthy and how they should rethink their relationship with said person”* and *“I’ll inform them that breaking up that relationship would be the best.”* In the post- surveys, few interventions were offered by participants beyond those presented in the quantitative questions. However, one participant, who suggested in the pre-program survey that they would inform their friend that breaking up the relationship would be best, shifted in the post- survey to say, *“I would offer the person support without overstepping my boundaries. If they don’t want to be getting help, I’ll keep an eye on them and intervene when things get bad.”* This shift indicates significant learning about how to appropriately intervene, with an increased focus on the needs of the survivor and an approach that seeks to increase the choices available to the survivor.

The decision balance scale explored motivations and barriers to intervening and provided the least quantitative evidence of change among the participants of the three scales used. The two qualitative questions in this area first asked participants what other reasons would make them willing to help in difficult situations. Pre-program comments identified motivation coming from seeing a friend changing for the worse, hearing an expression of lack of safety, and seeing no one else responding. One participant said they would help *“because of the person I am... I would be willing to help in any way I can.”* While in the pre- survey, assistance was identified by this participant as helping *“in any way I can,”* at the end of the group he was able to identify a plan of action for helping: *“I’ll express my concern to the person who looks to be in trouble and intervene if necessary.”* The post-program responses offered more personal reasons for intervening: *“I’ve been in trouble before and would like to assist...;”* *“if my loved ones were involved;”* *“if my friend is being overpowered.”* One participant said they would be motivated to *“express their point of view”* indicating a sense of confidence that they would have something helpful to say. These are indications of growth in knowledge and confidence among the participants supporting their motivation to intervene.

The second qualitative question related to the decision balance scale addressed barriers to intervention, asking, “What makes it hard for you to help out in difficult situations?” Pre-program concerns revolved around being “wrong” about what the situation was, making the situation worse, or a person not wanting assistance. Post-program concerns included potentially getting into trouble, noting their own smallness, being conflicted, having judgements, and knowing *“they might be joking.”* This second set of responses was much more specific in identifying potential issues, indicating that more consideration of the particulars of intervention had taken place and could therefore have a plan for mitigation in place. One participant who said in their pre-program response that if the person did not want help, *“all I can do is keep an eye on them to make sure things don’t get worse”* was able to articulate a more detailed intervention plan after the group work: *“...Obviously I will keep an eye on the person and express that I’ll be there to help when they want it. However, [if] I feel like things have gotten worse than when I found it, I will bring it up with that person and intervene before things get worse.”* This response highlights program learning such as consent, but also knowing when it is important to take action and how to do so if there is escalating harm.

The four qualitative questions that were added to the questionnaire at the end of the second year of the project, shed further light on the outcomes experienced by group participants. While greater numbers of responses would give more veracity to the patterns observed, the responses received do support and bolster the quantitative findings, demonstrating that learning was taking place regarding how to see themselves as men, how to intervene in difficult situations, how to identify their own motivations to intervening and being able to articulate and mitigate barriers.

### **Youth Facilitators**

Seven Youth Facilitators participated in two separate focus groups. The facilitators displayed excellent communication skills despite the difficulties of meeting online. They also expressed a strong commitment to the work they were doing and to the young men who attended the program. As one Youth Facilitator said, "we were like brothers". Some of them noted that Youth Facilitators and participants continued to talk after the group meetings were finished. Youth Facilitators who were leading groups when the pandemic began made considerable effort to maintain contact and stay in touch virtually with their groups through alternative means. This happened even though some program staff were not able to participate because of rules and restrictions related to their jobs and electronic communication.

#### *Building trust and participation*

The focus groups first addressed how effective the MANifest Change model was in increasing knowledge and concern among the group participants about violence against women (VAW). We asked focus group members to provide concrete examples about behavioral changes that indicated changes in the participants' attitudes. The principal means of measuring change was by observing participants' commitment to the group and their interactions during group sessions and immediately afterwards. Several of the Youth Facilitators mentioned that establishing trust and encouraging regular participation were two important components of being able to talk about VAW. Groups generally lasted for twelve weeks, and a couple of the Youth Facilitators mentioned that it took four or five weeks before participants developed familiarity with each other and commitment to the group work. One Youth Facilitator noted that when "they were more committed to the program, they were more open to the discussion."

Building this trust may be linked to the willingness of participants to share their own experiences with the behaviors and attitudes brought up by the Youth Facilitators. Youth Facilitators noted that conversations about gendered behavior often focused on family and friends. One instance of this was when they challenged the group participants to think about the difference between how they would treat their moms versus how they thought other women should be treated. Another example addressed questions and stories about how their sisters were treated.

Some of the Youth Facilitators had the opportunity to observe these changes outside the group meetings in school or during other activities and found that their behaviors outside of the group work changed in similar ways to their behaviors in the group. "*There was less name-calling*" one of them noted. Several Youth Facilitators observed participants putting the idea of consent into practice within their groups by actions such as asking permission to shake hands or to ask personal questions of each other. Another Youth Facilitator noticed that participants gave each other more space to speak as the sessions continued and several mentioned that they observed many of the participants showing more respect in general for other participants, facilitators, and adult allies.



### *Leadership skills*

The second part of the interview guide asked about leadership skills among the Youth Facilitators and the participants. One of the Youth Facilitators narrated an event he observed outside of group meetings between a teacher and a participant when the teacher took away the participant's phone because of some inappropriate classroom behavior. Another participant stepped in to mediate the situation thereby stepping into a leadership role to de-escalate the tension between teacher and student.

Another Youth Facilitator pointed out that many of the participants may have already been considered leaders by members of their social groups or communities. "They were already in the light", as one facilitator stated. This may mean that the actual function of the group work is to help *shape* leadership skills that already exist rather than *create* new leaders. Another Youth Facilitator described how one participant brought friends to the program who already viewed him as a leader. The Youth Facilitator viewed this person as a new potential facilitator for future groups because of his ability to attract people to the program.

### *Adult allies*

The third set of questions was about the role of program staff (adult allies) in the project. Youth Facilitators did not report any negative experiences about their collaboration with adult allies, although they did talk about some of the limitations of these relationships. For instance, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March 2020, their ability to remain connected to adult allies was restricted by professional regulations such as restrictions for staff on handing out personal contact information. There were other instances where the role of the adult allies required more focus on the regulations of the schools, community centres or other institutions to which the allies were affiliated instead of being focused on the purpose of the groups. The Youth Facilitators seemed to understand why these limitations existed and generally appreciated the work that was done to help their groups. Direct participation by adult allies in group meetings was also appreciated and the Youth Facilitators particularly noted the usefulness of adult allies in bringing experience and information to the group that might not otherwise be available to the participants.

### *Other issues*

As a final question for both sessions, Youth Facilitators were asked if there was anything they wished to add. Three interesting issues were raised: the role of race, culture and language, input from women, and the use of humour.

### *Race, culture, and language*

Cultural and racial issues came up repeatedly and appeared to be one of the most common items that Youth Facilitators felt could use more attention even before the groups first met. "We need to be more mindful of the background of the group members; we have people from many different cultural backgrounds" said one Youth Facilitator. Another facilitator noted that this was important because "most of the time it was cultural differences that came up" in the discussions about behavior that was acceptable or not. One Youth Facilitator who was working primarily with Arabic speakers noted that newcomers to Canada face prejudice that is "similar to racism with Black people". The same facilitator noted that this prejudice was brought up because it was also distinctly gendered in a way that affected their relationships with the women in their families and how they had to confront GBV in their community. One Youth Facilitator said that he often used family relationships as an example of how women should be treated with respect. Then another facilitator pointed out that relationships within their family were often complicated by external racism and the feeling that boys and men had to protect women in their family. There was a tension between the desire to adopt a more egalitarian practice of

masculinity and the wish to protect women and girls closer to them who may be subject to both racist and sexist abuse. This was particularly acute when it involved women and girls in their family circles who may have different expectations of the roles that men and boys should practice. This means that lessons learned within the family do not necessarily translate well into other relationships because the gendered culture and expectations may be different within the family than within the broader community.

The Youth Facilitators in both focus groups reported that racism was often brought up early in the group work and was an important part of how participants located their ideas about masculinities and appropriate behaviors. Many of the Youth Facilitators felt that they were *not* well equipped to deal with the complex interactions of racism and masculinities. One facilitator did tell us that he felt that the 'privilege line' exercise was useful in tackling race and gender together. This was an exercise where the participants lined up and then stepped forward or backwards as they responded yes or no to questions about challenges or privileges that they experienced in their lives. Another noted that it could be helpful to have some materials translated to better communicate some of the complex ideas they were trying to discuss. Some of them were able to translate for individuals in their groups but one reported that he had people speaking three different languages in one of his groups and it was sometimes difficult to express ideas about gender that were not based in the home cultures of the participants. The Youth Facilitators did express appreciation of having diverse people in the programs but that this also required more time to translate ideas and uncover understandings of gender that were not expressed explicitly. The facilitators talked about the challenges of understanding the different lessons learned about gender as children as well as the value of being able to bring these diverse home-based understandings to the group. Culturally specific ways of presenting material would help make the content more relevant and effective for the participants. One Youth Facilitator stated that he was "two weeks old in Canada when [he] first attended" a MANifest Change facilitator training and remembers struggling to figure out how privilege worked in his new Canadian community rather than "back home" because of cultural differences. He did not expand a great deal on this but indicated that as a man he had privilege in both places but that the specifics of that privilege differed according to place and culture.

#### *Desire for input from women and girls*

Several Youth Facilitators expressed an interest in having more information about how girls and women experience the gender differences that were brought up in group discussions. One facilitator made the point that they "could not speak for another gender" and another noted that some women had expressed interest in participating in a group. However, he also identified that there was a great deal of value in creating a safe space for men to talk about their ideas and experiences. Another was concerned that the participants might change their behavior if women were present. The Youth Facilitators spoke about the importance for the participants of understanding how their behaviors and attitudes affected the women in their lives including their sisters, mothers, and female friends.

The Youth Facilitators seemed to agree that having adult women allies present some of the time was very helpful and provided a "bridge" to women's experience of the issues being discussed. One of them noted that this seemed particularly useful closer to the end of a group when the participants had already done some work to develop empathy and positive behaviors within the group.

#### *Role of humour*

Another point that came up between two Youth Facilitators was the role of humour as an aid to understanding and remembering ideas. A particular video about consent was perceived as quite funny and therefore very effective in getting the attention of participants. A Youth Facilitator also noted that

humour could be used as a barrier to full participation in a group as he remembered one person who began the program making fun of many things but gradually opened up to more serious conversations. The Youth Facilitator found this behaviour a little difficult to deal with because some of the jokes were not in a language that was common to everybody there but also saw some potential value in exploring how humour could be used in the group work.

The Youth Facilitators and participants accepted the central aim of the program as building opposition to violence against women and mixed this with the specific context of their lives. One facilitator had joined the program as a participant and then become a Youth Facilitator at the same time as he graduated from high school. He described the program as particularly useful for boys and young men who may be experiencing many transitions in their lives including changes involving age, immigration, family, and education. The Youth Facilitators had clearly put a great deal of thought and effort into their work and seemed to welcome the possibility of learning more about healthy relationships in all aspects of their lives.

## **DISCUSSION**

This research project found that the MANifest Change model was effective in encouraging men to develop more egalitarian gender role attitudes and empowered men to want to act against GBV. The qualitative analysis supports and bolsters the quantitative findings showing movement towards the desired goal of encouraging young men to change their thinking and willingness to combat GBV.

### **Male Role Attitudes**

A key component of the MANifest Change model is to challenge and address problematic male gender norms that may either be enabling or increasing tolerance of GBV. These norms are socially constructed and can therefore be altered through changes in attitudes and behaviours (Pleck et al., 1993, p. 12). Gender equality is a combination of empowerment for girls and women and creating healthier norms for men and boys that can support empowerment and achieve gender equality.

The Young Men Leading Change project was successful in reducing harmful traditional gender norms and improving egalitarian views on gender roles among racialized and immigrant young men. This was indicated by increases in the average score on the Male Role Attitudes scale. This increase was statistically significant among the full group of respondents as well as the group who filled out surveys both before and after participating in the group work. This statistic is important because it is a measure of the effect of the group work on individual attitudes to male role norms. The responses to the open-ended question regarding what it means to be a man also showed an increase in clarity among participants about what it means to them to be a man. They moved away from comparisons of biological difference (and superiority) to women and girls toward relational goals. The Youth Facilitators reported seeing more respect toward others from the program participants as they moved through the group work.

### **Bystander Behaviour: Risky Situations**

Bystander interventions and willingness to help when witnessing GBV is a critical component of taking action. While bystander intervention is one way of putting ideas about gender equality into action, it is also fraught with challenges.

The YMLC project encouraged young men to consider a range of harmful behaviours identified as some of the most common situations for GBV, and the survey measured their willingness to intervene through a series of questions that proposed several types of intervention.

The quantitative results showed an increase in willingness to intervene in a variety of situations. This was statistically significant for both the full set of participants and those who filled out questionnaires both before and after participating in the programs. In their responses to the open-ended question of what other situations they would be willing to help in and what they might do, participants showed an increased knowledge of how to respond in respectful, and safe ways, valuing both consent and understanding of at what point they might need to act because of harm. They were able to articulate several steps they would take in an intervention, making it safer and easier for them to act. The Youth Facilitators observed increased leadership skills among the participants and witnessed participants putting these skills into action by intervening in difficult situations both within and outside the program.

### **Decision Balance of Motivation and Concerns**

Intervention in situations that could lead to GBV could have numerous social consequences for the intervenor, and the third scale measures their motivations and concerns about intervention. A lower score on the scale indicates higher motivation and lower barriers to help in situations of GBV.

The results of this scale were not statistically significant for the full group or the subset that filled out both pre- and post-surveys. There were slight changes to the mean scores, but they do not necessarily represent any change in thinking by participants. It is also possible that this portion of the questionnaire did not have questions that adequately reflected the lived experiences of the participants. The adjacent qualitative questions seemed to elicit more information on how their thoughts had shifted during the program.

The qualitative data shows that participants had put some thought into motivations and barriers that may not have been reflected in their quantitative responses. Participants articulated more personal motivations at the end of the group than when entering. Participants were also able to discuss barriers and approaches to mitigating these barriers, in that they identified steps they could take that increased their safety and likely effectiveness. The qualitative responses indicate that the program was successful in getting them to think about these things but the gap between the quantitative and the qualitative results suggest there may be a problem with how the survey questions are worded or how the scale is constructed. This may also be related to some of the complexity of cultural differences that Youth Facilitators described and that were not fully accounted for when the questions for this scale were composed.

## **LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Analyzing these surveys was complex because of the many different sites and groups. The survey covered groups in four different cities and an online group. There were twenty-eight separate groups that generally met for 12 weeks, but some also engaged in intense multi-day workshops. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted some groups and cancelled others. The YMLC project was hosted by numerous organizations, involved many different Youth Facilitators, and engaged in different community projects and activities.

The results of this complexity led to some inconsistencies in data collection. Responses were collected both on paper and online, and the questionnaires were altered at the end of year two to include qualitative questions. There were also gaps in the survey collection, which is why there are so few cases (n=39) where we have both pre- and post-surveys filled out by the same participant. The method used for the quantitative portion of the project was a quasi-experimental pre/post design without randomization. However, the absence of control groups and randomization means that the results cannot be generalized even to the participants in the program. We also cannot imply any causality based on the quantitative results nor can we know how long any study effects lasted.

The use of electronic survey technology was adopted intermittently throughout the project, and this helped increase response rates, but there are also some benefits to paper surveys. In particular, we noted that some of the paper surveys contained additional notes and markings, which appeared to be aids that participants added themselves in order to help understand and fill out the survey. It is possible that electronic surveys could be altered to make them more accessible. Some of the paper surveys had Arabic notes added to them to help Arabic-speaking participants, for instance, and this could also be done electronically. Graphics could also be added to help make the survey questions more accessible.

The qualitative questions that were included in some of the surveys are both a valuable source of information on their own and could help improve the quantitative component of the survey. An in-depth analysis of those responses revealed concerns identified by participants that were not included in the quantitative survey questions, which will support future adaptations of the MANifest Change model.

## **CONCLUSION**

Ongoing social media attention has provoked conversation about what can be done to prevent GBV. While often overlooked, this study showed that men and boys can play a critical role in the prevention of GBV, as the Young Men Leading Change project used local expertise in adapting the MANifest Change model to engage young immigrant and racialized men as allies in reducing and preventing GBV.

This evaluation of the Young Men Leading Change project indicated that the adapted model was successful in achieving the goals of improving healthy gender norms among young men in a measurable way. It also encouraged young men to become more willing to act to reduce the burden of GBV on women and girls, gender-diverse people, and other boys and men in their lives. Participants left the program with a deeper understanding of how to identify GBV, the societal and personal impacts of GBV, and how to act safely to prevent it. Given these promising results, further work to engage men and boys as allies should be implemented so that MANifest Change model can be further evaluated with this population in greater sample sizes.

In the hope of the Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women that as more programs using the model are implemented in Ontario, societal norms attached to GBV can be shifted, reducing barriers to help in these situations and ultimately creating a safer community for all.

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## **APPENDIX A**

Below is the paper-based pre-intervention survey. The post-intervention survey is identical except it does not include the questions regarding age, education, and occupation.

### **Pre-Program Questionnaire for Young Men Leading Change**

#### **About the survey**

I am invited to participate in the Young Men Leading Change study led by the Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women (OCTEVAW). The purpose of this study is to learn more about how to involve men and boys in preventing gender-based violence.

My participation in this study will be to fill out the same questionnaire twice – before and after the program. The task will take about 15 minutes each time.

The questionnaire asks about how I would react to difficult situations, so it may remind me of times I have witnessed or experienced harassment, racism, or violence. I do not have to share these experiences with the research team in order to answer the questionnaire. The group facilitators are available if I would like to talk to someone about these kinds of experiences, or they can help me find other support.

#### **Voluntary participation**

My participation in this study is completely voluntary. By handing in a completed questionnaire to the research team I consent to participate. If I do not wish to participate, I can simply return a blank questionnaire to the research team. I am free to stop at any time. I may refuse to answer questions without any negative consequences whatsoever. If I choose to end my participation in this study, all information I have provided up until that point will be eliminated. I have up until three weeks after the program ends to change my mind (once the results of the survey are processed my responses can't be removed).

#### **Confidentiality**

My participation in the study is anonymous. The research team will never match my name to the answers I provide. The information I provide will remain strictly confidential in a locked office and a password-protected computer. The individual data will be destroyed one year after the end of the project. The aggregate data will remain available to the researchers for future research uses.

#### **How will the results be shared?**

By comparing the pre- and post-program questionnaires, the research team can measure the effectiveness of the program in supporting young men to prevent gender-based violence. This information is shared with schools and community groups, the media, funding agencies, and through academic journals. The research team will share the results with me if I wish.

#### **Questions?**

If I have questions or concerns, I can contact either the project lead or the Research Ethics Board:  
Dr. Deborah Conners, Research Project Lead, Department of Sociology and Anthropology  
Carleton University, 613-520-2600 x5064 or [deborah.conners@carleton.ca](mailto:deborah.conners@carleton.ca), or  
Dr. Bernadette Campbell, Chair, Research Ethics Board, Carleton University,  
613-520-2517 or [ethics@carleton.ca](mailto:ethics@carleton.ca)

## Participation ID

In order to match the “before” and “after” questionnaires without using your name, please provide:

**Your date of birth:**       $\frac{\quad}{\text{DD}} / \frac{\quad}{\text{MM}}$

**Your mother’s initials:** \_\_\_\_\_ Example: Sara Hassan = “SH”

### A. Demographic Information

**First, we would like to know a little bit about you. Please do not include your name in any of your responses.**

What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_

Circle the highest level of education you have completed:

*High School*

*College / CEGEP  
diploma*

*Undergraduate  
degree*

*Graduate degree*

What is your primary occupation or job?

(Example: student, office worker, sales, construction, unemployed) -

\_\_\_\_\_

### B. How should men act?

We all have an idea of how men should behave. We'd like to know more about your views about what it is to be a man and how men should act.

Please answer the following statements on a scale from 1 to 5.

1	2	3	4	5
I totally disagree				I totally agree

1. It is essential for a guy to get respect from others.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
2. A man always deserves the respect of his girlfriend.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
3. I admire a guy who is sure of himself.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
4. A guy loses respect if he talks about his problems.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
5. A young man should be physically tough, even if he's not big.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
6. It bothers me when a guy acts like a girl.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
7. I don't think a husband should have to do housework.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
8. Men are always ready for sex.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5

In your opinion, what does it mean to be a man?

### C. Helping in difficult situations

Sometimes people are willing to get involved in difficult situations and sometimes people are not willing. We'd like to know about situations in which you would be willing to help.

Please answer the following statements on a scale from 1 to 5.

1	2	3	4	5
I would NOT react that way				I WOULD react that way

9. I weigh the pros and cons of different ways I might help if I see harassment or violence.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
10. I express concern to a friend if I see her partner acting in jealous ways and trying to control her.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
11. If a female acquaintance has had too much to drink, I ask her if she needs to be walked home from the party.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
12. When I hear sexist jokes I let people know I don't agree.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
13. I refuse to remain silent about instances of sexual violence I may know about.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
14. If a female friend is being yelled at or shoved by their partner, I get between the two of them.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
15. If a female friend is being yelled at or shoved by their partner, I ask if she needs help.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
16. I express disagreement with a friend who says forcing a woman to have sex is okay.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
17. If I saw a friend taking an intoxicated woman back to his room I would say something to him.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
18. I would go with a friend to talk with someone (e.g. police, counselor, crisis center, resident advisor) about an unwanted sexual experience.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5
19. I would ask for the help of others if someone takes an intoxicated woman upstairs at a party.  
1                      2                      3                      4                      5

1	2	3	4	5
I would NOT react that way				I WOULD react that way

20. If I heard a stranger insulting his partner I would get help from others.  
                   1                                  2                                  3                                  4                                  5

21. I would call 911 if an acquaintance needs help because someone is hurting her sexually or physically.  
                   1                                  2                                  3                                  4                                  5

Describe some other difficult situations you would be willing to get involved in. How would you help?

**D. Motivations and barriers**

Getting involved in difficult situations can be stressful. We’d like to know more about your motivations to get involved, or not, in difficult situations.

Please answer the following statements on a scale from 1 to 5.

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all important to me				Very important to me

22. If I get involved, I can prevent someone from being hurt.  
                   1                                  2                                  3                                  4                                  5

23. Everyone has a role to play in keeping others safe.  
                   1                                  2                                  3                                  4                                  5

24. Friends will look up to me and admire me if I get involved.  
                   1                                  2                                  3                                  4                                  5

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all important to me				Very important to me

25. I will feel like a leader in my community if I get involved.

- |   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 26. I like thinking of myself as someone who helps others when I can.                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 27. Getting involved would make my friends angry with me.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 28. Getting involved might cost me friendships.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 29. I could get physically hurt by getting involved.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 30. I could make the wrong decision and get involved when nothing was wrong and feel embarrassed. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 31. People might think I'm too sensitive and am overreacting to the situation.                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 32. I could get in trouble by making the wrong decision about how to get involved.                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

**What are some other reasons you would be willing to help out in difficult situations?**

**What makes it hard for you to help out in difficult situations?**

**Thank you for taking the time to answer the questionnaire!**