



RESEARCH SNAPSHOT

Friendship quality and ethnocultural
boys: An exploratory evaluation
of the WiseGuyz Program.

Financial contribution from



Public Health
Agency of Canada

Agence de la santé
publique du Canada

WISEGUYZ



Centre
for Sexuality



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The WiseGuyz program provided a safe space for ethnocultural boys to explore and dismantle male gender role norms. As a result, the boys were more open to sharing their emotions/feelings which resulted in higher quality friendships.

WHAT IS THE RESEARCH ABOUT?

Promoting healthy relationships is important for positive mental health outcomes in youth (i.e., friendship quality). Research has shown that gender differences in relationships exist and that as boys move into late adolescence, there is an increasing expectation to conform to stereotypical masculinity. This impacts the number of friends they have and the quality of those relationships. Next, research has also shown that ethnocultural boys are more likely to promote stereotypical masculinity norms and as a result, engage in less emotionally expressive male relationships. Since friendships are a critical component of positive mental well-being for youth, it is important to consider how gender, race and ethnicity intersect to promote healthy relationships for boys.

The Center for Sexuality developed and implemented a gender-transformative healthy relationship program for Grade 9 boys called WiseGuyz. The program aims to improve mental health and reduce male-perpetrated violence by dismantling the stereotypical gender role expectations for adolescent boys.

This study aims to explore the association between participation in the WiseGuyz Program and friendship quality for ethnocultural boys.

WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS DO?

The researchers recruited Grade nine guys (n=278) from nine schools in two divisions that offered the WiseGuyz Program during the 2016-17 and/or 2017-18 academic year. Participants completed an online survey before starting the program in October/ November and then again after the program in May of the given academic year.

The two surveys assessed key program outcomes. This study only reported on data pertaining to male role norm adherence and friendship quality. The researchers explored the data using descriptive, bivariate and multivariate statistical analysis.

WHAT DID THE RESEARCHERS FIND?

The researchers found that those who identified as being an ethnocultural boy were more likely to adhere to the male role norms when compared to white boys. Specifically, they believed that guys should be tough and avoid acting feminine. After completing the WiseGuyz program the ethnocultural boys reported that they were more open to sharing their emotions/feelings and reported having higher quality friendships.

HOW CAN YOU USE THIS RESEARCH?

This study shows how deconstructing male gender role norms can improve mental wellbeing for ethnocultural boys. It shows how offering Tier 1 mental health programs such as the WiseGuyz Program can provide ethnocultural boys with protective effects that promote positive outcomes.

Keywords:

equity, ethnocultural youth, gender-transformative, healthy relationships, intersectionality, school mental health

ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

Friendship quality and ethnocultural boys:
An exploratory evaluation of the WiseGuyz Program
(squarespace.com)

ABOUT THIS SUMMARY

This summary was prepared by Keri Rempel, a research assistant for the HOPE Lab at the University of Calgary. The HOPELab collaborates with a number of community and research partners with the goal of building healthy relationships as a foundation for child and adolescent well-being.

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