



Becoming Something Other Than *“Boys Will Be Boys”*

**WiseGuyz Research Report #2
Calgary Sexual Health Centre**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS	6
QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH RESULTS	6
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH RESULTS	9
INTRODUCTION	11
WHAT IS WISEGUYZ?	11
WHO ARE THE BOYS OF WISEGUYZ?	12
DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY	12
DISCUSSION OF DEMOGRAPHIC DATA	14
STATISTICAL CHANGES	15
QUANTITATIVE METHOD	15
PROCEDURE FOR DATA ANALYSIS AND STATISTICS	15
A PREAMBLE TO MALE NORMS	16
BACKGROUND OF THE MASCULINITY SURVEY	18
RESULTS OF MASCULINITY SURVEY	19
DISCUSSION OF AVOIDANCE OF FEMININITY	20
DISCUSSION OF RESTRICTIVE EMOTIONALITY	21
DISCUSSION OF SELF-RELIANCE	23
DISCUSSION OF AGGRESSION	24
DISCUSSION OF ACHIEVEMENT AND STATUS	25
RESULTS OF HOMOPHOBIA SURVEY	25
RESULTS OF SEXUAL HEALTH SURVEY	27
SEXUAL HEALTH CARE	29
SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS	29
SEXUAL EQUALITY/DIVERSITY	30
ABSTINENCE	31
SAFER SEX	32
SEXUAL ASSAULT	34
LEARNING FROM WISEGUYZ ALUMNI	35
RELATIONSHIPS	36
SEXUAL HEALTH	36
SEXUAL ACTIVITY AND CONDOM USE	37
MASCULINITY	38
NARRATIVE CHANGES	39
A SAFE SPACE FOR BOYS	39
UNPACKING MASCULINE IDEOLOGIES	42
SEEING THE WORLD DIFFERENTLY	44
MORE THAN A WISEGUYZ FACILITATOR	46

OVERALL RESEARCH LEARNINGS	48
WISEGUYZ DEVELOPS HEALTHY MASCULINITIES FOR ADOLESCENT BOYS	48
UNDERSTANDING THE INTERSECTIONS OF SEXUALITY AND MASCULINITY	50
CHANGING HOMOPHOBIA VIA INCLUSIVE MASCULINITIES	51
DEVELOPING EMOTIONALITY	54
IMPROVING CATEGORY OF SEXUAL ASSAULT WITHIN WISEGUYZ CURRICULUM	55
CONCLUDING ILLUSTRATION OF WISEGUYZ MODEL OF CHANGE	57

***“I feel like everyone who did WiseGuyz has an advantage
on everyone who didn’t.
– WiseGuyz Participant***

Imagine if you will that boys can become something *other* than what has been inscribed for them by conventional masculinity. In his poem, *“The After Hours Crowd”* Patrick Higgins explores the social construction of the “American boy” and the complexity and contradictions that are inherit within masculinity. The boys in his poem try to reconcile with being boys who are *“caught somewhere nomadic in packs”* as they try to make sense of *“smells of musk, fear, Old Spice, Boy Scouts.”* Higgins ends his poem with a plea for something else for the boys: he asks them and us to *“do away with Boys who will be Boys. Let’s become something else.”* WiseGuyz does just this: it supports boys to become something else; something more than prescribed social and gender norms. WiseGuyz provides adolescent boys with a space to come together with other boys and share experiences, curiosities, ideas, and fears as they learn and build renewed and inclusive ways of being boys in the world.

What is WiseGuyz?

WiseGuyz is a participatory school based program that is offered by Calgary Sexual Health Centre. The program began in 2010 and was offered in two junior high schools in Calgary. Since then, participation has steadily grown as well as demand for the program. WiseGuyz targets grade nine junior high boys aged 14 - 15 years of age. The foundation of the program is an integrated curriculum that is comprised of four sequential core modules that are facilitated over fourteen sessions. A

session is one and half hours in length and takes place during school hours. The program is offered once per week, however with calendar holidays and school events, it takes approximately eight months to facilitate the fourteen sessions. WiseGuyz is implemented over the length of the school year. The sequence of the modules is critical as each module builds into the next: *Module 1: Human Rights; Module 2: Sexual Health; Module 3: Gender; and Module 4: Healthy Relationships.*

Research Methodology and Results

This report represents the culmination of learnings from research conducted within the WiseGuyz program during the 2013 – 2014 year. Mixed methods research was conducted using quantitative and qualitative approaches. This is the first year that validated survey instruments were introduced in the WiseGuyz program. In previous years, the program has relied upon formative outcome surveys and extensive gathering of qualitative data via focus groups and interviews with boys and school administrators involved in WiseGuyz. The qualitative research tradition continued this year with three focus groups held with boys from the 2013/2014 WiseGuyz year. The focus group learnings were complemented with findings from the survey instruments. This research is ethically approved through the Calgary Board of Education.

Quantitative Research Results

Quantitative data was gathered from all 52 boys who participated in the WiseGuyz program from October 2013 to June 2014. Participants completed three validated survey instruments twice throughout the year: once before they started the program and once following its completion.

The surveys included:

- Sexual Health Practices Self-Efficacy Scale (SSES Survey)¹
- Male Role Norms Inventory-Adolescent-revised (Masculinity Survey)²
- Homophobia Survey³

Utilizing validated instruments has been valuable in demonstrating statically significantly improvements for the boys in the areas of masculinity norms, sexual health efficacy, and homophobia.

When comparing the average post-survey score to the average pre-survey score from all participants, there was a *statistically significant*⁴ *improvement* in each of the three surveys. The homophobia survey had the largest improvement with a 27% change from the beginning to the end of WiseGuyz.

“The average post-survey score for male norms improved significantly by 16% from the pre-survey. The average post-survey score also significantly improved in all 5 categories. The average post-survey score improved the least in the area of Achievement/Status (11%) and the greatest in Restrictive Emotionality (20%) and Avoidance of Femininity (20%).” - Prothos Research & Analytics, 2014.

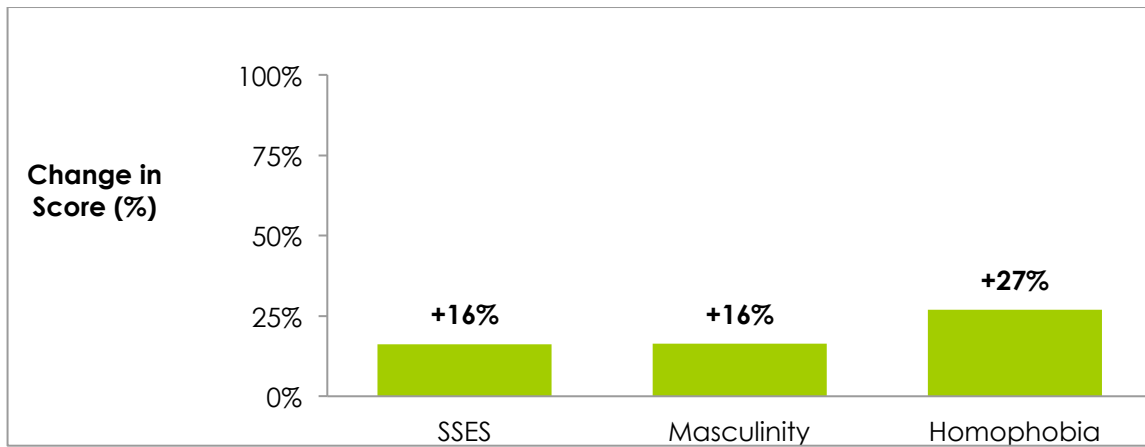
¹ Barthalow Koch, P. et al. (2010). “Sexual Health Practices Self-Efficacy Scale”. In *Handbook of Sexuality-Related Measures*, edited by Terri Fisher et al, p.345 – 347. London: Routledge.

² Levant, R. et al. (2012). Exploratory Factor Analysis and Construct Validity of the Male Role Norms Inventory-Adolescent-revised (MRNI-A-r). *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*.

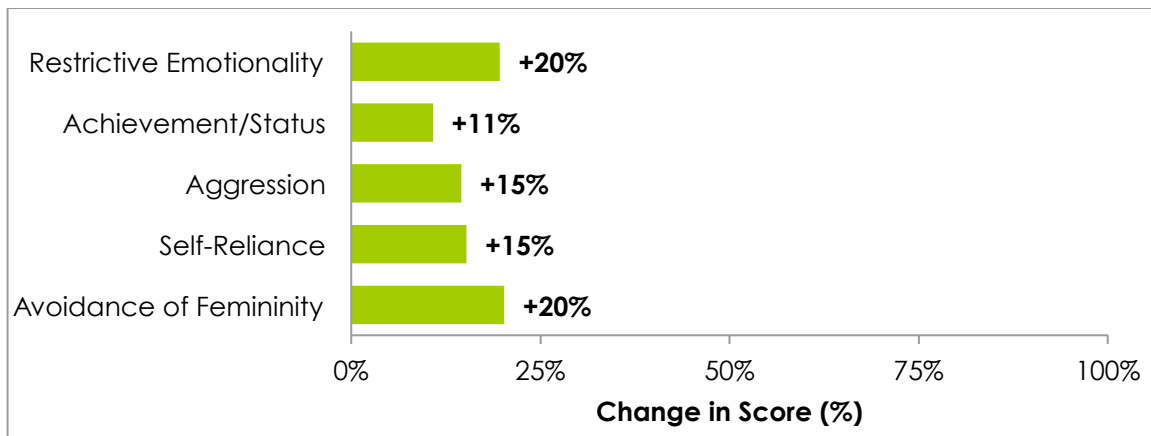
³ Ibid.

⁴ Note: Throughout this report, the term ‘significant’ is only used when statistical significance was present. Statistical significance means the difference is large enough that it was unlikely to have occurred simply by chance.

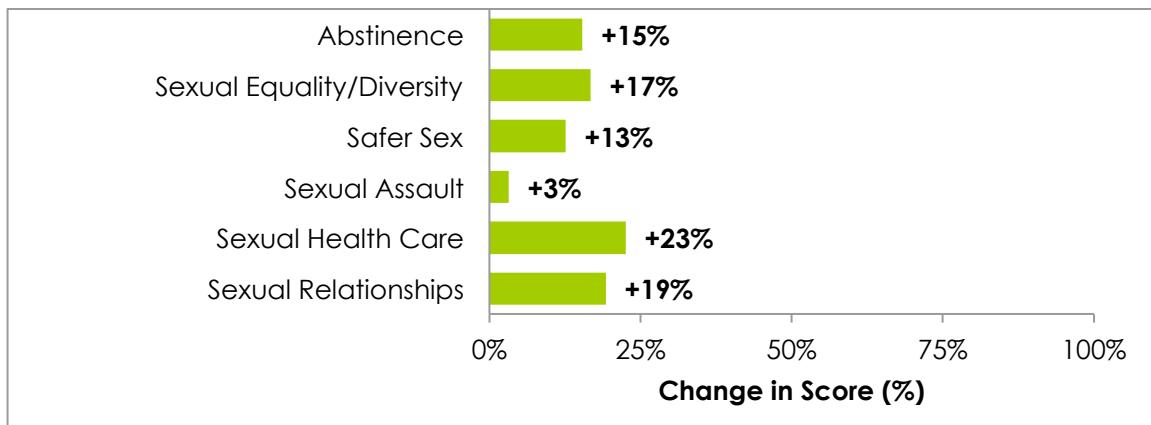
Overall Changes in Each Survey Area



Masculinity Survey Results



SSES Survey Results



Qualitative Research Results

Three focus groups were held with a sampling of boys who participated in the 2013/2014 WiseGuyz program. One focus group was held at the end of each program at the three schools.

The following are the key themes that emerged across the three focus groups:

- Creating A Safe Space for Boys
- Unpacking Masculine Ideologies
- Seeing the World Differently
- More Than a WiseGuyz Facilitator

The overall implications of the research emerged from an analysis of combining the key findings from the quantitative and qualitative research.

The following are the five implications of the research learnings:

- WiseGuyz helps create healthy masculinities for adolescent boys
- The necessity of understanding the intersections of sexuality and masculinity
- Changing homophobia via inclusive masculinities
- The Importance of cultivating emotionality in adolescent boys
- Improving the topic area of sexual assault within the WiseGuyz Curriculum

In Conclusion

The second year of research with the WiseGuyz program has proven very fruitful: we introduced three validated surveys that demonstrate statically significant improvements in the boys who participated in WiseGuyz. We continued to engage in qualitative research for a second year and in

doing so, see the development of consistent research themes. This further validates the centrality of WiseGuyz' efforts to understand masculine ideologies and how these shape boys' perceptions, behaviours and capacity for healthy relationships. WiseGuyz is a "game-changer" for the boys in developing healthy masculinities. With conviction, one of the boys in WiseGuyz declares: *"The things they've taught us in here, outweigh everything we've learned since kindergarten. That's how important the stuff is that they taught us."*

What is WiseGuyz?

WiseGuyz is a participatory school based program for junior high school boys in grade nine. It is guided by an integrated and sequential curriculum that is comprised of four core modules facilitated over fourteen sessions. A session is 1.5 hours long and takes place once per week during school hours. The program occurs over the length of the school year. The sequence of the modules is critical as each module builds into the next: *Module 1: Human Rights; Module 2: Sexual Health; Module 3: Gender; Module 4: Healthy Relationships*. There are currently three WiseGuyz Facilitators and all are male. There is a core facilitator for each program and when possible, an additional facilitator also attends a WiseGuyz sessions to offer additional support.

The WiseGuyz program was piloted in September 2010, and since then, a total of 218 participants have completed WiseGuyz. Since 2010, the program has been implemented in five public junior high schools in Calgary, three of which are currently committed to a long-term relationship with WiseGuyz. In October 2014, WiseGuyz will be expanding to six junior high schools in Calgary. The program participants join voluntarily or are gently encouraged by school administration, a teacher or a parent to join WiseGuyz.

WiseGuyz strategically targets grade nine junior high boys who are between the ages of 13 – 15. These boys are on the cusp of major transitions in their lives, one primarily defined by attending high school the following year. They are at a pivotal and influential development period of progressing in their maturity and curiosity about sexual health and

relationships. Boys in junior high school are defining their identity and perceptions of sexuality, sexual health, masculinity, and relationships.

Who Are the Boys of WiseGuyz?

During 2013 – 2014 year, WiseGuyz was held at three junior highs in Calgary. The total number of participants in the WiseGuyz program is 52. There were two boys who did not continue with WiseGuyz and chose to leave after an initial session. At schools A and B, two sessions were held each week with two different groups of boys, and one session was held at School C.

Year	WiseGuyz School A	WiseGuyz School B	WiseGuyz School C
2010	20	46	
2011 – 2012	17	30	
2012 – 2013	18	29	7 (first year WiseGuyz is offered)
2013 – 2014	23	20	8

Demographic Summary

The following demographic data is collected at the beginning of the WiseGuyz program through an Intake Form. It is intended to give Facilitators and the program evaluator a better understanding of the interests, backgrounds and relationship involvement of the boys in the program. The demographic results highlighted are to gain a better understanding of the: family background of the boys, relationship experiences and sexual health. The Intake Form was reviewed at the end of the 2013/2014 program and improved to gather more relevant and specific background information.

	Total	School A	School B	School C
Number of Participants	52	23	20	9
Average Age (years)	14.5	14.5	14.5	14.4
Ethnic Identity				
African Canadian	2%	0%	5%	0%
Caucasian	74%	82%	60%	88%
Chinese	8%	9%	20%	0%
First Nations	2%	0%	0%	12%
Southeast Asian	4%	9%	0%	0%
Other	9%	0%	15%	0%
Household Make-up				
Dual Parent	65%	62%	65%	75%
Single Parent	29%	29%	30%	25%
No Parent	6%	10%	5%	0%
Family Members in Home				
Mother	83%	74%	90%	89%
Father	67%	65%	70%	67%
Sibling(s)	21%	9%	25%	44%
Extracurricular Activities				
Yes	76%	81%	70%	75%
No	24%	19%	30%	25%
Sexuality				
Heterosexual	86%	95%	80%	75%
Gay or Bisexual	0%	0%	0%	0%
Not Sure	10%	5%	10%	25%
Rather Not Say	4%	0%	10%	0%
Has Begun Dating				
Yes	53%	71%	35%	50%
No	47%	29%	65%	50%
Is Sexually Active				
Yes	6%	5%	5%	12%
No	94%	95%	95%	88%

Discussion of Demographic Data

The majority of boys have a mother within the home, while 67% indicated they have a father within the home. This finding invites further questions such as; does having or not having a father influence a boy wanting to participate in WiseGuyz? Secondly, it is important to recognize that this finding is interpreted within a heterosexual context and some boys may have two mothers/same-sex parents, and in this case, their family structure would not be reflected and may be read as an absence of a father rather than a fulsome presence of two parents. Most of the boys have two parents, and 29% of the boys have a single parent. Of these single parents, most are mothers.

The finding, based on the boys' responses to the sexuality question, is significant because this is the first year that any variance has appeared with indications of "not sure" and "rather not say." We cannot fully say what this may be a result of, however, we could hypothesize that WiseGuyz may be contributing to overall school culture in which boys are feeling *safer* to consider their sexuality as something other than heterosexual.

A very small percentage of the boys in WiseGuyz are sexually active. This result is within the social norms of sexual activity for 14-year-old boys. This means that out of the 52 boys who completed this form, 3 identify as sexually active. Further, we are uncertain as to the frequency or context of the sexual activity. Of the 6% that indicated they are sexually active, 67% indicate that they always use a condom and 33% say sometimes.

Quantitative Method

Quantitative data was gathered from all 52 WiseGuyz participants who participated in the program from October 2013 to June 2014. Participants completed three validated survey instruments twice throughout the year: once before they started the program and once following its completion. The surveys included:

- Sexual Health Practices Self-Efficacy Scale (SSES Survey)⁵
- Male Role Norms Inventory-Adolescent-revised (Masculinity Survey)⁶
- Homophobia Survey⁷

The three surveys are externally validated instruments that measure the participants' attitudes, beliefs and behaviours towards each topic. It is important to note that the SSES survey's question 17 from the Sexual Assault category was not included.

Procedure for Data Analysis and Statistics

A database was developed by Prothos Analytics specifically to house the data generated from the surveys. Prothos Analytics also performed an analysis of the all the data. The data collected from the intake form and surveys was organized and filtered to remove any incomplete surveys. All

⁵ Barthalow Koch, P. et al. (2010). "Sexual Health Practices Self-Efficacy Scale". In *Handbook of Sexuality-Related Measures*, edited by Terri Fisher et al, p.345 – 347. London: Routledge.

⁶ Levant, R. et al. (2012). Exploratory Factor Analysis and Construct Validity of the Male Role Norms Inventory-Adolescent-revised (MRNI-A-r). *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*.

⁷ Ibid.

data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel (version 2010) and IBM SPSS Statistics Software (version 20.0). To determine whether there was a significant difference between pre-survey and post-survey scores, a Paired Samples T-test was used. Statistical significance indicates that the difference was large enough that it was unlikely to have occurred simply by chance. Throughout this report, the term 'significant' is used to indicate the presence of *statistical* significance.

A Preamble to Male Norms

Since the inception of research in the WiseGuyz program in 2012, there is an emergent central focus on the importance of understanding masculine ideologies and how they influence adolescent boys in relation to their sexuality, sexual health, gender equity and relationships. The purpose of wanting to understand is to then support boys in the development of healthy masculinities. With such a strong focus on the adolescent phenomenon of masculinities, we are cautious to not contribute to a narrative of masculinity as 'bad', as it is important to remember that there are characteristics of masculinity that are very valuable. As we discuss masculinities, it is within the context of *how* they become constructed and that WiseGuyz is a process of educating boys to be conscious, critical and self-aware of its affects in their development of identity and relationships.

Throughout this report, we will be utilizing the pluralizing term “masculine ideologies” and masculinities as introduced in the Masculinity Survey:

...masculine ideology refers specifically to internalized beliefs regarding defined standards or norms for males' roles and behaviours (Pleack, 1981, 1995). Through social interactions resulting in reinforcement or punishment, masculinity ideology informs, encourages and constrains boys and men to conform to the

*prevailing male role norms by adopting certain socially sanctioned masculine behaviours and avoiding creating prescribed behaviours.*⁸

In the previous WiseGuyz 2012/2013 research report, we concluded that the term “inclusive masculinities” is important because it denotes the plurality of masculinity, rather than seeing it is a singular construct. In C.J Pascoe’s detailed study about high school boys’ masculinities,⁹ she emphasizes the significance of the “model of multiple masculinities”:

*This model of multiple masculinities has been enormously influential, inspiring countless studies that detail the ways different configurations of masculinity are promoted, challenged, or reinforced in given social situations.*¹⁰

Pascoe reminds us that when we think in pluralities and in diversity that it is critical to be aware of how power plays out among the pluralities; if we miss this, then we are simply left with a “list of differences.”¹¹ What is refreshing about the continued use of pluralizing masculinity is that we begin to move away from only focusing on what boys “do” and moving to focus on identifying how boys’ behaviours, practices and discourses constitute masculinity. This is also helpful in moving beyond the common and sometimes overly used metaphor of the “man-box.” Understanding how masculine ideologies are contained is important, however even more important is understanding how the box is constructed and understanding that the box is fluid. In order for the boys in WiseGuyz to explore this, it is essential for them to feel safe and comfortable in

⁸ Levnat, R.F., Rogers, B.K., Cruickshank, B., Rankin, T.J., Kurtz, B. A., Rummell, C.M., Williams, C. M., & Colbow, A. J. (2012, August 6). Exploratory Factor Analysis and Construct Validity of the Male Role Norms Inventory-Adolescent-revised (MRNI-A-r). *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1037/a0029102.

⁹ Pascoe, C.J. (2013). *Dude, You’re a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School*. Berkley: University of California Press.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid. p. 9

becoming something other than the 'boy-box' or simply, "boys will be boys."

Background of the Masculinity Survey

The *Male Role Norms Inventory-Adolescent-revised MRNI-A-r* (hereinafter referred to as the Masculinity Survey) is an instrument developed by Dr. Ron Levant¹² who is an active researcher and practitioner in the psychology of men and masculinity. This instrument was selected as a result of the WiseGuyz developmental research conducted in 2012 – 2013, which pointed to the fundamentality of adolescent boys unpacking the construction of masculinity ideologies in order to better understand sexuality, sexual health, gender equity and health relationships. Through the 2012/2013 research we learned:

The boys in WiseGuyz demonstrate an awareness of the cultural constructions of masculinity and thereby develop the consciousness required to critically examine the constructions. WiseGuyz facilitates this by establishing a safe space for the boys to be free to examine and challenge their own beliefs. Undoing and interrupting the pressure to be extreme forms of masculinity is a significant part of the work of WiseGuyz. WiseGuyz begins to unravel the heteronormative values and behaviours of the boys that are required to maintain their masculinity.¹³

Permission was obtained from Dr. Ron Levant to use the validated survey in WiseGuyz. There are few validated tools that measure adolescent changes in male norms. We see the ongoing collection of data through the masculinity survey as an effective way to demonstrate program

¹² Permission was obtained to use the instrument from Dr. Ron Levant.
<http://www.drondalevant.com/mrni.html>

¹³ Hurlock, D. (2013). *Re-imagined Masculinities: Unfolding the Meaning and Affect of the WiseGuyz Program*. Calgary: Calgary Sexual Health Centre.

impact, but also to contribute to the growing discussion of masculinity studies in the area of adolescence.

The masculinity survey entails five sub-scales that are “designed to measure individuals’ behaviour about appropriate behaviour for adolescence boys.”¹⁴. The masculinity survey is a 41-item inventory using a 7-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), with the following five subscales:

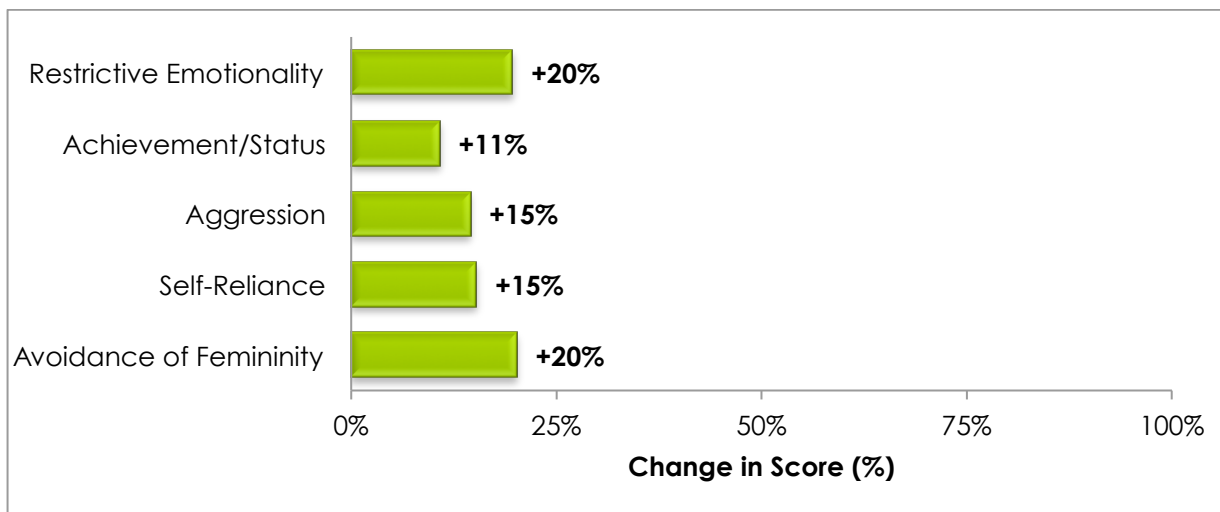
1. Avoidance of Femininity
2. Self-Reliance
3. Aggression
4. Achievement/Status
5. Restrictive emotionality

Participants of WiseGuyz indicate the extent of their agreement or disagreement with statements concerning beliefs about how boys ought to behave. The higher scores (from 1 to 7) correspond to more agreement with traditional and limited views of masculinity ideologies.

Results of Masculinity Survey

“The average post-survey score for male norms improved significantly by 16% from the pre-survey. The average post-survey score also significantly improved in all 5 categories. The average post-survey score improved the least in the area of Achievement/Status (11%) and the greatest in Restrictive Emotionality (20%) and Avoidance of Femininity (20%).” - Prothos Research & Analytics, 2014.

¹⁴ Levant, R.F., Rogers, B.K., Cruickshank, B., Rankin, T.J., Kurtz, B. A., Rummell, C.M., Williams, C. M., & Colbow, A. J. (2012, August 6). Exploratory Factor Analysis and Construct Validity of the Male Role Norms Inventory-Adolescent-revised (MRNI-A-r). *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1037/a0029102.



Discussion of Avoidance of Femininity

Men must avoid behaving in any manner that can be perceived as feminine; they must be the most important individuals in their domain; they must be independent, controlled, and unemotional; and they must be aggressive risk-takers (Crooks and Goodall, et al, 2007).

There was a 20% improvement in the avoidance of femininity category for the WiseGuyz participants.

There was a scoring change from 3.6 to 3.0 in the category of avoidance of femininity. This was the biggest improvement among the five subscales (alongside restrictive emotionality which has the same scoring change). This is significant because it tells us that the boys became more comfortable with behaviours that would typically be perceived as feminine. This is indicative that the boys are not agreeing with traditional gender traits and norms for boys and girls. Examples of statements within this subscale include "guys should play with trucks rather than dolls," "guys shouldn't carry purses" and "a boys should prefer football to sewing." For the post-

score there was a reduction of 3.6 to 3.0, which indicates a statistically significant change for the boys in that *they agree less with the need to avoid feminine behaviours in order to express their masculinity*. This tells us that the boys are increasingly supportive of what would be considered more feminine expressions of gender as part of masculinity.

The subscale of avoidance of femininity correlates with the sub-scale of restrictive emotionality and the findings from the homophobia survey. These intersections are critical to fully understanding the phenomenon of masculinity. In his book *Guyland*, Michael Kimmel purports that homophobia is not a fear of being gay or gay people, rather it is a fear for the boys that they will be “unmasked” by other boys, that other boys will “emasculate” them. In this way, boys are a “gender police” to each other, policing each other subtly if not unconsciously for failures in their masculinity.¹⁵ This highlights how deeply entwined the intersections of sexuality and masculinity are for adolescent boys.

Discussion of Restrictive Emotionality

“Stereotypical notions of masculine toughness deny a boy his emotions and rob him of the chance to develop the full range of emotional resources. We call this process, in which a boy is steered away from his inner world, the emotional miseducation of boys” (Kindlon and Thompson, 2000).

There was a 20% improvement in restrictive emotionality for the WiseGuyz participants.

There was a scoring change from 3.4 to 2.8 in restrictive emotionality. This score also represented the biggest change in scoring among the five subscales as it

¹⁵ Kimmel, M. (2008). *Guyland: The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men*. New York: Harper Collins Publisher.

scored the same as avoidance of femininity (The subscale of restrictive emotionality had the largest improvement along side avoidance of femininity: both of these subscales showed a 20% improvement). This result is significant and tells us that there is a definitive improvement in the boys agreeing that emotion should *not be* restricted, or limited in order to express their masculinities.

Dan Kindlon and Michael Thompson authored the pivotal book, *Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys*. The book is based on insights garnered after several years of therapy with adolescent boys. They realized that masculine ideologies that center on toughness, aggression, and hyper-masculine behaviour, rob boys of their emotions and the chance to develop a rich inner life and emotional resources. Through the statistically significant improvement in emotionality we determined that WiseGuyz helps boys to be re-educated in emotionality within the context of their masculinities. This is essentially the practice of undoing what has been coined as the “*emotional miseducation of boys*.”¹⁶

This survey finding correlates with the WiseGuyz research results from 2012 /2103, which indicated how influential WiseGuyz is in developing the boys' emotional competencies. It is critical to unpack the construction of 'toughness' for boys because the implications of not doing so can be vast, including being “ill-prepared” for being emotionally healthy adults¹⁷ and being denied a rich internal life. Further, the fear of vulnerability and the pressure to be stereotypically masculine may become channeled into aggression and possibly violence. Having the boys understand and learn to deconstruct the limited nature of emotionality as attached to male

¹⁶ Kindlon, D and Thompson, M. (2000). *Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys*. p.3. New York: Ballantine Books.

¹⁷ *ibid*

norms is critical to the boys' inner well being and to them having healthy relationships.

Discussion of Self-Reliance

There was a 15% improvement in the category of self-reliance from the beginning to the end of the program.

There was a scoring change of 3.3 to 2.9 in the subscale of self-reliance. This result correlates with restrictive emotionality as the concept of self-reliance can also mean an invulnerable stoicism. An example of some of the survey statements include "a guy who can't make up his mind will not be respected" or that "it is not okay to ask for help." There is a central connection between self-reliance as an expression of masculine ideology and being fiercely independent and invulnerable. Further, restrictive emotionality deprives boys of the opportunity for meaningful connections with other boys.

It is important to consider that men do not solely construct ideologies of masculinity. The concept of self-reliance is an important one for the boys to explore because of the social shifts that have occurred through gender equality, which has created less of a need for men to be 'protector and provider.' Although many of the boys inherit this narrative of requiring this to be masculine, it may not be fitting with the reality of the experience, which can lead to confusion for them. As Michael Kimmel reminds us in *Guyland*:

*men who once found meaning and social value in their work are increasingly pushed into lower-wage service occupations; as the economy has shifted from a culture of production to a culture of consumption, men experience their masculinity as less as providers and protectors, and more as consumers, as ornaments.*¹⁸

¹⁸ Kimmel, M. (2008). *Guyland: The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men*. p.17. New York: HarperCollins Publisher.

Discussion of Aggression

There was a 15% improvement in the category of aggression from the beginning to the end of the program.

In the sub-scale of aggression there was a scoring change from 4.1 to 3.6. This is a significant improvement for the boys in showing their disagreement of aggression as a masculine ideology.

This tells us that the boys do not endorse aggressive behaviours as way to express their masculinity. Examples of statements within this subscale include “When the going gets tough, guys get tough” and “If someone else starts it, a guy should be allowed to use violence to defend himself.” Through WiseGuyz, adolescent boys are educated at a pivotal time in their identify development about the relationship between aggression and masculinity and this is an instrumental strategy for violence prevention. Further, these boys may become leaders in reshaping masculinity ideologies by being characterized as the “well-meaning boys.”¹⁹ It is important to not overlook the well-meaning boys as there is an opportunity to challenge them through WiseGuyz to expand and deepen their personal growth as they may become leaders in influencing peers.

¹⁹ Crooks, C., Goodall, G., Hughes, R., Jaffe, P. Baler.,L. (2007). Engaging Men and Boys in Preventing Violence Against Women. Applying a Cognitive–Behavioral Model. *Violence Against Women*. 13(3), 217-239.

Discussion of Achievement and Status

There was an 11% improvement in the category of achievement and status from the beginning to the end of the program.

There was a scoring change from 3.3 to 3.0 in the subscale of achievement and status. Compared to the other five subscales, this one had the least amount of improvement. Perhaps concepts of achievement and status for adolescent boys are not as influential as other aspects of masculinity ideology. Examples of statements in this sub-scale include "It's important for guys to try hard to be the best," and "In a group of guys and girls, it is up to the guys to get things organized and moving ahead." The lower scoring of this subscale is interesting, and shows that boys attribute less weight to this category as one of the ways of maintaining masculine ideology.

Results of Homophobia Survey

The average post-survey score for homophobia significantly improved by 27% compared to the average pre-survey score.

The homophobia survey was administered to program participants prior to and following the WiseGuyz program. The survey asked respondents to indicate whether they agree, on a 7-point scale, with 9 different statements regarding homosexuality. Permission to use the survey was obtained by Dr. Ron Levant, developer of the instrument²⁰. The statements were originally intended to be part of the MRNI-A-r, however, the scale developers decided not to include the statements because they believed that including these scales might impede their ability to gain ethics approval

²⁰ Permission was obtained to use the instrument from Dr. Ron Levant.
<http://www.drroaldlevant.com/mrni.html>

with the schools boards. It is worthy to note that the concern to include the homophobia scales because it may deter approval ethics is itself indicative of the level of systemic and cultural change required in schools to be more inclusive of diversity.

Prior to starting WiseGuyz, participants pre-score from the homophobia survey was 2.8 and at the end of WiseGuyz it was 2.2. This means that there was a 27% *improvement* in attitudes of homophobia towards lesbian, gay transgender, bisexual and queer people. Examples of statements in the scale include “men should never hold hands or show affection toward one another” and “it is disappointing to learn that a famous athlete is gay.” Given that it is a 7-point scale agreement, the significant decrease in agreement of homophobia statements being part of masculine ideologies affirms the intersections of sexuality and masculinity. This finding also correlated with the key learnings from the 2012/2013 WiseGuyz research that reveals some of the most profound qualitative changes were in the boys’ new understandings of the damage of homophobic discourse and increase in empathy for other boys who are targeted with homophobic discourse.

Results of Sexual Health Survey

“The average post-survey score significantly improved by 16%. The average post-survey score also significantly improved in all 6 categories compared to the pre-survey, with the exception of the Sexual Assault category. The average post-survey score improved the least in the area of Sexual Assault (3%) and the greatest in Sexual Health Care (23%).” Prothos Research & Analytics, 2014.

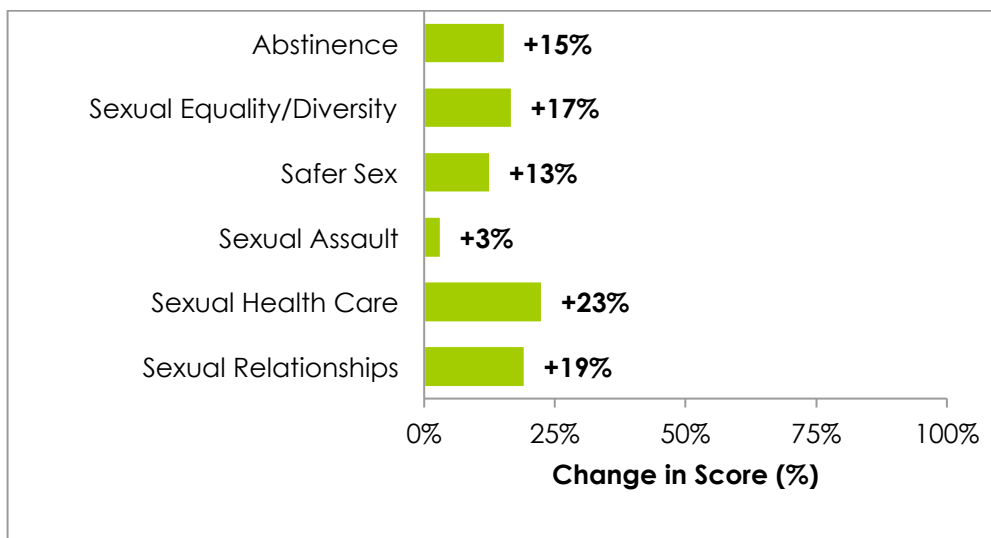
The Sexual Health Practices Self-Efficacy Scale (SSES) contains 20 questions relating to sexual health practices, where respondents indicate their confidence in performing these practices on a 5-point scale. The questions are organized into six categories:

- Sexual Relationships
- Sexual Health Care
- Sexual Assault
- Safer Sex
- Sexual Equality/ Diversity
- Abstinence

The SSES instrument was selected for the WiseGuyz program because it takes into account the World Health Organizations (WHO) definition of sexual health as including the physical, emotional, mental and social well-being related to sexuality. This aligns with Calgary Sexual Health Centre's approach and view of sexual health. It is a comprehensive relational approach that believes in the intersections of social and emotional health and sexual health as fundamental to well being.

Measuring the sexual health of adolescent boys is challenging and using a tool that is plain language and addresses the fulsome nature of sexual health was critical to understanding the impact of WiseGuyz. The best predictor of safe and healthy sexual practices for adolescence is to focus on increases in self-efficacy: *“Thus, the Sexual Health Practices Scale was developed to measure respondents confidence (self-efficacy) as described as their knowledge, skill and comfort to carry out 20 different sexual health practices.”*²¹

As shown below, the average post-survey score significantly improved by 16%. The average post-survey score also significantly improved in all six categories compared to the pre-survey, with the exception of the Sexual Assault category. The average post-survey score improved the least in the area of Sexual Assault (3%) and the greatest in Sexual Health Care (23%).



²¹ Barthalow Koch, P. et al. (2010). "Sexual Health Practices Self-Efficacy Scale". In *Handbook of Sexuality- Related Measures*, edited by Terri Fisher et al, p.345 – 347. London: Routledge.

Sexual Health Care

There was a 23% improvement in confidence in sexual health care for the participant of WiseGuyz.

The largest increase in improvement of the boys' confidence is in the category of sexual health care. Prior to being in WiseGuyz, the pre-score for sexual health care was 3.2 with a post-score of 3.9. This represents a 23% *improvement* in confidence within the areas of sexual health care for the participants of WiseGuyz. In particular, this area focused on getting tested for an STI, HIV, and being able to talk with a health care worker about a sexual health issue. Having the confidence to talk with a health care worker is an important outcome of the WiseGuyz program as the boys consistently indicate that they are least comfortable in talking with their parents and teachers about sexual health. Dr. Amy Schalet, a specialist in adolescent sexuality and culture notes:

connectedness between parent(s) and teenagers often breaks down over the issue of sex, with parents conveying foreboding messages and teenagers hiding sexual activities. Health professionals, educators, clergy and even those who work in media must help parents and teens bridge this connectedness gap.²²

Thus, ensuring boys are developing not only the knowledge about appropriate resources but also the *confidence to access them* is critical to their sexual health and engagement in healthy relationships.

Sexual Relationships

There was a 19% improvement in confidence in sexual relations for the participants of WiseGuyz.

Prior to starting WiseGuyz, participants pre score in the category of sexual relationships was 3.3, which saw an

²² Schalet, A. Beyond Abstinence and Risk: A New Paradigm for Adolescent Sexual Health. *Women's Health Issues* (2001). S5- S7.

increase to 4.0 at the end of WiseGuyz. This represents a 19% improvement over the course of the program. The category of sexual relationships included measuring the boys' confidence in their ability to communicate with a partner about sexual activity and behaviour.

The emphasis on communication is integral to understanding the extent to which the boys will maintain sexual health. Dr. Amy Schalet emphasizes the essential relationship between communication and emotional capacities of boys:

Communication skills involve both emotional and operational aspects. Image confidence, the perceived ability to deal with eventual negative impressions caused by proposing condom use, has to do with emotional motives to be accepted by the partner.²³

The increase in confidence in this area tells us that the boys understand the importance of communication, boundary setting and discussing mutual expectations within sexual relationships. Communication and emotional development are integral to safe sexual relationships and projected consistent condom use by the boys when they become sexually active.

Sexual Equality/Diversity

There was a 17% improvement in confidence in the areas of sexual equality/diversity for the participants of WiseGuyz.

Prior to starting WiseGuyz, participants pre score in this category was 3.4, which saw an increase to 3.9 at the end of WiseGuyz. This represents a 17% improvement in confidence to practice

²³ Baele, J., Dusseldorp, E., Maes, S. Condom Use Self-efficacy: Effect on Intended and Actual Condom Use in Adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 2002; 28: 421-431.

sexual equality. A 17% increase in this area is indicative of improved learnings in gender equity, relationships and diversity. The category of sexual equality within the SSES looks at practices such as “eliminating sexual double standards (based on gender) in your life” and “eliminating gender stereotyping from your life” and “accepting diversity in sexual orientation (heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality.” Understanding that sexual health also encompasses comfort with sexual diversity is significant to the boys having healthy relationships. This area also links to the positive findings from the Masculinity Survey.

Abstinence

There was a 15% improvement in confidence in the area of abstinence for the participants of WiseGuyz.

Prior to starting WiseGuyz, participants pre-score in the category of abstinence was 3.8 and at the end of WiseGuyz it was 4.4. This represents a 15% improvement in the boys' confidence to practice sexual abstinence. There was only one question on the SSES that pertained to abstinence. The philosophical approach of WiseGuyz curriculum is not to promote abstinence but rather to focus on the overall development of self-efficacy for the boys to practice sexual autonomy. This means when the boys have autonomy they can

*recognize their sexual feelings as separate from the desires and pressures of others, own their feelings, and exercise control over their sexual decision making...Teens who have a greater sense of control in sexual situation are more likely to refrain from intercourse and use condoms when they have sex."*²⁴

If the boys choose abstinence, they do so with fulsome knowledge and understanding about sexual health.

²⁴ Schalet, A. Beyond Abstinence and Risk: A New Paradigm for Adolescent Sexual Health. *Women's Health Issues* (2001). S5- S7.

Safer Sex

There was a 13% improvement in confidence in the category of safer sex for the participants of WiseGuyz.

Prior to starting WiseGuyz, participants pre-score in the category of Safer Sex was 3.9 and at the end of WiseGuyz it was 4.3. This represents a 13% improvement in confidence to practice safer sex. The questions in this category relate to how confident the participants are with making thoughtful decisions about sexual behaviour and having the confidence to practice safe sex. Considering that only 6% of the WiseGuyz participants are admittedly sexually active, it is important to focus on *preparing* the boys for *intended* condom use:

*condom use self-efficacy is one of the most important predictors of intended and actual condom use, where self-efficacy is identified as 'people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performance.'*²⁵

Through WiseGuyz' integrated approach to sexual health, boys are prepared through communication, comfort and tactile experiencing of the condoms. Research has shown that "*perceived technical skills could not be shown to influence condom use significantly.*"²⁶ However, when you cross reference this insight with the high scores in masculine norms, sexual health care and sexual relationships, this demonstrates that the predominant learnings for the boys are in fact in developing the self-awareness, meaning that they are able to recognize how their emotions and thoughts might influence their behavior related to condoms.²⁷ The

²⁵ Baele, J., Dusseldorp, E., Maes, S. Condom Use Self-efficacy: Effect on Intended and Actual Condom Use in Adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, p. 421. 2002; 28: 421-431.

²⁶ Ibid. p.430.

²⁷ See: Collaborative for Academics, Social and Emotional Learning. <http://www.casel.org/social-and-emotional-learning/core-competencies/>

most important component and predictor of consistent condom use is the development of social and emotional capacities, which are fundamental to having the efficacy required to practice thoughtful and safe sexual behaviour. Research has found that adolescent boys who have a stronger sense of emotional capacity, in particular self management (via ability to regulate emotional thought and behaviours), paired with strong relationship skills, (via being able to communicate clearly and appropriately) are more likely to use condoms and use them consistently.

The Sexual Health Module is further contextualized within the WiseGuyz program because it is followed by Gender and Relationship Modules. This supports the boys to understand the emotional traits of sexual behaviour and are thus better prepared for sexual situations when they happen, whether they are planned or unexpected. When it comes to understanding the sexual and reproductive health of boys, there is an over representation of research on boys age of sexual experience, sexual partners, condom use and sexual activity. What is scant in research are the feelings and emotions embedded in these experiences. In the World Health Organization's report about the health of boys, they punctuated this with the need to inquire with boys about *"What worries do they have?"* *"Who do they talk to about these worries?"*²⁸ The boys in WiseGuyz are at a peak developmental time of wanting to understand sexuality and sexual health. WiseGuyz creates a safe collective space in which the boys feel they can "talk about anything" or ask the facilitators questions without feeling shame. Feeling comfortable to talk about sexual health, to ask questions and share their concerns without feeling shame is vital to the

²⁸World Health Organization. 2000. *What About the Boys? A Literature Review on the Health and Development of Adolescent Boys*. Department of child and Adolescent Health and Development: World Health Organization.

boys not only practicing safe sex, but also maintaining healthy relationships within adolescence, which continue into adulthood.

Sexual Assault

There was a 3% improvement in confidence in the category of safer sex for the participants of WiseGuyz.

Prior to starting WiseGuyz, participants pre-score in the category of sexual assault was 3.6 and at the end of WiseGuyz it was 3.7. This represents a 3% improvement in confidence in ability to deal with issues of sexual assault. This score only improved slightly and is not statistically significant. This means, "it cannot be said with confidence that participants improved in the Sexual Assault category."²⁹ In this category it is important to note that one of the questions in the sexual assault category was removed. It was removed because the phrasing of the question conflicted with Calgary Sexual Health Centre's anti-oppressive practice and philosophy of sexual assault. The other two statements within this category focused on helping a friend who has been sexually assaulted and confidence in ability to deal with a sexual assault if it occurred to them.

The lower score for sexual assault may be due to a variety of factors, however, it does invite a critical review of this topic in the WiseGuyz curriculum and how it can be improved. This may also present an opportunity to explore partnerships with other community organizations that specialize in sexual assault.

²⁹ Prothos Research and Analytics. 2014. WiseGuyz Data Analysis and Summary Report.

LEARNING FROM WISEGUYZ ALUMNI

Out of the 218 boys who participated in WiseGuyz over the past three years, 21 completed surveys. The purpose of the survey was to gather information from boys who have been out of WiseGuyz between one and three years so that we can ascertain what kinds of continuing impact the program might have in relation to sexual health, relationships, and masculine ideologies. This was the first time a follow-up survey was administered with past participants of WiseGuyz. This survey is not a validated instrument and was intended to sample a group of past participants. Administering this survey further validated our intent to conduct future research via interviews with past participants so that we can gain an in-depth understanding of the longer-term impact of WiseGuyz. Following up with the past participants is one of the best ways to truly understand how the learnings they experienced in WiseGuyz are being integrated into their lived experiences.

The surveys were administered at a high school in Calgary that many of the past participants now attend. The survey was also disseminated via the WiseGuyz Facebook social media site.

Year	Percentage of Survey Responses by Year Boys Participated in WiseGuyz
2012/2013 (1 year out of program)	42%
2011-2012 (2 years out of program)	37%
2010/2011 (3 years out of program)	21%

Relationships

Percentage of boys who indicate WiseGuyz helped prepare them for a positive relationship

Yes: 86%
No: 14%

Percentage of boys that indicate the biggest influence in helping them to understand a healthy relationship:

Influence	1 (Biggest)	2	3	4	5 (Least)
WiseGuyz	57%	19%	10%	5%	10%
Friends	19%	33%	29%	0%	19%
Media	16%	5%	0%	26%	53%
Family	5%	29%	33%	19%	14%
School	0%	19%	29%	29%	14%

Sexual Health

Percentage of past participants whose knowledge of sexual health increased because of WiseGuyz:

Yes	No	Sort Of
96%	0%	5%

Percentage of past participants who accessed a sexual health service because of WiseGuyz:

Yes	No
19%	81%

* For the respondents who answered yes, the majority of them accessed a health clinic, Calgary Sexual Health Centre, or an STI clinic.

Sexual Activity and Condom Use

Percentage of past participants who are sexually active (sexually active is defined by having intercourse at least once)

Yes	No
29%	71%

For the boys who answered yes, 29% indicated that they had used a condom before WiseGuyz. When asked how many boys used a condom after participating in WiseGuyz, the number of boys increased to 71%. For the respondents who are sexually active, 40% responded that they “always use a condom” while 5% said “never.”

How WiseGuyz prepared past participants for condom use	
I feel like I am/would be respecting my partner by using a condom	95%
I don't feel embarrassed using a condom	71%
I now know how to use a condom	71%
I now feel comfortable using a condom	67%
I am no longer afraid to use a condom	52%

Percentage of past participants who feel WiseGuyz influenced them in delaying sexual intercourse:

Yes	Somewhat	No
0%	19%	81%

Masculinity

Percentage of past participants that agreed WiseGuyz changed their ideas of masculinity:

Yes	Somewhat	No
33%	43%	24%

For the respondents who answered “yes” or “somewhat” they indicated the following:

I feel more confident expressing my emotions	81%
I learned how hurtful homophobic language is	75%
I learned I don't have to fight to show how masculine I am	69%
I learned that being a guy means standing up for something that I know is wrong	69%
I respect women and girls more	63%

NARRATIVE CHANGES

A generic qualitative research approach was used for the 2013/2104 research to understand the particulars of how WiseGuyz influenced the boys and what anecdotally changed for them. The results of this qualitative research are consistent with the results of the 2012/2013 qualitative research. What this tells us is that there is program rigor and a common impact on the boys learning and behaviour. Having consistency in the qualitative research results in the second year supports WiseGuyz in achieving fidelity; we are increasingly confident that the fulsome nature and critical depth of the program is what is creating the positive results for the boys who participate in WiseGuyz. Long term, we anticipate that the robust fidelity of the program constructively influences gender and social norms, supporting youth in having healthy relationships and contributing to violence prevention

A Safe Space for Boys

"When a boy's experience of belonging is greater than his sense of differentness, then the burden of shame, inadequacy, and anger drops away, and he is free to learn." – Dan Kindlon and Michael Thompson, 2000

Safety is a word that appeared frequently throughout discussion in the focus groups. We cannot overstate the significance of this word. The word 'safe' may seem oxymoronic: *why would boys need to feel safe?* By asking this very question we can unpack its significance. In the 2012/2013 WiseGuyz research we stated *"it can be difficult to discern notions of safety, social inclusion and sense of community from each other."* The unifying of these concepts is precisely why there is such rigor and enduring

affect of the WiseGuyz program in the lives of the boys. During a 2013/2014 focus group discussion, one of the boys employed the metaphor of family to describe that WiseGuyz is like “a Dad and lots of older brothers that they could talk with.” This highlights how deep the sense of safety and belonging is for the boys.

In Niobe Way's recent book, *Deep Secrets: Boys Friendships and the Crisis of Connection* she explores how instrumental boys' friendships are to one another, and how at a young age these friendships are imbued with emotion, openness, dialogue, and love for each other. In Way's research she found that boys “understand how important the sharing of thoughts and feelings are in these friendships for their psychological well-being.”³⁰ As they grow into men, this becomes less acceptable and present in their lives, leaving boys feeling lonelier, isolated and disconnected. When they do have a close friendship with other boys, and share intimate or emotional gestures, they ensure that they use phrases like ‘no-homo’ to follow their actions so that it is clear that any expressions of platonic love and care are clarified to not be confused with ‘homosexual’ expression of love. This minimizing of emotional expression with the disclaimer of no-homo weaves into the theme of homophobic discourse because boys use it as a way to maintain their hetero-masculine boundaries.

Safety has been a predominant theme among past and current WiseGuyz research. What makes WiseGuyz' spaces safe is the boys' ability to be expressive, open, curious, and emotive with other boys, and most importantly, being able to practice these behaviours without fear of being judged, shamed or as CJ Pascoe notes, without having peers

³⁰ Way, N. 2013. *Deep Secrets: Boys Friendships and the Crisis of Connection*. P.

“police their gender.” As one of the boys noted, *“I would trust these guys in WiseGuyz with anything I said.”*

The boys in WiseGuyz emphatically shared they had developed new friendships that they did not have before; they felt part of a group process in which they trusted everyone and thus would talk about personal experiences during WiseGuyz. One of the boys in the focus group likened WiseGuyz to a *“therapy group”* because it is a space in which they can talk and connect without judgment, thereby cultivating emotionality by sharing their fears, vulnerabilities, curiosities, desires and learnings:

... Teachers in schools' always [tell us we are] supposed to feel like a safe environment [in school], but like when you're in class, you don't feel that. But when you come into WiseGuyz, that's safety. Everyone just felt so safe (2013/2014 WiseGuyz Participant).

The boys' feeling safe is fundamental to the outcomes of WiseGuyz because it supports the boys in co-creating a space in which new masculinities can be expressed. They feel safe to unpack traditional masculine ideologies that are related to sexual health, sexuality, and relationships. Through this they establish a meaningful and trusting male social network as *“all the guys know what you're going through and what it's all about”* (2013/2014 WiseGuyz Participant). They are establishing progressive peer influences and thus, renewing male gender norms through WiseGuyz.

Through WiseGuyz the boys are able to safely question the ideologies of masculinity and unpack their own identities as boys. Further, the boys feel they can be vulnerable, to share their fears and concerns and to ask what may otherwise seem as uncomfortable or silly questions:

...you're in an environment with only guys and you don't have to worry that it might be awkward...like another girl [being] in your class, like they might judge you and so being with just a small group of guys you could express more and talk about more (2013/2014 WiseGuyz Participant).

Again, safety is integral to the boys feeling comfortable with their own vulnerability, which opens them to living more inclusive masculinities. They do not have to feel torn between “*proving their masculinity and expressing their humanity.*”³¹ This is how we begin to reshape social norms and establish inclusive masculinities.

Unpacking Masculine Ideologies

“I'm pretty sure at one point in every guys life they've been called a pussy or a chicken...you don't realize the destruction that it does.”

- 2013/2014 WiseGuyz Participant

“It was not just sexual health either. We learned about the man box. We learned about expectations and stereotypes.”

- 2013/2014 WiseGuyz Participant

As the boys in WiseGuyz felt safe to explore masculine ideologies, new learnings began to emerge. This shift was most noticeable when they shared how they see media differently. Once they gained an understanding of how they are influenced by masculine ideologies, it “*triggers everything else*” in their perspectives:

The man box, I found that the most interesting of all of them [in reference to the program modules]...it stood out to me because I never really thought about what society put us in as a box....I realized with all the other things that we've been taught but

³¹ Kimmel, M. (2008). *Guyland: The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men*. P. 270. New York: Harper Collins Publisher.

weren't really that important to me. It kind of triggered everything else in my perspective (2013/2014 WiseGuyz Participant).

This affirms how fundamental and interconnected understanding masculinities are to other areas of their lives; once they begin to see things differently, there is a domino effect.

One of the boys in the focus group wanted to emphasize that not all things about masculinity are bad and he commented that there are, *"certain things I do want in the man box but there are some things that are really not that important at all"* (2013/2014 WiseGuyz Participant). This boy's discernment is an important reminder to not position masculinity as negative. Michael Kimmel noted in his book *Guyland* that there are *"many elements of masculinity that are enormously valuable; indeed, qualities such as honor, especially, integrity, doing the right thing despite the costs."*³² Again, what is critical is not perceive and associate these elements as solely bound within one gender.

By unpacking masculinity, the boys are experiencing a shift in consciousness and critical thinking; they are able to discern and understand the role media plays in constructing and perpetuating social norms and how this relates to gender norms:

So now you actually notice it all over the place, like before you'd be like: "McDonalds Commercial has a beautiful girl" now you'd be like, it's sex. Like they're selling sex even if it is McDonald's (2013/2014 WiseGuyz Participant).

After this example was shared, the boys continued to banter and talk about different commercials and products that perpetuate hyper-

³² Ibid

sexualized, inequitable and limiting perceptions of gender norms. The boys are aware of the language and how it relates to behavior and social norms. One of the boys reflected on how he has changed the way he speaks to his younger brother because of what he has learned in WiseGuyz:

I mean, everyone's different, but my brother he's a bit nerdy. He likes these video games and all those things. I used to kind of give him heck for it because personally, I was never really into that stuff. But now looking back on it and seeing how that's how father-son things work. Like where they push them to be something that they don't wanna be...I looked back on it, I totally changed the way I treat him and stuff (2013/2014 WiseGuyz Participant).

This boy not only reflected on his own behaviour and how he has treated his brother, but also extends his critical thinking to relationships among fathers and sons and how a fathers' expectations consciously and unconsciously shapes their sons' identity and behaviour.

Seeing The World Differently

*"I don't know if I've changed personally, but I definitely look at things with a different point of view."
- Current WiseGuyz Participant*

There is an irony in this quote from one of the boys: although he is uncertain that he has changed, he unequivocally declares that he sees the world differently. We cannot separate our perceptions of the world from who we are; thus it would be safe to say that the boy did personally change.

Being able to see difference in the world and to understand the power that is at play within difference is critical to the development of the boys' social competencies. In the focus groups, the boys recounted their awareness of difference and how some boys are socially awkward and do not carry the social status of some of the "social giants." In one of the programs, the boys saw themselves as social outcasts, and would not want to have *"the cool kids in the program"* as they would disrupt the social inclusion they had created within WiseGuyz.

In another focus group a boy shared how he noticed another boy in WiseGuyz was quite detached in school and *"barely ever smiles."* However, *"at WiseGuyz he smiles a lot more and is a lot friendlier of a guy."* Discerning difference is reaffirmed in another program where one of the boys is autistic and how the boys learned be being with him:

at the beginning of every class we do something called the check in and you explain what you did in the past week and the last time you guys saw each other. And explain anything that's been happening or anything you want to talk about. You go around the circle saying that. That was kind of a big thing because you kind of learned more about the other people who you might not have been as close to. But in our group a lot, most of us we knew each other because we were all in like the French Program, but then there was 2 PLP's and one English program person and it was kinda interesting like having, like one of the guys had autism and it's really cool to like see how he learns. Just like, he's a part just like anyone else. Just like being a part of everyone (2013/2014 WiseGuyz Participant).

The boys are discerning social differences, yet these differences are not separating them, they are respected. One of the boys reflected on his own difference, noting *"I know alot of people consider me to be kind of a doof...I was not really well respected. But when I come to WiseGuyz I'm equal to everyone, like it's just great"* (2013/2014 WiseGuyz Participant).

With their differences, they are able to create a unified and equitable safe space.

More Than a WiseGuyz Facilitator

"...they're great leaders...you can tell them anything and you know, they're accepting and they could give you advice and stuff, and you know they're just great guys"
- 2013/2014 WiseGuyz Participant

The WiseGuyz facilitators are essential to creating a space for the boys that is defined by being non-judgmental, equitable, comfortable, and open. The importance of the WiseGuyz facilitators was a key theme in the 2012/2013 research and emerged again in this current 2013/2014 WiseGuyz research. One of the most common ways the facilitators are described by the boys is that they are "relatable" yet the boys also view them as adults with expertise that they respect; thus the facilitators maintain the delicate balance of being approachable and relevant:

"say you're feeling sad or something or depressed, you'd just be like 'oh ya, I can go to WiseGuyz. It's not only what you learned, it's like I can go to [the facilitators] and talk to the them about it"
(2013/2014 WiseGuyz Participant).

A new facilitator was added to the WiseGuyz program in 2013. Each WiseGuyz program has a core facilitator, yet when available, a second facilitator would attend. This had a positive impact on the boys as it exposed them to more male mentors and they also witnessed the multiple ways masculinities can show up. Rachel Guise wrote a featured article about WiseGuyz that appeared in *The Walrus* within which she poetically describes why the facilitators have such a strong appeal to the boys:

*All three are around thirty years old, confident, handsome, and dressed in lumberjack-chic uniform of the modern urban man: well groomed beards, dark denim jeans, white T-shirts peeping out from under fitted shirts. B tends to be laid back and observant, while T is talkative and good humored. S offers the sunbeam-like attention of a beloved older brother.*³³

Not only did the boys learn from the facilitators, but also by watching them:

"it's not just that they taught us things, it's just the little things too, like the way they carry themselves. Like I learned alot from just seeing them and how they acted with all of us" (2013/2014 WiseGuyz Participant).

We know from previous research that the facilitators are instrumental to the program's success, yet this year it was more explicit. The boys gravitate to these facilitators, as *"boys are desperate for role models as they head into this uncertain age, and in most cases the dominant image of masculinity is one that requires strength and stoicism."*³⁴ A space of equity is created as the boys commented that the facilitators *"treated everyone as equal."* This teaches them about the importance of equality and equity by also experiencing it.

³³ Giese, R. (2013). The talk: A new sex ed for boys. In *The Walrus*. April 2014. pp 28-33.

³⁴ Kindlon, D and Thompson, M. (2000). *Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys*. p. 73. New York, NY: Ballantine Books.

OVERALL RESEARCH LEARNINGS

WiseGuyz Develops Healthy Masculinities for Adolescent Boys

“Guys feel torn, sometimes between proving their masculinity and expressing their humanity. How can we help them make the right choices for themselves and do so publicly as a challenge to other guys?”- Michael Kimmel, 2008.

Combining the survey results and the qualitative research, we confidently claim that WiseGuyz is significantly contributing to the reshaping of healthy masculine ideologies for adolescent boys. The statistically significant results, in particular, from the masculinity survey, tell us that these changes are not random, but are in fact a result of the WiseGuyz program.

This means that the boys gained an understanding of masculinity ideologies that is critical to reshaping progressive and equitable gender and social norms. This reshaping is instrumental to boys having healthy identities and significantly contributes to them developing and maintaining healthy relationships in all areas of their lives: with their families, with peers, and with partners. The reshaping of social norms is an enormous and long-enduevor, however, redefining masculinity for 14 year-old boys during their critical time of gender identity development is a significant contribution to this social endeavor. WiseGuyz is offered at an ideal point in their development and it opens up new understandings of masculinity and how it shapes their behaviours:

*We propose that at the heart of the end goal of engaging men and boys in violence prevention is broader and more varied concepts of masculinity (Frank et al., 2003). As a society, we have to fundamentally extend the notion of what it means to be a man. At one level, exploring new masculinities is an intellectual, philosophical, and introspective endeavor and one that many men may never undertake.*³⁵

Understanding the configurations and practices³⁶ of masculinities is at the heart of WiseGuyz program. Research has identified that limiting notions of masculinity are connected to “gender-based violence.”³⁷ The White Ribbon Campaign stressed that:

*young men and boys still learn that the ideal man, a real man, is tough, unemotional, powerful, dominant, uncompromising and in control. This concept of masculinity is not only limiting and dated, it's also dangerous.”*³⁸

Further, “[i]ssues related to male privilege and control are identified within the top three major factors in predicting the perpetration of violence against women.”³⁹ WiseGuyz is shaping adolescent boys' attitudes, behaviors, and expectations. Through this foundational learning, WiseGuyz moves beyond gender sensitivity and promotes “gender transformation” for the boys who participate as the program “seeks to

³⁵ Crooks, C., Goodall, G., Hughes, R., Jaffe, P. Baler., L. (2007). Engaging Men and Boys in Preventing Violence Against Women. Applying a Cognitive–Behavioral Model. *Violence Against Women*. 13(3), 217-239.

P.223

³⁶ Pascoe. J. 2012. *Dude, You're a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School*. University of California Press: Los Angeles.

³⁷ White Ribbon Campaign Issue Brief: Engaging Men and Boys to Reduce and Prevent Gender-Based Violence. 2011. P.9

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Crooks, C., Goodall, G., Hughes, R., Jaffe, P. Baler., L. (2007). Engaging Men and Boys in Preventing Violence Against Women. Applying a Cognitive–Behavioral Model. *Violence Against Women*. 13(3), 217-239.

P.223

*promote equitable relationships, change gender norms and social expectations."*⁴⁰

Understanding the Intersections of Sexuality and Masculinity

We learned through the surveys and the qualitative findings that sexuality and masculinity are extensively intertwined. Firstly, this underscores that a fulsome sexual health program must include education about masculinity ideologies, and vice versa. Omitting one will no doubt mean less rigour for the program and less impact. Thus, the rationale for and importance of the integrated and sequential modules of the WiseGuyz curriculum.

Secondly, the largest improvements for the boys are in the areas of emotionality and expression of femininity. This has significant bearing for the practice of safe sex. Research has shown that the more accurate predictor of practicing safe sex for boys is the ability to communicate and feel comfortable in their emotions. Being able to express themselves and their vulnerabilities with a partner is critical to safe sexual relationships. Therefore, their comfort with being emotive and not being concerned that this may be perceived as feminine is entwined with practicing safe sex and maintaining healthy relationships. Through the focus groups we heard consistently that one of the most valuable aspects of WiseGuyz for was the ability to be open, curious and not feel shame in asking sexual health questions. This links to the concept of safe space that enables the boys to feel comfortable in learning about safe sex and sexuality.

⁴⁰ White Ribbon Campaign Issue Brief: Engaging Men and Boys to Reduce and Prevent Gender-Based Violence. 2011. P.9

Changing Homophobia Via Inclusive Masculinities

“A boy could get called a fag for exhibiting any sort of behaviors defined as unmasculine.” CJ Pascoe, 2012.

The biggest improvement of the three surveys was in homophobia. Secondly, restrictive emotionality and avoidance of femininity also saw the largest increases of the sub-scales in the masculinity survey. These top areas of improvements illuminate the significance of homophobia not solely being about sexual identity, but also about maintaining masculine ideologies. The implications of this are the importance of discerning and attending to the discourses practised among adolescent boys and noting the difference between “gay and fag” as the word fag brings the gendered nature of homophobia into focus.⁴¹

Research has shown that homophobic discourse among adolescent boys is more gender-based and related to heterosexual maintenance than a fear of people who are gay. In her ground breaking book, *Dude, You're a Fag*, C.J Pascoe shows how the use of what she coins “fag discourse” and “fag epitaph” are narrative practices that boys lob at each other as a way to maintain their hetero-masculinity. Boys avoid displays and practices of what would be considered feminine because it does not fit within the masculinity ideology. The “fag discourse” points to how boys use gay discourse to maintain masculine ideologies. They do this by using the language to effeminize another boy. This also invites a way of thinking about boys and homophobia that questions to what degree are they actually homophobic? In the context of masculine ideologies, the

⁴¹ Pascoe, J. 2012. *Dude, You're a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School*. University of: Los Angeles: California Press.

“problem of effeminacy is not associated with being a gay male, it is the lack of masculinity.”⁴²

The attention to effeminizing language was a key learning shared among the 2013/2014 focus groups, and how debilitating it is to call other boys effeminate names such as ‘fag’ and ‘pussy.’ This further supports the key findings from the 2012/2013 WiseGuyz research:

*...their biggest learning was in noticing and attending to language, specifically the demeaning discourses of gay, or calling someone ‘gay’ or ‘faggot.’ Further, they identified that this changed them as they noted that they no longer make assumptions about people they do not know, or project assumptions about others who people may stereotype. The boys, who admittedly used the language before WiseGuyz, did so as a way to effeminate other boys. These boys do not appear homophobic, but when feeling scared and pressured to assert their masculinity, the most effective way to do this was to feminize another boy through language and describing someone as gay, therefore attempting to de-masculinize him.*⁴³

The implications of the boys showing significant improvements in homophobia and also masculinity indicates they will not feel a need to effeminize other boys for the purpose of maintaining masculinity by calling another boy ‘gay’ or ‘a fag.’ This tells us that they are renewing masculine ideologies as inclusive. If we only look at homophobia within the context of sexuality, we will miss so much that could help us understand aggressive behaviour in boys and what may appear as homophobic bullying, is also a form of emasculating other boys.

CJ Pascoe observes in her book the rise of tragic events in America such as high suicide rates among adolescent boys because of being perceived as gay, or for being gay, or because of homophobic bullying.

⁴² Ibid. p. 56

⁴³ Hurlock, D. 2013. *Re-imagined Masculinities: Unfolding the Meaning and Affect of the WiseGuyz Program*. P.63. Calgary: Calgary Sexual Health Centre.

Pascoe cautions readers that “[f]raming these events as bullying, cyber bullying or simple homophobia elides the centrality of definitions of masculinity to these tragedies.” Within these anecdotes are a vital realization of the interconnections among homophobic discourse with masculine ideologies and the feared perceptions for boys of being feminine.

To fully understand the complexity and depth of the concept of homophobia among boys, we need to understand its relationship to the maintenance of ‘manlihood.’ Michael Kimmel notes that homophobia is as much about masculinity as it is about sexuality. As “homosexuality becomes a kind of shorthand for “unmanliness.”⁴⁴ In previous WiseGuyz research, we questioned if WiseGuyz boys are actually homophobic, or, are they using gay slurs as a way to maintain their ‘manliness’. In past research, we have noticed WiseGuyz participants’ continuous and casual use as an indicator that “the intersection of heterosexuality and masculinity is so intense that Pronger (1990) argues that the term heteromascularity is required to more accurately capture its imbrications.”⁴⁵ Fortunately in WiseGuyz the “multi-dimensional interaction of sexuality and gender” is identified, discussed and the boys are supported in recognizing and understanding this interaction.

⁴⁴ Kimmel, M. (2008). *Guyland: The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men*. p.50. New York: HarperCollins Publisher.

⁴⁵ McCormack, M and Anderson, E. (2010). “It’s just not acceptable any more’: The erosion of homophobia and the softening of masculinity at an English sixth form in *Sociology*, Vol. 44, No5. Pp. 843 – 858.

Developing Emotionality

"Learning emotional literacy involves recognizing the look and feel of our emotions, then using this skill to better understand others and ourselves. We learn to appreciate life's emotional complexity, and this enhances all our professional and personal relationships, helping us to strengthen the connections that enrich our lives." - Dan Kindlon and Michael Thompson, 2000

In the Masculinity Survey, emotionality had the one of the largest improvements of all subscales. This is further supported through learnings from the WiseGuyz Alumni Survey in which emotional expression was identified as their biggest learning with 81% indicating that they feel more confident expressing emotions. This is further substantiated through the current 2013/2014 focus groups in which the boys likened WiseGuyz to a "therapy group" or a "family of brothers" that they trust and feel they can share anything with. Not only does this encourage the boys to be openly emotive with each other, it gives them permission to experience a range of emotions rather than the ones they only feel that they are allowed to feel, such as "bravery" and "anger" as the boys noted.

There is significant alignment between expressing emotion and the improvement in "restrictive emotionality" which was the biggest improvement for the boys in the current WiseGuyz program. This also aligns with confidence in emotional expression being identified as the major learning for past participants in the context of masculinity. This is further sustained by the open-ended questions in the survey that asked what the most important learning was for each respondent in regards to WiseGuyz. The majority of the responses were about learning how to "express emotions" and learning about healthy and unhealthy relationships. This also verifies the predominate learning from the

2012/2013 in which the boys noted learning about and understanding healthy relationships was one of the main and most valuable learnings of WiseGuyz.

The category of safer sex interconnects with the learnings from the Masculinity Survey in which the greatest increase in learning for the boys was in understanding that 'restrictive emotionality' is one of the ways that masculine ideologies is maintained. This tells us that the boys had a significant increase in understanding how important being able to understand and express emotions is to their well being, but also in doing so, is reshaping and changing traditional masculine ideologies of the 'stoic' and emotional man. WiseGuyz is premised on the belief that boys have been on the margins of sexual education and social and emotional learning. WiseGuyz develops a safe space in which boys can unmask their constrictions in emotions and establish meaningful connections and bonds with other boys.

Improving Category of Sexual Assault Within WiseGuyz Curriculum

Sexual assault was the only area that "it cannot be said with confidence that participants improved in the Sexual Assault category."⁴⁶ Not only did it receive the smallest score in the survey, it is a topic that did not emerge in the focus groups. Although the boys did talk about an increased respect for girls and a new knowledge of how media portray gender, they did not yet make explicit connections to assault. Yet, at the end of one of the focus groups, the boys commented that WiseGuyz overall engendered "more respect" for each other and for girls. They jokingly said that if all guys went through WiseGuyz, there would be "world peace"

⁴⁶ Prothos Research and Analytics. 2014. *WiseGuyz Data Analysis and Summary Report*.

which another boy agreed and said *“ya, there wouldn’t be nearly as much like rapes happening and assaults and stuff like that. Guarantee it.”*

However, in another focus group, boys entered into a debate about whether a girls clothes is reason to invite sexual comment or not. Some of the boys took a strong stand that a girl can wear what ever she would like, while another boy disagreed. The very disagreement of the topic tells us that some boys have developed further in their understanding of gender boundaries and social norms, while others have not. Sexual assault is an important and complex topic for adolescent boys. This component of the curriculum is being reviewed by the WiseGuyz team, with the intent to improve this area so that it has improved resonance and understanding among the boys.

Concluding Illustration of WiseGuyz Model of Change

The following is a visual illustration of the key elements that interconnect with the core of the WiseGuyz program, which is understanding and redefining masculine ideologies

