Method: digital focus group of 17 youth

FINDINGS FROM FORMATIVE RESEARCH

• Breaking out of society’s rigid boundaries means acknowledging that there are not just one or two or three ways to be. Instead, there are Many Ways of Being.

• Often, this baggage binds us from freely expressing who we really are.

• There are not just one or two or three ways to be. Instead, there are Many Ways of Being. (8 two-hour sessions)

1. Welcome
2. Exploring Gender and Identity
3. Understanding and Expressing My Emotions
4. Exploring Power and Relationships
5. Sex and Sexuality in Media Today
6. Keeping Yourself and Others Healthy and Safe
7. Contraceptives and Seeking Services
8. Journey Ahead

DIGITAL COMPONENT

Complementary Instagram posts, stories, poll and quiz ‘stickers,’ and hashtags posted twice weekly to provide additional opportunities to reinforce the content covered during sessions through media channels used by youth to engage with the topics.

CURRICULUM (8 two-hour sessions)

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CURRICULUM

Welcome
Exploring Gender and Identity
Exploring Power and Relationships
Sex and Sexuality in Media Today
Keeping Yourself and Others Healthy and Safe
Contraceptives and Seeking Services
Journey Ahead

DISCUSSION

• Complementing a gender transformative curriculum with a digital strategy will help reinforce healthy, equitable, and non-violent relationships.

• Even in a gender inclusive intervention, the binary gender norms (man/woman) need to be well understood to then be scaffolded, challenged, and deconstructed through an intersectional and transformative lens.

• Youth’s diverse lived experiences and intersectional identities need to be reflected, normalized, and celebrated in the curriculum.

BACKGROUND

• Traditional gender norms, unequal power in sexual relationships, and intimate partner violence are linked with negative sexual and reproductive health outcomes (STIs, HIV, and unintended pregnancy) as well as mental health problems.

• Black and Latino teens in the United States experience high levels of SRH disparities, lack of available sexual and reproductive health services, due primarily to structural barriers, such as discrimination and coercion from health care providers.

PROGRAM HYPOTHESIS

A gender transformative sexual and reproductive health program that is grounded in exploring intersectional identities and restrictive gender norms can yield significant improvements in healthy relationships and sexual health behaviors among Black and Latino teens, ages 15-19 in Washington, DC, USA.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Adolescents are capable decision-makers.
2. Gender equity and diversity are catalysts for empathy and understanding.
3. Intersectionality is a means of representation.

PROCESS

1. Conducted formative research with youth to inform the adaptation of Equimundo’s evidence-based gender-transformative curricula.
2. Developed a complementary digital component to accompany the in-person sessions
3. Pilot (2022) & implementation (2023-2025) in community center and charter school settings in English and Spanish

DESIRED OUTCOMES

Through a Randomized Control Trial (RCT), we will evaluate the following short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes of the intervention.

Determinants (short-term outcomes)

CRITICAL: reflection on gender norms
Increased knowledge and awareness of gender norms, misconceptions about healthy relationship characteristics, and sexual health.

INCREASE: increased understanding of sexual health
Increased skills and sufficiency to use contraception, access SWF care, and total reproductive health.

DECREASE: decreased incidence of S&H
Decreased incidence of unintended pregnancies

Increased communication between partners
Increased provision of support to friends and family (seeking, providing, and receiving support)