I, Sarah E. Haney M.A., hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Counselor Education.

It is entitled:
Program Evaluation of the Girls Action Team

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Committee chair: Laura Nabors, PhD
Committee member: Mei Tang, PhD
Committee member: Lisa Vaughn, PhD
Program Evaluation of the Girls Action Team

A dissertation submitted to the
Graduate School
of the University of Cincinnati
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By

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Abstract

Adolescent girls benefit from mentoring and social support to build their leadership potential and personal growth. This dissertation project was focused on evaluation of an intervention program, termed the Girls Action Teams (GATs), designed to promote leadership and positive development in girls. This was an afterschool project for urban minority and immigrant middle school-aged girls. Facilitators of four different "project" groups (photography, art, health, and drama) followed the girls' lead in developing projects in several areas. The facilitators promoted the activities to enrich positive youth development and provide girls with an opportunity to explore ideas and identities through multiple forms of self-expression. In order to evaluate the impact of the GAT groups, ten girls were recruited from the four groups to participate in individual interviews, tell stories, and take photographs to document their experiences. In addition, facilitators completed reflection forms to gather information about their perceptions of the groups and participated in a focus group to share their ideas about how the groups influenced the girls' development and personal growth. Data analyses indicated themes of growth and facilitation of self-esteem and self-confidence as outcomes of group participation. The themes appeared consistent with the theory of the 6 C’s of Positive Youth Development (Lerner et al., 2005). The theme of connection was the most evident through positive relationships with peers, family, school, and facilitators. Further, the GATs provided girls with a creative forum for building strong relationships with peers and adult facilitators in an environment where they felt listened to and where their opinions were valued. A limitation of this research is that findings were based primarily on child self-report and gathering information from teachers and parents may provide information about change in girls’ social and emotional functioning after group participation. Future research should continue to examine the
effectiveness of child-directed activity groups to determine their impact on girls’ development and feelings of self-efficacy and empowerment.
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the following people:

• To the memory of my father, the first Dr. Haney, who has continued to offer inspiration and encouragement

• To the memory of my grandfather, Norm Wilhelmi

• To my mother, Janet Haney, who has been my number one support and friend throughout my education
Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Philippians 4:13

My deepest gratitude is to my advisor, Dr. Laura Nabors. I have been amazingly fortunate to have an advisor who gave me the freedom to explore on my own, and at the same time the guidance to recover when my steps faltered. Her patience and support helped me overcome many crisis situations and finish this dissertation. I hope that one day I would become as good an advisor to my students as Laura has been to me.

I would like to thank my dissertation committee Dr. Mei Tang and Dr. Lisa Vaughn for their support over as I completed my study. Dr. Vaughn allowed me to use her program as my source for data and for that I am extremely grateful.

To all of my friends and family who have continually supported me on this journey. And to my fellow counseling doctoral support group members, our dinner nights were a much needed part of this process. Also, I would like to thank Dr. Michael Spigarelli, who knew always knew I was capable of a doctoral degree.

Lastly, to all the girls that participated in the Girls Action Team and agreed to be interviewed, without whom, this project would not be possible!
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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

The Girls Action Teams (GATs) was an afterschool program to promote the health and well-being of ethnic minority adolescent girls (i.e. Latina, African immigrant, and African-American) at a language immersion school within the Cincinnati Public School District. It is an enrichment program designed to provide girls with an opportunity to explore ideas and identities through multiple forms of self-expression. The overarching goal of the Girls’ Action Teams (GAT) project was for urban minority and immigrant middle school-aged girls in Cincinnati to have an outlet for participation and self-determination and to help them become agents of change in their own community. Girls need an outlet that allows participation and self-determination (voice and choice), competence and attitudes (self-efficacy) to enact personal power and control, and a skill set to help them become agents of change in their community (Prilleltensky, Nelson, & Peirson, 2001). Such opportunities foster wellness and resilience in girls (Hirsch et al., 2000). GATs offered an interstitial space for the exploration of ideas, activities, and identities through multiple forms of self-expression. GATs encouraged meaningful contributions to group-designed social action projects to improve self, school and world. A sense of power and control in girls’ lives will ultimately contribute to health and wellness overall (Prilleltensky et al., 2001).

Model of Wellness, Strengths, and Assets Applied to Adolescent Minority Girls

The GATs operated on a model of wellness, strengths and assets. The basic idea for the importance of the groups is that they provided every girl with opportunities for participation and self-determination (voice and choice), competence and attitudes (self-efficacy) to enact personal power and control, and a skill set to help them become agents of change at their school and in their world (Prilleltensky et al., 2001). In these type of groups, girls have the opportunity to
experience participation and partnership, learn new skills, and take action about things from their own perspective that improve themselves, their school, and their worlds (Wilson et al., 2007).

*Digital Stories for Program Evaluation*

For this study, digital stories were one method used for program evaluation of the GATs. This research method was selected as it highlighted the girls’ experiences as they developed projects in teams over time. Digital storytelling allows participants to provide information through the use of pictures, drawings, images, music, story-telling, and developing captions to describe their products (Robin, 2008). Digital stories are a means of sharing one’s story through a medium that invites multiple sensory involvement as storytellers using words, song, voice, photos. In addition to digital storytelling, girls were interviewed to examine their perceptions about how the groups facilitated their growth and resilience as well the girls’ views of the process of group development. Each GATs group also had a facilitator to help the girls work together as they developed their activities. Other information was provided by facilitators. Specifically, at the end of each session, facilitators completed journal reflection forms to provide information about group processes. A focus group also provided data from facilitators. The knowledge gained from analyzing facilitator data provided window on group process and activities during the groups.

*Previous Research*

In the winter and spring of 2011, a pilot Girls Action Teams (GATs) program was developed and conducted at the school (Vaughn). As part of an ongoing community-academic partnership between a local public elementary school and an academic institution, girls at a local school in grades 4 through 8 were invited to participate in the pilot GATs after school program. This pilot program ran for four months starting mid January 2011 with bi-weekly meetings of the
five groups: health-all about me, art, writing, photography and drama. Each group ran for 50 minutes, beginning with snack and discussion of the day’s planned activity.

During the 2011 pilot program, 29 girls attended GATs consistently and each team was comprised of 5-6 girls. The average age of the girls in GATs was 11. Seventeen of the 29 girls (59%) identified themselves as African American, 10 girls (34%) were Latina, and 2 girls were from West Africa (7%). Overall, the girls were primarily U.S. or Puerto Rican born, but a few were born in Mexico. The majority of parents were U.S. born as well, but other countries were represented such as Honduras, Mexico, Guatemala, and Senegal. The majority of the girls reported that they speak English at home, but about 24% said they speak primarily Spanish at home. The West African girls said they speak an assortment of African languages.

Researchers conducted qualitative interviews with the girls and facilitators. Salient themes from the interviews included the importance of having goals and group cohesiveness. Facilitators noted that the girls benefitted from self-expression and were comfortable sharing their work within the groups. Girls described increased skills in their focal area and mentioned their personal contribution to their group’s final project.

The current study was part of a broader, ongoing project that capitalized on the aforementioned pilot project (Vaughn, 2011). The current study also extends the pilot study by examining the impact of GATs for middle school girls. This project had two aims. Aim one was an in depth analysis of the development of the GATs groups from both the girls and facilitators’ perspectives. Aim two was to evaluate girls’ perceptions of the outcomes of participating in their group and determine whether girls perceived their participation in their group as contributing to the growth or development of their own resilience. One potential asset for this study is the use of multiple qualitative methods to gather information.
CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a critical analysis of the literature relevant to the Girls Action Teams (GATs). The first section provides a description of issues for adolescent girls. The second section reviews literature on positive youth development with a focus on resilience theory and building resilience factors for youth. The third section will review participatory action research. Information about digital stories will be presented as a research tool that facilitated program evaluation efforts.

Adolescent Girls

Until recently, the mental health field focused primarily on the needs and concerns of adults. At one time, the difficulties of adolescence were dismissed as transitional problems that would naturally be overcome. While strides have been made in researching and working with adolescents, there are underserved subgroups under the larger umbrella of adolescence. Early adolescence (12 to 14 years of age) is a time of development marked by significant changes and transitions, further, middle school girls are especially vulnerable to depression as well as loss of self-esteem and confidence (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Kazdin, 1993). Girls in this age range also are more apt to engage in substance use to fight emotional issues (Girls and Drugs, 2006). Many of these marginalized girls “strive to navigate what can be a minefield of conflicting, constraining, and sometimes denigrating messages about what it means to be a young girl developing into a woman” (Sassen, Spencer, & Curtin, 2005, p. 67). Further, these girls are faced daily with multiple stressors associated with poverty, immigration, risk behavior, discrimination and legal problems that affect families.

Early adolescence, in general, is a time where youth live in an ambiguous reality between childhood and early adulthood (Kantrowitz & Wingert, 1999). Early adolescents tend to be
unsure of themselves, have less well-developed self-concepts, and tend to heavily rely on others in decision-making, and this puts them at greater risk for peer pressure (Kliegman et al., 2007; Sugar, 1993). Further, middle school-age girls are especially vulnerable because of emotional changes, stemming from puberty, that often result in behavioral changes such as intentional and unintentional injury, sexual activity, and drug use (Nicholson, Collins, & Holmer, 2004).

**Positive Youth Development**

Positive youth development (PYD) is a term that refers to “each and every child’s unique talents, strengths, interests and future potential” (Damon, 2004, p. 13). PYD is an approach that views young people as resources rather than problems and aims to understand, educate, and engage rather than treat or correct “maladaptive behaviors” (Damon, 2004). This shift in perspective brings a focus to childhood and adolescence as special periods in which children should be given support to learn and develop.

Positive Youth Development (PYD) is not a specific program but an approach that can be applied to engage youth. PYD is an evidenced-based holistic approach that engages the entire community, including young people. It intentionally focuses on building strengths and competencies in the following areas: physical, intellectual, psychological, emotional, and social skills (Kuperminc, Thomason, DiMeeo, & Broomfield-Massey, 2011). It ultimately results in youth successfully navigating through adolescence to adulthood and becoming productive and contributing citizens.

Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003) suggested that youth development programs provide opportunities and experiences to youth in the following domains: reinforced support at home, school, and in the community; creation of social, academic, and work related skills; and engagement in thought-provoking roles and activities. Peter Benson (1997) and his colleagues
at the Search Institute in Minnesota focused on “developmental assets” and helped establish a basis for a universal model of youth development. Benson’s approach focuses on sustaining positive strengths. The major tenet of this youth development framework is that resilience is a capacity for healthy development and successful learning innate to all people. It is an inborn developmental wisdom that naturally motivates individuals to meet their human needs for love, belonging, respect, identity, power, mastery, challenge, and meaning. The ongoing process of meeting these needs is called youth development (Benson, 1997; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003).

Originally proposed by Rick Little in the early 1990’s, the theoretical constructs that comprise positive youth development were first presented as the four Cs: competence, confidence, (positive social) connection, and character (Little, 1993; Lerner et al., 1995). Further research and practice stressed the use of a fifth C, caring (or compassion) in understanding the goals and results of youth development programs in the community (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003; Learner, 2004).

The Five Cs of PYD are competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring.

1. Competence: Positive view of one’s actions in specific areas, including social, academic, cognitive, health, and vocational.

2. Confidence: Internal sense of overall positive self-worth and self-efficacy.

3. Connection: Positive bonds with people and institutions that are reflected in exchanges between the individual and his/her peers, family, school, and community in which both parties contribute to the relationship.

4. Character: Respect for societal and cultural norms, possession of standards for correct behaviors, a sense of right and wrong, and integrity.

5. Caring/Compassion: A sense of empathy and sympathy for others (Lerner et al., 2005).
Young people who have developed these “Five C’s” are considered to be on the developmental path to the Sixth C: Contribution. Contributing positively to self, family, community, and the institutions of society (Lerner et al., 2005). The model of the Five C’s, along with the newer 6th C, suggests positive development occurs if the strengths of youth are supported with positive resources that promote these developments. These internal characteristics help youth grow into helping adults.

In 2005 Lerner et al. published the first wave of data from a large, longitudinal study to assess and understand the processes included in the emergence of PYD. The study was an effort to construct a diverse sample of youth to test the developmental contextual model of PYD. This is referred to as the 4-H study of PYD as it was a project funded by the National 4-H Council. The overall goal of the study was to test the level of youth participation to see if youth development is associated with PYD and ultimately contribution (the sixth C). A measure of participation was used to define an individual’s depth and maximum involvement in a program rather than number of programs participated in. Results indicated a casual relationships between the PYD, participation in a youth program, and contributions. Both PYD and program participation were found to be significantly related to contribution. This study provided further support for the conceptualization of PYD as competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring, as well as the addition of contribution.

Larson, Hansen, and Moneta (2006) inventoried the types of developmental and negative experiences encountered by youth participating in extracurricular and community-based activities. The organized activities included sports, performance and fine arts, academic clubs and organizations, community-oriented activities, service activities and faith-based youth groups. Over 2,000 youth from 19 different schools completed the computer-administered protocol.
Results showed the 62% were involved in sports (both individual and team), 45% were involved in musical, performance or art clubs, 30% involved in academic clubs and organization; 27% were involved in community and peer services, 19% involved in a faith-based youth group, and 17% were involved in community oriented clubs (such as 4H or Big Brother/Sister). Youth reported “community-oriented, service, and faith-based programs provided …(valuable) experiences… in the domains of identity, positive relationships, and adult networks” (Larson, Hansen & Moneta, p. 860).

Another example of promoting positive development in early adolescent girls is the Cool Girls, Inc. program (Kuperminc et. al., 2011). The Cool Girls, Inc. mission “is dedicated to the self-empowerment of girls. We inspire girls to change their world… support(ing) girls in all aspects of their development- breaking the cycles of poverty, low self-esteem, and teen pregnancy” (Cool Girls, Inc. 2012). Cool Girls was founded in 1989 as a community-based program located in the metropolitan Atlanta, GA. Operating on a PYD framework, Cool Girls’ (2011) “theory of change reflects a belief that increasing girls’ access to internal (e.g., self-determination or internal locus of control) and external resources (e.g., supportive social networks) will result in enhancing the likelihood of healthy behaviors and attitudes over time” (p. 172). The program consists of an inclusive life skills curriculum covering topics from health and hygiene to self-esteem and cultural awareness. Another component of the Cool Girls, Inc. Program is participation in Cool Scholars. This part of the program provides girls with tutoring, academic assistance, and time to complete homework to foster academic compliance and growth. To evaluate the impact of their program, Cool Girls utilizes self-report instruments to assess:

- Self-concept: including scholastic abilities, behavioral conduct, social acceptance, body image, and global self worth
• Academic orientation: including school grades, academic effort and internalized achievement motivation

• Future orientation: including goal-setting and decision-making skills

• Healthy behaviors: including nutrition, physical activity, reproductive health and avoidance of substance use

The short-term effect of participation in the Cool Girls core program was evaluated using a quasi-experimental, non-equivalent comparison group (Kuperminc et. al., 2011). The domains of self-concept, future orientation, and healthy behaviors were found to be more positive in the Cool Girls Participants compared to reports of girls in the comparison groups.

Another component of the Cool Girls Program is being paired with a peer mentor (older/younger) after being in the program for 1 year. Assessment of the impact of mentorship revealed it was related to gains in peer acceptance, improved perceptions of body image, and expectations of future drug use abstinence. When discussing their evaluation process, Kumerminc et al. (2011) highlighted the fact that future studies should include data from other sources, such as program staff. The current study advances knowledge by interviewing group facilitators to gain knowledge about the impact of the GATs.

Methods Used With the Girls

This project was conducted as a program evaluation of Vaughn’s larger project (2011). Interviews and digital stories were the primary methods used to gather information from the girls participating in GATs. The next section introduces information on digital stories which was a “new” method for this investigator. Thus, the following description of digital stories represents the investigator’s new knowledge in this area.
**Digital Story Technique**

In the field of education the use of digital story has become popular as a technical application as it can accommodate user-contributed content and therefore is easily used by students in creative processes (Robin, 2006; Robin, 2008). Stories exist in every culture as a means of sharing about oneself in a setting as well as learning the stories of others. Stories explain the origins of cultures, current narratives and future hopes. Individuals have their own narrative as they express the stories of their lives embedded in culture, community and family. According to Sawyer and Wilson (2011), “digital stories use computer-based images, recorded music, art created by hand or digitally, photography, student dramatic dialogue, and computer-generated sound clips to create stories. Multimedia then serves as the artistic creative element” (p. 275). Digital storytelling allows for use of expressive arts as a counseling modality (Bradley, Whiting, Hendricks, Parr, & Jones, 2008). Through writing, art, music, movement, drama, and poetry participants can tell their stories providing opportunities for emotional release, and affording a rich source of data for researchers and evaluators. In fact, Pederson (1995) cites storytelling as “the original form of teaching” (p. 2). Digital storytelling is commonly used by people to tell their own stories, and it also allows users a chance to create a social community around these stories. This use has grown because of the relatively low cost of digital devices, the ease of learning to create digital stories, and the availability of many sites on the web where stories may be displayed and shared (Meadows, 2003).

Miller (2010) lists seven elements that are key to the development of a digital story. Miller adapted elements based on the Center for Digital Storytelling (Lambert, 2010) to include the following: “(1) an interesting question to answer, (2) impact, (3) a clear point of view, (4) economy, (5) the power of a student’s voice, (6) art that helps tell the story, and (7) the
soundtrack” (2010, p.15). It is important to note that digital stories do not have to include all of the elements; instead it depends on the time and ability level of the student (Miller, 2010).

According to Gils (2005), using digital story as an educational tool provides numerous advantages including a personalized experience, improved student involvement in the process of learning, and variation “because of the generating power of digital storytelling no story or scenario has to be the same” (p. 5). Digital storytelling also provides participants a way to learn how to use technology effectively in their learning to produce, particularly if provided the appropriate resources (Gils, 2005).

For the purpose of GATs evaluation, during a small group session, participants produced a digital story to explain and define their group. By creating a digital story, participants were able voice their own opinions and create an authentic personal experience (Sadik, 2008). Specifically, participants produced stories and drawings by pencil-sketching on a storyboard (Ohler, 2008, 2012) to provide information about what they learned in GAT groups. Ohler’s storyboard template was used to allow participants to describe an event or object and provide a narrative. The narrative reflects what the object or event meant and provides a way for participants to answer questions about the object or event (see details in procedures section for this document). This method also allows for uploading audio and other materials such as songs, sounds or voice recordings so that participants can provide information (e.g., picture, clip art, graphic, or other kind of visual media) that will help illustrate or explain their narratives or stories about an event or object. (See Appendix A for Digital Story Directions.)
CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY

Participants

Ten pre-adolescent girls and eight facilitators participated in the current study. Girls were recruited from the Academy for Multilingual Immersion Studies (AMIS). AMIS girls in the 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th grades were invited to participate in the Girls Action Teams (GATs). Table 1 presents demographic information for the 10 girls participating in this study. This study was approved by the institutional review board at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center (Appendix B).

Table 1. Demographic Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ariel</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>African-American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>African-American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dacia</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>African-American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dana</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Latina</td>
</tr>
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<td>Diana</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jade</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>African-American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kayla</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Bi-racial</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Latina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Latina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sasha</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Latina</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Pseudonyms are used to protect the girls’ identities.
Eight facilitators (two per group) were recruited to participate in this study. Four facilitators contributed data and participated in the evaluation; however, only three were consistently involved throughout the duration of the assessments. These facilitators were adult female students and professionals connected to either a university (University of Cincinnati or Xavier University) or Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center and of diverse race, ethnic and educational backgrounds. Table 2 presents background information about facilitators who provided the data for this project.

Table 2. Facilitator Background Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>GAT Group</th>
<th>Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Masters student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>4th year undergraduate student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>Masters student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Latina</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>BA Physical Education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Setting**

AMIS is a Cincinnati public school designed to serve students in kindergarten through 8th grade who are native Spanish or French speakers along with a large number of African-American urban youth. Increasing numbers of immigrant students are attending AMIS and greater numbers self-identify as Hispanic. Student population racial/ethnic demographics include 60.2% Black, non-Hispanic, 34.8% Hispanic, and 3.1% Multiracial (Cincinnati Public Schools, 2010).
According to the Ohio Department of Education, almost 89% of the student body is economically disadvantaged (Cincinnati Public Schools, 2010).

Materials

*Parent Agreement Form.* Girls who were interested in participating in the GATs were given permission forms to be signed by parent or legal guardian (Parent Permission Appendix C). Parental consent was required for child participation in GAT groups. Child assent was also required.

*Group Descriptions.* All groups used arts and craft materials including, but not limited to, markers, glue, scissors, paper, notebooks, magazines, and beads. The materials needed for the group projects varied depending on the activity of the specific group (photography, drama, art, and health- all about me).

The photography group used point and shoot digital cameras, cardstock, and large pieces of construction paper. Each participating girl was given her own camera to use for the course of the group. A set of rules for the camera was developed: (1) be careful with the cameras; treat them with respect, (2) only we are allowed to use the cameras, (3) ask permission before taking pictures of other people, and (4) pictures should be appropriate. At the beginning of each session, each girl was given a chance to share something that happened during the school day followed by a discussion of recent events (long weekend or holiday) or how the girls were feeling that day. The facilitator then explained the day’s agenda beginning with an activity art, game, self-esteem activity or photography lesson and practice. The group concluded with a discussion of what the girls liked, learned or something to change for the next week.

The art group used beads, markers, pencils, clay, paints, as well as paper mache. The art projects ranged from clay, paints, to paper mache, beads, markers and pencils. Each week, the
materials for the day’s project were presented followed by a group discussion of the project. At the end of the project, the girls helped clean up followed by a discussion of the details of the next week’s project.

The health group began with a healthy snack and a discussion about why or why not the snack was healthy. Often there was a writing or art activity related to the group’s garden project. These assignments focused on leading a healthy lifestyle.

The drama group started with a music and dance related warm-up activity (facilitator had background in Argentine folk dance) to get warmed up and ready to start the group. As the play developed, the group time was spent reviewing, correcting, fixing, and modifying the script of a play. New ideas were also added each week if the girls had anything to add.

*Demographic Information.* Participating girls completed a demographic questionnaire. Questions ranged from age and grade to how many adults are in your home and what language(s) do you speak at home? The complete demographic questionnaire is presented in Appendix D.

*Procedures for Individual Interviews.* A minimum of two girls from each GAT group were randomly selected to participate in semi-structured interviews, which focused on examining girls’ ideas about their own strengths, personal development as a result of being in the groups, relationships formed in the groups and interests “sparked by the groups.” The girls also responded to questions evaluating what the girls learned as a result of group participation. The selection of girls was based on the girls present for the group. For each of the groups, at least two girls participated in the interview (the art group and the health group each had an additional interviewee).

The interviewer asked girls to discuss the GATs and talk about their own interests and stressors. Each interview took 30 to 40 minutes. Interview questions were modeled after
previous research (Amper, 2010). The interview questions/guide is presented in Appendix E. Interviews were audio taped and transcribed. Each interview was typed and transcribed on the researcher’s personal computer which is password protected.

**Procedures for Digital Stories.** Participants used the digital story method to reflect on their perceptions of their experience in GAT groups. Specifically, girls selected their frame, which was a picture or a drawing that reflects what the group meant to them. As prompts, the interviewer asked the girls to discuss what they learned from being in the groups. The interviewer used probes such as, “Tell me more about it” or “Give me an example” to gather more or additional information about experiences described by the girls. This process was adapted from Robin’s four-step approach to creating and integrating digital stories to learning (2005; See Appendix A).

Each scene for the digital story was pencil-sketched on a storyboard as developed by Jason Ohler (http://www.jasonohler.com/pdfs/storyboard_template.pdf) (See Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Digital Storytelling Storyboard Template**

![Storyboard Template](Ohler, 2008)

There is a box to write or sketch what will appear (graphic or photo) at this point in the story. The frame description is used to describe the following: (1) what will appear on the screen
(picture, clip art, graphic, or other kind of visual); (2) what listeners will hear (music, narrative, sounds); (3) comments about what you are trying to achieve and communicate at this point in the digital story. The narration section allows for the narration or description of the scene to be written out. Finally, the media list section provides details on the specifics of every piece of media needed such as, music, songs, sounds, or voice recordings; pictures, graphics or diagrams, video clips, or even text.

Photographs. Girls were asked to submit photographs that reflected their experiences and feelings about participating in the GAT groups.

Facilitator Reflection Forms. Facilitators completed a reflection form to review their impressions of each GAT session (see Appendix F for Facilitator Reflection Form). In their written responses, facilitators provided a brief overview of the session and an assessment of how involved the girls were in the session as well as any challenges or obstacles to completion of projects or to maintaining a positive group climate.

Procedure for Facilitator Focus Groups. One focus group was conducted to examine the experience of the GAT facilitators (see Appendix G for Facilitator Interview Guide). Facilitators provided information about the girls’ development, group processes and resilience factors acquired as a result of group participation. The group started with an introduction and description of the purpose of the group (see script presented in Appendix F). The group was audio taped and transcribed. Transcriptions of the focus group and interview data were analyzed to determine themes related to group impact and effectiveness as well as the group processes.

Data Analyses

Qualitative methods were used to uncover key themes in the data provided from the digital stories, interviews with girls, discussion of photographs, facilitator reflection forms, and
the focus group with facilitators. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Transcripts and interviewer notes were reviewed by the investigator in order to “immerse” herself in the data analysis process. The investigator reviewed the transcripts of interviews and focus groups and information in digital stories to develop broad conceptual categories/salient themes describing the girls learning experience and personal outcomes from GAT groups. The investigator conducted multiple readings of the interviews and extracted the main themes, phrases, and meanings of the participants’ words as they related to the group development of the girls (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). The investigator reviewed the materials and underscored words or phrases and developed short notes or memos that summarized participants learning and group experience and after several rounds of review developed categories reflection key themes in the data. Through a process of continuous review and data reduction, modifications were incorporated until a final set of themes emerged (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Miles & Huberman 1994; Agar, 1996; Huberman & Miles, 2002). The investigator conducted three reviews of the data to develop categories and complete a data reduction and analysis process.
CHAPTER IV. RESULTS

The first section of this chapter focuses on the analysis of information obtained from the girls who participated in the interviews to review their perceptions of their Girls Action Teams (GATs). At times, methods are reviewed, when this material might aid in the explanation of results. Ten girls were interviewed from the four different GATs groups. The girls also utilized digital stories and took pictures of their work, which were prompts used to discuss what they learned about and the products they developed during their group. Information from interviews with girls and the focus groups with facilitators were combined to form a “picture” or story of the growth processes that occurred in the groups. The second section of this chapter presents data shared by adult facilitators through reflection forms and a focus group. The facilitator data also informed the development of themes by describing the process of self-development that occurred during the GAT groups.

Information Provided by Girls

The individual interviews were conducted over a two-month period (April to May 2012). Figure 2 presents a graphic display of the girls interviewed from each of the four groups. The names in this document are “pseudo names” or pseudonyms developed by the author. Table 1 presents additional information on the girls.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Photography</th>
<th>Health- All About Me</th>
<th>Art</th>
<th>Drama</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca Grade 4</td>
<td>Dana Grade 5</td>
<td>Dacia Grade 5</td>
<td>Ann Grade 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jade Grade 4</td>
<td>Mary Grade 5</td>
<td>Diana Grade 5</td>
<td>Ariel Grade 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sasha Grade 5</td>
<td>Kayla Grade 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2 Girls and Groups
### Table 3

The Girls by GAT Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Girl</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Biographical Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jade</td>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>10 years old; lives with mom &amp; younger brother (2 years old). Born and raised in Cincinnati, OH.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca</td>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>11 years old; lives with mom &amp; 4 siblings (1 brother and 3 sisters). Father left family when Rebecca was four years old.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dana</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>10 years old; lives with mom, dad, and three brothers (1 older and 2 younger)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>11 years old; lives with mom (parents recently separated).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sasha</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>10 years old; lives with mom, dad and 16 year old sister. Born in Mexico and majority of extended family still lives in Mexico.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dacia</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>11 years old; lives with mom and dad and two 17 year old brothers (one from mom and one from dad).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diana</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>11 years old; lives with mom and dad. Youngest of five siblings, brothers are 16, 13, 12, 12, and 10.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kayla</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>13 years old; lives with mom, 19 year old sister, 18 year old brother, and two 7 year old brothers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>9 years old; lives with mom and stepdad and younger sister (1 year old). Has two older brothers that live with dad whom she has not seen in recent years. Born and raised in Cincinnati, OH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ariel</td>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>9 years old; lives with mom and 7 year old sister. Born and raised in Cincinnati, OH.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As mentioned, the primary data source for results were themes derived from individual interviews with girls. However facilitator reflection forms, facilitator focus groups, digital story comprised of drawings (prompt- Girls Action Team is...), and photographs were also used to inform the development of results. Figure 3 presents a schematic depicting the sources of data reviewed by this investigator.

![Figure 3 Sources of Data]

**Summarizing the Girls’ Interview Data**

During interviews, the girls discussed what they learned from groups and what they valued from participating in the group process. Five main categories emerged from the review of the interviews.

1. **Connection**

   The theme of connection seemed to be the most relevant and consistent throughout the data. At the core of this theme is membership and belonging as well as having a sense of safety and structure. Connections to family, GAT group leaders, friends, and other group members appeared to be of value to the girls. For example, Sasha provided additional evidence of the importance of connection in her life as indicated by the following interview data:
Interviewer: Okay, so who are the most important people in your life? Who would you say Sasha?

Sasha: My mom, my dad, and my sister.

Interviewer: Your mom your dad and your sister at and what you value about them that means what's important about them?

Sasha: My mom she is always with me and I feel safe with my dad and with my sister I get along with her sometimes she's and sometimes she's mean…but when she is not here and stuff I miss her.

Connection with Family. Another question in the interview assessed girls’ thoughts about important people in their lives. Most girls reported that family was important and some revealed concerns about family stress. For most girls, parents were the most important people in their lives. The following are excerpts from some of the girls’ comments: (a) “My family….my parents” (Dana), (b) “My mom, my dad, and my sister” (Sasha), (c) “My mom…. I love her, she’s like my hero. She’s special to me, like, I have the best mom, she’s the best mom to me” (Kayla), (d) “My family….they take care of me and help me through stuff I need and stuff” (Mary) and (e) “My baby sister…she always have this lil’ charm on people” (Ann). These excerpts illustrate the importance of family in the girls’ lives. One girl did mention the importance of teachers as mentors and positive figures in her life. This girls’ response about important people in her life was,

My parents and some of my teachers… well they teach me a lot, like, sometimes, when I think I was younger, um, sometimes my teachers used to, um, like right now, my teacher now, she usually like when we need help, she takes us out into the hallway and we have one on one, one on one time.
When discussing important people, one participant, revealed that parental separation was a significant stressor. She disclosed that her parents had separated two years ago and that they, “…used to always get into fights and stuff so um they separated so I barely see my dad but all the time see my mom and my brother too left so its only me and my mom at home. This girl also revealed that, “…

I do stress about money and my parents because it’s kinda hard since I grew up with them together and now growing up I have them separated and having more than one side so I have two sides to pick from…

This is evidence indicating that what happens at home does have a lasting impression on girls and can cause significant stress even to an eleven year old.

*Connection with Group Leader.* Connections with group leaders were also important. Even by session two, the girls had started to make connections with the facilitators. One girl remarked, “I wish we could come everyday.”

During Sasha’s interview she referred to her group leader as being an important factor in why she is comfortable in her group.

*Interviewer:* Are you comfortable with participating in your group?

*Sasha:* Yes

*Interviewer:* Is there anything that you don’t really feel comfortable with?

*Sasha:* At first, me and her (pointing to her friend, Dana) wanted to be in art, but now that we’re in the “Me” group. It’s really fun being with M (group leader).

Later in the interview, Sasha again brings up her group leader:

*Interviewer:* So what kind of feelings do you think or what are some feelings that you’ve been feeling better about yourself because of the group?
Sasha: Um, like, when we are with her (group leader) we like tell her everything we did at school and she understands us and but when like we are with our teacher we don’t. but when I’m at home with my mom I feel comfortable like when I’m with her (group leader).

Connection with Friends. Connection with friends was another theme that continually arose throughout the data analysis. There were mixed responses with some girls having more friendships at school and others with more outside of school.

Interviewer: okay, would you say you have close friends? Here at school?

Dana: (points across the room to) Sasha, she’s my best friend.

Interviewer: What about outside school- do you have friends outside school?

Dana: (shakes head yes), ‘Cause my mom and hers are best friends, so we see each other a lot.

Dana and Sasha have an advantage of being friends both at school and outside of school. The girls’ families are very close with their mothers being good friends so the girls are able to spend time with each other during school as well as on the weekends. “We have lots of sleepovers.” Dacia talked about friends at school and outside of school “one does [goes to the same school] and one is in Atlanta…I met her at church but uh she been here since I was like five and then she left but I still talk to her.

(2) Strengths

Another interview question focused on having the girls discuss what they were good at and their personal strengths. For example, one girl mentioned she had opportunities to be creative while participating in the GAT groups and this seemed to improve her feelings of self-worth. She mentioned that, “It’s a good thing to be creative and it’s like being yourself and that
how you learn how to be yourself by being creative.” Other girls provided answers that indicated group participation enhanced their social development and contributed to their valuing of interpersonal relationships and developing interpersonal skills. In response to the interview question, “What in the group made you feel like you had more strength as a person?” Girls provided various answers indicating improved confidence and caring resulted from group participation. Diana reported that she learned ways to be a better friend and “not talk about each other.”

Girls also reflected on their own positive characteristics when responding to the question about their strengths. Many listed academic skills as strengths or personal skills as strengths. Competence in school subjects was another theme that arose for many of the girls. While they did not necessarily address their own competence, school subjects were often referred to as being a strength. This is evidenced in interview data provided by Rebecca who reported that she was good at “science.” She said, “I like, like how there’s always a solution to it. And like you can discover things from the past and like um, you can mix chemicals and find out what they make. Rebecca also mentioned that she was good at “jumping rope and riding a bike.” Another girl reported that she was good at math and playing football (“I’m good at math and I mostly play football with my cousins”).

(3) Drawbacks of Group Participation

The girls did report some negative aspects about group participation. Typically, these negative experiences were offset by positive mentoring from group facilitators. For instance, one girl stated she was uncomfortable with the fact, “the people that don’t like other people in our group, that (they) talk about others in our group.” She was a member of the largest group, art. Toward the end of the year, there were problems with bullying (girls teasing each other and
talking about each other) in this group. However, later she said, “I learned that working in teams helps us be more creative and we have fun working together as a team.” Other girls discussed things they struggled with personally. One girl, Dacia disclosed, “um, I have trouble doing sports…‘cause it’s kinda hard for me.” Another girl revealed, “I’m kinda struggling in math,” when asked to name something she struggled with or had a harder time accomplishing. Rebecca’s answer was that she struggled with “cooking.”

(4) Stress

The girls had a variety of answers and definitions about stress and how to cope with it. When asked to define stress the girls remarked that stress was “like your nervous… like you’re don’t want to like … you don’t feel like talking.” Jade deals with her stress by sitting in her room and going to sleep “I don’t talk to nobody; I leave myself alone so I don’t get mad.” Another girl, Rebecca described stress as exhausting and that she copes with it by “taking a hot bath, screaming into a pillow…. [and] sitting in a dark place where no one can hear you and you can’t hear no one.” Kayla identified herself as a dancer and remarked when stressed at home, specifically, “ehh, I really don’t do anything, I would probably just step (dance).” Sasha related her stress predominantly to school, “stress means like, you are thinking about oh, I got a lot of homework to do and its all over your head and you can’t think of anything else.” When asked how she copes with it, she replied with “maybe, not go to school, I don’t know, or maybe just study and when you get to school do your best.” She often had to leave school in order to help her parents with an appointment because she acts as their translator. She didn’t seem to mind, but she did say that it caused her to miss a day of state testing to help as translator. She was most upset about the amount of work she had to do to make up missing school. School was a form of stress for a few of the girls. This is evidenced by Dana, who talked about homework being
stressful because “my dad stopped going to school when he was in the 4th grade and my mom in 6th grade… and my big brother, he always tell me the wrong answer on purpose.” When asked how do you cope with stress, one girl reported asking family, specifically mom, for help. “…Um, I would just ask my mom, ask my mom to help me get relaxed to take my mind off it. To go out for an ice cream or something.”

(5) Learning and Satisfaction

Questions specific to each group were asked to assess overall group participation and satisfaction. The girls reported feeling satisfied and pleased with their groups. The question, “What did you learn about in the group” provided a prompt that led to a variety of answers about a positive group experiences. Several girls provided answers showing a good understanding of the purpose of the reflection activities in the groups. For instance, Jade, responded, “that photography is not just all about taking pictures. like not only, like I learned photography you just don’t take pictures but like you have to like tell why you took the picture and how you took the picture and when did they take the picture and stuff like that.” Rebecca added to the concept of learning, “that it’s also about memories… like when you take a picture and when you print it out or something or copy it or stuff you can keep it in a photo album or something and you can always go through it.”

In general their perceptions of the GAT groups were positive. When prompted with, “If you could summarize your involvement in GAT in one word, what word would you use?” The girls answered,

1. Fun (III)
2. Awesome
3. Inspirational
4. Extraordinary
5. Helpful
6. Cool

_Digital Stories and Photographs_

_Results of Digital Story_

The digital story was introduced to the girls as a group project, meaning all four groups met together to answer the question, “Girls Action Team is…” Each girl was provided with a copy of the Digital Storytelling Storyboard Template (see Appendix Figure 1 Digital Storytelling Storyboard Template). The girls were given other paper to use to draw what they envisioned in the frame. Analysis of the digital stories revealed that girls’ expressed the themes consistent with the five categories discovered in the analysis of interview data. The following is a selection of examples that best represent the girls’ comments, reflecting themes of connection and satisfaction with the GATs.

The first digital story example, was by Ariel, who despite her quiet demeanor during the individual interview, was able to use the Digital Story to express her opinions and sentiments about starting GATs. Evidence of her growth in terms of confidence is reflected in her story.

The amazing day is when it had just started I met a lot of different teachers it started out small and become big to me. It is a great awesome time for me. Just making the play is awesome. I finally use writing and my creativity has helped me greatly.
The second example is a collage of positive words such as “creative, exciting, entertaining, awesome, and wonderful” that describes the individual’s experience of satisfaction related to participating in her group.

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**Figure 4 Digital Story Example 1**

**Frame Description:** “My picture is about how it felt when I started Girls Action Team”

**Narration:** none.

**Media List:** Slow music and pink dots on the screen behind it.
The third example focused on friendship, a key component of “connection.” The importance of connecting with friends is a theme that maintains consistent throughout the data. The frame describes a friend as “someone who is always there for you in time of good or bad. A friend will always be by you side. A friend is love.”
Figure 6  Digital Story Example 3

Frame Description: “A friend is someone who is always there for you in time of good or bad. A friend will always be by you side. A friend is love!”

Narration: “I selected the friendship of love picture, because, a friendship is a relationship between people that grows and remains forever true.”

Media List: Song- “That’s What Friends are For” by Dion Worwick
The fourth example provides an in-depth look at the drama group. The focus is two girls performing a play about GAT. The dialogue includes the remark, “Girls Action Team is epic. Yes it is.” This provides evidence of the positive experiences of group members and their satisfaction with their experience.

![Digital Story Example](image)

**Figure 7** Digital Story Example 4  
Frame Description: “About a play where they are talking about girls action team”  
Narration: none.  
Media List: Characters talking about GATS. Slow dance music.

**Photographs**

The photographs taken by the girls in the groups (not just the photography group) can be seen as another form of qualitative data. The girls were asked to submit photos that represented their feelings about participating in GATs. The photographs themselves are not shown because the girls took pictures of each other. Perhaps this is additional evidence of the importance of connection and friendships made during group participation. The girls discussed positive
feelings about each other and the activities they engaged in together when talking about the photographs.

Facilitators

Facilitator Reflection Forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health-All About Me</td>
<td>3 reflection forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>3 reflection forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drama</td>
<td>3 reflection forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>15 reflection forms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 8* Group and Quantity of Facilitator Reflection Forms

At the end of each group session, facilitators completed a reflection form concerning that day’s session (see *Appendix F* for Facilitator Reflection Form). In their written responses, facilitators provided an overview of the group process as sessions unfolded. Turning in the Facilitator Reflection Form was highly suggested but not mandatory; thus, there was a wide range in responsiveness. The depth of analysis consequently depended on the number of the forms and information provided. Facilitator information provided a window on group activities and climate. The next section presents a review of findings by GAT group.

*Health-All About Me Group*

The health group, self-named “Queens of Health,” was a group focused on educating girls about health in a fun and empowering way. Through group participation girls were able to learn about factors influencing their own health (for example, importance of healthy eating,
importance of a varied diet, the difference between vitamins and minerals). The girls were able to try various healthy snacks and discuss the nutritional value of the snack and the importance of nutrients in the snacks. At the beginning, “There are some cliques within our group, initially there was a racial divide (African-American girls hung out at the same table and Latina girls at the other)…. They did, however, form great bonds with each other and myself [facilitator].” Activities such as the “share jar” were utilized as ice breakers and a way for the girls to share about themselves.

The group started with two facilitators and halfway through the year, one stopped attending the group. Several girls dropped out due to needing to attend tutoring or having transportation issues. For the remaining girls, these two issues were upsetting as they “felt left out” (left behind). On the other hand, this smaller group had stronger connections and friendships by the end of the school year. The stress and demands of state testing became apparent “towards the end of the school year, because many students seemed drained.” The facilitator noticed, “when we were together and working on our projects, I see a sense of relief from the girls that they can just be themselves and relax for awhile and get to know one another.”

Art Group

The beginning sessions of the art group were used to establish group rules. “The girls all appeared to agree with the rules, and agreed to share them with the rest of the group when they came.” The girls did not know one another so there was little talking and sharing. The facilitator noted, “the girls were not very actively involved in today’s session…. I am hoping that next week they will be more pepped up.” The second week the group started with an art focused icebreaker activity. The girls were asked to pick a prompt (ie. What is your favorite animal) and draw their response. The girls were then asked to share their drawings. “The girls did some
great work. While most of them were quiet, they worked really diligently on some beautiful
drawings.” The quietness of the girls could also be attributed to the fact that two new girls joined
the group. The group dynamics continued to change as girls either did not show up or were
added to the group.

Drama Group

The drama group began with high enthusiasm as noted by the facilitator, “the girls were
very exited and anxious to know the plans for the upcoming sessions.” The girls were “good
listeners and respectful of each other’s ideas.” As for group dynamics the girls worked well
together and used their creative thinking to start brainstorming ideas for their play. By the fourth
session, the girls had learned to recognize parts of a play and had started to work together to
write a script for their play. The girls seemed to understand the importance of following steps to
write a script that has all the fundamental points of a play. The facilitator reported that, “Girls
worked well in groups- gave support to one another as ideas were developed. As they were in
full control of putting together a story.” An obstacle was that he girls had trouble choosing an
idea for the final script.

Toward the middle of the year, the main facilitator stopped attending due to conflicts
with her new job. The sudden lack of and change of leadership resulted in a lack of consistency
for the girls. The project and thus the progress of the girls floundered because the facilitators
were inconsistent. Due to not having a main facilitator many of the girls stopped attending
regularly and only two girls finished the program. Unlike the other groups, group rules were not
established or reinforced at the beginning, which caused discipline problems. Also, the drama
group had the greatest number of younger girls (fourth graders) which could have also influence
the discipline and “acting out behaviors.”
Photography Group

The development of connection and friendships was important for girls in the photography group. The facilitator’s notes indicated that even from the beginning, the girls showed evidence of caring and looking out for one another. In the week 2-reflection form, it was noted:

They will let me know if one of their peers won't be coming in that day. Today, the girls openly communicated with one another and shared some personal experiences regarding their family life…The girls are very talkative and are generally inclusive. They walk around taking photographs together, and eagerly take pictures that include each member of the group.

During week 4, Rebecca was particularly helpful to another member, who was struggling to come up with questions for a game. As noted by the facilitator, “Rebecca would give suggestions for questions or ask if Francine would like a hint. She showed positive relationship skills and I was very pleased with her willingness to help…” Rebecca was not asked to help, but rather saw a fellow group member having trouble and reached out to help her. Like the other groups, group progress limited at times due to sporadic attendance issues:

I sometimes feel it is difficult to make group progress with the unpredictable attendance rates of some of my girls. We are essentially a concrete group of six now (5 students and myself), but attendance on a weekly basis is generally around 3 or 4. The girls continue to get along well. This session they were supportive, encouraging, and helpful to their peers. Even with attendance issues, the girls were able to form connections and friendships with one another. The facilitator noted that,
The girls continue to be very open and eager to share personal details about their lives.

The two present today not seem hesitant to share information or work with each other.

They both continue to display positive interpersonal and collaboration skills.

*Focus Group with Facilitators*

One focus group was held with facilitators. Analysis indicated three categories (building community, self-esteem, and leader commitment). During this group the main topic of conversation centered on group dynamics and building the girls’ sense of self. Facilitators valued building a sense of community in their groups as well as having opportunities to build the girls’ self-esteem. They also discussed the importance of leader commitment to facilitating group development and progress. It is noteworthy, that although a script was provided and related to questions to guide reflections, the participants in this group used the session to process their feelings about factors critical to running the groups and their common experiences of how the groups benefited the girls.

(1) *Building a Sense of Community*

One facilitator noted, “my girls got along extremely well. They were very open to sharing their stories and becoming friends with each other.” Thus, girls who could work together built a sense of community and this lead to positive feelings and accomplishments for the group. If girls in the group already knew one another, this contributed to a strong and positive sense of community and group cohesion. Another facilitator noted that the girls formed a cohesive group, but this disintegrated somewhat as new girls came into the group. She remarked, “the addition of new girls proved difficult.” By adding new participants mid-year, “there was kind of an implosion of the group because new people were added. In retrospect, that was a mistake. With the addition of the new girls, the girls showed more meanness to one another.” Another
facilitator described the sense of community as building “more connectedness with each other and the facilitators....”

The facilitators also mentioned barriers to building a sense of community. A common barrier was sporadic attendance. Attendance problems were related to girls not having transportation home as well as their not attending school regularly. Additional barriers were related to the facilitators as some facilitators also attended infrequently which hampered group cohesion and community building.

(2) Self-Esteem

As the groups progressed so did the girls’ positive views of themselves. Evidence of this is demonstrated by the fact that the girls were able to share information about themselves and how others viewed them. “The girls talked about how others’ opinions affect their self-esteem and how others’ opinions may or may not be accurate representations of who they are.” Another example of the positive view of self, “I can’t believe I planted these and now they are sprouting. I grew them on my own!” Both the girls and facilitators enjoyed the afterschool time getting to know one another. One facilitator noted that every week the girls were “…very excited to see me when I walked in, and they were looking forward to the group.”

(3) Involvement and Leader Commitment

It was important to have leaders who were committed to developing the group atmosphere and building a sense of community among the group. For example, one group had consistently strong dynamics, even though at least two of the girls were considered “problematic” because they exhibited behavior problems during school. This facilitator was skillful in redirecting the group when needing to, involving everyone, making progress in activities, and consistently present so that girls in the group (who weren’t friends beforehand and
were not in the same grade level) were able to form a cohesive group. The commitment and involvement of the facilitators proved to be essential. The group without consistent leadership also did not have group rules and was observed to have “very bad discipline.” Additionally, the group’s project was lost (one hardcopy of the play) which could be attributed to lack of leadership.

The facilitator focus group provided an opportunity for the leaders to express their feelings and opinions of the girls’ development. Overall the opinions of the facilitators were positive and included statements such as, “I loved working with (my) group, their personalities mixed well and we had a lot of fun!” as well as “I really loved the group I facilitated. They were so energetic and told me they looked forward to coming to see me and each other every week. They were respectful and always helped me and one another…”
CHAPTER V. DISCUSSION

Project Overview

The purpose of this qualitative research was to evaluate the experiences of girls involved in the GAT afterschool program. The aims of the project were twofold. One goal was to evaluate the girls’ perceptions of the outcomes of participating in the groups. Another objective was to provide an in-depth analysis of the group development.

Ten girls participated in the interviews that served as the foundation for the development of themes and results. Data from the facilitators also provided a window on group processes. In addition, focus group data revealed facilitators’ views of the advantages of participating in GATs. The following sections discuss key themes uncovered from qualitative analyses, such as the value of connection with others through group participation and strengths for girls in the GATs. After discussing key themes, ideas generated from review of information provided through digital stories and photographs are presented. After this, an overview of facilitator data is presented followed by study limitations and conclusions. Thus, the discussion of the results of this study, in keeping with the “chapter format” required by the Counseling Program Handbook; relates project findings to key literature reviewed for this project.

Connection

The theme of connection was the most significant throughout the data provided by the girls. Whitlock (2004) proposed that connectedness comes from a feeling of belonging; it is a sense of place between youth and the environments in which they grow up both school and community. Girls involved in the GAT showed increased feelings of collectivity, belonging, and sharing. This is relevant as relationships are a key to adolescent well-being (Whitlock, 2004). Positive connections with family also were discussed. The girls’ comments revealed the
importance of family in their everyday lives. The “most important” family members included mother, father, and siblings with the most references to mothers.

Another theme that emerged in relation to connection was the relationship with the group leader. Connection to the group leader was a significant factor in how “comfortable” the girls felt in their groups. For example, one girl referred her facilitators as a reason for liking the group and why she felt “comfortable.” Roth & Brooks-Gunn (2002) noted the importance of having positive adults in an adolescents’ life because of their need for connectedness and to provide ongoing support in their development. The GAT group facilitators were able to be positive role models another contributing factor of this afterschool program.

It is interesting that the girls did not specifically mention connectedness in regards to school, but rather the people at school (such as teachers and friends). One girl referenced teachers as an important influence, “…like when we need help, she takes us out into the hallway and we have one on one time.” This is significant to note because the important connections occur at the interpersonal level. Friends were also mentioned throughout the interviews. The girls referenced friends both at school and outside of school. Additionally, by participating in the groups girls were able to develop connections through friendships with fellow group members with whom they did not previously know.

Stressors for Girls

Nearly all of the girls talked about school, some as a source of pride and many others as a source of stress. They looked to GAT as a place to just “be kids,” to be creative and to have fun. Any experience that mimicked school was perceived as a negative component of the program. The girls used group as a place to voice concerns and thoughts that they did not feel comfortable expressing in other environments. This finding supports literature that states that many youth
report that school is not a safe space to address their concerns (Ozer & Weinstein, 2004; Torre, 2005). Youth are looking for a place to talk about pressing concerns, and after-school youth programming is an ideal place for them to access support. In a political climate where budget cuts are commonplace and educational programs, particularly in inner city schools, are being eliminated, it is so important to recognize the need for extracurricular activity for positive youth development (Lerner et al., 2005). The definitions of stress also varied by individual response. One girl referred to stress at school specifically related to homework while another mentioned family stress. Family stress included parental separation, which also caused her to worry about financial stress. The girls had many ideas about coping with stress from not talking and having along time, talking to someone, screaming into a pillow, or even taking a bath. Overall, however, there was a positive response to having participated in GAT. The girls were able to develop friendships with each other and group leaders as well as participate in various projects related to the group’s topic area. These projects often included an activity involving art or self-expression.

**Strengths**

The girls also discussed their strengths. Each girl was asked to comment on a specific strength or “something you are good in.” Girls attributed involvement and participation in GAT groups as something that increased their personal strength and helped them develop a positive view of self. Academic skills were another common “strength.” Academic strengths ranged from math to science to reading. Some girls interpreted the question to focus only on school, while others referenced physical activities such as “jumping rope and riding a bike” as being personal strengths.
Self-Esteem

In general, study findings showed that the GAT groups provided an outlet for self-determination and improving self-worth by operating on a model of wellness, strengths, and assets. Some of the girls’ responses indicated groups benefitted feelings of self-worth. This also was evidenced in facilitators’ reflections about the GATs. Improving girls’ self-esteem is an important contribution given that many preadolescent girls suffer from poor self-esteem (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Kazdin, 1993). Early adolescence is a period of adjustment and transition in all areas: physically, mentally, and emotionally. Thus, it is important to combat these vulnerabilities by working to increase self-esteem and confidence (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Kazdin, 1993).

Digital Stories and Photographs

The digital stories provided a window to view what girls’ valued about the GAT groups. The prompt, “Girls Action Team is…” was used to elicit responses from the girls. As an evaluation tool, it provided information about girls’ satisfaction with peers, facilitators, and group projects. Common themes throughout the stories focused on how the girls felt participating in groups, the development of friendships, and positive words used to describe the experience. Photographs were also incorporated as data. The girls were asked to submit photographs to help describe their feelings about GAT. The visual representations focused on the friendships and connections made by the girls. This data highlighted the importance of connection and friendships. Having positive bonds or connections is one of original 5 C’s, and serves to build feelings of self-worth (Lerner et al., 2005).
Facilitator Focus Group

As mentioned, the facilitators reflected on their experiences during their focus group rather than responding to questions on the focus group script. Yalom, a psychiatrist known for his work with groups, believes there are “curative factors” found in groups (Yalom, 1995). Several of Yalom’s notions about curative group processes were represented in statements from the facilitators as they discussed positive factors about the GATs during their focus group. These factors include: “instilling hope” through group support and mutual sharing; “interaction” through conjoint work on group activities or sharing with others; “universality” through learning that one’s problems are similar (Yalom, 1995). The facilitators benefited from discussing how their groups yielded similar benefits for the girls, such as connecting the girls with each other through lived experiences. For example, one facilitator noted,

In the beginning the group dynamic was strong… We really respected one another and the girls helped each other out and offered feedback on their work, which was positive. Overall, the action team was a very energetic dynamic. The girls enjoyed this time to just “be kids” and network with people they may have never really spoke to during the regular school day.

The facilitators showed the universality or commonalities of their leadership experiences in their reflections.

Facilitator Reflection Forms

Facilitators were asked to comment on the group process in their weekly reflection forms. The majority of the girls got along well and as one facilitator noted, “their personalities mixed well and we had a lot of fun! There were no real issues to work through as we got along from day one.” An analysis of submitted forms revealed that overall the girls got along well and were
open to sharing their stories and becoming friends with one another even with the occasional teasing. Another facilitator remarked, “the girls were very open and willing to share some painful experiences (such as embarrassment and betrayal).” She went on to say that,

I was glad that they were willing to share their feelings with me without any apparent hesitation. I hope we can continue to develop our relationships and build a sense of trust and community with one another. The girls seem to enjoy coming to GAT and I hope that I can provide a safe and welcoming environment for them.

These examples offer insight into the development of the group and its ability to provide a group environment where the girls felt comfortable and accepted. In addition, facilitators reflections provided insight into the development of group projects and the complex interactions among girls to achieve final projects..

This investigator noted that three themes that emerged from analysis of facilitator reflection forms: (1) building a sense of community, (2) development of self-esteem, and (3) involvement and leader commitment. These themes helped inform the description of the group process. Facilitators referenced building a sense of community in the group as an essential factor in group cohesiveness and development. The sense of community was developed as girls began to trust one another and form friendships with peers. Another theme that emerged from the perspective of the facilitators is the increased development of self-esteem in the girls. This is another noteworthy factor, as girls felt comfortable expressing themselves through verbal communication as well as through the various arts based projects such as painting and making collages.

Facilitators noted the importance of being committed to attending group sessions. One facilitator had to stop coming, which left her group without a leader and thus hindered the
groups’ growth and development. Another component of involvement and leader commitment was facilitator flexibility. Facilitator flexibility was critical during the program; instead of forcing the girls to go in one direction, they allowed the girls to influence the direction of the group. Again, such flexibility is supported by literature that states that the decision making throughout the group needs to be shared with participants (Wheeler et al., 2005).

**Study Limitations**

Several factors could have limited the utility of study findings. For example, social desirability bias could have influenced girls to report positive things about the groups and suppressed their inclination to report problems with the groups. The interviewer had very good rapport with the girls making this less likely to have occurred. However, involving a peer interviewer may have increased the girls’ comfort levels when they discussed pros and cons of group participation. Another limitation of this research is that findings were based primarily on preadolescent self-report and gathering information from teachers and parents may provide information about change in girls’ social and emotional functioning after group participation.

One important consideration on the impact of the group was the differing ethnicities of the facilitators with those of the girls. This girls in the groups were predominately African American and Latina (interviews with 5 African Americans, 4 Latinas, and 1 biracial girls reflect this). There were three Caucasian facilitators and one facilitator who was Hispanic, but she stopped attending her group halfway through the groups. The girls may have experienced greater comfort, which would have improved their sharing of personal information if group leaders were in their own ethic group. Research documents the potential difficulty in mentoring across race and ethnicity (Wheeler et al., 2005). The impact of race and ethnicity was not addressed but perhaps future studies should address this topic.
The analysis of the interviews presents another potential weakness of the study. Although there was a careful, thoughtful analysis of data, ideally, the thematic analysis would have been presented to the participants for review. This could have helped the researcher understand whether her meaning making of the girls’ experience was correct. Unfortunately, the program ended during the final week of school and there was not time analyze the interviews prior to the girls leaving for summer vacation.

It may have been optimal to combine the results and discussion chapters for continuity of the qualitative approach. Due to student handbook instructions for five chapters, the decision was made to keep the traditional five-chapter approach. This may have constrained the presentation of qualitative methodology.

Researcher Reflections and Lessons Learned

In conclusion, I believe it is important to reflect on the overall research process especially considering the personal nature of qualitative methodology. As a researcher, I have learned how to push my own limitations when faced with challenges and doubts. Additionally, I have come to develop and view my own strengths and weaknesses as they work together and are pieces to the puzzle that enable my development from the development of a study to the writing of the results. I have definitely grown as a researcher during this project. My understanding and conceptualizations have also changed and developed, which I suppose is a benefit to a good research project. If a project kept one thinking the same thing, there is really no contribution or benefit to the greater good of society. I think we should also strive to influence the thinking of one person. Implanting a seed, a mere seed of change in just one individual, could have life changing consequences.
I think one of the most important contributions of this study is the use of the interview to obtain information. Interviews are a common method of qualitative inquiry. For the girls who participated in this study, the interview did yield information that had not been gained in previous evaluations, chiefly about the importance of connection. Considering the majority of the participants come from a traditional oral culture, girls responded better to being asked questions in a one-on-one setting than responding to a survey or questionnaire. This cultural accommodation is vital to obtaining rich quality data when survey methods and questionnaires have failed in gaining information needed to evaluate a program.

In conducting this study I learned that the girls really enjoyed art as a method for self-expression. For instance, the girls enjoyed drawing pictures when completing the digital stories. After this, then discussion about what they valued during the groups seemed to flow as a natural part of presenting their perceptions of their art. Hence, art was another way to tap into information about the girls’ experiences and to open up rich discussion of how they felt about participating in the GATs. Furthermore, I believe the photography was a helpful window into perceptions. The girls probably needed more specific instructions to “not” take pictures of people. Instead, they could have photographed things that presented their learning without showing other people in the photographs. This might have improved the contribution of this research technique.

I have mentioned the importance of connection many times. I think that the girls’ valued connection and friendship as an anchor to their own self-development. After school groups are a way to allow children more avenues for developing close ties with peers. In some neighborhoods and busy families’ lives, these opportunities may be diminished. Consequently, after school groups can be an avenue for girls’ development and “plug” them into others in a positive way.
where an adult mentor can teach friendship skills, which can help girls form close ties that will enhance their social and emotional development.

I have also learned some things I will do differently for my next qualitative study with children. First, I will ensure that there is time for the participants’ to reflect on the themes I find in the data. This will allow for member-checking, allowing verification of themes and offering opportunities for expanding upon information that was presented. This would allow the research to come full circle and be in the hands of the girls, who are the group whose story I wished to tell. I would also allow more time for data collection when using qualitative methods such as those used for the current study.

I believe that the girls might have provided even richer data if I had conducted multiple interviews with them on different days and allowed them to reflect on the information from the previous interview. Multiple interviews would allow me as the researcher to develop better probing questions and would allow me to follow-up on any new insights I found from the previous interviews. Alternately, constructing a design that allowed for continuous evaluation, maybe at the end of each group, would have provided richer data. In order to do this, perhaps facilitators could be trained as evaluators and ask the girls about the benefits of group participation at the end of each group.

In terms of the focus group with facilitators – I learned that the moderator needs to structure the group in order to ensure that focus group questions are answered. The moderator might be able to ensure this by handing out written copies of key focus group questions to participants. If a group moves “off topic,” however, valuable information can still be obtained. Perhaps, if I had conducted two focus groups or a follow-up group, I would have had an opportunity to ensure that key questions for the focus group were addressed.
In hindsight, more follow through with collecting facilitator reflection forms would have yielded more data. Offering an incentive to facilitators to turn in forms or making it a part of their weekly routine might have motivated them to turn in more reflection forms. Or, I could have collected and reviewed the forms immediately and then followed up with an interview to make sure that any missing data was collected. In summary, I learned that collection of qualitative data involves perseverance and that an iterative process – where data is checked and further information is gathered – can yield richer information for the researcher.

Implications

The broadest implication of this study was the benefit of using a positive youth development (PYD) framework (Lerner et al., 2005). Much of the research on urban minority youth takes a deficit approach, thereby portraying girls as having problem-saturated lives. When using a deficit approach, one sees just that, deficits. In taking that stance, the literature ignores the strengths and assets that urban minority youth possess. Many urban minority youth face significant challenges, but their resilience is striking. The positive youth development approach does not ignore youth challenges; instead it focuses energy on strengths.

The experiences the girls reported provide useful information for future practitioners, researchers and theorists working with or studying urban, middle school minority girls. The Groups served to improve connections and confidence for the girls, which are cornerstones of the 5 C’s (Lerner et al., 2005). Additionally, future research should continue to examine the effectiveness of child-directed activity groups to determine their impact on girls’ development and feelings of self-efficacy and empowerment. Young people have the right to explore artistic expression and it is important that American society begin to offer young people more of these types of opportunities. Providing them with these opportunities would promote positive youth
development, development of healthy self-esteem, with tools and avenues to resist negative stereotypes and discrimination and ultimately to develop their resiliency in the face of challenging life circumstances.
REFERENCES


Appendix A

*Digital Story Procedures*
Appendix A

**Digital Story Procedure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>Procedures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Define, collect, and decide | • Select a topic for your digital story  
• Create a folder on the desktop where you can store the materials you find  
• Search for image resources for your story, including: pictures, drawings, photographs, maps, charts, etc.  
• Try to locate audio resources such as music, speeches, interviews, and sound effects  
• Try to find informational content, which might come from web sites, word processed documents, or PowerPoint slides  
• Begin thinking of the purpose of your story |
| 2. Select, import, and create  | • Select the images you would like to use for your digital story  
• Select the audio you would like to use for your digital story  
• Select the content and text you would like to use for your digital story  
• Import images into Photo Story  
• Import audio into Photo Story  
• Modify number of images and/or image order, if necessary |
| 3. Decide, write, record, and finalize | • Decide on the purpose and point of view of your digital story  
• Write a script that will be used as narration in your digital story AND provides the purpose and point of view you have chosen  
• If needed, use a computer microphone and record the narration of your script  
• Import the narration into Photo Story  
• Finalize your digital story by saving it as a Windows Media Video (WMV) file. |
| 4. Demonstrate, evaluate, and replicate | • Show your digital story to your peers  
• Gather feedback about how the story could be improved and/or expanded  
• Help other groups create their own digital story. |
Appendix B

Institutional Review Board Approval
Date: 1/5/2012 2:15 PM  
From: IRB Committee  
To: Principal Investigator: Lisa Vaughn  
Division: Emergency Medicine  
Re: Study ID: 2010-0456  
Study Title: Engaging Early Adolescent, Minority and Immigrant Girls in a School-Based Enrichment Project

The above referenced protocol and all applicable additional documentation provided to the CCHMC IRB were reviewed and RE-APPROVED using an EXPEDITED review procedure set forth in 45 CFR 46.110(b)(1), Category(ies)(see below) on 1/5/2012.

This study will be due for continuing review at least 30 days before 1/4/2013.

If you wish to continue program evaluation during this school year and/or future school years you need to submit a protocol amendment to describe that activity.

The following documents were reviewed and approved:
Name  
addendum with revised date clean copy  
child info form--just surveys  
CHILD INFORMATION FORM version 1-10a.doc  
connectedness scale 1-10a  
demo questionnaire 1-10a  
girls health activism scale 1-10a  
Harter scale  
letter of support AMIS  
Parent Letter version 1-10a.doc  
PAS 1-10a  
protocol 1-10a amendment 9-13-10  
strengths and difficulties questionnaire  
study info sheet parents--just surveys  
Study Information Sheet for Parents version 1-10a.doc

Please note the following requirements:
OTHER APPROVALS: Principal investigators are responsible for maintaining approval from other applicable review committees and performance sites. This includes, but is not limited to, Divisional Scientific Review committee, General Clinical Research Center (GCRC), Radiation Safety, Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC), Conflict of Interest (COI) Committee, and any sites (i.e., schools, hospitals) where the research may be conducted. Principal investigators are also responsible for maintaining approval from the FDA and a valid contract between the sponsor and CCHMC, as applicable. If any of these entities require changes to the IRB-approved protocol and/or informed consent/assent document(s), the changes must be submitted to and approved by the IRB prior to implementation.
AMENDMENTS: The principal investigator is responsible for notifying the IRB of any changes in the protocol, participating investigators, procedures, recruitment, consent forms, FDA status, or conflicts of interest. Approval is based on the information as submitted. New procedures cannot be initiated until IRB approval has been given. If you wish to change any aspect of this study, please submit an Amendment via ePAS to the IRB, providing a justification for each requested change.

CONTINUING REVIEW: The investigator is responsible for submitting a Continuing Review via ePAS to the IRB at least 30 days prior to the expiration date listed above. Please note that study procedures may only continue into the next cycle if the IRB has reviewed and granted re-approval prior to the expiration date.

UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS: The investigator is responsible for reporting unanticipated problems promptly to the CCHMC IRB via ePAS according to current CCHMC reporting policy found on CenterLink.

STUDY COMPLETION: The investigator is responsible for notifying the IRB by submitting a Request to Close via ePAS when the research, including data analysis, has completed.

Research Categories

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. (NOTE: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) and (b)(3). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.)

If you have any questions about the information in this letter, please contact the Institutional Review Board office at 513-636-8039.

Thank you for your cooperation during the review process.
Institutional Review Board - Federalwide Assurance #00002988
Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center

Date: 2/14/2011 9:29 PM
From: Lisa Vaughn
Division: Emergency Medicine
To: Principal Investigator: Lisa Vaughn
Division: Emergency Medicine
Re: Study ID: 2010-0456
Study Title: Engaging Early Adolescent, Minority and Immigrant Girls in a School-Based Enrichment Project

This study expires on: 1/31/2012.

An amendment to the above referenced protocol was reviewed and APPROVED using an EXPEDITED review procedure as set forth in 45 CFR 46.110(b) on 2/14/2011.

The following documents were reviewed and approved:
Name addendum with revised date clean copy

Please note the following requirements:

OTHER APPROVALS: Principal investigators are responsible for maintaining approval from other applicable review committees and performance sites. This includes, but is not limited to, Divisional Scientific Review committee, General Clinical Research Center (GCRC), Radiation Safety, Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC), Conflict of Interest (COI) Committee, and any sites (i.e. schools, hospitals) where the research may be conducted. Principal investigators are also responsible for maintaining approval from the FDA and a valid contract between the sponsor and CCHMC, as applicable. If any of these entities require changes to the IRB-approved protocol and/or informed consent/assent document(s), the changes must be submitted to and approved by the IRB prior to implementation.

AMENDMENTS: The principal investigator is responsible for notifying the IRB of any changes in the protocol, participating investigators, procedures, recruitment, consent forms, FDA status, or conflicts of interest. Approval is based on the information as submitted. New procedures cannot be initiated until IRB approval has been given. If you wish to change any aspect of this study, please submit an Amendment via ePAS to the IRB, providing a justification for each requested change.

CONTINUING REVIEW: The investigator is responsible for submitting a Continuing Review via ePAS to the IRB at least 30 days prior to the expiration date listed above. Please note that study procedures may only continue into the next cycle if the IRB has reviewed and granted re-approval prior to the expiration date.

UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS: The investigator is responsible for reporting unanticipated problems promptly to the CCHMC IRB via ePAS according to current CCHMC reporting policy found on CenterLink.

STUDY COMPLETION: The investigator is responsible for notifying the IRB by submitting a Request to Close via ePAS when the research, including data analysis, has completed.

If you have any questions about the information in this letter, please contact the Institutional Review Board office at 513-636-8039.

Thank you for your cooperation during the review process.

§46.110. Expedited review procedures for certain kinds of research involving no more than minimal risk, and for minor changes in approved research.

§46.108(b) An IRB may use the expedited review procedure to review either or both of the

following:

1. some or all of the research appearing on the list and found by the reviewer(s) to involve no more than minimal risk,
2. minor changes in previously approved research during the period (of one year or less) for which approval is authorized.

Under an expedited review procedure, the review may be carried out by the IRB chairperson or by one or more experienced reviewers designated by the chairperson from among members of the IRB. In reviewing the research, the reviewers may exercise all of the authorities of the IRB except that the reviewers may not disapprove the research. A research activity may be disapproved only after review in accordance with the non-expedited procedure set forth in §46.108(b).
Appendix. C

Parent Agreement Form
Appendix C

Parent Agreement Form

Girls Action Team Sign Up
The Girls’ Action Teams are an after-school program for 4th through 8th grade girls at AMIS. Each group is dedicated to a particular area (e.g., photography, writing, health, drama, or art). Each group of girls will develop and carry out a project to improve themselves, their school or their world. Girls will develop leadership abilities and skills in the particular area of their group.

You must complete this form to be considered as a participant in this year’s Girls Action Teams.

Name ___________________________ Grade ________ Age ________

Please CIRCLE the 2 groups that you would most like to be in. Do NOT circle more than 2!!!
Writing
Art
Photography
Health/All about Me
Drama/Theatre

Now, put a #1 by your top choice and a #2 by your second choice. We will do our best to get you in one of these two groups.

Briefly explain why YOU want to participate in the Girls Action Teams.

Parent Agreement
I agree to have my daughter participate in the Girls Action Teams which will meet Mondays after school 4pm to 5pm beginning September 12.

Parent Signature ___________________________ Date __________________

_____ I will be able to pick up my daughter from school on Mondays.
_____ My daughter will need to have bus transportation on Mondays.

Teacher Recommendation. Please have a teacher write a brief recommendation about why they think you would be a good member of the Girls Action Teams.

Please return this form by September 2 to Maria Lang, ESL Coordinator. Thanks!
Appendix D

*Girls Demographic Questionnaire*
Appendix D

Girls Demographic Questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE</th>
<th>NAME: __________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How old are YOU?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What grade are you in?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How many adults live in your home?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How many children live in your home?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. In what country were you born?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. How long did you live there?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Have you lived in any other countries?</td>
<td>___Yes ___No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. If yes, for how long?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. If not born in the U.S., how long have you lived in the U.S.?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. In Cincinnati?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. What is the primary language spoken in your home?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. What other languages are spoken in your home?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. What language(s) do you speak?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. My race/ethnicity is</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Asian, Asian American, or Oriental</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Black or African American</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. White, Caucasian, European, not Hispanic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. American Indian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Mixed; parents are from two different groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Other (write in): _______________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. My father’s race/ethnicity is (use numbers above)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. My mother’s race/ethnicity is (use numbers above)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E

*Interview Questions/Guide*
Appendix E

Interview Questions/Guide

Semi-Structured Interview Template
(Modified from StrongLinks: Amper, 2010)

INTRODUCTION: Hello, my Name is _________ (interviewer will state his or her name). This interview will last for approximately 60 minutes. Remember what you say during this interview, so we all need to agree we won’t talk about what people said after the group. You have agreed to this by turning in your consent form. I just want to ask you again if you will agree to this?

Interviewer describes AUDIO TAPING: To state a few things - there will be audiotaping of the sessions. We will review the talking on the tape to understand what was said. Nothing but this discussion will be recorded. Notes reflecting the discussion will be transcribed and no names or any type of identifying information will be on the notes.

Demographic information
1. Who do you live with?
2. How old are you?
3. How many siblings do you have? How old are they?
4. Where do you live?
5. Do you feel safe in your neighborhood?
6. Where were you born?

Relationships
7. Who are the most important people in your life? What do you value about your relationship with them?
8. Do you have family in the area? Who are you close to in your family, if anybody?
9. Would you say that you have close friends?

Interests and perceived strengths and weaknesses
10. What do you think are your strengths? What are you really good at? (i.e. academics, sports, reading, singing etc.)
11. What do you think you struggle with? What is hard for you? (i.e. academics, sports, reading, singing etc.)

Assessment of interest and perceived strength in the arts
12. What GAT group are you a member of?
13. What do you think about the other groups (art, drama, photography, and health—all about me)?
14. Are you comfortable with participating in your group? What are you the most/least comfortable with?

**Perceived stressors**

15. How would you define stress and how do you cope with it?
16. What do you currently do to help yourself to manage or deal with your stress? Tell me about a time you think you handled it well?

**Group specific questions**

17. What did you learn about in the group?
18. Did the group help build your good feelings about yourself?
   
   **Probing questions:** How? What types of feelings?
19. What did you learn from your group?
20. Did you make friends in your group?
21. Did anything in the group make you feel like you had more strength as a person?  
   **Probing question:** If yes, what?
22. Did things you learned in group help you deal with stress in your life?  
   **Probe:** If yes, How? Ask to provide examples...
23. What was positive about being in group?  
   **Probe:** Please explain what you mean.
24. What things needed to improve about the group?
25. Was there anything you didn’t like about group?
26. Were you satisfied and happy with being in the group?  
   **Probe:** Please explain what you mean.

Is there anything else that I missed about girls your age that you want me to know about?
Appendix F

Facilitator Reflection Form
Facilitator Reflection Form

GAT LEAD FACILITATOR REFLECTION FORM 2011-2012
Please complete after each GAT session and email or scan before your next session.

1. Briefly, what did you do today?

2. Did the session today meet any of the following academic and/or 21st Century standards? (check any that apply and give brief description of how; Note: these standards do not have to be met as part of the GATs but we want to keep track of any that are met).

   _____ Reading
   _____ Mathematics
   _____ Science
   _____ Citizenship/social responsibility
   _____ Information and media literacy skills
   _____ Creativity/innovation
   _____ Communication (oral or written)
   _____ Global awareness/multiculturalism
   _____ Personal responsibility/accountability/self-direction
   _____ Writing
   _____ Social studies
   _____ Leadership
   _____ Life/career skills
   _____ Technology
   _____ Critical thinking/problem solving
   _____ Collaboration/interpersonal skills
   _____ Health and well-being

3. How actively involved were the girls in today’s session?

   1  Not at all
   2  little
   3  somewhat
   4  much
   5  a great deal

4. Highlights of today’s session (as it relates to GAT overall goals):

5. Challenges/obstacles of today’s session:

6. Reflection on self and your facilitation and interactions with girls during today’s session:
7. Notes regarding group progress or growth, group dynamics:

8. Notes regarding specific girls (please use initials or pseudonyms)/specific comments from the girls:

9. Overall, considering everything, how would you rate today’s session?

   1. terrible  2. not good  3. OK  4. good  5. awesome

10. Please provide statements or quotes directly from the girls about today’s session (please use initials or pseudonyms).
Appendix G

Facilitator Focus Group Script
INTRODUCTION: Hello, my Name is_________ (interviewer will state his or her name). This interview will last for approximately 50 minutes. Remember what you say in this group is private, so we all need to agree we won’t talk about what people said after the group.

Interviewer describes AUDIO TAPING: To state a few things - there will be audiotaping of the sessions. We will review the talking on the tape to understand what was said. Nothing but this discussion will be recorded. Notes reflecting the discussion will be transcribed and no names or any type of identifying information will be on the notes.

1. Why did you want to be involved in the Girls Action Team?

2. What group do you facilitate? Did you have an interest in this before the group?

3. What have you observed in the girls?
   a. Have you noticed any changes or differences?
   b. Positive or negative

4. How do you perceive the group dynamics of the girls?