

ENHANCING GIRLS' SELF-ESTEEM:
THE *4 GIRLS BY GIRLS* PROGRAM
A CREATIVE PROJECT
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
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Chapter I: The Problem

Introduction

The National Association for Self-Esteem (2010) defines self-esteem as, “the experience of being capable of meeting life’s challenges and being worthy of happiness” (para. 2).

Throughout one’s life, an individual will experience different levels of self-esteem stability, or variations between high and low self-esteem. During childhood, self-esteem stability is relatively low, it increases throughout adolescence and into young adulthood, and it finally decreases throughout midlife and old age (Trzesniewski, Donnellan, & Robins, 2003). Self-esteem is an important component of an individual that must develop properly in order to maintain a happy and healthy life.

In an individual’s life, adolescence is a transitory phase in an individual’s life between childhood and adulthood where many changes take place. Physical, social, mental, and environmental factors influence the development of an adolescent and his or her self-esteem (LeCroy, 2005). Unfortunately, research has shown during adolescence children struggle with low levels of self-esteem (Trzesniewski et al., 2003; Harter, 1990). Self-esteem starts to decrease at the age of eleven, and between the ages of twelve and thirteen, self-esteem is at its lowest (Rosenberg, 1986). According to Robins and Trzesniewski (2005), the declines in adolescent self-esteem are due to:

Body image and other problems associated with puberty, the emerging capacity to think abstractly about one’s self and one’s future and therefore to acknowledge missed opportunities and failed expectations, and the transition from grade school to the more academically challenging and socially complex context of junior high school. (p. 159)

Many factors influence an adolescent's self-esteem stability specifically causing the experience of low self-esteem.

This decline in self-esteem is seen more often in adolescent females as opposed to males (Harper & Marshall, 1991; Kearney-Cooke, 1999; Birndorf et al., 2005; DuBois, Felner, Brand, Phillips, & Lease, 1996; Eiser, Eiser, & Havermans, 1995). Adolescent girls face many issues including "cigarette and drug use, body dissatisfaction and body image disorders, academic underachievement, problems associated with sexual behaviors, and high rates of depression and unhappiness" (LeCroy, 2005, p. 76). In addition, such factors as appearance, academic performance, and peer teasing have been found to negatively affect self-esteem levels in adolescent girls (Kutob, Senf, Crago, & Shisslak, 2010).

Due to these issues, interventions should be put into place to help improve the self-esteem of adolescent females. Many studies have found that self-esteem programs are successful in increasing an adolescent female's self-esteem (LeCroy, 2005; Haney & Durlak, 1998; Dalgas-Pelish, 2006); and, evaluations of these programs are necessary to confirm the effectiveness they have in improving self-esteem levels of adolescent females.

Statement of the Problem

Currently, no evaluations have been conducted to determine if the *4 Girls by Girls* program is positively affecting the girls enrolled.

Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation will be to determine if the *4 Girls by Girls* program is positively impacting the adolescent girls involved.

Significance of the Evaluation

The *4 Girls by Girls* program directors will benefit directly from this evaluation. Positive results could lead to additional funding for the program or justify replicating this program in other locations.

Parents, educators and self-esteem program directors will also benefit from this evaluation. Because studies have shown that girls tend to have lower levels of self-esteem (Harper & Marshall, 1991; Kearney-Cooke, 1999; Birndorf et al., 2005; DuBois, Felner, Brand, Phillips, & Lease, 1996; Eiser, Eiser, & Havermans, 1995), knowing what interventions produce success in increasing girls' self-esteem during adolescence is important. If these leaders can be confident in selecting proper interventions, there should be a rise in self-esteem levels of adolescent girls.

The self-esteem issue facing adolescent girls is a serious problem. If it is not addressed, levels of depression, unhappiness, poor academics and deviant behaviors (LeCroy, 2005) may continue to rise among adolescent girls. Therefore, self-esteem enhancement programs for adolescent girls need to be available, and evaluations are needed to measure the success of these programs.

Delimitations of the Evaluation

1. The sample is adolescent females participating in the *4 Girls by Girls* program in Muncie, Indiana.
2. The program, *4 Girls by Girls*, will specifically be evaluated. This is a female-only program for girls ages 7 to 17. It may not accurately represent other self-esteem intervention programs. Also, this program will not provide any information on adolescent boys and self-esteem.

Limitations of the Evaluation

The limitations of this evaluation will include:

1. Secondary data will be used to determine if this program is positively affecting the girls involved, specifically their self-esteem. The program director collected surveys from the participants after the 2012 summer portion of the program. The results will be analyzed for this evaluation.
2. The results of this evaluation will not be generalizable.

Assumptions of the Evaluation

The following is assumed for this evaluation:

1. The participants answered the survey questions honestly.
2. The adolescent girls who shared their views in the video were representative of all the girls in the program.
3. The volunteers who shared their views in the video were representative of all the volunteers involved with the program.

Evaluation Question

1. Does the program, *4 Girls by Girls*, positively impact the adolescent girls involved, specifically their self-esteem?

Hypothesis

1. Participating in the *4 Girls by Girls* program will positively influence the girls involved.

Definitions

1. The National Association for Self-Esteem (2010, para. 2) defines self-esteem as “the experience of being capable of meeting life’s challenges and being worthy of happiness.”
2. An adolescent is defined as an individual between the ages of 10 and 21 (Spano, 2004). There are three stages of adolescent development: early adolescence (10-14 years old), middle adolescence (15-16 years old), and late adolescence (17-21 years old).

Chapter II: Review of Literature

Introduction

Self-esteem is defined as “the experience of being capable of meeting life’s challenges and being worthy of happiness” (“National association of self-esteem”, 2010, para. 2). It is a positive or negative attitude towards one’s self (Rosenberg, 1989). This construct is associated with and can affect an individual’s mental and emotional wellbeing (Rosenberg, Schooler, Schoenbach, & Rosenberg, 1995). For the purpose of this evaluation, mental wellbeing is defined as the absence of depression, anxiety, and other mental disorders. Emotional wellbeing is defined as the absence of constant feelings self-doubt, self-dissatisfaction, and self-rejection.

An individual who experiences high self-esteem has respect towards him or herself and feels he or she is worthy (Rosenberg, 1989). They do not think they are significantly better or worse than their peers; instead, they recognize their limitations and have a desire to develop and improve. On the other hand, an individual with low self-esteem has very little or no respect for him or herself, is dissatisfied, and wishes he or she was someone else.

Throughout one’s life, self-esteem is stable overall, with stretches of fluctuation. For example, as a social environment changes, or as individuals experience puberty, self-esteem can be affected by either increasing or decreasing (Robins & Trzesniewski, 2005). After conducting a meta-analytical review, Trzesniewski, Donellan, and Robins (2003) found that self-esteem was stable across the lifespan with periods of instability. Although self-esteem is continuously changing across an individual’s life, the researchers found “levels of continuity across decades of life” (Trzesniewski et al., 2003, p. 216). Due to this stability, an individual who has a high self-esteem as a child will most likely experience a high self-esteem in the future (Robins &

Trzesniewski, 2005; “Adolescent self-esteem”, 2003). The opposite is true as well; a child who experiences low levels of self-esteem will commonly have low self-esteem in the future.

One period in an individual’s life when self-esteem is developing and changing is adolescence (Clay, Vignoles, & Dittmar, 2005). Research has found that one-third to one-half of adolescents have low self-esteem (Harter, 1990). This is a problem facing today’s youth, and more specifically, this is a problem facing adolescent females. During adolescence, females reported having lower self-esteem than males (Harper & Marshall, 1991; Kearney-Cooke, 1999; Birndorf et al., 2005; DuBois, Felner, Brand, Phillips, & Lease, 1996; Eiser, Eiser, & Havermans, 1995). Therefore, it is crucial that interventions be put into place and evaluated to help increase the self-esteem of adolescent girls. In response to this major problem, the purpose of this evaluation will be to determine the effectiveness of the program, *4 Girls by Girls*, in enhancing the self-esteem of the adolescent girls involved.

Adolescent Self-Esteem

The developmental period between childhood and adulthood is known as adolescence. This phase in a child’s life begins at approximately age ten and lasts until he or she is roughly 21 (Spano, 2004). During this period, children face numerous physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and interpersonal changes (Spano, 2004; Trzesniewski et al., 2003; Harter, 1990; Harter, 1999; LeCroy, 2005; Biro, Striegel-Moore, Franko, Padgett, & Bean, 2006), as well as the maturity of self-esteem (Clay, Vignoles, & Dittmar, 2005; Impett, Sorsoli, Schooler, Henson, & Tolman, 2008; Pflieger & Vazsonyi, 2006). Because of these numerous changes and challenges, many adolescents experience decreasing levels of self-esteem (Trzesniewski et al., 2003; Robins & Trzesniewski, 2005). However, it is important to note that these changes will affect individuals differently. For example, a female who matures physically earlier or later than

her peers may experience a lower level of self-esteem compared to a girl who matured at the same time as many of her peers (Trzesniewski et al., 2003). On the other hand, Birndorf, Ryan, Auinger, and Aten (2005) found that adolescents who have positive family interactions, feel safe and secure in school or who are part of a supportive religious community generally have higher levels of self-esteem despite the changes they are experiencing.

These physical, social, and environmental changes can either positively or negatively affect an adolescent's self-esteem, thus, causing fluctuations in self-esteem stability during this period. Self-esteem tends to begin decreasing at the age of eleven, and between the ages of twelve and thirteen self-esteem is at its lowest (Rosenberg, 1986). Another study conducted by Clay, Vignoles, and Dittmar (2005) also found that "self-esteem appeared to decline consistently from age 11 to age 16" (p. 471). During this time known as early adolescence, an individual is normally transitioning from elementary school into junior high school. The transition to junior high school causes social and environmental changes (Harter, 1990). According to Kearney-Cooke (1999), the most difficult period in an individual's life is early adolescence because of the many physical, social, environmental, and cognitive changes. These changes may overwhelm an adolescent, consequently contributing to some dips in self-esteem (Robins & Trzesniewski, 2005). Also, this is the typical age frame when many adolescents are experiencing puberty. However, individuals that experience it at a drastically earlier or later time than their peers tend to have substantial drops in self-esteem (Harter, 1990). Finally, the increases in cognitive ability an adolescent experiences can cause declines in self-esteem. One reason this decline occurs is because the gap between how an adolescent views his or her "real" self compared to his or her "ideal" self grows further apart (Kearney-Cooke, 1999).

The consequences of having a low self-esteem during adolescence can be short-lived, but in many cases, it can lead to serious lifestyle problems such as depression, eating disorders, delinquency, self-harm, and suicide during adolescence and adulthood (“Adolescent self-esteem,” 2003; Biro et al., 2006). Also, since self-esteem is tied to academic performance, having a low self-esteem during adolescence can lead to poor school performance (“Adolescent self-esteem,” 2003). Trzesniewski, Donnellan, Moffitt, Robins, Poulton, and Caspi (2006) conducted a longitudinal study that found “17% of adolescents with low self-esteem were free from problems as adults, whereas 56% had multiple problems as adults” (p. 385). On the other hand, 51% of adolescents with high self-esteem did not experience problems as an adult, with only 17% having many problems (Trzesniewski et al., 2006). This longitudinal study of health and behavior in a complete birth group also found low self-esteem in adolescence predicted poor mental and physical health, decreased economic prospects, and higher rates of criminal convictions during adulthood (Trzesniewski et al., 2006). Furthermore, Pflieger and Vazsonyi (2006) found “low self-esteem was predictive of dating violence” (p. 507). Finally, adolescents who have emotional problems (i.e. low self-esteem) are more inclined to smoke (Pflieger & Vazsonyi, 2006). These studies depict the consequences an individual can face if self-esteem is not properly developed during adolescence.

Female Adolescent Self-Esteem

During adolescence, females have an even greater likelihood of experiencing lower self-esteem than males. Many studies found that girls have notably lower levels of self-esteem than boys (Harper & Marshall, 1991; Kearney-Cooke, 1999; Birndorf et al., 2005; DuBois, Felner, Brand, Phillips, & Lease, 1996; Eiser, Eiser, & Havermans, 1995). Also, research has shown that along with low self-esteem, adolescent females experience depression more often than males

and are four to five times more likely than males to attempt suicide (Kearney-Cooke, 1999). These high levels of depression, suicide, and low self-esteem are especially harmful for adolescent girls (Engles, Hale, Noom, & de Vries, 2005).

Throughout adolescence, girls face many issues such as “cigarette and drug use, body dissatisfaction and body image disorders, academic underachievement, problems associated with sexual behaviors, and high rates of depression and unhappiness” (LeCroy, 2005, p. 76). LeCroy (2005) found the issues adolescent females face, specifically the development of a negative body image, can lead to decreases in self-esteem, depression, body image problems, and eating disorders. Not only do females face body image problems more frequently, but they also face self-acceptance issues (LeCroy, 2005). Research found that females experience a decline in self-esteem during early adolescence along with increased criticism toward oneself and a higher occurrence of negative moods.

Appearance, academic performance, and peer teasing have also been found to negatively affect self-esteem levels in adolescent girls (Kutob et al., 2010). Research found girls who were teased by their peers about their weight were more likely to have a low self-esteem. Teasing by female peers that occurred in earlier grades was directly related to lower self-esteem, while in later grades, teasing by male peers was linked to lower self-esteem. Second, the research found physical appearance affected self-esteem levels in adolescent females most often. Finally, academic performance only predicted self-esteem levels in older adolescent girls as opposed to younger adolescent girls. Therefore, as adolescent females get older, they place more importance on their academic performance.

For females, it is apparent adolescence is a difficult period. By high school, girls tend to report higher depression levels, higher incidents of eating disorders, more issues with body

dissatisfaction, and lower self-esteem compared with their male peers (Kearney-Cooke, 1999).

Therefore, interventions need to be available for girls to help both increase self-esteem levels and prevent low self-esteem from developing.

Self-Esteem Interventions

Adolescent interventions. Eccles (1999) found “organized programs can be a safe place for youth to develop their self-concept by providing challenging mastery attempts and positive socialization” (as cited in Martin, Waldron, McCabe, & Choi, 2009, p. 128). Research suggests that to help counter the declines in self-esteem adolescents face, interventions should be put into place; and, as Denmark (1999) believes, they need to be evaluated to determine how successful they are in raising self-esteem levels (as cited in LeCroy, 2004). Several studies concluded that interventions that raise self-esteem levels in adolescents no matter if they are experiencing high or low levels could be beneficial (Trzesniewski et al., 2006; Schöllgen, Huxhold, Schüz, & Tesch-Römer, 2011; Shapka & Keating, 2005; Dalgas-Pelish, 2006). Additionally, these preventative programs can also prevent or postpone problem behaviors in adolescents (LeCroy, 2004).

The negative outcomes of having low self-esteem include poor mental and physical health, increased risk of being convicted of a crime, and having worse economic prospects as an adult (Trzesniewski et al., 2006). But, by increasing self-esteem by one standard deviation, the risk of many of these negative outcomes decreases. Trzesniewski et al.’s research shows these negative outcomes can be prevented solely with the increase of self-esteem, and this increase can be achieved with self-esteem enhancement programs. As Dalgas-Pelish (2006) stated:

A child who is exposed to self-esteem enhancement programs may be better equipped to face decisions and to make better life choices. If children can learn to value themselves,

then they are better able to value others around them and to feel good about the world in which they live. (p. 347)

According to DuBois et al. (1996), interventions that focus on adolescent experiences in a variety of settings and areas may positively affect self-esteem. Additional findings suggest that families, schools, and community organizations can provide adolescents with safe and supportive environments and encourage them to engage in positive communication; this may, in turn, promote high self-esteem (Bindorf et al., 2005).

Furthermore, the topics discussed in the self-esteem interventions should be considered. Some believe focusing on different predictors of self-esteem depending on the age of the adolescent is vital because the predictor variables change with time and age (Kutob et al., 2010). For example, one area that should remain constant in every self-esteem intervention for females is peer teasing. Peer teasing has been found to negatively affect the self-esteem of adolescent girls. Other research found interventions that concentrated mainly on self-esteem and were based on theory or empirical rationale saw significant improvements in self-esteem (Haney et al., 1998). Also of importance to note is that with any intervention the participants will be affected differently.

The timing of an intervention is another important component to keep in mind. The results Trzesniewski et al. (2003) found supported the use of interventions that “target early adolescence because self-esteem stability is relatively low and there is little controversy over the validity of self-reports of that age group” (p. 217). They believe that “true” change can occur during this period, which may positively influence self-esteem levels.

Others argue that the time when an intervention is put into place does not matter (Shapka & Keating, 2005). Their findings show that intervening at any age will positively benefit an

adolescent's self-worth. Similarly, van de Berg, Mond, Eisenberg, Ackard, and Neumark-Sztainer (2010) found that self-esteem interventions could focus on all stages of adolescence, not just early adolescence.

Several examples of intervention programs exist for adolescents that were successful in increasing self-esteem. First, after conducting a meta-analysis of 120 self-esteem interventions, Haney and Durlak (1998) found the self-esteem of an adolescent could be improved; therefore, supporting the use of self-esteem enhancing interventions. Next, a four-lesson self-esteem enhancement program was successful in improving the self-esteems of children in grades five and six (Dalgas-Pelish, 2006). Another program, *Happy Being Me*, a school-based body image intervention, had a positive impact on the self-esteem of the adolescents involved (Richardson & Paxton, 2010). However, the main goal of this intervention was to reduce the risk factors for body dissatisfaction in order to decrease body dissatisfaction itself; the aim was not to help increase adolescents' self-esteem.

Adolescent female interventions. A need also exists for gender-specific self-esteem interventions (LeCroy, 2005; Dalgas-Pelish, 2006). Programs specifically for females can foster a successful and healthy transition from adolescence into adulthood (LeCroy, 2004). LeCroy's (2004; 2005) research found these types of programs are successful in the short-term.

A study conducted by Impett, Sorsoli, Schooler, Henson, and Tolman (2008) found "if an intervention is able to increase a girl's relationship authenticity throughout her high school years, it will also be likely to increase her self-esteem" (p. 729). This specific study demonstrated that interventions that help encourage authenticity in relationships would also help increase the girls' self-esteem (Impett et al., 2008). Next, researchers, McVey, Davis, Tweed, and Shaw (2004), evaluated a school-based life-skills promotion program delivered to girls in the sixth grade.

Results indicated that this intervention had “a significant and positive short-term influence on the girls’ body image satisfaction, global self-esteem, and negative eating attitudes and behavior scores” (p. 8). Another study found group sandtray therapy, a specific type of therapy, was successful in enhancing the self-esteem of young adolescent females (Shen & Armstrong, 2008). The researchers found that adolescent girls’ perceptions of their social acceptance among peers and their appearance were most predictive of self-esteem.

The GLO program, or Girls Leading Outward, is grounded on the idea that every girl has leadership potential (Hamed, Reyes, Mocerri, Morana, & Elias, 2011). “Results from 2009-10 suggest that GLO increased girls’ overall self-concept and, particularly among the more introverted and shy girls in the groups, their sense of mastery” (Hamed et al., 2011, p. 72). Another program, The Girls’ Circle, a gender-specific intervention, was found to successfully increase “perceived social support, self-efficacy, and perceived body image” (Steese, Dollette, Phillips, Hossfeld, Matthews, & Taormina, 2006, p.63). This program provided adolescent girls with a female support system during a time when they were going through many developmental changes. A similar program, Cool Girls, Inc., was also evaluated and had positive findings (Kuperminc, Thomason, DiMeo, & Broomfield-Massey, 2011). For example, results from this study found the preadolescent and early adolescent participants experienced increases in “hopeful attitudes toward the future” and “scholastic competence” (Kuperminc et al., 2011, p. 179). Finally, the Go Grrrls Program was successful in changing certain aspects of a girl’s self-image (LeCroy, 2004). LeCroy (2004) stated, “Preventative interventions can have a positive effect on girls’ mental health and help prevent the downturn of girls’ self-esteem as they make these transitions” from elementary to middle school (p. 436). The above research demonstrates

that specific programs are successful at increasing the self-esteem of the adolescent girls involved.

It is evident adolescent females are at risk of experiencing low self-esteem. Interventions are needed to help counter this growing problem. Additionally, these programs need to be evaluated for their effectiveness of raising self-esteem levels in adolescent girls. However, few assessments have examined the success of specific programs. Therefore, the purpose of this evaluation will be to determine the effectiveness of the *4 Girls by Girls* program.

Chapter III: Design

Current Context

The *4 Girls by Girls* program takes place in Muncie, Indiana. This Midwest community is located in east central Indiana in Delaware County. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, the total population here was 117,671 (United States Census Bureau, 2013). In this county, the race of the population is predominately white followed by African American.

Delaware County faces a variety of public health issues. The poverty rate in 2010 was listed at approximately 21% (United States Census Bureau, 2013). This percentage is 7% higher than the poverty rate in Indiana as a whole, which is about 14%.

Sample

4 Girls by Girls Inc. is an organization created six years ago in Muncie, Indiana. The idea formed when the founder, Crystal Ivy, longed to create a group for adolescent girls in the Muncie community. She wanted to develop a program that was created by girls, for girls. Her dream came true in June of 2007.

The mission of *4 Girls by Girls Inc.* is to “embrace, educate, empower, and encourage the lives of young girls.” This summer program is six weeks long and is geared towards girls ages 7 to 17. The group meets twice a week, for two hours each session. After the summer portion of the program, the group meets once a month during the school year.

The activities planned for the program aim to help the girls feel comfortable in their own skin through intergenerational mentorship. Some of the activities the girls participated in last year included the “Uniquely Me” fashion show, sewing, crocheting, cooking, scrapbooking, dancing, creative writing, swimming, motivational speakers, and other arts and crafts.

Another unique feature of this organization is their summer program planning committee. This small group is made of girls who participate in the *4 Girls by Girls* program. These girls meet with the program coordinators to decide what specific activities the summer program will offer. This allows the girls to have a direct voice in the planning of the program.

Data Collection Method

The *4 Girls by Girls* program in Muncie, Indiana was evaluated using secondary data analysis of documents and artifacts collected by the program coordinators to determine if it was successful in positively affecting the adolescent girls involved. Forty-two of the 80 adolescent girls from the *4 Girls by Girls* program completed the summer feedback survey. Additionally, a small group of girls from the program co-produced a documentary video that displayed how this program empowered them as young women.

The *4 Girls by Girls* program coordinator provided the data she collected at the end of the 2012 summer portion of the program. This summer program feedback survey was the primary source for information regarding the *4 Girls by Girls* program. The survey asked three questions that can be found in Appendix B. Another set of data was also provided regarding the “Uniquely Me” fashion show the girls in the program developed, produced, and participated in during the fall of 2012. The findings from these surveys as well as a summary of recommendations from the respondents for future pageants can be found in Appendix A.

Next, a group of the program participants co-produced a video telling the story of the *4 Girls by Girls* program. Co-production is defined as a “means of delivering public services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals, people using services, their families and their neighbors” (Boyle & Harris, 2009, p. 11). Research has found that when activities are co-

produced, the “service” will become a “far more effective agent of change” (Boyle & Harris, 2009, p. 11).

Co-production is a participatory approach that requires evaluators to be patient while leading from behind the scenes instead of out in front of the group (CTSA, 2008). This approach “challenges academics and community partners to invest in team building, share resources, and mutually exchange ideas and expertise” that if successful “should inform policy and inspire structural changes in healthcare systems and in communities” (Horowitz, Robinson, & Seifer, 2009, p. 2633). The video created highlights several girls’ stories of specifically how the *4 Girls by Girls* program has empowered them as young women and has positively impacted the Muncie community.

After a practice video was taped, the official footage was recorded using a Zoom Q3 video recorder at the program coordinator’s home. This camera is a small, handheld device that captures videos and uploads files directly to a computer via a USB connector.

Six of the girls from the committee volunteered to be video taped and shared their story of how the *4 Girls by Girls* program has empowered them as young women. Additionally, eight adult volunteers and mentors involved with the program were video taped to share how this program has impacted them, the girls involved, and the overall Muncie community.

Once the videos were collected on the Zoom Q3 video recorder, they were uploaded to a password-protected computer located in the Fisher Institute for Wellness and Gerontology at Ball State University. Then, the Windows Live Movie Maker software (Microsoft Windows, 2012) was used to edit the footage and create the final video. The editing process involved trimming the original videos, adding transitions and title slides, combining all the video segments, and ensuring the video flowed between the different speakers. The whole editing process took

approximately two to three weeks to complete. The final documentary video is about twelve minutes long and captures the true essence of this incredible program for young girls.

Data Analysis

The secondary data was transcribed and coded in an Excel spreadsheet. This information can be found in Appendix C. The data were analyzed and several common themes were found among the questions asked in the summer feedback survey. Finally, once the documentary video was taped, direct quotes were identified to help tell the girls' story.

Chapter IV: Findings

The *4 Girls by Girls* program was evaluated using existing artifacts. Below are the findings from the survey questions and the documentary video.

Question One

When asked to respond to the question, “Is this summer program what you expected it to be?” 95% of the girls answered “yes”. Only two of the forty-two respondents marked “no”. This is a positive finding for the *4 Girls by Girls* program. The program participants came in with a set of expectations and for the vast majority of participants these expectations were fulfilled.

Question Two

Forty-one of the forty-two respondents wanted to continue to be apart of the program on a monthly basis after July. This overwhelmingly positive response suggests that the girls are benefiting from this program and enjoy partaking in it, thus increasing support for why it should continue to grow in the future.

As with any program, it is very hard to reach a 100% satisfaction rate among all of the participants. However, this program came very close by receiving 98% positive satisfaction. This provides further supporting evidence for the continuation of this program.

The second part to this question asked the girls to explain why they would want to continue or not continue with the program. The responses presented eight common themes. The most common theme was “the program is fun.” Twenty-six of the girls indicated that this program is fun and that is why they want to continue. One individual wrote “I love *4 Girls by Girls*, always have and always will,” while another said, “It is amazingly fun!”

Next, twelve of the respondents reported that they “enjoy the program” and that is why they want to continue. The third theme was the program is a “positive experience.” Nine girls found this program to be positively impacting their lives and thus, they want to continue attending sessions. Two responses directly related to these two themes were: “It is a good self-esteem booster for girls and I really enjoy it!” and “It is extremely fun and it is something positive I can participate in.”

Because seven of the girls were learning about new activities and topics, the fourth theme centered on “learning.” Next, six girls wrote that this program was a good way to keep them busy and consequently, they want to continue with it. “Making friends” was another theme that occurred in four of the responses. One response that included this theme was: “I enjoyed making positive friends and I learned to sew.”

The final two themes were negative and were only found in one response each. These were: “it’s not fun” and “I don’t know.” Since each of these themes were only found in one response each, it is evident they were not common among the majority of the respondents and only represent what two of the 42 girls thought.

It is evident, through the responses to this question, the *4 Girls by Girls* program is benefiting the girls involved in multiple ways and providing direct support for the continuation of the program.

Question Three

The last question asked the girls to expand on what they learned and enjoyed most during the summer portion of the program. From the responses, three major themes emerged. First, thirty-one of the responses mentioned they learned many new activities and enjoyed the variety

of activities taught. For example, one individual wrote she learned “how to make flowers, paint, and art.”

Next, making new friends was a main theme that was revealed in twelve answers. Many of the girls were able to spend time with their friends or met new friends through the program. One response that included this theme was: “I enjoyed meeting friends, and I learned about relationships.”

Finally, eight girls found this program helped them to learn more about themselves and to grow as individuals; this theme was called “internal learning.” This theme directly relates to the concept of self-esteem in adolescent girls. It was enlightening to learn eight girls reported experiencing increasing self-esteem because of the *4 Girls by Girls* program. Three responses from the surveys that directly related to this theme were: “I learned how to build up my self-esteem and how it is okay to accept others for who they are,” “I’ve learned that no one can stop me,” and “Feeling like I’m not alone, this program has helped me with my self-esteem.” This represents direct evidence that this specific program positively impacts the self-esteem of the girls involved.

One response contained an appreciation for the nice staff. Although this was not a significant theme, it was important to include. This response demonstrated the staff and volunteers were also positively impacting the girls involved.

The results from the third question revealed that the girls enjoyed the array of activities offered, making friends, and learning how to do new things and more about themselves. And these positive reactions prove the positive impact the *4 Girls by Girls* program has on the girls.

Documentary Video

The footage from the documentary video truly tells the *4 Girls by Girls* story. It is evident from the film this influential program is positively impacting the girls, mentors, and volunteers involved. From how this program was created to how this program has changed lives, the documentary video highlights some of the common themes that were found in the survey analyzed as well as supports the current research available on self-esteem programs for adolescent girls.

The young girls featured on this video overwhelmingly agree that *4 Girls by Girls* has increased their self-confidence and self worth. Not only are the girls in the program making new friends and mentors and learning new skills, they are also learning how to respect themselves and others. For example, one girl shared, “When I was younger, I used to think that you know like, no one liked me; no one thought I was pretty or anything, and going to *4 Girls* with Ms. Crystal, it’s brought my attitude up; it makes me feel like I have a lot of friends and it makes me feel like I’m pretty and that there’s nothing that can turn me down.” Another girl said, “The *4 Girls by Girls* program impacted my life by just having fun, making new friends, and helping my self-confidence.” And finally, a volunteer stated, “I’ve been a part of *4 Girls by Girls* since the beginning. And it’s a really awesome program. As an adult, it has really shown me how a positive influence really helps young girls. And as a mother, it has helped my daughter really come out and be more outspoken, meet new friends. And all the girls really seem to get along with each other and all of the mentors. So as this program has been developing year after year, I have seen more development in girls, more opportunities for girls to reach out and learn more about themselves. So I really enjoy the program. It’s been a great asset to the Muncie

community. And I always enjoyed helping, and I look forward to helping as long as this program is going.”

These direct quotes from the video demonstrate how the *4 Girls by Girls* program is positively impacting the girls involved as well as the volunteers. It further supports the research that found programs geared towards increasing the self-esteem of girls are successful and benefit the individuals involved.

Chapter V: Conclusion

The data from the surveys and video supports that the *4 Girls by Girls* program is positively impacting the adolescent girls involved. Many girls reported in the post-summer program feedback survey that this program is a positive experience for them and boosts their self-esteem. By learning new activities, meeting new friends, and having a strong support system, the girls are developing into confident young women. In addition, the stories told in the documentary video support the data from the surveys and tell how this program is directly empowering them.

Research has demonstrated that many specific programs are successful in their efforts at positively impacting adolescent girls (McVey et al., 2004; Shen & Armstrong, 2008; Hamed et al., 2011; Steese et al., 2006; Kuperminc et al., 2011; LeCroy, 2004). And the *4 Girls by Girls* program is yet another successful program that empowers young women. This evaluation provides further evidence that programs designed for adolescent girls are beneficial to their overall development (LeCroy, 2004).

Determining whether these “girls only” programs are successful must continue. Adolescent girls are at a greater risk of experiencing low levels of self-esteem (Harper & Marshall, 1991; Kearney-Cooke, 1999; Birndorf et al., 2005; DuBois et al., 1996; Eiser et al., 1995); and programs designed for girls can help counter these low self-esteem levels (LeCroy, 2004). If this issue of low self-esteem is not addressed, girls will continued to be plagued with higher depression levels, higher incidents of eating disorders, more issues with body dissatisfaction (Kearney-Cooke, 1999), poor mental and physical health, increased risk of being convicted of a crime, and having worse economic prospects as an adult (Trzesniewski et al., 2006).

Unfortunately, like this evaluation, many evaluations only study positive short-term evidence (LeCroy 2004; LeCroy, 2005). Consequently, future evaluations need to be conducted to see if these programs are successful in the long-term. Discovering the long-term affects of these programs on the girls involved could uncover new tactics to enhance the proper development of adolescent girls.

Next, co-producing a documentary video with participants in the *4 Girls by Girls* program provided a greater insight of how much this program is positively impacting the girls involved. Not only was the evaluator able to see the inner workings of the program, but also heard, firsthand, their stories. For example, a very unique component of the program is the committee members. There are girls from all age groups on this planning committee. This allows the girls in the program to have a voice in the development of the summer program, specifically by helping to decide which activities are offered.

Additionally, from working with this group, the evaluator introduced the program coordinators with a free online tool to create a website for *4 Girls by Girls Inc.* Now, this organization has a live website where anyone can see how this program is positively impacting the Muncie community youth, register their child for the summer program, donate financially, or volunteer their time. By co-producing this project, *4 Girls by Girls Inc.* gained direct data and evidence of how powerful this program is for the young girls involved, a video that tells their story, and a website that spreads their reach into other areas.

The positive findings from this creative project demonstrate the importance of working with community groups to evaluate their programs. The success *4 Girls by Girls* has had at positively impacting the girls involved may have gone unnoticed; however, by working with the

organization and co-producing an informative paper and documentary video, their inspiring story can be shared across other communities.

Appendix A

“Uniquely Me”: Summary of Findings

The *4 Girls by Girls* Program from Muncie, Indiana created, for the first time, a fashion show during the fall of 2012 entitled, “Uniquely Me”. This pageant was developed and performed by the individuals from the *4 Girls by Girls* program. The “Uniquely Me” pageant consisted of each girl being assigned a mentor; the pair, mentor and mentee, met a few times before the finale debut of the fashion show to develop the program and learn routines. After the show, the mentees, mentors, and audience were asked to fill out surveys regarding the pageant. The feedback was analyzed and the results are summarized below.

The mentees enjoyed the pageant and were interested in partaking in future pageants and other *4 Girls by Girls* events. One important and well-liked part of this program was the relationship between the mentor and mentee. The mentees got along well with their mentors and rated them as “good” and “very good”. A few girls stated their mentor “was nice” and others said their mentor “supported me all the way” and she “could count on her”. Finally, the mentees were asked how future “Uniquely Me” Pageants could improve. A popular response was creating additions, whether it is bigger crowns, more dances, longer stage time, or more categories. Also, some participants recommended developing a better scheduling system.

Even though the mentees were the fashionistas of the “Uniquely Me” pageants, the mentors played a pivotal role in the success of the fashion show. Many of the mentors chose to participate in the pageant because they loved the message behind the “Uniquely Me” fashion show; the euphoria of being recommended by their *4 Girls by Girls* faculty; and the belief that it was a positive way to help young girls. This pageant met the mentors’ expectations for the most part because it came together in the end, they felt involved with the young girls, and they enjoyed it overall. In general, the mentors believed the mentor-mentee component worked very well and should be continued for future pageants. Additionally, the different categories, including the age groups, worked well. However, future *4 Girls by Girls* fashion shows, and events in general, need improved organization to make the programs run effectively and efficiently. Better organization includes: better communication, better time management, more meetings for the mentors and event leaders, making sure everyone is on the same page and has a clear understanding of the program goals, and being prepared from week to week, especially with practice scheduling. As far as the leadership of the event, most mentors believed it was “good” or “ok”. Few did mention the leaders needed to be better organized and prepared. Despite this, every mentor expressed an interest in helping with future *4 Girls by Girls* events.

The mentors and mentees were important to the success; however the reception by the audience was critical to the continuation of the “Uniquely Me” pageant. The audience thought the pageant had a good flow overall. They wrote many compliments, including “well done”, “excellent”, “great work”, and “great program”. For them, the way the pageant was created, allowing the girls to express themselves and show their personalities and style, made it very unique. Also, the fact the pageant was not about looks, the different categories, and the input and ideas from the girls were positive features. Adding more categories or acts to the pageant or making each act longer would benefit future fashion shows. Also, just being more organized, for example fewer pauses between transitions and being clear about breaks, would make the show even better.

The audience was surveyed on several other items, including questions regarding receiving *4 Girls by Girls* information or helping with future *4 Girls by Girls* programming. A little over half of the respondents (55%) were interested in receiving information about the program and over half (62%) would be interested in helping with future events by being a mentor, a future speaker in their profession, providing financial support, or volunteering in any way needed.

From the participant, mentor, and audience feedback, it is evident the “Uniquely Me” pageant positively affected everyone involved. Future *4 Girls by Girls* events have a bright future.

Appendix B

Summer Feedback Questionnaire:

1. Is this summer program what you expected it to be? ___Yes ___No
2. Would you like to continue to participate in the program on a monthly basis after June? ___Yes ___No

Please explain why or why not.

3. Please tell what you learned and enjoyed most so far from the programming this summer.

Appendix C

	1. Is this summer program what you expected it to be?	2. Would you like to continue to participate in the program on a monthly basis after July?	Please explain why or why not.	3. Please tell what you have learned and enjoyed most so far from the programming this summer.
1	Yes	Yes	Because it keeps me busy and we always have fun.	How to do different things and meet new people.
2	Yes	Yes	I love 4 girls by girls always have and always will.	That you are perfect the way you are.
3	No	Yes	It's fun and interesting.	About relationships and boys!
4	Yes	Yes	I think it helps me become more of a young lady, and I like being able to help more girls.	I learned how to build up my self-esteem and how it is ok to accept others for who they are.
5	Yes	Yes	Because it's fun and it gives me something to do!	I have enjoyed getting to know everyone.
6	Yes	Yes	Because I enjoy it and I feel my self-esteem getting higher.	I have enjoyed swimming and food. I have learned stuff I didn't know about other people.
7	Yes	Yes	I don't know.	Because NA
8	Yes	Yes	Because this class is helping me.	I enjoyed meeting friends and I learned about relationships.
9	Yes	Yes	Because I think it would help me.	What's good and bad in relationships.
10	Yes	Yes	Cause it's fun.	Dance class, groups.
11	Yes	Yes	Because it is fun and something to do in the summer time.	How a lady is suppose to act like.
12	Yes	Yes	Because it is a good program and it is a good way to get out the house.	How to socialize with people. When the people come to talk to us.
13	Yes	Yes	Because it gets me out of the YOC and it is fun and you all are nice.	I have met new people and the staff are nice. I learned to be nice.
14	Yes	Yes	It is a good self-esteem booster for girls and I really enjoy it!	Not to worry about what others say and to stay focused on myself.
15	Yes	Yes	Because it's a lot of fun and girls need this probably ESPECIALLY during the school year.	I have learned what to look for in a good friend and I enjoyed the art.
16	Yes	Yes	Because I think it's a good thing for my art stuff.	How to krosche [crochet].
17	Yes	Yes	I like to keep going because it empowers [empowers] me.	I've learned that no one can stop me
18	Yes	Yes	I really like it: it's fun.	I learned how to croschay [crochet]. I've croschayed [crocheted] everything since then.
19	Yes	Yes	It's fun.	I like when we worked out and I like to meet new people.
20	Yes	Yes	Because I love this program. Because it's fun.	To get alone with others you don't know.
21	Yes	Yes	Because it's fun.	I learned how to croschay [crochet].
22	No	Yes	It's fun.	The dancing. Not to bully.
23	Yes	Yes	Why I do is because this is very fun, and it gives me something to do most times when I am bored.	How to socialize with people, a lot! I enjoyed going to Turkey Pool with everybody.
24	Yes	Yes	Because it was a great and fun experience.	That guys don't just look for appearances.
25	Yes	Yes	Because it was an awesome experience.	It's good to surround yourself by people.
26	Yes	Yes	It's good for you.	What boys want.
27	Yes	Yes	It's amazingly fun!	I enjoyed meeting new people.
28	Yes	Yes	It's a positive way to express yourself and fun to do.	What men want in a girl and how to keep your health regulated.
29	Yes	Yes	It is extremely fun and it is something positive I can participate in.	I have learned more about myself and I really enjoyed the guy panel.
30	Yes	Yes	Cause it's really fun. I made a lot of friends.	Making experiments (peppies in lemon juice) (baking soda and vinegar)
31	Yes	Yes	I enjoyed making positive friends and I learned to sew.	I learned to sew and I made positive friends.
32	Yes	Yes	I would like to hep other girls who are in my shoes.	Feeling like I'm not alone, this program has helped me with my self-esteem.
33	Yes	Yes	It's so much fun and I love it!	I've learned healthy foods for me and many other things.
34	Yes	Yes	It is so much fun and I love it!	I love meeting new people and dancing with my mom and my friends.
35	Yes	Yes	Cause it's fun and I like it.	How to make flowers, paint, and art.
36	Yes	Yes	I had fun.	Everything food.
37	Yes	Yes	Because I get to dance, be with my friend, and have fun.	I learned and enjoyed that to not be shy and dancing.
38	Yes	No	It is not fun.	NA
39	Yes	Yes	Because I think it's fun.	NA
40	Yes	Yes	I like the program.	To not hold back and be friendly.
41	Yes	Yes	Because I love to dance.	Learn to dance, and love new friends.
42	Yes	Yes	Yes I liked this program because it's very fun and meeting new people.	The thing I've enjoyed the most NA

Age (optional)	A. Theme 1: Fun	A. Theme 2: Enjoy Program	A. Theme 3: Positive for Me	A. Theme 4: Learn New Things	A. Theme 5: Keeps Me Busy	A. Theme 6: Make Friends	A. Theme 7: It's Not Fun	A. Theme 8: Don't know	B. Theme 1: Learn Lots and Lots of Activities	B. Theme 2: Make Friends	B. Theme 3: Internal Learning	B. Theme 4: Nice Staff
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10												
NA												
NA												
19												
12												
Mean Age: 12.85	26	12	9	7	6	4	1	1	31	12	8	1

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