



girls circle:
summary of outcomes for girls
in the juvenile justice system

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Introduction

The Girls Circle Association (Girls Circle) is a non-profit organization that is a project of the Tides Center.

Girls Circle has developed a model for girl-centered support groups. This model provides support groups that are delivered for girls by women.¹ These groups focus on girl-relevant topics using a particular method of presentation. This method focuses on the strengths of the participating girls and is non-judgmental, caring, confidential, consistent, and fun.

Girls Circle has trained over 500 organizations nationally on their model of support groups. As a result, Girls Circle programs have been implemented with girls representing every socio-economic group, geographical area, ethnic identity, religion, and sexual orientation.

Girls Circle has developed nine separate activity guides that represent unique 8-12 week programs organized around the themes of friendship; being a girl; body image; diversity; connections between the mind, body and spirit; expressing individuality; relationships with peers; identity; and paths to the future

This research summary reports the findings from analysis of data collected by Girls Circle and Dominican University of California. This data was collected from girls who participated in circles across the country between January 2005 and August 2005. We paid special attention to the outcomes for girls involved in the juvenile justice system.

Research Design

Ceres Policy Research analyzed survey results for participants in circles from fifteen different cities. Eight sites hosted circles for girls who have been involved in the juvenile justice system. These cities include San Mateo and Santa Rosa in California; Boulder, Colorado; Bend and Pendleton in Oregon; and Cincinnati, Dayton, and Xenia in Ohio. An additional seven sites hosted circles for girls who are not court-involved.² These cities include Fresno, San Jose, and Yuba

¹ *Girls Circle recommends that women facilitate circles. However, some sites have had men co-facilitate circles due to staffing shortages.*

² *By “court-involved,” we mean girls who have been involved in juvenile delinquency court. We did not collect systematic data on whether girls have been involved in youth dependency court and, therefore, cannot make dependency court distinctions.*

City in California; Brandon and Tampa in Florida; Norcross, Georgia; and Houston, Texas.³

All of the circles implemented the same activity guide. The guide, entitled “Side by Side” was a special curriculum developed for the research. The guide represents a sample of activities from across the nine available activity guides. Each program cycle consisted of ten-week cycles. Each circle lasted between an hour and a half and two hours. No participant had been in a girls circle prior to the research.

To document outcomes for girls participating in circles, Girls Circle and Dominican University of California surveyed participants at the beginning and end of each 10 week cycle. Participants completed one sheet containing demographic variables, a validated self-efficacy instrument, a validated body image instrument, and a validated social support instrument.

98 pre-surveys were collected. 89 post-surveys were collected. Respondents varied in age, ethnicity, involvement in the juvenile justice system.

Data Analysis

Ceres Policy Research analyzed the surveys collected from participants. We relied on two different statistical tests. When we were interested in determining whether a group changed over time, we used a t-test. When we were interested in determining whether two groups were different from one another, we used an analysis of variance test.

Findings from these tests were considered “statistically significant” if we could be more than 90% sure that change had occurred over time or that the groups were different. We report only statistically significant results below.

Findings

Self Efficacy

Prior to participating in Girls Circle, girls scored 2.80 on the self efficacy scale. After participating in Girls Circle, girls scored 3.08 on the self efficacy scale.

³ *The results from the seven sites with girls who are not court involved were also analyzed separately by researchers at Dominican University of California. See Rough, Julia Colleen. 2005. Understanding the Intervention of Girls Circle on Friendship and Self Efficacy: A Replication and Extension. Thesis submitted to Gail Mathews, Ph.D., Dominican University of California, San Rafael, CA.*

T-tests showed that this was a statistically significant gain (sig=.000; this means that we are 100% sure that this result is not due to random error).

Body Image

Prior to participating in Girls Circle, girls scored 4.49 on the body image scale. After participating in Girls Circle, girls scored 4.72 on the body image scale. T-tests showed that this was a statistically significant gain (sig=.039; this means that we are over 96% sure that this result is not due to random error).

Perceived Social Support

Prior to participating in Girls Circle, girls scored 5.36 on the social support scale. After participating in Girls Circle, girls scored 5.68 on the social support scale. T-tests showed that this was a statistically significant gain (sig=.008; this means that we are over 99% sure that this result is not due to random error).

Subpopulations

Analysis of variance tests were run to see if there were any subgroups within the respondents that had different rates of improvement than others. We compared girls in middle schools to girls in high schools, girls from the different cities, and girls across race and ethnic identity. We found that there were no differences between groups on these measures, indicating that girls of all ages, in all locations, of all ethnic and racial identities benefit equally from participating in Girls Circle.

Additionally, we completed an analysis of variance test to see if there were any differences between girls who have been involved in the juvenile justice system and girls who have not been involved in the juvenile justice system. We found that girls who have been involved in the juvenile justice system are more likely to show an increase in perceived social support (sig=.056; this means that we are over 94% sure that this result is not due to random error).

Conclusion

Ceres Policy Research finds that girls participating Girls Circle experience significant gains in self-efficacy, body image, and perceived social support.

Girls across different ages, locations, ethnic and racial identities benefit equally from Girls Circle programs.

Girls who have been involved in the juvenile justice system are more likely to experience gains in perceived social support than girls who have not been involved in the juvenile justice system. This indicates that Girls Circle may help girls begin to develop the relationships they need to unravel cyclical involvement with the juvenile justice system.