



SPEAK for YOURSELF

What Girls Say about What Girls Need



Written and directed by
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Sponsored and facilitated by
Girl's Best Friend Foundation

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Girls speak with many voices—some critical and challenging, some muted, others playful and questioning. *Speak for Yourself: What Girls Say about What Girls Need* is designed to amplify and elevate what many girls have to say.

In 1998, Girl's Best Friend Foundation commissioned a research project to listen carefully and intentionally to girls and to learn from them, while at the same time providing girls with new skills and opportunities to grow. The Foundation's hopes were many—to inform and focus our grantmaking, to test and document an approach that put girls at the center of research, and to promote funding for high-quality girls' programs.

Over the course of two years, the research team recorded a set of common themes illuminating the lives of 233 girls. Researchers also learned valuable lessons on how to work with girls from the more than 40 advocates and program providers involved in the research project. Those themes and lessons are described in detail in *Speak for Yourself*.

Speak for Yourself was written and led by Lynn M. Phillips, Ph.D., a social and developmental psychologist and author of *Flirting with Danger*, and the National Council for Research on Women's *The Girl's Report*, as well as several national publications on adolescent girls and young women.

While the initial intention was that Lynn be a collaborator in the research project's development, execution, distillation, and presentation, over time she became its leader. Through changes at Girl's Best Friend Foundation, modifications in the research team, and amendments to the research design, Lynn remained devoted to the project.

The integrity, insight, and deep respect she has for girls are immediately apparent in *Speak for Yourself*. In many ways, Lynn embodies the type of adult care and encouragement girls want and need. The Foundation is fortunate to have engaged her in the research and we are proud to present her work.

We could not have taken on or completed this exploration of girls' voices without the generous partnership of six organizations that work with girls. The first three are in Chicago: Carole Robertson Center for Learning, Centro Comunitario Juan Diego, and Girl World (a program of Alternatives, Inc.). The YWCA of Rockford's location is self-evident, Green Meadows Girl Scouts is in Champaign/Urbana, and the McHenry County Youth Services Bureau is located in Woodstock. We thank them for opening their doors to our research and for being there for many girls.

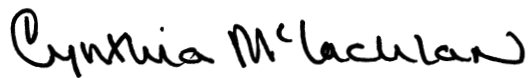
Girl's Best Friend Foundation was founded in 1994 by Cyndie McLachlan and her family as a material expression of her commitment to building on the strengths of girls and developing girls into future leaders with deep feminist, social justice values.

In the past six years, the Foundation has made \$1.2 million in grants to organizations working with girls. Our goals today are to support model development programming for girls and young women from the ages of eight to 21, to strengthen organizations partnering with girls, and to influence the quality of girls' programming. The lessons of *Speak for Yourself* will be incorporated

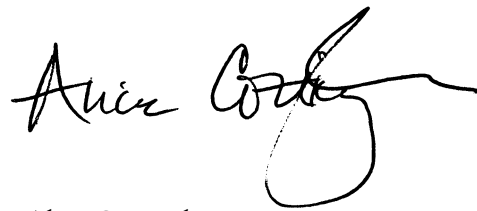
into Girl's Best Friend Foundation's activist-driven grantmaking, our girl-led grantmaking program Sisters Empowering Sisters, and our advocacy and educational efforts in and around Chicago.

We are especially grateful to the girls who so generously shared their thoughts, ideas, feelings, and questions with the research team. They are girls like those you know and live with, not the tragic victims, monstrous meanies, or budding stars often presented to us in magazines and on television. We are honored to present them to you.

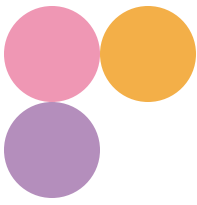
Regards,



Cynthia McLachlan
Founder and Board Member
Girl's Best Friend Foundation



Alice Cottingham
Executive Director
Girl's Best Friend Foundation



“One thing that I wanted to say is that I don’t think we’re giving girls as much credit as they deserve sometimes. Some people try to make it seem like girls are just suffering, and they’re not growing up right, and there’s like, going to be millions of women in therapy when they hit 18...and I don’t think it’s quite that.”

– Alana

“I’m not going to be in therapy. I’m going to be a therapist.”

– Taniqua
Case Study Meeting
Champaign-Urbana¹

What do girls like Alana and Taniqua need to grow up healthy and strong? What kinds of resources can help them pursue their dreams, and what obstacles continue to stand in their way? The last decade has seen increasing attention to these questions and to the issues raised in the above exchange. Since the early 1990s, the number of studies on girls has increased dramatically, and girls’ programs have sprung up in schools and communities as never before. Awareness of girls’ needs and concerns has been raised by the important and provocative work of both small, grassroots organizations and such national and international organizations as the American Association of University Women (AAUW) Educational Foundation, the Center for Women Policy Studies, Girls Incorporated, the Global Fund for Women, the Ms. Foundation for Women, the National Council for Research on Women, and the Wellesley Centers for Women. By conducting or commissioning research, creating or supporting programs, and issuing reports on the status and experiences of adolescent girls, such organizations have brought much needed attention to girls’ issues.

These developments represent good news to those committed to promoting girls’ rights and carving out spaces where girls can explore, expand, and challenge their worlds. The heightened focus on girls has revealed new insights about issues ranging from school achievement and sports involvement to acquaintance rape and eating disorders. Yet still too often, programs, studies, and policies reflect adult assumptions about what girls need. Despite adults’ best intentions, girls are frequently talked at, talked around, and talked about—but adults too seldom invite young people to talk in ways that position girls as teachers and adults as learners.

Girl’s Best Friend Foundation’s (GBF) Statewide Research Initiative—*Speak for Yourself: What Girls Say about What Girls Need*—marks a departure from traditional, adult-centered ways of

¹Alana describes herself as Caucasian/Serbian, 15 years old, and in 10th grade; she describes her religion as “undecided.” Taniqua describes herself as African American, Baptist, 13 years old, and in 7th grade. All names used in this report are pseudonyms.


studying and working with girls, and instead builds on the important insights of the feminist and youth development movements. From the research design to the analysis of findings, this project emerges from the Foundation’s commitment to a “girl-friendly” process—one that takes girls seriously, embraces their complexities, respects their perspectives and contributions, and creates safe and stimulating contexts in which they can explore their strengths, concerns, and aspirations. Based on a desire to listen to girls and honor their expertise, this study was designed as a partnership between girls and women—an opportunity to collaborate across generations to address the following questions:

- How do girls from urban, suburban, and rural communities identify their own strengths and aspirations?
- What qualities do girls value in programs and relationships with adults and peers?
- What do girls want and need from their communities—what resources are available to support girls’ well-being, and what resources are still needed?
- How can girls work together to create more girl-friendly communities?
- How can adults support their efforts?

This project intentionally straddles the lines that typically separate research from programming and activism. It serves as both a vehicle for gathering information about how girls are faring, and a vehicle for promoting girls’ empowerment—this includes their ability to advocate for themselves, their feelings of efficacy, and their sense of entitlement to fair and respectful treatment. By prompting girls to become experts and change agents in their own lives, *Speak for Yourself* represents an effort to learn from girls while co-creating with them an engaging environment in which to learn for, from, and about themselves and each other.

The data presented in this report were gathered from girls and by girls. Girls provided data as research participants reflecting on their lives within their communities, and they collected data as actual researchers surveying and interviewing adults and peers. Through their wisdom, curiosity, and collaborative spirit, they taught us much about girls’ strengths, needs, and aspirations.ⁱ

Speak for Yourself represents an opportunity to share with others what girls helped us learn. It is an invitation to rethink traditional assumptions about working with girls, and a call to place girls at the center of conversations about research and programming. Girls have a great deal to offer their communities. They deserve the respectful support of adults within those communities—through formal and informal programs, grantmaking, empowering research, social services, meaningful job and volunteer opportunities, community organizing, parenting, and schooling. It is our hope that those wishing to advocate for girls will draw useful information from this report—and that they will gain inspiration from the hard work, talent, and courage of the girls who so graciously shared their insights with us.



“ They [adults] should listen to us and ask us what we think before they make decisions for us.”

— Beth describes herself as White, Jewish, 16 years old, and in 11th grade. She was a girl-to-girl interviewee in Rockford.

OUR JOURNEY

Points of Departure

This project began with a belief that adults have much to learn from the perspectives and experiences of adolescent girls. It began with a view of girls as strong, capable, and entitled to the respectful support of adults and peers. And it began with a conviction that girls and women can work together in partnership to identify and co-create resources that enhance girls' healthy development. By the time this project was completed, the research initiative had evolved into a two-year, action research project conducted collaboratively with six community agencies and a core group of 65 adolescent girls in urban, suburban, and rural communities across Illinois. We also tapped into the needs and priorities of an additional 168 girls and 30 adult advocates through focus groups and girl-conducted interviews. And, through a project called "girl mapping," girls surveyed 1,814 adults and teens in their neighborhoods to better understand attitudes toward girls and the availability of girl-friendly resources in each community. The research initiative spanned from January 1999 through December 2000; it incorporated multiple methods, including individual interviews with girls and adults, ongoing discussion groups, journal writing, girl mapping, and focus groups.

The project was built on the following premises:ⁱⁱ

- Girls can become researchers of their own lives and change agents in their own communities.
- Girls' knowledge is a valuable resource for adults, communities, and other girls.
- Girls develop a sense of empowerment when encouraged to speak for themselves, think critically about their lives, and participate in meaningful decision-making.
- Girls need and deserve adult support and opportunities to develop critical thinking, inquiry, and leadership skills.
- The complexities of girls' experiences are best understood using qualitative, participatory methods; they also require multiple forms of data gathering over a sustained period of time.ⁱⁱⁱ

Girl researchers asked adults, "Do the activities, programs, and places in this community meet the needs and interests of girls?" This is how the adults surveyed responded:

| | | |
|-------|-----------------|-----------|
| 10.5% | said Definitely | (n = 50) |
| 48.5% | said Somewhat | (n = 232) |
| 20.7% | said Not much | (n = 99) |
| 9.2% | said Not at all | (n = 44) |
| 11.1% | said No opinion | (n = 53) |
| | | (N = 478) |

Girls asked the same adults, "Do the activities, programs, and places in this community meet the needs and interests of boys?" These are their responses:

| | | |
|-------|-----------------|-----------|
| 25.8% | said Definitely | (n = 123) |
| 45.5% | said Somewhat | (n = 217) |
| 12.2% | said Not much | (n = 58) |
| 5.5% | said Not at all | (n = 26) |
| 11.1% | said No opinion | (n = 53) |
| | | (N = 477) |

Source: GBF Phase II mapping data. Because the mapping project used a convenience sample, the data presented here describe views of these respondents only. They do not necessarily represent the views of other community members.

OUR GOALS

Committed to funding programs that support the healthy development of girls in Illinois, GBF set out to learn more about how girls across the state were faring, what resources were available to them, and what resources were lacking as they made their way into young womanhood. In March 1998, Girl's Best Friend Foundation convened a research advisory group—a racially, ethnically, and socially diverse group of 20 researchers, community activists, and girls' advocates from around the country—to conceptualize a research initiative that would shed light on the resources girls need to grow up confident, healthy, safe, and strong.^{iv}

The project emerged with four broad goals in mind:

Focus Girl's Best Friend Foundation's Funding

A primary impetus for the research initiative was to inform and focus Girl's Best Friend Foundation's grantmaking. In order to maximize the impact of its own work, the Foundation wanted to learn what concerns Illinois girls identified as most pressing in their lives, as well as what types of programs they considered most needed and most helpful in addressing those concerns.^v Girl's Best Friend Foundation wanted to develop more girl-driven grantmaking strategies by hearing from girls themselves, placing them in the role of experts, and making its funding decisions based on girls' insights about themselves, their peers, and the types of programs they consider most empowering to them. Inspired by the asset-based, deeply participatory, and girl-centered research conducted by the Ms. Foundation's Healthy Girls/Healthy Women Collaborative and others on a national level, Girl's Best Friend Foundation wished to focus specifically on girls in its own state and incorporate their perspectives and priorities into its grantmaking strategies.

Encourage Girl-Friendly Programming, Funding, and Policymaking

Although the research initiative grew from Girl's Best Friend Foundation's desire to better direct its own grantmaking, the project's goals far exceeded this aim. It was GBF's hope that the knowledge gained from this initiative would inspire and inform the work of other foundations, program staff, policymakers, educators, caregivers, and community members interested in fostering the well-being of adolescent girls both within and outside of Illinois. Girl's Best Friend Foundation hoped that the information gleaned would both guide existing organizations in developing more girl-centered programming and policies, and inspire concerned individuals to create new organizations devoted to supporting girls' healthy development. By gathering information from a diverse group of girls living in urban, suburban, and rural communities across the state, Girl's Best Friend Foundation hoped to provide a knowledge base and a call to action for those wishing to expand and refine their commitment to girls.

“If I had to say one thing that girls need most, it would be someone to listen to them, believe in them—somebody that understands we can do a lot more than people give us credit for. And then we need somebody to give us a chance to learn it and do it.”

— Clarisse describes herself as Black, Baptist, 15 years old, and in 9th grade. She was a core participant in Champaign-Urbana.

Benefit Girls in the Here and Now

Girl's Best Friend Foundation was interested in gaining knowledge that would sharpen the focus of its own grantmaking and help others develop more girl-friendly programs and funding strategies. But it was just as concerned with creating a research process that would offer direct benefits to those participating in it. It was a central and explicit goal of this project not just to collect data that would benefit an abstract group of girls “down the road” through better targeted funding and more effective programming, but also to enhance the lives of girls in the here and now, through their participation in a collaborative research project that would honor their knowledge, provide them opportunities to connect with other girls and adults in meaningful ways, and prompt them to experience themselves as researchers, activists, and vital, entitled members of their own communities.

Inspire Further Research

Finally, the Foundation hoped that this research would open a door to other girls and adults interested in co-creating activist research projects in their own communities. As an explicitly feminist, girl-centered foundation, GBF is concerned that too much of what is known about adolescent girls comes from the perspective of adults or is extrapolated from studies on youth in general. In addition, much of the existing research and policy literature on girls is deficit- rather than asset-based—it focuses on the ways that girls are “at risk” rather than on the ways that girls can thrive when adults offer them the support, trust, and opportunities they deserve. Girl's Best Friend Foundation hoped that *Speak for Yourself's* findings would contribute to the growing body of asset-based, youth-centered research literature on adolescent girls—and that its methods would inspire others to form cross-generational partnerships to explore girls' knowledge and perceptions of their own wants, needs, and capabilities in other areas of the United States and beyond.

A GUIDING FRAMEWORK

Between March and July 1998, the research advisory group met three times to develop a guiding framework within which an informative, feasible, and girl-centered research design could emerge. The group stressed the importance of developing a study consistent with Girl's Best Friend Foundation's commitment to creating empowering opportunities for participants, interacting respectfully with their communities, and honoring their diverse experiences and sources of knowledge.

The research advisory group conceptualized a study that would unearth vital information about girls' lives while it also provided a vehicle for meaningful collaborations with community agencies and created empowering opportunities for adolescent girls in Illinois. Rather than attempting to capture a snapshot of one point in time, we wanted to provide a context for girls to come together to grapple with the issues that concerned them, to learn new skills, to gather and create new knowledge, and to take action as they deemed appropriate.

The following criteria shaped the research design:

- The research initiative is a partnership among girls, community agencies, adult researchers, and Girl's Best Friend Foundation.
- The research provides direct benefits to those participating in the project.
- The research is asset-based.
- The project explicitly blends research and action.
- Girls are positioned as researchers of their own lives.
- Adults support and learn from girls, rather than direct them.
- The research involves a diverse group of girls across urban, rural, and suburban communities.
- The project encourages girls to think critically and take constructive action in areas of concern to them.
- The research is deeply qualitative and offers participating girls and adults a safe space to reflect together over time.
- The research incorporates multiple methods intended to shed light on the complexities of girls' lives.

WHAT WE LEARNED

Through our work together, both the girls and the adults involved in this study learned a great deal—about ourselves, each other, and our communities. Together we pondered possibilities beyond the here and now, asking ourselves not only how girls describe their lives at present, but also what girls' lives might look like in a more just, equitable, and girl-friendly world. We discovered the rewards and challenges of collaborating on a project intended to invert traditional power relationships between women and girls. We experienced the richness, the complexities, and sometimes the frustrations of coming together as community advocates, researchers, foundation staff, and adolescent girls—groups whose goals intersect, but whose approaches and perspectives sometimes differ. And we all reveled in the pleasures of witnessing girls defining, fulfilling, and often exceeding their goals.

We learned that:

- Girls find within themselves a wide range of strengths, from leadership to courage, and an ability to find common ground.
- Girls are less concerned with the *types* of programs in their communities (e.g., recreational, educational, etc.) than with their ability to find respectful and caring relationships *within* those programs.

- Girls often feel alone, unheard, and uncertain about the future—they crave a safe space to go and tell the truth about their lives.
- Girls want to work with adults who support their efforts rather than direct them.
- Girls name boredom as one of the most common reasons that girls join gangs, use drugs and alcohol, and engage in fights—they want more fun and meaningful activities in their communities.
- Girls want a girl-friendly place to belong to, and an opportunity to develop relationships with girls they experience as different from themselves.
- Girls want opportunities to explore their possibilities and develop skills that will help them articulate and act upon their own desires and visions.
- Girls want both girls-only and mixed-sex activities, but they need to be sure that in mixed-sex settings, their voices will be heard.
- Girls are done a disservice when well-intentioned adults unwittingly project unresolved power struggles or personal issues onto them.
- Girls need practical support to help them access programs, activities, and services.
- Girls want and deserve a real voice in matters that concern them.

In addition to providing and collecting compelling data, girls learned new skills, stretched their thinking, and made valuable contributions to their communities. They spoke eloquently with television, radio, and print reporters, describing their work on talk shows, in local newspapers, and on the six o'clock news. In the process, they practiced public speaking skills, conquered fears, learned to work with and think critically about the media, raised public awareness about girls' strengths and needs, and had the opportunity to see themselves and their work as newsworthy. Girls also developed letter-writing campaigns to express their support of girl-friendly businesses and their intention to boycott those that treated them disrespectfully, discriminated against young people, or carried products that exploited women and girls. They pressed for more girl-friendly selections at their local library. They presented their work at women's studies and youth conferences. They developed new relationships with police, community advocates, and business owners in their neighborhoods, and raised money for a program for teen mothers. They expanded their personal horizons by taking part in a ropes course, visiting a college campus, seeing their first ballet, sharing books and newspaper articles, enhancing their knowledge of geography and politics, and sampling new cuisines. And throughout all of these efforts, they forged new connections across age, race, culture, language, class, and community.

“I learned [from this project] that I can work with people who are different than me and that I can take myself and other girls seriously. I learned that we have a lot of talents that could help our community. I feel a lot stronger now than when I came into it.”

— Teresa describes herself as Mexican, Catholic, 14 years old, and in 9th grade. She was a core participant in Woodstock.

Speak for Yourself represents the hard work and reflections of girls from a wide range of backgrounds. Participants are the daughters of office workers, professors, day laborers, unemployed workers, business owners, and drug dealers. They live in apartments, single-family homes, housing projects, and homeless shelters. They attend large public schools and small parochial schools. They are Black/African American, Asian American, White/Caucasian, Latina/Hispanic, and multiracial.^{vi} All speak at least some English, although many speak other languages with friends or at home. Some plan to be doctors or lawyers, others hope to stay in school long enough to graduate high school, and many are not yet sure what they want the future to hold. But all of them want to be heard—they want to share their experiences with readers in the hope that their insights will be used to support the well-being of adolescent girls.

In the following chapters, we discuss the lessons learned from the girls' research. We reflect on the information girls discovered from their interviews and mapping project, and perhaps more importantly, from the process of becoming researchers and activists in their own communities. We begin with a project overview in Chapter Two, so that readers may appreciate the scope, depth, and rationale of the girls' work. In Chapter Three, we discuss the issues girls describe as their most significant challenges or obstacles to their healthy development. In Chapters Four and Five, we explore what girls taught adults and each other about themselves, their peers, their communities, and what they need to overcome challenges and embrace their own strengths. Here readers will encounter girls' reflections on their experiences as researchers, activists, and collaborators on this project, as well as their thoughts on the merits and limitations of the research initiative itself. Finally, in Chapter Six, we synthesize the lessons learned and offer recommendations for those working to promote the healthy development of adolescent girls. We invite readers to share in what girls have taught us and to use it to fuel their own efforts to advocate for girls.

“The girls I work with are doing their very best under some really harsh circumstances. They need someone they can count on and a chance to see how smart and strong they can actually be.”

—Advocate interview, North Lawndale

END NOTES

ⁱThroughout this report, the terms “we” and “us” are used primarily to refer to the adult researchers. However, when these terms are used to refer to all who participated in the project, we attempt to make that clear through the language used (e.g., “we shared what we learned as women and girls working together”).

ⁱⁱThese premises are consistent with a youth development approach. A youth development orientation presumes that young people are valuable community members whose capabilities are best fostered when adults form a commitment to provide genuine opportunities for them to assume leadership roles, build empowering relationships, and develop useful and meaningful skills. A youth development approach is inherently asset-based—it respects young people as important sources of strength and vitality in their communities rather than viewing them as a drain on societal resources or as simply “at risk.” Advocates of a youth development perspective seek to engage young people meaningfully in the design, implementation, and decision-making processes of the projects in which they are involved. This may include encouraging youth to assume such traditionally adult-held responsibilities as program design, budget management, hiring and staff development, board membership, group facilitation, and project evaluation. From this perspective, adults position themselves primarily as supporters, rather than directors, of youths' efforts. While adults certainly may teach young people valuable skills and impart needed information, such skills and information should be identified by the youth, not just the adults, as important. Further, adults should be thinking constantly of ways to de-center themselves. Even as they teach new skills, for instance, adults should simultaneously mentor young people in such a way as to enable the youth themselves to become the teachers for the next group seeking such skills. In short, adults who work from a youth development approach respect young people and have faith in their capabilities—they help them to gain the knowledge, confi-

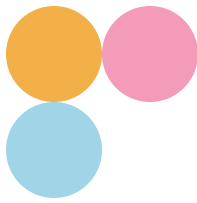
dence, and experience they need to define their own goals, think critically about their lives and their communities, speak for themselves, and assume leadership positions in areas that concern them.

ⁱⁱⁱOur methodological approach is consistent with the assumptions of feminist activist research. In feminist activist research, studies are designed to prompt participants to reflect upon and analyze the issues that emerge through the research process; researchers and participants co-create meaning through reflexive dialogue about the issues under investigation. Participants are not treated as passive sources of data for researchers to interpret. Instead, feminist activist research is designed so that participants are empowered by the very process of taking part in the research. It is hoped that by tapping into their own experiences and engaging in meaningful discussion based on their own perspectives, participants will not only shed light on the topic of study but also construct new and more empowering understandings of their own lives. Feminist activist research deliberately sits at the junction between research and action. Activist research uses social science methods to document the process of social change projects as they occur. As the project unfolds, the research itself becomes a catalyst for social change. By prompting participants to reflect critically on their own assumptions and on their work, the participants, the researchers, and the project are to some degree transformed.

^{iv}After extensive discussion about the merits and limitations of including girls as research advisory group members, both the adult members and girls involved at GBF determined that girls' talents and energies would not be best spent in these initial discussions. However, girls were involved heavily in decision-making throughout the remainder of the project.

^vGirl's Best Friend Foundation exclusively funds girls' programs in Illinois, where the Foundation is based. Effective Fall 2002, Girl's Best Friend Foundation narrowed its funding focus to the metropolitan Chicago area.

^{vi}Although debates persist regarding the appropriate language to denote race categories, we use Black/African American, White/Caucasian, and Latina/Hispanic here to reflect the range of terms the participants used to identify themselves.



“If you want to know more about adolescent girls, go and ask them.” In a very real sense, this simple statement summarizes our approach to this study. The specifics were much more complicated. But the entire project was predicated on the notion that girls are experts on their own lives and that, given a safe space to explore and critique their experiences, they are quite capable of teaching adults what they need to grow up healthy and strong.

The study was designed not to uncover some definitive truth about what girls need, but rather to offer a multidimensional view of girls’ lives and their perceptions of what would be most helpful to them. Unlike large-scale surveys that present a static snapshot of what girls say about their lives at any given moment, this study provided an opportunity to tap into the nuances of girls’ experiences and to represent them in ways that honor their contradictions and complexities. As important, this project presented an opportunity to witness the development of girls’ thinking and relationships over time by prompting them to come together with their peers to grapple with issues of concern to them. And, in cases where such grappling led girls to take action in their communities, it became an opportunity to document the processes by which girls mobilize to create constructive change on their own and others’ behalf.

In this chapter we describe the design of the research initiative and explain the thought process that informed our decision-making. Our aim is not to delve into the technicalities of the design, but rather to 1) offer an overview of the project components so that readers can better envision the challenging work the girls undertook and 2) provide a backdrop against which to consider the findings discussed in later chapters.

WORKING PARTNERSHIPS

Speak for Yourself represents a partnership among four groups:ⁱ

- Adolescent girls
- Community agencies
- Adult researchers
- Girl’s Best Friend Foundation

Each partner played multiple, interlocking roles throughout the study. The project design reflects not only a desire to build on the important strengths of each group, but also a commitment to provide benefits to each partner. In addition to providing data on girls’ needs and experiences, the research initiative was designed to benefit partners in the following ways.

Provide opportunities for girls to:

- Experience themselves as part of a stable, supportive, and girl-centered group
- Express their wants, needs, and experiences individually, in groups, and in writing
- Develop critical thinking and research skills
- Investigate other girls' attitudes and perceptions, as well as the resources available and lacking in their communities
- Experience themselves as experts on their own lives and communities
- Contemplate and create constructive social change
- Identify and develop the skills (e.g., public speaking, lobbying, writing, etc.) necessary to act on their desires to create change
- Inform programming, policy, and research debates about adolescent girls
- Receive a stipend for their participation in a meaningful projectⁱⁱ

Provide opportunities for agency partners to:

- Gain knowledge that may strengthen programming efforts for girls
- Develop a greater understanding of the girl-friendly resources and services available and lacking in their communities
- Strengthen the agency's relationships with girls in their communities
- Receive financial support for working with girlsⁱⁱⁱ
- Strengthen the agency's relationships with other agencies in the community
- Exchange ideas with other participating agencies across the state
- Participate in the generation of new knowledge regarding adolescent girls

Provide opportunities for adult researchers and Girl's Best Friend Foundation to:

- Expand their knowledge about adolescent girls and their communities
- Form new partnerships with community agencies across Illinois
- Inform the Foundation's grantmaking
- Document the processes by which girls engage in social change
- Gather information that might help foundations, programs, policymakers, researchers, educators, and parents or other caregivers better understand and advocate for adolescent girls
- Raise public awareness of girls' strengths, struggles, and needs

Agency Partners

The research initiative was divided into two distinct phases. Phase I ran from March through August 1999 and involved girls and agencies in the following three Chicago neighborhoods:

- Carole Robertson Center for Learning, North Lawndale
- Centro Comunitario Juan Diego, Southeast Chicago
- Girl World (a division of Alternatives, Inc.), Uptown/Edgewater

Phase I served both as a freestanding component of the research and as an opportunity to pilot the study before moving statewide, to three communities outside Chicago, in Phase II. Based on extensive debriefing sessions with the adult research team, agency partners, and participating girls, several modifications were made before beginning Phase II.^{iv} One of the most important changes was to double the length of the project in Phase II, allowing girls more time to work together, reflect on the data they collected, and take action in their communities. Phase II ran from March through December 2000 and involved the following agencies:

- Green Meadows Girl Scouts, Champaign-Urbana
- McHenry County Youth Services Bureau, Woodstock
- YWCA of Rockford, Rockford

All six of our agency partners shared a strong commitment to girls' well-being. However, their approaches to working with girls varied widely. Our partners ranged from organizations founded specifically to foster girls' empowerment to social service agencies whose clients included boys as well as girls, and adults as well as youth. Some were small, grassroots community organizations while others were affiliated with large, national organizations. Two agencies had girls on their boards of directors, involved them as search committee members when hiring new staff, or gave them a programming budget to manage themselves. Most were more traditional and hierarchical, positioning adults as the providers and girls and/or their families as the consumers of services.

Each agency assigned one or two adult women to work closely with the core participants and adult researchers.^v They oversaw administrative and logistical aspects of their team's work, coordinated the girls' mapping activities, and, in Phase II, met with the girls every two weeks (alternating with case study meetings) for team-building, special projects, and recreation. Of the 12 agency staff members with whom we worked most directly, three were Black/African American, one was Asian American, five were Caucasian/White, and three were Latina/Hispanic. Agency team members included lesbian and heterosexual women ranging in age from their 20s to their 50s.

SPEAK FOR YOURSELF AGENCY PARTNERS

Girl World has been building upon the strengths and creativity of young women ages eight to 18 since 1996. Their innovative after-school programs provide the tools for self-determination and safe spaces for young women to engage in positive self-expression. Girl World empowers young women to take on leadership roles within their communities and advocates for young women's voices to be heard and validated. Girl World is a program of Alternatives, Inc., a nonprofit youth and family service agency in northeast Chicago. Girl World serves the northeast Chicago communities of Edgewater, Rogers Park and Uptown, three of the most ethnically, religiously, politically, culturally, and economically diverse communities in Chicago.

Centro Comunitario Juan Diego (CCJD) is a grassroots organization that promotes leadership and social change. Their activities focus on three areas of concern: education, health promotion, and community organizing/human rights. The majority of CCJD's clients are immigrant Latina women and children. CCJD is located in the Southeast Chicago community. The neighborhood is an important entry point for immigrants into Chicago.

The Carole Robertson Center for Learning is a multicultural, nonprofit partnership among parents, youth, and community dedicated to nurturing, supporting, and strengthening family life through quality child, youth, and family development programs. The Center develops innovative programs that are both sustainable and responsive to community needs. Communities served by the Center rank among the highest in the concentration of impoverished families in Chicago. Communities are over-represented with individuals receiving public assistance, adults without high school diplomas, and female-headed, single parent households. They also have high rates of teen pregnancy, infant mortality, high school dropout, and illiteracy. Crime rates, particularly from gang, drug, and domestic related violence, are among the highest in the city. Most families at the Carole Robertson Center fall below 50 percent of the Illinois median family income.

The McHenry County Youth Service Bureau is a private, nonprofit mental health agency located in Woodstock, Illinois. The Bureau offers outpatient counseling for a wide range of youth problems, substance abuse counseling and intervention, therapeutic mentoring, community-based prevention programming, case management, a day reporting center, and services to pregnant and parenting teens. McHenry County has approximately 240,000 residents. The western half of the county is fairly rural, while the eastern half is larger and more suburban. Incorporated areas consist of 30 cities and villages varying in size from more than 30,000 to less than 1,000 residents. McHenry County is one of the fastest growing counties in the state.

The YWCA of Rockford serves women with needs and interests ranging from job readiness to leadership skill development. It serves girls through programs designed to strengthen their inner resources, explore ways to deal with real life issues, and learn about technology careers. The YWCA of Rockford thrusts its collective power toward the economic self-sufficiency of all women with the commitment to promoting equality and diversity. More than 60 percent of those served reside in zip codes with a high concentration of low socioeconomic status families. The greater Rockford area, population 371,236 in the 2000 Census, is a unique mixture of urban, suburban, and rural populations. The Rock River Valley encompasses three counties in northern Illinois, 90 miles west of downtown Chicago. Rockford has an ethnically diverse population of 150,115.

The Green Meadows Girl Scout Council provides services to girls in six counties in central Illinois, an agrarian region of the Midwest. It is by far the largest organization for girls in this area, with more than 35 troops and groups in the Green Meadows Girl Scout Council's 16 service units. Approximately 1,000 volunteers work with the 4,000 Green Meadows Girl Scouts. The Green Meadows Girl Scout Council is the sole provider of girl-specific programming in most towns, villages, and counties where they operate. The Council is recognized politically as a primary voice for girls throughout Central Illinois. Champaign-Urbana is a small, relatively progressive community within the strongly conservative Corn Belt. Home to a large academic community as well as manufacturing and service industry workers, Champaign-Urbana stands in stark contrast to surrounding communities. Booming technological innovation and supercomputer facilities within both cities have nicknamed the area "The Silicon Prairie." More than 175 temples, churches, mosques, and religious centers thrive in the neighboring cities.

Note: The descriptions listed above were provided by the organizations.

Core Participants

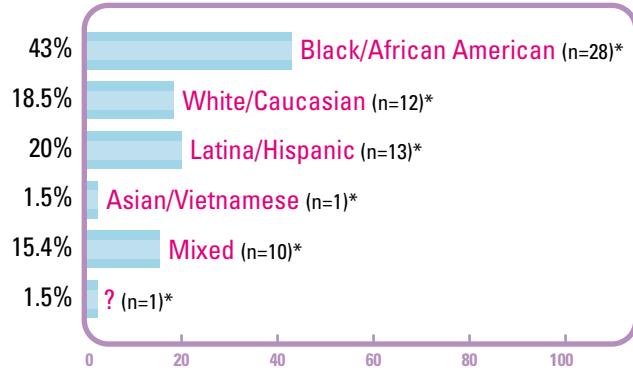
In order to tap into the diverse perspectives of girls living in Illinois, we sought out 12- to 18-year-old girls from a wide range of communities and personal circumstances, as well as varying identities in terms of race, ethnicity, social class, sexuality, and disability. In Phase I we sought participants from neighborhoods with varying demographic compositions across Chicago; in Phase II, we sought participants from urban, suburban, and rural communities across the state. Although we hoped to hear from girls across a broad spectrum of experiences and identities, we did not seek a strictly representative sample of girls in Illinois. Since GBF is particularly interested in funding programs that support the healthy development of girls with limited access to community resources, we deliberately emphasized recruitment of girls who might be described as “underserved” or “marginalized.”

In order to maximize our opportunity to work with traditionally underrepresented groups, we emphasized the need to reach out to girls who identified themselves as lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, or questioning, as well as to those who identified themselves as having a disability. Each agency was responsible for recruiting approximately 10 core participants (girls participating in the entire project as opposed to a one-time interview or focus group).^{vi} Agencies had considerable discretion to develop their own application and interview processes, but the girls selected had to fit the following basic criteria:

Core participants must:

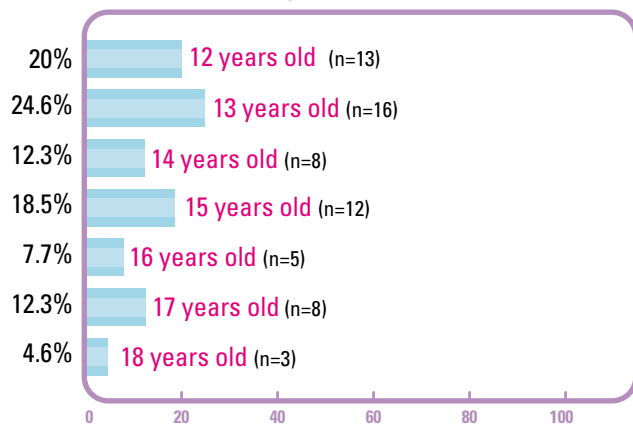
- Be between 12 to 18 years old
- Live in the community
- Agree to attend all meetings and activities associated with the research initiative
- Agree to abide by the expectations (ground rules) girls set at their first meeting
- Show basic proficiency in written and spoken English^{vii}
- Return an informed consent form, with a parent or guardian’s signature, to GBF before taking part in any activities related to the research initiative

Race of Core Participants – Phase I & II (N=65)



*For a breakdown of race categories please see the chart on page 17.

Age of Core Participants – Phase I & II (N=65)



Speak for Yourself Core Participants (Totals all sites) N = 65

| AGE | RELIGION | RACE |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| Mean = 14.5 | Baptist 21.5% (n = 14) | Black/African American 43% (n = 28) |
| Age Distribution: | Christian 20.0% (n = 13) | White/Caucasian 18.5% (n = 12) * |
| 12 = 20% (n = 13) | Catholic 24.6% (n = 16) | Latina/Hispanic 20% (n = 13) ** |
| 13 = 24.6% (n = 16) | Jewish 6.2% (n = 4) | Asian (Vietnamese) 1.5% (n = 1) |
| 14 = 12.3% (n = 8) | Methodist 1.5% (n = 1) | Mixed 15.4% (n = 10) *** |
| 15 = 18.5% (n = 12) | Muslim 1.5% (n = 1) | ? 1.5% (n = 1) |
| 16 = 7.7% (n = 5) | Protestant 7.7% (n = 5) | |
| 17 = 12.3% (n = 8) | None/Blank 13.8% (n = 9) | LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME OR WITH FRIENDS |
| 18 = 4.6% (n = 3) | Don't Know 1.5% (n = 1) | English Only 73.4% (n = 48) |
| | Undecided 1.5% (n = 1) | Spanish or Sp./Eng. 21.5% (n = 14) |
| n = number of participants | | Vietnamese 1.5% (n = 1) |
| Uptown/Edgewater n = 11 | Champaign-Urbana n = 11 | Bosnian 1.5% (n = 1) |
| Southeast Chicago n = 14 | Woodstock n = 11 | Romanian 1.5% (n = 1) |
| North Lawndale n = 9 | Rockford n = 9 | |

*Of those who identified as White/Caucasian: 1 identified as White/Bosnian
1 identified as White/Romanian
1 identified as White/Serbian

**Of those who identified as Latina/Hispanic: 10 identified as Mexican
1 identified as Guatemalan
1 identified as Guatemalan/Puerto Rican
1 identified as Guatemalan/Mexican

***Of those who identified as racially mixed or biracial: 1 identified as White/Black
2 identified as White/Black/Indian (Blackfoot)
2 identified as Black/Puerto Rican
3 identified as Black/Indian (Cherokee)
1 identified as African American/Native American/Caribbean
1 identified as Mexican/White

Please see Appendix for a breakdown of sample demographics by site.

The resulting sample of core participants was diverse by race, culture, social class, and community type, and participants’ life experiences and aspirations varied considerably. The final sample is described above.

Although the sample was diverse in other respects, it was limited in three ways. First, agencies were unable to recruit girls who explicitly identified themselves as lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered, and only one girl described herself as questioning (“heterosexual but not done experimenting yet”).^{viii} Second, despite Girl’s Best Friend Foundation’s and the agencies’ express commitment to providing access and support to girls with disabilities, no girls who identified themselves as having a physical disability applied to take part in the project.^{ix} Finally, although the core participants’ ages ranged from 12 to 18 years old, 75 percent were 12 to 15 years old (mean age = 14.5 years).^x

Adult Research Team

The adult research team consisted of a research director,^{xi} a mapping director,^{xii} two mapping coordinators,^{xiii} and three local researchers.^{xiv} The local researchers worked closely with the girls and the agency partners throughout the project. They conducted all case study meetings, individual interviews, and focus groups; accompanied participants and agency partners during much of the mapping project; and met with girls individually as needed. They also co-designed the case study meeting agendas and interview protocols with the research director and the participants. Four research team members were Black/African American and three were Caucasian/White; the research team included lesbian, bisexual, and heterosexual women in their 30s, 40s, and 50s. Their backgrounds included social, developmental, and educational psychology, social work, and youth development.

The Girls' Work: An Overview

The girls' work unfolded in three steps:

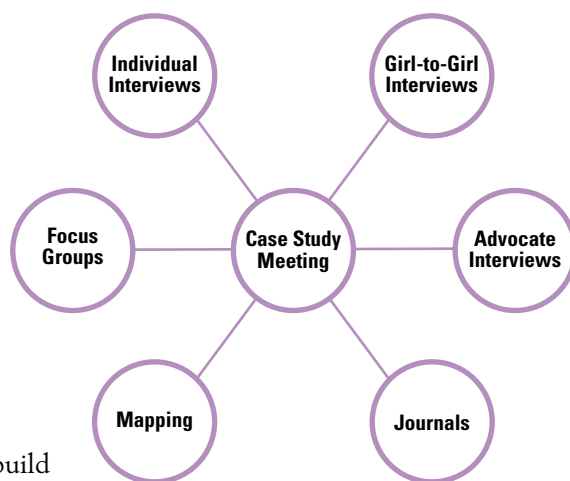
- I. Sharing Ideas.** In the early weeks of the project, girls identified issues of concern, both in their personal lives and in their communities. They met in groups at local agencies to share their thoughts on everything from sexuality to neighborhood recreational facilities to curfews, while adult researchers facilitated discussions and tape-recorded girls' conversations to analyze as data. Girls also learned about the nature of social research and considered how they could learn more from and about other girls in their communities.
- II. Becoming Researchers.** In the second part of the project, girls learned research skills, designed research instruments, and then collected data themselves by interviewing other girls and adult advocates who work with youth, and conducting a survey (girl mapping) in their neighborhoods. During this time, adult researchers also conducted focus groups with other local girls and conducted individual interviews with each of the core participants.
- III. Reflecting and Taking Action.** In the final part of the project, girls reflected on what they learned from their own group discussions and research, developed strategies to address findings that concerned them, and, in Phase II, carried out their own social change projects. Adult researchers tape-recorded these discussions and strategy sessions and used them as data to illuminate the process by which girls work together to move from understanding to action.^{xv}

WINDOWS ON GIRLS' EXPERIENCES: MULTIPLE METHODS

The research design invited girls to express their views in a variety of ways. Each method complemented the others and offered a slightly different window on girls' lives, resulting in a more textured and multi-layered appreciation of girls' strengths, struggles, wants, and needs.

We developed a seven-pronged approach:

- 1. Case Study Meetings.** The core of the design involved a series of meetings in which nine to 14 girls and one adult researcher worked together at each of the six sites.^{xvi} Meetings occurred once a month for five months during Phase I and twice a month for 10 months during Phase II. Case study meetings provided a context in which to process the information the girls were learning through the other methods. They offered a forum for girls to discuss issues of concern, build supportive relationships with adults and team mem-



bers, practice research and critical thinking skills, and develop strategies for initiating change in their communities. Meetings also presented an opportunity for adult researchers to gather data (through audiotaped discussions) on girls' thoughts and priorities, on their dynamics as they worked together, and on the conditions that support or frustrate them in their endeavors.

- 2. Individual Interviews.** Each core participant took part in an in-depth, semi-structured, individual interview conducted by her team's adult researcher (total = 65 individual interviews). Interview questions complemented those raised in the case study meetings, but individual interviews allowed girls to reflect on issues in a one-on-one setting. Since in any group, members' verbal participation can vary due to shyness, differences in communication styles, cultural or linguistic differences, or the emotionally charged nature of a particular topic, we included individual interviews to give participants an opportunity to share ideas and experiences they may not have wanted to express in a group setting. Interviews lasted one to two hours; participants received a \$15 stipend for the interview.^{xvii}
- 3. Focus Groups.** At each site, adult researchers conducted one focus group with six to 12 girls between 12 and 18 years old (total = 48 interviewees). Focus groups allowed girls who were not core participants to share their perspectives and experiences. This was particularly important since cultural, financial, or family considerations precluded some girls from being involved in the full length of the study. This included girls who visited family in Mexico each summer; girls whose parenting responsibilities, jobs, or other commitments left them too little time to attend meetings; girls who lived in the community only temporarily because their families lived in homeless shelters and moved often; and girls who lived in rural areas outside the communities where the partner agencies were located. Discussion topics complemented those covered in case study meetings and individual interviews. Focus groups lasted approximately two hours; each participant received a \$15 stipend.^{xviii}

Focus Group Participants (aggregate) N = 48

| AGE | RELIGION | RACE |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|--|
| Age range = 12-18 | Baptist 33.3% (n = 16) | Black/African American 39.6% (n = 19) |
| Mean age = 14.7 years | Buddhist 2.1% (n = 1) | White/Caucasian 20.8% (n = 10) * |
| Age distribution: | Christian 10.4% (n = 5) | Latina/Hispanic 22.9% (n = 11) ** |
| 12 = 10.4% (n = 5) | Catholic 25% (n = 12) | Asian (Vietnamese) 6.3% (n = 3) |
| 13 = 14.6% (n = 7) | Jewish 10.4% (n = 5) | Mixed 10.4% (n = 5) *** |
| 14 = 22.9% (n = 11) | Lutheran 2.1% (n = 1) | |
| 15 = 20.8% (n = 10) | Methodist 6.3% (n = 3) | LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME OR WITH FRIENDS |
| 16 = 16.7% (n = 8) | Muslim 4.2% (n = 2) | English Only 83.3% (n = 40) |
| 17 = 6.2% (n = 3) | Presbyterian 4.2% (n = 2) | Spanish or Sp./Eng. 12.5% (n = 6) |
| 18 = 8.3% (n = 4) | None 2.1% (n = 1) | Bosnian 4.2% (n = 2) |

*Of those who identified as White/Caucasian:
2 identified as White/Bosnian
1 identified as White/Jewish

**Of those who identified as Latina/Hispanic:
7 identified as Mexican
2 identified as Puerto Rican
1 identified as Puerto Rican/Mexican

***Of those who identified as racially mixed or biracial:
2 identified as White/Black
1 identified as Black/Puerto Rican
1 identified as Mexican/White
1 identified as Asian/White/French

4. Girl-to-Girl Interviews. Girl-to-girl interviews allowed core participants a chance to interview their peers in order to practice qualitative research skills and learn more about the concerns and experiences of other girls in their communities. Like the focus groups, these interviews provided another avenue for girls who could not be core participants to express their views and concerns. Each team of core participants developed its own interview protocol to guide the girl-to-girl interviews, and each participant identified two girls she wished to interview (total = 120 interviews).^{xix} Interviews lasted approximately one hour; interviewees received a \$15 stipend.^{xx xxi}

| Girl-to-Girl Interviewees (aggregate) N = 120 | | |
|---|---|--|
| AGE | RELIGION | RACE |
| Age range = 12-18 | Baptist 22.5% (n = 27) | Black/African American 33% (n = 40) |
| Mean age =14.1 years | Christian 15.8% (n = 19) | White/Caucasian 20.8% (n = 25) * |
| Age Distribution: | Catholic 28.3% (n = 34) | Latina/Hispanic 23.3% (n = 28) ** |
| 12 = 18.3% (n = 22) | Jewish 7.5% (n = 9) | Asian (Vietnamese) 2.5% (n = 3) |
| 13 = 25.8% (n = 31) | Methodist 5% (n = 6) | Mixed 20% (n = 24) *** |
| 14 = 20% (n = 24) | Muslim 3.3% (n = 4) | |
| 15 = 15% (n = 18) | Presbyterian 4.17% (n = 5) | LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME OR WITH FRIENDS |
| 16 = 10% (n = 12) | Protestant 2.5% (n = 3) | English Only 75.8% (n = 91) |
| 17 = 7.5% (n = 9) | None/Blank 10% (n = 12) | Spanish or Sp./Eng. 18.3% (n = 22) |
| 18 = 3.3% (n = 4) | Don't Know .83% (n = 1) | Vietnamese 2.5% (n = 3) |
| | | Bosnian 3.3% (n = 4) |
| *Of those who identified as White/Caucasian: 4 identified as White/Bosnian 2 identified as White/Jewish | **Of those who identified as Latina/Hispanic: 18 identified as Mexican 1 identified as Guatemalan 7 identified as Puerto Rican 2 identified as Puerto Rican/Mexican | ***Of those who identified as racially mixed or biracial: 4 identified as White/Black 3 identified as Black/Indian 6 identified as Black/Puerto Rican 1 identified as Puerto Rican/Haitian 1 identified as Mexican/Black 6 identified as Mexican/White 1 identified as Hispanic/Black/White/Indian 2 identified as Asian/White |

5. Advocate Interviews. In addition to interviewing their peers, each team interviewed five adult advocates who work with youth in the girls' communities (total = 30 interviews). In most cases, an adult researcher and one or two core participants conducted each interview.^{xxii} Advocate interviews offered another window on the availability of girl-friendly resources in each community. Participants and agency partners identified potential interviewees in such settings as girl-centered organizations, social service agencies, and schools. Advocates received \$30 for their participation, since these interviews typically lasted approximately twice as long as girl-to-girl interviews.

6. Journals. At the beginning of the project, each core participant received a journal in which to reflect on the issues discussed in case study meetings and discovered through their interviews and mapping project. Girls were encouraged to use their journals as diaries, to draw

pictures, to write poetry, or to choose any other form of self-expression they found meaningful. They were informed that although adult researchers would not show their actual journals to anyone else, excerpts might be used in the final report.^{xxiii}

7. Girl Mapping. The purpose of the mapping project was for girls to gain experience conducting survey research while they learned about girl-friendly resources present and lacking in their communities and heard other community members' views of adolescent girls. Core participants spent two weeks during the summer administering three separate surveys to people in their neighborhoods: one to youth, one to adults, and one to people working in businesses or agencies (see appendix for sample surveys).^{xxiv} Girls collected a total of 1,814 surveys. Examples of findings from the Phase II youth survey and adult survey are presented throughout this report.^{xxv xxvi}

It is important to note that because mapping projects rely on convenience samples (i.e., rather than using random sampling, mappers approach people of their choice and ask them to fill out a survey), the results of these surveys are descriptive rather than inferential—they should not be interpreted to represent the views of community members in general. Indeed, our main interest in undertaking the mapping project was not to collect statistically generalizable data (which, by design, no mapping project can do) but to immerse girls in the research process and offer them an opportunity to speak with others in their communities about girls' needs and girl-friendly resources. Readers should bear this in mind as they consider mapping findings presented in this report.

Incorporating these seven methods into the research design not only enabled us to view girls' lives and communities from various angles, but also allowed us to maximize the number of girls with whom we could work. By drawing on multiple methods, we expanded our sample from the original 65 core participants to a total of 233 girls (65 core participants, 120 girl-to-girl interviewees, and 48 focus group participants) and 30 advocates. We also glimpsed the perceptions of 1,814 survey respondents from the six communities.

MAKING SENSE OF WHAT WE FOUND

The findings discussed in the remaining chapters resulted from a lengthy and complex process of data collection and analysis. Some of our greatest rewards resulted from involving girls not only in the research process but also in the interpretation of data. As patterns and themes suggested themselves, core participants examined and critiqued the findings.^{xxvii} In a series of meetings between the adult researcher and core participants in Woodstock, girls offered their insights, reworked categories, and offered illustrations of the points under discussion. They then read drafts of the data chapters and offered critical feedback, which was incorporated into the final report.

In the remaining chapters, we discuss what girls taught us about their aspirations, their struggles, their strengths, and what they need in order to thrive as healthy and fulfilled members of their communities. Drawing on findings gleaned from the work described above, we now turn to an examination of girls' reflections on their own lives.

ⁱAt each site, we created a local research team consisting of 9 to 14 girls (core participants), one adult researcher, and one or two agency partner staff members. Each local research team functioned largely as an independent entity but received support and guidance from the research director, a mapping director/coordinator, and the executive directors and other staff members at Girl's Best Friend Foundation.

ⁱⁱGirl's Best Friend Foundation and the adult research team recommended that agencies set the stipends at \$300 for each core participant. However, agencies were free to determine how the stipends were awarded. It is important to note that the money the girls received was in the form of a stipend, not wages, since many of the participants were not of legal working age.

ⁱⁱⁱEach agency was given a stipend to help cover the cost of materials, food, staffing, and girls' stipends.

^{iv}These included such changes as a redesign of the mapping surveys, changes in administrative procedures, creation of a detailed handbook for agency partners, and a change in the structure of the research team.

^vAlthough some of the agencies included men as staff members or volunteers, this project was designed specifically as a collaborative endeavor between women and girls. Although men can certainly be important sources of support for girls, the research advisory committee suggested that girls might feel more comfortable discussing issues such as sexuality, power, and victimization in same-sex groups. Core participants confirmed that this was the case.

^{vi}Our goal was to create six teams of 10 girls, for a total of 60 core participants. Some agencies recruited more than 10 girls to account for possible attrition. In most cases, girls who dropped out of the study were replaced with new participants (this was done at the discretion of each group). If a girl participated in more than half of the study (whether she left early or joined late), she is counted in the total of core participants. Of the six core participants who left the study before the project was completed, reasons cited for dropping out included: getting a full-time job, going away to school, moving out of the community, and scheduling conflicts with family responsibilities.

^{vii}Girls needed to be able to take part in group discussions and to administer and fill out mapping surveys in English. Girls who were not linguistically proficient enough to conduct the surveys were paired discreetly with participants with stronger English literacy skills. Although some girls did administer the surveys in Spanish, they translated the respondents' answers to English on the survey forms.

^{viii}The lack of participants who identified themselves as lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, or questioning may be attributable to a number of factors. First, since most of the core participants were younger adolescents, they may not yet have addressed questions of their own sexuality. Growing up in a society that presumes heterosexuality and that discourages open discussions of sexuality among adolescent girls, those who may identify themselves as lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered at some later point in their lives may not yet have had sufficient information or experience to consider the possibility of falling outside the presumed "normal" category of heterosexuality. A second reason for the lack of apparent sexual diversity may be that girls who did self-identify as lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered, or who were questioning their sexualities, may have felt uncomfortable disclosing this information in their groups. Indeed, despite the best efforts of the adult researchers, and despite the impressive openness and supportiveness displayed by the girls on other topics, the climate in most of the girls' groups was quite close-minded on the issue of sexual orientation. Finally, although the demographics survey completed by all participants asked girls how they described their sexual orientation [see appendix], two of the agency partners in Phase II refused to ask applicants to answer that question. Citing the girls' young age and concerns about coming under attack by conservatives in their communities, they decided, after the girls' application process was underway, that their agencies could not distribute the demographics survey with that item on it. It is possible that the agencies' clear avoidance of this topic merged with the homophobia displayed by the girls and society as a whole, making it difficult to contemplate "coming out" in this environment.

^{ix}The absence of girls who identified themselves as having disabilities may be due, in part, to questions of definition. For instance, although several girls in the sample were classified as having learning disabilities, they may not have been aware of this classification or may not have considered it a disability. The fact that no girls with physical disabilities applied to take part in the study may have been due to lack of interest, lack of awareness of the project, or lack of girls with physical disabilities who met the other criteria (e.g., age range, community residence, ability to attend scheduled events, etc.) in the agencies' areas.

^xFeedback from participants suggests that older girls had scheduling conflicts due to job opportunities that paid them more than the average \$300 stipend this project offered.

^{xi}The research director is also the author of this report; she also served as the local researcher at two sites in Phase I.

^{xii}The mapping director worked on Phase I only. During Phase II, the position of mapping director was eliminated, and the research director and the mapping coordinator shared direction of the mapping project.

^{xiii}Only one mapping coordinator worked on each phase of the project; a different mapping coordinator was involved with each phase of the research.

^{xiv}In Phase I, the research director worked with girls in Southeast Chicago and Uptown/Edgewater and a local researcher worked

with girls in North Lawndale. In Phase II, one local researcher worked with girls in Woodstock and Rockford and another local researcher worked with girls in Champaign-Urbana.

^{xvi}Only girls involved in Phase II worked on social change projects because Phase I ended after the mapping and final debriefing session. Based on feedback from core participants, agency partners, and adult researchers from Phase I, Phase II was extended so that girls would have time to analyze, strategize, and act on the data they collected.

^{xvii}Agency staff members were not present during case study discussions since some participants and/or their families had relationships with partner agencies outside the context of this study. Agency staff members agreed not to attend case study meetings in case girls preferred that the agencies not know certain information.

^{xviii}It is important to note that the money the girls received was in the form of a stipend, not wages, since many of the participants were not of legal working age.

^{xix}Please see endnote xvii.

^{xx}The total is 120 interviews (rather than 130) because five core participants did not conduct girl-to-girl interviews.

^{xxi}Interviewees were required to submit an informed consent form, signed by a guardian, before being interviewed.

^{xxii}Each core participant received a tape recorder, batteries, and tapes with which to record her interviews. At the end of the project, Girl's Best Friend Foundation donated this equipment to the participating agencies to support the continuation of this type of work.

^{xxiii}Due to time constraints and scheduling difficulties, adult researchers conducted most of the advocate interviews alone in Phase I. In Phase II, adult researchers and core participants worked as teams to conduct the advocate interviews. Thank you to Kathy Chuckas of A Sporting Chance Foundation for stressing the importance of working through logistical difficulties to enable girls to conduct these interviews themselves.

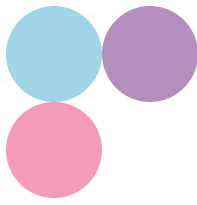
^{xxiv}In one case, a participant's journal entries suggested depression and thoughts of suicide. With the knowledge of the participant, the local researcher shared the journal with the agency partner and another member of the research team in order to strategize about how best to obtain help for the individual.

^{xxv}GBF's girl mapping project was similar in design to "youth mapping" projects in Chicago and other cities. However, this project was conducted exclusively by girls and it explicitly considered girls' issues rather than studying youth in general. In addition, although youth mapping is sometimes described informally as "young people going door-to-door," the girls in this project did not go to any residences. They confined their sample to pedestrians, people sitting outside, and people in ground-level business establishments, agencies, or public spaces such as libraries or malls. Girls were instructed not to enter any establishment in which they would not be allowed as a client or customer (e.g., bars, liquor stores, adult book stores, etc.). In addition to administering the surveys, girls had input on the survey design.

^{xxvi}Due to problems with the original database, mapping data from Phase I could not be used. These problems resulted from the work of an organization we originally hired to code and analyze the data and were not the fault of the Center for Governmental Studies at Northern Illinois University, which analyzed the Phase II mapping data.

^{xxvii}Since the sample size for each survey type (i.e. youth, adult, places) in each community was small from a statistical perspective, it is not possible to break down responses meaningfully by race and community. Therefore, while the mapping data presented in this report are broken down by gender, they represent the responses of those surveyed across all three Phase II communities—Champaign-Urbana, Rockford, and Woodstock.

^{xxviii}Drawing on the principles of "grounded theory building" (Glaser, B. and Strauss, A. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Chicago: Aldine, 1967), adult researchers analyzed the transcripts for themes, patterns, and discrepant examples that emerged across the various forms of qualitative data. Due to logistical constraints and assurances that the actual transcripts and journals would be kept private, girls were not involved in the coding of data. Since the participants used their journals inconsistently, they were used as supporting documents rather than as primary data.

**FACING CHALLENGES: WHAT GETS IN GIRLS' WAY?**

"I'm strong and I'm keeping it together, but sometimes it's hard, you know? There's a lot of things that girls these days have to deal with, in their neighborhoods, in their schools, with their families, peer pressure. A lot of stuff. And some of it's good but a lot of it's bad. So you've got to stay strong and find your way through all that because you can't let it get you. You can't let it get you."

– Denise
Rockford girl-to-girl interviewee¹

As we will see throughout this report, girls demonstrate a host of strengths that are impressive by any measure. But they are all the more admirable in light of the difficult circumstances under which many girls in this study live. Some of the participants feel safe in their neighborhoods, excel in school, have family members or friends with whom they can discuss difficult issues, and involve themselves in interesting activities in their schools or communities. However, far more feel disengaged from school, struggle to find a caring adult to turn to, or face violence in their homes, schools, or neighborhoods. Many of the participants' families experience the sometimes overlapping stresses of unemployment, too little money, drug and alcohol abuse, immigration concerns, isolation, or histories of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse. Girls' schools may lack resources to provide students with needed services, and if community agencies for girls exist at all, they often face budgetary, staffing, and political constraints. In the midst of such difficulties and scarcity of resources, girls note that it can be difficult to keep their heads above water, let alone to thrive.

In this chapter, we discuss the struggles and stressors girls identified as most troubling to them. Not all girls faced each of these difficulties. Daughters of middle class parents sometimes had very different concerns than girls living in homeless shelters. Girls whose families were U.S.-born and spoke English fluently were unaware of some of the linguistic and/or immigration challenges experienced by girls whose families had recently arrived in Illinois from Mexico, Guatemala, Bosnia, or Vietnam. Girls in honors classes often felt unaffected by concerns expressed by girls in Special Education or English as a Second Language courses. Those who enjoyed close relationships with their families could only imagine the emotional experiences of those whose caregivers loved them but, for a variety of reasons, were unable to be deeply involved in their lives. And girls who lived in suburban and rural areas were often immune to fears felt by the majority of girls who lived in urban neighborhoods. On the other hand, some issues, such as sexual harassment, boredom, and feeling that they were not taken seriously by adults, were shared by virtually all of the girls, regardless of their personal, family, or community circumstances. In the following pages we address some of the most salient issues raised in case study meetings, individual interviews, focus groups, girl-to-girl interviews, and participants' journals, as girls reflected on the conditions that threaten to thwart their feelings of strength and wellness.

¹Denise describes herself as African American, Baptist, 14 years old, and in 9th grade.

Girls identified the following as among their most pressing concerns:

- Lack of meaningful activities
- Lack of access to existing activities
- Violence
- Drugs and alcohol
- Sexuality and relationships
- Loneliness
- Feeling shut out in mixed-sex settings

Lack of Meaningful Activities: “There’s nothing to do around here.”

In both phases of the study, girls’ most frequently cited complaints involved a lack of things to do in their communities.¹ In fact, regardless of where they lived, girls were quite sure that theirs was the most boring city, town, or neighborhood in the world. In Phase I, girls lamented the lack of opportunities to learn, express themselves, and have fun in their Chicago neighborhoods. In Phase II, girls offered the same complaints about their communities. They often compared their towns with Chicago and imagined that life could never be boring if only they lived there.

While it certainly is not unusual for adolescents to complain of boredom, the participants spoke of a deeper sense of frustration and alienation. Many girls interpreted the lack of meaningful activities as an indication that young people, particularly girls, were not taken seriously by adults in their communities. For some, the sense of being unimportant to their communities further translated into a subtle erosion of their own feelings of connectedness, self-confidence, and hopes for the future. Certainly such complex emotions as optimism and self-worth are not attributable solely to girls’ sense of being valued in their communities, but girls like Marabel, of Southeast Chicago, did feel that their communities’ lack of investment in girls must reflect to some degree on their own lack of potential.² She mused,

“I guess they must not think much of girls in this neighborhood, or else they would give us more to do...think about our needs and our feelings a little more. I guess they think we’re not worth the effort, because, like, I guess they figure us Mexican girls, and the black girls too, maybe we won’t amount to much.”

Whereas Marabel internalizes the lack of activities in her community to mean that she and her peers “won’t amount to much,” girls like Kya, from North Lawndale, hold on to their own senses of self-worth and entitlement to something more.³ But they feel frustrated that their potential is diminished by a lack of activities and programs to help them discover and act on their inter-

¹Marabel describes herself as Mexican, Catholic, 12 years old, and in 6th grade.

³Kya describes herself as African American, Christian, 12 years old, and in 7th grade.

ests. Indeed, most of the girls had a sense of a fascinating world “out there” and a sense that they were missing out.

“I would love to just get out of here, I really would. Because there’s nothing for anybody here. It’s depressing, you know, being, there’s nothing constructive for us to do, and it’s hard for somebody who, you know what I’m saying, wants to make it, because it’s like everything is happening out there, but, like how do you get there? How do you get what it is you deserve, like a chance, when there’s nothing going on all around you, and nobody making it that you know?”

Straddling the boundary between childhood and adulthood, and often dealing with family and personal difficulties, girls reported that they often felt stressed and confused about their roles. They sometimes felt overburdened with adult responsibilities; yet at the same time they felt relatively powerless in matters that impacted on their own quality of life. At times, they just craved a safe place to go and have fun—to let off some steam, get exercise, socialize with other teens, learn something new, express their creativity, or simply forget their troubles and play. Girls said they would feel less frustrated, agitated, depressed, and unfulfilled if there were more fun things for girls to do in their communities.

Girls also felt strongly that young people would get into less trouble if they had better access to fun and meaningful activities. Indeed, core participants, focus group participants, and girl-to-girl interviewees cited boredom as among the main reasons that girls fight, commit crimes, abuse drugs and alcohol, and join gangs. LaVaugn, of Southeast Chicago, acknowledged that she sometimes gets into fights because she lacks more constructive opportunities to channel her energy and express her feelings:⁴

“My parents put a lot of pressure on me to be the best at everything...it’s just so important to them for me to achieve all the time. I work really hard, and I’m stressed out a lot. So for me, it’s really good to have a chance just to join something where I can just hang out and relax a little and play.”

— Anh describes herself as Asian/Vietnamese, 13 years old, in 7th grade, and as having no religion. She is from Uptown/Edgewater.

“It’ll be like, ok, like say I’m just feeling like, all this pent up energy and there’s nothing to do and it’ll be hot like today and I’m just bored and bothered that there’s like nothing to do and it just stinks, you know, and I get, like, somebody will just be in the wrong place or say the wrong thing to me, and I’ll be like all, ‘why don’t you mind your business’ and all that, and next thing you know, it’s like, somebody starts swinging, and then you got to fight.”

Lourdes, from Woodstock, understands the lack of girl-friendly activities as a very serious community issue.⁵ She worries that girls with nothing else to do will take unhealthy risks and endanger themselves:

⁴LaVaugn describes herself as Puerto Rican and African American, 14 years old, in 8th grade, and having no religion.

⁵Lourdes describes herself as Mexican, Catholic, 18 years old and in 11th grade.

“There’s a lot of places that are not girl-friendly. Nothing for the girls to do, if you think about it. And the fact that there is nothing for the girls to do, that’s scary. Because if you think about it and there’s nothing to do, then the girls go to places where there is more things for them to do and there’s more danger...then there’s where they start doing some things that will hurt them.”

It is interesting to note that in the entire study, only two girls stated explicitly that they had plenty to do. It is also striking that these two girls’ lives differed markedly. Diana, who took part in a focus group in Woodstock, lived on a quiet road in a rural community. Although she was not close to formal services or programs, several relatives lived nearby, giving her access to close peers with whom to talk and play.⁶ By contrast, Justine, a member of the Uptown/Edgewater group, was living in a homeless shelter at the time of this study.⁷ Because she was deeply involved in Chicago’s social services system, and because her family had moved frequently to shelters in several different neighborhoods, she was aware of many programs and free activities for youth across the city. Although by some measures she was among the most marginalized participants in the study, she was also perhaps the best connected to youth services and recreational opportunities, and she regularly referred her teammates to activities in which she was involved.

Girl researchers asked teen boys and girls in their neighborhoods what they did for fun when not in school. Of those girls surveyed, these responses were among the most common:

| | | |
|-------|--|-----------|
| 86.1% | of girls said Hang out at a friend’s house | (n = 155) |
| 76.7% | of girls said Shop or go to the mall | (n = 138) |
| 75.6% | of girls said Go to the movies | (n = 136) |
| 75.0% | of girls said Hang out at home | (n = 135) |
| 74.4% | of girls said Watch TV | (n = 134) |
| 46.7% | of girls said Play sports | (n = 84) |
| 46.7% | of girls said Hang out with boyfriend | (n = 84) |

Of those boys surveyed, these were the most common responses:

| | | |
|-------|---|----------|
| 75.0% | of boys said Hang out at a friend’s house | (n = 90) |
| 63.3% | of boys said Watch TV | (n = 76) |
| 59.2% | of boys said Go to the movies | (n = 71) |
| 57.5% | of boys said Hang out at home | (n = 69) |
| 55.8% | of boys said Play sports | (n = 67) |
| 46.7% | of boys said Surf the Internet | (n = 56) |
| 45.0% | of boys said Shop or go to the mall | (n = 54) |

N = 300 (180 girls; 120 boys)

Note: Respondents could choose more than one answer. Source: GBF Phase II mapping data. Because the mapping project used a convenience sample, the data presented here describe views of these respondents only. They do not necessarily represent the views of other community members.

Lack of Access: “I’d like to participate, but...”

Nearly all of the participants and interviewees lamented a lack of interesting things to do in their communities. But even among girls who knew of programs or activities, some had difficulty participating. Girls offered a variety of reasons for their inability to participate, but some common themes recurred regardless of where girls lived.

Lack of transportation was among girls’ most frequently cited frustrations. In rural and suburban areas, girls often had to travel considerable distances to access existing programs, activities, recreation areas, and informal gathering places such as malls and movie theaters. Since most of the girls did not drive and few programs offered transportation, they had to rely on public transportation or family members to get them to the activities they wished to attend. For girls who lived far from bus routes or whose caregivers and older siblings worked outside the home, even these were not options. In urban areas, distance was also sometimes an issue, especially for girls in poorer

⁶Diana describes herself as Caucasian, Protestant, 13 years old, and in 10th grade.

⁷Justine describes herself as African American and Puerto Rican, 14 years old, and in 8th grade. She describes her religion as “none.”

neighborhoods with few stores, parks, programs, and services. But even when activities were close by, girls and/or their caregivers often feared for girls' safety when they were walking alone or with other girls their age. This was especially true in winter months when it got dark in the late afternoon. In such cases, even activities a few blocks away could be out of reach. Thirteen-year-old Miranda, of Southeast Chicago, felt stifled in her home because her parents would not let her go to the park around the corner to play or meet with other girls. Wanting to protect their daughters from the violence in their neighborhood, they often refused to let Miranda and her sister off their front porch.⁸

"It's so unfair, because my brothers they will let go anywhere, but me and [my sister], no, they keep us on the porch and we can't go anywhere. So, like, I'm surprised I can even do this [program], that they'll let me come. And if it wasn't here, where they know [the staff], they probably wouldn't."

A lack of money also kept girls from involvement in activities that interested them. Girls with limited financial resources were unable to take part in programs that required them to pay dues or registration fees, cover the costs of field trips, or provide their own supplies or uniforms. Girls noted that informal meeting places such as bowling alleys, amusement parks, or roller skating rinks had entrance fees that many could not afford. Even malls, which technically cost nothing, made girls feel out of place if they were the only one among their peers without money to spend.

A related obstacle involved lack of time to participate in activities of interest. For girls old enough to work, after-school and weekend time was often devoted to part-time employment, either for their own spending money or as a vital contribution to household income. Both younger and older girls often shouldered considerable household responsibilities, such as caring for younger siblings or cousins, doing housework, cooking meals, taking care of elders or ill or addicted parents, running errands, or performing odd jobs. In their group and individual interviews, girls were quick to point

out that these duties fell disproportionately on them, as opposed to their brothers. Although none of the core participants had children of their own, girls in focus groups who had children noted that the demands of parenting, coupled with a lack of childcare, left them with far too little time to become involved in activities outside of school. Indeed, most teen parents struggled to keep up with their studies at all. Nicole, a focus group participant from Uptown/Edgewater, explains:⁹

Girl researchers asked their peers whether their schools had enough resources. Here is a glimpse at the most common things respondents considered lacking when girl researchers asked, "Does your school have enough..."

| | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| Teen health services? | 45.4% of girls said no (n = 69) |
| | 43.4% of boys said no (n = 43) |
| Security? | 34.1% of girls said no (n = 55) |
| | 36.5% of boys said no (n = 38) |
| Sports equipment? | 23.0% of girls said no (n = 38) |
| | 18.1% of boys said no (n = 19) |
| Teachers who care? | 22.7% of girls said no (n = 37) |
| | 27.2% of boys said no (n = 28) |
| Computers? | 22.1% of girls said no (n = 36) |
| | 16.0% of boys said no (n = 17) |
| | N = 300 (180 girls; 120 boys) |

Source: GBF Phase II mapping data. Because the mapping project used a convenience sample, the data presented here describe views of these respondents only. They do not necessarily represent the views of other community members.

⁸Miranda describes herself as Mexican/Latina, Catholic, 13 years old, and in 7th grade.

⁹Nicole describes herself as Caucasian, Catholic, 17 years old, and in 11th grade.

“You guys just couldn’t believe what it’s like...I’ve got to make money to support my child because we’re on our own. And she gets sick and I have to get out of class to take care of her, and she cries and needs me to give her attention. When am I supposed to do my homework or study for exams? I want to get my education, but it’s really hard to do everything at once, and my baby doesn’t care that it’s three o’clock in the morning and I have a test the next day or she just spit up on my homework. I love my daughter, but it’s hard.”

A less frequently cited, but nonetheless compelling obstacle to girls’ involvement was a lack of programs geared to adolescents who simply wanted to try something new or take part in an activity just for fun. Arielle, of Champaign-Urbana, noted that in her community, introductory level recreational programs are often designed for younger children, while programs for teens are usually competitive and/or offered at the “intermediate” or “advanced” level.¹⁰ Girls who feel overweight, out of shape, or lacking in skills or coordination may have particular difficulty mustering the courage to enroll in athletic programs. And regardless of the actual skill level required, unless carefully advertised as open to all, programs in certain areas (such as math, science, or technology clubs) may seem off-limits for girls with little experience or a history of academic difficulty. For Arielle’s teammate, Helena, the possibility of feeling embarrassed among peers with more advanced skills outweighed her interest in pursuing an activity that once gave her great pleasure.¹¹

“I used to take gymnastics when I was younger, and I would love to do it again. I still think about it every day. I just felt so good about it...but I’ve been out of it for so long that now I’d be way behind...I’m way too old for the beginner’s class, and the girls my age, they’re way, way more advanced than me and I’d just look stupid. They couldn’t even find any place to fit me in. So now it’s too late for me.”

A fear of embarrassment also underlies some girls’ decision not to take part in activities that presume literacy skills or fluency in English. Although in case study meetings and activities Simone hid her inability to read and write from her teammates (her best friend discreetly helped her during the mapping project), in her individual interview she confided that she felt ashamed and fearful that her peers would mock her if she enrolled in a program where she might be expected to read or complete writing exercises.¹² For girls who are recent immigrants and/or whose first language is other than English, participation in discussions or group activities can be daunting. Some of the Latina participants were acutely aware of the possibility of embarrassment or being misunderstood in groups where only English was spoken. Carla, of Southeast Chicago, acknowledged that she avoids situations involving group discussions in English and that if forced to join them, she typically avoids expressing her views:¹³

“I don’t feel very good about my English and so I’m afraid people will not understand me or will laugh and think I’m stupid. So a lot of times I just keep my mouth shut and kind of hide what I feel so I don’t look dumb.”

¹⁰Arielle describes herself as African American, Christian, 14 years old, and in 8th grade.

¹¹Helena describes herself as White, Jewish, 15 years old, and in 10th grade.

¹²Simone describes herself as African American, 15 years old, in 8th grade and having no religion.

¹³Carla describes herself as Guatemalan and Puerto Rican, Catholic, 12 years old, and in 7th grade.

Violence: “I just really want to feel safe.”

The majority of girls voiced concerns about their personal safety, although their fears of violence varied depending upon where they lived. Girls in urban areas named violence as a much more serious problem than did girls in suburban or rural areas. Those who did name violence as an issue tended to see it as a major obstacle to their feelings of well-being. In fact, when asked what they would like to change about their communities, girls in urban neighborhoods named “make it safer” almost as frequently as “give us more things to do.” As Chrystal noted when reflecting on crime and violence in her North Lawndale neighborhood, “It just really wears you down.”¹⁴

At our urban sites, discussions of violence almost immediately led to discussions of gangs. Gangs impacted girls’ feelings of safety in all three neighborhoods in Chicago, as well as in Champaign-Urbana. For many girls, gangs were simply part of the backdrop of daily life—they did not necessarily threaten girls directly, but gang presence in their neighborhoods and schools caused girls to think twice about where they walked, whom they interacted with, or what they wore (e.g., avoiding wearing gang colors so that neighborhood gang members would not mistake them for supporters of a rival gang). Girls were most likely to be fearful if they regularly witnessed gang violence, drug dealing, and harassment from gang members on their own blocks or on their paths to and from school and other activities. These girls tended to see gangs and gang members as casting a dangerous shadow over their communities, and many advocated increased police presence to force gangs out or at least curb their activities. Sydney, who took part in a focus group in Southeast Chicago, reflected on gang violence in her neighborhood:¹⁵

“I do wish the police would do more, because, like, the cops in this neighborhood, they like, they’re not around when the gang bangers are messing with the neighborhood. And it’s a shame, because we can’t ever feel safe, because there’s too much violence, but I think either the cops is afraid themselves or I don’t know what.”

For other girls, gangs played a more complicated role. Although none of the core participants, focus group participants, or girl-to-girl interviewees reported being a gang member herself, several acknowledged that siblings, cousins, friends, or parents belonged to gangs. These girls tended to share their peers’ perceptions of gangs as dangerous, but they often expressed ambivalence about how to address the problem. When asked how they felt about increased police presence in their neighborhoods or schools, most girls immediately supported the idea. But when asked whether they had close relationships with gang members, those who responded affirmatively tended to

Girl researchers asked other teens in their neighborhoods where they feel the safest. These were girls’ top four responses:

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| 66.7% of girls said Home | (n = 120) |
| 13.3% of girls said Friend’s house | (n = 24) |
| 12.2% of girls said Relative’s house | (n = 22) |
| 10.6% of girls said School | (n = 19) |
| | (N = 180) |

These were boys’ top four responses:

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| 59.2% of boys said Home | (n = 71) |
| 16.7% of boys said Friend’s house | (n = 20) |
| 15.8% of boys said Girlfriend’s house | (n = 19) |
| 12.5% of boys said School | (n = 15) |
| | (N = 120) |

Note: Respondents could select more than one answer. Source: GBF Phase II mapping data. Because the mapping project used a convenience sample, the data presented here describe views of these respondents only. They do not necessarily represent the views of other community members.

¹⁴Chrystal describes herself as Black, Christian, 13 years old, and in 8th grade.

¹⁵Sydney describes herself as African American, 15 years old, in 8th grade, and having no religion.

modify their initial support for more police intervention. They noted that while they wanted the gangs out of their neighborhoods, bringing in more police would likely result in the arrest of friends and family members. Arielle, of Champaign-Urbana, reported mixed feelings about gangs and safety.¹⁶ On the one hand, she attributed her inability to feel safe in her neighborhood to the presence of gangs. Yet at the same time, she noted that her family members who are in gangs help to protect her. While she described the gang problem in her neighborhood as “real, real bad,” she did not think increased police presence would help:

“All they do is make it worse...because I mean, if you take them to jail or whatever, and they’ll get right back out and do the same thing, and it ain’t gonna work. I don’t think they really be helping them.”

Arielle went on to explain that although she was not in a gang herself, her brothers’ and cousins’ gang membership made her a target for police harassment.

“All the police know my family...cause I was going to the club and I got pulled over because I was walking up the street...and he was like, ‘I think you were selling drugs,’ or something like that, ‘cause you’re walking in the street, and that’s illegal, and I thought I saw a car pull past you, and you stopped to talk,’ and I said, ‘You ain’t seen no car pull past me,’ and he was like, ‘Well, I thought I did, so I just wanted to make sure, you know, like what’s your name?’ and I was like, ‘[full name]’ and he was like, [recited the names of all her siblings]...cause, you know how bad it is, all the police know my cousins and brothers and sisters.”

While gangs prompted considerable fear or discomfort for girls in urban settings, fighting, bullying, and harassment were causes for concern in all six of the communities we studied. Girls generally saw sexual harassment as an inevitable part of their daily lives—something simply to steer around and try to put up with. In fact, harassment was so entwined with their other experiences on the street and at school that some girls, ironically, described it as unproblematic, even as they discussed the toll it took on their energy and self esteem. For instance, even though Nyeshia described sexual harassment as annoying and intrusive, she described herself as “used to it.”¹⁷

“Boys are forceful, and a girl won’t try to do that to a boy. A boy probably wouldn’t get harassed at all because girls aren’t like that...not like trying to touch a boy in the wrong places...Boys always touch girls on their butt, or whatever...I mean, nobody ever thinks about it because everybody’s so used to it, because it happens all the time...nobody ever pays any attention to it or makes a big deal about it because it’s just something that happens every day...I’m just used to it.”

Most girls reported that they had never been in a fight themselves, although they described fights among girls as fairly common in their schools or neighborhoods. Of those who did acknowledge participating in one or more fights, nearly all described themselves as acting defensively after someone else “picked a fight,” “went off,” or “started it.” Of course, it is impossible to know whether their adversaries in these fights, if interviewed, would accept responsibility for initiating them or would also claim to have acted in self-defense.

¹⁶Arielle describes herself as Black, Christian, 14 years old, and in 8th grade.

¹⁷Nyeshia describes herself as African American, Christian, 12 years old, and in 8th grade.

Participants and interviewees stated almost unanimously that girls' fights tended to erupt over disputes about boys or being "dissed," while boys' fights stemmed from a broader range of complaints. Many acknowledged deriving some sense of enjoyment from watching fights, describing them essentially as a spectator sport with large groups of students gathering around and cheering until one of the fighters became seriously injured or, more often, until someone (usually an adult) broke up the fight. Girls who described fights as frequent events indicated that this eroded their sense of safety and well-being at school, even though those same girls sometimes admitted feeling a sense of excitement when witnessing actual fights. Girls who considered adults unlikely or slow to intervene felt especially frustrated. Juliana, a girl-to-girl interviewee from Rockford, described her thoughts:¹⁸

“I wish guys in my school would keep their hands to themselves, and in my neighborhood, too. They may think it's fun, but I think it's mean and it makes me feel scared sometimes, and pissed off, too.”

— Dianne describes herself as African American, Baptist, 16 years old, and in 10th grade. She was a focus group participant in North Lawndale.

“What are they waiting for? I think some of them are too scared themselves to get involved, and then there's others that I think they're just into watching it as much as everyone else... Yeah, it bothers me, because who's going to set some kind of rules where people can feel safe? I mean it ought to be the adults, right?”

Girls generally expressed mixed feelings about the advisability of addressing violence by installing metal detectors in schools, implementing zero tolerance policies, and increasing police presence in their neighborhoods. While some welcomed these attempts to curb violence, many doubted that these strategies would work as proposed. For instance, Jasmine, a girl-to-girl interviewee from North Lawndale, was concerned about violence in her neighborhood and often felt unsafe in her school.¹⁹ She clearly wanted something to be done. Yet she had little faith in the police, noting that they often failed to intervene in serious situations but tended to harass teens even when they were not creating a disturbance. She also worried that zero tolerance policies would be applied inconsistently and unfairly.

“I don't know, but I think there's one set of rules for some people, and then another set of rules for the other. They can have a policy that says we're not going to tolerate violence, but then who's going to enforce it, and how's it going to be applied? I don't think it's necessarily going to be any more fair than it is today.”

Although fights, harassment, and gang violence weighed much more heavily on their minds, some girls acknowledged fears of mass violence in their schools in the wake of Columbine and similar events around the country. Kristen, of Champaign-Urbana, recalled a threat in her school that was particularly frightening:²⁰

¹⁸Juliana describes herself as White, Christian, 15 years old, and in 9th grade.

¹⁹Jasmine describes herself as African American, Baptist, 14 years old, and in 8th grade.

²⁰Kristen describes herself as African American, Christian, 14 years old, and in 9th grade.

“And then the Columbine thing, that was kind of scary, too...because people were threatening our school, to blow it up, and, like they were going to pull the fire alarms, because they’d already pulled it a couple of times, and then the people inside, if they stayed inside, they were going to get blown up, and the people who ran out were going to get shot. [Classmates were going to do it]. We had the police there and everything, but not that many people showed up to school.”

It is interesting to note that girls were much less likely to talk about violence in their families or relationships than in their schools or neighborhoods. Given the considerable stressors in many girls’ families and communities, it is quite likely that violence against women and/or children would be present, as well. However, the privacy and fear that typically surround abuse in families, coupled with the presence of mandated reporters in community agencies, most likely made this issue too threatening to talk about, even in the supportive environment the girls created for one another.

Drugs and alcohol: “It takes its toll on everybody.”

Drug and alcohol abuse ranked high on many girls’ lists of concerns about their families and neighborhoods. Girls in urban areas, in particular, spoke of communities ravaged by drug dealers; of brothers, cousins, and sometimes parents “lost” to drug addiction and alcoholism; of their sense of despair as they walked by neighborhood drug addicts and “winos”; and of the threat of violence spilling over from street corner drug dealing and gang activity. Whether or not girls in such settings had direct experience with drug and alcohol abuse, as Akirah, of Southeast Chicago, put it, “It takes its toll on everybody.”²¹

Girls in all communities spoke of pressure to drink and use drugs recreationally. Not surprisingly, the younger girls in the study were less likely than older girls to have used alcohol, drugs, and cigarettes, but it was not uncommon to hear 12-year-old participants complain about peer pressure to do so. Danielle, a 16-year-old from Woodstock, commented that she was glad, in some ways, that she had epilepsy, as it gave her an excuse not to drink at parties.²² If this were not the case, she said, she would feel like she had to get drunk or else face ridicule from her peers.

Some of girls’ most painful revelations in case study meetings and interviews involved stories of parents’ substance abuse. In a few cases, parents were absent from girls’ lives altogether, pulled away by the strength of their addiction or in prison for selling or possessing drugs. Other girls shared stories of parents who used drugs at home or got drunk every night. Girls often recounted such stories with a great deal of sorrow, frustration, and shame. In such situations, teenage girls often took on major responsibility for the running of their households and the care of younger children. They also carried the burden of trying to hide their parents’ addictions and of making excuses for their failure to attend to their children’s needs. In her girl-to-girl interview, Shamika, of Uptown/Edgewater, spoke of the pain caused by her mother’s addiction to alcohol.²³

“My mom just gets drunk every night. And now, she lost her job, she gets drunk every day, too. She just sits and drinks her beer and watches her TV and that’s it. My little sister, I have to take care of

²¹Akirah describes herself as African American, 12 years old, and in 6th grade (she does not name a religion).

²²Danielle describes herself as White, Protestant, 16 years old, and in 11th grade.

²³Shamika describes herself as bi-racial (White/African American), Methodist, 16 years old, and in 10th grade.

her, because half the time my mom don't even act like she's her kid. And like, I'm trying to take care of everything, but it's rough, you know? I mean trying to hide everything from my little sister, and be like, you know, 'Mommy's just tired,' you know? 'Don't be too loud, now, Mommy's feeling sick.' And my mom, she just sits there, and it's like, it makes me sad because it's like she don't know how to love me no more."

Sexuality and Relationships: "Girls have a lot more to think about."

Whether or not girls had ever been involved in sexual relationships, the potential burdens as well as the pleasures of sexuality were clearly on their minds. Girls held a wide range of values regarding when, whether, and how teens should express their sexualities, but most voiced a belief that the decision to enter a sexual relationship opened up a host of complex issues that many teens were not ready to confront. They also agreed that girls unfairly bore the majority of responsibility for preventing and dealing with the consequences of unwanted pregnancy, sexual abuse, and HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).²⁴ In a case study discussion about males' and females' roles in sexual decision-making, Nina, of North Lawndale, summed up the views of most of the participants and interviewees: "Girls have a lot more to think about."²⁴

Most girls felt they had enough information regarding reproduction, but they had widely differing opinions about the adequacy of information on sexual relationships, sexually transmitted infections, and birth control. Girls were most likely to have received information about reproduction and sexually transmitted infections from school-based sex education or health classes, although this did not necessarily include information about birth control and STI prevention. Shayla, of Southeast Chicago, told of seeing "really gross" pictures of sexually transmitted infections and being warned that, "This is what could happen if you have sex." However, she says she was not taught about how to protect herself (other than practicing abstinence) from becoming infected.²⁵ When school curricula did include such information, it ranged from vague references about how to obtain condoms and gynecological care, to actual demonstrations of various birth control methods and discussions about their safe and effective use.

Girls who felt confident in their understandings of sexuality, power issues in relationships, and changes in their bodies were most likely to describe information as coming from their mothers, aunts, sisters or older female friends. Some girls also named teen or women's magazines and clinics as helpful sources of information. Girls were markedly split when asked whether they felt they could go to their parents or caregivers with questions about sexual feelings, relationship decisions, abuse or exploitation, gynecological health, pregnancy, or birth control. Some girls, like Charmene, a focus group participant in Uptown/Edgewater, described their mothers, in particular, as open and caring and indicated that they would not hesitate to go to them for comfort or advice.²⁶

"She is just the coolest person. I would totally go to her because I know she would help me because she loves me and she knows a lot about stuff. . . I would just totally trust her. And it's like, even my friends [whose] moms aren't open to stuff like that at all, they, like, talk to my mom about it."

²⁴Nina describes herself as African American, Baptist, 13 years old, and in 7th grade.

²⁵Shayla describes herself as African American, Baptist, 15 years old, and in 9th grade.

²⁶Charmene describes herself as African American, Christian, 14 years old, and in 9th grade.

Others, like Magdalena, a member of the same focus group, laughed at the very question, adamant in their claim that they would face serious repercussions for even thinking about such issues.²⁷ Magdalena attributed her inability to address sexuality with her mother to both her personal values and those of her Mexican culture.

“Oh my god, my mother would kill me if I asked her about sex. In my family, I guess in my culture, girls just don’t do that, because my parents are like, so old fashioned and really, really overprotective. I think that my mother wouldn’t tell my father, because she would be afraid that he really would beat me, but my mother, she would just be so ashamed, and she would like, not even talk to me or want to be around me, and that would just be worse.”

Most girls, however, occupied some middle ground—they felt able to talk with their mothers or other female family members about such topics as menstruation and general relationship issues (such as when they were old enough to have a boyfriend), but unable to discuss sexual desire, pregnancy concerns, a need for birth control, or problematic power dynamics in their relationships.

When discussing relationships, girls frequently expressed frustration about sexual pressure from boys and men. Even girls who clearly wished to be in sexual relationships sometimes felt pressured by boyfriends to “go further” or “move faster” than they wanted. Some girls, particularly younger teens, were firm in their belief that they should wait until a certain age (typically 18) or until marriage before expressing their sexuality with another person. Others had a more abstract sense of needing to “wait for the right person” or “until I’m mature enough.” But nearly all voiced concerns about negotiating among competing desires: the desire to avoid disappointing boys and appearing prudish; the desire to protect themselves against potential unwanted outcomes such as pregnancy, infection, or a bad reputation; and the desire to simply have the space to determine the pace and behaviors that felt right for them.

It is interesting to note that one of the most frequently offered reasons for wanting to put off having romantic or sexual relationships was a desire to succeed in school. Girls feared becoming pregnant and dropping out of school to take care of a baby, and many could point to friends or relatives who had experienced this outcome. A surprising number of girls, though, saw any involvement in dating relationships as a distraction from schoolwork, and they were not willing to compromise their academic achievement to pursue romantic interests.

Although none of the girls in this study described herself as lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered, and only one described herself as “heterosexual but not done experimenting yet,” it is likely that their peers who do not identify themselves as heterosexual face considerable homophobia in their communities.ⁱⁱⁱ Indeed, two of the agencies were so concerned about homophobic reactions from community members that they required the adult researchers to remove the question, “How do you describe your sexual orientation?” from the demographic survey before administering it to potential participants in Phase II. Annette, from Champaign-Urbana (the only site in which girls engaged in serious discussions of sexual identity), described a climate of homophobia in her school:²⁸

²⁷Magdalena describes herself as Mexican, Catholic, 14 years old, and in 9th grade.

²⁸Annette describes herself as White/Romanian, 18 years old, in 12th grade, and having no religion.

“Like if two girls are walking down the hall and they want to put their arms around each other, everybody will be like, ‘Oh, oh, they must be girlfriends or lesbians’ or something. Why can’t they be like just wanting to be affectionate? And so what if they were, like, a couple or something? It’s like ‘Oh my God, like that would be the end of the world and we have to put a stop this.’”

Loneliness: “I don’t feel like anybody really knows me, or maybe really cares.”

If a lack of meaningful activities was girls’ primary complaint about their communities, loneliness was their number-one frustration in their personal lives. This may seem, on its surface, to be a relatively minor complaint. Unlike sexuality, violence, and drugs, loneliness is not a “hot topic” of research, policy, or popular debate. But loneliness nonetheless took a major toll on girls’ feelings of well-being. Girls were not necessarily physically isolated, but they often voiced a sense of being profoundly misunderstood, unheard, or alone in the world. Across age, race, class, culture, and community groups, girls were aching for safe spaces to explore intimate concerns in their lives. Yet they seldom found them. In fact, it was not uncommon to hear girls assert that the case study meetings or focus groups were the first contexts they had found that encouraged open exploration of personal concerns.

When needing help with personal problems, some girls turned to parents or other family members, friends, community advocates, clergy, caseworkers, teachers, or guidance counselors. In fact, those with close relationships to parents, relatives, and supportive friends counted these as invaluable resources. But girls distinguished between seeking out help for a specific problem and finding a safe space to truly let down their guards and examine their experiences and concerns in a deep and expansive way. Although many could point to agencies that offered help for particular concerns or individuals (such as a trusted coach, teacher, parent, relative, or youth worker) who would be willing to listen to problems and offer advice, they often worried that they would face repercussions if they shared too much or told the wrong person. For instance, a girl struggling with a parent’s drinking problem or abuse in her family might hesitate to share her concerns with even the most compassionate guidance counselor or caseworker for fear of being removed from her home. A girl who otherwise felt comfortable turning to someone from her church, synagogue, or mosque might feel unable to do so when pondering questions about sexuality, particularly if her religion was known to cast certain types of sexual activity as deviant or sinful. A girl grappling with issues of power and control in a relationship with an older male might decide not to seek guidance from an advocate for fear that her partner might be reported and arrested for statutory rape. And even a girl from a very close-knit and supportive family might be reluctant to share some concerns with her parents or caregivers for fear of worrying or disappointing them.

Participants asked their peers where they are most likely to turn for help or advice. These were the 5 most common responses among girls surveyed:

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 73.9% of girls said My mother | (n = 133) |
| 68.3% of girls said A friend my age | (n = 123) |
| 39.4% of girls said My brother or sister | (n = 71) |
| 38.3% of girls said My father | (n = 69) |
| 35.0% of girls said An adult friend | (n = 63) |

These were the 5 most common responses among boys surveyed:

| | |
|---|----------|
| 56.7% of boys said My mother | (n = 68) |
| 54.2% of boys said A friend my age | (n = 65) |
| 44.2% of boys said My father | (n = 53) |
| 28.3% of boys said My brother or sister | (n = 34) |
| 22.5% of boys said An adult relative | (n = 27) |

N = 300 (180 girls; 120 boys)

Note: Respondents could select more than one answer. Source: GBF Phase II mapping data. Because the mapping project used a convenience sample, the data presented here describe views of these respondents only. They do not necessarily represent the views of other community members.

Immersed in the often-shifting roles and conflicting emotions of adolescence, many girls lamented the lack of opportunity to share their full range of feelings with others and find unconditional acceptance and support. Those who lacked access to programs, who had few friends, or whose families admonished them to keep “family problems” a secret, were particularly likely to feel isolated. For some girls, like Jackie, this sense of loneliness led to feelings of despair.²⁹ Attempting to deal with a multitude of stressors in her family, and too afraid to tell her friends or other adults, she tried to suppress her emotions to the point of becoming depressed and wanting to die. A passage from her journal is troubling:^{iv}

“There are a lot of bad things that happen to me, but only some things I’m going to tell. The rest I keep to myself. I need to say a lot of things to a lot of people and I really need a friend to talk to because of the things that happened to me but I just know that whoever I talk to, they will laugh. And one of these days they will drive me crazy...If only I wasn’t born I will be happy. My classmates laugh at me because I’m fat and my brothers and sisters they don’t even think they’re hurting me...every single day I cry. There’s no day that I don’t have to cry...I like to talk to my sister because she’s the only one who knows what I’m going through. She could understand that I wish I was dead. I never should have come to this world. I wish I was dead and when I die I don’t want anybody to cry. I want them to have a party because that’s what they were going to do.”

Feelings of loneliness may lead girls to behave in ways that are unhealthy for them. Participants in case study meetings and focus groups pointed to loneliness and a desire to belong, as well as a lack of meaningful activities, as primary reasons why girls become involved with gangs, and become involved or stay in relationships that are exploitive or abusive. Despite their obvious dangers, gangs offer girls acceptance and the security of group membership, and relationships, however unhealthy, can give girls a sense that they are wanted, needed, and known. For girls who feel lonely and unheard, the comfort of belonging may be very compelling, in spite of the costs involved. In her focus group, Stephanie, of North Lawndale, noted:³⁰

“Most girls who join gangs...they just want to feel like they belong and like, gangs maybe feel good for girls who feel they got nobody. If you don’t have a very good sense of yourself, then you’re going to feel better about yourself if you’ve got, like, these instant people who are like your blood now, because you belong to them. It’s a stupid thing to do and way, way dangerous, but I guess they feel like it’s worth it for that, like, security thing.”

Girls’ sense of loneliness can stem not only from their present circumstances, but also from the fear of an unknown future. Some girls in this study had mapped out their futures in great detail and were happy with their vision of their lives. Paula, from Woodstock, for example, had plans to attend college and medical school in order to pursue her goal of becoming a doctor.³¹ Although we have no way of knowing at this point what her future will bring, Paula felt confident and settled in her choices. Her teammate Teresa, on the other hand, worried a great deal about the

²⁹We do not include Jackie’s community or self-description in order to further protect her privacy.

³⁰Stephanie describes herself as African American, Baptist, 15 years old, and in 10th grade.

³¹Paula describes herself as Mexican, Catholic, 14 years old, and in 9th grade.

future and envied Paula's sense of clarity.³² Her inability to envision a path for herself left her feeling sad, lonely, and afraid.

"I just feel bad because, like, you know what you want to do and you have a plan and everything, but it's scary because I have no clue. I just look ahead and I don't know what will be out there for me. I wish I knew like you do...It's just upsetting."

Feeling Shut Out: "Sometimes they let the boys crowd everyone else out."

When asked if they would rather take part in mixed-sex or all-girl activities, girls offered a range of responses. Some preferred to be in girls-only settings because they felt boys' presence prompted girls to spend too much energy worrying about how boys would perceive them. Others were drawn to all-girl places and activities because they observed that boys tended to get more attention and better resources (such as more time on the basketball court) in mixed-sex settings. Some girls also felt intimidated or harassed by boys, making them less likely to have fun or try new skills. Girls who preferred mixed-sex contexts pointed out that boys and girls could complement and learn from one another, but they tended to focus more on their desire to socialize with boys. Interestingly, several girls noted that they preferred all-girl settings for some activities, such as sports or science programs, but that for activities such as music or volunteer programs, they would prefer to be with both girls and boys.

Whether they preferred mixed-sex or girls-only activities, participants and interviewees noted that many community spaces that are supposedly gender-neutral actually do not feel welcoming to girls. This was especially true of urban parks, pools, basketball courts, and school playgrounds—some of the most common places where girls said young people like to hang out. Girls noted that although they would like to participate in recreational activities in those places, they often feel shut out because they can't get on the fields or courts when boys are playing, and boys always seem to be playing. They also pointed out that those settings often lack adult supervision and that even when adults are present, they seldom insist on more equitable distribution of playing time and resources. As a result, participants often felt that in informal mixed-sex community settings, the boys got to play and the girls got to watch. In a girl-to-girl interview, Cecile, of Uptown/Edgewater, expressed her frustration that she and her female friends could not play basketball, despite the presence of courts a block away.³³

"I like to play basketball, and I'm pretty sports-minded, but the guys, they hog up the courts and girls can never get on. And nobody's going to tell them to get off the courts and give anybody else a chance, and the girls, like, they don't dare. I'm pretty good, but I can't play with the guys, cause even if they'd let me, which they never would, they just play too rough for me. But they just do one game after another, and the girls can never get in. So, like, all we can do is stand around and watch, and it's like, so frustrating."

³²Teresa describes herself as Mexican, Catholic, 14 years old, and in 9th grade.

³³Cecile describes herself as Bosnian, Muslim, 13 years old, and in 6th grade.

Girls cited male harassment as a major obstacle to using community recreation facilities that were designed to be gender-neutral. Although they were technically free to use the facilities, they dreaded going there because they knew they would face humiliating or threatening comments or behavior from boys and men. This was especially the case at urban parks and pools. Some girls also complained that even if they were willing to put up with this, their parents forbade them to go to these places, even though they allowed their brothers to go. In hot summer months, with the local pool as the only place in the neighborhood to cool off, girls were often resentful that adults failed to challenge men's and boys' misbehavior and instead took it as a given that girls must miss out. In a focus group in Southeast Chicago, Claudia voiced her anger.³⁴

“Why does it have to be that way? Just because some guys are obnoxious and all grabbing girls’ bodies, and ‘hey Mama’ and everything, how come nobody puts a stop to it? Why does it have to be that the girls have to stay away and swelter with no place to cool off or have fun, and the guys who are being the problem, they get rewarded to swim in the pool all day?”

Our interviews with community advocates revealed that most worked with both boys and girls. Indeed, it is still quite rare in many communities to find programs devoted specifically to girls unless they focus on pregnancy prevention or on assisting pregnant and parenting teens. Although programs and services that are open to both girls and boys appear to be gender-neutral, advocates themselves often noted that girls' concerns are sometimes seen as less urgent than boys' and are therefore less likely to be addressed. This is not necessarily because adults see girls as less important than boys, but more likely because the manifestations of boys' needs and frustrations may be more overt and are therefore seen as more pressing and/or dangerous to the community. A school-based counselor in Woodstock, for instance, noted that although she is responsible for helping both girls and boys, and although she is quite interested in girls' issues, up to 90 percent of her energy is spent on issues of boys and violence. Caught in a system with too little staffing and too little time, she must focus on what seems most urgent. Since girls' concerns often present themselves as less visible and/or volatile than boys', she is faced with the need to pass over girls' concerns in order to deal with the immediacy of boys'.

Many girls would like to participate in mixed-sex activities and find advocacy in organizations designed for youth in general, and they certainly would like to have access to those community spaces that do exist for young people. Too often, though, what looks gender-neutral on the surface feels very unwelcoming for girls.

CONCLUSION

The obstacles girls face sometimes differ across age, race, class, and community, but the participants shared a desire to meet the challenges in their lives in order to grow up feeling healthy and strong. Their ability to do so depends, in part, on their ability to find support in honing their skills and formulating and pursuing their dreams. It also depends on adults' willingness to address the community conditions that fail to support, and even threaten to undermine, girls' well-being. In the following chapters, we explore the factors girls identified as key to supporting their health and their ability to think critically and proactively about their own lives.

³⁴Claudia describes herself as Mexican American, Catholic, 12 years old, and in 7th grade.

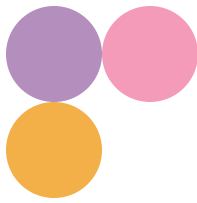
END NOTES

¹Although this was girls' most frequently cited complaint, it was not necessarily their most serious complaint. Indeed, girls who voiced concerns about violence, sexuality, and lack of a safe space to express their feelings named these as more pressing issues.

²Following the lead of progressive sexuality educators, we use the term "sexually transmitted infection" (STI) instead of "sexually transmitted disease" (STD), as this term is considered by many to be less stigmatizing.

³Of course, all those who witness homophobic behavior are affected by it in some way, regardless of their sexual identity and whether or not they are targeted directly. In addition, while it may be the case that all of the participants were heterosexual, it may also be that participants who were lesbian, bisexual, or "questioning" felt uncomfortable disclosing this information to others. In light of the homophobic climate in girls' communities and occasionally within their own teams, reluctance to self-identify as anything other than heterosexual would not be surprising.

⁴Upon reading this journal entry, the adult researcher notified the agency staff members, who had close relationships with Jackie, and called her to offer support and let her know that the researcher and the agency staff needed to report their concerns about her suicide ideation. The adult researcher and agency staff spoke with a local counselor trained in suicide and depression, youth, and family counseling, referred Jackie to her, and continued to offer her personal support. The name of Jackie's community and the agency she worked with are omitted here in order to protect her privacy.

**EMPOWERING BY DESIGN: HONORING GIRLS' STRENGTHS**

“When you feel like somebody takes you seriously, like believes in you and wants you to do good, it kind of inspires you to want to bring out the part of you that wants to do good too. But when people are looking all negative, down on you, sometimes you just want to give up. And it shouldn’t be that way, but I think that’s how a lot of girls give up, ‘cause they don’t have anybody in their corner. So that’s why I say girls need somebody to get behind us and give you that courage, that one-on-one. ‘Cause strength is inside of you, but sometimes you need a push from the outside, too.”

– Sabina
North Lawndale¹

Girls’ ability to grow as healthy and fulfilled community members depends, at least in part, on the extent to which they encounter opportunities to activate, enhance, and take ownership of their many talents and insights—and on the extent to which they receive that helpful “push from outside” to which Sabina refers. In settings where their capabilities are underestimated and their ideas are squashed, girls may express frustration, a lack of connection to their communities, and an erosion of their sense of self. As some recent literature points out, and as the participants in this study confirm, girls can “act out” and be as mean or disengaged as anyone else.¹ But as we have seen in our own work, when they are honored as bright, competent, and vital group members—when they have the time, space, and support to work through difficulties and differences—girls’ strengths can come alive. They create. They lead. They dare to dream big and to see their dreams through. Girls’ finest qualities can emerge, take root, and flourish, often surprising girls themselves.

How can girls and adults work together to foster girls’ healthy development? What qualities do girls value most in programs and relationships with peers and adults, and how can those programs and relationships enhance the qualities girls value most in themselves? In this chapter, we reflect on our own work in order to explore these questions. In Chapter Five, we explore lessons learned from the challenges we encountered along the way.

“I wish [adults] would be a little more tuned into what we’re really feeling. I don’t want to be told that these are the best years of my life, because sometimes it feels that way, but most times it’s really not. It just seems like sometimes adults don’t take us that seriously...”

– Gloria describes herself as Black, Baptist, 13 years old, and in 9th grade. She was a focus group participant in Uptown/Edgewater.

¹ Sabina describes herself as Black and Indian/Cherokee, Baptist, 14 years old, and in 8th grade.

GIRLS' STRENGTHS/PROJECT STRENGTHS: WHAT WORKS FOR GIRLS?

Ask girls what it means to be healthy and strong, and you'll get a variety of answers. For some, it means being free of illness. For others, it means feeling good about themselves and the conditions of their lives. For still others, it means having the skills and resilience to make their way when the conditions of their lives are not so good. Although the girls in this study drew from a broad range of experiences and definitions of health, all agreed that girls possess important strengths that—if recognized, supported, and encouraged to grow—can enable them, and their communities, to thrive.

Asked to identify their most important strengths, girls named a capacity to:

- Respect and support one another
- Find common ground
- Lead
- Be fair-minded
- Think critically
- Speak for themselves
- Think big
- Find courage within themselves

Not all girls demonstrated or claimed to have each of these strengths, and no one girl exhibited them all of the time. In many cases, girls began this project with no notion that such capacities lay within them. Yet over time, both girls and adults watched these qualities develop and find expression through the girls' work together.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the aspects of the research initiative girls considered particularly meaningful were also those that 1) gave them a real voice in decision-making, and 2) honored and helped develop the personal characteristics they most valued and wished to express.

Girls identified the following aspects of the project as most significant to them:

- Building relationships and being heard
- Opportunities for leadership and shared decision-making
- Opportunities to work through and across differences
- Knowing girls matter
- Stretching beyond limits
- Learning how to analyze and articulate concerns

- Having fun while working hard
- Making a difference

In the remainder of this chapter, we examine each of these aspects more closely.

Building Relationships and Being Heard

When asked to discuss what they valued most about this project, girls tended first to identify the relationships they built with individuals and the collective. Indeed, while case study meetings provided an opportunity for the adult researchers to collect data and for the girls to work on their activities, in many ways their most important function was to provide a safe space for girls struggling to make sense of the concerns in their lives. Participants knew that every week they would be in the presence of caring girls and adults who would listen to what they had to say, help them work through their feelings, and challenge them to think in new ways.¹ Through the evolution of their relationships, girls developed a new level of trust—in their own strengths and in their peers’.

Girls’ ability to create an environment where everyone was heard was guided, in part, by their “group expectations.” Although each team created its own expectations, all stressed the importance of confidentiality, respect, and openness to differences in experience and perspective. The development of a safe space was further bolstered by the adult researchers’ conscious attempts to include every voice and to remind girls to give each participant plenty of room to express her views. The participants, in turn, demonstrated great patience with one another to allow this to occur. During Phase II, girls met every other week with agency staff for recreational, artistic, and educational activities of their choice; this gave participants additional opportunities to interact informally and work on shared projects.

Although most team members had never met before their involvement in the research initiative, over time they established a sense of belonging—the reassurance that they were safe, valued, and known—that enabled them to share stories many said they had never told before. For instance, when Paula confided to her teammates in Woodstock that her mother was ill, she was so horrified at the thought of her dying that she could barely speak the words aloud.² Terrified, she finally said the words she had not been able to utter to anyone, “My mother is sick, and I’m afraid...” With that, the group stepped in and took care of her.

Girls not only offered one another comfort when sharing concerns from their personal lives; they also treated one another with care and respect when making decisions as a group. In that same group, when Heather expressed her fear that she would feel left out if the group invited Luz, a former member, to join them for their final celebration, her teammates immediately acknowledged her feelings and reaffirmed their commitment to her.

Researcher: Luz wants to come to the celebration.

Heather (the only White/Caucasian girl in the room): I’ll feel left out because when Luz comes she hangs out with Teresa who is my age and I am left out.

²Paula describes herself as Mexican, Catholic, 14 years old, and in 9th grade.

Lourdes: What do you mean? But Sue [who is White/Caucasian] will be there. She came last week.

Researcher: No, I don't think so...

Heather: Every time Luz is here and Sue is not, it's always me left out and you guys together.

Lourdes: If you feel like that then we shouldn't have Luz...If you think about it, Luz was with us at the beginning but not at the end.

Paula: You're going to be with us and, you don't understand, you are going to feel loved!

Group: Laughter³

Girls did not necessarily begin the project with a sense that their voices would be heard, nor did the support they received spring up automatically. Rather, it developed over time as their relationships and confidence in one another evolved. Here, some girls from Woodstock reflect on their movement from initial mistrust and even animosity to the development of camaraderie and a sense of being heard:

Teresa: I learned about myself that I could talk more. That I could actually talk.

Paula: In the beginning [I thought], I don't know these people, I ain't going to talk, but now it's like...

Group: We know!

Janelle: Maybe [I learned] to trust people more. I never tell anyone anything. I let secrets out—they come back to me. But here it's different.⁴

Teresa: I learned that judging how a person looks is not how they feel inside. I was not, like, good friends with Tania. I went to her locker, stole all her books and threw them in the pond and I almost beat her up.

Paula: We were this close to beating each other up. Once we did the mapping we started being friends...we even slept in the same bed.

Lourdes: Just by being here...when I started talking about my dad, I just felt like I had support.

Paula: You guys were support for me...like with my mom too...I felt like I had so much support, you don't understand...and I found I got a sister.

³Luz describes herself as Mexican, Catholic, 17 years old, and in 11th grade. Heather describes herself as White, Protestant, 13 years old, and in 7th grade. Teresa describes herself as Mexican, Catholic, 14 years old, and in 9th grade. Lourdes describes herself as Mexican, Catholic, 18 years old, and in 11th grade. Paula describes herself as Mexican, Catholic, 14 years old, and in 9th grade.
⁴Janelle describes herself as Mexican and Caucasian, Catholic, 17 years old and in 12th grade. See descriptions of other girls in this passage in footnote #3.

Opportunities for Leadership and Shared Decision-Making

The sense of being heard included not only being able to share one's stories, but also having a voice in the group's decision-making. The girls decided what action, if any, they would take in their communities based on what they learned from their research. Each girl had a say, and ultimate decisions typically reflected a building of ideas as participants offered opinions and suggestions and modified earlier contributions as the discussion evolved. Over time, girls took the lead, both as individuals and as a group, in implementing their decisions as well.

Although few of the core participants could recall prior opportunities to assume leadership positions in their communities, those with leadership experience typically described their roles with pride and confidence. For instance, when her teammates asked Angela, a 13-year-old participant at Girl World, in Uptown/Edgewater, how she knew one of the advocates there, she asserted:⁵

“Oh, I hired her. I was on the hiring committee when she interviewed for her position, and I hired her. So, like, we’ve known each other since then.”

Some girls began this project seemingly predisposed to leading. By the second case study meeting, Annette, of Champaign-Urbana, took it upon herself to co-facilitate discussions; although she offered her own insights, she also posed probing questions, often asking her teammates to respond by going around the room or offering a show of hands to indicate their views on a topic she found intriguing. Shelly, of Uptown/Edgewater, relished jumping up to the dry-erase board to take notes and help orchestrate the group discussion. And LaVaughn, of Southeast Chicago, was quick to suggest that she handle everything from passing out papers to speaking with reporters.⁶

More often, girls initially felt shy about stepping into leadership roles. But when encouraged to envision themselves in such positions, learn needed skills, and ponder their potential contributions, they were able to step in, speak out, and, when necessary, take charge. In an especially inspiring discussion, girls from Woodstock pondered changes they would make if this study were undertaken again. After suggesting specific changes, Paula exclaimed, “They should definitely run it again so more girls can get involved in it—and next time we should be the leaders!”⁷

The adult researchers were particularly gratified to watch the teams take over the case study agendas partway through the study. Whereas the adult researchers developed a discussion outline and journal assignment for each case study meeting early on in the study, by the end the girls determined their own topics. This turnaround occurred during the fourth case study meeting in Champaign-Urbana. When the adult researcher offered a set of questions to guide girls' journal

What are girls' commitments outside of school? During their summer mapping project, participants learned that of those girls responding:

| | | |
|-------|--------------------|-----------|
| 47.3% | had a paying job | (n = 81) |
| 46.0% | did volunteer work | (n = 79) |
| | | (N = 171) |

Source: GBF Phase II mapping data. Because the mapping project used a convenience sample, the data presented here describe views of these respondents only. They do not necessarily represent the views of other community members.

⁵Angela describes herself as African American, Caucasian, and Blackfoot Indian, 13 years old, and in 7th grade. She describes her religion as “somewhat like Jewish.”

⁶Annette describes herself as White/Romanian, 18 years old, in 12th grade, and having no religion. Shelly describes herself as Biracial (African American and White), Baptist, 15 years old, and in 9th grade. LaVaughn describes herself as Puerto Rican and Black, 14 years old, in 8th grade, and as having no religion.

⁷Paula describes herself as Mexican, Catholic, 14 years old, and in 9th grade.

writing for the next meeting, they considered the topic and concluded that a different assignment would yield more fruitful discussion. With the support of the adult researcher, they then decided they were better able than adults to determine what they should write about. The girls went on to determine their own journal assignments, carefully developing a process that allowed everyone to contribute topics and to write about something else if they did not like a particular week's assignment. More than simply being allowed to vote on an idea generated by an adult, the girls actually took over the process and found encouragement to continue.

Opportunities to Work Through and Across Differences

The project provided an opportunity for girls to work and bond together across lines of race, culture, social class, and age—lines that many had not previously imagined crossing. Indeed, some participants acknowledged that as they embarked on their work together, they immediately formed stereotyped assumptions about teammates whose backgrounds differed from their own. Some of these misconceptions quickly faded as girls began to share their ideas and experiences with one another; others took much longer to work through. But in most cases, the girls not only found common ground but also found support and friendship with girls they had no previous interest in knowing. As their relationships evolved, they learned about each other's differences and similarities and came to new understandings across race, culture, language, class, and age.

By collaborating over time on a shared set of goals, girls had the opportunity to witness one another's strengths and commitment to both their project and their teammates. And by carving out space for open-ended, intimate discussions on a regular basis, girls had a chance to learn from one another's perspectives and experiences. At times, girls found themselves surprised by their commonalities and intrigued by their differences. In the Uptown/Edgewater group, for example, Margie, an African American girl who described her neighborhood as "torn apart by drug dealers," asserted passionately that girls outside her neighborhood could not possibly understand how it felt to fear being shot every day, to lose people they love to violence, to "live in a war zone." After a considerable pause, Anna, a soft-spoken girl who had recently moved to Chicago from Bosnia, said,⁸

“I’m planning on going on to college, so it’s good for the people that I work with that I volunteer, but it’s good for me, too, because colleges look at that sort of thing.”

— Patricia describes herself as African American, Christian, 15 years old, and in 9th grade. She was a girl-to-girl interviewee in North Lawndale.

“I think I can feel for you, because I remember the war all around me, and we had to run from our homes. And I was very scared. The saddest thing for me was hiding in the forest and after a few days, my uncle going back to get some of our things so we could survive, and he never came back. He never came back. I don’t like to talk about any more. But I can know a little bit how you must feel. It is very hard.”

⁸Margie describes herself as African American, Christian, 16 years old, and in 11th grade. Anna describes herself as Bosnian, Muslim, 13 years old, and in 6th grade.

When they first met, this 16-year-old Black/African American girl and this 13-year-old Bosnian immigrant assumed they would have little in common. But despite their very different personal histories, an opportunity to share their stories of pain and resilience in the face of loss revealed a great deal of emotional common ground.

By the end of the study, most participants had developed a more multidimensional view not only of their teammates, but also of others outside the group. For instance Lourdes, Teresa, and Paula, Mexican American girls from Woodstock, noted that their ability to find common ground with other girls in the group left them better able to work with people from different race or cultural groups elsewhere. Their teammate, Heather, the only European American in the group at the end of the project, acknowledged that she did not anticipate being able to get along with the Mexican girls on her team, yet she ultimately developed bonds with them that extended beyond their work on the project:⁹

Teresa: I didn't think Americans...I didn't think that I could be like them and talk to them, get along. Now everything is different.

Researcher: Does that extend outside the group?

Teresa: Yes.

Heather: I never thought I could be in a group with Teresa and...but then I was with them in gym...

Lourdes: It seems that now I get along more with them. Before this I wouldn't even want to work with Americans. I don't know why. I think I was racist. But now it's easier for me...Now it doesn't matter, I see everybody the same, and if I'm stuck with Americans I really don't care...I get along with them better. You feel you have so many things different when you don't know them.

Paula: I was really shy. I couldn't talk to an American.

Lourdes: You feel like you are a nerd with them, and the fact that you have so many things different and that's the part that you can't get used to.

In spite of these deeply ingrained ways of thinking about different groups and their ability to work together, these girls worked hard to find a great deal of common ground that left them seeing themselves and others in a more positive light. In fact, Lourdes has found that her relationships with her teammates have actually helped her in her job at a nursing home. She now feels less intimidated around people from other race groups and better able to acknowledge their similarities and respect their differences. Now that she no longer expects them to look down on her because she is Mexican, she finds that the energy she once expended feeling defensive can now be used elsewhere.

It is important to note that sexual identity remained one area where most groups either did not choose or did not have adequate opportunity to work across differences. Only in Champaign-Urbana, where a participant (Alana) described herself as "heterosexual but not done experiment-

⁹Please see footnote #3.

ing yet,” did a group engage in serious discussions of sexual orientation and homophobia.¹⁰ At the other sites—where no one self-identified (either verbally or on the demographics survey) as lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, or questioning—girls resisted adult researchers’ attempts to introduce such discussions. Indeed, some girls moaned or made statements like, “That’s sick,” or “I’m no pervert,” when discussing homosexuality, despite the adult researchers’ repeated invitations for girls to examine their assumptions and challenge stereotypes.

It is impossible to determine whether girls at these sites would have attempted to suspend their homophobia to work across differences if, as in Champaign-Urbana, a teammate rather than an adult had introduced such discussions. In light of the respect and candor with which girls worked through their own racism, it is quite possible that their commitment to finding common ground with teammates would have allowed them to confront their own homophobia as well. However, the process of working through homophobia may be more complicated, in some ways, than working through other issues. For instance, since race identity may be more visible than sexual identity, in mixed-race settings girls may be cued from the onset that they should not make racist comments, even if they hold racist attitudes. Girls who are lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, or questioning, on the other hand, must “come out” if they want their sexual identities to be known. Yet if teammates have already expressed homophobic comments, this may be particularly difficult to do. In short, if teammates knew lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, and/or questioning girls were in their group, they might be less likely to make homophobic comments. And if teammates did not make homophobic comments, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, and/or questioning girls might be more likely to come out. Indeed, we cannot know whether girls at the other five sites felt freer to express homophobia because everyone identified as heterosexual, whether no one identified as other than heterosexual because girls expressed homophobia, or both.ⁱⁱⁱ

Knowing Girls Matter

One of the most important factors in girls’ experience of this project was also, in some ways, one of the most basic. For many, the most meaningful aspect of their experience was simply knowing that they mattered—to adults, to their peers, and to their communities. Indeed, participants knew the entire study was predicated on Girl’s Best Friend Foundation’s belief in the importance of girls’ needs, girls’ expertise, and girls’ action to improve their own communities. Perhaps the most obvious indication of the girls’ importance occurred when the media visited each of the sites during mapping. Girls had the opportunity to see themselves not only as researchers but also as spokespersons and newsmakers—as people whose work was interesting and important enough to warrant coverage in the newspaper, on the radio, and on the six o’clock TV news.

Even more important than the affirmation they received from the media and the Foundation, however, was girls’ awareness that they mattered to the adults and other participants with whom they worked most directly. Girls saw that they mattered in a variety of ways, often through the simple acts of respect adults showed them on a daily basis. A most striking example of this occurred during Phase I at Centro Comunitario Juan Diego in Southeast Chicago.^{iv} Located in a largely windowless space with very little ventilation, the agency is often abuzz with people organ-

¹⁰Alana describes herself as Serbian, 15 years old, and in 10th grade. She describes her religion as “undecided.”

izing programs, and neighbors stopping in for information or to share resources and ideas. During the summer of 1999, when the girls did their mapping project, Chicago experienced record-breaking temperatures, and as a result this crowded space was stiflingly hot. Although Centro Comunitario is comprised of only three main rooms, the agency staff graciously gave the girls the entire back room—a third of the center’s space—so that they would have privacy for their interviews and case study discussions.^v Since the agency has very limited funds, the executive director went out into the community and convinced neighbors to donate a filing cabinet and other supplies for the girls. When one community member donated a used air conditioner, it went immediately in the girls’ room. As the adults sat perspiring and waving papers in front of their faces in a futile effort to cool off in the two front rooms, the girls sat comfortably in their private, air conditioned space, munching on the lavish dinners the staff provided them for each case study meeting. For many of the girls, the experience of being put first was both novel and profound.

Yet another way that girls knew they mattered was by seeing that their participation was crucial to the success of this project. In addition to reaping rewards from taking part in the research initiative, the girls knew that they each shared responsibility for its outcome. Researchers and agency staff stressed the fact that each girl’s perspective was essential if we were to develop an accurate picture of girls’ wants and needs. The knowledge that her input was valued gave Zakiya, of Southeast Chicago, a sense of meaning that she had not experienced before:¹¹

“The thing that I like, that I never really had before, is that you all really want to know what I think, and what girls think and what we think about our neighborhood and what needs to change to make it better for us. That’s cool, you know, to have somebody ask your opinion and feel like there’s something maybe going to be done about it.”

The participants not only derived a sense that they mattered to the project; they also expressed a sense that their teammates mattered to them. This was manifested in acts of kindness toward one another and in an emphasis on fairness to both the individual and the group. For instance, although the adults defined certain rules and responsibilities before the project began,^{vi} the girls also had considerable leeway to set and enforce their own group rules. When unanticipated circumstances arose and decisions needed to be made (as when some girls realized they needed to attend summer school and would therefore miss some mapping sessions), the girls grappled with how to apply the rules fairly. Although each team came up with a different solution (at one site, girls’ stipends were reduced for each day missed; at another site, a girl was allowed to miss the morning activities and catch up with the group in the afternoon), in each case girls worked earnestly and at great length to devise a solution they deemed fair according to the values of the group.

In one of the most compelling examples of generosity and fair-mindedness we witnessed in this work, Gabriella, a Mexican American girl from Southeast Chicago, advocated for Donna, an

When girl researchers asked adults in their communities whether they help or work with young people, 60 percent of respondents said “yes.”
N = 476

Source: GBF Phase II mapping data. Because the mapping project used a convenience sample, the data presented here describe views of these respondents only. They do not necessarily represent the views of other community members.

¹¹Zakiya describes herself as Indian/White/Black, 12 years old, in 6th grade, and as having no religion.

African American teammate who had taunted her on several occasions.¹² Donna's bullying, while clearly unacceptable, seemed related to her own very tenuous sense of self and lack of power in her life. Unfortunately, Gabriella, who was very shy and self-conscious about her English speaking abilities, made an easy target. Having just heard Donna bullying Gabriella particularly forcefully, the agency staff informed Donna that she could no longer participate in the study. Angry and deflated, Donna went outside and broke down in tears. A short time later, Gabriella and Donna sat together on a porch down the street from the agency, deep in conversation. Rather than enjoying the fact that the tables had turned, Gabriella approached the agency staff, explaining that Donna had apologized and they had come to an understanding. Gabriella asked the staff to reconsider their decision and allow Donna back in the group. The staff agreed, and Donna and Gabriella worked as teammates for the rest of the project.

Stretching Beyond Limits

The participants were keenly aware of stretching their thinking and their skills into realms they had not previously entered. And they were understandably proud of themselves for doing so. The project provided participants with a safe context in which to explore talents and ideas, knowing that they could make mistakes and still find support from caring adults and peers. In such a context, girls found the courage to take risks and venture into new territory. From sharing secrets to daring to be interviewed on television or speak on a conference panel, girls faced their fears and in many cases, with the support of their teammates, they conquered them. They developed new ideas, created strategies for action, and saw their projects through to completion. They forged relationships with individuals and groups with whom they had not expected to find common ground—this occurred not only within their teams, but also with neighborhood police, business owners, and community advocates. They toured a university, started a petition, and read and wrote letters to the editor, all for the first time. And they pondered issues—from acquaintance rape to affirmative action—they had never discussed with other teens before.

Many girls entered this experience with preset notions about what they could and could not do. Yet as they worked together and set their own goals, girls came to believe, and demonstrate, that they could learn anything they set their minds to. One day in Champaign-Urbana, before Phase II mapping began, Sharon announced that she was terrible with directions, confessing, "I can't read a map to save my life."¹³ The researcher replied, "Sure you can—you just have to learn how." Sharon promptly went on to learn how to read a map. When agency staff in Southeast Chicago learned, to their dismay, that several girls were unable to find Chicago or Illinois on a map, they created a geography game to play each morning before mapping. The girls not only learned to locate their city and state, but also developed a new awareness of where they were situated relative to the rest of the country and the world. As their curiosity and confidence grew, momentum built, and soon they were locating places they had only vaguely heard of before.

For many girls, taking on a new identity—that of "researcher," "interviewer," or "expert"—was significant in forming their thoughts about themselves. At the beginning of the study, many girls

¹²Gabriella describes herself as Mexican, Catholic, 12 years old, and in 8th grade. Donna describes herself as African American, 12 years old, and in 7th grade. She describes her religion as "don't know."

¹³Sharon describes herself as Black and Indian/Cherokee, Baptist, 14 years old, and in 8th grade.

expressed great misgivings about conducting the mapping because they were afraid to approach people on the street to ask them to complete surveys. Most were even more nervous about speaking with the media, whom they were informed might visit them during one of their mapping sessions. Yet, clad in their purple “girl mapper” T-shirts, holding their clipboards, and showing their Girl’s Best Friend Foundation ID to potential survey respondents, they felt a new sense of confidence and entitlement to approach strangers and speak about their work. And when the media appeared with cameras and microphones, girls stepped up to reporters and spoke eloquently about themselves and the research they were conducting in their communities. For example, Akirah, from Southeast Chicago, described herself at the beginning of mapping training as terrified at the thought of speaking with a reporter.¹⁴ Yet by the time the media arrived after the first week of mapping, she actually volunteered to be interviewed for a local news story. When the reporter asked this self-described shy 12-year-old what the group was doing, she spoke clearly into the microphone, saying:

“I’m a researcher, and we’re here today to learn information about what’s available for girls in our community so we can take it back and help people do a better job of supporting girls and what they need.”

At their final celebration, the girls from North Lawndale, Southeast Chicago, and Uptown/Edgewater stood confidently in front of a crowded room of peers and adults, many of whom they had only met once, and reported on their work. In Phase II, several girls went on to speak at several public forums: girls from Woodstock spoke on a panel at a women’s studies conference at Northern Illinois University, and girls from Champaign-Urbana spoke on a local radio show called “RadioGirl,” and at a conference on youth issues. At times girls seemed even to surprise themselves with their ability to articulate their concerns and describe the research project and its findings. With each media interview they granted, with each passerby they surveyed, with each group of adults or peers they addressed—each time they stretched beyond their preconceived limits—they grew stronger in their belief that they were experts on their own lives.

Learning How to Analyze and Articulate Concerns

When the girls began this project, many expressed dissatisfaction with the conditions of their lives. Whether citing too few stores, too much gang violence, or troubles at home, girls had little difficulty identifying aspects of their personal lives or communities they would like to see changed. They were less inclined, however, to place their frustrations in a broader context or to ponder the social practices and ideologies that fueled the problems girls faced in their communities. Although they clearly had a capacity for critical thinking, they did not yet have a set of analytical skills or access to language to help them critique and reframe troubling conditions in their communities and personal lives.

The adult researchers watched continually for opportunities to help girls move from complaint to critique—to question their own assumptions, examine issues from multiple perspectives,

¹⁴Akirah describes herself as African American, 12 years old, in 6th grade, and as having no religion.

and explore relationships between their own experiences and larger cultural practices and social structures. Through ongoing dialogue and prompting to think systematically about their own communities and their positions within them, girls both deepened and expanded their sense of what supported or undermined their healthy development. Ultimately, with some prompting and encouragement from the group, girls could move from statements like, “The best way they could improve this neighborhood for girls is to have more shoe stores,” to, “They should have training for girls so they can understand how laws get made and money gets spent, so we can take part in deciding what goes on in our own community.”¹⁵ Once girls began to critique and imagine something more, by their own acknowledgment, they tended to “think big.” When girls in Champaign-Urbana brainstormed about how to make their communities more girl-friendly, Annette came up with this idea:¹⁶

“Ok, here’s my idea. I want a place, like, I’m thinking of a building of some sort where we can have workshops on body and health image where people can talk about that, like you go to someone and say, ‘you know, I’m feeling kind of weird about my body,’ you know? And they can get feedback on what they can do for their health, because a lot of girls, they’re not told that when they get their period or at the age of 16, they should go to the gynecologist, and all that stuff. So I think that would be a good idea to have in a place. Also, girls and young girls who have a problem from anywhere like issues to not fitting in because they’re not the usual girl or anything. And it should also have computer workshops where girls are being trained on how to use computer programs...and then, science, like girls are interested in, cause there’s obviously going to be other girls who are interested in biology or engineering or physics. I think that if we have that in a place where they can say, ‘yeah, I can take a couple classes and learn something about biology, or something that I’m interested in, it’s ok for me to do that, to be interested in that kind of stuff.’ And so art classes or some art-related stuff. Writing, drama, social work, government, and I think it should also have a library...yeah, and I think it would need like a big newspaper kind of thing where girls could become journalists and make articles and tell them what’s going on in their part of the world, and in the country. They could have that in their newspaper where they could meet other girls in their own girls’ age and stuff like that.”

As girls gained new frameworks to understand their experiences and new language to express their thoughts, they became better able to find connections between personal experiences and political realities. For instance, girls began this project knowing that they did not like being pressured to have sex, and they could discuss their frustrations in a discussion group with other girls. But once they had frameworks such as “sexual harassment” or “acquaintance rape” into which they could put their experiences, they developed a new sense of entitlement to critique this behavior. Knowing that terms existed to name their experiences, they were able to see that they were not alone in their circumstances. And that awareness enabled them to envision making changes—both in their relationships and in their communities—to address what they now saw as a social, rather than simply a personal, problem. Tara, from Southeast Chicago, described the sense of empowerment that came from naming her experience.¹⁷

¹⁵Shelly, from Uptown/Edgewater, made both statements. The first was made during the third case study meeting; the second was made at the end of Phase I. Shelly describes herself as Biracial (African American/White), Baptist, 15 years old, and in 9th grade.

¹⁶Annette describes herself as White/Romanian, 18 years old, in 12th grade, and as having no religion

“It’s a good feeling to learn that it’s not just me. That this is something that, I knew other people felt it too, but I didn’t really know there was a whole name for it, and it seems so simple and so obvious now, but now I know. And now, ‘coercion,’ like that’s a word I can use and know that it happens enough that there’s a real term for it, and I don’t have to put up with it the same way, now that I know.”

It is important to note that the girls’ movement from dissatisfaction to critique did not proceed in a linear fashion, nor did girls find that at some point they “arrived” at some analytical higher ground. Each group had its own pace and its own approach to working through issues, and individual participants came to the group with different degrees of readiness to apply a critical lens to their own experiences. Depending on how they were situated socially or culturally, girls had different types or amounts of dissonance to work through when challenging the status quo. For instance, girls from higher socioeconomic backgrounds and/or those of European descent—in other words, those for whom the system had generally worked well—sometimes had difficulty pondering the notion that the system that had benefited them might actually be structured so as to unfairly reward certain groups. Conversely, girls from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, recent immigrants, and/or girls of color—those whom the system had often failed—often had a different layer of dissonance to contend with. For some girls in these groups, even contemplating “making it” within existing social structures was an ongoing struggle. To then be asked to critique those very social structures—which they were already ambivalent about fitting into—was often particularly challenging. In most cases, though, as their work progressed, girls developed greater analytical skills and became increasingly able to apply them to examinations of their lives.

Having Fun While Working Hard

Girls at each research site developed their own style of working and their own group identity. But in each group, girls managed to blend hard work with a great deal of caring and fun. The project’s structure allowed girls considerable flexibility in creating their own process. Adults made a conscious effort to suspend preconceived notions about what “work” or “progress” looked like. Instead, they offered girls space to weave in and out of the personal and professional, work and play. In their group discussions, for instance, girls often blended personal talk with task talk. To an outsider observing a segment of a case study meeting, the girls might look hopelessly “off track,” lost in the examples, or more interested in each other’s latest love interest than in the topic at hand. But a closer look would show that with time and periodic reminders from the adult researcher, the girls would refocus and get back to their discussion, only to meander back and forth again and again. While to an adult accustomed to efficiency and professional meetings this might be quite frustrating, in this context it seemed to ensure that everyone was cared for and that the official task eventually got done.

While participants took plenty of time to play and converse informally, they also worked hard and learned interview skills and work ethics that would likely help them in future employment or

“ I like volunteering because it feels good to give something back to people that need help. People have been good to me and my family, and I like working with kids, so it just makes me feel good to volunteer. ”

—Marina describes herself as Mexican, Catholic, 14 years old, and in 9th grade. She was a girl-to-girl interviewee in Woodstock.

¹⁷Tara describes herself as African American, Baptist, 16 years old, and in 11th grade.

educational endeavors. Girls were clearly proud to develop these skills. In the end, they had an opportunity to relax and have fun, think critically and work hard, and develop skills and relationships that strengthened their sense of competence and connectedness. Corrine, from Rockford, reflected:¹⁸

“I have these skills now that I never had before...we all do, and I think we can put them to good use. Like for summer jobs, say, or for programs and things, or even to be more organized for school, because that’s something I always need to work on [laughs]. And I just, I learned a lot of practical things. Things about myself personally, too, but even just things like be on time and carry my clipboard, and express myself, and that makes me feel good about myself, like I could maybe have a business one day.”

Making a Difference

A final aspect of the project that girls identified as empowering was the opportunity to make a difference. Whether girls took part as core participants, focus group participants, or girl-to-girl interviewees, they knew that the information they provided would be used to enhance adults’ understandings of how to better advocate for adolescent girls. They also derived satisfaction from their ability to offer strength and insight to others. As Roselle, a focus group participant from North Lawndale, noted:¹⁹

“I’m glad if I can say something that might make another girl have an easier time of it or feel less alone. I’ve felt alone all my life, but even just in this group here today, I don’t feel so alone no more. I feel like I’m helping other girls here, and maybe even other girls who read about what I say when you write about me.”

Participants also found solace in the sense that their own misfortunes had not occurred in vain. From the ability to translate their own negative experiences into insights that might help others, girls gained a sense of control and ownership of painful events. Rather than simply being at the mercy of difficult life circumstances, they could use those circumstances for something positive. While this did not necessarily change their situations, it gave girls some sense of power and control within them. Vicky, of Rockford, for instance, reflected on a case study meeting in which she offered a teammate empathy and advice on a personal problem.²⁰ She explained:

“It feels good, you know, to be able to help out somebody else, to help them by what I’ve been through. At least I can use my own situation for something good.”



“We need more opportunities for girls to have fun and work together to do something constructive. It feels good that maybe what we did here will make a difference.”

—Janet describes herself as White, Protestant, 15 years old, and in 10th grade. She was a core participant in Rockford.

¹⁸Corrine describes herself as Black, Methodist, 12 years old, and in 7th grade.

¹⁹Roselle describes herself as African American, Baptist, 15 years old, and in 9th grade.

²⁰Vicky describes herself as White, Catholic, 15 years old, and in 10th grade.

The project offered core participants an opportunity to make a difference in more concrete ways as well. Girls took action to create positive changes in their own communities based on what they learned from their mapping, advocate and girl-to-girl interviews, and case study discussions. This did not occur spontaneously, but with prompting from the adult researchers, participants began to move from feeling frustrated about what they found problematic, to envisioning themselves as entitled and able to make a difference, to strategizing about how best to have an impact, and to setting their plans in motion to make their communities more girl-friendly. In this way the design of the research initiative encouraged girls to engage in a set of discussions and develop a set of skills that enabled them to see themselves as both critical thinkers and constructive social change agents. In her individual interview, Carla, from Southeast Chicago, described the feelings this process elicited:²¹

“When we were complaining about how some of the places treated us, and then you said, ‘So what are we going to do about it?’ at first I was really surprised. I didn’t know what to think, because I don’t think we ever knew we could do much except feel bad. And then when somebody said, you know, ‘We could stop going there,’ that felt good. But then when you asked us, ‘Do you think the stores will know you stopped going there, or why you did?’ that’s when it occurred to me that we should write them a letter. And then we all got to talk about what we should say and what was the best way to say it. And that’s really doing something. That feels kind of powerful. I don’t know if we really changed anything in those stores or not, but I’m glad we decided to try. And now when I see things I don’t like, I think more about what I can do to change them, or even just say something about it instead of keeping it to myself.”

CONCLUSION

When asked to reflect on the aspects of the research initiative they found most empowering, girls named those elements that allowed them to discover, develop, and act upon the capabilities they considered most central to them. They also named dimensions of the project that placed them at the center of decision-making processes—something few had experienced before. In being asked to stretch themselves and direct their own work, girls experienced themselves not just as recipients, but as co-creators of a safe space where they could explore ideas, learn new skills, take an active role in their communities, and take ownership of the strengths they worked so hard to develop.

While these characteristics were built into the design of a research project, they lend themselves as easily to the design of a wide range of programs for girls. In light of the struggles girls face and the strengths in which they take pride, it makes sense that they would embrace projects that offer them an empowering context in which to bond with others, develop their skills, and explore contours of their own lives. It makes sense that they would be drawn to projects in which they are taken seriously.

The girls brought to their work a great deal of courage—the courage to speak up, try on new roles, challenge stereotypes, expand their thinking, reach out across differences, create fair-minded solutions, and support one another in times of success and vulnerability. The adults working on

²¹Carla describes herself as Guatemalan and Puerto Rican, Catholic, 12 years old, and in 7th grade.

this project were impressed and humbled by girls' willingness to open themselves up to new experiences and new ways of learning, and to persevere through times of personal difficulty and challenges in their groups. Girls demonstrated the strength to suspend their own assumptions in order to consider the needs of their teammates and ensure that everyone was heard. At the same time, they showed the courage to challenge their teammates when their behavior or way of thinking was doing them a disservice or was harmful to the group. Perhaps more than anything, girls exhibited the courage to grow, and they did so with an energy and openness that inspired both girls and adults.

END NOTES

¹See Lamb, S. *The Secret Lives of Girls: What Good Girls Really Do—Sex Play, Aggression, and Their Guilt*. New York: The Free Press, 2000. See also Simmons, R. *Odd girl out: The hidden culture of aggression in girls*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 2002.

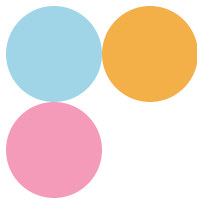
²In Phase I girls met once a month; in Phase II girls met weekly.

³Furthermore, in many popular settings (media, schools, workplaces, etc.), displays of racism are treated as inappropriate but homophobic comments are overlooked or accepted as humorous. This may give girls the impression that such comments are acceptable, and may make it difficult for others (regardless of their sexual identity) to critique such behavior without fear of ridicule. In addition, organizations may be less comfortable introducing discussion of sexuality than discussion of racism, ageism, or other "differences" because they may face more repercussions from their communities for doing so. This may be particularly the case in organizations that deal with young people, since parents or caregivers may not want their children to participate in discussions of sexuality.

⁴We use the name of the agency here because we are referring to the actions of the staff there. When referring to the girls or their work, we use the name of their community, rather than the name of the agency.

⁵Since this study was conducted, Centro Comunitario has moved to a larger space.

⁶For instance, girls and their guardians were required to sign informed consent forms, girls were required to attend mapping training in order to participate, and so forth.



GROWING TOGETHER: LESSONS LEARNED

It may seem obvious to anyone committed to youth development that women and girls should work together as full partners. Ask almost anyone who is actually doing it, however, and they will likely tell you that it is not always obvious how to bring this ideal into practice. Similarly, activist researchers understand that any community-based research project should involve full and meaningful partnerships between researchers and community agencies. But those who conduct this type of research know all too well that the dynamics of such partnerships can, at times, be anything but straightforward.

Having discussed what girls identified as the most empowering aspects of this research, we now turn to a consideration of the challenges we confronted along the way. We share these struggles not simply to acknowledge the difficulties of conducting girl-centered, activist research, but, more importantly, to illuminate the valuable lessons we learned as we worked our way through them. Indeed, it was in pondering our most frustrating experiences that we gained some of our most important insights about how (and how not) to work together as women and girls.

In our biweekly adult research team meetings, we often found ourselves grappling with how to understand and address certain tendencies, assumptions, or dynamics that seemed to surface again and again, whether among the girls, among the adults, or between the women and girls. Upon further analysis, our struggles seemed to cluster around three related themes:

- Projecting adults' issues onto girls
- Striking a balance between stepping in and letting go
- Acknowledging what adults are, and are not, prepared to do to support girls

“I'd like [adults] to know that girls are a lot stronger than they think. We have a lot going for us and we have a lot to say.”

— Alicia describes herself as Mexican/Puerto Rican, Catholic, 15 years old, and in 10th grade. She was a focus group participant in Southeast Chicago.

Although in many ways these themes overlap and inform one another, here we tease them out in order to examine each one more closely. After discussing each theme, we offer lessons we learned in an effort to help others anticipate potential difficulties.

Throughout this discussion it is important to understand that our aim is not to criticize any individual or group, but rather to examine the systemic constraints within which we all operated—whether those stemmed from community influences, organizational pressures within the agencies, the demands of the project itself, or the broader cultural and gendered ideologies that permeate our thinking in various ways. Toward that end, when discussing behaviors or assumptions that ran counter to the project's girl-centered, youth development approach, we refer to the agencies or individuals (whether researchers, girls, or agency staff) only abstractly, without using names or identifying information. This, we hope, will enable us to have a candid discussion while also respecting the commitment, good intentions, and valuable contributions of everyone involved in this project.

PROJECTING ADULTS' ISSUES ONTO GIRLS

A recurring theme in our work involved a tendency for adults to project their own assumptions or unresolved issues onto girls. Often unconscious, and never maliciously intended, such projections nonetheless took a toll on the work that girls and adults tried to accomplish together. It is important to note that adults in all types of roles appeared susceptible to such projection, whether they were researchers, agency staff, advisory group members, or advocates we interviewed. Although adults' projections were manifest in a variety of ways, they typically took one of the following three forms:

- A tendency to romanticize girls
- A tendency to overprotect or underestimate girls
- A tendency to involve girls, directly or indirectly, in adults' conflicts or power struggles

Romanticizing Girls

One way adult women seemed to project their own issues or assumptions onto girls was by portraying them as larger-than-life heroes who were inherently savvy, outspoken, and unwilling to let anything stand in their way. At times adult discussions revealed an unspoken assumption that girls' perspectives would represent some higher truth—that if only girls were invited to speak their minds without adult interference, they would automatically bring a critical lens to their experiences and an eagerness to become activists on their own behalf. Of course, the adults in this study knew very well that girls are no more immune than the rest of us to damaging sexist, racist, classist, ageist, ableist, and homophobic portrayals of girls and women—indeed, they witness them everywhere from women's magazines and music videos to textbooks and fairy tales. Yet somehow an almost magical notion of girls as bold and untainted social critics seemed to color our discussions from time to time. This tendency showed up most often in such adult-only forums as early planning meetings, debriefing sessions, and training or check-in sessions as we discussed how we expected the project to unfold.

The tendency to romanticize girls occurred most noticeably early in Phase I, as we designed the methodology and speculated on our findings. In several of our planning meetings, adults spoke at length about how girls create their own “underground collectives” to support one another and share information. We traded insights about how girls resist and transform the negative messages that surround them. And we looked forward to “hearing directly from the source” what girls really want and need to stay healthy and strong. But while some girls may form collectives, resist and transform stereotypes, and have a critical understanding of what would make their lives more fulfilling, we were quickly humbled to find that few, if any, of the girls we met fit these romanticized images. Indeed, when we first asked girls what their communities should provide to better support their healthy development, girls' answers ranged from “more shoe stores” to “longer hours at the pool.” Seldom did we hear calls for girls' involvement in the political process, greater allocations for girls' programming, or opportunities for girls to speak out in public forums. After working together and practicing critical thinking skills for many months in Phase II, girls began to think in

such terms. But by no means did such ideas spring forth spontaneously simply because girls were invited to speak their minds.

The impulse to romanticize girls is certainly understandable, particularly among those who care deeply about girls. Women who work closely with them know all too well that when girls are not ignored altogether in scholarly, policy, and popular debate, they are often vilified (“those selfish teen mothers,” “wild girls,” or “promiscuous teens”), or cast as victims (“girls go underground” or “those poor, at risk girls”). Seeing the damage caused by such stereotypes, it makes sense that concerned adults would tend to highlight girls’ many strengths, perhaps even to the point of romanticizing them.

In addition to attempting to correct negative portrayals of girls, adult women may unwittingly project onto them unresolved issues from their own adolescence. Perhaps in a desire to rewrite our own adolescent biographies, we may project onto this generation of girls what we wish we had been allowed to do or be. Whether we experienced ourselves as strong and full of potential but felt we were sold short, or experienced ourselves as timid and silent and now wish we had been more forceful, we may find ourselves inadvertently ascribing to girls those qualities we now, with the benefit of hindsight, wish we had been able to better develop within ourselves.

While a romanticized portrait of girls is certainly more hopeful than images of girls as either victims or villains, it remains problematic for several reasons.

When adults romanticize girls, we may unwittingly:

Place undue pressure on girls. Girls cannot possibly live up to unrealistic images of the perfectly bold and savvy young critic, and they certainly should not be expected to allow adults to relive our own adolescent dreams or regrets vicariously through them.

Overlook the ways girls continue to struggle. If we buy into the notion that girls are somehow able to extract themselves from their circumstances and take charge of their destinies without having the structure and opportunity to think critically about their lives, we may overestimate their resilience and fail to advocate for them adequately.

Neglect to offer girls the information and support they need to succeed. If adults underestimate girls’ need for assistance, we may set them up to fail by encouraging them to assume leadership positions without offering them adequate support. Girls may end up feeling more alienated than when they began if they are placed on executive boards, given funds to manage, or invited to have a voice in policy decisions (all roles we advocate) but are not given an opportunity to learn how to function within and think critically about those roles.

Overprotecting Girls

A second form of projection we experienced sat at the opposite end of the continuum from romanticizing girls. In this case, we observed an impulse on the part of some adults to underestimate, overprotect, or “rescue” girls. As with the tendency to romanticize girls, the impulse to overprotect them could be found across all groups of adults in this study—researchers, agency staff, advisory group members, and advocates we interviewed. Not all of the individuals within each group experienced this impulse, and those who did feel it did not necessarily act on it, but no group of adults was exempt from at least some inclination to step in too early or do too much. While the intention here was no doubt positive, the impact was unfortunate.

The most common expression of underestimating or overprotecting girls involved jumping in to do things girls were perfectly capable of accomplishing themselves. In many cases, this was most likely simply a function of habit. Whether ordering food and supplies, writing the group’s ideas on a chalkboard, or facilitating discussions, responsibilities that girls could certainly have assumed often fell “automatically” to adults. At other times, adults’ tendency to step in too soon resulted from a well-intentioned but misplaced desire to shield girls from their own potential failures. For instance, one of the adult researchers acknowledged feeling this impulse during a case study meeting in which the girls struggled to develop the questions they would be using to guide their girl-to-girl interviews. As an experienced researcher, she knew that certain types of questions were likely to open up discussion, while others were more likely to close it down. As girls suggested potential questions, she found herself wanting to jump in to reframe or reword them in ways that would likely result in a more satisfying interview, rather than allowing the girls to figure out for themselves how best to phrase their own questions. She was able to identify this impulse and use it to remind herself that she had not given the girls enough opportunity to practice interviewing techniques. Once the girls practiced asking and answering the questions they had developed, they could see for themselves the value of open-ended questions, follow-up questions, and so forth. Had the researcher allowed herself to continue rephrasing the girls’ questions for them, they would have missed the opportunity to practice these skills, work together to come up with their own solutions, and experience the satisfaction of knowing that their interview questions were truly their own.

Another form of overprotection occurred when adults tried to shelter girls from potentially harsh judgment by adults and peers. The women in this study know their communities well, and they are painfully aware that community members often hold race, class, gender, age, and cultural stereotypes that set girls up to be overlooked, misunderstood, or blamed for whatever problems

Girl researchers asked adults, “How would you describe your impressions of the girls in this community?” Of those adults surveyed:

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----------|
| 21.9% said Very positive | (n = 105) |
| 50.2% said Good | (n = 241) |
| 17.3% said Just okay | (n = 83) |
| 2.9% said Not very positive | (n = 14) |
| 2.3% said Very negative | (n = 11) |
| 5.4% said No opinion | (n = 26) |
| | (N = 480) |

Girls asked those same adults, “How would you describe your impressions of the boys in this community?” Of those adults surveyed:

| | |
|------------------------------|-----------|
| 9.6% said Very positive | (n = 46) |
| 44.0% said Good | (n = 211) |
| 26.7% said Just okay | (n = 128) |
| 10.2% said Not very positive | (n = 49) |
| 3.5% said Very negative | (n = 17) |
| 6.0% said No opinion | (n = 29) |
| | (N = 480) |

Source: GBF Phase II mapping data. Because the mapping project used a convenience sample, the data presented here describe views of these respondents only. They do not necessarily represent the views of other community members.

they may face. Seeking to help girls avoid such outcomes, some agency staff and community youth advocates we interviewed voiced a belief that concerned adults should do whatever they could to prevent girls from fueling these stereotypes. Unfortunately, in some cases, this well-intended desire to protect girls led adults to substitute one form of stereotyping for another. In order to avoid reinforcing stereotypes of adolescent girls (particularly girls of color and/or girls who are poor) as loud, disrespectful, and out of control, they instead promoted stereotypical feminine behavior such as meekness and acquiescence. In one agency, girls were reminded that community members would be judging them, and they were thus admonished to “act ladylike” every day before they set out for mapping. In another case, when girls mobilized to go to the local library to speak out against the racial discrimination a teammate felt she experienced there, the agency staff vetoed their plans, expressing fear that the girls would be seen as “an angry mob” and thus reflect negatively on the agency and the girls themselves. Although well-meaning, these attempts to protect girls eclipsed opportunities to invite them to critique stereotypes of both unruly girls and traditional femininity, and they did little or nothing to promote girls’ senses of themselves as strong, confident, and capable community members who are entitled to assert themselves and speak their minds.

“It’s not so hard to find services if you’re either in trouble or you’re a superstar. But for girls who don’t fit either one of those, it’s easy to fall through the cracks unless adults are really careful.”

– Advocate interview, Woodstock

In some cases, the impulse to overprotect seems to be fueled by adults’ projections of their own needs or anxieties onto girls. In advocate interviews, some interviewees speculated that adults may be quickest to protect girls from judgment if they see girls’ behavior as a reflection on themselves, or if they are extremely concerned about drawing negative attention to themselves or their agencies. A youth advocate in Uptown/Edgewater explained:

“If you’re under fire, you may feel like everybody is, and so you feel like you need to protect everybody, especially if they’re younger or more vulnerable. It’s easy to forget that you have to let kids work through their own stuff and try out their own ideas, even if you think they could mess up a little or be disappointed. And even if you think it’s going to reflect on you. I think that’s a part of it. If they mess up, you look bad or your group looks bad. And there are people out there wanting you to fail, wanting a reason to pull your funding out from under you. So there’s that part of you that doesn’t want them to look bad.”

This is not to say that adults’ concern for the girls is not genuine; we have no doubt that protective advice is offered with the most compassionate of intentions. Rather, it is to acknowledge that oftentimes agencies or individuals feel under attack themselves and face tremendous pressure to maintain the agency’s reputation for fear of losing funding or community support. If they lose such resources, they cannot continue to advocate for girls. In such cases, the impulse to keep girls from “rocking the boat” serves a dual purpose: it may make girls less likely to be judged, and it keeps agencies from losing their

“I’ve watched girls do some awesome things when they’re encouraged to think outside the box.”

– Advocate interview, Uptown/Edgewater

standing with the community, or individuals from losing their standing with their agency. However, instead of inviting girls to join with women to confront negative stereotypes or constraining community practices, such strategies tend to teach girls to accept and reproduce the status quo.

Adults' projection of their own needs or anxieties onto girls may also stem from more personal concerns. In our interviews, several advocates expressed concern about adults who may be drawn to work with youth in part because of a desire to "rescue" others, to assume a maternal (or paternal) role, or to perceive themselves as indispensable to the population with which they are involved. When adults are influenced by such needs, they may find it very difficult to assume a behind-the-scenes support role while allowing young people to work through their own problems and find their own solutions. Although we do not presume to know whether such unresolved issues were operating among the adult researchers or agency staff with whom we worked, we believe this issue is worth reflecting on for all adults who work with girls.

Involving Girls in Adults' Conflicts

The final manifestation of adult projection occurred when adults used their knowledge or feelings about girls as a form of capital in conflicts or power struggles among themselves. Although this dynamic did not occur often, it could be seen when adults in different roles (e.g., researchers and agency staff) or adults in different positions of power (e.g., staff and administrators within an agency) experienced serious disagreements about how an aspect of the research should be handled. Invoking language reminiscent of a custody battle, adults could be heard using such expressions as, "You obviously don't understand the needs of our girls," or, "I've been working with young people for [number] years—I think I know what I'm doing." References to girls as "my girls" or "our girls" also showed up in advocate interviews, particularly when an interviewee was describing differences in perspective among the staff of her organization, or between the organization and its funders or the surrounding community. Whether or not girls are directly aware of being referenced in this manner, using them, or one's knowledge of them, as capital in adult conflicts is ultimately destructive. By turning to such a strategy, adults close off avenues for learning from others with different perspectives that might enhance their work with girls. They also miss the opportunity to model collaboration and constructive conflict resolution for girls. And if girls do become aware of a "custody battle" among the adults who care about them, they are put in an unfair and difficult position where they may feel forced to choose sides or to defend adults against one another. They may also feel exploited by adults' attempts to use them to vie for power when disagreements arise. In any case, this form of projection does a disservice to the very girls adults are attempting to support.

LESSONS LEARNED

Avoid romanticizing girls. Honor girls' many strengths, give them credit for what they can do themselves, and give them the space and encouragement to go out and do it. However, avoid setting them up by romanticizing them and failing to offer them the information and support they need to succeed.

Transform protective impulses. Instead of focusing on protecting girls, agencies, and the community from one another, spend that energy on protecting girls' rights to a safe space, to respect, and to having a voice in matters that impact them.

Work through unresolved issues. Whether those issues are personal (e.g., one was judged, unprotected, or didn't get what she needed in her own girlhood) or organizational (e.g., one's job or agency feels vulnerable to community pressures, negative publicity, or lack of funding), address those issues directly rather than projecting them onto girls. If outside pressures are operating, invite girls to strategize together about how to address them.

Deal with adult disagreement directly. If adults are struggling with one another over differences in orientation toward their work, be careful not to involve girls in a "custody battle."

Address power issues. Often people who feel disempowered seek other ways to feel needed and valued. Avoid seeking to meet this by assuming a "maternal" or "rescuer" role.

STRIKING A BALANCE BETWEEN STEPPING IN AND LETTING GO

The research initiative was built on Girl's Best Friend Foundation's commitment to fostering girls' experiences as bold, capable, and outspoken critics and social change agents. As such, it might seem obvious that girls should take complete charge of their own work. But as we made our way through the project together, it became evident that this was not always the case. At times it made perfect sense for girls to set the agenda, control the terms of the discussion, and decide on their own how they would like to proceed. At other times, even if the adults wanted girls to take charge, it became clear that they needed some help. A recurring challenge for adults, then, was figuring out when to step in with ideas or assistance, and when to step back and simply let go.

In both the planning and implementation of this project, adults placed great emphasis on listening to girls and inviting them to speak and make decisions for themselves. Indeed, girls were frequently referred to as "experts on their own lives," while adults saw themselves as learning from, collaborating with, and supporting girls. This orientation was critical, not only because it allowed us to gather information from girls themselves, but also because it let girls know that adults valued what they had to say. As participants indicated in Chapter Four, some of the most meaningful aspects of this project involved the ability to make their own decisions and the knowledge that their voices would be heard.

“ My mom helps me out a lot, and my aunt too. Sometimes I feel like they're too protective, but I know they're just keeping me on the right path, because a lot of kids don't have that guidance and they get going in the wrong direction and they don't have that support to get back on track. That's why they need more programs and opportunities for girls, because a lot of them don't get that at home. ”

— Nadia describes herself as White/Bosnian, Muslim, 13 years old, and in 7th grade. She was a focus group participant in Uptown/Edgewater.

While the adults offered the girls a great deal of material, intellectual, and moral support, at times the most important form of support involved simply getting out of the girls' way. Often one or two open-ended questions from an adult were all that were needed to start a provocative discussion, with girls building on one another's ideas, posing their own questions, and bringing the conversation into dimensions that neither the girls nor the adults could have anticipated. Indeed, in both the ongoing case study meetings and the one-time focus groups, girls were so clearly thirsty for meaningful conversation that they easily plunged into deep and intimate discussions at the slightest prompting.

While the importance of stepping back was clear, it also became clear that at times adults did a disservice to girls if they stopped at simply asking them for their views and listening quietly to what they had to say. Girls seldom had difficulty sharing their opinions, observations, and personal experiences, and in this process, they often discovered new things about themselves and one another. But without prompting to think more critically, deeply, and broadly, they sometimes stayed locked within the confines of what they had been taught to think of as inevitable. For instance, recall that when an adult researcher asked girls whether sexual harassment was a problem at their schools, they responded, "No, it's not a problem; it happens all the time" (see Chapter Three). If the researcher had not probed further, the notion that unfair treatment becomes acceptable if it happens frequently would have been left unexamined.

As we noted in our discussion of romanticizing girls, when asked to ponder ways to improve the quality of life for girls in their communities, participants typically imagined asking for more stores and better malls, but not for structural changes, protection of their rights, or a voice in the political process. But when adults prompted them to think beyond the bounds of "what is" and invited them to imagine "what could be," girls' sense of what is possible gradually began to expand. They not only fantasized about what would make their communities more girl-friendly—they determined what skills and information they would need to bring about constructive change, practiced those skills and obtained that knowledge, and then set out to make a difference. An exchange in Southeast Chicago shows how girls' thinking stretched when an adult researcher seized an opportunity to engage girls in critical thinking and encouraged them to strategize to take action in an area of concern to them.¹

Girl researchers asked teen girls and boys what factors are most important in making them feel safe in their communities. This is what respondents considered most important:

| | | |
|-------|---|----------|
| 44.4% | of girls said Friendly adults | (n = 80) |
| 28.3% | of girls said Friendly young people | (n = 51) |
| 16.7% | of girls said Adults who respect young people | (n = 30) |
| 15.6% | of girls said Young people who respect each other | (n = 28) |
| 11.7% | of girls said Police who are available | (n = 21) |

| | | |
|-------------------------------|--|----------|
| 41.7% | of boys said Friendly adults | (n = 50) |
| 20.0% | of boys said Friendly young people | (n = 24) |
| 14.2% | of boys said Adults who respect young people | (n = 17) |
| 14.2% | of boys said I know everyone | (n = 17) |
| 11.7% | of boys said Police who are available | (n = 14) |
| N = 300 (180 girls; 120 boys) | | |

Note: Respondents could select more than one answer. Source: GBF Phase II mapping data. Because the mapping project used a convenience sample, the data presented here describe views of these respondents only. They do not necessarily represent the views of other community members.

¹LaVaughn describes herself as Puerto Rican/Black, 14 years old, in 8th grade, and as having no religion. Sierra describes herself as African American, Christian, 12 years old, and in 7th grade. Carla describes herself as Guatemalan and Puerto Rican, Catholic, 12 years old, and in 7th grade. Miranda describes herself as Mexican, Catholic, 13 years old, and in 7th grade. Marabel describes herself as Mexican, Catholic, 12 years old, and in 6th grade. Gabriella describes herself as Mexican, Catholic, 13 years old, and in 8th grade. Tara describes herself as African American, Baptist, 16 years old, and in 11th grade.

LaVaughn: This guy at [the fast food restaurant], he was just so rude to us. He just said he was too busy and wouldn't even look at our survey. It just made me so mad. They just have their own opinion of youth, and they think we all alike and they don't want to make time for us except to take our money.

Researcher: How did you handle it? What did you guys do?

Sierra: We just said, 'Forget you, I don't have time for you neither,' and walked out.

Researcher: How do you think that worked? What message do you think you got across?

LaVaughn: [Laughing] Probably just that kids are really as rude and obnoxious as he thinks! But he really made me mad!

Researcher: Can you think of anything else you could have done, or anything you'd like to do now? Like, what would you want as a result?

[long pause]

Carla: I wonder if maybe we could go there again, only this time when they're not so busy, because the first time, I think it was during lunch, like at noon, so maybe they really were too busy. And maybe we could tell them we didn't like the way they treated our friend.

Miranda: Maybe we could tell everybody we know not to go there any more, that they're really not nice to young people.

Marabel: What if we do both, like go there and tell them that maybe we didn't come at the best time, but they still didn't have to be so rude, and we're going to tell our friends about....

LaVaughn: Yeah, and like tell our friends to watch out for how they treat girls and if they keep on doing it, then none of us will eat there anymore. And then it's not just us, but it's all our friends who are taking away our business.

Researcher: Who should we talk to at [the restaurant]?

Carla: Maybe it would be better to write them a letter so it's in black and white.

Sierra: And we could all sign it.

Gabriella: And then maybe they'll think we're more serious, too, because we took the time to write a letter. And then they can't blow us off so easily, too, because they can't say we came when they were too busy.

Tara: We better really think through what we want to say and how to make it official-like, because we want to sound responsible, like we're worth listening to. I think if we're going to do it, we need to make a good impression, like, that says, 'don't you think you should have taken us seriously in the first place?'

It would be naïve to expect that girls would automatically think critically about their lives or would spring up to take collective action after years of learning to accept things as they are. But once girls became accustomed to questioning their own assumptions and envisioning themselves as entitled community members who could ask and work for more, their own process took off and they began to think more critically and expansively on their own.

Finding a balance between stepping in and letting go presents an ongoing challenge that weaves through all aspects of girl-centered work. On the one hand, adults need to step back and give girls room to explore their own perspectives and speak for themselves. But as we saw from the early case study meeting discussions, if we were to regard girls' initial articulations as the final truth about their thoughts, needs, and experiences, we would likely get a very narrow sense of what they need to help them thrive. If we based our advocacy efforts on that information alone, we might find ourselves working to get better shopping malls rather than helping girls to press for more girl-friendly services, address age, gender, and race inequities, or gain a voice in community matters. If we push forward with our own agendas, however, we risk closing down opportunities for girls to build on their own insights and forge their own paths. By listening to girls and working closely with them to determine when to step in and when to step back, we can support them and open up new possibilities at the same time.

LESSONS LEARNED

Know when to get out of girls' way. Create safe spaces and step out of the way to allow girls to explore their own feelings, strengths, and viewpoints.

Promote critical thinking. When girls share their thoughts and feelings, respect them for what they are, but also ask questions: Why are things the way they are? Do they necessarily need to be that way? What is the impact on girls'—and others'—lives? Encourage girls to ask themselves and one another these questions so that, eventually, the adult becomes obsolete in that role.

Trust girls to handle conflicts. Help girls create a safe space for working through their conflicts without premature or heavy-handed adult intervention. Encourage girls to set parameters for what is and is not acceptable behavior, and help them to develop a process for dealing with behaviors or dynamics they deem destructive.

Address issues of cultural power and identity. Carve out time and space for explicit and critical discussions of race, culture, social class, gender, language, sexual identity, disability, and age. Ask girls to discuss how power dynamics operate both within and upon their group.

“A lot of the services aren't where the girls who need them most actually live. If they have to get all the way to the other side of town, it's hard to feel connected when you don't have a way to get there.”

— Advocate interview, Rockford

ACKNOWLEDGING WHAT ADULTS ARE—AND ARE NOT— PREPARED TO DO TO SUPPORT GIRLS

The adults in this study worked very consciously to support girls' ideas and initiatives and to show girls through our actions that we honored their wisdom, skill, and commitment. In addition to building caring relationships with the girls, the adults offered as much time and as many material resources as they could. The agencies devoted staff, supplies, space, and other resources to the girls' work; the Foundation gave the agencies stipends to cover costs of meals and materials, coordinated media outreach, and offered administrative support; and the researchers offered training and coordination and worked both one-on-one and with the groups to put the girls at the center of this project. Differences in organizational structure, size, budget, and scope and urgency of other projects understandably allowed some agencies to more easily devote energy and resources to the girls' work than others. And changes in the structure of the project allowed researchers in Phase II to have closer and more sustained contact with the girls than researchers in Phase I.¹ But in all cases, adults offered as much as they could and tried to be clear with girls about the extent of their abilities to support their endeavors. In general, the participants were quite gracious—as long as they knew what to expect, they clearly appreciated what they were offered and seldom complained about what they were unable to receive. But as we learned, in cases where adults were less than clear about their capacity to help girls or were unable to offer as much as girls had come to expect, girls quickly became disheartened.

Overall, the adults in this project went out of their way to offer girls far more of themselves than girls ever expected. Indeed, most agency staff and researchers spent a great deal of time outside their “official” duties to meet with the girls, offer them individualized and group support, and involve them in activities in the wider community. For instance, in weeks when the girls did not have case study meetings, the staff members at the McHenry County Youth Services Bureau, in Woodstock, set up forums for discussion and learning based on interests the girls had expressed. They brought in speakers on topics ranging from drunk driving to race relations in the community. The adult researcher who worked with the girls in Woodstock and Rockford took participants to her university and arranged a campus tour, a roundtable with students and faculty to discuss the girls' research, and a meeting with students and staff at the Center for Latin American Studies. She also accompanied girls to the ballet in Chicago, invited them to a celebratory dinner at her home, and helped them prepare for their presentation at a women's studies conference at Northern Illinois University. A staff member at the YWCA of Rockford worked with girls to create a mural in the childcare center. Staff at Girl World, in Uptown/Edgewater, provided transportation to and from each case study meeting and event so that girls never had to be excluded for lack of a ride. They also provided full dinners for each meeting, played games each morning before mapping, and encouraged girls' involvement in activities at the agency and in the community. Staff at the Green Meadows Girl Scout Council, in Champaign-Urbana, arranged for the girls to take part in a ropes course in order to help build their team identity at the beginning of the project, and the adult

“ I think they need someone to go to school to teach these girls. These people come in from outside, talk and talk [about sex education] and leave. Ok, it's a 45 minutes class—you never think what did these girls learn and what are they thinking? ”

— Advocate interview, North
Lawndale

researcher there brought in local advocates to help girls practice interview skills, assisted them in connecting with community resources, and helped them prepare to speak about their work on a local radio show and a youth conference panel. When additional participants were needed for the team in North Lawndale, a staff member at the Carole Robertson Center for Learning literally took to the streets, going up to girls in the community and describing the project in an effort to involve more girls. And in addition to offering girls meals, assistance with literacy skills, and the most comfortable space in the agency, staff at Centro Comunitario Juan Diego, in Southeast Chicago, invited girls to hang out in the office and found tasks for them to work on when they complained of boredom and wanting something meaningful to do. Although at times it might have been more efficient to reclaim their space and perform these tasks themselves, the adults graciously included the girls and shared their days with them.

Through such gestures, adults let girls know that they were important, that their presence was valued, and that adults were committed to their relationships with them. For all of the energy adults devoted to showing girls that they were respected and cared for, however, at times this message was not communicated as well as we intended. Some of the most disappointing moments for girls arose from a lack of clarity about what adults were and were not able to do to support them. The adult researchers and agency staff were very careful, in general, to make explicit any limits on what they could do for girls or what they could encourage girls to do for themselves. However, on rare occasions, communication broke down, assumptions were made, or issues arose that kept adults from supporting girls in the ways they expected. Although the larger context of respect and good faith kept those moments from eroding the trust we had built together, the sting of disappointment was nonetheless painful for girls to feel and adults to observe.

An example of the unfortunate consequences of differing expectations occurred at the end of Phase I, as adult researchers solicited participants' ideas for a final event to celebrate their completion of the project. In the adults' minds, girls were being asked to suggest a number of possibilities that we would all review together for their feasibility and appeal to other teams taking part in the study. In the girls' minds, however, they were being told that they could do anything they wanted, and the decision was theirs to make. The girls decided they would have a party at a beach or a water park. When the adults investigated and found that safety and logistical constraints made such a celebration impossible, we informed the girls that, regrettably, we could not pursue this option. The girls felt angry and extremely disappointed, both because they could not have the type of

“Seven years ago, someone wanted to open a daycare, and finally they opened a daycare for the students. The reason we have this daycare is because a lot of girls [in this community] keep their babies and they leave school. And finally this year we opened the daycare at the high school, and we have 22 students with kids in the daycare.”

— Advocate interview, Southeast Chicago

“Around here, we have nothing for the youth. We have sports in the parks, but nothing else. In Mexican families, it's tradition that the girls stay home and the boys go out, but boys and girls have the same rights and the same needs.”

— Advocate interview, Southeast Chicago

celebration they wanted and because they felt empowered to make a decision and then felt suddenly stripped of that power. In the end, we had a fun and meaningful celebration in another venue. But had we been clearer in the beginning that the girls could not make this decision unilaterally, and had we acknowledged up front that certain types of celebrations might not be feasible, the process would no doubt have been much more fulfilling for everyone involved.

The girls were generally very savvy in sensing when they were valued as full partners in a collaborative project and when their contributions were undervalued or unacknowledged. Often, seemingly small things came to symbolize much more. For instance, having been told they were researchers, experts, and partners in this project, girls at one agency assumed they would be able to use the staff bathroom. When a staff member (who was not involved with this project) told them that this bathroom was reserved for adults and therefore off limits to them, they felt disillusioned and disrespected. When girls at another agency were told at the beginning of the study that they would have dinner during their meetings but then frequently were given ice pops or a box of cookies and some juice to share, they felt disappointed and treated like an afterthought. And when girls were promised a private space of their own and then assigned to a lounge with no doors and too few chairs, they wondered how much the agency valued their work. In talking with the girls, it became clear that the bathroom, snacks, and room setup were not the real issues—girls stated that they would have been grateful for whatever the agency had to offer. Their real concern was that they had been led to expect that they would be treated as colleagues and provided with certain things, only to have adults apparently disregard these promises.

It is important to stress that all of the adults in these cases demonstrated respect for the girls in many other ways. It is equally important to understand that they were constrained by larger organizational factors—from tight budgets to understaffing to workspace politics—that kept them from offering all that they might have liked to the girls. The lesson we draw from these examples is that adults need to be particularly careful to state explicitly from the beginning what we can and cannot offer. We need to double-check with our colleagues to be sure that we are not promising something our organizations cannot allow us to deliver. We need to be clear about when decisions can be made by girls alone, when they can be made collaboratively, and when they must be approved by adults. And when, on rare occasions, plans must be revised or promises must be broken, we must take responsibility for explaining what went wrong, help girls explore options for how to proceed, allow them space to vent any anger or disappointment, and make clear through our words and actions that the misunderstanding or disappointment does not reflect adults' lack of respect for them or their work.

LESSONS LEARNED

Clarify decision-making processes. When designing projects, think ahead about which types of decisions can be made by girls only, which can be made by adults and girls together, and which must be made or approved by adults. Communicate these distinctions clearly to girls and explain the reasons for them.

Engage in explicit discussions about resources. Clarify with colleagues the extent and types of resources that can be devoted to girls' projects. Advocate for as much support as possible for girls' leadership opportunities, educational and

recreational activities, and latitude in decision-making. Explain to girls what resources can and cannot be devoted to their project, and help them to find other avenues for getting those resources as necessary.

Allocate resources in ways that demonstrate a commitment to access for all girls.

Funds and/or staff should be available for transportation, disability access, bilingual materials, quality refreshments, and childcare.

Clarify roles and responsibilities. Work together with girls to define roles and responsibilities before the project begins, and schedule time throughout the project to reevaluate.

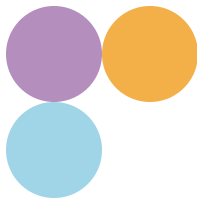
Share tasks as true partners. Be sure everyone shares some responsibility for the “maintenance tasks” (e.g., cleaning up, photocopying, making phone calls, etc.). These responsibilities do not necessarily need to be shared evenly. However, if adults and girls are calling themselves partners, they must be careful not to assign all the “maintenance tasks” to one constituent and all the “meaningful tasks” to another.

CONCLUSION

While the challenges we identified in this chapter arose in the context of a collaborative effort among girls, researchers, and agencies, they might as easily emerge in any setting in which adults are genuinely committed to engaging in a process that promotes girls’ empowerment. It is our hope that the lessons we learned from our own struggles will provide food for thought to others wishing to advocate with and for girls.

END NOTES

¹These included holding case study meetings biweekly instead of monthly, extending the length of the project, and working with researchers who lived in or near participants’ communities.



CONCLUSION: WORKING TOWARD MORE GIRL-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES— WHAT ADULTS NEED TO KNOW

During their summer mapping project, the participants wore matching purple T-shirts with white letters identifying them as Girl Mappers. The back of the T-shirts read:

Girls growing with strength and resilience in an equitable world.

It is our hope that the participants and their peers will find, and help create, a more equitable world in which communities promote girls' healthy development and embrace the valuable contributions they are eager to make. This will require the conscious effort of adults to take girls seriously and let them know they matter—by helping them create safe spaces to explore their needs and experiences, by listening respectfully and learning from what they have to say, and by inviting girls to assume leadership positions and giving them the support they need to thrive there.

Throughout this report, we have listened as girls identified their strengths and struggles, and we have pondered the challenges and possibilities of collaborating across generations on a project intended to support girls' empowerment through both its process and its findings. Drawing on the lessons learned from our own work with girls, as well as on girls' expressions of their personal hopes and challenges, we turn, in this final chapter, to a consideration of what a girl-friendly community would look like. Based on the insights girls have shared in the preceding chapters, we offer various ways that communities can support girls' healthy development. We conclude with some thoughts on how programs, foundations, and concerned individuals might strategize together to better advocate with and for adolescent girls.

WHAT DO GIRLS WANT?

In some sense, girls' needs vary as much as their circumstances. Their personal histories are unique and their hopes and dreams are theirs alone. Yet as girls shared their stories with one another, they found that even their most deeply personal experiences often resonated with others—even those with whom they thought they had little in common. From girls' diverse perspectives and aspirations, the following themes emerged as girls reflected on what they want and need most from the adults in their communities:

Girls want a safe space to go and tell the truth about their lives.

Girls crave an opportunity to explore their strengths and struggles and share them with people who care. Unfortunately, girls in each community frequently noted that the case study meetings and focus groups represented the first invitation they had really had to openly express their

frustrations as well as their triumphs, and to gain support from other girls and concerned adults. In some cases, girls indicated that no adult had ever actually asked them about their own needs and concerns. In other cases, girls noted that while adults had asked, they had not created an environment where girls could feel safe to speak freely without fear of reprisals. Some girls reported connections with caring caseworkers, counselors, or other advocates, but they still often felt that they were viewed as somehow damaged or as problems that needed to be fixed. Most girls could name programs in their schools and communities, and some had participated in them and found them enjoyable, yet they seldom experienced these programs as opportunities to forge the deeper connections they were seeking. Those girls who had found safe spaces for open and respectful dialogue with peers and adults considered them a lifeline in a sometimes stressful and alienating world.

“ I’m pretty involved in things like band and my youth group at church, and I work hard at my schoolwork. I don’t feel tempted to get involved in drugs or drinking or anything, and I’m not interested in having a relationship yet... definitely not sex for a long time, because I have other things that are important to me, and I wouldn’t want to mess that up. I feel strong because I have a lot of good things going on and I always like to have a goal.”

— Lori describes herself as African American, Baptist, 13 years old, and in 8th grade. She was a focus group participant in Southeast Chicago.

- Girls want fewer programs with scripted activities, and more opportunities to come together and discuss the issues that concern them.
- Girls need to know that others will treat their hopes, worries, secrets, and ideas with respect, confidentiality, and care.
- Girls need a supportive space to explore their frustrations without premature intervention from adults trying to “fix” them.
- Girls are often stressed from carrying the weight of family responsibilities and family secrets. They want to build trusting relationships where they can let down their guard, tell their truths, and feel renewed.

Girls want fun and interesting things to do.

As we noted in Chapter Three, girls in each of the six communities felt quite certain that theirs was the most boring community on the planet. Girls expressed frustration with their communities for not meeting girls’ needs for recreation and personal enrichment. They also sometimes interpreted the lack of interesting activities as an indication of their own lack of worth in the community. Girls in Chicago and Champaign-Urbana pointed to a lack of meaningful outlets as a major reason for girls’ attraction to gangs and their temptation to do things that were dangerous or unhealthy for them. The girls in this study were looking for opportunities to do more in their spare time—to play, relieve stress, exercise, learn, make a difference in their communities, and socialize with peers.

- Girls want to be involved in activities that stimulate their thinking, activate their creativity, and encourage them to explore their talents.
- Girls want safe places to relax, meet new people, and socialize with friends.
- Girls want opportunities for physical activity without having to compete or demonstrate already-developed athletic skills.
- Girls believe that having more to do will help keep them out of trouble.

Girls want a girl-friendly place to belong.

Beyond having things to do, girls expressed a desire for a welcoming place where they could feel that they belong. As we saw in previous chapters, whether they lived in urban, suburban, or rural areas, and regardless of age, race, culture, or social class, girls voiced a profound sense of loneliness that left them feeling misunderstood, unheard, and unknown. Amidst all of their other frustrations, perhaps the most recurrent theme that emerged across communities was girls' longing simply to feel that they mattered. Girls wanted to find acceptance for who they were and encouragement for who they wanted to become. They sought not just a place to go for a couple of hours a week to attend a formal program, but a place where peers and adults projected a sense of warmth and invitation when girls walked in the door. For those girls who did find such a place, the experience was deeply affirming. Girls seemed to care very little about the specifics of the space—it could be in a community center, a youth program, a social service agency, or an informal group—and they were not particularly concerned about how much the place had to offer in terms of material resources. Rather, they were looking for adults who offered them their time, company, and positive regard. They were looking for adults who allowed them to hang out and help out. They were looking for adults who made the effort to know them well and who, no matter how busy, seemed genuinely happy to see them. In addition to wanting formal programs, girls want an informal place where they feel welcomed and known.

- Girls want to create deep and lasting relationships with caring peers and adults, not just short-term acquaintances that last only the duration of a program session.
- Participants indicate that the most valuable contributions adults can make to girls are their warmth, genuine interest, faith in young people, and time.
- Girls who anticipate harsh judgment due to race/ethnic or class stereotypes feel especially disconnected from both adults and peers.
- Participants cite the desire for a sense of belonging as one of the most common reasons that girls join gangs.

Girls want to work with adults who support girls' efforts rather than direct them.

In the course of this project, we conducted interviews with 30 community advocates and worked closely with staff from our partner agencies. In each of these contexts, we met only dedicated and caring individuals who wanted to do their best for girls. Their approaches to their work varied widely, however. Some encouraged girls to assume leadership positions, speak for themselves, and make decisions on their own or collaboratively with staff. But many seemed to work, perhaps unconsciously, from a deficit- rather than an asset-based model and found it difficult to imagine trusting girls to assume positions of authentic leadership without adult direction. Interviews and focus groups with girls indicate that girls feel most empowered when working with adults who encourage them to tap into their own ideas and talents, find their own solutions, and decide for themselves how best to proceed. Although they appreciate adult support, they want opportunities to strategize together without adult intervention.

- Girls want programs that are based on a belief that girls are entitled to take charge of their lives and their communities—not based on an attempt at crisis prevention or intervention.
- Girls need to spend time with adult women who can learn from girls and put girls' ideas first, rather than those who feel a need, however well-meaning, to “save” girls.
- Girls need resources and information to support their pursuits, but they should be allowed to decide the nature of those pursuits and what kinds of help they need.

Girls want practical support to help them access programs and activities.

Many girls are interested in becoming involved in school- and community-based activities and programs, but some are unable to take part due to financial, safety, or logistical constraints. In group and individual interviews, girls and advocates in urban, suburban, and rural communities pointed to a lack of transportation as a major obstacle to girls' participation. They also noted that unless extra funding is available, girls with limited means cannot take part in programs that require them to pay dues or membership fees, buy uniforms or supplies, or pay for extra activities, food, or field trips. Girls who had recently immigrated from Mexico, Central America, and Bosnia found that a lack of bilingual materials made it difficult for girls with limited proficiency in English to participate in many types of activities. Core participants who had to take care of younger siblings or cousins, as well as girls in the focus groups who were parents, indicated that difficulty finding childcare kept them from participating in programs of interest to them. Although none of the girls in this study had a physical disability, advocates noted that too few agencies had ramps, wheelchair-accessible doors and bathrooms, access to a signer, or materials in Braille that would allow girls with disabilities to participate. Finally, both advocates and girls of all ages, races, cultures, and income levels noted the need for better outreach and advertisement so girls will know what programs and activities are available to them.

- Even when programs and activities exist for girls, a lack of resources sometimes keeps them from participating.
- Program planners must try to provide bilingual materials, disability access, childcare, transportation, and meals so that all girls can attend.
- Those who fund programs need to include money for these forms of support.
- A disturbing number of girls are unaware of those programs and activities that do exist in their communities. Agencies need to think creatively about how to ensure that information about their offerings reaches the girls they are trying to attract.

Girls want opportunities to explore their possibilities.

Some of the girls we worked with and interviewed envisioned their futures as bright, productive, and teeming with possibilities. Others found the future rather daunting, and struggled even to begin to imagine what life would be like when they reached adulthood. Whereas some girls assumed they would actively create a future of their own choosing, others spoke of the future as something that would happen to them—something over which they would have little or no control. Girls' confidence and ability to envision a fulfilling adulthood was related, in part, to the opportunities they had to explore various talents and curiosities and to witness adult women in meaningful roles. Most girls felt a need for much more exposure to a range of avenues for developing and expressing their values, skills, and interests. Some spoke of learning about an interesting profession or avocation—often on television, in a movie or book, or through a teacher, mentor, counselor, or family member—and sensing that was who they wanted to be or what they wanted to do. But they typically felt a huge gap between discovering a field of interest and being able to visualize what it would be like to work in that field, or what skills, knowledge, and experience they would need to actually do it.

“ I like getting the [work] experience now so I know I can get a bigger job somewhere down the road, when I’m finished with school. ”

—Lillian describes herself as African American, Christian, 16 years old, and in 10th grade. She was a girl-to-girl interviewee in Southeast Chicago.

- Girls need programs that stimulate their imaginations and introduce them to a variety of potential areas of interest.
- Girls need volunteer, educational, and career awareness programs that give them a chance to try out new skills and experience themselves in a range of meaningful roles.
- Girls sometimes worry that programs in certain fields (especially math, science, technology, and the arts) require an advanced skill level in order to participate. They want introductory programs for teens that allow them to explore new areas without fear of embarrassment.

Girls need opportunities to explore relationships across perceived differences.

Once they developed safe and respectful relationships with their teams, many girls began to acknowledge that they held negative stereotypes based on race, culture, age, or social class—stereotypes that affected their ability to feel comfortable or view their teammates clearly at the beginning of the study. Over time, girls noted, they began to see that they held much in common with girls they perceived as different, and that the differences that did exist were neither cause for envy nor for scorn, but rather worth understanding and embracing. Participants were clear that these new understandings would not have emerged without the opportunity to work closely with a diverse group of girls on a project in which they were all invested and in which they all had an equal voice. Most important, they said, was the chance to share their experiences and hear one another's stories in an environment that was safe, open, and nurturing. And it was girls' ability to determine their own group expectations and work through their own conflicts and misunderstandings that allowed them to create that environment. Had adults tried to set the pace, protect girls from conflict, or forbid them from voicing questions that might make the group uncomfortable, girls would not have had the chance to move toward each other authentically, on their own.

It is important to note that while girls came to see a need to deepen understandings across race, cultural, age, and class differences, in most cases they expressed no need to expand awareness or develop relationships across differences in sexualities or disabilities. Despite adult researchers' attempts to introduce these topics into discussion, participants largely ignored issues of disability, and most groups refused to address issues of sexual orientation. Both their apparent apathy toward disability issues and their homophobia point strongly to the need for better opportunities for girls to challenge stereotypes and forge connections with one another across a range of sexualities and abilities.

- Girls need opportunities to work closely with and exchange views with girls they perceive as different from themselves.
- Many girls acknowledge that they would not seek out such connections on their own; they need a safe and supportive context in which to deepen their understandings and find common ground.
- Girls may be particularly resistant to challenging their own and others' homophobia. This points to a particularly strong need for safe contexts in which girls can discuss sexual differences and reach new understandings.
- Many girls are unaware of disability issues, and girls with disabilities often lack access to programs and activities. If no one in their group appears to have a disability, girls without disabilities may not see the value in discussing these issues or advocating for better access. Adults must work doubly hard both to recruit and provide access for girls with disabilities and to raise awareness of disability rights whether or not such girls are present.

Girls want a real voice in matters that concern them.

At the beginning of this study, girls voiced complaints about the lack of girl-friendly resources in their communities. When asked if they had ever tried to do anything to remedy the situation, girls often lamented, “Nobody ever asks us.” Girls were painfully aware that they did not have much of a voice in community decision-making, but it seldom occurred to them that they could take an active role in changing things. But over time, as they pondered both the state of their communities and the nature of social change processes, they began to imagine themselves as entitled to assert their opinions and affect change, rather than waiting, passively and half-heartedly, to be asked. Unfortunately, they typically found that neither their communities nor the programs or agencies with which they were involved offered many meaningful opportunities for young people to take an active part in important decision-making. Girls came to realize (and they certainly demonstrated in this project) that they have leadership, creative problem-solving, and critical thinking skills just waiting to be honed, and they wanted a chance to lend those skills to their wider communities and the organizations within them. Girls noted at least three benefits from their increased participation and leadership in their communities. First, they would feel more investment in programs and activities where they had an active role in decision-making. Second, they need and deserve opportunities to learn more and develop their skills. Finally, they have a great deal to offer and they welcome the chance to make a difference—to enhance their communities both for themselves and for future generations of girls.

- Girls want opportunities to make a difference in their communities.
- Girls want encouragement and practical support to assume leadership positions.
- Girls want to share decision-making with adults and to make their own decisions when appropriate.

Girls want meaningful opportunities to develop skills that will help them articulate and act upon their own desires and visions.

As girls thought about the changes they would like to make in their communities and the options they would like to pursue in their lives, they became aware of the need to acquire certain types of knowledge and develop new skills. But while they were interested in expanding their skills and knowledge base, they were often hesitant to take steps to do so. For instance, although an ability to read and write in English was one of the prerequisites for participating in the research initiative (in order to administer the mapping surveys), and although the project encouraged social action, it became apparent over time that several of the girls in the study lacked basic literacy skills and that almost all lacked knowledge of social and political change processes in their communities. Girls indicated that although they wished to develop competence in these areas, they would not be interested in a literacy or civics program, or would be too embarrassed to participate. However, they were quite eager to develop these skills in the context of ongoing discussions about their own needs and desires. When attention to literacy skills, geography, and social change strategies was woven into work girls found engaging, they had a clear incentive to learn

more, and a meaningful context in which to pursue knowledge and practice skills that they might otherwise have found irrelevant or boring. Of course, the more girls have a chance to develop important skills, the better able they will be to pursue interesting work and advocate for themselves and their communities.

- “Skills-training” needs to derive from, not precede, girls’ desires to make change in their own personal lives and communities.
- Girls need adults who remind them that a lack of skills or information is temporary and can be remedied with effort.
- Girls want to work with adults who help them develop fun and interesting strategies for learning what they want and need to know.

Girls want both girls-only activities and mixed-sex activities, but they need to know that in mixed-sex settings their voices will be heard.

As we noted in Chapter Three, some girls say they prefer girls-only activities, some are drawn to mixed-sex activities, and others prefer all-girl settings for some activities and mixed-sex settings for others. But regardless of their preferences, participants expressed frustration that in mixed-sex spaces they sometimes felt shut out, underserved, or overlooked. In community settings such as parks and athletic courts, which are technically open to all, even otherwise assertive girls often felt too intimidated to press for equal access and playing time, and they often stayed away altogether to avoid harassment from boys or men. In some schools and programs, advocates say that although they would like to balance their time more equitably, they feel compelled to spend more time dealing with boys because the manifestations of their problems are more overt or seem more urgent. Girls have compelling reasons for wanting to take part in mixed-sex as well as girls-only activities, and since most settings already include both boys and girls, it is important for adults to ensure that in such settings resources are allocated fairly, no group is too intimidated to participate, and girls’ as well as boys’ needs and voices are heard.

- Girls need adults to help them advocate for equal time and attention in mixed-sex settings.
- Girls need help to think critically about the current gendered (as well as “raced” and “classed”) distribution of resources in their schools and communities and to work toward greater equity.
- All community members need to work together to ensure that public spaces are free of harassment and violence toward girls and women.

CONCLUSION

It has been our privilege to partner with and learn from the girls in this study. The participants graciously opened up their lives and offered their stories in hopes of making a difference for other girls in their communities and beyond. If we are to help them make that difference, we—program staff, funders, educators, social service workers, researchers, counselors, youth advocates, and other concerned family and community members—must all work together to adopt a girl-centered, asset-based, youth development approach in our work with girls.

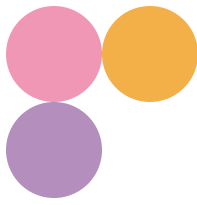
Those involved with program design and implementation can support girls by involving them in meaningful ways in positions of leadership—both within programs and agencies and within the wider community. They can support girls by working actively to resist adult-centered assumptions and instead allowing girls to speak for and about themselves. They can help girls to think critically about their lives and support them in making constructive changes in their worlds. They can take responsibility for working through their own adult stresses, conflicts, and organizational issues so that these are not projected onto girls. They can press their agencies to devote ample resources to girls' programs and let them know that it is not sufficient to view work with youth as an afterthought in social services, or to view work with girls as an afterthought in work with youth. And they can take the suggestions girls have made throughout this report, discuss them with colleagues and girls in their own organizations, and incorporate them into their efforts on behalf of girls.

Foundations can, and must, play a complementary role. They can help by directing funds to programs that support girls' healthy development. In addition to providing start-up grants, they can help by providing multi-year grants, which are fundamental to developing and sustaining girls' programs. They can help by redesigning application procedures and evaluation criteria to hold programs accountable for following an asset-based approach, and for involving girls in leadership positions at all levels—from program design to budget management to evaluation. They can help by advancing a girl-friendly funding agenda within the philanthropic community. And they can help by promoting partnerships among agency staff, other funders, researchers, educators, counselors, family members, and girls themselves to share knowledge and resources as they work toward a more girl-friendly world.

We began this study with a desire to listen to girls. Two years, 221 interviews,ⁱ and 1,814 surveys later, we have learned a great deal from girls' expertise about their own lives. They need all of us, in partnership with girls, to put that knowledge into action.

END NOTES

ⁱThis includes 65 individual interviews, 120 girl-to-girl interviews, 30 advocate interviews, and 6 focus groups.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Speak for Yourself represents the hard work and wisdom of many people and organizations. Over the last three years, they came together to help us learn more about girls and to help girls learn more about themselves. Although the individuals acknowledged here offered a wide range of talents and contributions, they were united in their commitment to enhance the lives of adolescent girls.

Above all, thanks and congratulations are due to the 65 core participants for their valuable insights and for a job well done. This diverse and dedicated group of girls worked through difficult issues, opened their hearts and minds, and shared their stories in order to enlighten others about the needs and realities of adolescent girls. Working with them was a pleasure and a continual learning experience for everyone involved. Profound thanks, as well, to the 120 girl-to-girl interviewees and 48 focus group participants who offered their perspectives and enriched our understanding of Illinois girls. Thank you to all of the girls' families for encouraging their participation.

I also wish to thank the 30 advocates in Chicago, Champaign-Urbana, Rockford, and Woodstock, Illinois, who agreed to be interviewed for this study. Although their names are omitted in this report to ensure their privacy, their contributions—both to this project and to the young people in their communities—are deep and lasting. Thanks as well to the more than 1,800 community members who took the time to stop and fill out the girls' surveys. Their willingness to participate boosted the girls' morale on hot summer days and helped them to learn more about their neighborhoods.

The research initiative would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of our agency partners. They recruited the participants, worked closely with the girls and the adult researchers throughout the project, tended to many of the administrative and logistical details, and devoted agency resources that enabled the girls' work to flow smoothly and helped them feel honored for their hard work and accomplishments. In particular, I wish to thank: Debra Birch, Jill Bradley, Gail Nelson, and Tracey Young of the Carole Robertson Center for Learning in Chicago; Enid Bos, Tiffany Chiang, and Roxanne Peyton of the Girl World program at Alternatives, Inc., in Chicago; Olivia Hernandez, Rosio Nazimek, Rosa Perea, and Sister Connie Fitzgerald of Centro Comunitario Juan Diego in Chicago; Ellen Greaves and Ani Yazedjian of the Green Meadows Girl Scout Council in Champaign, IL; Sue Krause, Sandy Palmer, and Candy Spasojevich of the McHenry County Youth Services Bureau in Woodstock, IL; and Barbara Boyd-Lewis and Pam Clark-Reidenbach of the YWCA of Rockford.

Police officers in Chicago and in Champaign-Urbana, Rockford, and Woodstock, Illinois, worked closely with the agency partners and participants to provide safety tips and create a visible police presence in the areas where girls mapped each day. Their respectful treatment of the girls (including their willingness to be surveyed) is greatly appreciated. Thank you, as well, to the many local business owners and workers who provided meals, snacks, and supplies to mapping teams. Their kind support showed the girls that they were valued members of their communities.

I was impressed with Girl's Best Friend Foundation before I ever became involved with this project, and my work with them over the last three years has only fueled my admiration, both for

their mission and for how they carry it out. The Girl's Best Friend Foundation Board of Directors not only supported the development and implementation of the research initiative but also posed helpful questions and offered critical suggestions throughout the project. Research committee members Mary Scott Boria, Cyndie McLachlan, Nancy Tartt, and Plashan Waits-McCune, along with Marcia Festen, offered vital feedback at various stages of the research process and helped think through challenging administrative and conceptual questions. Special thanks to Cyndie McLachlan for her unwavering support and for sharing her insights about funding, social change, and adolescent girls. She is a wise and generous soul.

I was fortunate to work with three executive directors, each of whom lent her own unique talents and insights to the project. Betsy Brill, Executive Director of Girl's Best Friend Foundation from 1996 through 1999, first conceived of this project and saw it through Phase I. Without Betsy's creative vision, wide-ranging skills, and commitment to nurturing partnerships among researchers, advocates, and funders, this work would not have gotten off the ground. Karen Zeitlin, Executive Director from 2000 through 2002, stepped into the project midway and offered valuable support and guidance. Alice Cottingham became GBF's Executive Director as the project was drawing to a close, but her insights are very much a part of this report. Alice immediately familiarized herself with the history, goals, and findings of the research initiative and worked closely with me to enhance the report. Her encouragement and input were pivotal in seeing the project to completion.

Working with the staff at the Girl's Best Friend Foundation office was a true pleasure. Robin Dixon made a complicated project run smoothly and efficiently, and her grace and good humor always helped to keep things in perspective. Thanks also to Moréniké Cheatom Basurto, Josephina Herrera, Megan Macaraeg, Scott Sacco, Abbe Shapiro, and Maureen Wissman, both for their practical assistance and for creating such a welcoming and stimulating environment in which to work.

I am deeply indebted to three talented and dedicated research associates who collected qualitative data and worked closely with the agency partners on the mapping project. Lisa Marie Pickens worked with the girls in North Lawndale in Phase I and provided invaluable feedback on the pilot study. Her insights were critical in improving the design and administrative procedures for Phase II. I thank her for her patience and sharp mind as we worked through it all. Aimee Rickman worked with the girls in Champaign-Urbana and bravely took on the task of transcribing many of the interviews and case study meetings. Aimee's ability to challenge and motivate the girls was truly an inspiration, both to them and to me. She is an excellent model of an adult who honors girls' strengths. Kay Harned worked with the girls at the Rockford and Woodstock sites. She went above and beyond to help the girls create a safe and challenging space to explore both their pains and their triumphs. Their deep affection and lasting connections with her speak volumes about the spirit she brought to this work. Kay also worked closely with me through the data analysis and writing of this report. There are not enough thank yous in the world to express my appreciation for her generosity and intellectual companionship throughout this process.

Several people helped to design and implement the mapping portion of this study. Renae Ogletree was the mapping director of Phase I; she also co-directed the pilot study and participated in site selection for Phase II. Esther Shelton-Smith provided invaluable administrative support and graciously tended to the countless details involved in carrying out the pilot study. Rosalind Sanders served as mapping coordinator for Phase I. Ayani Good conducted mapping training in

Phase I and was the mapping coordinator for Phase II; she also helped to create the survey instruments for Phase II. Rosalind and Ayani's fine skills and commitment to youth development enhanced the agencies', the researchers', and, most importantly, the girls' experiences of this project. The data from the girl mapping project were analyzed by Cynthia Nelson and her staff at the Center for Governmental Studies at Northern Illinois University. Cynthia brought not only her statistical expertise but also her warmth and patience to a complicated project. Her respect for the girls' work is deeply appreciated. Thank you to Pete Trott, director of the Center for Governmental Studies, for donating funds to supplement the girls' stipends.

The initial research design grew from a set of provocative conversations among a talented and diverse group of women who formed a research advisory group for this project. The group met three times before the study began and once between Phase I and Phase II. My fellow research advisory group members included Judith Musick (chair), Betsy Brill, Lora Branch, Tiffany Chiang, Alice Dan, Kim DeLong, Kate McLachlan, Heather Johnston Nicholson, Jenny Knauss, Esther Nieves, Michelle Oberman, Camille Odeh, Renae Ogletree, Sylvia Puente, Deborah Puntenney, Ross Sanders, Walidah Sherman, Stacy Wenzel, and Judith Witttner. These individuals gave generously of their time and expertise, and their diverse and critical perspectives enhanced the research immeasurably.

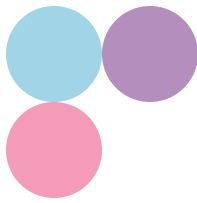
I wish to thank several readers who gave wise and thoughtful feedback on an earlier draft of this report. Their ideas and encouragement strengthened the report and lifted my spirits at a critical point in the writing process. Thank you to Moréniké Cheatom Basurto, Alice Cottingham, Dana Davis, Marcia Festen, Jeanette McCulloch, Cyndie McLachlan, Erica Ringewald, and Pamela Stevens.

Thank you to the staff at Valerie Denney Communications for their collaboration on this project over the last three years. Jeannette McCulloch and Erica Ringewald worked closely with the research team, the agency partners, and the core participants to publicize the girls' work and prepare us to work with the press. They conducted a thought-provoking and thoroughly girl-friendly media training that became one of the high points of the participants' work. The media attention they brought to the mapping project gave girls an opportunity to view themselves as experts in their communities and to see their work as newsworthy. I thank them for giving the girls an experience they will no doubt remember for a lifetime. I also thank Erica Ringewald for her partnership through the final stages of this process. In addition to collaborating on the executive summary and writing the tip sheets, she offered key suggestions on the text and an always-encouraging voice on the other end of the phone.

Thanks also to our copy editor Catherine Clark, and to our graphic designer Sandra Vogt.

I would also like to thank Jackie Cunliffe, Leigh Phillips, Marlene West, and Nancie Zane for their support and ongoing conversations about girls in general and this project in particular. Mirna Castro, Anne-Marie Edwards, Monica McGoldrick, and Linda Anderson offered moral support and practical assistance that gave me the time and energy to work. Mark Jackson went above and beyond, expressing his confidence in my work, freeing me up to collect data and write, and making sure I had plenty of snacks to complete the task. Finally, special thanks to Lauren Phillips-Jackson for keeping me balanced and for being such an inspiring role model of a happy and healthy girl.

Lynn Phillips
December 2002



DEMOGRAPHICS

Core Participants (by site)

Demographics for core participants (aggregate), focus group participants, and girl-to-girl interviews are listed in Chapter Two, pages 17, 19 & 20. Descriptions of “race” and “religion” reflect girls’ self-descriptions.

Uptown/Edgewater N = 11

| AGE | RACE | RELIGION | LANGUAGE SPOKEN WITH FAMILY/FRIENDS |
|-------------------|---------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------------|
| Range = 12-16 | Black/African American: 3 | Baptist: 1 | English Only 6 |
| Mean age = 13.5 | White/Caucasian: 0 | Christian: 3 | Spanish or Sp./Eng. 3 |
| Age Distribution: | Bosnian/White 1 | Catholic: 3 | Vietnamese 1 |
| 12 = 1 | Latina/Hispanic: | Jewish: 1 | Bosnian 1 |
| 13 = 6 | Mexican/Hisp. 1 | Muslim: 1 | |
| 14 = 2 | Guatemalan/Hisp. 1 | None/Blank: 2 | |
| 15 = 1 | Asian/Asian American: | | |
| 16 = 1 | Vietnamese 1 | | |
| 17 = 0 | Mixed Race: | | |
| 18 = 0 | White/African Am. 1 | | |
| | African Am./Caucasian/ 1 | | |
| | Blackfoot Indian | | |
| | Black/Puerto Rican 1 | | |
| | “?” 1 | | |

Southeast Chicago N = 14

| AGE | RACE | RELIGION | LANGUAGE SPOKEN WITH FAMILY/FRIENDS |
|-------------------|---------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------------|
| Range = 12-17 | Black/African American: 6 | Baptist: 2 | English Only 8 |
| Mean age = 13.5 | White/Caucasian: 0 | Christian: 1 | Spanish or Sp./Eng. 6 |
| Age Distribution: | Latina/Hispanic: | Catholic: 5 | |
| 12 = 6 | Mexican/Hisp. 4 | None/Blank: 5 | |
| 13 = 3 | Mexican/Puerto Rican 1 | Don't Know: 1 | |
| 14 = 1 | Guatemalan/Puerto Rican 1 | | |
| 15 = 2 | Asian/Asian American: 0 | | |
| 16 = 1 | Mixed Race: | | |
| 17 = 1 | Indian/White/Black 1 | | |
| 18 = 0 | Black/Puerto Rican 1 | | |

North Lawndale N = 9

| AGE | RACE | RELIGION | LANGUAGE SPOKEN WITH FAMILY/FRIENDS |
|-------------------|---------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|
| Range = 12-17 | Black/African American: 6 | Baptist: 5 | English Only 9 |
| Mean age = 13.8 | White/Caucasian: 0 | Christian: 4 | |
| Age Distribution: | Latina/Hispanic: 0 | | |
| 12 = 2 | Asian/Asian American: 0 | | |
| 13 = 3 | Mixed Race: | | |
| 14 = 1 | Black/Indian-Cherokee 3 | | |
| 15 = 2 | | | |
| 16 = 0 | | | |
| 17 = 1 | | | |
| 18 = 0 | | | |

Champaign-Urbana N = 11

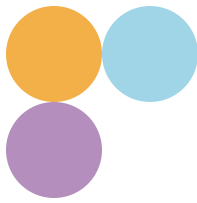
| AGE | RACE | RELIGION | LANGUAGE SPOKEN WITH FAMILY/FRIENDS |
|-------------------|------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------------|
| Range = 12-18 | Black/African American: 7 | Baptist: 2 | English Only 10 |
| Mean age = 14.5 | White/Caucasian: 1 | Christian: 5 | English/Romanian 1 |
| Age Distribution: | White/Romanian: 1 | Jewish: 1 | |
| 12 = 2 | White/Serbian: 1 | None/Blank: 2 | |
| 13 = 2 | Latina/Hispanic: 0 | Undecided: 1 | |
| 14 = 2 | Asian/Asian American: 0 | | |
| 15 = 3 | Mixed Race: | | |
| 16 = 0 | African Am./Native Am./Caribbean 1 | | |
| 17 = 1 | | | |
| 18 = 1 | | | |

Rockford N = 9

| AGE | RACE | RELIGION | LANGUAGE SPOKEN WITH FAMILY/FRIENDS |
|-------------------|---------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------------|
| Range = 12-17 | Black/African American: 6 | Baptist: 4 | English Only 9 |
| Mean age = 13.8 | White/Caucasian: 3 | Catholic: 2 | |
| Age Distribution: | Latina/Hispanic: 0 | Jewish: 1 | |
| 12 = 1 | Asian/Asian American: 0 | Methodist: 1 | |
| 13 = 1 | Mixed Race: 0 | Protestant: 1 | |
| 14 = 0 | | | |
| 15 = 4 | | | |
| 16 = 2 | | | |
| 17 = 1 | | | |
| 18 = 0 | | | |

Woodstock N = 11

| AGE | RACE | RELIGION | LANGUAGE SPOKEN WITH FAMILY/FRIENDS |
|-------------------|---------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------------|
| Range = 12-17 | Black/African American: 0 | Catholic: 6 | English Only 6 |
| Mean age = 13.8 | White/Caucasian: 5 | Jewish: 1 | Spanish or Sp./Eng. 5 |
| Age Distribution: | Latina/Hispanic: | Protestant: 4 | |
| 12 = 1 | Mexican 5 | | |
| 13 = 1 | Asian/Asian American: 0 | | |
| 14 = 2 | Mixed Race: | | |
| 15 = 0 | Mexican/Caucasian 1 | | |
| 16 = 1 | | | |
| 17 = 4 | | | |
| 18 = 2 | | | |



RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

GBF Statewide Research Initiative Focus Group Outline

- I. Introductions: go around the room and have each girl (and researcher) tell:
 - Name
 - Age
 - Where she lives
 - What school she goes to
 - Any organizations she belongs to, hobbies, interests, etc.
 - Anything else she wants to tell the group at that point
- II. Brief description of the study and how this focus group fits into the overall project
- III. Ground rules/group expectations: ask girls what they need to feel comfortable being open with one another. Explain role of the tape recorder and that only the researcher, the research director, and the transcriptionist will hear the tape. Some ground rules to be sure to include:
 - Confidentiality
 - Showing respect for each other's statements, even if you disagree
 - Tape recorder needs (e.g. talking one at a time, avoiding side conversations, speaking clearly and loudly, saying name before speaking, etc.), everyone gets a chance to speak
- IV. Questions
 - 1) One of the things we're trying to learn is what it's like growing up in different communities. Do you think this is a good place to be a girl? If I were a girl your age looking to move somewhere, would you recommend your community? Why or why not?
 - 2) What do most people your age do for fun around here? Is it different for girls than for boys? Why or why not?
 - 3) Are there any things this community is lacking that you wish it had? Give some examples. What kind of difference would these make in girls' lives?
 - 4) What kinds of support services are available for girls here? Where do girls your age go if they have a problem? Where/to whom do *you* go when you need help with a problem?
Potential follow-up prompts:
 - Family?
 - Adults at school?
 - Community organizations?
 - Church?
 - Peers?
 - Other?
 - No one?

- 5) If something bad happens to you or you are worried about something, what kinds of support do you want from:
 - Adults
 - Friends
- 6) Do you usually get the kind of support you're looking for? Why or why not?
- 7) Whom do you want to tell when something wonderful happens to you or when you get a great idea or have an achievement? How do they usually react?
- 8) Do you think there are any things that girls have to deal with that are different than boys? If so, what? How do you feel about this?
- 9) Tell me about your school(s). What do you like best about your school? What do you like least?
- 10) How do you feel about your teachers and the other adults there? Do they treat girls and boys differently or the same? Can you give some examples? Why do you think this is the case?
- 11) Do you feel safe at school? Do you feel safe in your neighborhood? Why or why not?
- 12) Are there fights in your neighborhood and/or school? Who fights more, girls or boys? Why? Do you ever get into fights? Why or why not? How does it feel to be in fights or watch fights? How do adults react when there is a fight? Do you ever wish they would react differently? If so, how would you like them to respond?
- 13) Are gangs an issue around here? If so, how do they affect you? Do you belong to a gang? Have you ever been tempted to join a gang? Why or why not? Do you have any friends and/or family members in gangs? What do you think draws girls to gangs? What do you think draws boys to gangs?
- 14) What about drugs? Do a lot of people your age use drugs? Are there more boys or more girls your age using drugs? Is there a lot of pressure to use drugs? If yes, what kinds? Do you and/or your friends use drugs? If yes, which one(s) and why? If not, why not? Do you and/or your friends smoke cigarettes? Use alcohol? Why or why not? If you don't use them yourself, why do you think other girls do?
- 15) How do you feel about your body? What do you like most about it? What do you like least about it? What kinds of messages have you gotten about your body from adults? How do you feel about those messages?
- 16) Where do you go to get information and/or resources about sexuality (including decision-making, contraception, pregnancy, STDs, issues in relationships, sexual identity and coming out, sexual and gynecological health, etc.)? Do the adults in your life talk about girls' sexuality? If so, who talks about it, and what do they say? Do you ever get any nonverbal messages about girls' sexuality? What, if anything, would you like to change about the way adults deal with girls when it comes to issues of sexuality?
- 17) Do you feel healthy? What does that mean? (Try to tap into physical wellness—i.e. lack of illness, sense of physical fitness, etc.; emotional wellness; feelings of empowerment; etc.). What do you feel you and other girls need to be healthy? What could adults do to help you with this?

- 18) If you could tell boys anything that would help them understand girls better, what would it be? Why?
- 19) If you could tell adults anything that would help them understand girls better, what would it be? Why?
- 20) Can you think of anything else you'd like to talk about that would help me to understand your experiences as a girl in this community?

GBF Statewide Research Initiative Individual Interview Outline

Note to interviewers: If a topic is omitted, be sure to explain why in your field notes. These questions need not be asked in any particular order; depending on answers given, go to appropriate set of questions.

1. General Information:

- Name
- Age
- Where do you live?
- What school do you go to?

2. How long have you lived in this community?

- What is it like?
- What do/don't you like about it?
- Would you recommend this town/neighborhood to someone (youth? adult?) looking for a place to live? Why/why not?

3. How safe is this community?

A. Gangs:

- Are gangs a problem in this community?
- Are you in a gang? Why/why not?
- If not, are you ever tempted and/or pressured to join? How/why?
- Do you have any friends/family in gangs?
- What do you think about gangs in general? In your neighborhood?
- What is the role of police, other neighbors, etc. in dealing with gang violence?

B. School:

- How safe is your school?
- What makes it feel safe/unsafe?
- Who fights more, girls or boys? Why?
- What do girls/boys fight about?
- How do adults at school respond when a fight occurs? How would you like them to respond?
- Do you ever get into fights? Why/why not?
- If so, do you usually start the fight or respond to someone else? What do you fight about?
- Do you have metal detectors in your school? If yes, how do you feel about that? If no, do you wish your school had them? Why or why not?
- Does your school have a "zero tolerance policy" about violence? How do you feel about this?

C. Harassment:

- Have you ever been harassed? What does that mean?
- Who harasses more, boys or girls? Explain
- Who is harassed more, boys or girls? Explain
- Where does harassment usually occur (e.g., school, neighborhood, etc.)?
- How do adults typically respond when they witness harassment of girls/boys?
- What do you do when you're harassed? Why?

4. What do you like to do in your spare time?

- Where do you hang out? Why there?

- Do you mostly hang out in this neighborhood, or do you go elsewhere for fun? Why?
 - What activities do you like? Why those?
 - Are you involved in any school/community programs? Which ones? Why those? Why not others?
 - Are there activities/programs you would like to take part in but can't (e.g., because they're not available, can't afford them, can't get to them, etc.)? Why?
 - Do your activities mostly involve girls/boys/both? Which do you prefer? Why?
5. Who lives in your household?
- How many brothers/sisters do you have? How old are they?
 - How do you get along?
 - What responsibilities do you have around your home?
 - Are there differences in what the girls/boys are expected to do in your home? If so, how do you feel about that?
 - Are you and your brothers (if you have them) treated differently or the same in terms of what you're allowed to do (e.g., curfews, activities, etc.)? How do you feel about that? Would you do things the same or differently if you were a parent?
6. How do you feel about school?
- How caring/respectful are the adults there?
 - Do you feel like you're getting a good education there? Why/why not? What does that mean?
 - What is your favorite subject? Why? What is your least favorite subject? Why?
 - What makes a good teacher good? What makes a bad teacher bad? Give examples.
 - What does your school need more of? What does it need less of?
 - Are boys and girls treated equally at your school? In what ways are/aren't they? How do you feel about this?
 - Do you take part in any extracurricular activities? Which ones? Why those? How do you feel about them?
 - How does your family feel about your education? What kinds of messages/values do they give you about education?
7. Are you involved in sports?
- What kinds of sports (if any) do you like? Why those?
 - Where do you play (e.g., school, park, community center, streets, etc.)?
 - Do you prefer to play with all girls or in mixed-sex settings?
 - Have you been encouraged or discouraged to pursue sports and physical activity? Explain.
8. What makes you happy? What makes you sad? What makes you angry?
9. What do you want to do when you get done with school?
- Do you expect that you'll graduate high school? Why/why not?
 - Do you want to go to college? Do you think you will? Why/why not?
 - What kind of job/career/further education would you like to pursue? Why? Do you think you'll be able to do this? Why/why not?
 - How much/what kinds of education do the other people in your family have?
 - If the adults in your family have jobs, what do they do?
10. What kinds of responsibilities do you have around your home?
- Are you responsible for caring for younger siblings? Elders?
 - Are you responsible for housework?
 - Are you responsible for contributing income to your family?
 - How do you feel about your responsibilities?

- If you have brothers and/or sisters, are the same kinds of things expected of them? If not, what's different, and how do you feel about that?
 - Do you have a curfew? What is it?
 - If you have brothers, are their curfews earlier, later, or the same as yours? How do you feel about that? If their curfews are different, why do you think that's the case?
11. Have you had any romantic and/or sexual relationships?
- If yes, please describe the person and the relationship.
 - If no, would you like to be in a relationship at this time? Why/why not?
 - Do you tend to be attracted to boys/men, girls/women, or both?
 - If you have had relationships, what are the best/worst things about them?
 - What do you think is an appropriate age for girls to become involved in a romantic relationship? A sexual relationship/encounter? Is this age the same as or different than the appropriate age for boys? Why?
 - How do the people in your family feel about the idea of you being involved with someone romantically and/or sexually? Why?
 - How do you feel about the information you've been given (if any) about relationships and sexuality?
 - Where do you get most of your information about relationships and sexuality? Are there particular people you wish would give you more and/or different information?
 - Do you feel you have the information and resources (e.g., condoms, contraception) you need to prevent pregnancy and STDs? Why/why not?
12. How much of an issue are drugs in your community?
- Do a lot of young people use drugs in your school and/or neighborhood?
 - Do you? Why or why not?
 - What kinds of drugs do young people use?
 - Is drug use more of a problem for boys or girls, or are they both the same?
 - Why do you think girls/boys use drugs?
13. What do you think are the most important/urgent needs of girls in your community?
- Of girls in general?
 - What do girls need in order to grow up happy, healthy, and strong?
14. If you could say anything you wanted to boys to set them straight about the needs and experiences of girls, what would it be?
15. If you could say anything you wanted to adults to set them straight about the needs and experiences of girls, what would it be?
16. "Process" questions:
- How are you feeling about our group discussions?
 - What's good about them? What's frustrating about them?
 - What could I do differently to make them more enjoyable/interesting/safe/etc. for you or other girls?
17. Is there anything else you want to add? Is there anything you want to ask me? Can you think of anything I should be asking other girls that I haven't asked you?

GBF Statewide Research Initiative Advocate Interview Outline

Note to interviewers: Feel free to modify as necessary. Please tailor follow-up questions to the answers given by the interviewee.

- 1) Would you tell me your name, the organization you work for, and the type of work you do?
(Ask this even if you already know, so that it is on the tape).
- 2) How long have you worked with this organization? How long have you done this type of work?
- 3) Can you give me some history of the organization? How and why was it started? What is its mission? Whose needs does this organization serve?
- 4) How/why did you become involved in this type of work?
- 5) Please tell me about the programs/activities/services/opportunities/etc. this organization offers. Are there programs specifically for teens? Are there girls-only programs? Boys-only?
- 6) If you have programs or activities specifically for girls, why did your organization decide to offer such programs?
- 7) How would you describe the population of young people this organization works with—in terms of such characteristics as race, ethnicity, language spoken, age, social class, sexual orientation, disability, etc.?
- 8) How would you describe the staff/volunteers who work with this organization—in terms of such characteristics as race, ethnicity, language spoken, age, social class, sexual orientation, disability, etc.?
- 9) What do you think are the most pressing needs of girls in this community? What are the most pressing needs of boys?
- 10) How well do you think this organization meets the needs of adolescent girls? In what ways does it help girls, and in what ways does it not? How about boys?
- 11) Are there particular groups of girls whose needs are not met as well as others'? Please explain.
- 12) Are there any topics that girls are not allowed to discuss here? Are there any topics that are “officially” okay to talk about, but that girls are likely to feel uncomfortable talking about here? What topics, and why?
- 13) How much emphasis do you think this organization places on the needs of girls compared to those of boys? How much emphasis do you think the community in general places on the needs of girls compared to those of boys?
- 14) What do you think are the greatest strengths of the girls you work with?

- 15) To what extent does your organization focus on girls' strengths (i.e. empowering girls), and to what extent does it focus on girls' weaknesses (i.e. "curing" or "saving" girls? How does (or doesn't) this occur?
- 16) Are girls involved in decision-making in your organization? In what capacities? (For example: Are there any girls on the board? Do they have control of a budget? Do they take part in staffing decisions? Do they decide what activities will be offered?)
- 17) What types of leadership opportunities are available for girls in this community? In this organization?
- 18) Overall, how would you describe this community's view of girls? How would you describe this organization's view of girls? How would you describe your personal view of girls?
- 19) If you were going to advise a funder how best to direct their funding for adolescent girls in a community such as yours, what advice would you offer?
- 20) Based on your experience with girls, if you could tell other adults one thing that would help them to advocate more effectively for girls, what would you tell them?
- 21) Can you think of anything else you would like to share about your work, your community, yourself, or adolescent girls?

Demographics Survey

Interviewer: _____

Site: _____

Date of Interview: _____

Name: _____

Phone number where you can be contacted: _____

Name of parents(s) or guardian(s): _____

What is their relationship to you (e.g., parent, aunt, grandparent, etc.)? _____

What is their phone number (if different)? Home: _____

Work: _____

Emergency Contact: _____ Phone: _____

Home address: _____

How long have you lived in this area? _____ How long have you lived in the US? _____

Date of Birth: _____ Age: _____

Where were you born? _____

What grade are you in at school? _____

What language(s) do you usually speak at home? _____

What language(s) do you usually speak with your friends? _____

How do you describe your race(s)? _____

How do you describe your ethnicity(s)? _____

How do you describe your sexual orientation(s)? _____

How do you describe your religion (if any)? _____

What school do you attend? _____

What are your favorite hobbies? _____

Is there anything you need in order to participate fully? _____

Girl Mapping-Youth Survey

1. Is the young person being interviewed a (Please circle): GIRL or BOY

2. What's this neighborhood called? (Don't know)

3. How old are you today? _____

4. How do you racially identify yourself?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> African American/Black | <input type="checkbox"/> Multiracial |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian/Asian American | <input type="checkbox"/> Native American/American Indian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Caribbean American | <input type="checkbox"/> Pacific Islander |
| <input type="checkbox"/> White/European American | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic/Latino(a) | |

5. Are you currently in school? YES NO

If yes, which school? _____ In September, what grade will you be in? _____

What kind of school? Public Private Religious Alternative GED Program

If no, are you:

Graduated Expelled Dropped Out Home Schooled Other

6. Do you currently have a paying job? YES NO

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cashier | <input type="checkbox"/> Stock Clerk | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-employed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sales Rep. | <input type="checkbox"/> Office Clerk | <input type="checkbox"/> Work at Place of Worship |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Maintenance | <input type="checkbox"/> Daycare/Babysitting | <input type="checkbox"/> Work w/Youth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yard Work | <input type="checkbox"/> Fast Food | <input type="checkbox"/> Hospitality Service |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tutoring | <input type="checkbox"/> Restaurant Service | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

Wages _____

How many hours? _____

7. Do you do volunteer work? YES NO

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> School Service Learning | <input type="checkbox"/> Daycare/Watch Siblings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Place of Worship | <input type="checkbox"/> Homeless Shelters |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tutoring | <input type="checkbox"/> Soup Kitchens |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Youth Center | <input type="checkbox"/> Mentoring |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Service Hours | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

How many hours per week? _____

8. What is your career goal?

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Youth Work | <input type="checkbox"/> Sales | <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business Administration | <input type="checkbox"/> Lawyer/Legal | <input type="checkbox"/> Athlete |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Medical/Health | <input type="checkbox"/> Police Work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Computer Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-employment | <input type="checkbox"/> Hospitality Service |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Skilled Labor | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Post Office | <input type="checkbox"/> Government Work | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clerical/Secretary | | |

9. Does your school have enough of the things on this list? (Please mark under Yes or No)

- | YES | NO | YES | NO |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | Other _____ | |

10. What do you do for FUN when not in school? (Check all that apply)

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Hang out at home | <input type="checkbox"/> | Hang out at park |
| | | | Which park? _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Hang out a friend's house | <input type="checkbox"/> | Participate in park activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Hang out at relative's house | | Which activities? _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Hang out with girlfriend | <input type="checkbox"/> | Hang out at community center |
| | | | Which center? _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Hang out with boyfriend | | Which activities? _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Hang out downtown | <input type="checkbox"/> | Play sports/Where? _____ |
| | Where? _____ | | Which sports? _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Hang out at Place of Worship | <input type="checkbox"/> | Read for pleasure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Go shopping/to the mall | <input type="checkbox"/> | Play computer games |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Go to the movies | <input type="checkbox"/> | Surf the Internet |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Watch TV | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other _____ |

11. Do you participate in after-school and weekend activities with your school or community center? YES NO

If YES, why? (check all that apply)

- Programs are available
- I enjoy them
- Matches my interests
- My friends are there
- Easy to get there
- I like the neighborhood
- Adults there respect the kids
- Doesn't cost much or free
- Lots of girls around
- Lots of boys around
- Nothing else to do
- Get to help others
- Get to learn new things

If NO, why not? (check all that apply)

- Programs are not available
- I don't enjoy them
- Doesn't match my interests
- My friends aren't there
- Difficult to get there
- I don't like the neighborhood
- Adults there don't respect kids
- Costs too much
- Not enough girls around
- Not enough boys around
- Other things to do
- Too noisy or crowded
- Other _____

Please check under S for school activities and under C for community center activities in which you participate.

- | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| S | C | | S | C | | S | C | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Academic clubs | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Mentoring | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Peer counseling |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Arts/theater | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Job skill development | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Volunteer work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Sports | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Tutoring | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Girls only activities | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Leadership activities | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Boys only activities | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Special interest club (Which? _____) | | | |

12. Do you have adequate transportation to get to programs/activities that interest you? YES NO

13. When you participate in programs, do you prefer: All Girls All Boys Girls & Boys

14. What 5 things do you like best about this neighborhood? Using 1 as the best thing, please rank up to 5 things you like best.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> People are friendly | <input type="checkbox"/> Good shops nearby |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Neighbors look out for each other | <input type="checkbox"/> It's safe |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Schools are good | <input type="checkbox"/> Close to stuff I like |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community center has fun things to do | <input type="checkbox"/> People share my language and culture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other young people are around | <input type="checkbox"/> Good library |
| <input type="checkbox"/> It's quiet | <input type="checkbox"/> Lots of local business |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parks are good | <input type="checkbox"/> Daycare centers are available |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Police are around | <input type="checkbox"/> Feels like home |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hospitals are available | <input type="checkbox"/> Religious leaders speak for people |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Convenient public transportation | <input type="checkbox"/> Nothing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Access to banks | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

15. What are your favorite places in this neighborhood? Using 1 as your most favorite, please rank up to 3 places in this neighborhood.

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Home | <input type="checkbox"/> Local shops/malls | <input type="checkbox"/> Gym/athletic facilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> School | <input type="checkbox"/> Movie theater | <input type="checkbox"/> Arcade/game room |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friend's house | <input type="checkbox"/> Park | <input type="checkbox"/> Clubs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Relative's house | <input type="checkbox"/> Place of Worship | <input type="checkbox"/> Nowhere |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Girlfriend's house | <input type="checkbox"/> Community center | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Boyfriend's house | | |

16. What are some of the things this neighborhood needs more of? Using 1 as most important, please rank the 5 most important things.

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sports activities | <input type="checkbox"/> School based after-school programs | <input type="checkbox"/> Violence education |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Youth programming (Community center) | <input type="checkbox"/> Police | <input type="checkbox"/> Local shops |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family activities | <input type="checkbox"/> Gang prevention programs | <input type="checkbox"/> Block parties |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior citizen activities | <input type="checkbox"/> Substance abuse education | <input type="checkbox"/> Adult involvement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Safe places | <input type="checkbox"/> Art & culture programs | <input type="checkbox"/> I don't know |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fun stuff for youth | <input type="checkbox"/> Family planning places | <input type="checkbox"/> Nothing |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Public transportation | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

17. What are 3 things YOU could do to make this neighborhood better?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

18. Are there young people in your neighborhood that need services but are not receiving them?
YES NO If so, what groups? _____

19. Please rank the 3 most serious issues in your neighborhood, using 1 for most serious issue.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teen pregnancy | <input type="checkbox"/> Gangs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of quality sex education/family planning | <input type="checkbox"/> Poverty |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Drug dealers | <input type="checkbox"/> Intolerance of individual differences |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Substance abusers | <input type="checkbox"/> No good stores nearby |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of substance abuse education | <input type="checkbox"/> Violence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Schools aren't very good | <input type="checkbox"/> Not enough Public Transportation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not enough quality housing | <input type="checkbox"/> People too nosy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of job opportunities for youth | <input type="checkbox"/> I don't know |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of job opportunities for adults | <input type="checkbox"/> Nothing |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

(If you ranked violence as one of the 3 major issues, please rank which types of violence are the most serious, use 1 for the most serious issue.)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Child abuse | <input type="checkbox"/> Fighting in streets |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family violence/battering | <input type="checkbox"/> Girlfriend/Boyfriend violence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gang on gang violence | <input type="checkbox"/> Sexual assault |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gangs in community violence | <input type="checkbox"/> Police violence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Random gang shootings | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

20. Please rank the 3 most pressing issues for girls.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

21. Please rank the 3 most pressing issues for boys

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

22a. Who do you go to for help or advice? Check all that apply.

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mother | <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher | <input type="checkbox"/> Gang Member |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Father | <input type="checkbox"/> Coach | <input type="checkbox"/> Internet |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brother/Sister | <input type="checkbox"/> School Counselor | <input type="checkbox"/> TV Program |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Relative | <input type="checkbox"/> Religious Leader | <input type="checkbox"/> Reading Materials |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adult Friend | <input type="checkbox"/> Doctor/Nurse | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friend your age | <input type="checkbox"/> Police | |

22b. What sort of help do they provide? Check all that apply.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Counseling | <input type="checkbox"/> Food |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Boyfriend/Girlfriend help | <input type="checkbox"/> Money |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family planning | <input type="checkbox"/> Safe place to stay |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual guidance | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Career advice | <input type="checkbox"/> Help with school work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Someone to talk to | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

23a. Where do you feel safe? Using 1 as safest, please check up to 5.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Home | <input type="checkbox"/> Parks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> School | <input type="checkbox"/> Gym/Athletic Fields |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friend's House | <input type="checkbox"/> Place of Worship |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Relative's House | <input type="checkbox"/> Downtown |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Girlfriend's House | <input type="checkbox"/> Community Center |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Boyfriend's House | <input type="checkbox"/> I feel safe everywhere |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Malls/Shops | <input type="checkbox"/> I don't feel safe anywhere |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Movies | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

23b. Which of the following is most important in making you feel safe? Using 1 as most important, please check up to 5.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friendly adults | <input type="checkbox"/> Adults who respect young people |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friendly young people | <input type="checkbox"/> Young people who respect each other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Police who are available | <input type="checkbox"/> Well maintained building/facility |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Know everyone | <input type="checkbox"/> Gangs that protect me |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Good security | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

24. Please put a check next to the places you know how to locate in this neighborhood.

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bank | <input type="checkbox"/> Park | <input type="checkbox"/> High School |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Library | <input type="checkbox"/> Swimming pool | <input type="checkbox"/> Middle School |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nursing home | <input type="checkbox"/> Doctor's office | <input type="checkbox"/> Funeral Home |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Place of Worship | <input type="checkbox"/> Job placement center | <input type="checkbox"/> Family planning clinic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Museum | <input type="checkbox"/> Alderman's office | <input type="checkbox"/> Elementary School |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Daycare | | <input type="checkbox"/> Athletic facilities |

Mapper: _____ Date: _____ Neighborhood: _____

Girl Mapping-Adult Survey

1. How would you describe your impressions of the **girls** in this community?
 Very positive Good Just okay Not very positive Very negative No opinion

2. How would you describe your impressions of the **boys** in this community?
 Very positive Good Just okay Not very positive Very negative No opinion

3. Do the activities, programs and places in this community meet the needs and interests of **girls**?
 Definitely Somewhat Not much Not at all No opinion

4. Do the activities, programs and places in this community meet the need and interests of **boys**?
 Definitely Somewhat Not much Not at all No opinion

5. Which of these areas need more attention if **girls** are to be successful growing up? Please rank the top 3, using 1 as the most needed help.

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Problems | <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership Opportunities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Career Planning | <input type="checkbox"/> Health Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Relations | <input type="checkbox"/> Violence Prevention | <input type="checkbox"/> Safer Communities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Decision-making | <input type="checkbox"/> Computer Training | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Job Training | <input type="checkbox"/> Pregnancy Prevention | |

6. Which of these need more attention if **boys** are to be successful growing up? Please rank the top 3, using 1 as the most needed help.

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Problems | <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership Opportunities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Career Planning | <input type="checkbox"/> Health Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Relations | <input type="checkbox"/> Violence Prevention | <input type="checkbox"/> Safer Communities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Decision-making | <input type="checkbox"/> Computer Training | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Job Training | <input type="checkbox"/> Pregnancy Prevention | |

7. What particular hobbies or talents do you have that you would like to share with young people? Please check all that apply.

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employment skills | <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural heritage | <input type="checkbox"/> Science/Computers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cooking skills | <input type="checkbox"/> Artistic talents | <input type="checkbox"/> Sports |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parenting skills | <input type="checkbox"/> Life lessons | <input type="checkbox"/> Financial management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business skills | <input type="checkbox"/> Trade skills | <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership skills |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Study skills/Tutoring | <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual guidance | <input type="checkbox"/> None |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

8. Do you help or work with young people? YES NO

If the answer to #8 is NO, please complete next page and STOP.

If the answer to #8 is YES, please proceed to page 101.

If you answered "NO" to #8, please complete this page.

9. Are you interested in volunteering for any of the following programs? (Check all that apply.)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mentoring | <input type="checkbox"/> Religious Activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tutoring | <input type="checkbox"/> Health Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Relationship Counseling | <input type="checkbox"/> Family Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership Development | <input type="checkbox"/> Substance Abuse Prevention |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Job Training | <input type="checkbox"/> Substance Abuse Treatment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Career Counseling | <input type="checkbox"/> Violence Prevention |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Safe Place Provision | <input type="checkbox"/> Daycare/Childcare |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recreation/Sports | <input type="checkbox"/> Clean-up Programs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Field Trips | <input type="checkbox"/> Food Pantries |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural Activities | <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Services |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

Are you interested in volunteering for programs that are specifically geared to the needs of (Check all that apply.)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Male | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth with Physical Disabilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Female | <input type="checkbox"/> Homeless Youth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Youth | <input type="checkbox"/> Gang Affiliated Youth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heterosexual Youth | <input type="checkbox"/> Religious Youth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Youth with Learning Disabilities | |

10. Are you willing to contribute: (Check all that apply)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Time | <input type="checkbox"/> Food |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Money | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Space | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Materials/Supplies _____ | |

11. May we contact you again? YES NO

| |
|---|
| NAME: _____ PHONE #: _____ |
| ADDRESS: _____ |
| Mapper: _____ Date: _____ Neighborhood: _____ |
| STOP THANK YOU SURVEY COMPLETE |

If you answered "YES" to #8, please complete the remainder of this survey.

9. What help do you offer young people? (Check all that apply.)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mentoring | <input type="checkbox"/> Religious Activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tutoring | <input type="checkbox"/> Health Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Relationship Counseling | <input type="checkbox"/> Family Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership Development | <input type="checkbox"/> Substance Abuse Prevention |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Job Training | <input type="checkbox"/> Substance Abuse Treatment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Career Counseling | <input type="checkbox"/> Violence Prevention |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Safe Place Provision | <input type="checkbox"/> Daycare/Childcare |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recreation/Sports | <input type="checkbox"/> Clean-up Programs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Field Trips | <input type="checkbox"/> Food Pantries |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural Activities | <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Services |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

Are you interested in volunteering for programs that are specifically geared to the needs of (Check all that apply.)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Male | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth with Physical Disabilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Female | <input type="checkbox"/> Homeless Youth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Youth | <input type="checkbox"/> Gang Affiliated Youth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heterosexual Youth | <input type="checkbox"/> Religious Youth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Youth with Learning Disabilities | |

10. What racial/cultural groups do you most often work with?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> All | <input type="checkbox"/> Native American/American Indian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> African American/Black | <input type="checkbox"/> Pacific Islanders |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian/Asian American | <input type="checkbox"/> White/European American |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic/Latino(a) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Multiracial | |

11. What ages do you most often work with?

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0-4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 15-17 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5-9 | <input type="checkbox"/> 18-21 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10-14 | <input type="checkbox"/> 21 & older |

12. Please put a check under **Have** to show what donations you already receive and under **Want** to show what donations you would find helpful.

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| Want | Have | Want | Have |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Time | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Food |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Money | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Resources _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Space | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

13. Would you like training in:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Youth Development | <input type="checkbox"/> Working with Girls |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Program Development | <input type="checkbox"/> Working with Boys |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Organizing | <input type="checkbox"/> Working with LGBT Community |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership | <input type="checkbox"/> Diversity Issues |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mentoring | <input type="checkbox"/> Conflict Resolution |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

14. May we contact you again? YES NO

| |
|---|
| NAME: _____ PHONE #: _____ |
| ADDRESS: _____ |
| Mapper: _____ Date: _____ Neighborhood: _____ |
| STOP THANK YOU SURVEY COMPLETE |

Girl Mapping-Places Survey

1. Places Contact Information:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____ Fax: _____

_____ E-mail: _____

Contact Person: _____ Title: _____

2. Is this Place a:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business | <input type="checkbox"/> Government Agency |
| <input type="checkbox"/> School | <input type="checkbox"/> Hospital |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Youth Agency | <input type="checkbox"/> Place of Worship |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Library | <input type="checkbox"/> Community Service Provider |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Park | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bank | |

3. Does this Place offer jobs to young people? YES NO (If NO, skip to next question)

3.1 How many of your workers are: #___ Girls #___ Boys

3.2 What's the age range for the young people working for you?
___ below 13 ___ 14-15 ___ 16-17 ___ 18 & Older

3.3 How much do you pay them per hour? \$_____

4. Does this Place have clubs, programs or services specifically for young people? YES NO (If NO, skip to next question)

4.1 What types of clubs, programs or services?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mentoring | <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural Activities (Arts, Music, Theater) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tutoring | <input type="checkbox"/> Health Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> General Counseling | <input type="checkbox"/> Family Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership Development | <input type="checkbox"/> Substance Abuse Prevention |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Job Training | <input type="checkbox"/> Substance Abuse Treatment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Career Counseling | <input type="checkbox"/> Violence Prevention |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Safe Haven | <input type="checkbox"/> Daycare/Child Care |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recreation/Sports | <input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood Clean-up Programs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Field Trips | <input type="checkbox"/> Food Pantry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ethnic Activities | <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Religious Activities | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

4.2 Are these clubs, programs or services designed for: (Check all that apply)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Girls-only | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth with Disabilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Boys-only | <input type="checkbox"/> Homeless/Runaway youth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mixed sex | <input type="checkbox"/> Gang Affiliated Youth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Families | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth affiliated with religious organizations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual youth | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

4.3 What age groups participate in your clubs, programs or services? (Check all that apply)

___ 0-4 ___ 15-17 ___ 5-9 ___ 18-21 ___ 10-14

5. Would this Place like to offer clubs, programs or services specifically for young people? YES NO (If NO, skip to next question)

5.1 What types of clubs, programs or services?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mentoring | <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural Activities (Arts, Music, Theater) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tutoring | <input type="checkbox"/> Health Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> General Counseling | <input type="checkbox"/> Family Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership Development | <input type="checkbox"/> Substance Abuse Prevention |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Job Training | <input type="checkbox"/> Substance Abuse Treatment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Career Counseling | <input type="checkbox"/> Violence Prevention |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Safe Haven | <input type="checkbox"/> Daycare/Child Care |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recreation/Sports | <input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood Clean-up Programs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Field Trips | <input type="checkbox"/> Food Pantry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ethnic Activities | <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Religious Activities | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

5.2 Would you like to offer the clubs, programs or services for:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Girls | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth with Impairments |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Boys | <input type="checkbox"/> Homeless/Runaways |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Families | <input type="checkbox"/> Gang Affiliated Youth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gay/Lesbian Youth | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

5.3 What age groups would you like to have participate in your clubs, programs or services? (Check all that apply)

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 0-4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 15-17 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5-9 | <input type="checkbox"/> 18-21 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10-14 | |

6. If this Place offers clubs, programs or services for young people, would you please tell us:

6.1 Is your program open:

- Year Round
 School Year Only
 Summer Only
 Other _____

6.2 What are your regular hours of business: _____

6.3 Do your clubs, programs or services have fees?

- All Some None

6.4 Is your building accessible to people with disabilities?

- Fully Partially Not At All

6.5 How do you attract young people?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Word of Mouth | <input type="checkbox"/> Brochures & Fliers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Posters | <input type="checkbox"/> Internet |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Places of Worship | <input type="checkbox"/> Newspapers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parents | <input type="checkbox"/> Staff Outreach |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Schools | <input type="checkbox"/> Referrals from other agencies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Other Young People |

7. Please take a minute to answer a few general questions:

7.1 How many young people come to this place? ___ Boys ___ Girls

7.2 Please rank the 3 most pressing issues for Girls?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

7.3 For Boys?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

7.4 Would this Place be willing to donate or contribute:

___ Space ___ Volunteers
___ Money ___ Transportation
___ Food ___ Other _____
___ Materials/Supplies _____

7.5 Is this Place interested in the results of this survey? ___ Yes ___ No

7.6 May we contact this Place again? ___ Yes ___ No

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!!

OKAY MAPPERS, NOW IT'S YOUR TURN TO ANSWER QUESTIONS.

1. Would you recommend this Place to friends and family? ___ Yes ___ No

2. Was the person you talked to polite? ___ Very Polite ___ Didn't Notice ___ Rude

3. Was the meeting scheduled? ___ Yes ___ No

4. Were other young people in this Place while you were visiting? ___ Yes ___ No

4.1 How were they treated while you were there?

___ Very Well
___ Didn't Notice
___ Not Very Well

5. Did you fill out this survey or did the person you interviewed complete it?

___ You ___ Interviewee

Mapper: _____ ID #: _____ Date: _____ / _____ / _____