

Fostering Healthy Development Among Middle School Females:

A Summer Program

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Abstract

This study seeks to understand the effectiveness of a five-day residential leadership camp on the body image, assertiveness skills, attitudes towards gender equality, conflict resolution skills of early adolescent girl participants. To investigate the significance of the intervention, camp participants were asked to complete several instruments including the *Adolescent Femininity Ideology Scale Parts 1 and 2* (Tolman & Porche, 2000), the *Attitudes Toward Women Scale for Adolescents* (Galambos, Peterson, Richards, & Gitelson, 1985), the *Body Appreciation Scale* (Avalos, Tylka, & Wood-Barcalow, 2005), and the *Conflict Resolution Scale* (Smith, Daunic, Miller, & Robinson, 2002). These instruments were given in a pretest/posttest format and were analyzed for significance through a repeated measures MANOVA test. Statistical significance was found for every scale but the conflict resolution style subscale of the *Conflict Resolution Scale* (Smith et al., 2002). Specific implications for school counselors are discussed.

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Much has been written about adolescent females, and the plethora of challenges they face during this developmental period (Gilligan, 1993, 1995; Orenstein, 1994; Pipher, 1994; Straus, 2007). Teenage trials for early adolescents include: academic achievement; career exploration; dealing with peer pressure and finding healthy means for social inclusion; maintaining stable; supportive friendships; dealing with social conflicts or social sabotage from other girls or classmates; developing a healthy relationship with their own bodies and eating; managing pressure from the media regarding appearance and sexuality; thoughtfully controlling their sexuality and/or sexual activity; learning how to have healthy romantic relationships; responding to sexual harassment or unwanted sexual encroachment; and adjusting to the physiological, biological, and psychological changes that occur during this time.

In comparison to their male peers, Kleinfeld (2009) writes that girls suffer “from higher rates of depression, eating disorders, and suicide attempts” (pg. 114) yet, have higher rates of literacy, greater level of school involvement and higher grades, a lower drop-out rate, fewer arrests and lower rates of completed suicide. Various authors have adeptly named the tasks associated with adolescent female development; however, the literature is relatively sparse regarding specific interventions designed to help equip adolescent females with the necessary skills to foster resiliency, self-confidence, and effective problem solving. This research focuses on the specific developmental issues facing early adolescent females and one specific intervention program to address some of these needs.

Middle and high school counselors are repeatedly called upon to develop responsive services to assist adolescents with various developmental issues. However, with the current emphasis on educational achievement through high stakes testing (i.e., *No Child Left Behind Act, 2001*) in the US, school counselors often struggle with how to address the social and emotional needs of students without pulling them from academic courses during the school day. Therefore, school counselors often need to identify creative ways (e.g. lunch groups, collaborative classroom guidance, after school workshops, etc.) to reach middle school students and provide proactive, enrichment opportunities. This study suggests summer programming as another venue to reach middle school students and will purposely address how a week-long, residential summer program impacted adolescent girls. Specifically, attitudes toward gender equality, assertiveness skills, conflict resolution attitudes and skills, and body image satisfaction were measured before and after the summer program. The following literature review explores specific developmental challenges faced by early adolescent females in middle school.

Female Gender Role Socialization

Despite the academic, athletic, economic, and career opportunities for women in the United States, societal and cultural forces still attempt to dictate that girls' social value lies in being physically attractive and appealing to prospective dating partners (Choate, 2007). Societal messages about what a girl "should" value and how a girl "should" be often contain paradoxical advice on specific behaviors, such as gain attention from boys but do not gain too much attention or don't acknowledge sexual desire to avoid being labeled a 'slut' (Currie, Kelly, & Pomerantz, 2007). This is one

example of the gender code for femininity that girls become painfully aware of during adolescence. During adolescence, gender role attitudes and behaviors become more clearly defined (Galambos, Almeida, & Peterson, 1990), are often exaggerated and put girls at risk for being socially devalued for their femininity. Galambos et al. (1990) found that girls were aware of societal messages supporting female inferiority and rebelled against this perception by supporting gender equality more than boys. While this study indicates awareness and rejection of such skewed societal messages, the research is also replete with evidence to support the idea that many girls internalize these messages regarding inferiority (e.g., Straus, 2007; Pipher, 1994).

America's technological and media based entertainment culture often promotes the inferiority of women through both direct and indirect methods. Movies and television shows often depict women in stereotypical roles or as objects of sexual desire. Adolescent females, who consume this media, are often in search of female representations of "who" they can develop into, which influences their emerging sense of identity (Schooler, Sorsoli, Kim, & Tolman, 2009). "Becoming a woman in a patriarchal society demands the embodiment of femininity, that is, disassociating from one's own physical hungers (e.g. for food, sex) and training the body in how to move (and not move) appropriately to conform with ladylike norms of physicality" (Tolman, Impett, Tracy, & Michael, 2006, p. 86). Without assistance in how to critically examine popular culture's version of "how to be female," girls may buy into their own sense of gender inferiority. Williams (2000) calls for media training in sensitivity to gender equality or how females are portrayed, because much of the current media continues to promote gender stereotypes. Critical analysis of media images and marketing strategies

empowers adolescent females to understand that their internalized feelings of inferiority are not symbolic of actual problems or signs of inadequacy; but rather, represent patriarchy. Left unchecked, internalized messages regarding inferiority pose myriad implications for girls.

According to Pipher (1994), girls face enormous cultural pressure to develop a false self. This means abandoning genuine interests and passions in lieu of a more socially acceptable persona, one that focuses on societal standards for outward beauty and social desirability. In order to meet societal expectations, females lose the 'honest' part of themselves, meaning that they suppress their true opinions in favor of finding acceptance from others. Yet despite the altering of self to win the favor of others, girls are simultaneously held to different standards of "appropriate behavior." Instead of being frustrated, girls are 'bitchy;' instead of protesting the status quo, girls are 'delinquent', and instead of withdrawing, girls are 'depressed' (Pipher, 1994). Because honesty potentially coincides with negative labels, girls turn to their "false selves" in order to survive in their social circles. Within this restrictive milieu, girls often create alternative modes of empowerment with each other. In their peer circles, "power comes from the ability to invoke the unspoken 'rules' that police the boundaries of acceptable middle-class femininity" (Currie et al., 2007, p. 24).

Peer Relationships and Conflict

As preadolescent and early adolescents enter junior high school or middle school, they begin to move away from parental influences and become more reliant on peers to achieve identity formation (Akos & Levitt, 2002). Peer groups or cliques fill the "emotional vacuum" left behind (Adler et al., 1999) by providing emotional support and a

social network. Field, Kolbert, Crothers, and Hughes (2009) write that “reliable teen friendships are invaluable in navigating the angst, terror, joys and triumphs of adolescent life; however, when their friendships are not dependable, teens can find themselves adrift in challenging waters without the lifeboat of trustworthy friends” (p. 1). Although more reliant on peer support, girls especially are constantly evaluated by their peers in their social circles (Lund, 2002). The purpose of this evaluation is to assess one’s social status through comparison of oneself to other girls. Adolescent girls want “to achieve popularity and recognition as well as a degree of status within their social networks” (Willer & Cupach, 2008, p. 416). Peer acceptance or rejection can significantly affect the attitude of a girl towards her school and school community (Brady, 2004). In the struggle to fit in, being “normal” is often the means of success. Letendre (2007) writes, “Belonging to a peer group is particularly important to girls during the adolescent years because it bolsters confidence, and reinforces identity, and protects against isolation and victimization from female peers” (p. 360).

Within the context of school, students are often bullied when they are perceived to be different from the established norm (San Antonio & Salzfass, 2007). Standing out from the crowd on either end of the social spectrum (too intelligent or not being intelligent enough, too attractive or not being attractive enough, too much attention from boys or too little) can make a girl into a target for others in the school, whether out of envy or a sense of superiority. Social dominance hierarchies among peer groups may be based on socio-economic status, extra-curricular events, clothing styles, and many other factors, including race and sexual orientation (Brady, 2004). Adolescents constantly vie for power within that group and will engage in hurtful behaviors in order to

remove others so that they may occupy their social position in the group or social hierarchy (Willer & Cupach, 2008).

To meet this demand, girls cultivate cunning and covert methods of dealing with conflicts among members of the social hierarchy to maintain the dichotomous roles of appearing “nice” and “kind” while wielding their social power. The societal restriction on direct expression of feelings and needs teaches girls to manage anger, hurt, and disappointments typical of any relationship through the use of covert methods (Letendre, 2007). Instead of maintaining relationships assertively (through direct confrontation, expression of feeling, and honest self-reflection) females often employ indirect methods of aggression to increase their sense of control.

Relational and social aggressions are often the weapons of choice for dealing with peer conflict. Relational aggression is defined as behaviors (e.g. withdrawing friendship, isolating a friend from a peer group, telling a friend’s secrets to embarrass her) which are used to harm a person’s friendships or feelings of belonging in a peer group (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995) and social aggression includes behaviors (e.g., gossiping, spreading rumors, getting others to turn against a particular person) that are used to damage a person’s status among peers by attacking her social or sexual reputation (Field et al. 2009). Research has found connections between relational aggression and jealousy (Culotta & Goldstein, 2008), establishing power within peer groups (Currie et al., 2007), and gender socialization (Vall, 2002).

Body Image

During early adolescence when girls are struggling to achieve identity, they often make social comparisons to peers and media images offer alternative comparison

standards (Choate, 2007). Striving to look 'perfect' is essential for maintaining popularity in school (Currie et al., 2007). How do girls know what perfection looks like? The media tells them every day through internet websites, movies, television shows, and magazines (Thompson & Heinberg, 1999). In one study conducted in England, girls aged 11-16 were exposed to either ultra-thin or average-sized models on the covers of magazines (Clay, Vignoles, & Dittmar, 2005). Girls exposed to the ultra-thin models reported a significant decrease in body satisfaction and self-esteem. This study suggests a causal effect of media messages on body image satisfaction. The article goes on to hypothesize that awareness of societal ideals regarding appearance increases as girls get older. As the female body develops, the gap widens between societal messages and the actual female body, which can lead to body dissatisfaction and loss of self-esteem. In a study comparing boys' and girls' adolescent body image and psychosocial functioning, including 245 boys and 173 girls aged 12 to 15 years, girls were significantly more dissatisfied with their bodies than boys, had a more negative body image, had more concern with others' perceptions of their bodies, and would conceal their bodies from others more than boys (Davison & McCabe, 2006).

Body image is the strongest predictor for global self-esteem for adolescent girls and boys (DuBois, Tevendale, Burk-Draxton, Swenson, & Hardesty, 2000). Unfortunately, print, internet, and television advertisements relentlessly promote health, beauty and dietary products to females, directly or indirectly informing them of their flaws, hoping to increase anxiety about the body and appearance so that products and/or services are needed to solve various "problems." Because of the economic advantage of provoking appearance anxiety, marketers will not change their strategies

and it is up to invested adults and peers to teach media literacy skills and reinforce critical thinking on these topics.

Intervention: Summer Camp

This study proposes a specific intervention for supporting and assisting adolescent females with improving attitudes toward gender equality, assertiveness skills, body image satisfaction, and conflict resolution attitudes and skills. Further, this research is unique because it targets specific behaviors and skills of adolescent females in a “real life” setting. The summer camp took place on a university campus in the Northeastern United States and was directed and coordinated by a counselor educator and a graduate student in school counseling. Three undergraduate students majoring in helping professions and one recent school counseling graduate served as camp counselors and were each assigned a group of girls for small group activities.

Camp participants lived in college dormitories for five days and were educated in topics to foster resilience, empowerment and problem-solving. Local school counselors, university representatives and first year graduate students in school counseling developed and delivered educational sessions and experiential workshops. Topics for both the educational sessions and experiential session included leadership skills, healthy and unhealthy conflict resolution, assertiveness training, obtaining and maintaining a positive body image, media literacy, stress management, refusing drugs and alcohol, career exploration, and overall health and wellness. Each day was devoted to a specific theme (e.g. Monday: Building community: Establishing connections and promoting leadership) and all daily activities revolved around each theme. A typical day included an all camp opening session, a small group meeting to review the theme and

topics of the day, a series of workshops and experiential sessions, evening activities such as movies, dance lessons, indoor rock climbing and swimming, and a final small group meeting to reflect on the day and what was learned.

Camp participants represented nineteen different schools and one individual identified as being home schooled. This eclectic mix of campers from a variety of middle and junior high schools allowed most of the girls to have a “clean social slate” from which to build friendships and social bonds based on current circumstances rather than reputations or clearly divided social cliques in their current schools. Additionally, the camp curriculum incorporated a variety of team building activities to encourage camp cohesion and to help promote optimal participation. Creative, physical, experiential and academic methods of teaching were used to appeal to diverse learning styles. A major strength of the intervention was camper access to the diverse female staff, including local school counselors, professionals from the community, (e.g. female physician, minister and police officer) and the university representatives (e.g. female Director of Women’s Studies, geology professor, Dean of the College of Education) where the camp was held. Finally, participant learning was enhanced as the campers were required to develop a closing program for parents and family members. This concluding program featured poems, skits, songs, dances, and artwork that reflected the camp curriculum. For example, one of the skits featured the difference between inappropriate and appropriate conflict resolution skills. Rehearsal of the material was a strategic learning strategy and provided the camp participants with an opportunity to showcase their new knowledge, insight, and skills.

Quantitative surveys were administered to gain knowledge of girls' perceptions of their attitudes, abilities and skills, and to assess the effectiveness of the camp experience. In this study, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What is the effectiveness of a 5-day summer, residential program on assertiveness skills including attitudes about gender equality?
2. What is the effectiveness of a 5-day summer, residential program on body image?
3. What is the effectiveness of a 5-day summer, residential program on conflict resolution skill building in all areas of conflict including relational aggression?

Method

Participants

Thirty-four middle school/junior high-aged girls (12-15) from area urban, suburban, and rural schools participated in this study. Girls were recruited to attend a five-day, summer camp entitled *DREAM (Dynamic Respectful Empowered Active Motivated) Girls* via letters and phone calls to school counselors in four counties as well as newspaper advertisements promoting the camp. The camp was held at a moderately-sized university in the same Northeastern state during the summer of 2009. After applications were screened by the researchers, acceptance packets that included information about the present study as well as student assent and parent consent forms were mailed to the applicants' homes. All 34 campers elected to participate in the research study and completed the surveys during the course of the camp.

Of the 34 girls participating in the study, 23.53% reported as 12 years old, 32.35% as 13 years old, 35.29% as 14 years old, and 8.82% as 15 years old. These

ages represented 3 grade levels (entering in the fall): 5.88% entering 7th grade, 50.0% entering 8th grade, and 44.12% entering 9th grade. This is noteworthy because the majority of girls ($n = 32$) had experience at the junior high level prior to the camp intervention. While the surrounding region is predominantly Caucasian, there is some racial and ethnic diversity, and this was reflected in the sample. Of the 34 participants, 73.53% reported as Caucasian, 8.82% African American, 5.88% Latino, and 2.94% Biracial or Multiracial.

Procedure

The camp began on a Monday evening and concluded on a Friday evening. Participants were split into two groups according to the randomly selected colored stickers placed on name tags. During the first night of the camp, each group took turns participating in ice-breaker activities and completing the surveys. The surveys included a Demographic Questionnaire, the *Adolescent Femininity Ideology Scale Parts 1 and 2* (Tolman & Porche, 2000), the *Attitudes Toward Women Scale for Adolescents*, based on the short form of the *Spence-Helmreich Attitudes Toward Women Scale* (Galambos, Richards, & Gitelson, 1985), the *Body Appreciation Scale* (Avalos, Tylka, & Wood-Barcalow, 2005), and the *Conflict Resolution Scale Parts 1 and 2* (Smith, Daunic, Miller, & Robinson, 2002).

The participants were introduced to the study by the researcher. All participants were reminded that their participation was completely voluntary. The surveys took about 30 minutes to complete and several camp staff was on hand to answer any questions about an item's wording or meaning; however, pressure to answer questions was

controlled and results were more likely to be more accurate and/or honest. When finished, the participants were asked to submit their surveys to one of the assistants.

During the last day of the camp, participants again completed the surveys. The procedures that were followed for the pretest were repeated in the posttest. The researcher explained the posttest procedure and emphasized the voluntary nature of the project. When finished with the instruments, students turned their surveys upside-down and the researcher waited until everyone had done so before collecting the posttest.

Instruments

Demographic Questionnaire. The Demographic Questionnaire included questions about age, grade entering in the fall, and race. Its purpose was to obtain demographic data that would support the sample as being representative of the region from which it was taken. It was created in collaboration with a professor at the university and was not tested prior to the present study because there are no interpretive results to be drawn from the information presented in the questionnaire.

The Adolescent Femininity Ideology Scale (AFIS). *The AFIS* (Tolman & Porche, 2000) is a 6-point Likert scale that measures an adolescent female's individual response to social constructions of femininity. Sample items include, "*Often I look happy on the outside in order to please others, even if I don't feel happy on the inside*" and "*I wish I could say what I feel more often than I do.*" The research conducted to develop and validate this scale consisted of three studies. The first study generated and piloted potential items for inclusion in the scale. The second study tested the individual responses in sub-scales set by the researchers. The third study examined the validity of

the scale. All three studies used a diverse sampling of participants in both age (junior high to college) and ethnicity. Results of these three studies determined this two-part, 20-question scale to be both reliable and valid. Internal reliability for part 1, Inauthentic Self in Relationship was .67 for the eighth-grade site, .75 for the high school site, and .81 for the first-year college site. The internal reliability for Part 2, Objectified Relationship with Body, was .70 for the eighth-grade site, .80 for the high school site, and .81 for the first-year college site. Sample statements from Part 2 of the scale include, "*I often feel uncomfortable in my body*" and "*I am more concerned about how my body looks than how my body feels.*"

The Attitudes Toward Women Scale for Adolescents (ATWSA). *The ATWSA* (Galambos et al., 1985) is based on the short form of the *Spence-Helmreich Attitudes Toward Women Scale* (1980). It is a 12-question, 4-point Likert scale survey designed to examine adolescents' attitudes toward women and how these attitudes shape the life-paths of adolescent girls. Sample statements from this instrument include, "*On the average, girls are as smart as boys*" and "*In general, the father should have greater authority than the mother in making family decisions.*" This study was conducted with four separate sample groups with students ranging from 6th grade through 12th grade and representing diverse socioeconomic and racial groups. Reliability ranged from .62 to .86 with an average of .78 for boys and .72 for girls. Validity also proved to be consistent, for instrument results correlated closely with results from *Spence and Helmreich's Attitudes Toward Women Scale* (1978).

The Body Appreciation Scale (BAS). *The BAS* (Avalos et al., 2005) is a 13-question 5-point Likert scale and was designed to examine positive body image rather

than view only the negative aspects of body image. To this end, four studies were conducted with college women ranging in age from 17-55 years of age to develop this instrument. The first study developed the *BAS* items while the second study determined if the one-factor structure generalized to a different population of women. The third study tested for validity by correlating the test to body dissatisfaction, eating disorder symptoms, and personal sense of well-being. The final study was used to measure test-retest reliability of the scale. Reliability proved to be high ($r = .90, p < .001$). This 13 question 5-point Likert scale assessment accurately reflects body appreciation among women. Sample questions from this scale include, "*On the whole, I am satisfied with my body*" and "*Despite its flaws, I accept my body for what it is.*"

The Conflict Resolution Scale (CRS). The *CRS* (Smith et al., 2002) consists of two parts. The first part measures level of conflict in schools and is divided into several subscales: aggression, levels of disciplinary interventions, conflict-resolution styles, outside influences, need for help in solving problems, effects of poor communication on conflicts, and group aggression. Internal reliability ranged throughout the subscales from .45 (outside influences) to .89 (group aggression). The second part measures efficacy in conflict and non-conflict situations, adapted from a scale developed by Wheeler and Ladd (1982). The internal reliability for this section was .91 (conflict subscale) and .90 (non-conflict subscale). Each subscale of this instrument is based on a 5-point Likert scale and subsection length ranges from 2 to 13 questions. Sample items contained in each subscale include, "*When I am mad I threaten people,*" "*I have trouble letting people know what I want,*" "*I could use someone to help settle arguments*" (*friend, teacher, parent, or counselor*) and "*I get into arguments because of rumors.*" For

the purpose of this study, each subscale in part 1 will be individually tested while part 2 will be tested as a single subscale, since measure of efficacy in difficult situations meets the need of this research and does not call for a further split in analysis.

Results

Repeated measures multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to reduce the risk of Type I errors given the small sample size. The test was performed on the 24 dependent variables (pre and post tests for each subscale). The independent variable was Time (1 and 2). The Pillai's Trace criterion was used to determine the significance of the MANOVA. For the purposes of these analyses and determining statistical significance, alpha was set at $< .05$. With the use of the Pillai's Trace criterion, the combined dependent variables were significantly affected by time $F(1/22.000) = 4.232, p < .002$. Multivariate sphericity was assumed due to the nature of the pretest/posttest design (multiple measures were collected for each participant at both times of testing) (Robey & Barcikowski, 1987). Mauchly's test for sphericity revealed this to be true, but was not determined to bear significantly on the univariate test results.

Views on gender equality were assessed with ATWSA. This scale addresses gender equality, which includes questions related to feelings about gender stereotypes. Results of the univariate ANOVAs indicated significance for each subcategory ($F = 6.507, p = .05$). These results indicate an increased awareness of gender stereotypes. Throughout the intervention, participants were exposed to strong women in various career fields that encouraged them to challenge these gender stereotypes. Participants responded favorably to these women and results point to a significant change in thinking.

Table 1*Univariate Analysis of Variance for ATWS, AFIS-Part 1 & 2, BAS, CRS Part 2*

Variable	M	SD	F*	df*	p*
<i>ATWS</i>					
Pre-test	3.35	.36			
Post-test	3.50	.53	6.507	1	.016
<i>AFIS-Part 1</i>					
Pre-test	3.43	.83			
Post-test	2.95	.87	15.165	1	.001
<i>AFIS-Part 2</i>					
Pre-test	2.89	.88			
Post-test	2.42	.98	13.101	1	.000
<i>BAS</i>					
Pre-test	3.64	.89			
Post-test	4.03	.75	15.965	1	.000
<i>CRS-Part 2</i>					
Pre-test	3.54	.93			
Post-test	3.84	.92	7.611	1	.009

Note. * shown in post-test only

Two instruments measured general assertiveness. The first instrument, the *AFIS-Part 1*, assessed for worry over pleasing others while the second instrument, the *CRS-Part 2*, addressed standing up for self in issues of conflict. Because the second instrument focuses on self-efficacy in situations of conflict and not just conflict-resolution skills, it was included in analyzing the second research question rather than the third. There were statistically significant increases for both of these instruments: the *AFIS-Part 1* indicated a statistically significant increase ($F = 15.165$, $p = .001$), and the *CRS-Part 2*: efficacy in conflict and non-conflict situations demonstrated a statistically

significant increase ($F = 7.611, p = .009$). These findings are also significant, which indicate a positive response to assertiveness training during the intervention. Training included education of terminology such as passive, aggressive, and assertive as well as role plays and projects that encouraged assertive behavior. Results demonstrate awareness and appreciation for an assertive communication style.

Two assessments were administered to measure for body image: the *AFIS-Part 2* and the *BAS*. Univariate ANOVAs indicated significant changes in both the *AFIS-Part 2* ($F = 13.101, p = .000$) and the *BAS* ($F = 1.965, p = .000$). Table 1 shows the level of significance for each of these tests. Participants showed a significant increase in body appreciation at the end of the intervention camp. Education on this topic included understanding media messages as well as distortions about the ideal feminine body, nutrition and exercise workshops, and the psychological and physiological effects of positive body appreciation.

One of the main goals of the camp was to educate girls about relational aggression and alternative methods of handling aggressive situations; thus relational aggression was specifically mentioned in the third research question. Because the instruments that assessed conflict-resolution skills did not specifically focus on relational aggression, the results are combined. Of the seven subscales on the *CRS-Part 1*, there was only a statistically significant increase for the conflict resolution style subscale ($F = 5.729, p = .023$). No significant differences were found in the other six subscales of the *CRS-Part 1*. These subscales included aggression ($F = 1.897, p = .178$), levels of disciplinary interventions ($F = .653, p = .425$), outside influences ($F = .719, p = .403$), need for help in solving problems ($F = .250, p = .620$), effects of poor communication on

Table 2*Univariate Analysis of Variance for CRS-Part 1*

Variable	M	SD	F*	df*	p*
<i>Aggression</i>					
Pre-test	1.85	.83			
Post-test	1.73	.65	1.897	1	.178
<i>Discipline</i>					
Pre-test	1.04	.14			
Post-test	1.06	.21	.653	1	.425
<i>Conflict resolution</i>					
Pre-test	2.46	.95			
Post-test	2.13	.90	5.729	1	.023
<i>Influences</i>					
Pre-test	2.07	1.09			
Post-test	1.93	1.14	.719	1	.403
<i>Help</i>					
Pre-test	2.15	.70			
Post-test	2.20	.79	.250	1	.620
<i>Communication</i>					
Pre-test	1.99	1.00			
Post-test	1.99	1.00	.000	1	1.000
<i>Group aggression</i>					
Pre-test	2.87	1.28			
Post-test	2.57	1.04	1.882	1	.179

Note. * shown in post-test only

disciplinary interventions ($F = .653$, $p = .425$), outside influences ($F = .719$, $p = .403$), need for help in solving problems ($F = .250$, $p = .620$), effects of poor communication on

conflicts ($F = .000$, $p = 1.000$), and group aggression ($F = 1.882$, $p = .179$). Participant scores indicated a change in the area of conflict resolution, but not on other subscales.

Discussion

In general, the researchers found support for the effectiveness of a 5-day summer camp on attitudes toward gender equality, assertiveness skills, body image satisfaction, and conflict resolution skills among middle school girl participants. There did not appear to be any significant difference in the use of relational aggression.

Statistically significant results were noted for attitudes on gender equality, assertiveness, body image, and conflict resolution skills. Participants demonstrated a clear level of cognitive growth in each area, as evidenced by the instruments' mean scores.

The first research question addressed participants' attitudes toward gender equality. Participants' results on the *ATWSA* (Galambos et al., 1985) increased significantly from pretest to posttest. It is important to note the mean for both the pretest (3.35) and posttest (3.50) results. With a maximum of 4, these results indicate a mild level of agreement with some gender stereotypes. This could indicate the cultural reinforcement of these gender stereotypes in this geographic region. It could also indicate an unwillingness to have a strong opinion on every question, which would support literature on gender expectations and their relationship to female suppression of self (Lund, 2002). Apart from mild adherence to gender stereotypes, participants demonstrated a significant increase in assertiveness skills. They specified greater ease in confronting others when an issue arose based on a hypothetical situation and less worry over what others think about them. While the hypothetical situations addressed

attitudes rather than actions, participants acknowledged willingness to change passive or aggressive behaviors. One reason for this might be the assertiveness training sessions during the camp experience, both in awareness of terminology as well as specific methods to confront someone in an assertive manner.

Body image satisfaction increased overall for the camp participants. Results from both instruments used showed a statistically significant increase at the end of the intervention camp. Therefore, the camp participants were learning to be aware of societal messages relating to body image, use media literacy skills to evaluate these messages and generate their own assessment of self using critical thinking. Therefore, participants have begun to achieve a higher rate of body appreciation at least in the short term.

Finally, it is worthy to note that results for this research question were only significant in the conflict resolution style subscale of the *CRS-Part 1* (Smith et al., 2002). Since participants indicated a higher level of assertiveness, it seems it should follow that conflict resolution skills should improve while relational aggression should decrease. Indeed, conflict resolution styles did improve significantly. Participants reported an increase in communicating with others when placed in a situation of conflict. This supports research from the second question in the study. The other subscales in this instrument, however, did not indicate significance. It seems that the other subscales assess actions at school while the conflict resolution styles portion assessed attitude instead. For example, other questions from the subscales assessed levels of detention or suspension based on problems with other kids, getting into physical fights with others, arguments at home affecting feelings at school, getting distracted from

schoolwork because of others' arguments, getting into arguments because of rumor-spreading, and backing up friends in a fight. Some of these responses were out of the participants' control while others required participant action to change. One explanation for the insignificance is that participants could not justify altering responses on the posttest because they had not had a chance to change their behaviors in the various situations presented. Another explanation could indicate of change in participants' thinking. Based on the significance of both the assertiveness skills instruments and the conflict resolution styles subscale, it can be assumed that this is not the case.

Limitations

This research study serves to better understand the effectiveness of a five-day intervention camp for early adolescent females in a northeastern state in the United States. It does not adequately allow for generalization to other populations such as urban and some suburban settings, as most participants were from a rural or moderately suburban background. This population was also largely homogeneous in nature in regard to racial background as well: 73.53% reported as Caucasian, which is indicative of this setting but not necessarily other areas of the country. Another limitation of the study is the simple pretest/posttest design. Participants were given the same instruments for both the pretest and the posttest. This allowed for consistency in determining statistical significance, but may have promoted participants to modify answers based on what they thought was the "correct", socially desirable response given the themes and programming involved during the camp experience.

Most instruments measured participants' attitudes toward each topic addressed, but the conflict resolution survey measured participants' actions in school and everyday

life. Participants may have felt confused by this switch in focus. They may have changed their attitudes towards conflict resolution skills but were unable to mark responses accordingly in the survey because of the nature and focus of the questions (e.g., *other kids mess with me on the way to and/or from school*). As a result, the insignificant findings for this scale may not capture conflict resolution skill development.

Future Research

Aside from these noted limitations, this research does much to further literature on the effectiveness of proposed out-of-school interventions for early adolescent females. Further research in this area should include diverse populations in a range of settings. Ethnic diversity, socio-economic background, school atmosphere, familial structure, and regional settings would all be additive variables in investigating the effectiveness of an intervention such as the proposed study employs.

Additional research could also use a parallel form design instead of a simple pretest/posttest design. This would eliminate participants' responses designed to please the researcher. A different unknown individual could administer the surveys to avoid a dual relationship between the participants and the researcher/counselor. Additionally a quasi-experimental design using a control group may better assess the significance of the intervention.

The current research indicated a positive impact on both assertiveness skills and gender equality as a result of the intervention camp. Further research could attempt to determine the long term benefits of participating in a summer program (e.g. third measure one year after the camp). For example, a longitudinal study could track the participants' progress throughout the following school year to determine occurrences of

relational aggression or other forms of conflict. In this way, the impact of the intervention camp on relational aggression and other forms of conflict could be accurately assessed. An additional camp experience for returning campers would provide additional information on current hypotheses as well as provide further training for participants, thus increasing the possibility of long-term positive effects.

Implications for School Counselors

School counseling professionals are encouraged to focus primarily on academic interventions with students although the ASCA National Standards clearly outline expectations in career and social and emotional development. Additionally, many school counselors are overwhelmed by challenging student to counselor ratios and cannot fathom the addition of another programming initiative. Unfortunately, male and female middle school students are often left to navigate difficult developmental challenges without the support of their school counselors. Yet, it is clear that female adolescents' academic focus and achievement can be adversely impacted by gender stereotypes, body image dissatisfaction, and inadequate conflict resolution skills.

The development of summer programming may provide some answers to this dilemma for middle school counselors. Further, summer programming holds incredible opportunities for collaboration with fellow school counselors, local universities and community members which may make the development and implementation of a camp less onerous. Universities with school counseling graduate programs may particularly benefit from collaborating on summer camp programming. Briggs, Staton and Gilligan (2009) proposed a dual focus leadership camp which emphasized leadership development for girls as well as a parallel, experiential education opportunity for school

counselors in training. School counselors in training were able to develop leadership curriculum and programming, use their emerging leadership skills and have experience with collecting and evaluating data related to a specific intervention.

Conclusion

Camp participants benefitted from this camp experience. There was a significant positive impact on participants voicing gender equality and valuing assertiveness. Further, participants learned definitions of assertiveness, passivity, and aggression as well as practiced methods to demonstrate assertiveness in difficult social situations. The middle school girls reported significantly greater satisfaction with their bodies as well as understanding of unrealistic pressures from the media on their gender in general and voicing gender equality specifically.

Finally, there are mixed results in determining the impact of a five-day summer leadership camp on conflict-resolution skill building in all areas of conflict including relational aggression. While participants delineated an increase in conflict resolution style, there was no significant impact on other areas of conflict resolution including relational aggression. In conclusion, this research supports actively addressing the social and emotional needs of middle school females. Summer programs allow school counselors to address the developmental needs of students without taking time away from the academic focus of the school year.

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