

**A PROPOSED SELF-ESTEEM AND BODY IMAGE CURRICULUM FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL-AGED GIRLS**

by

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**ABSTRACT**

Middle school girls are a population with low average self-esteem and body image. Self-esteem and body image can affect many aspects of health, including substance use, eating disorders, and depression. The Girl Scouts of Central Indiana (GSCI) Terre Haute Service Center runs an in-school club at Otter Creek Middle School to improve girls' self-esteem. Because many of the girls participate in the club year after year, a new curriculum is needed each school year. The purpose of this project is to create a program plan for the 2015-2016 school year, based on self-esteem and body image research. In order to have a curriculum that is supported by research, practical for this situation, and appropriate for these girls, activities from several curricula are modified and combined in this program plan. Because of the serious health implications of low self-esteem and body image in middle school girls, successful interventions are a necessary public health goal. This program plan is a model for how to tailor existing interventions for a specific population.

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## **PREFACE**

The author would like to thank her advisor, Elizabeth Felter, as well as her committee member, Candice Kammerer. She would also like to thank Stacey Rozmin, Membership Director of the Girl Scouts of Central Indiana, Terre Haute Service Center, who coordinates the in-school club at Otter Creek Middle School.



## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Low self-esteem and poor body image are common problems in middle school girls (Armitage, 2012; Birndorf, Ryan, Auinger, & Aten, 2005; Levine & Smolak, 2002a; Polce-Lynch, Myers, Kliewer, & Kilmartin, 2001; Smolak, 2002; van den Berg, Mond, Eisenberg, Ackard, & Neumark-Sztainer, 2010; Wild, Flisher, Bhana, & Lombard, 2004). Both can lead to a number of health concerns, including substance abuse, depression, eating disorders, and risky sexual behavior (Gordon & Caltabiano, 1996; Haney & Durlak, 1998; McGee & Williams, 2000; Neumark-Sztainer, Paxton, Hannan, Haines, & Story, 2006; Neumark-Sztainer, Story, French, & Resnick, 1997; Salazar et al., 2005; Spencer, Zimet, Aalsma, & Orr, 2002; Stice & Shaw, 2003; Wild et al., 2004). Research supports several strategies for interventions to improve body image and self-esteem in this population. Some of these strategies have been studied under specific circumstances (McVey, Lieberman, Voorberg, Wardrope, & Blackmore, 2003; McVey, Lieberman, Voorberg, Wardrope, Blackmore, et al., 2003; Neumark-Sztainer, Sherwood, Coller, & Hannan, 2000; J. A. O'Dea & Abraham, 2000; Smolak & Levine, 2001; Stice, Rohde, Shaw, & Gau, 2011), but to the author's knowledge, they have not been systematically compared or tested under a wide range of circumstances. Furthermore, in the interventions tested, researchers have not pieced out which aspects of the program contributed to positive change (Neumark-Sztainer, Paxton, et al., 2006).

The Girl Scouts of Central Indiana ran a program in 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 at Otter Creek Middle School designed to help girls' self-esteem and body image. The author coordinated this program in 2014-2015. A different curriculum was used each year, and because girls participate year after year, a new curriculum is needed for 2015-2016. The purpose of this paper is to review the relevant literature,

consider lessons learned from the 2014-2015 school year, explore existing curricula, and ultimately adapt those curricula to create a customized program plan.

### **1.1 TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA**

Terre Haute, Indiana is a city of approximately 61,000 people. About 84% of its residents are white (not Hispanic), about 11% are black, about 3% are Hispanic, and about 1% are Asian. The city is relatively poor, with a median household income of \$31,943 (state average \$48,374) and 25.8% of persons below poverty level (state average 15.4%). The homeownership rate is 55.8% (state average 70%), and the median value of owner-occupied housing units is \$76,800 (state average \$122,800) (Census).

Unemployment was 7.5% in December 2014 (statewide 5.9%) (BureauofLaborStatistics). Within the city, there are several institutes of higher education, including Indiana State University, Rose Hulman Institute of Technology, Ivy Tech Community College, and Harrison College for Career Training. Terre Haute is also home to a Federal Corrections Complex, comprising two facilities, one of which houses the federal death row for males (FederalBureauofPrisons).

Terre Haute is located in Vigo County, which is in the west central part of Indiana, 70 miles west of Indianapolis. The county has approximately 108,000 people within its 403 square miles (Census). About 60% of the land in the county is farmland, with crops of soybeans, corn, wheat, and hay. Within Vigo County, the industries with the most employees are Healthcare and Social Assistance, Government, Manufacturing, Retail, and Accommodation and Food Services (TerreHauteEconomicDevelopmentCorporation).

## 1.2 IN-SCHOOL CLUB AT OTTER CREEK MIDDLE SCHOOL

According to their mission, “Girl Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place.” At the regional level, there are Girl Scout Councils. The Girl Scouts of Central Indiana (GSCI) is a Girl Scout Council that organizes Girl Scout troops and other activities in 45 counties in Indiana. GSCI has eight Service Centers spread throughout the 45 counties, including one in Terre Haute. This Service Center oversees Girl Scout Troops in the Terre Haute area (GSCI).

One of the programs run by the Terre Haute Service Center is a free, in-school club called Being Me at Otter Creek Middle School. The school has approximately 800 students in grades 6, 7, and 8 (VigoCountySchoolCorporation). The club meets in one of the school’s cafeterias; the room is large with long tables that seat up to 8 students. In the cafeteria, there are no computers or other technology available to show videos or project large images for everyone to see at once (Personal Experience). Lorrie Schiedler, the school counselor, handles sign-ups for the club, as well as being a resource for any problems that arise. The school does not provide any additional materials or resources (Personal Communication with Lorrie Schiedler on October 2, 2014). The Girl Scout Service Center is able to provide limited materials, but the author and 2014-2015 coordinator of Being Me spent about \$150 on supplies and \$100 on snacks, including a pizza party for each group at the end of the school year (Personal Experience).

There are two groups of approximately 15 girls; the two groups meet on alternate weeks. Each week, the number of girls who attend varies. There have been as few as seven girls or as many as fourteen in a given week. During the same time period, other activities sometimes meet, such as choir or band, so girls who are also in those activities miss the club. In the 2014-2015 curriculum, many of the

activities build on previous activities. This can pose a problem because the girls do not necessarily attend every time (Personal Experience).

The club meets Monday afternoons for 45 minutes during the school day. On days when there is a two hour delay, the group meets for 30 minutes (Personal Communication with Lorrie Schiedler on October 2, 2014). However, it often takes five or more minutes for the girls to arrive at the club (Personal Experience). This has two effects. One, the real time available for activities is more like 40 minutes (25 on a two hour delay day). Two, it works better when there is an introductory activity that the girls can work on as they wait for other girls to arrive. The activity should be something with minimal instructions because they have to be repeated as additional girls arrive. It should also be something that does not need to be completed, because the girls who arrive last will not have much time to work on it. In Being Me 2014-2015, opening activities have included word searches with words related to the other activities and crafts related to the themes of the program (Personal Experience).

The 2013-2014 program used a curriculum called Studio 2B. For 2014-2015, the program used a curriculum called Free Being Me (Personal Communication with Stacey Rozmin on September 19, 2014). The programs address body image issues and self-esteem through fun, age-appropriate activities. Some of the girls who participated as sixth or seventh graders participated again as seventh or eighth graders. Every sixth and seventh grade girl who attended the final session in 2014-2015 stated a desire to participate again in 2015-2016 (Personal Communication April 20, 2015 and April 27, 2015). This means that the curricula must not have too much repetition of activities.

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Girls are more affected by body image issues than boys (Armitage, 2012; Polce-Lynch et al., 2001; Smolak, 2002; van den Berg et al., 2010; Wild et al., 2004), and woman more than men (Frederick, Peplau, & Lever, 2006). Girls have also been shown to have lower self-esteem than boys of the same age (Armitage, 2012; Birndorf et al., 2005; Polce-Lynch et al., 2001; van den Berg et al., 2010; Wild et al., 2004). Black girls seem to have better body image and self-esteem, on average, than white girls (Adams, 2010; Birndorf et al., 2005; Biro, Striegel-Moore, Franko, Padgett, & Bean, 2006; Kelly, Wall, Eisenberg, Story, & Neumark-Sztainer, 2005; van den Berg et al., 2010). Many girls are dissatisfied with two or more aspects of their body (estimates range from 40% to 70%) and over half would like to be thinner (estimates range from 50% to 80%) (Levine & Smolak, 2002a). Based on population surveys, about 80% of girls diet at some point while they are teenagers, and up to 65% of teenage girls are dieting at any one time (Striegel-Moore & Franko, 2002). In Indiana, 9.2% of teenage girls are overweight, but 37.2% think they are overweight and 63.1% were trying to lose weight at the time of the survey (IndianaStateDepartmentofHealth, 2005). Girls' dissatisfaction with their appearance seems to peak in early adolescence, ages 12-15 (Levine & Smolak, 2002a). Interventions may be more successful when implemented before girls reach high school because body image stabilizes in later adolescence (Birndorf et al., 2005; Biro et al., 2006; Clay, Vignoles, & Dittmar, 2005; Tiggemann, 2006; Yager, Diedrichs, Ricciardelli, & Halliwell, 2013).

Low self-esteem in adolescents has been linked to substance abuse including alcohol use and abuse, eating disorders, risky sexual behavior, and suicidal ideation (Gordon & Caltabiano, 1996; Haney

& Durlak, 1998; McGee & Williams, 2000; Neumark-Sztainer et al., 1997; Salazar et al., 2005; Spencer et al., 2002; Wild et al., 2004). Poor body image contributes to depression in adolescent girls (Stice & Bearman, 2001; Striegel-Moore & Franko, 2002). Poor body image also increases the chances that adolescent girls will begin to smoke ( $R = .22$ ) (Stice & Shaw, 2003). In a five year longitudinal study, lower body satisfaction at the beginning predicted more dieting and very unhealthy weight control behaviors at the end of the study. Of those in the lowest quartile of body satisfaction at the beginning of the study, 65.1% were dieting at the end, versus 47.1% of those in the highest quartile of body satisfaction at the beginning. Similarly, of those in the lowest quartile of body satisfaction at the beginning of the study, 32.7% used very unhealthy weight control measures at the end of the study, compared to 15.7% of those who started in the highest quartile of body satisfaction at the beginning (Neumark-Sztainer, Paxton, et al., 2006).

Body image is closely linked to self-esteem, with poor body image predicting low self-esteem (Paxton, Neumark-Sztainer, Hannan, & Eisenberg, 2006). In one study of adolescent girls, appearance satisfaction was positively correlated with self-esteem ( $R = .46$ ), while desire for thinness was negatively correlated with self-esteem ( $R = -.24$ ) (Dohnt & Tiggemann, 2006). Tiggemann conducted a longitudinal study that found weight dissatisfaction predicted self-esteem two years later ( $R = .33$ ) (Tiggemann, 2005). Levine and Smolak assert that the most important part of global self-esteem in adolescence is body image (Levine & Smolak, 2002a). In one study with eighth grade girls, body image was the best predictor of self-esteem, better than family relations, peer relations, and media influence (Polce-Lynch et al., 2001). Tiggemann found that body dissatisfaction accounted for some of the variance in self-esteem ( $R = 0.35$ ) (Tiggemann, 2001), while van den Berg et al. found a strong negative association between body dissatisfaction and self-esteem in average weight, overweight, and obese girls (van den Berg et al., 2010).

## 2.1 CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO POOR BODY IMAGE AND LOW SELF-ESTEEM

Having a higher Body Mass Index (BMI) has been linked to poor body image and self-esteem. In a longitudinal study, girls with higher BMI at time one had lower body satisfaction later ( $R = .47$ ) (Stice & Whitenton, 2002). In another study, high BMI predicted lower self-esteem two years later ( $R = -.19$ ), but figure dissatisfaction and perceived overweight were more closely correlated with self-esteem than BMI with self-esteem ( $R = -.21$  and  $R = -.24$  respectively) (Tiggemann, 2005). Durkin and Paxton found the body image of girls with high BMI was more negatively affected by media images than girls with normal BMI. The correlation between BMI and state body satisfaction after media exposure was  $-.27$  (Durkin & Paxton, 2002). In another study, the quartile with the highest BMI, when compared to the other three quartiles, had lower scores on scholastic competence, social acceptance, athletic competence, physical appearance, job competence, romantic appeal, behavioral conduct, close friendship, and global self-worth (J. A. O'Dea, 2006).

The tripartite influence model states that “contemporary beauty ideals for women are reinforced and transmitted by a number of sociocultural influences, most notably parents, peers, and the media” (Tiggemann & Miller, 2010). Because of the extent of media exposure, media could be the most significant source presenting society’s thin ideal for women (Tiggemann, Gardiner, & Slater, 2000; Tiggemann & McGill, 2004). Images of the female ideal may have an especially large effect on middle school girls (Durkin & Paxton, 2002). Images of people seem to have more of an effect on body image than images of appearance-related products (Birkeland et al., 2005). The effect of media on body image seems to be strongest in those who are “already most invested in their appearance” (Tiggemann, 2002). The effect of media exposure on body image may also be affected by self-esteem. Tiggemann found the effect of TV watching on body dissatisfaction was much stronger in girls who had low self-esteem ( $R =$

.23) than in girls with higher self-esteem ( $R = .01$ ) (Tiggemann, 2003). Body dissatisfaction and the consumption of media may be reciprocal, meaning that those with body image issues may seek out more media that promotes the thin ideal, which then harms body image, in an infinite cycle (Clay et al., 2005; Tiggemann, 2006; Tiggemann & Miller, 2010).

Two models have been proposed for how media affects body image and self-esteem. One model proposes that girls compare themselves to images they see (social comparison), girls recognize that our culture values thinness (internalization of the thin ideal), and girls learn that how they look is an important part of who they are (investment in appearance for self-evaluation) (Tiggemann, 2002). Another proposed model is more linear, with increased media exposure leading to increased awareness of cultural ideals, leading to increased internalization, leading to increased social comparison, leading to decreased body satisfaction, leading to decreased self-esteem (Clay et al., 2005). Whether the process is linear or not, research supports the importance of social comparison and internalization of the thin ideal in how media affects body image and self-esteem. Appearance-related internet exposure was linked to both a decrease in weight satisfaction ( $R = -.17$ ) and an increase in drive for thinness ( $R = .32$ ) in one study. This process was mediated by internalization of the thin ideal and social comparison (Tiggemann & Miller, 2010). Clay et al. found that internalization and social comparison accounted for 47% of the differences in body satisfaction and 64% of the differences in self-esteem (Clay et al., 2005). One study found that girls with higher internalization had a more negative emotional response to exposure to media images. The correlation between internalization and state body satisfaction after media exposure in tenth grade girls was  $-.34$ , while the correlation between internalization and state depression after media exposure was  $.23$  (Durkin & Paxton, 2002). Recent research has focused specifically on internet exposure; more exposure was linked to thin-ideal internalization and drive for thinness ( $R$  ranges from  $.11$  to  $.26$ ) (Tiggemann & Slater, 2013).



The concepts of thin ideal internalization and investment in appearance for self-evaluation have been studied outside the realm of media exposure. Internalization can lead to poor body image and eating problems (Thompson & Stice, 2001). Shroff and Thompson studied thin ideal internalization and found it was closely linked with body dissatisfaction ( $R = .60$ ) (Shroff & Thompson, 2006), and a longitudinal study found thin ideal internalization was a predictor of body dissatisfaction ( $R = .40$ ) (Stice & Whitenton, 2002). Tiggemann found that girls who based their self-evaluation more on their appearance were more likely to have poor body image a year later (Tiggemann, 2006).

Interactions with other people can also affect self-esteem and body image. This is supported by both the Social Cognitive Theory, which states that “socio-environmental, personal, and behavioral factors continually interact with each other” to affect body image and self-esteem (Neumark-Sztainer et al., 2000), and the tripartite influence model discussed above, which includes the importance of parents and peers. As mentioned above, social comparison (comparing oneself to other people who are either more or less attractive) is one way that interactions with others can affect girls. Another way is “reflected appraisal,” in which individuals are influenced by how they believe others see them, even more than they are influenced by how others actually see them. Others may also provide feedback about how individuals look through comments, body language, and the way they are treated. Peers’ behavior can model cultural norms about body image (Tantleff-Dunn & Gokee, 2002). In one study, peer influence accounted for 46% of the variance in body dissatisfaction and 33% of the variance in self-esteem (Shroff & Thompson, 2006).

## **2.2 INTERVENTIONS FOR SELF-ESTEEM AND BODY IMAGE**

Only a few body image Interventions have been rigorously tested, but there is some support for the potential that interventions for girls age 12-17 can improve body image (Levine & Smolak, 2002a).

For example, 95% of participants reported one or more change indicating improved body image after the program Everybody's Different (J. A. O'Dea & Abraham, 2000). A program called Eating Smart, Eating for Me found that participants had better body image than non-participants two years later (Smolak & Levine, 2001). A school-based program targeting self-esteem found improved body satisfaction, but the researchers were unable to replicate it (McVey, Lieberman, Voorberg, Wardrope, & Blackmore, 2003; McVey, Lieberman, Voorberg, Wardrope, Blackmore, et al., 2003). Free to Be Me, the curriculum being used for the 2014-2015 school year at Otter Creek Middle School, cites a study that found three years after a school-based program, "60% of girls have significantly improved body confidence, 78% of girls feel more confident and capable at school, and 71% of girls have better relationships with their peers" (Stice et al., 2011). Participants in a different version Free to Be Me had lower levels of thin-ideal internalization than girls in a control group (Neumark-Sztainer et al., 2000). Unfortunately, it is difficult to piece out which parts of interventions are contributing to positive changes (Neumark-Sztainer, Levine, et al., 2006).

School-based interventions have some distinct advantages. Most importantly, schools provide access to large numbers of students, which is especially useful for broad-based prevention programs. Additionally, health promotion is already part of many curricula, and school-wide efforts can reinforce body image or self-esteem campaigns (Yager & O'Dea, 2005). Unfortunately, school-based programs which depend on teachers to deliver them may suffer if the teachers do not receive sufficient training. They may oversimplify the issues, not have accurate information, and may have subconscious biases against larger children (Yager & O'Dea, 2005). Programs focused on weight may actually backfire, causing more harm to overweight adolescents, which is why a self-esteem approach is so promising (J. A. O'Dea, 2006).

In a meta-analysis (ES of 1 = 1 SD), researchers found that the most effective interventions were those focused specifically on self-esteem (mean effect size = 0.57) rather than behavior or social skills

(ES = 0.10). Interventions were also more successful when they were based on existing research (ES = 0.71), compared to those based on theory (ES = 0.43 to 0.53, depending on the theory), a research hypothesis (ES = 0.26), or no rationale at all (ES = 0.11). The authors concluded that “it is possible to significantly improve children’s and adolescent’s levels of self-esteem and self-concept” (Haney & Durlak, 1998). Another analysis found that successful interventions met more than once, for an average of 5 hours. The authors also found the programs more effective when they included only girls (Yager et al., 2013).

Many strategies to prevent or treat eating disorders, poor body image, and poor self-esteem have been used or proposed based on research. One of the most commonly cited strategies is to improve media literacy (Clay et al., 2005; McVey, Davis, Tweed, & Shaw, 2004; Neumark-Sztainer et al., 2000; Polce-Lynch et al., 2001; Smolak & Levine, 2001; Tiggemann & Slater, 2013; Yager et al., 2013; Yager & O’Dea, 2008; Yamamiya, Cash, Melnyk, Posavac, & Posavac, 2005), which makes sense given the extent to which the media is thought to influence body image. A related strategy is to help girls understand and speak out against cultural pressures to combat thin ideal internalization (J. A. O’Dea, 2004; J. A. O’Dea & Abraham, 2000; Polce-Lynch et al., 2001; Smolak & Levine, 2001; Stice & Whitenton, 2002; Williamson, Stewart, White, & York-Crowe, 2002), and even try to change cultural norms (Levine & Smolak, 2002b). A potentially effective technique is to teach participants empowerment and advocacy skills (Neumark-Sztainer, Levine, et al., 2006; Neumark-Sztainer et al., 2000). To combat the effects of social comparison, interventions could teach girls not to compare themselves with others, especially with the unrealistic depiction of women in the media (Tiggemann & McGill, 2004).

Some strategies to improve self-esteem have to do with areas not specifically related to body image. One tactic is to teach participants ways to handle stress through healthy coping strategies (McVey et al., 2004; J. A. O’Dea, 2004; J. A. O’Dea & Abraham, 2000; Williamson et al., 2002). Interventions could encourage positive relationships (Levine & Smolak, 2002b; McVey et al., 2004; J. A.

O'Dea, 2004; Williamson et al., 2002). Programs should also teach specific competencies (Bos, Muris, Mulkens, & Schaalma, 2006; Levine & Smolak, 2002b), including communication skills (J. A. O'Dea & Abraham, 2000) and relationship skills (J. A. O'Dea & Abraham, 2000). This kind of skill-building may help participants' self-concept. A related strategy is to help participants consider many parts of the self, value parts of the self that are positive, and decrease the importance of appearance in self-evaluation (Armitage, 2012; Bos et al., 2006; McVey et al., 2004; J. A. O'Dea, 2004; Polce-Lynch et al., 2001). More directly, interventions should provide the opportunity for positive self-evaluation (Armitage, 2012; Bos et al., 2006; J. O'Dea, 2002; J. A. O'Dea, 2004; J. A. O'Dea & Abraham, 2000), as well as positive feedback from others (Bos et al., 2006; J. A. O'Dea, 2004).

Another set of strategies are more directly related to body image. One author suggests that interventions address perceptions and misperceptions about the body (Williamson et al., 2002). Because adolescence is a time in which girls experience a lot of body changes, interventions should teach them about normal pubertal development and natural genetic variation (McVey et al., 2004; Neumark-Sztainer et al., 2000; Smolak & Levine, 2001). Interventions also may target the potentially negative influence of peers on body image (Shroff & Thompson, 2006; Yager et al., 2013). On the other hand, peer influence can be positive if participants share and relate to one another (Tiggemann et al., 2000).

### 3.0 METHODOLOGY

The in-school club at Otter Creek Middle School is meant to improve the self-esteem and body image of girls. To find potential curricula that might be appropriate for this program, the author searched online using the key words self-esteem with curriculum, then body image with curriculum. The author explored results based on several criteria. First, the curriculum had to be designed for girls or a group with mixed gender (not for just boys). Second, the curriculum had to be designed for the right age group, encompassing at least part of the age range 11-15 and/or grades 6-8. Finally, the curriculum had to be available immediately to a lay person. Using these criteria, four curricula were identified: Girls Only!, Go Girl Go!, Healthy Body Image, and Your Own Healthy Style. In addition, the Amaze Journey was selected because it is a Girl Scout curriculum. Although it does not specifically address body image and self-esteem, the activities contained within the curriculum are related to these issues.

The four curricula available online are free and available to the public. Girls Only! is designed to be implemented by community groups, and it specifically mentions that it can and should be adapted for the particular needs of the group. Go Girl Go! is designed to be implemented by a school, sports team, or community group, and it also specifically states that it can be modified for the needs of the program. Healthy Body Image and Your Own Healthy Style are both designed to be presented in school, but there are no specific prohibitions against using them in other settings or using only parts of them. The Amaze Journey is contained in a book for sale through the Girl Scouts of America. Although girls can purchase a book, the leader can facilitate the program by only purchasing one book. The Being Me club is sponsored by the Girl Scouts, and the Terre Haute Service Center provided a copy of the Amaze

Journey to the author. If another organization wanted to use the activities from the Amaze Journey, they would have to purchase one copy of the book. To respect copyright law, the facilitator may not photocopy the book, and she must cite the curricula wherever appropriate.

The author of this manuscript was the facilitator for the Being Me club during the 2014-2015 school year. Through communication and interaction with the participants, she became familiar with the program and participants. At the second to last session, girls completed a short evaluation of the program (see Appendix). This provided direct, anonymous feedback from the girls about Being Me. The author consolidated her notes on these interactions and communications to create a list of practical considerations for program planning.

## **4.0 RESULTS**

The author will describe the girls who participated in the 2014-2015 school year, as well as practical considerations for program planning. Then, each of the five curricula are reviewed.

### **4.1 GIRLS WHO PARTICIPATE**

A total of 28 girls attended at least one session in the 2014-2015 school year (Attendance logs). The girls who participate in the program are in grades 6 through 8. Their ages range from 11 through 15 (Sign-up forms). A large developmental gap exists between the youngest girls and the older girls. For example, in one activity, the girls were asked to brainstorm physical features of the theoretical “perfect-looking” woman. The younger girls were embarrassed to refer to breasts, even when they were using more general terms like chest. The older girls suggested that a woman should be well groomed “down the V,” meaning the pubic region (Session 2 on October 27, 2014 and November 3, 2014). A second example comes from an activity called Rock or Feather. The girls were asked which of two options they were more like, such as a rock or a feather. In the younger group, the girls had trouble with the abstract nature of the activity. They selected which option they liked better, and were unable to think about which they were more like. In the older group, the girls were able to think more abstractly, relating characteristics of the concept (such as feather) to characteristics of themselves (such as being gentle) (Session 6 on January 26, 2015 and February 2, 2015).

Although they were not asked in a formal way about their home lives, some of the 28 girls did report problems at home. One girl spent part of the year in foster care after being removed from her mother's home. She later returned to live with her mother, but her two brothers remained in foster care (Personal Communication on February 9, 2015). Another girl reported that she lived in a foster home long term (Personal Communication March 23, 2015). One girl's permission slip was signed by a grandmother, who is her legal guardian (Sign-up sheet). Five girls mentioned that their mothers had them at a young age (Personal Communication on October 6, 2014, October 20, 2014, October 27, 2014, and November 3, 2014). About 10 mentioned a friend or family member who currently is or previously has been pregnant as a teenager (Personal Communication on October 6, 2014, October 20, 2014, October 27, 2014, and November 3, 2014). At least 8 mentioned step-siblings and/or half siblings (Personal Communication throughout 2014-2015 school year). Approximately 5 girls reported that their parents called them fat or ugly (Personal Communication throughout 2014-2015 school year). During the development of group guidelines, four girls said their parents spoke to them with hostile body language and/or rolled their eyes frequently (Session 1 on October 6, 2014 and October 20, 2014). Three girls (out of twenty eight) moved away during the school year (Personal Communication December 8, 2014, January 5, 2015, and February 23, 2014). All of these examples are anecdotal, but they are probably underestimates because they only include girls who volunteered the information.

Free Being Me, the curriculum for 2014-2015, was designed specifically for girls ages 11-14. However, some of the activities with a more academic component were too hard for the girls in this group. In one activity, they were asked to create a press release. Almost all of the girls struggled to complete the press release, even though they had a template with blanks to fill in (Session 4 on December 1, 2014 and December 8, 2014). The girls also reported that they do not like doing activities where they have to write. In an informal, verbal midpoint review about what the girls liked and did not like about the program, 5 of 10 girls said they wanted to do less writing (Personal Communication



December 8, 2014). In an end-of-year survey about the program, 16 girls responded to a question about what they liked least about Being Me. Two girls said writing, and one girl said the challenging activities.

Group 1 consists of the sixth graders and half of the seventh graders. Group 2 consists of the other half of the seventh graders and the eighth graders. Most of the girls do not know the girls in other grades. They also do not know all of the girls in their own grade (Personal Communication throughout 2014-2015 school year). This became an issue in some of the activities, which were designed for a group in which everyone knows each other. In one activity, the girls were supposed to give each other compliments that were not based on how they look. When the girls do not know each other, it is hard to give compliments that are not based on appearance (Session 7 on February 9, 2015 and February 23, 2015). As in any group, some girls are much more outspoken than other girls. When the facilitator asked a question, often the same few girls answered (Personal Communication throughout the 2014-2015 school year). When the facilitator asked every single girl to answer or show her work, everyone participated (Session 1 on October 6, 2014 and October 20, 2014; Session 4 on December 1, 2014 and December 8, 2014; Session 5 on January 5, 2015 and January 12, 2015; Session 6 on January 26, 2015 and February 2, 2015). Every girl also participated in small group activities (Session 3 on November 10, 2014 and November 17, 2014; Session 4 on December 1, 2014 and December 8, 2014; Session 7 on February 9, 2015 and February 23, 2015; Session 8 on March 9, 2015 and March 16, 2015; Session 9 on March 23, 2015 and April 13, 2015).

#### **4.2 PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Based on her experience leading the 2014-2015 club, the author identified several important factors that will affect the design of the 2015-2016 program plan. These practical considerations describe some

of what makes this club unique. Figure 1 summarizes some of the specific things that must be considered when planning the club for 2015-2016.

- 10 sessions, each conducted twice (Group 1 and Group 2)
- 40 minutes (25 minutes if 2 hour delay) of usable time
- At least 2 weeks between sessions, with no communication during that time
- 7-14 girls at a time
- Girls often miss sessions
- Girls do not all know each other
- Activities must be appropriate for range of ages and developmental stages
- Activities must not be academically challenging
- An opening activity is helpful
- Limited resources
- Must be fun because girls do not have to attend
- Cannot repeat too much from the previous curriculum

**Figure 1. Practical considerations for program planning**

### 4.3 AMAZE JOURNEY

For each age group, the Girl Scouts have three “Journeys” based on the idea that girls discover, connect, and take action, which together teach the girls leadership. One of the Journeys for Cadettes (girls in grades 6 through 8) is called “aMAZE!: the twists and turns of getting along.” It is about relationships; it is not specifically a body image or self-esteem curriculum. However, it has many lessons that, based on the research described above, may contribute to improved body image and self-esteem.

Lesson 1 is called “First Impressions in the Maze.” In small groups, girls draw their own mazes illustrating the complex nature of relationships they navigate on a daily basis. They share their mazes with the group and discuss. As a get-to-know-you activity, girls toss a ball to one another. When they catch the ball, they peel off a piece of tape to reveal a question, which they must answer. Girls also come up with and agree to a set of guidelines for their behavior in the group. Finally, each girl writes down a goal related to a relationship, and she seals it in an envelope. At the end of the Journey, the leader will return the envelope to each girl.

“Navigating Friendships” is the topic for lesson 2. Each girl decorates a small box. Every session, girls are asked to write down things they have learned that they want to remember, and they put these messages in their box. They will get to take the box home at the end of the Journey. The adult leads a discussion about stereotypes, including examples in popular media and how stereotypes can affect feelings. Girls are asked to share a story about a time when they were affected by stereotypes. Then girls list qualities they look for in a friend and qualities they bring to a friendship, and the group discusses the lists. In a role-playing activity, girls pretend to be on a talk show. One girl pretends to be the host, and other girls pretend to be the guests who are on the show because they have a friendship dilemma. The host offers advice and asks the audience for their suggestions about how the guest could

address her problem. After the role-play activity, the leaders talk to the girls about the advice that was given, as well as where the girls can turn for advice in real life. Girls are then asked to decorate a mask with one side representing how they believe others see them and the other side representing how they see themselves. Finally, the girls share their masks with the group.

In lesson 3, girls learn about “Cliques and Conflicts.” The session starts with an ice breaker activity. One suggestion is to have girls stand back to back in pairs, lock arms, and try to lower down, sit on the floor, and stand back up. After a brief discussion about peer pressure, girls are asked to take a stand on several scenarios. They go to one side of the room if the scenario is okay, the other side of the room if the scenario is not okay, and the middle if they are not sure. Girls get a chance to explain why they stood where they did. In the next activity, girls brainstorm a list of words related to cliques and another list of words related to an inclusive circle of belonging, then they discuss the lists. Next, girls learn how I-statements can help resolve conflicts. Using a list of feeling words to help, girls practice using I-statements to respond to sample scenarios.

Lesson 4 is called “Caution: Bullies Straight Ahead.” The leader explains the different kinds of bullying, including physical, verbal, indirect, and virtual. Then the girls discuss why people bully and what responses are most effective. In a role-playing activity, girls act as a bully, a target, and a witness. They are asked to practice the responses they discussed earlier, using audience suggestions if they get stuck. Next, the discussion turns to online relationships, including cliques, bullying, and peer pressure online. Girls talk about staying safe online.

Girls in lesson 5 focus on the idea of “Let Peace Begin with You.” Girls talk about how people with good relationship skills have helped the world and how people with bad relationship skills have hurt the world. Next, small groups list the top personal qualities, skills, and accomplishments of a leader. Small groups report back, and the large group agrees on the top three qualities, skills, and

accomplishments. Next, the girls begin to think about a Take Action project to improve relationships in their community. Lessons 6 and 7 are dedicated to working on this Take Action project.

Lesson 8, “Pass it Forward,” is the final lesson. Girls are asked to reflect on the Journey. Leaders return the envelope with the personal goal from the first session. There are three awards that girls can earn in the Journey, and these awards are handed out to girls who have earned them. Interact is awarded to girls who complete three challenges (of nine listed) to interact with others. The Diplomat award is granted to girls who participate in the Take Action Project. Peacemaker is awarded to girls who commit to using the tools they learned in the group. In a closing ceremony, girls commit to peace.

#### **4.4 GIRLS ONLY!**

A coalition in San Diego created Girls Only! Billed as “a prevention education toolkit designed to promote self-esteem, develop life skills, and inspire positive motivation in young girls,” it is meant to keep 8 to 12 year old girls away from drugs, gangs, prostitution, and the criminal justice system. The designers imagined that organizations, such as Boys and Girls Clubs, after school programs, churches, and juvenile detention facilities, would incorporate the curriculum into their existing frameworks. Designed to be very flexible, each of the 16 lessons contains multiple activities of varying duration, and organizations can choose which lessons and which activities to complete. Each session ends with time for girls to write in a journal. There are “evaluation” questions for facilitators to reflect on to assess the success of the session.

Lesson 1 is the Orientation. Everyone introduces themselves, and the facilitators lead an icebreaker activity. The group comes up with rules, then they do another icebreaker activity. A parent meeting is suggested so parents will understand the program. Each parent receives a resource packet with information about local organizations and agencies that may be of use.

Lesson 2 covers Self-Esteem. In the first activity, girls write 10-15 statements beginning with “I am.” Pairs read their lists aloud to one another. Girls use some of the statements to compose a poem, which they write out neatly and decorate. For the next activity, girls write a list of things they love about themselves. They create a paper flower and write one quality they love about themselves on each petal. Compliments are the topic for the next activity. Girls sit in a circle; one girl compliments the girl on her right. That girl says thank you, then compliments the girl on her right. It continues all the way around the circle. Then the facilitator leads a discussion about how it feels to give and receive compliments. Next, girls trace each other on large sheets of paper, then they write nice things about each other inside the silhouettes. Finally, girls talk about beauty. Each girl writes three things they think when they look in the mirror. As a group, they decide whether each anonymous statement is positive, negative, or in the middle. If most of the statements are negative, facilitators ask why the girls think that is the case. Girls brainstorm things that are beautiful, then they talk about who gets to decide what is beautiful and whether beauty is internal or external. They each say three things that are beautiful about themselves.

Emotions and Feelings are the topics for lesson 3. Girls discuss what feelings are and what feelings they have experienced that day. They play charades, acting out a feeling for the group to guess. As the facilitators read a list of scenarios, girls stand up for things that would make them feel good and squat down for things that would make them feel bad. This illustrates that we all have ups and downs. Crinkle Heart is an activity that shows the power of words. Each girl gets a paper heart. They brainstorm words that hurt, and they crumple the heart a little for each one. Then they brainstorm words that make them feel good, and they smooth the heart out a little for each one. Even after the heart is smoothed out, wrinkles remain, illustrating that words have a lasting impression. For the next activity, the group discusses stress and what makes them stressed. Then the facilitator reads a story, and each time the character feels stressed, the girls blow air into a balloon. When the character does something to relieve stress, the girls let air out of the balloon. This illustrates that if stress builds up, we

can “pop,” so we need strategies to cope with stress to offer release. Girls, as a group, brainstorm ways to release stress.

In lesson 4, girls learn about Communication. Girls play telephone and charades to illustrate verbal and non-verbal communication. To learn about conflict resolution, girls do role plays about different situations. The group comes up with different ways to handle the conflict, including what the consequences might be, and then the girls in the role play act out a positive conflict resolution strategy. Next, girls learn about internet safety through discussion and viewing videos about cyber-bullying and the dangers of meeting people online. As a group, girls come up with a list of online safety rules they will follow. To learn about teamwork, the girls play human knot, a game in which girls hold hands with other girls across a circle, then they try to untangle themselves without letting go. Finally, girls learn about forgiveness. The discussion should include examples of forgiveness, what the girls would do if they were in the situations in the examples, and it should reiterate that forgiveness is a process. Girls then write letters (that they do not have to send) either asking for or granting forgiveness.

Lesson 5 is about Violence. In the first activity, one end of the room is designated as very violent and the other end as very peaceful. As the facilitator reads various situations, girls move through the room according to how violent or peaceful they think the situation is. Facilitators explain that violence can be physical, verbal, emotional, sexual, institutional, or in the form of neglect. Girls create a poster with examples of violence, the consequence of the violence, and what can be done to challenge the violence. To learn empathy and to relate to one another, girls participate in an activity called cross the line. Facilitators put a tape line on the floor, and all the girls stand on one side. For each statement read by the facilitator, girls cross the line if it applies to them; after everyone looks around, they return to the starting point. Although no talking is allowed during the activity, girls get the opportunity to debrief after the activity. Next, girls discuss bullying, including physical, verbal, social, and intimidation. They talk about what they can do if they are bullied or they see someone else being bullied, then they role

play standing up to a bully. Girls are asked to define the concepts of values, choices, and consequences. They each list their most important values. Then the discussion turns to gangs and the pros and cons of joining a gang. Facilitators pass out the Road of Life handout, illustrating how choices affect the future. For the final activity, the facilitator reads various statements about relationships, and girls go to one side of the room if they agree and the other side of the room if they disagree. The girls then discuss the concepts, including elements of a healthy relationship, boundaries, and how to get help if they need it.

Lesson 6 deals with Gender. Girls discuss stereotypes, then write a poem to debunk stereotypes about themselves. They get a handout to help write the poem. It says “just because I am \_\_\_\_\_, I am not \_\_\_\_\_, I am not \_\_\_\_\_, I am not \_\_\_\_\_, I AM \_\_\_\_\_.” The next activity is about how their lives are affected because they are girls. Facilitators go over the difference between gender and sex. One group of girls brainstorms what is expected of girls in our culture, and another group brainstorms what is expected of boys. After sharing the lists with the whole group, they discuss gender roles, including sexuality. The facilitator encourages girls to be who they are, not to try to live up to unrealistic or irrelevant gender roles.

Health is the topic of lesson 7. The group does a physical activity and/or a yoga class. In the next activity, girls learn about how nutrition affects the way your body functions. Facilitators hold up pictures of foods and the girls decide whether they are healthy, unhealthy, or not sure. Girls are told that they do not have to avoid unhealthy foods altogether, but they should eat them in moderation. The facilitators teach the girls how to read nutrition labels, then the girls brainstorm a list of healthy snacks. For the next activity, facilitators teach about different types of drugs, physical effects, and psychological effects. Girls act out role-plays to practice saying no to drugs. In the final health activity, girls learn about puberty and sexuality. Facilitators lead a discussion about how bodies change during puberty, about hygiene, and then about menstruation. In another discussion, girls talk about sexuality,



including bodies, feelings, values, and behaviors. It is recommended that parents give separate permission for this activity.

For lesson 8, girls explore Creative Arts. One option is to hold a talent show for friends and family. Another option is to explore written, visual, and musical works by diverse women. Girls can also create their own art, including poetry, theater, music, dance, painting, collage, photography, and crafts.

Community is the focus of lesson 9. Girls discuss what community means to them. Then girls design their own community using physical items representing food, water, money, shelter, healthcare, jobs, and laws. They decide how to allocate resources and what responsibilities community members will have. The next activity illustrates how we are all connected. Girls sit in a circle. Each girl says her name, how she contributes to the group, and how she contributes to her family, school, or neighborhood. Then she throws a ball of string to another girl while holding on to a section of the string. After each girl has shared, the string will form a web showing how they are connected.

Lesson 10 is meant to be a field trip. Suggested options include a college visit, a nature visit, a community garden, a farmer's market, a museum, a theater performance, or a service learning volunteer project. The curriculum has individual tips and discussion prompts for each type of field trip.

Girls learn about Culture in lesson 11. They discuss what culture means, then they brainstorm examples of culture, like speaking English or wearing a friendship bracelet. The curriculum suggests holding a culture day for parents, where girls bring things to represent their own or a chosen culture. Girls can share food, music, clothing, ceremonies, games, and traditions.

In lesson 12, girls learn about Careers and Jobs. First they learn about getting long- and short-term goals. Each girl lists long-term goals for 5, 10, and 15 years from now. She also lists short-term goals for today, tomorrow, and this week. The curriculum suggests holding a career day, where about 5 women holding different types of jobs come to share with the girls. Each woman talks about her job, and girls participate in an interactive activity related to her job.

Lesson 13 is about Diversity. Girls create a timeline of their lives, and then they write a short autobiography. Facilitators lead a discussion about diversity and the advantages of living in a diverse world. Girls think about ways they are all similar. Then they talk about discrimination, including whether they have ever been discriminated against. Girls each complete a Diversity Action Project, which could be creating a song or poster, teaching someone about diversity, or learning about another culture. Finally, girls learn about women's history. After discussing the progress that has been made and the work left to be done, girls select a woman to research. Each girl will create a poster about her chosen subject, and she will think about how her life relates to the subject's life.

The last regular lesson, number 14, is about Media. The facilitators lead a discussion about what media is, and they show examples of different forms of media. In small groups, girls look at magazine advertisements. They are asked to consider what is being sold, who is the audience, what ideals are being promoted, who is in the ad, and how the ad makes them feel. Next, girls create a collage of images that stereotype women. As they share their collages with the group, girls are asked to consider how the images make them feel and who benefits from making them feel like that. Finally, girls create their own media. They choose their format (billboard, radio, TV, internet, magazine, etc.) and create a positive message. Everyone shares their project with the group.

Lesson 15 is a Family Day and Open House. Girls share what they have learned and created during the program. Lesson 16 is Graduation. Everyone gets a certificate. Facilitators get a chance to share their thoughts, then girls get a chance to share something.

#### **4.5 GO GIRL GO!**

Go Girl Go! is a product of the Women's Sports Foundation. It is designed for girls age 11 to 13. What is unique about this curriculum is that it integrates lessons with physical activity. Each of the 12 lessons

consists of 2 sessions; each of the sessions includes 30 minutes of discussion/learning and 30 minutes of physical activity. (It is not practical to do physical activity in the context of the Otter Creek Club, because of space constraints, because the girls are not dressed for it, and because it would add liability. For that reason, the discussion below will be limited to the non-exercise portion of the curriculum.) Each week there is a story about a female role model. After the group reads the story together, facilitators lead a discussion based on questions in the Leader's Guide. The curriculum contains a Go Girls! Guide to Life and Journal for the girls, which includes the stories about the role models, resources, and space to write and reflect. Unlike some of the other curricula, this one has more practical information about running a program, including tips for leaders, online training available, lots of suggested resources, and an information sheet for parents. Some lessons are designated as "Tricky Topics," and the authors recommend that leaders be aware of institutional policies, as well as preparing themselves through additional research.

Lesson 1 is about Body Image. The story "Size Wise" is about Cheryl Haworth, an Olympic weight lifter. She was always big, but that was a good thing in weight lifting. The discussion focuses on accepting and appreciating your body. In an activity called Ad Savvy, girls get in small groups to look at advertisements from teen magazines and answer questions on a handout. The questions ask about the advertiser and their message, as well as about the models in the ad. After the small groups finish, they reconvene and discuss as a large group.

Nutrition is the focus of lesson 2. "Fueling Up" is a story about Caitlin Baker, a high school swimmer. She says that eating healthy makes her feel better and swim better. In the discussion, girls are asked about healthy eating, and they are asked to confront the mixed messages of ads for junk food with thin models. After reviewing the "My Plate" nutritional recommendations, girls are asked to re-imagine a fast food meal so that it fits better with the My Plate guidelines. Girls discuss their modifications and how they can eat healthier.

In lesson 3, girls learn about Stress Management. Alexis Page is a rhythmic gymnast, and in her story “Sidestepping Stress,” she talks about managing stress, like talking to people and taking deep breaths. Girls discuss the physical and emotional effects of stress, as well as their own coping strategies. Each girl then creates a Personal Stress Management Guide with her triggers, how to avoid them, and how to manage stress including a physical activity, a relaxing activity, and a creative activity. Those who wish can share with the group.

Lesson 4 is called Dealing with Difficult Feelings, and it is designated as a Tricky Topic. This week’s story is about Sanya Richards-Ross, an Olympic medalist in track and field. In “Emotion Commotion,” she talks about conflict with other girls in high school, and she handles stress by running or getting support from family and friends. In the discussion, girls talk about healthy and unhealthy ways of dealing with their feelings. One of the purposes of the discussion, and the lesson as a whole, is to help girls understand the difference between feeling sad and clinical depression. In the next activity, girls are asked to go to one side of the room if they agree with a statement about feelings and depression and the other side of the room if they disagree. Girls get a chance to explain their choice.

Family Issues are the topic for lesson 5, and this is also a Tricky Topic. Mary Riddell, a Paralympic skier, tells the story of her parents’ divorce in “The Split.” The following discussion focuses on divorce, single parents, and other family stress. Leaders are instructed to affirm all types of families. In pairs or groups of 3, girls then plan and act out a role-play about family conflict. They discuss similarities and differences in how the groups addressed conflict.

Lesson 6 is once again a Tricky Topic: Smoking and Substance Abuse. In the role model story, Mimi Smith, a college field hockey player, talks about “‘High’ School.” In both high school and college, she had to deal with friends who were doing drugs. The girls are asked about how they can say no and what to do if someone needs help. Leaders read 10 statements about drugs and alcohol, and girls have to decide if they are true or false. Girls are then split into 3 groups, and each group is assigned alcohol,

marijuana, or tobacco. They have to make a poster about the substance, negative effects, and how to avoid peer pressure to use the substance. The groups come back together to share their posters and discuss them.

Dating and Sex, obviously a Tricky Topic, are the focus of lesson 7. The curriculum suggests parents be given the opportunity to keep their daughters from participating in this lesson. “Hookin’ Up” tells the story of Jessica Mendoza, an Olympic medalist in softball. She was dumped when she was 13 because she wouldn’t have sex with her boyfriend. The discussion centers on learning to trust yourself and how to resist pressure to be sexually active. Girls then write a letter to hypothetical friend whose boyfriend is pressuring her to have sex. Volunteers can read their letter, and the group discusses strategies to deal with this situation.

In lesson 8, girls learn about diversity. LaChina Robinson, a college basketball player, talks about fitting in as a racial minority in middle school in her story “Accept n’ Respect.” Girls are asked to discuss getting to know people who are different and the benefits of diversity. Then, girls draw self-portraits that show what makes them unique. They discuss feeling judged, being who you are, and ways to embrace diversity. For this lesson, girls are asked to consider diversity in attributes that can be seen and qualities that cannot be seen.

Lesson 9 addresses Bullying. In “Breaking Free from Bullies,” dancer Savannah Outen talks about how she has been bullied and how she handled it. The following discussion prompts girls to consider why people bully and how to stop bullying. Pairs of girls create Top Ten lists of what to do if you are being bullied, then they share their lists with the large group. Leaders ask the girls about being bystanders to bullying.

Building on the lesson about Bullying, lesson 10 is about Harassment (a Tricky Topic). One of the purposes of the lesson is to distinguish between bullying and harassment. An Olympic ice hockey player, Julie Chu, tells how she was harassed for being a girl in “Harassment.” In the discussion, girls are asked

how they might deal with harassment. Leaders read out situations, and girls have to decide if the scenario involves harassment. Then, the girls break into pairs to discuss harassment they have witnessed or experienced at school and in their community. Girls share their experiences with the large group.

Digital Media Smarts are the focus of lesson 11. Charlene Learner, a multi-sport high school athlete gives her tips for staying safe online in “Virtual Reality.” The girls discuss what is appropriate online and cyberbullying. They then respond to a list of factual questions about using the internet. In the next activity, pairs of girls come up with tweets that provide internet safety tips. Leaders reinforce the importance of privacy and safety issues online.

The last lesson is called Pay it Forward. In “Stand Up,” blind Paralympic cyclist Pam Fernandes talks about what it was like to speak to Congress about diabetes. Girls are prompted to think about what they would ask Congress for and how kids can make a difference. As a group, the girls brainstorm issues that are important in their community. In pairs, they create an action plan to address one issue. Sharing their plans allows other girls to provide suggestions and feedback.

#### **4.6 HEALTHY BODY IMAGE**

This four part curriculum was designed by the Perdue Extension: Consumer and Family Sciences. It is meant for middle school students, both male and female. As the name suggests, this program focuses on a healthy body image, but it also focuses on physical health, including exercise and healthy eating. The introduction mentions students who are underweight, as well as those who are overweight/obese. Curtailing unhealthy weight loss strategies is one of the goals of the program.

Lesson 1, “Differences are OK,” consists of a group discussion. First, students brainstorm ways that people are different, like eye color, height, and interests. They are encouraged to consider which

traits can be changed, which cannot be changed, and which will naturally change over time. Each student is asked to list three things he or she is good at, then the group discusses how our strengths and weaknesses contribute to who we are. Next, the facilitator explains some of the normal body changes that occur in adolescence. Students are asked if they have ever been teased about their unique qualities, how it made them feel, and how they handled the situation. Finally, they are asked if they have teased others and what they could do differently. The final message is that “each of us should focus on being the best we can be and showing respect toward others.”

Lesson 2 is called “Mixed Messages: Living in a Supersized World.” The main focus of this lesson is media literacy. “By challenging stereotypes presented in popular advertising, we can help teens recognize that there is no ideal body type.” In this lesson, students break into small groups. Each group gets two advertisements from teen magazines and a handout with questions that the group is supposed to answer about each ad. The students return to the large group and report back about their ads. Some discussion points include that models are thin and always look happy regardless of the type of item they are advertising, and that models have lots of makeup and their photos are air-brushed. Students then brainstorm about what messages media sources send about body image. Finally, to challenge the myth, students are asked if it is realistic for people to try to look like models. The facilitator should make sure the students understand that people have all different body types, they shouldn’t try to look like any one type, and they should focus on being healthy.

“Healthy Eating in a Nutshell” is Lesson 3. Students brainstorm factors that contribute to achieving and maintaining a healthy weight. Facilitators explain what the research says about successful weight loss, namely that a combination of healthy eating and exercise is required and dieting does not work. Students are directed to [MyPyramid.gov](http://MyPyramid.gov) to find information about healthy eating. Together, the students and the facilitator discuss healthy eating behaviors, like eating slowly and eating only when you are hungry.

The final lesson is “An Ounce of Exercise Keeps the Doctor Away.” Students learn that physical fitness includes cardiovascular fitness, muscular fitness, and body composition. They brainstorm how exercise contributes to physical and psychological health, then they learn what counts as exercise. Many forms of activity count, including things that are fun. Finally, students learn that an exercise program should include aerobic exercise, flexibility exercise, and resistance exercise.

#### **4.7 YOUR OWN HEALTHY STYLE**

Designed by Montana State University-Bozeman and the Montana Office of Public Instruction, Your Own Healthy Style: A Middle School Curriculum to Enhance Body Image consists of seven 50 minute sessions arranged into three topics. The curriculum is designed to be conducted in school by teachers, with specific Montana Education Standards given for each lesson. In the introduction, body image is linked to self-esteem, and body dissatisfaction is linked to eating disorders. Objectives of the curriculum address self-acceptance, body satisfaction, media literacy, knowledge of puberty and healthy eating, and risk of eating disorders. Overall, the authors frame this curriculum as an eating disorder prevention program.

Lesson 1 is called, “So What is Your Own Healthy Style?” and it takes two class periods. First, the teacher introduces the topic and leads a discussion about “how a positive body image is an important component to overall self-esteem.” Students complete a worksheet about body image, what affects it, and what it might affect. The discussion turns to the idea of beauty, and how the female beauty ideal has changed over time. A handout displays pictures of women from the early 1900’s through the late 1990’s, then prompts students to reflect on the current beauty ideal. In the second class period, students are asked to list “characteristics of your own healthy style,” or what defines who they are right now. As a class, students describe a new version of beauty that includes natural diversity and “values intellectual, personal, spiritual, and physical attributes.” To prepare teachers for these two class



periods, the curriculum provides three pages of background information addressing the concept of body image, statistics about body image, examples to help students describe their healthy style, and historical information about beauty ideals.

Lesson 2, “But the Commercials Say it’s True??!,” focuses on media literacy over two class periods. First, everyone watches a video called “The Making of a Model.” Students then complete a worksheet about what they learned regarding how media images are altered. The teacher shows examples of advertisements that could help or hurt a person’s body image. In the second class period, small groups of students look through teen magazines and discuss the messages the advertisements are sending. Individually, students are asked to describe a person they admire, then to list their own best characteristics. Finally, the small groups redesign an advertisement to help instead of hurt body image. The background information for teachers includes statistics about media influence and “Tips for Becoming a Critical Viewer of the Media.”

Lesson 3 teaches that “Health Comes in All Shapes and Sizes” over three class periods. On the first day, students receive a two page information sheet about normal body changes during puberty; they complete a worksheet about these changes, and the concepts are discussed as a class. On the second day, students receive a one page handout “Just Say ‘NO’ to Dieting!” and a handout about healthy eating. After a discussion about dieting, healthy eating, setting realistic goals, and being healthy at any size, students take home a three day food diary to track everything they eat. Finally, on day three, students receive an Activity Pyramid, discuss ways to incorporate more physical activity into their daily lives, set realistic goals, and take home a one week activity diary to track their daily activity. Other than the handouts students receive, there is no additional information about Lesson 3 for teachers. The curriculum concludes with a list of websites teachers and parents can access for more information, as well as a handout for parents on how they can support their children.

#### **4.8 COMPARING THE CURRICULA**

Based on the literature review, the author identified 13 research-based strategies for interventions to improve body image and/or self-esteem in middle school girls. She assessed each of the 5 curricula to determine which of the strategies were employed in each curriculum. These strategies were not explicitly described in the curricula. Figure 2 shows which of the curricula utilizes each of the research-based strategies.

These curricula were designed for different situations and audiences. Figure 3 shows some of the specific details about each curriculum.

<b>Research-Based Strategies</b>	<b>Amaze</b>	<b>Girls Only!</b>	<b>Go Girl Go!</b>	<b>Healthy Body Image</b>	<b>Your Own Healthy Style</b>
Address negative peer interactions, including bullying	X	X	X		
Address perceptions and misperceptions about the body			X	X	X
Decrease importance of appearance in self-evaluation		X	X	X	X
Encourage positive relationships	X	X			
Empowerment and advocacy		X	X		
Healthy coping with stress	X	X	X		
Media literacy	X	X	X	X	X
Positive feedback		X			
Positive self-evaluation		X	X	X	X
Sharing their own stories	X	X	X	X	X
Teach competencies like communication skills	X	X			
Teach normal pubertal development		X		X	X
Understand and speak out against cultural pressures		X	X	X	X

**Figure 2. Research-based strategies in body image curricula**

	<b>Amaze</b>	<b>Girls Only!</b>	<b>Go Girl Go!</b>	<b>Healthy Body Image</b>	<b>Your Own Healthy Style</b>
Creator(s)	Girl Scouts of America	Coalition in San Diego, CA	Women’s Sports Foundation	Perdue Extension Consumer and Family Sciences	Montana State University
Audience gender	Girls	Girls	Girls or mixed	Mixed	Not Explicit
Audience age	Grades 6-8	Ages 8-12	Ages 11-13	Middle School	Middle School
Number of Sessions	8	16	12 (once a week) or 24 (twice a week)	4	7

**Figure 3. Detailed comparison of body image curricula**

## **5.0 DISCUSSION**

Following a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the curricula described above, a program plan will be presented for the Being Me program for the 2015-2016 school year.

### **5.1 REVIEW OF CURRICULA**

No single curricula is perfectly suited to the Otter Creek Club. Each has pros and cons. They all need to be adapted to fit the time and resources available. Although all of the curricula feature strategies based in self-esteem and body image research, not all of the activities are research-based. All of the curricula include material that is not appropriate for this club. It is not practical to do physical activity. Nutrition and substance abuse are covered in health class. Because permission slips are not obtained, the club should avoid discussion about sex and sexuality. As described earlier, the girls arrive over the course of several minutes. An opening activity is helpful. This activity should be simple, because directions have to be repeated as more girls arrive. The activity should be relatively short, and some girls will not finish the activity. None of these curricula include this type of activity.

Amaze is a Girl Scout program designed specifically for girls in grades 6-8. Activities are age-appropriate, and mostly fun. Some of the activities that could be incorporated into the Being Me program are lessons on first impressions, stereotypes, peer pressure, "I" statements, goal setting, bullying, and internet safety. The leaders' guide has a lot of good discussion prompts. The small box that the girls add to, the letter to themselves at the beginning, and the awards are ideas that could

inspire the girls. However, the Take Action project is not realistic for this program. It requires too much time outside of school, as well as resources that are not available.

Girls Only includes lots of interactive activities, not just talking. The lessons on self-esteem, emotions and feelings, communication, and media are particularly helpful. Portions of the lessons on violence, healthy bodies, and diversity are also appropriate for the Otter Creek Middle School Club. However, some of the lessons are not applicable, including the talent show, field trip, culture day, career day, and family day. These require transportation and parental involvement that are not practical for Otter Creek. Finally, the audience for Girls Only! is 8 to 12 year olds, slightly younger than middle school girls.

Go Girl Go! is a well-designed, complete program with lots of practical suggestions. It includes a good deal of discussion, but it also includes small group work and interactive activities, like making posters, self-portraits, and role-playing. The physical activity component, fully half the program, will not work for this situation. Girls are not dressed for physical activity, the space is not conducive to physical activity, and the leader is not trained to ensure the safety of the girls during the physical activity. This curriculum contains several Tricky Topics. Because the girls do not have permission slips to talk about sexuality, lesson six on dating and sex is not appropriate for the Otter Creek group. The other Tricky Topics could be addressed, with the input of the school counselor.

Healthy Body Image covers some topics that are very helpful, such as natural differences, media, and the diet myth. The small group activity about advertisements is good. Another strength is that it does not require a lot of materials. A major weakness is that the curriculum does not provide enough background information for facilitators. It also assumes that students will come up with lots of answers to brainstorming questions, but in reality, the facilitator will likely have to supply some of the answers. The curriculum does not include enough interactive activities.

Your Own Healthy Style comprises discreet activities that could easily be broken up to fit in the time available. Other than handouts, the only supplies needed are teen magazines. Several of the handouts contain a wealth of relevant information, including Tips for Becoming a Critical Viewer of the Media and Just Say No to Dieting, although these would need to be redesigned to be more visually appealing. The best activity is the one where girls redesign an ad from a magazine, but other than that activity, there are not enough interactive components. This curriculum also teaches about setting realistic goals, with small changes. Girls in the Otter Creek group do not like to write, so many of the worksheet activities would be better as a discussion. Finally, it is completely unrealistic to ask the girls to fill out the food and activity logs, and they would not remember to bring it back.

## **5.2 PROGRAM PLAN**

In September of 2015, Lorrie Schiedler, school counselor at Otter Creek Middle School, will pass out fliers advertising the Being Me program, and girls will sign up. The facilitator will work with Ms. Schiedler to split the girls into two groups. During this time, the facilitator will also work with Stacey Rozmin, Membership Development Manager of the Terre Haute Service Center of the Girl Scouts of Central Indiana. She will need to complete Girl Scout training, as well as pass a background check. In October 2015, the facilitator will begin to hold sessions on Mondays from 2:30 to 3:15. She will work with Ms. Rozmin to complete Girl Scout membership forms for all the girls. Sessions will continue throughout the school year, based on the school calendar. The facilitator will monitor the school website for snow days and 2 hour delays, which will affect the schedule. As any problems arise, the facilitator will work with Ms. Schiedler and Ms. Rozmin as appropriate. An overview of the program is illustrated in the logic model in Figure 3.

During the 2014-2015 school year, the Being Me program cost approximately \$150 in supplies and \$100 in snacks, including a pizza party for each group at the end of the school year. It is reasonable to guess that the budget will be similar for 2015-2016, although the budget may be affected by several factors. These include the number of girls who participate, the types of snacks purchased, and what supplies the facilitator already has. While the 2014-2015 facilitator paid for these expenses herself, it may be possible to get donations of goods or money to help defray some of the costs.

One of the ways the program will be evaluated is through attendance and participation. Because the girls do not have to attend the sessions, their attendance is a signal that the program is fun. The girls are not forced to participate in any activities, so their participation is also a signal of the success of the program. At the end of the school year, the girls will be asked to complete a short survey about Being Me. Open-ended questions will ask what they liked, disliked, and what they learned. They will also be asked whether they think Being Me helped their self-esteem, body image, and confidence. These questions will have the girls circle one of three options. For example, one question might ask, "How did participating in Being Me affect your self-esteem?" The answer choices would be it made my self-esteem lower, it did not change my self-esteem, and it made my self-esteem higher.

<b>Problem</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Middle school girls suffer from low self-esteem and body image</li> </ul>				
<b>Inputs</b>	<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>		
		<i>Short</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Long</i>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Girls enjoy program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Girls report improved self-esteem and body image at the end of the school year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Girls maintain self-esteem and body image through their teens</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitator (TBD)</li> <li>Stacey Rozmin, Girl Scouts of Central Indiana</li> <li>Lorrie Schiedler, Otter Creek Middle School</li> <li>Curriculum</li> <li>Photocopies</li> <li>Poster paper and markers</li> <li>Craft materials</li> <li>Weekly snacks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10 sessions with each of 2 groups</li> <li>Employ research-based strategies</li> </ul>	<b>Evaluation</b>		
		<i>Short</i>	<i>Medium</i>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>About 30 girls in grades 6-8 at Otter Creek Middle School</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least 75% of girls attend at least 5 sessions</li> <li>At least 90% of girls participate in each activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At least 50% of girls report the program helped their self-esteem, body image, and/or confidence on an end-of-year survey</li> </ul>	
<b>Assumptions</b>		<b>External Factors</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Girls who participate in 2015-2016 will be similar to girls who participated in 2014-2015</li> <li>The facilitator will be dedicated and will have good communication with the girls</li> <li>The school will continue to support the program</li> <li>Finances will be available for photocopies, poster paper and markers, craft materials, and weekly snacks</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Constraints of the physical space</li> <li>Lack of parental involvement</li> <li>Snow days and 2-hour delays</li> <li>Girls' other activities during the time period</li> </ul>		

Figure 4. Logic model



### 5.3 BEING ME 2015-2016 CURRICULUM

The proposed curriculum was designed by the author. First, a list of the main topics for each of the curricula was created. These were then assessed for overlap and joined to create topic categories. The topics were then arranged to fit a 10 week program. Activities from each curriculum were listed under the appropriate topic, then were edited to select those that matched the research-based strategies and the practical considerations, including the 40 minute time frame. An opening activity was added to each session.

Lesson 1 is the introduction to the program. As girls arrive, the facilitator will pass out nametags and take the girls' photos individually with the nametags showing so that she can learn their names. She will introduce herself, then all the girls will introduce themselves. The girls do not all know each other, so these introductions are for the benefit of the girls and the facilitator. They will play an ice breaker game, such as get to know you bingo (Girls Only! lesson 1). Finally they will have a discussion about body image, based on Your Own Healthy Style lesson 1. The girls will explain what they think body image is, what may affect body image, and what other aspects of their lives body image might affect.

Friendship will be the topic of lesson 2. Girls will work on a word search as they arrive and wait for others to arrive. The first activity will be a discussion of first impressions (Amaze lesson 1, *Beneath the Surface*). This will lead into a discussion of stereotypes (Amaze lesson 2, *How do You Know and Stereotypes and You*). Next, girls will play Ball Brainstorming. In this game, girls stand in a circle and toss a ball to each other. When a girl catches the ball, she must answer the question. For this lesson, the girls will list things they look for in a friend. These activities about first impressions, stereotypes, and what they look for in a friend are supported by two research-based strategies: encourage positive relationships and decrease importance of appearance in self-evaluation. The final activity for lesson 2 is

about peer pressure. As the facilitator reads out various scenarios, girls have to move to one side of the room if they think it is okay and the other side of the room if they think it is not okay. Girls get a chance to discuss their stance (Amaze lesson 3, *Where do You Stand?*). This activity employs the research-based strategy to address negative peer interactions.

In lesson 3, the girls will learn about communication and conflict resolution. As the girls arrive, they will come up with movies, people, and books that will be used in charades. When all the girls are there, they will play charades. The facilitator will explain that they were using non-verbal communication (Girls Only! lesson 4, *Ways to Communicate*). Next, the facilitator will talk about another type of communication: gossip. Then she will introduce the idea of conflict resolution, and she will lead a discussion with the girls (Girls Only! lesson 4, *Conflict Resolution*). She will teach the girls about “I-statements” as a conflict resolution technique (Amaze lesson 3, *I-statements: The Key to Resolving Conflicts*). Finally, the girls will do a role-play in which one girl plays a talk show host and other girls play guests with friendship dilemmas. Other girls play experts on the show, and they give advice (Amaze lesson 2, *Talk Show: Ask the Expert*). Together, these activities are related to the research-based strategies of addressing negative peer interactions, encouraging positive relationships, and teaching competencies like communication skills.

Lesson 4 is called “Who Am I?” The opening activity is for girls to create self-portraits that show what makes them unique. Those who want to will be given the opportunity to share with the group (Go Girl Go! lesson 8, *Self-Portraits*). Next, girls will play a game called Cross the Line. This game shows girls how they are similar to one another and different from one another. All the girls stand on one side of a tape line on the floor. They are asked to cross the line if a statement applies to them. For example, cross the line if you have a sister. Following the activity, the facilitator will lead a discussion about how it felt, what was surprising, and what they learned (Girls Only! lesson 5, *Cross the Line*). The self-portrait and Cross the Line activity are supported by the research-based strategy to decrease the importance of

appearance in self-evaluation and to utilize positive self-evaluation. Finally, the girls will learn about setting goals (Girls Only! lesson 12, *Setting Goals: Long-term and Short-term Goals*). Each girl will write down a goal and seal it in an envelope. The facilitator will collect the envelopes, and she will return them to the girls on the last day (Amaze lesson 1, *Going for Goals*). Goal setting is a competency, so teaching it meets the research-based strategy to teach competencies.

In lesson 5, girls learn about diversity. As they arrive, girls get some blank stickers to decorate with positive messages for their friends. The facilitator will lead a discussion on diversity (Girls Only! lesson 13, *Diversity*; Go Girl Go! lesson 8 *Read and Discuss*). Then girls will brainstorm a list of ways that people are different from one another, and the facilitator will write them on a sheet of poster paper. After the girls finish brainstorming, they will go through the list and decide if each feature can be changed through effort, cannot be changed, or will change naturally over time (Healthy Body Image lesson 1, *In What Ways are People Different from Each Other?*). Some of the things on the list may affect body image, such as height, weight, and shape. The facilitator will return to those items, and will segue into factual information about average women versus average models (Your Own Healthy Style lesson 1, *Teacher Background Information*), as well as normal body changes during puberty (Girls Only! lesson 7, *Puberty and Human Sexuality* – limited portions only; Healthy Body Image lesson 1, *Normal Physical Growth and Development*; Your Own Healthy Style lesson 3, *The Perfect Body Myth*). Finally, the facilitator will go over a handout about why girls should not diet (Your Own Healthy Style lesson 3, *Just Say No to Dieting*). Lesson 5 utilizes the research-based strategies of teaching about normal pubertal development and addressing perceptions and misperceptions about the body.

Media literacy is the focus of lessons 6 and 7. As the girls arrive, they will look at popular teen magazines. The facilitator will lead a discussion about hidden messages and appearance messages in advertising (Girls Only! lesson 14, *Media and My Body and Mind*; Go Girl Go! lesson 1, *Ad Savvy*; Healthy Body Image lesson 2, *Mixed Messages: Living in an Supersized World*; Your Own Healthy Style lesson 2,

*Truth in Advertising...Yeah, right!*). Girls will be asked to design their own advertisement or redesign an existing advertisement so that it does not have appearance messages (Girls Only! lesson 14, *Media and My Body and Mind*; Your Own Healthy Style lesson 2, *Truth in Advertising...Yeah, right!*). This activity will carry over into lesson 7; as girls arrive, they can finish their ad. Then all the girls will present their ad to the group. The discussion and designing an ad relate to the research-based strategies of media literacy and understanding/speaking out against cultural pressures. For the rest of session 7, the topic will be Internet Safety. Although this is not specifically related to self-esteem and body image, it is addressed in several of the curricula (Amaze lesson 4, *Surfing through Cyber Relationships*; Girls Only! lesson 4, *Online Communication: Internet Safety*; Go Girl Go! lesson 11, *Digital Media Smarts*).

Lesson 8 is about stress and feelings. As the girls arrive, they will do a word search with feeling words. The facilitator will lead a discussion about feelings (Girls Only! lesson 3, *Emotions*; Go Girl Go! lesson 4, *Read and Discuss*). She will segue into a discussion about stress (Go Girl Go! lesson 3, *Introduction and Read and Discuss*). Next, the facilitator will pass out a balloon for each girl (except any who are allergic to latex). She will explain that stress is like putting air in the balloon, too much stress can make us pop, and we need to find ways to let air out of the balloon. Then she will read a story. Every time the character in the story is stressed, the girls will blow air into the balloon; every time the character does something to relieve stress, the girls will let some air out (Girls Only! lesson 3, *Stress Balloon*). Finally, the girls will create their own stress management guides (Go Girl Go! lesson 3, *Personal Stress Management Guide*). This lesson focuses on the research-based strategy of healthy coping with stress.

In lesson 9, the girls will talk about bullying. For the opening activity, girls will make buttons with positive messages. The facilitator will lead a discussion about bullying (Amaze lesson 4, *Definitions Please and Take Back the Power*; Girls Only! lesson 5, *Bullying*; Go Girl Go! lesson 9, *Read and Discuss*). Then the girls will do a role play where they act out being a bully, a target, and a witness (Amaze lesson

4, *Flip the Script*; Girls Only! lesson 5, *Bullying*). Next the girls will create a top ten list of ways to deal with bullying (Go Girl Go! lesson 9, *Band Together Against Bullying*). These activities are supported by the research-based strategy to address negative peer interactions. The last activity for the day is for each girl to write something nice about every other girl. The facilitator will collate these compliments and give them back to the girls in lesson 10. This activity provides the girls with positive feedback, another research-based strategy.

The last session, lesson 10, is a party. As girls arrive, they will eat pizza. Each girl will be asked to complete a short survey about their experience with the program. Then there will be a ceremony. The facilitator will give each girl a certificate of participation and the list of compliments the other girls wrote in the previous lesson. As each girl receives her certificate, she will have the chance to say something to the group if she wishes. Finally, the girls will do some sort of craft project.

Throughout the Being Me program, girls will have the opportunity to share their own story, a research-based strategy. They will also benefit from an environment that does not focus on how they look, hopefully decreasing the importance of appearance in self-evaluation, another research-based strategy. Girls will be able to spend time with their friends and make new friends, which goes along with the research-based strategy of encouraging positive relationships. They will also practice communication, a competency suggested by a research-based strategy. In addition to the specific lessons, the program as a whole will use research-based strategies to improve self-esteem and body image. Figure 5 summarizes the use of research-based strategies in the proposed curriculum. Figure 6 provides examples of how the proposed curriculum addresses the practical considerations identified in Figure 1.

<b>Research-Based Strategies</b>	<b>Lesson in Proposed Curriculum</b>
Address negative peer interactions, including bullying	Lessons 2, 3, 9
Address perceptions and misperceptions about the body	Lesson 5
Decrease importance of appearance in self-evaluation	Lessons 2, 4, and throughout
Encourage positive relationships	Lessons 2, 3, and throughout
Empowerment and advocacy	throughout
Healthy coping with stress	Lesson 8
Media literacy	Lessons 6, 7
Positive feedback	Lesson 9 and throughout
Positive self-evaluation	Lesson 4 and throughout
Sharing their own stories	throughout
Teach competencies like communication skills	Lessons 3, 4, and throughout
Teach normal pubertal development	Lesson 5
Understand and speak out against cultural pressures	Lessons 6, 7, and throughout

**Figure 5. Research-based strategies in the proposed curriculum**

<b>Practical Consideration</b>	<b>Proposed Curriculum</b>
10 sessions, each conducted twice (Group 1 and Group 2)	10 sessions
40 minutes (25 minutes if 2 hour delay) of usable time	Designed to fit into 40 minute block, will need to be adapted by facilitator if there are 2 hour delays
At least 2 weeks between sessions, with no communication during that time	Girls do not need to remember specific content from previous lessons to complete a given lesson; no homework because no mechanism to remind the girls
7-14 girls at a time	All activities can be complete in groups of various size
Girls often miss sessions	With the exception of lessons 6 and 7, activities do not carry over into subsequent sessions and can be completed without having been to previous sessions
Girls do not all know each other	Early sessions include get-to-know-you activities
Activities must be appropriate for range of ages and developmental stages	All activities should be easy enough for the younger girls yet not too easy for the older girls
Activities must not be academically challenging	Focused on discussions so the girls do not have to write much; discussions also allows facilitator to help more
An opening activity is helpful	Each day there is an opening activity planned
Limited resources	Minimal materials are needed, such as poster paper, envelopes, magazines, and balloons
Must be fun because girls do not have to attend	Lots of interactive activities and games; little writing
Cannot repeat too much from the previous curriculum	While some general topics repeat (like media literacy), the specific activities are different

**Figure 6. How the proposed curriculum addresses practical considerations**

## 6.0 CONCLUSION

Being Me will employ a number of research-based strategies to improve middle school girls' body image and self-esteem. Rather than use an existing curriculum, the program plan employs parts of several different curricula which are available on the internet. Because the girls participate in sixth, seventh, and eighth grades, a total of three curricula are needed. Studio 2B (2013-2014), Being Me (2014-2015), and the proposed curriculum can be cycled every three years. The activities are selected and organized to meet the needs of Otter Creek Middle School. The process described within this document could be used in other locations to tailor activities to be culturally appropriate and practical in other situations. The two major barriers to success are the need to secure funding (for craft projects, photocopies, snacks, and miscellaneous supplies) and the need to find a dedicated facilitator (who can relate to the girls but maintain control, function with little oversight, commit to the weekly sessions, and have positive body image herself). The two major assets are the existing personnel (a dedicated leader at both the Girl Scouts of Central Indiana and at Otter Creek Middle School who interact well with adolescents, are committed to the concept of building girls' self-esteem and body image, and are willing to problem-solve with the facilitator as necessary) and the continued interest of girls who participated in 2014-2015.

## **6.1 LIMITATIONS**

This curriculum was designed specifically for the needs of Otter Creek Middle School. It may not be appropriate for other groups. For example, activities from other curricula were combined to fit into the 40 minutes available. Other groups may have longer or shorter at each meeting, so the activities would have to be changed or reorganized to fit the time allotted. Another example is that the curriculum was designed for about 7 to 14 girls at a time. Some activities may be difficult with a larger group, and a larger group would require multiple facilitators.

Although this curriculum is based on the literature available on the topic, little research exists on successful interventions with long-term follow-up. Based on the information available, the curriculum should improve body image and self-esteem, but it is difficult to know whether that improvement will last. Without the resources to follow the participants over time, it is impossible to measure the long-term effects of participation in this intervention.

Finally, teen culture changes rapidly. Activities that are culturally appropriate in 2015 may seem outdated in 2018 when the curriculum is due to be repeated. For example, bullying takes place on social media websites, but those platforms may change or be replaced by other types of online interaction. The facilitator will have to adapt the curriculum to seem current for the girls.

## **6.2 PUBLIC HEALTH SIGNIFICANCE**

As discussed above, body image and self-esteem can affect many aspects of health, and these problems are especially prevalent in middle school girls. Therefore, public health professionals must develop successful body image and self-esteem interventions that target middle school girls. The model employed here uses current literature on the topic, as well as existing curricula, to create an



intervention targeted at a specific group of middle school-aged girls. The focus on both the academic aspects of the curriculum and the practical considerations necessary for a specific program serve as a model other organizations could follow to develop their own curricula.

## **APPENDIX**

### **EXIT SURVEY**

1. What was your favorite part of Being Me?
2. What was your least favorite part of Being Me?
3. What was the most important thing you learned in Being Me?
4. How have you changed because of Being Me?
5. What would you like to see in the program next year?
6. Additional comments?

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