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I found my insides: giving voice to the adolescent experience of a gender-specific treatment program

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I found my insides: Giving voice to the adolescent experience
of a gender-specific treatment program

by

Lue Kirsten Turner

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation of  

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has met the dissertation requirements of Iowa State University  

Signature was redacted for privacy.  

Major Professor  

Signature was redacted for privacy.  

For the Major Program
To the young women who gave their voices for this research
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You have not failed until you quit trying
—Gordon B. Hinckley

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Popular family based treatment approaches have generally failed to take into account the unique contextual issues adolescent females face in their development. Gender socialization, cultural stereotypes, and the meaning given to physical changes at puberty, are a few of these sociological contexts that are uniquely different for developing adolescent girls as compared to boys. The purpose of this research was to highlight voices of female adolescents as they shared their experience of being involved in a gender-specific treatment program designed to address the unique issues they faced as developing females. A qualitative methodology was chosen which consisted of eight interviews of adolescent girls who had participated in a particular gender-specific treatment program. Results detail that social context is a large and influential part of the developmental context of these young women. The young women interviewed also reported two main types of change they experienced in the program, namely (1) applied change, which refers to skills learned, and (2) internal change, which refers to how they saw themselves and others. The young women also presented general themes of “finding myself”, “liking myself”, and “discovering myself”—all of which translated into better self-esteem. Results also indicated that personal desire and a supportive program environment influenced change. Challenges to change were member inappropriateness for the group and mixed messages from the program itself. Interviews also revealed that change could either occur during the program as a direct and immediate result, or change could have a “delayed-impact” where effects of program involvement were not apparent until sometime after completion of the program. Ideas are discussed for how parents, educators, and marriage and family therapists can better enhance the development of female adolescents. Discussed are ways to (1) raise awareness of female adolescent issues, (2) support young women who display non-traditional female behaviors and interests, (3) provide training for those working with young women, (4) promote positive connections among young women, and (5) enhance program development.
INTRODUCTION

The number of adolescents involved in crime has risen in recent years (Alexander, 1999). Drug abuse, disorderly conduct, weapons law violations, and aggravated assault have increased steadily by as much as 50% to greater than 70% within the last 15 years (Snyder 1998). Other troublesome behaviors exhibited by teens may include fighting, lying, vandalism, theft, truancy, and fire setting (Kazdin, 1987). This increase in what can be termed “at-risk” behaviors, or behaviors which put the physical, emotional, and social health of the teenager at risk, has been an area of concern for society (Burdsal, Force, & Klingsporn 1989). As a result, researchers have identified factors that contribute to adolescent delinquency and corresponding treatment approaches have been developed. Literature reviewed below will outline contextual correlates of adolescent behavior, established treatment procedures for adolescent delinquency, and a discussion of the unique contextual issues that female adolescents face during development.
LITERATURE REVIEW

Correlates of Adolescent Delinquent Behavior

Research suggests that delinquent behavior is often a result of social environment, and less as a problem in the mind of the adolescent (Forgatch & Patterson, 1998). It is believed that the family and peer environments significantly influence development of adolescents (Bank, Patterson, & Reid, 1987; Forgatch & Patterson, 1998; Henggeler, 1989; Patterson, 1986; Patterson, Bank, & Stoolmiller, 1990; Patterson & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1984; Synder & Patterson, 1987; Vuchinich, Bank, & Patterson, 1992). Discussed below are major components of the adolescent environment believed to contribute to delinquency.

Family Interaction and Management Skills

Taking a closer look at the context of the family as a contributor to adolescent delinquent behavior, researchers have cited poor family socialization practices and inconsistent discipline as items that invite higher frequency of antisocial behaviors, such as non-compliance, fighting, temper tantrums, and lying (Snyder & Patterson, 1987). Specifically, family and parental themes of (a) discipline, (b) monitoring, (c) positive parenting (reinforcement), and (d) conflict and problem solving will be discussed in terms of how they relate to occurrence of adolescent delinquency. These four aspects were the parenting and management variables identified as salient after reviews of several studies by Patterson and Stouthamer-Loeber (1984) and Snyder and Patterson (1987).

Discipline

According to Snyder and Patterson (1987), discipline can be defined as methods used by parents to discourage certain behavior in their children. These methods should include, first, the accurate definition and labeling of excessive behaviors, second, tracking of the
antisocial behaviors across time and setting, and third, use of effective methods to inhibit the
behaviors. It is shown that inconsistent, permissive, or overly harsh punishment can lead to
adolescent delinquent behaviors by a demonstrated parental lack of control, empty threats,
and lack of follow through on discipline, all of which eventually lead to inadvertent positive
consequences for antisocial behavior (Patterson & Yoerger, 1993; Snyder & Patterson,
1987). These problematic parenting practices can escalate aggressive behavior of the
adolescent, which in turn can invite more aggressiveness from the parent. As parents cannot
respond to or punish every behavior, the intermittent reward of the parent backing off serves
to reinforce the child's aggressive tactics (Patterson & Yoerger, 1993; Snyder & Patterson,
1987). In their study of 206 boys aged 10-16, parental discipline practices had the second
strongest correlation to police contacts, $r = -.30, p < .10$, and self-reported delinquent life
style, $r = -.35, p < .05$ (Patterson & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1984).

**Monitoring**

Parents who lack adequate disciplinary skills also tend to know less about where their
child is, who she or he is with, what she or he is doing, etc. (Bank et al., 1987). Monitoring
and awareness of a child's friends, activities, and whereabouts influences the frequency and
variety of adolescent antisocial behaviors and becomes increasingly important as a child
moves through adolescence (Snyder & Patterson, 1987). Adequate monitoring affects
adolescent delinquency in two ways. First, monitoring makes it more likely that a parent will
have knowledge of, and immediately attend to, problematic behavior. Second, monitoring
can limit access to negative peers and foster more involvement with positive ones (Snyder &
Patterson, 1987). Again, referring to the correlational study by Patterson and Stouthamer-
Loeber (1984), monitoring behavior by the parents was the number one correlate to police
contacts, \( r = -0.55, p < .0001 \), and a self-reported delinquent life style, \( r = -0.54, p < .0001 \).

Reviewers of other research also indicate that low levels of parental monitoring are linked to adolescent deviant behavior (Henggeler, 1989).

**Positive Parenting and Reinforcement**

In addition to effective discipline and monitoring, positive parenting and reinforcement seem to encourage the adolescent to develop normative values and behavioral standards (Patterson & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1984). This development and reinforcement of positive skills can affect antisocial behavior by increasing the chance that the adolescent is accepted by peers (Snyder & Patterson, 1987). In a review of longitudinal literature, Snyder and Patterson (1987) surmised that parental coldness, rejection, and a lack of support and affection are predictive of socially unskilled adolescents who exhibit delinquency.

**Conflict and Problem Solving**

Inadequate conflict and problem solving skills can contribute to adolescent delinquency in two ways (Snyder & Patterson, 1987). First, unresolved problems can lead to large amounts of family and parental stress. When parents are stressed they may employ less effective parenting skills (Reid & Patterson, 1989). Stress can also contribute to parental depression, which in turn can lead to disrupted parenting practices. Conger, Patterson, and Ge (1995) hypothesized that a stress-induced depressed mood for parents may decrease effective monitoring and discipline practices, while increasing threats and coercive discipline of the adolescent. They collected data from 290 adolescent males and their families in both Oregon and Iowa. The assessment included interviews, questionnaires, telephone interviews, and in-home observations. Results indicated that parental stress is related to stress-related parental depression, which in turn can disrupt parenting practices. As previously discussed,
these disrupted or ineffective parenting practices can then contribute to, or reinforce, delinquent behavior.

A second way inadequate conflict and problem solving skills may facilitate antisocial behavior is through example. The family is a primary place where a child observes these practices and skills (Snyder & Patterson, 1987). If effective examples are not found in the family the adolescent may not learn the social and adjustment skills needed to effectively work with others in various settings, such as work or school. This reduced demonstration of social skills by the adolescent can lead to further peer rejection or association with other deviant peers (Henggeler, 1989; Snyder & Patterson, 1987).

Reciprocal Reinforcement

In addition to a lack of these four basic parenting and family management skills, adolescent delinquent behavior is also influenced by reciprocal reinforcement and feedback loops between parents and the adolescent and between peers and the adolescent. In essence, the delinquent adolescent is seen as being a product as well as an architect of the environment (Snyder & Patterson, 1987).

From his review of theoretical frameworks, Patterson (1986) suggests that adolescent delinquency is ultimately learned in the family and is strengthened and maintained by social interaction (Reid & Patterson, 1989). It may start as a failure by parents to punish low-key coercive behaviors. The lack of punishment of these behaviors leads to a display of these same behaviors in higher frequency (Snyder & Patterson, 1987). The adolescent behavior is being reinforced by lack of discipline. As this cycle continues parents may even find themselves trying to use the adolescent’s own tactics to control his behavior (such as whining, yelling, tantrums, and threats) (Patterson, 1986). These mutually coercive
exchanges then continue to the point of being mutually reinforcing. In effect, “ineffective parent discipline and child antisocial behavior mutually maintain each other” (Vuchinich et al., 1992, p. 518).

Evidence for this feedback loop was investigated during a two-year longitudinal study of 206 pre-adolescent boys. Structural equation modeling was used to test the model that parental discipline practices affected adolescent delinquent behavior, and visa versa. Results indicated that the magnitude of the effects were similar (Vuchinich et al., 1992). Others have added to this model of mutual influence suggesting that as an adolescent demonstrates more antisocial behavior, the parent will increasingly avoid reasonable attempts at discipline (Patterson et al., 1990). This type of pattern can lead to parental rejection (Patterson, 1986) as the adolescent becomes increasingly difficult to parent (Snyder & Patterson, 1987).

Furthermore, this parental rejection can be generalized to peer rejection (Vuchinich et al., 1992). Just as the adolescent’s coercive behavior has caused his parents to back off (Patterson & Yoerger, 1993; Snyder & Patterson, 1987), the behavior has the same effect with peers (Snyder & Patterson, 1987). As the child has a lack of interpersonal social skills, this increases the likelihood of peer rejection (Snyder & Patterson, 1987), and peer rejection can further contribute in a reciprocal way to elicit an even greater amount of antisocial behavior from the adolescent (Vuchinich et al., 1992). The rejected adolescent is more likely to associate with other unskilled coercive peers which will “increase his opportunities to acquire, perform and hone antisocial behavior” (Snyder & Patterson, 1987, p. 219). Becoming a member of a deviant peer group can mean more extreme deviant behavior, alcohol use, and substance abuse (Bank et al., 1987).
Forgatch and Patterson (1998) suggest that the core problem of delinquency is a social environment that supports deviant behavior. However, in the literature the term “social environment” has been used to describe the immediate surroundings of the adolescent in the home, school, neighborhood, and community, without much attention given to the adolescent within the broader spectrum of society. Certainly the aforementioned contexts (primarily family, school, and community) are micro-components of society. However, it would also be of interest to know how macro-society messages of tradition, media, and stereotypes would also influence the correlates of delinquent behavior for the adolescents who participated in these studies.

It should be noted that the majority of research done on correlates of delinquency has been with male adolescents (Henggeler, 1989). According to Henggeler (1989) reasons for this may include (a) prevalence and incidence of delinquent behavior is higher among males as compared to females; female delinquent behavior is less frequent and less serious than male behavior; (b) males are more aggressive than females due to socialization and/or hormone levels; and (c) societal sexism—adolescents are treated differently by the juvenile justice system with females receiving harsher treatment and more drastic intervention than males.

These reasons sighted for why there has been more research on delinquency of male adolescents when compared to female adolescents exposes a broader message: male and female adolescents are different. There is difference in incidence and prevalence of antisocial behavior, difference in how society perceives, views, and deals with the behavior (Henggeler, 1989), and a difference in variables associated with the development of delinquent behavior (Snyder & Patterson, 1987). For this last reason, some researchers do
Treatment of Adolescent Delinquent Behavior

As contextual contributors to adolescent delinquency have been identified, interventions have been developed as a way to help address the growing concern of adolescent delinquency and to enable adolescents to return to a more productive side of society. Discussed below are established treatment procedures for adolescent delinquency.

Functional Family Therapy

One family based approach that has been identified as useful in treating adolescents with delinquent behavior is Functional Family Therapy (FFT) (Alexander, Waldron, Newberry, & Liddle, 1988; Brosnan & Carr, 2000). In general, FFT assumes that “behavior occurs in circular and reciprocal ways, and that the relationship context, rather than the individual focus, creates the major meaning of behavior” (Friedman, 1989, p. 336). Alexander et al. (1988) cite three major strengths of the FFT approach. First, authors cite a strong research base. Outcome data has suggested that FFT has influenced low recidivism rates among delinquent adolescents. Second, FFT is broad enough to be used with most families, yet is able to be tailored to fit needs of individual families. This flexibility allows treatment to vary over context and populations. And third, FFT is outlined by specific phases and tasks of intervention. In this way, treatment can be somewhat uniform across time and space.

One therapeutic principle that is essential to FFT is relabeling (Alexander et al., 1988; Morris, Alexander, Waldron, 1988). Relabeling, also referred to as reframe or positive connotation (Morris et al., 1988), is a way for FFT to reduce resistance in therapy by
assigning new constructive motives and assumptions to problem behavior. Relabels must be believable/plausible, assign benevolent motives to behavior, and point out the benefits of the symptomatic behavior to the family system or individual (Morris et al., 1988).

Communicating this new meaning for behavior is the first step toward helping families to change their automatic thinking about their assumptions behind the so called “bad” behavior. For example, a teenager who smokes and gets a reaction from an absent dad could be relabeled as a teenager who desires to bring more closeness to the family by having his dad involved more. The “bad” behavior of the adolescent is seen as having a benefit for the family and the adolescent is seen as one with benevolent motives.

Functions also play an important role in FFT (Alexander et al., 1988; Morris et al., 1988). In short, a function is defined as “a person’s pattern of behaviors, feelings and thoughts that mediate the amount of psychological relatedness in a relationship with another person” (Morris et al., 1988, p. 121). A function is a way to understand the effects of individual behavior on a relationship. No matter what the behavior is the interpersonal function of the behavior usually manifests itself in three ways: closeness, distance, or midpointing (combination of closeness and distance) (Alexander et al., 1988). In this way, every problematic behavior performed by an individual can also be seen in terms of the purpose it serves in the family (to distance or to draw others closer together). A behavior is not just an overt action. It also performs a higher function in regulating family relationships.

Functions are characterized by the following five assumptions as outlined by Alexander et al. (1988) and Morris et al. (1988).

1. Functions in and of themselves are not bad, however the expression may be. For example, it is not bad that a parent wants to feel close to his or her children (the
function), but it is problematic if this closeness is achieved through harmful or abusive means (the expression).

2. Functions are unique to each relationship. Individuals can display different functions and behavior in different relationships. For instance, a teenager can be distancing with his mother at the same time he is increasing closeness to peers.

3. Functions are phenomenological, not observational. A function of a behavior is dependent on how it is experienced. It cannot be arbitrarily observed. For example, if someone cries, that behavior cannot be assumed to be performing a closeness function. Crying could also function as a distancing mechanism. It must be determined what function crying is supporting, and not just view crying as performing only one particular function at any one time. A certain behavior can never be assumed to ratify a specific function (Alexander et al., 1988).

4. Functions are not stable throughout life. Individuals redefine their relationships throughout life and routinely change their behavior to change the functions that govern those relationships.

5. Functions are unique to each relationship but do not operate in isolation. Functions are unique in that the same behavior that serves as closeness in one relationship can at the same time serve as distancing in another. These functions, although unique from each other, are not in isolation from each other. Change in one relationship will affect other relationships as well. For example, parents who start paying their delinquent son to do chores around the house in order to get him to be home more (closeness function) may have to deal with another sibling (who was already close)
fighting with them over money (distancing function) since that sibling has never
gotten paid for chores.

In relation to adolescents displaying delinquent behaviors, FFT is a model designed to
bring about changes in the family by redefining the adolescent’s behavior in terms of
relabeling and functions. The adolescent is not seen as an individual entity to be “fixed”, but
rather as someone who is part of a bigger family system. The behaviors of the adolescent are
seen as performing specific functions. The goal of therapy is to have these functions remain,
but change the behavioral means of attaining them.

**Effectiveness of FFT with Adolescents**

As reviewed by Alexander et al., (1988), FFT has proven effective with antisocial and
delinquent adolescents by demonstrating lower recidivism rates (27%) at one year follow up
points, as compared to a comparison group (47%). In addition, it was summarized that FFT
has proven to be successful in improving general family functioning through improved
family communication and interaction patterns (Huey & Henggeler, 2001).

One study that investigated the impact of FFT for a group of adolescents displaying
delinquent behavior was conducted by Gordon, Graves, and Arbuthnot (1995). Participants
consisted of 38 males and 16 females all approximately 15 years of age, who were guilty of
misdemeanors or felonies. Fifteen males and 12 females were assigned to the FFT treatment
group while the rest were placed in a comparison group not referred for family therapy.
Methodology dictated that the adolescent be followed up at five years post-intervention
(when participants would be 20-22 years old) in order to determine recidivism rates leading
into adulthood. Results indicated that the recidivism rates for the treatment and comparison
groups significantly differed at 8.7% and 40.9% respectively (Gordon et al., 1995). Authors
concluded that those adolescents treated with FFT were significantly less likely to be convicted of criminal misdemeanors or felonies as adults.

In their study of four complete research projects on FFT (45%-70% of participants were male), Brosnan and Carr (2000) assessed from research results specifics of how outcome was related to time spent participating in FFT. Brosnan and Carr concluded that anywhere from 8-36 hours of FFT was needed to effectively improve family communication and reduce conduct problems and recidivism rates among delinquent adolescents with conduct problems. Authors also assessed that improvements were held short term from 18 months up to 3 ½ years after FFT treatment, with recidivism rates being just half of recidivism rates for non-treated adolescents.

A recent look at the FFT research has asserted that FFT has indeed focused on hard to treat populations, and that clear effects in controlled studies indicate more change with FFT than other treatments (client-centered family groups) or controls (no treatment discussion groups) (Kazdin, 2002). It has also been determined that FFT works with adolescents whose behavior varies in terms of severity and chronicity (Kazdin, 2002).

Critique of FFT

One main area where FFT has been criticized is in its handling of functions. As stated earlier, FFT holds that interpersonal functions (closeness, distance, midpointing) are not good or bad, however, the expression of the function through various thoughts, feelings, and behaviors may be unacceptable (Alexander et al., 1988; Alexander, Warburon, Waldron, & Mas, 1985; Morris et al., 1988). FFT asserts that whatever function is trying to be achieved is honorable and that attempting to change the functions in relationships will invite resistance and difficulty, which could lead to drop out and wasted time and resources.
(Alexander et al., 1985). Critics, however, are concerned that legitimizing any function without question, especially when the functions support gender expectations, can inadvertently endorse and uphold traditional gender roles (Avis, 1985a, 1985b). For example, when FFT does not address the appropriateness of functions, it could be reinforced for a family that women should stick with their traditional responsibility for closeness functions and men should continue with their distancing functions, both which are products of traditional gender role stereotyping and societal expectations (Avis, 1985a, 1985b). It is argued that FFT has ignored the political implications of treatment (Avis, 1985b).

Avis (1985b) suggests that the following steps be taken in order to enable families to be aware of how society influences their relationships with others.

1. Help families understand all the choices they are actually making, even the unconscious ones.
2. Explore how families pick choices (free choice vs automatically adopted stereotypes).
3. Help families understand the costs and benefits of these choices.
4. Explore alternatives with the family.
5. Encourage families to act on their true choices.

It is argued that FFT could more richly help clients by actually investigating how family members have been informed to choose the functions that they have. This could be particularly crucial in working with adolescent girls. As the teenage years are a time for much growth and development, it is also a time when societal expectation and influences regarding gender are greatly felt (Hill & Lynch, 1983). For example, as females physically mature, there is increased pressure to conform to the stereotypical role society prescribes to this gender. It would be vital when addressing the at-risk behavior of teenage girls that it
also be evaluated not only which functions of their behavior have been chosen, but how have they chosen those functions, and what has influenced their choice of functions. Treatment should investigate the limiting nature of narrowly defined gender roles in order that more options be opened (Avis, 1985b).

**Multisystemic Therapy**

A second family based approach that has been identified as useful in treating delinquent adolescent behavior is Multisystemic Therapy (MST) (Alexander, Robbins, Sexton, 2000; Borduin, 1999; Brosnan & Carr, 2000; Henggeler, 1999; Henggeler & Borduin, 1990; Hengeller, Cunningham, Pickrel, Schoenwald, & Brondino, 1996). In general, MST is a family and community based treatment approach that focuses on the interactions between individuals and the systems within which they are embedded (Henggeler et al., 1996). These systems can include the family, work, peer, neighborhood, community, and cultural institutions (Henggeler, Schoenwald, & Pickrel, 1995), all of which influence individual behavior. The primary goals of MST are first, to empower parents with skills and resources to handle the expected difficulties of raising an adolescent, and second, to empower adolescents with the ability to cope with family problems (Bourduin, 1999). Treatment focus is broad as it covers many systems of interaction, and within with these systems, MST is also able to individually tailor its interventions in a way that is family focused, intensive, and practical (Henggeler et al., 1996). This is done by conceptualizing treatment goals that assure individualized treatment to a “real life” setting (Henggeler et al., 1996). The end result is a “flexible and individualized treatment approach that addresses the multiple determinants of antisocial behavior in the youth’s natural ecology” (Henggeler et al., 1996, p. 55).
MST is guided by several strategies and principles which help outline MFT philosophy and basis for intervention. Detailed below are six strategies as outlined by Henggeler (1999), and nine treatment principles as outlined by Henggeler et al. (1996).

The six strategies are as follows:

1. MST adopts the philosophy that the most effective and ethical way to help adolescents is through helping their families.
2. MST therapists are available for client needs 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
3. MST therapists assume responsibility for client engagement and achieving clinical goals. Client dropout and resistance are seen as reflecting on the therapist.
4. Treatment takes place in the home or other community locations to eliminate treatment access barriers.
5. Treatment is strength-focused and families are viewed as resourceful.
6. MST services are individualized to meet the many changing needs of adolescents and their families.

In addition to these strategies, nine treatment principles are as follows (Henggeler et al., 1999, p. 56-58):

1. The primary purpose of assessment is to understand the fit between the identified complaints and problems and the broader systemic context. Problems are not in individuals per se, but rather, are the “end product of reciprocal interactions between individuals and the interconnected systems in which they are nested” (Henggeler et al., 1996, p. 53).
2. Therapeutic contacts should emphasize the positive and use these client strengths as influence for change.
3. Interventions need to promote responsible behavior and decrease irresponsible behavior among family members.

4. Interventions should be focused in the here-and-now and target specific, well-defined problems.

5. Interventions should target sequences of behavior within or between multiple systems. Multiple systems for multiple family members are engaged all at once to aid in treatment.

6. Interventions need to be developmentally appropriate.

7. Interventions should be designed to require daily or weekly effort by family members.

8. The usefulness of interventions should be evaluated continuously from multiple perspectives. These perspectives can include the adolescent, family, teachers, coaches, etc.

9. Interventions need to promote generalization and long term maintenance.

Interventions are not meant to offer a "quick fix" but are meant to be valuable across time and situation.

**Effectiveness of MST with Adolescents**

MST has been assessed as being an effective family based approach for treating adolescent delinquent behavior (Alexander et al., 2000; Brosnan & Carr, 2000; Borduin, 1999; Henggeler, 1999; Henggeler & Borduin, 1990; Henggeler, Borduin, & Mann, 1993; Henggeler et al., 1996). In a review of six studies on the effect of MST on adolescent conduct problems (67%-84% of participants were male), Brosnan and Carr (2000) summarized that MST was capable of reducing recidivism rates as well as re-incarceration.
rates, because the average adolescent treated by MST fared better than 88% of controls two to four years after treatment. It was determined that after two to four years recidivism was 36% for MST treated adolescents and 75% for controls (Brosnan & Carr, 2000). Authors also concluded that MST was able to improve family functioning and that 20 hours of MST a month for 2-47 months may be effective in bringing about his change.

Another study conducted in 1992 and reported on by Henggeler et al. (1996) and Henggeler (1999), showed the effectiveness of MST in working with delinquent adolescents. In this study of 84 serious juvenile offenders (77% male) the adolescents were randomly assigned to receive either MST or the usual services provided by Department of Juvenile Justice. Results indicated that MST was effective in reducing rates of criminal behavior. At a 59-week follow up, those adolescents that received MST had significantly fewer rearrests ($\mu = .87$) than those adolescents treated with usual services ($\mu = 1.52$). There was also a difference in number of weeks incarcerated. At follow up, adolescents treated with MST averaged 5.8 weeks of incarceration while those traditionally treated averaged 16.2 weeks.

A second study reported on by Henggeler et al. (1996) and Henggeler (1999) compared the effectiveness of MST with individual therapy. For this study 176 juvenile offenders (67% male) and their families were randomly assigned to participate either in MST or individual therapy. Following treatment, families who participated in MST reported more positive changes than those who participated in individual therapy. At a four year follow up of the same group it was still seen that those who were treated with MST had 22% lower recidivism rates than those that received individual therapy. It was also
concluded that adolescents treated with MST were less likely to be arrested for violent crimes as compared to the individual therapy group.

Critique of MST

One strength of MST is its focus on treating severely impaired adolescents (Kazdin, 2000, 2002). It is thought that using this type of population is a strong test of a treatment program (Kazdin, 2000). A second strength has been the ability for MST to conceptualize and treat adolescent conduct problems at multiple levels, such as individual, family, and community (Kazdin, 2000). Kazdin also points out that long term follow up has also been positive in showing long term effects of MST. Fourth, it also appears that MST is not moderated by adolescent characteristics such as age, social class, or arrest and incarceration history (Huey & Henggeler, 2001).

Where MST has been criticized is in its lack of precise techniques as to how to maneuver the multisystem interventions. There are not explicit guidelines for therapists (Kazdin, 2000). Second, the need to administer and oversee several different multisystemic interventions is very intensive and taxing on therapist time, energy, and resources (Kazdin, 2000, 2002). Third, MST is criticized for having outcome research largely performed by the same group of researchers who developed the program (Kazdin, 2002). If more MST outcome research was done by others, it would greatly enhance credibility of previous results.

One aspect of MST that seems to be missing is attention to the cultural context of the adolescent. Henggeler et al. (1995) state that MST is consistent in how the “child and family’s school, work, peer, community, and cultural institutions are viewed as interconnected systems with dynamic and reciprocal influences on the behavior of family
members” (p. 710). While the first mentioned systems of family, school, work, and peers, are obvious influential circles that MST addresses, it is unclear what the “cultural institutions” are that it claims to address. In the previously reviewed literature, including studies, case examples, treatment strategies, and treatment principles, there was nothing specific found as to how MST addresses those issues that deal with the “cultural institution” of society, including issues of gender expectation, gender roles, stereotypes, and media influence.

It was also previously stated that the effects of MST do not seem to be moderated by adolescent age, ethnicity, social class, or arrest and incarceration history (Huey & Henggeler, 2001). While it is noted that gender has not been mentioned in this list, there does not appear to be any MST research to support either position as to whether gender in MST has an influence on outcome or not. As the reviewed studies on MST efficacy included a preponderance of males, and it appears that males and females are treated as one group (called adolescents), it is not apparent if MST is equally effective with female adolescents and male adolescents, or if there are significant differences in post-treatment recidivism rates based on gender.

Day-Treatment Programs

One aspect of both FFT and MST that contributes to the success of these treatments for adolescent delinquent behavior, is that both treatments take place in the real world environment of the adolescent and involve those real world aspects of life, such as family, peers, and community (Henggeler et al., 1996) This is in contrast to other treatment options which house the problematic adolescent away from his family, home, and community. Even if the adolescent is “fixed” re-entry to the “real world” is extremely challenging. Another
treatment style that has surfaced to also alleviate the challenge of re-entry to community life is day-treatment programs. A day-treatment program can be understood to be a group program conducted outside of the home that the adolescent attends for a certain amount of hours on given days, and the primary residence of the adolescent is still with the family. In opposition to residential programs which take the adolescent out of home and social environments, day-treatment allows the adolescent to practice and use skills gained in treatment within the natural settings of home and school.

Reviewed below is outcome literature of day-treatment programs, with special emphasis given to methodology and inclusion of female adolescents in sampling.

Effectiveness of Day-Treatment Programming

One study, completed by Matzner, Solvan, Silva, Weiner, Bendo, and Alport (1998), focused on a day-treatment program where high school credit was given to the adolescents who participated in lieu of attending public high school. The aims of the program were to improve psychiatric symptoms, family, academic, and interpersonal functioning. The participants were referred from mental health clinics, school guidance counselors, foster care agencies, or psychiatric outpatient and hospital day units. Those adolescents included in the study were 10 males and 21 females ranging in age from 14-19, with the majority being between 16 and 17 years old. Most adolescents lived with a parent. Major depression was common among 16 of the 31 adolescents.

One purpose of the study was to assess if the day-treatment program would have a greater effect on psychiatric symptomology than standard outpatient treatment. A pre-test and post-test was used to examine severity of mental illness between admission to the program and six months after the program was completed. This pre- and post-test was
conducted using the Global Assessment of Functioning (GAF) and the Severity of Illness and Global Improvement items on the Clinical Global Impressions scale (CGI). Both Severity of Illness and Global Improvement are based respectively on a seven- and eight-point Likert scale. Both of these scales and GAF were coded every three months by the trained mental health clinicians who interacted with the adolescents on a daily basis.

Results of paired t-tests indicated significant improvement in manifestation of psychiatric symptoms from admission to six months post-test. It was concluded by authors that day-treatment is capable of reducing target symptoms and improving global functioning in the particular population (Matzner et al., 1998).

The Matzner et al. (1998) study is unusual in the number of female participants used in the study. When compared to others (Carlson, Barr, & Young, 1994; Rey, Denshire, Wever, & Apollonov, 1998), this study was the only one to assess more female than male adolescents. While unique in this way, this study is not unique from others in the general quantitative approach to data analysis, as exhibited by the statistics and the expert health clinicians who assessed the functioning of the adolescents by means of observation.

Rey et al. (1998) state the purpose of their study was to examine the efficacy of a day-treatment program for adolescents with behavioral problems compared with a matched control group receiving other treatments. Authors hypothesized that three years later, those in day-treatment, when compared to the control group, would function better, have fewer symptoms, and be more satisfied with treatment. Participants of the study comprised 31 males and 7 females matched with a control of 30 males and 5 females. Age range for adolescents in these comparisons was 13-19 years. The control group consisted of teens
whom either were not accepted to the program, refused treatment, lived too far away, or for whom no vacancies were available.

Information about each adolescent was gathered through a psychiatric evaluation and interviews with the adolescent, family, and teachers. Measures of assessment were also used including Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL) and Youth Self-Report (YSR).

Chi-square tests and two-tailed t-tests were used to compare the two groups of adolescents. Final results suggested that those adolescents who attended the day-treatment program were judged to be better functioning than controls. Also, parents and adolescents were more satisfied with the program when they felt it specifically met their needs and helped to achieve goals. However, authors found that symptom improvement was no better for those in the program than for those in the control group, as both groups had marked reduction in CBCL and YSR scores. The researchers attributed this to normal development, regression to the mean, or inflated baseline scores due to special circumstances at time of referral to the program (Rey et al., 1998).

One aspect of interest is that part of the methodology of this study was based on something other than that of questionnaires: interviews were done with the adolescent and family members. However, upon closer examination, the information collected from these interviews included primarily demographic data, school or employment situation, problems with the law, family living arrangements, drug use, and other treatments received (Rey et al., 1998). This information was then categorically coded and analyzed with the chi-square. In no part of the methodology was space allowed for the adolescent to document any more experience than what was already included on the questionnaires and the coded variables of categorical information listed above.
Authors of another study (Carlson et al., 1994) also conducted interviews with treated adolescents and their parents. The purpose of these interviews was to assess attitudinal factors of the client and his family in hopes of predicting treatment outcome. One hypothesis was that adolescents who admitted they had a problem at intake would be more likely to experience positive outcomes than those adolescents who did not admit to problems.

The adolescents included in the study totaled 84, with 73 in a residential program and 11 in day-treatment. Their mean age was approximately 15 years. Gender of these adolescents is not discussed; however, Carlson et al. describes the sample as “fairly typical of youthful offenders in treatment programs” (1994, p. 43). Being that female adolescents are not typically a subject of research concerning treatment programs (Matzner et al., 1998), it is interpreted from the statement by Carlson et al. that the youth in this study are all male, or at least majority male.

Methodologically, the study was carried out by having the social worker collect the attitudinal data at the time the adolescent was placed for treatment. This same data would again be collected six months following discharge from the treatment program to allow for comparison. The social worker collected this attitudinal data both times by means of an interview with the adolescent and his parents (Carlson et al., 1994). Although an interview would allow for much richer description concerning adolescent and parent attitudes, these rich responses were limited, or shut down, by the coding procedure of the interview. For example, the social worker would ask the adolescent, “What kinds of things are you worried about right now in terms of you being placed?” This was asked as a measure of anxiety and was coded a “2” if any worries were named, and a “0” if the adolescent denied having any worries (Carlson et al., 1994).
While Carlson et al. did allow for more adolescent input in their study, it seems that the responses received from the adolescent were shut down by the coding method, resulting in an analysis product similar to quantitative questionnaires.

Critique of Day-Treatment Programming

To date, a limited number of studies have been done to test the impact of day-treatment programs on adolescent at-risk behavior. Foremost, in reviewing the methods of some of these studies, it was found that the research is primarily conducted using quantitative methods, such as scaled questionnaires, or at the most, coded interviews (Carlson et al., 1994; Matzner et al., 1998; Rey et al., 1998). Secondly, it is noted that of the studies reviewed, the majority were conducted among male adolescents (Carlson et al., 1994; Rey et al., 1998), with only minor inclusion of female adolescents (Matzner et al., 1998; Rey et al., 1998). Whether this is due to researcher choice, convenience, or lack of availability of female adolescents, is not known.

It would be of added value to specifically study female adolescents involved in day-treatment to not only discover specific effectiveness of day-treatment programming with adolescent girls, but to also understand the experience of the girls in a treatment that is specifically designed for their needs. To allow for this, more reflexive methodologies will need to be utilized.

Developmental Context of Adolescent Females

In examining correlates of delinquency, two family based treatment approaches that systemically deal with delinquent and antisocial adolescents, and day-treatment programs, which also treat adolescents in real life contexts, it has become clear that there are discrepancies surrounding treatment of adolescents when it comes to issues of gender. First,
female adolescents are included less than males in research studies. Second, female adolescents are possibly treated differently by the justice system, due perhaps to societal gender expectations (Henggeler, 1989). Third, two effective family based treatments for delinquent adolescents may not completely or adequately address the social and cultural influences on gender expectations, gender roles, prescriptions for gender behavior, traditions, stereotypes, and media influences that female adolescents so intensely face as they develop. Fourth, research on day-treatment programs has also not demonstrated a deep understanding of the unique contexts of female development and how these contexts influence psychological functioning of adolescent females.

One area of particular concern pertaining to adolescent development is the heightened occurrence and salience of depressive symptomology among adolescent females. Discussed below is literature regarding depressive symptomology as an outcome of the unique sociological and biological contexts encountered by adolescent females.

Depression and Adolescent Females: Sociological Considerations

In general, depressive symptomology has been thought to be nearly twice as prevalent in populations of female adolescents as compared to males (Angold & Worthman, 1993; Nolen-Hoeksema & Girgus, 1994), and that this difference between genders becomes more marked as girls approach 13-14 years of age (Hankin & Abramson, 2001; Nolen-Hoeksema, 1994; Nolen-Hoeksema & Girgus, 1994; Wichström, 1999). In a review of thirty studies of non-clinical adolescents it was concluded that 20% to 35% of adolescent boys and 25% to 40% of girls self-reported depressive symptoms (Petersen, Compas, Brooks-Gunn, Stemmler, Ey, & Grant, 1993). Although it has been inferred that rates of depression rise for both men and women through middle age, much of the indicators of life-time risk can be accounted for
by changes that occur during the critical ages of 10-15 when girls are making an enormous transition in terms of physical development and gender-related attitudes and behavior (Basow & Rubin, 1999; Frank & Young, 2000). It is this heightened occurrence of depression which has spurred both conceptualization and study into understanding the unique contexts surrounding adolescent females.

Socialization and Gender Identity

One theoretical and conceptual body of literature concerning female adolescent development centers on the notions of gender identity and socialization of the adolescent female. In short, gender identity refers to a person’s subjective feelings about maleness or femaleness (Basow & Rubin, 1999). Gilligan, Rogers, and Brown, (1990) elaborate “male and female development may be characterized in terms of a particular way of arranging themes that pertain to the experience of one’s body and relationships with others, and to living within a family and culture” (p. 315). In this sense, adolescence is a process of social construction (Grotevant, 1998) and can be viewed in relation to the context in which it occurs. Related to gender identity is gender role identity, which is the “degree to which an individual identifies with definitions of masculinity or femininity constructed by a given society” (Basow & Rubin, 1999, p. 26). Again, gender role identity is also seen to incorporate components of social construction, as it is society which has a major influence on how gender role identities are defined. It is these two components—gender identity and gender role identity—that act to influence the developmental pathways followed by both girls and boys. However, it is the difference in these developmental pathways which has implications for gender differences in depressive symptomology (Rosenfield, 2000).
To understand more specifically the role society plays in the development of the female adolescent, the interplay between the individual and society's culture will be explored. Rosenfield (2000) argues that individuals internalize conceptions of masculinity and femininity by adopting the attitudes of others. She suggests that individuals will modify their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to match the expectations that others have for them. Many of these expectations are defined by social categories (such as gender) and therefore, masculinity and femininity become an integral part of the attitudes and expectations that a person internalizes. It is these culturally based notions that influence assumptions about the self, the world, and relationships with others. It is these assumptions, that result from socialization practices by gender, that are highlighted in adolescence, that may explain gender differences in depression (Rosenfield, 2000).

There has been a significant amount of theorizing about what are these socially and culturally based gender role notions that become a large part of the changes that adolescent girls make in their own gender-related attitudes and behaviors (Basow & Rubin, 1999). Adolescence is a time where girls wrestle with what it means to be a woman and are consistently faced with contradictory and restrictive messages about “being attractive but not too vain, being sexy but not too sexual, about being an individual but pleasing others, about developing one’s abilities but not being too achievement oriented” (Basow & Rubin, 1999, p. 37). Adolescence for females has been called a crossroads where girls are faced with increased pressures and expectations to conform to a more restricted female role (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). The perils of these crossroads have been described using the terms loss of self, loss of voice, internalization, and powerlessness—all of which manifest the pressure adolescent females feel to be the “perfect girl” rather than the one they really are (Brown &
Gilligan, 1992). It is this social pressure that girls feel to “put aside their authentic selves and to display only a small portion of their gifts” (Pipher, 1994, p. 22) which leads to a tug-of-war that can feed into problematic depression.

**Gender Intensity and Internalization**

The gender intensification hypothesis (Hill & Lynch, 1983) states that in adolescence there is an increased focus on gender issues for both males and females that is brought about by physical changes (secondary sex characteristics) and social changes (dating) (Aubé, Fichman, Saltaris, & Koestner, 2000). It is during this time that adolescents more closely examine their behavior in terms of cultural ideals (Rosenfield, 2000). Specifically, female adolescents will more closely identify with stereotypes about femininity (Basow & Rubin, 1999). It is suggested that as an adolescent female more intensely conforms to a female gender role stereotype, it leaves her vulnerable to experiencing depressive symptoms (Aubé et al., 2000, Wichström, 1999).

Authors of one study who investigated this relationship between feminine role-related characteristics and depressive symptomology hypothesized that the negative aspects of the feminine gender role would be associated with depressive symptoms for adolescent girls (Aubé et al., 2000). Specifically, authors hypothesized that “feeling too responsible for others” and “difficulty being assertive with others” would be related to symptomology. It was also hypothesized that there would be a greater chasm in scores of older and younger female adolescents in these measures, as the older adolescents had been involved longer in the gender intensification process. Questionnaires were given to 206 female adolescents between the ages of 11 and 16. The results of ANOVA and multiple regression measures were supportive of the hypotheses (Aubé et al., 2000). The results asserted that the
traditionally feminine gender role traits of feeling responsible for the welfare of others and difficulty asserting personal needs and preferences in relationships, were predictive of greater depressive symptomology. It was also revealed that older girls reported a greater tendency than younger girls to feel responsibility for the welfare of others, which supports the gender intensification hypothesis (Aubé et al., 2000). However, authors did draw distinction between a “feminine” personality style of warm, nurturing, other-oriented traits which are not indicative of depression, and the interpersonal styles they investigated of feeling overly responsible for others and lacking assertion (Aubé et al., 2000).

Wichström (1999) also investigated gender intensification as a vehicle of depressed mood in early adolescence. Conducted among Norwegian adolescents, over 12,000 students were administered questionnaires at school. Although gender composition of the participants was not given, ANOVA results did reveal girls reporting more depressed mood than boys. In fact, females scored about .5 standard deviations above boys on depressed mood. This gender difference appeared to emerge around 13 years of age and remained constant during the rest of adolescence (Wichström, 1999).

The results of these studies regarding gender intensification seem to support recent theorization about the part that socially constructed gender role identity may play in the development of internalized disorders in females. Rosenfield (2000) has stated that female adolescents internalize concepts of femininity from attitudes of others and these conceptions affect reality for that adolescent in that these culturally based assumptions and practices are used to create individual understandings about the self, the world, and relationships with other people. It is these assumptions that are then played out and can shape tendencies toward a particular behavior (ex. non-assertiveness, getting lost in the needs of others). In
this way, gender role identity, coupled with gender intensification, is foretelling of why female adolescents could have greater occurrences of depressive symptomology—social constructions of femininity, and the intensification of them, have invited adolescent females to do so.

**Depression and Adolescent Females: Biological Considerations**

Adolescence is a time when great physical changes take place for the adolescent. Physically speaking, these internal and external changes at puberty are characterized by the following, as outlined by Graber, Petersen, and Brooks-Gunn (1996, p. 25).

1. Acceleration followed by deceleration of skeletal growth (growth spurt)
2. Change in body composition and distribution of fat and muscle tissue
3. Development of circulatory and respiratory systems resulting in greater strength and endurance
4. Maturation of reproductive organs and secondary sex characteristics
5. Changes in nervous and endocrine systems which regulate and coordinate the other pubertal events

While the above list outlines purely biological aspects of physical maturation, it should be kept in mind that biology merely is a background for social experiences that are also characteristic of physical development (Frank & Young, 2000). The meaning of physical change to an adolescent female is also based on cultural assumptions that are constructed in relation to others (Rosenfield, 2000). These personal and cultural meanings of puberty are forefront for developing females (Angold & Worthman, 1993).

It has been suggested that another reason adolescent females are more likely to experience depressive symptoms is due to challenges faced during the transition of puberty.
One salient factor of pubertal development is that of time, which refers to the “time” at which an adolescent physically develops in relation to age and peers (Graber et al., 1996). This timing is characterized by early, late, or on-time maturation. In reviewing several studies (gender composition of participants not given) Graber et al. (1996) determined that although progression of physical maturation is stable across individuals, the timing of onset is not, and varies greatly within each gender and between genders, as boys typically develop one to two years later than girls. The same authors also discerned from their review of studies that for boys, early maturation was generally positive to social and emotional functioning. However, early maturation for girls was associated with negative outcomes such as deviancy, lowered academic outcome, lowered self-esteem, and depression (Graber et al., 1996), and withdrawn behavior (Laitinen-Krispijn, Van der Ende, Hazebroek-Kampschreur, & Verhulst, 1999). Also, early maturing girls may feel greater pressure to behave sexually (Basow & Rubin, 1999) or engage in other activities they are psychologically unready for (Graber et al., 1996), which may also lead to depression.

Bodily changes related to puberty also invite depressive symptomology for adolescent females as they become dissatisfied with their bodies (Hankin & Abramson, 1999; Nolen-Hoeksema, 1994; Petersen, Sarigiani, & Kennedy, 1991; Rosenblum & Lewis, 1999; Wichstrøm, 1999). Body image is influenced by self-evaluation, which is influenced by society’s expectations as well as expectations of others (Rosenfield, 2000; Rosenblum & Lewis, 1999). Rosenblum and Lewis (1999) investigated perceptions of body image over influence of gender, physical appearance, and weight changes. One hundred fifteen adolescents (55 male and 60 female) participated in a longitudinal study with data collected
at ages 13, 15, and 18 years of age. Across the course of the study, as predicted, body image for females declined while body image for boys improved. This result was linked to a normal consequence of puberty for girls: weight gain. During physical development girls experience an increase in body mass with increased accumulation of fat around the hips and thighs. While this is a normal process, it is in contrast to culture’s standard of beauty which is a thin, less-rounded body, often verging on unrealistic parameters (Hankin & Abramson, 1999; Rosenblum & Lewis, 1999). It is this chasm between girls’ perceptions of real and ideal bodies which contributes to distress and depression (Rosenblum & Lewis, 1999). A normal developmental event for girls is cast in a negative light in part due to the internalized images gathered from external events and social feedback from others (Duncan, Ritter, Dornbusch, Gross, & Carlsmith, 1985; Rosenblum & Lewis, 1999). In essence, physical changes of the developing female adolescent are devalued by society and this is reflected in a lowered sense of well-being and increased rate of depression among adolescent females (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1994).

Wichstrøm (1999) also concluded that body dissatisfaction is an important factor for explaining the gender difference in depression between females and males. In addition to the hypothesis on gender intensification (as discussed earlier), Wichstrøm also hypothesized that body dissatisfaction would coincide with diverging levels of depression between girls and boys. Results indicated that for adolescent females, body dissatisfaction coincided with increased levels of depression around the age of 13-14. Results from this study also indicate that the development of a mature body (butt, hips, and breasts) was an active component of dissatisfaction. Body dissatisfaction also affected depression levels through decreased self-worth (Wichstrøm, 1999).
Unique Context

Adolescent girls develop in a social context that is uniquely different from adolescent boys and it is evident that “young women negotiate the transition from childhood to adulthood differently than young men” (Matheson, 1992, p. 34). This difference is primarily manifested in the ways that females and males make meaning of the messages and experiences encountered by interactions with society (Rosenfield, 2000). In viewing adolescence as a social construction (Grotevant, 1998), it is accepted that assumptions regarding components of adolescence, such as gender identity and body image, are socially constructed through the attitudes of others and society. Included in this are society’s expectations and stereotypes about the roles and behaviors that characterize what it means to be female or male. These constructed assumptions then shape individual views of self, world, and others (Rosenfield, 2000), which in turn shape the meaning given to experiences. It is these formative experiences and the meaning given to them that are uniquely and qualitatively different for adolescent girls as compared to adolescent boys. When adolescence is viewed as a social construction, then paying attention to issues of meaning is imperative for research concerning adolescents (Grotevant, 1998). Some previous research designs regarding adolescent programming have attempted to put adolescent meaning into categories of researcher meaning (Grotevant, 1998). It was desired that the present research would fulfill the purpose of highlighting adolescent meaning by accentuating the lived experiences of adolescent females as they made sense of the salient personal, social, and cultural issues they were each facing—all within in the context of an influential treatment program that had been introduced as a means of specifically addressing their developmental issues.
Rationale and Purpose

Adolescence is a time in a young woman’s life that is characterized by transition (Denmark, 1999). It is during adolescence that a young woman discovers more of who she is and explores preferences for “being” and relating with others. It is also a time when a young woman deals with many social contexts that are qualitatively different when compared to boys. These contexts include gender socialization, cultural stereotypes, and the meaning given to physical changes at puberty. Brown and Gilligan (1992) have called adolescence a crossroads where young women are faced with increased pressures to conform to a stereotyped gender role to be the “perfect girl” rather than the one they really are. While adolescence is undoubtedly a difficult time in young women’s lives it is also a time of “exploration, freedom to try new things, growing independence, and self-awareness” (Denmark, 1999, p. 377). With this in mind, there are implications for parents, educators, and marriage and family therapists (MFTs) as to how to help young women navigate the crossroads of life where they are met with so many pressures and expectations. The purpose of this research was to highlight the voices of female adolescents as they shared their experience of participating in a gender-specific treatment program specifically designed to address the unique contextual issues they face as developing females.
METHODOLOGY

As the purpose of this study was to highlight the voices of female adolescents, a qualitative approach was chosen so as to ensure that each participant’s point of view was captured (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Adolescent females have a voice that must be listened to (Matheson, 1992).

Phenomenological Approach

A phenomenological approach (Creswell, 1998) to this research was chosen because the purpose of this study was to gather information from female adolescents about a particular experience. Using the phenomenological approach allowed each female adolescent to share her experience of being in a selected day-treatment program. These individual experiences were then used to better understand the adolescents’ experiences surrounding the phenomenon of being involved in a gender-specific day-treatment program.

Creswell (1998) summarized the major issues involving phenomenological study as follows:

1. The researcher must be aware of personal biases and preconceived ideas concerning either the informants of the phenomenon of the study.
2. The researcher prepares and asks questions to help informants explore the meaning of their lived experience concerning the phenomenon.
3. The researcher then uses these questions to interview informants and gain a thick description of the phenomenon experienced.
4. Data collected from the interviews are then divided into statements and clusters of meaning at several different levels of categorical understanding.
5. A report is then written to most fully describe in detail the essence of the experience, recognizing that a single unifying meaning of the experience exists.

Site and Participant Selection

Site

The site for this study was a non-profit social service agency that specializes in services for families and youth. This agency is located in a Midwestern university community with a population of approximately 50,000. The particular program focus for this study was a day-treatment program for adolescent females called Progress.

Program Specifics

Progress is a locally developed strengths-based day-treatment program for young women in grades 7-12 who exhibit at-risk behaviors. The program was first started in January 1999 and continues to run year-round, including summers. Young women are enrolled in Progress for a minimum of 16 weeks to a maximum of 48 weeks, with successful completion determined by Progress staff. The group is rotating, meaning that different young women may enter the program at varying weeks. Group membership usually ranges between seven to twelve participants at any given time. Two group coordinators head the program and work with the young women on a daily basis. The program also allows for volunteers and outside speakers to contribute to the group.

The program format (Family Counseling Center, 1999a) is a 16-week cycle, with each two weeks emphasizing one of eight different topics. All of the topics involve skills and insights that can be worked on for a lifetime and can be addressed through many different activities. Young women who stay in the program up to the maximum of 48 weeks
will have opportunity to build upon previous experience as they repeat a particular topic emphasis.

During the school year, Progress meets Monday through Thursday. Those young women enrolled in Progress are escorted to and from the program in vehicles driven by Progress staff or other employees of the social service agency. Each program day includes a one hour group skill development session and a one and one-half hour group therapy session. One-half hour is scheduled for dinner, which is prepared on premises by the Progress staff. One half-hour is devoted to homework or free time. The program ends with a journaling activity designed to help each young woman focus on some positive aspect of her day. Time is also given for each young woman to share highlights of the day or week.

At Progress, issues are addressed through a psychoeducational component, such as a skill group or structured activity, as well as through a group therapy process. This is a time when both Progress leaders and participants can offer strength and direction pertaining to the issues each girl personally faces. Over the 16-week cycle of Progress, eight different topic areas are a focus of the psychoeducational group. Group therapy can either be an extension of the issues brought up during the skill group, or the focus can shift to more immediate concerns or issues the girls face.

Listed and briefly described below is each of the eight different topic areas addressed during the psychoeducational skill group component of Progress. Each topic area is focused on for approximately two of the sixteen weeks of group. These topic areas were derived from suggestions and guidelines presented by both Mary Pipher, author of *Reviving Orphelia* (1994), as well as the Iowa Commission on the Status of Women (1999).
Self-esteem/self-awareness. This topic is about exploring the opinion of self, including abilities, strengths, and weaknesses. Influences and beliefs that shape self-esteem are discussed.

Communication. During this segment different ways to communicate and how an individual can be a more effective communicator are addressed.

Conflicts and conflict resolution. This topic covers sources of conflict, resolution, and self-protection when conflicts are not resolvable. Anger management in relation to conflict is also discussed.

Relationships. Exploration of family, peer, and romantic relationships is done in the context of how to avoid exploitative and harmful relationships, while fostering healthy and rewarding ones.

Mind and body issues. In this segment body image, and connections between physical, mental, and emotional health are reviewed. Eating disorders, substance abuse, as well as ways to achieve a healthy body and life-style are discussed.

Sexuality. Gender identity and issues of sexual expression are explored. Topics of STD, abstinence, and pregnancy prevention are also approached in this segment.

Connections. During this topic ideas are discussed as to how individuals can build a strong internal support system ranging from spirituality to hobbies. Sources of family, school, and community support are also identified.

School, career, and future. The focus of this final segment is on future goals, lifestyle, and vocational choices. Practicalities of time and money management are introduced.
In order to successfully complete Progress, the young women must accomplish goals that include such things as being able to demonstrate increased self-control and discipline, exhibit improved self-image, meet realistic goals, and create and maintain healthy, supportive, and positive relationships with family and peers. Although these are broad program goals, each young woman has a detailed treatment plan that consists of specific and individualized outcomes that she is to accomplish while in the program. This way, the general goals are brought to a very specific and operational level for each of the participants. The accomplishment of these individualized outcomes are assessed by staff and self-report of the young woman. In order to qualify for graduation, 80% of the individualized treatment outcomes have to be reached. Program attendance and general behavior while at Progress are also taken into consideration.

The Progress program was selected for this research project for the following reasons. First, the program was new in 1999, and therefore research had not been done specifically for this program. As a new program, exploratory research was welcome and appropriate. Second, Progress is a unique gender-specific program that was specifically designed keeping in mind the developmental issues and pressures that girls face as they mature. It was a unique opportunity to explore the influence of this type of program on the lives of its participants. Finally, Progress is located at a local agency for convenient access to participants. The Progress staff was excited about this research and were helpful and supportive of the research efforts.

Program Philosophy

As a treatment program, Progress follows the philosophy that adolescent girls learn best in settings based on relationships and mutual respect (Family Counseling Center,
As a strengths-based program, Progress concentrates on enabling young women to navigate the teen years and make positive life choices while developing greater self-esteem, healthy habits, and closer relationships (Family Counseling Center, 1999b) in a setting that feels safe for expression and exploration. Rather than receiving treatment in a reward based or a "boot-camp" style environment, Progress participants work toward their goals in a setting based on mutual respect, with a focus on the strengths that each girl has within herself to make changes in her life.

Four basic assumptions that guide gender-specific programming for young women are outlined below. These are based on guidelines given by the Iowa Commission on the Status of Women (1999, p.10-11).

1. Good gender-specific services begin with good services. An effective program must have a solid program base and have competent staff knowledgeable about the youth being served.

2. Young women are different from young men, so their services must be also. There are unique differences in the process of female development and treatment programs must consider these differences to be effective.

3. Equality does not equal sameness. Equality must be met in basic program requirements, such as quality of staff and financial support. However, treatment services may differ whether females or males are being served. Opportunities that are meaningful to each gender must be provided which legitimizes developmental differences based on gender.

4. Services for young women cannot be viewed in isolation from society. Problems of young women are often based on society's gender role expectations of young women.
Staff must help young women link their issues to larger societal issues in order to address the pressures and problems.

The Iowa Commission on the Status of Women (1999, p.11-18) also recognizes eleven components of gender-specific treatment for young women. The eleven components are as follows:

1. Programs must provide emotional and physical safety
2. Programs must be culturally appropriate
3. Programs must be relationship based
4. Programs must provide positive female role models and mentors
5. Programs must address the abuse in young women’s lives
6. Programs must be strength-based, not deficit-based
7. Programs must address sexuality, including pregnancy and parenting
8. Programs must provide equitable educational and vocational opportunities
9. Programs must address the unique health needs of females, including nutritional concerns and regular physical activity
10. Programs must nurture the spiritual lives of participants
11. Programs should involve individual members of young women’s families

Intervention. Based on these assumptions and components of gender-specific treatment programs, interventions were fashioned to address the specific needs of young women from their perspective. For example, young women experience body image differently from young men. In covering this topic in a program such as Progress, special attention would be given to the role that culture and media play in influencing how females...
feel about their body image and sexuality, and how these influences in turn affect how young women feel about themselves.

Staff and Training

Progress staff are trained to implement gender-specific programming through conference attendance, study of publications, and on-the-job training. Progress staff regularly attend conferences addressing gender-specific programming and the needs of young women. There are also publications distributed by a gender-specific task force, which include a periodical newsletter that discusses the direction of staff efforts. Also, through feedback of other staff members, Progress staff are trained on-the-job of ways to better improve their effectiveness as a group leader and role model to young women.

For the four years of Progress existence, staff turnover has been about one person per year. Progress is staffed by a team of two women, so even when there was staff turnover, at some least one of the women was constant during that time. All current and past Progress staff have had a minimum of a Bachelors degree in a human services field. The staff have had at least two years experience and practice in human services before coming to Progress.

Individuals that are hired specifically to drive and transport the young women must pass child abuse background checks as well as a driving record check. Although experience with youth is not required, drivers are interviewed to determine their experience in working with female adolescents. While in the past Progress has hired both male and female drivers, females are preferred as many of the young women in Progress deal with victimization issues. Because of this, some young women are uncomfortable riding alone in the evening with a male driver.
Participants

Possible participants for this study were adolescent females who had been involved in Progress. The primary means of finding informants was through a list of Progress participants provided by Progress staff members. Female participants that were in the program were from the University community and surrounding communities. For this study, participants were either “graduates” of Progress, or else previously enrolled in Progress, but did not graduate for whatever reasons.

In general, any young woman that participates in Progress will be enrolled in grades 7-12 and will have been referred to the program by Juvenile Court Services, Department of Human Services, other agencies, the family, or the school. Young women in Progress most likely have been involved in at-risk behaviors, such as relationship problems, low-self esteem, illegal or unsafe behaviors, would otherwise be in residential treatment, or are returning to the community and their home after having been in placement.

Each referred young woman and her parents are interviewed by Progress staff to ensure the program will address each young woman’s needs. This interview takes place in the home or foster home of each young woman. In this way, the staff member is better able to become familiar with each young woman’s home environment. This interview is typically 20-40 minutes long. Its purpose is to help parents and daughter identify goals to work on that are compatible with Progress programming. If Progress is decidedly not able to meet the treatment needs of a particular young woman, she and her family will be referred to other services for treatment. For example, young women who are at high risk for running away, have current substance abuse issues, or need a more intensive treatment program (such as
residential treatment), are referred for other types of programming that would better meet the young woman's needs.

Procedures and Data Collection Techniques

Participant Recruitment and Permission

Before commencement of data collection, the procedures were reviewed and approved by the University Human Subjects Committee. Next, potential participants were selected based on graduate/non-graduate status, ethnicity, family composition, socioeconomic status, age while in Progress, and length of time since termination from Progress. After potential participants were selected, letters of intent and permission were mailed out addressed to both the young woman and her parent(s)/guardian(s) (all in one packet). Two letters of intent were included in the packet, one addressed to the young woman, and one to her parent(s)/guardian(s). The letters of intent stated the purpose of the study as well as included an invitation for the young woman to participate. Also included in the packet was a permission form to be signed by the parent(s) or guardian(s). This form was needed because the participants were minors. The letter of invitation stated that if the young woman desired to participate in the study then the signed permission form should be returned in the enclosed envelope. Upon receipt of this, the researcher contacted the young woman and her parent/guardian either by telephone or email to set up a convenient time to be interviewed and to answer any questions. Adolescents who desired to take part in the study were compensated by a $20 gift card that was given to them at the conclusion of the interview. For those participants who were currently over the age of 18, a packet was sent that did not include the parent permission form, but another form where they could indicate interest to participate. An initial wave of 15 (nine to graduates, six to non-graduates)
invitations to participate were mailed out with a response rate of seven returned. Another two (one to a graduate, one to a non-graduate) invitations were mailed out with a response of one returned. This total of eight young women interviewed represented 12% of the total number of young women served by Progress to that point. The participants interviewed were fairly representative of all Progress participants.

Table 1. Demographics of program and interview participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Composition</th>
<th>Program Participants</th>
<th>Interview Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single Parent</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dual Parent</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster Home</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated Family SESa</td>
<td>low to middle</td>
<td>low to middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Graduates</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Participants</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Estimated family SES is based on subjective assessment by Progress staff. Families of Progress participants are not required to report income.

Interviews

For this current study, information was gathered through individual interviews conducted with either “graduates” from Progress or with others who were previously enrolled
in Progress, but for some reason did not graduate. A total of eight young women (four graduates, four non-graduates) were interviewed in order that saturation was reached. The interviews were conducted at each young woman’s home or another mutually agreed upon place of convenience. At the interview each young woman chose her own pseudonym to be used for this research.

**Recording**

The individual interviews were audio taped. This enabled accurate transcripts to be made of the interviews. Each interview lasted anywhere from 35-90 minutes.

**Interview Protocol**

At the onset of each interview the following was explained by the researcher:

I am conducting a preliminary study about what it is like for young women to be involved in a day-treatment program like Progress. I want you to feel comfortable sharing your experiences. Maybe not all of your experiences in Progress were good and that is OK. I just want you to share what you honestly think—good or bad. I will not use your name in my research work, but need to record our conversation to help me remember the important points you share. I may also take notes while you talk. If at anytime you have questions or want to stop the interview please let me know. Do you have any questions before we start?

Each young woman then signed her own assent for participation form and an audio recording was started. The first question of that the interview participants spontaneously responded to was as follows:

“How was it like for you to be in the Progress program?”

In response to the participant’s answer, additional follow-up questions, as suggested by Spradley (1979), were asked such as “What do you mean by......?”, or “Can you tell me more about.......

“or “How is ...... connected to.......?” The responses to these types of questions led to other questions that were also being asked. Depending on where the young
women took the interview other secondary questions were asked in random order. These questions were:

1. In your own words, what is the Progress program? Who is Progress for?
2. What was it like for you to be in a group that was all females?
3. What are issues in your life that you face special as a girl?
4. How do you connect Progress with these issues? How does Progress influence how you deal with these issues?
5. How has being in Progress affected how you feel about yourself?
6. How has being in Progress affected how you make choices?
7. In what ways has being in Progress influenced your relationships with other people? Your family? Peers?
8. How much were your parent(s)/guardian(s) involved with Progress? What was helpful about this? How do you wish this was different?
9. Taking everything into account, what was the most helpful part of Progress? Least helpful?
10. Taking everything into account, what would make Progress more helpful?
11. How would you sum up your experience in Progress?

In addition, other relevant descriptive, structural, and contrasting questions (Spradley, 1979) were asked in order to obtain a rich description of the participant’s experience. These questions helped each young woman explore the meaning of her experience in Progress, a purpose suggested earlier by Creswell (1998). Descriptive questions invited more details about a particular aspect of Progress and resulted in detailed description about an event or setting. An example was “Could you describe how Progress involved your parents in the
program?” Structural questions were used to ask about how participants organized their knowledge. An example of a structural question was, “What were some of the different activities at Progress that helped connect with the issues you were facing?” Contrast questions were used to discover meaning. For example, it was asked, “What is the difference between what you call a ‘normal’ girl and you?”

**Data Analysis**

Audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed. After this, the transcripts were read through by the researcher in order to become more familiar with the content. The following few paragraphs detail how the data analysis for this study was conducted using the ideas of Spradley (1979) and Joanning and Keoughan (1998) as a base. These guidelines were also in accordance with Creswell’s (1998) suggestions of analysis for phenomenological data.

First, the transcript was read by the researcher and key words and phrases were highlighted. As this was done, natural breaks were looked for in the text, and occurred every few paragraphs. When these natural breaks were noticed, a brief synthesis statement was written in the margin summarizing the paragraph content, or main thought, from the last in-the-margin synthesis statement. The end result was a transcript with key words and phrases highlighted and synthesis statements found in the margin about every few paragraphs.

Next, the synthesis statements from each transcript were gathered together into categories of similar meaning. Following this, the categories of similar meaning were expanded upon and made more prominent. At this stage, illustrative quotes were added to these synthesis statements from the transcript. These illustrative quotes served the purpose of enriching the narrative, which was comprised of the gathered synthesis statements, which
were constructed into categories. A cover term was then given that describes the type of items in each category and text was edited for easier reading.

Once all interviews are conducted, clusters of the outlined categories were also gathered into either clusters similar across the individual informants, clusters unique to an informant, or leftovers—items not clustered. The clusters were then titled to describe all categories named within them. These named clusters were then grouped into an even broader domain of meaning. The title of the domain of meaning was broad enough to include all the clusters within that particular domain of meaning.

Trustworthiness Features

In order to have the interpretation of the data be in keeping with the voice and intent of the participants being interviewed, a number of trustworthiness features were introduced, as outlined by Maxwell (1996). These trustworthiness features can also be thought of as ways to help ensure that validity was met and credibility was added to the conclusion of the data.

Thick Description

Thick description, or rich data, are used to give a detailed and complete picture of what is taking place for the participants. Thick description is obtained through the use of interview notes as well as complete transcripts of the interviews. A thick description is key in attempting to add accuracy and depth to the participants’ experiences. In addition, thick description is to help the readers feel as if they have vicariously experienced, or shared in, what is being described (Denzin, 1989). Thick description means that the write-up “presents detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships...[and] evokes emotionality and self-feelings....It establishes the significance of an experience...for the person or persons in
The voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard” (Denzin, 1989, p. 83). For this study, in addition to the above guidelines, thick description also contained dialogue written in the style and natural language of the participants as suggested by Creswell (1998). Obtaining this thick description was a component of what Creswell (1998) previously outlined as an aspect of phenomenological study.

**Member Checks**

Member checking consists of soliciting feedback from the participants pertaining to the conclusions the researcher has drawn from the data. Traditionally, a member check may be conducted by the researcher mailing out a copy of the write-up and conclusions to all participants of the study. However, keeping in mind the age of these participants as well as their life events (school, work, extra-curriculars) which capitalize their time, a limited selection was given to participants to review. After each interview a synopsis was written by the researcher highlighting key ideas, themes, and feelings that the young woman communicated during the interview. Within one week this was then either mailed to each young woman or, if mail wasn’t possible, shared over the phone. Each young woman was invited to respond to the synopsis and change any part of it. The researcher made follow-up phone calls to those young women who received a mailed synopsis in order to obtain this feedback. This way, researcher misinterpretation was modified as an overriding validity threat, as feedback was received from participants.

**Peer Feedback**

Another trustworthiness feature consisted of giving portions of the transcript and corresponding research write up and conclusions to the researcher’s peers for review. This way, the researcher was able to receive peer feedback on accuracy of logic and interpretation.
Peers consisted of both those familiar to the context and field, as well as those who were less familiar with the context and field.

One person I selected to participate in peer feedback is a 30 year-old male graduate student who has experience working with adolescents and their families within a therapeutic context. This person was not only familiar with adolescent treatment, but also with the qualitative research process. This man was selected because of his familiarity to the field as well as his attention to detail. In several of my past interactions with this individual I have come to know him as someone who is able to view things from a slightly different angle than others. I expected that in his peer feedback he would be able to ask questions or point out holes and faulty logic that I may not have caught. I viewed his thoroughness and life outlook as assets to this project.

Another person I selected for peer feedback is a woman in her mid-thirties who is married and a mother of a teenage son. This woman has some familiarity to the field as she has previously held jobs related to the field of social work. I have chosen this woman not only because I think she would be moderately interested in the subject matter, but because her interests and travels through life are different from my own. If my interpretation and write-up is severely faulty, it should be apparent to all, not just those familiar with the therapy field and certain research methodology. I esteemed this woman as someone with valuable wisdom and insight who would not be afraid to point out interpretive misgivings to me.

Negative Case Analysis

Attention was given to the experience of all participants, regardless of their feelings about Progress. Negative case analysis refers to specifically making an effort to ensure that
varying themes that the participants offer come through, not just ones that portray Progress in a helpful or positive light.

**Researcher As Instrument**

As one of the issues surrounding phenomenological research is researcher bias, Creswell (1998) states that the researcher must be aware of and acknowledge personal biases and preconceived ideas that may influence the study. In exploring this, I thought it important to tell of how I became involved in the Progress program.

I first became interested in adolescent populations when during my first year as a doctoral student at the University (1999-2000) I was assigned for an assistantship to be an assistant skills development specialist and group co-therapist for Progress. Previous to this, my therapy experience had primarily been counseling married couples and adult individuals. Throughout all my training, dealing with adolescents was an area in which I felt quite inexperienced, as I had very limited exposure to work with adolescents.

Because of my inexperience, I was apprehensive about this new experience with adolescent females. However, as I got to know the young women better and started to gain a greater understanding of their lives and the pressures they faced, I found myself becoming fascinated by some intangible aspect of these young women. I found myself wanting to know their experiences and how they thought about and interpreted the world. I wanted to know how these youth saw themselves. I also wanted to discover how I could communicate to them the potential for their lives that I saw.

While my inquisitiveness was fed by new surroundings, it was also influenced by what I term the “less than choice” experiences of being an authority/therapist figure to youth. There were certainly days filled with anger, snappiness, name-calling, and bitterness from the
girls at Progress. I would joke to myself that if I were seeking self-affirmation, I needed to get it somewhere else other than Progress! But still I enjoyed my time as an assistant group leader. Even on the “less than choice” days I wondered, “What was going on for these girls?” “How can they be so angry?”, and “Who is in their corner fighting for them?”

During that year as I tried to connect with the girls it was at times a struggle. I knew that I grew up in a different home environment and setting than it seemed most of these young women had. I felt that many of the girls were traveling roads in life I never traveled, or even desired to travel (for example, illegal drug use or teen pregnancy). What made it difficult too is that I felt the girls knew I had not walked in their exact shoes before. Not experiencing exactly what they were was not anything I could change.

In my desire to establish a connection to these young women I continued to listen to their life stories as shared in group. It dawned on me that although we had traveled different paths as teens I could still “walk the walk” when it came to emotion. Everything they described, I knew how that felt. I am familiar with joy, loyalty, grief, disappointment, betrayal, pressure, hurt, and pain. I may not be able to identify with their actions and all their life circumstances, but I was certainly familiar with the feelings behind them. I felt like I had finally found my connection.

This connection to these girls was influential in my work as a researcher. Through this connection was how I could enter their world without having those exact parallel experiences. However, I was not the gatekeeper of these girls’ world. They would have to allow me to be a part of it. On one of my job evaluations, the Progress Coordinator stated that she felt the girls saw me as a dependable and loyal person, and as someone who “does
the right thing.” While I expected that this did not give me “Buddy” status I felt that it did allow me that degree of connection and trust essential for this project.

In order to help account for any displayed biases during interviewing and data analysis I have introduced a number of measures. First, after each interview I took a few minutes to debrief with each young woman to find out what she thought of the questions, if she felt I was understanding her, and if there was anything I didn’t ask that maybe I should have. This debriefing enabled me to gain a different view on what were the best questions to ask and how I can get the best and most accurate information from each young woman I interviewed. Second, biases I may have had during interviews were checked as I compared my field notes to the transcripts of the audio tape. This way, things I missed or misinterpreted in the moment could be cleared. Using the transcripts enabled me to know when saturation was being reached, as the same themes were presented again and again.

Measures to help account for biases during data analysis have already been previously discussed. These included thick description, member checks, peer feedback, and negative case analysis.

During the time that I worked at Progress and listened to these young women tell their experiences of feeling judged, misunderstood, and not listened to, I wondered when the last time was these young women felt their opinion and experience mattered. This question in my mind led me to want to ask and explore what the experience in Progress had been like for these girls. Although I no longer work with the program I am still interested in letting these young women “have their say.”

I feel I have already been influenced in this project by my desire to listen to and understand the young women I worked with in Progress. It would be much easier to write
this research referring to the Progress participants as girls. However, they have
spontaneously expressed in the group that they prefer to be called women. I have no disputes
with this; however, I consider what confusion this may create contrasting the age of the
participants with widely accepted definitions of “women.” Therefore, I have decided to
address my participants as “young women,” a title that I am sure will be much better
embraced by the women in Progress than that of “girls.”
FINDINGS

Coding Process

All interviewing of participants and transcribing of interview tapes, save transcription of one tape, were done by this principal researcher. Actually being part of each interview and spending numerous hours transcribing tapes word for word, allowed me to become very familiar with the data and the ideas these young women were wanting to communicate about their experience in Progress. Each tape took anywhere from 5-12 hours to transcribe depending on length of the interview and the speech pattern of each young woman. I wanted to really capture the language each young woman used to express herself and so tried to include every partial thought, run-on sentence, and “filler word”, such as “you know”, “like”, “umm”, and “whatever”. Invariably, the more “filler words”, the more time it took to accurately type, as often these are words that my mind just tends to skip over as I listen to people talk.

After all transcripts were completed I read each one over carefully, paying special attention to the flow of what each young woman was telling. Reading the transcript as a whole was a different feel for me than when I had pieced it together word by word during the transcribing process. It was easier to see the interview as a related and flowing piece of work, rather than as choppy words here and there.

My first task with these transcripts was to bring the masses of data into manageable chunks (Anafra, Brown, & Mangione, 2002). To do this I read each transcript and wrote out in the margin by each paragraph a key summary word or phrase which I felt identified what the young woman was expressing. Some paragraphs had anywhere from one to three key summary words in the margin, depending on the flow of what was shared. As I went through
the second and third transcripts I noticed that while some key summary words were new to that particular transcript, other key summary words were identical to summary words that I had used in previous transcripts. By the time the seventh transcript was scrutinized, all key summary words had appeared previously in the other coded transcripts. The end result was eight transcripts with key summary words displayed in the left hand margin.

My next task was to take these key summary words and generate themes (Anafra et al., 2002), which would bring meaning and organization to the words of the young women. Previously, as I had written each key summary word or phrase in a transcript margin, I had also written the same word or phrase on a separate piece of paper. By doing this I was able to have a working list of the manageable chunks that was easy to see and review. In order to generate themes I grouped related key summary words and phrases together under broad category names. While doing this I also kept in mind that a single overarching theme would be helpful in order to link all the categories together in hopes of building a sense of simplicity among the vast amount of data (Chenail, 1995). This overarching single concept is not something that immediately became apparent when I started the interviewing and transcribing process. Keeping everything in mind I often asked myself, “What is the bottom line?”, or “What is the essential message these young women are trying to tell me?”. It was only after much exposure to the transcripts and their themes that I finally understood.

Whether it happened or not, whether it was good or bad, these young women were talking about one key concept on many different levels—change. With this overarching concept finally named, an outline of change was formed that included all the themes, manageable chunks, and key summary words and phrases.
Although I was the researcher who generated the specific key summary words and phrases used to organize the data, member checks and peer feedback were also incorporated to help ensure a measure of trustworthiness. Within one week of each interview I sent by mail (or telephoned if mail wasn’t an option) to each young woman a half page summary of my impressions of the interview, trying to capture the themes and emotion each young woman shared with me during the interview. By way of seeing if I was “on track” each young woman was asked in a follow-up phone call what she thought of the synopsis and what, if anything, she would change. This was each young woman’s opportunity to correct my impression of what she was expressing to me. No young woman thought any changes were needed. In fact, some of the young women told me that my summary was “perfect” or “really good.”

Another check I conducted on the generation of key summary words and their related themes was accomplished through peer review. Two different individuals, one within the field of family therapy, and one not, were given a copy of transcripts with what I had generated in terms of key summary words. A copy of the findings was also supplied in order for each person to see the reasonableness of how the key summary words eventually lead to themes.

Change

As previously mentioned, findings presented here are organized around one central theme that seemed to encompass the essence of what the young women shared regarding their experience in the Progress program. This theme, broadly entitled “change”, opens up to several different meanings and contexts for the lives of these young women. However, before discussing change experienced in the program, described first will be the context,
social environment, and challenges these young women were initially facing when they came to Progress. Described next will be types of change experienced while in the Progress program. This will be followed by a discussion of how change happens and when it occurs. Lastly, challenges to change will be explored.

Context

The context refers to those factors, both personal and social, that these young women were dealing with at the time they entered Progress. In this section, context of change is presented in three sections. The first section addresses the context surrounding what these young women thought of coming to Progress. The second section focuses on stereotypes as an influential piece of these young women’s lives. The third section addresses how these young women experienced the context of an all-female treatment group.

Coming to Group

As previously discussed, girls who participate in programming are often referred to as “at-risk”, having that heightened risk of participating in unsafe and delinquent behaviors. For these young women in Progress, attendance did not mean that they were “bad girls” but that they were, as one young woman put it, the “average teenager.” Going to Progress could even be a normalizing experience as described by Catie, age 11:

Like all these girls are coming here with some kind of problem, but yet they’re probably thinking, “Oh, well why are they here, why am I even here? There’s nothing wrong with me. I’m just a normal girl going on with life.” But I mean if you really think about it everyone has some kind of problem.

Feeling that everyone had problems and that they were normal even further lead to the idea that anyone can belong in Progress. Jerri, age 15, saw Progress as appropriate for anyone who wants to do the “learn and grow type thing.” Anne, age 15, further expounds:
I think it’s [Progress] for young women who, not necessarily have, you know, issues to work out, but also just—I mean, I can just see a girl coming here just because you know, she needs support, or needs a friend, or you know, just doesn’t have what she needs at home to be able to talk. I mean, there’s a number of reasons to come to Progress. It’s definitely for any girl who just like, has anything to talk about, anything about being a girl, anything about being a person you know, on this earth. And Progress is just, it’s all about support and learning about yourself and other people and it’s just an overall great experience for anybody, even if you don’t have any problems in your life, I think you learn a lot no matter what you do.

Although Progress wasn’t necessarily viewed by many of the young women as a place for problem teens, there was still the recognition that there were things going on in their personal lives that led to their involvement in Progress. For instance, one young woman described herself before Progress as “not so respectful,” because she had problems with getting really angry at people for no reason and she was also physically hitting her younger sister. Similarly, another young woman, Kayleigh, age 13, explained:

I have kind of a little attitude problem according to everybody. Dealing with my friends and holding grudges, things like that.

Stereotypes

Stereotypes were another component of the context these young women were dealing with as they entered Progress. Lauralie, age 14, realized that her group involvement stemmed from her previous placement in a mental ward for past suicide attempts as well as problems she was having at school being involved in fights. Lauralie describes the pressure she dealt with that was brought on by stereotypes, which was part of her social context:

Lauralie explains:

The stereotyping. People pass a large amount of judgment on the girls. We’re expected to look a certain way and to dress a certain way. You’re grouped by the way you look instead of the way you act. [Girls] will get labeled as a slut or a whore or something like that just for one thing they wear one day. And that will last for awhile. And you get labeled a prep because you are seen shopping at this store, or something like that. And just because it’s that one little thing that makes a difference.
This pressure to physically look a certain way is something that emerged early for Catie as she was still in grade school at the time she was in Progress. Catie explains:

Well at my school you kind of feel like you need to be skinny, perfect, have the perfect hair, you have to be rich so like you can get all this clothing. You feel like you need to be popular in order to fit in with anyone else. When I came [to Progress] I was really sad because I didn’t have any friends because I wasn’t like skinny or the right size or anything like that.

Snoopy, age 14, also identified with pressures pertaining to appearance. She shares:

I mean there are some girls that I don’t like, umm, who make fun of me by what clothes I wear and stuff.

Stereotyping and the pressure to be a certain way was not something that was limited to only a physical realm. These young women also expressed ways they feel pressured by society to act like a “normal girl” in terms of behavior and character traits. For some young women the laundry list of “normal girl” behaviors included “gossiping”, “talking about each other”, “not getting in trouble”, “being judgmental and critical”, “being perfect”, “being nice”, and “not doing anything bad”. Jerri described this expectation on girls’ behavior as:

Girls are supposed to be giggly and dumb, I guess is what I feel like. And they’re supposed to be stupid and not have their brain work.

Several of the young women felt that because they personally did not fit these stereotypes they were accused of “not acting like a girl” and hence not fitting in with their peer group. Kaija, age 13, felt pressure to be “quiet and polite,” but to her, this did not fit who she really was. She explains how being honest with her feelings and not hiding them was important to her:

If someone bugs me that I don’t like, I tell them. To girls I was a bitch and I was, you know, horrible, and I was so brutally honest, I mean I made a lot of people cry I was so honest about things. And I never am really nice and innocent and sweet. I mean, if I have something to say I say it and I’m just brutally honest and sometimes it ends
up hurting a lot of my friends. But you know, what else can I do? I’m not going to sit there and lie, you know.

Kaija described that her attempts to be true to herself and to be who she really was were oftentimes met with the sentiment “maybe she was meant to be a boy.” Kaija, who even describes herself as “more of a guy than a girl,” illuminates her struggle between who she is verses who she is “supposed” to be through the use of a box metaphor:

It’s like a box. “Girls do this” [on the inside] and on the outside it was “guys do that.” I would lean more toward the outside than I do on the inside. I’m not really into, you know, the whole you know, “girls do this and guys do this” thing. And so people would get on my case because they’re like, “You know what? You’re a girl. You shouldn’t be doing that. You know, only guys do that.” So yah, pretty much it’s really hard to be a girl, you know, and try to be put into the box but then you’re not [belonging there]. I’m a girl but I will do what I want to.

Similarly, Anne also felt the pressures of not fitting the typical female mold and the stereotypes that go with it. Anne is a self-proclaimed ‘ham-boy,” but describes that at times this is a disadvantage for her in terms of wanting to be accepted and respected. Anne relates:

Even though being a tom-boy is a good thing for me, a lot of people have a hard time respecting that and accepting that. A big challenge for me was not being the kind of girl that was like, “I’m happy, and giggly, and moving all around.” My priorities were a lot different. It’s because I’m very much a feminist and me wanting equality was something unrealistic with certain people and it was very difficult for me to accept that other people also have opinions. And so it was a lot of me wanting to be accepted but not being able to accept not being accepted by everyone, if that makes sense.

In this case it is almost like a sense of celebration being missed, in that Anne finds a way to “be” that works for her, but it is not embraced by society and those she knows. Another young woman also wondered why she could not be judged as she judges others. This now 16 year-old states:

I don’t judge people by whether or not what sex they are. I judge them by their personality. I’ve never judged anyone by “Oh, you’re a girl, so you know, you can
only do these things,” or “You’re a guy, so I can’t hang out with you.” [People] will just be closed-minded, not open-minded, so that kind of really bugs me a lot.

All-Female Experience

These personal and social challenges help to frame the context in which these young women attended Progress. Not only were there struggles with personal issues or behavioral problems, but these young women also felt pressure from society to look and behave in certain ways that did not necessarily fit for them. For most, this was the first time they had participated in a treatment program that was specifically designed for them—meaning a program meant to address the specific needs of young women as they directly faced the stereotypes and pressures of society. An essential element of Progress is that it is a “girls-only” group, set up this way in hopes of fostering a supportive environment and network for females. As this experience of the all-female aspect of Progress was met with both anticipation and trepidation, these two differing views will be addressed. Described here is the third component that helps outline the context of the young women as they participated in Progress.

All-girls: Anticipation. Some of the young women experienced a group of all females as something positive because it helped increase the comfort and sharing level of the group, something they imagined may not have happened had there been boys in the group. There was also the feeling that girls could somehow understand things that boys could not. Catie explains:

Well the fact that it was girls and that you didn’t have to watch what you said, because you can like say things that girls would understand but boys won’t, and like they take it the wrong way, I mean girls could too, but they’re not as likely. And so you feel a little more comfortable letting your insides out.
The notion of feeling comfortable in order to “let your insides out” is something that Anne also related to as she described her feelings about participating in an all-female group:

It really helped having all females. That was one thing that definitely attracted me to the group actually. My mom showed me the things, “Oh, it’s an all-girls group. This will help you.” That was definitely a deciding factor in coming and participating in the group. I just think, I honestly think that like if there were guys in the group it would not have been the same at all. There would not have been certain things that we talked about. And I think that would have been a little bit more threatening rather than feeling comfortable being here. So I think that if there was guys in the room I probably wouldn’t have opened up as much as I did—at all. Actually I know I wouldn’t have.

Anne also felt that it was valuable to share with girls her age going through similar experiences. For her, the all-girls aspect of group was an essential element to being able to share, and she could even think of two other girls, that had there been boys in the group, they would have been just like her and “shut up”, and “never said anything”.

An all-girls group also increased the comfort level when certain topics were discussed. For example, Kayleigh explains:

I think it [being an all-girls group] was easy because that way when we talked about girl things or whatever you didn’t have to be embarrassed. Like when we were talking about sex and stuff, you didn’t have to worry about that as much because we’re all girls and so we’re all the same.

Catie also expressed concern over how some girl topics could be made light of by boys, had Progress not been an all-girls group. Catie relates her specific concern pertaining to PMS:

With girls you can talk about anything, like what you’re going through, PMS, time of the month, or anything like that and they’ll be sympathetic about it and everything. But when you talk to a boy about it they’re like “Uuhhhh”. At our school the boys, they just make up weird words that go with PMS and basically they just make up funny words that are like stand for P-M-S. So I mean, that’s something that girls understand but guys don’t.
All-girls: Trepidation. While this young woman looked to the gender-specific aspect of Progress as something positive that would allow her to open up, share, and feel camaraderie with other girls, other young women expected their experience in Progress to be awful based on the all-female aspect of the group. This sentiment is expressed strongly by Antoinette, now 17, but 14 years of age when in Progress. Antoinette felt that many girls just “talk shit”. She went on:

I have a problem with girls. I can’t stand them, and that’s one of the biggest problems—I do not get along with girls. I hang out with guys and that’s it. All the girls I’ve ever had a friendship with were just backstabbing and cause crap.

Similar to Antoinette, Kaija also expressed concerns of an all-girls group based on her past relationships with girls. Kaija shares:

I never really got along with girls and to this day I really don’t. I think the biggest problem for me was the fact that a lot of girls who were in [Progress] I either knew from the past or I went to school with them and I didn’t like them. Because, you know, a lot of them were really mean to me at school. It was hard for me because most of my friends are mostly guys because I’ve always gotten along with guys. For some reason I’ve always clicked with guys.

Like Antoinette and Kaija, Jerri also felt negatively about the gender-specific aspect of Progress based on bad previous relationships with girls. Jerri described this circumstance as something particularly stressful, since interacting with females is where she “always got into trouble.” However, Jerri also saw this stressful event as something she could learn from. Jerri states:

I don’t get along with girls so it helped me to like learn to cope with them.

Learning to cope with other girls was also something that Kaija felt she gained from the group. Taking it a step further, Kaija expresses her surprise in discovering that she
actually could communicate and make friends with other young women. Kaija describes how Progress was helpful for this:

It kind of helped me, you know, gain more friends that were girls because I realized now that, "Oh, wait, you can talk about some of these things with girls," it just depends on what their personality is and what they’re doing. I mean, it didn’t really change much of what was going on in my life, but it did help a little ‘cause I got a few more girlfriends.

Being able to develop female friendships was also important to Catie. She expounds:

When I went to Progress I didn’t have much friends so it was kind of nice to have some friends I could actually go to and talk to.

Understanding the personal and social context that are part of these young women’s lives helps to build a framework for other experiences these young women had while in Progress. Described next are two different types of change these young women encountered as part of their Progress experience.

**Types of Change**

The two types of change explored here are termed applied change and internal change. Applied change refers to those changes that involve practical life skills application of useful information. Applied change is divided into two subcategories that address application to skills and application to choices. Internal change is also divided into two subcategories. First, internal change that involves how the young women viewed themselves, and second, internal change pertaining to how the young women viewed others as a result of being in Progress. Internal change that involves how the young women viewed themselves is further divided into three categories that address self-discovery, self-esteem, and the myth of perfection.
Change of Skill: Applied Change

As previously mentioned, Progress focuses on eight different topic areas as part of its programming. These topic areas are meant to promote greater awareness, as well as skill development in each of these realms.

Application to skills. Several of the young women mentioned specific skills that were learned or enhanced while in Progress. Antoinette describes what sorts of skills were valuable to her. She explains:

The anger management and stuff like that. I have a really bad temper. And so does my dad. And just learning how to deal with like my dad getting mad over stupid crap. Just really learning how to control anger.

Anger management was also something that resonated with Anne who was fifteen while in Progress. She discusses how controlling anger has helped her in life now that she’s seventeen. Anne relates:

I had a lot of anger management issues and you know, somebody would make me angry that was in Progress I had to—like basically I was forced to learn how to deal with that, and I use that a lot now, you know, working, in my job and my school, you know, everything I do now.

Other skills the young women discussed walking away from Progress with were much more general in nature. These types of skills included things such as “learning how to deal with things”, “handling problems”, “coping better”, “expressing feelings and emotions”, or “dealing with people”. Catie expounds further on these ideas:

[Progress did] like help me say the right things and teach me how to cope with other people around me—just people skills, how to talk to them not so they get angry at you saying wrong things. And teaching me how to cope with things—it really got me to know who I am and what everything around me is and that I just need a—I mean, if you don’t cope with it you’re gonna back up all this other trash and stuff and it’s gonna get bigger and bigger. But if you keep going with your life it’s gonna be a nice steady stream. It helped me cope with my feelings inside.
Catie also named some strategies she uses to cope such as stress balls, writing things down, or talking to the person she is angry at.

Kayleigh also found that dealing with problems was a way to avoid the “trash back-up” that was described by Catie. Kayleigh explains:

They just kind of helped me deal with some of the problems you have to deal with like understanding new things. Just like better ways to solve problems rather than just like forget them, like how to deal with them, ‘cause pretty soon it all builds up and you just kind of explode, so they tell us how to kind of deal with them.

Coping with feelings in ways other than to “call a nasty name,” as Lauralie put it, was a valuable part of skill development for these young women. It allowed them more productive ways to express the frustration and anger they were feeling in their lives.

Application to choices. Other than application to current relationships, some of the young women also found what they were learning in Progress to be applicable to life choices they were making. Described here is the second type of applied change gained from Progress.

Anne describes how Progress was able to relate to issues in her daily life:

It was like crazy time in my life. Just the issues that we talked about like applied well in real life, so you know, drugs, alcohol, boys, family, whatever, you know whenever those would arrive like in my life, in my everyday life or whatever, I would, you know, think about Progress and the people that were there and what we talked about.

Kaija was someone who would also find herself in sticky situations at times, but was able to realize that asking for help in making decisions was OK. Kaija shares what about Progress was helpful for her:

[It] had to do with a lot of things about, you know, what kind of things, situations you can get yourself into and how to do—get out of it. And in a way about how I was putting myself in a lot of those positions, and I was always, I always ended up trapped and so I couldn’t get out of them. But once I figured that out I eventually started
getting my own problems and how to go to people saying, “You know, this isn’t a big deal, but how do I get out of it?”

Catie was also a young woman who shared how Progress affected decisions she made in life. As Anne and Kaija evaluated what types of situations they were getting themselves into, Catie saw her growth as having the ability to re-evaluate decisions before jumping into something. Explains Catie:

It’s like you have a paragraph and you always want to recheck it to make sure there’s no mistakes or anything. Well, I didn’t do that, I would just think of what I was going to do and I’d do it right away and I wouldn’t even think a second, or how that was going to influence anyone. I still do that just a little bit, I mean, like I’ll go jump in and do what I want anyway, but it’s gotten less and less since I’ve gone to Progress. So that’s really good.

An applied change of skill for these young women in Progress primarily took the form of learning how to manage day-to-day problems, handle feelings, communicate better with others, evaluate choices, and just in general “learning how to deal with things.” At the same time, however, there was a much greater change going on in the lives of these young women.

Change of View: Internal Change

In addition to the change of skill described by these young women, there was also a change of view that occurred. This first change of view is characterized by the internal change that allowed the young women to see and experience themselves differently than they previously had. This personally change of view encompasses seeing the self differently by way of self-discovery, self-esteem, and the loss of perfectionist ideals. The second change of view refers to how the young women were able to see and experience others differently.

Seeing self: Self-discovery. For most of these young women, Progress was a time where they felt they could really explore who they were as a person. They learned more
about who they were in relation to the world and discovered more of their preferences pertaining to their way of “being.” Words such as “finding myself”, “discovering myself”, “liking myself”, and “being myself” help to communicate the sense of satisfaction that some of these young women experienced as they explored who they were. Below is a poem written by Catie and Maggie, Catie’s friend from school. These young women decided to write this particular poem because as Catie says, “We had both gone through this situation about what it’s like to not have friends.” To Catie this poem not only expresses how “tied up” she felt all the time to her many problems, but the very existence of the poem, in Catie’s words, means, “I’ve really found who I am. I’ve found that I’m a very good writer.”

The Lonely Girl

Some say that she had no friends.  
Some say she was shy.  
But now that she’s gone we will never know what was really wrong.  
She never talked, even to her family.  
She was a loner.  
At her school she didn’t even have friends.  
She was a lonely girl.

The girl was like a puppet trying to get away from those strings.  
Tied up to all her troubles, she just wanted to get away.  
She was a lonely girl.  
So depressed and sad for no apparent reason.  
She wanted to crawl in a hole because she was lonely.

But one day she just disappeared.  
And no one could find her.  
She was gone with no trace.  
No one could find that lonely girl.  
Maybe if she had just one friend who would care for her  
She wouldn’t have left us just wondering.  
But I guess her wish was granted.  
No one ever saw her.  
No one ever knew her name and they didn’t find her family.  
Maybe that’s why she was a lonely girl.
I hope she’s in a happy place where there are no troubles, 
Or maybe she’s just dead. 
Hopefully she’s not a puppet anymore, tied up to all her troubles. 
But she wished she would disappear and that’s what happened to that 
Lonely girl.

Catie is one young woman in particular who communicated a deep sense of inner 
peace now that she has discovered who she is. Catie describes her internal change of view as 
more of an event, which she refers to as “finding my insides.” Catie shares:

Finding my insides has just really helped me find who I am. [Progress] really helped 
me find my insides and not judge myself as much now, because I know that who I am 
is who I’m going to be. It’s just me. I used to come home crying ‘cause I didn’t fit in 
with anyone and I wanted to be like them, but if I just realize who I am and that I’m 
going to be like this my life, that I really am a really good person. It’s really helped 
me with that. And since I found my insides I think I know more about myself and 
how I cope with things, and not just blurt out a bunch of stuff. Since I found who I 
am and what I think I’m gonna be and what I know I like and stuff like that, it’s easier 
to cope with stuff. But I think that’s the biggest thing.

For Catie “finding her insides” has led to a source of strength and centeredness to 
better cope with life’s problems. It’s almost as if valuing her “insides” led her to value her 
own unique talents and characteristics, and that truly, as Catie says, “It’s what I have inside 
that matters to other people.”

This discovery and connection to self was also something that resonated with Anne. 
Here she relates how Progress connected to her self-discovery:

It helped me get like over that bridge of, you know, from being confused and not 
knowing who I am and umm—It got me, you know, to the point where I could like 
sort my thoughts and who I am, and it was kind of—it was definitely a passage in my 
life, in choosing which passage to take. Umm, you know, either keep going down the 
same road or change my life. I think I’m not so angry anymore. Like I was just 
always angry, like it didn’t matter how my day was, I was always, like I could always 
say I was angry or pissed off about something. I was angry at the world. And I think 
my attitude has changed a lot. Umm, I think that I’m a lot more umm, constructive, 
like I don’t do the things I used to that just made things harder for me, if that makes 
any sense. Umm, I just got rid of the things I didn’t need. I’m a totally different
person, I mean if somebody knew me then and then talked to me now, it would just be like, you know. But I think I surprised a lot of people, because a lot of people that were in my situation usually don’t get out of it like I did. I think that—I think I changed a lot. I mean I’m still the same person, I just figured out who I am.

For Anne, figuring out who she was and learning about herself not only changed her own personal outlook and how she viewed herself, but it also have her motivation to “clean house” and adolescence Anne shares, “got rid of the people I didn’t need in my life, people that were making things harder on me rather than easier on me.” Anne expressed wanted to be a mentally and physically happier person and “cleaning house” is something where she says, “ I don’t think I would have done that if I didn’t have the support I had here.”

Another part of discovering and finding self for these young women was developing the ability to just be themselves. For example, Kayleigh shares the importance of this for her:

It just kind of made me realize you don’t really need to care what people think, but then you don’t want to have everybody hate you, but then you shouldn’t base your opinion of yourself on just what other people think of you.

Snoopy reiterates:

I don’t care if people make fun of me or whatever. But then, it doesn’t hurt my feelings like it used to.

Catie likewise expressed:

I’ve realized that I’m just myself. That’s what I need to worry about is myself. And not what other people are around me.

Anne’s thoughts on this entailed:

[We] learned how to reach that point where we could you know, be happy with who we are and not have to worry about what other people think.
Lauralie also emphasized how being herself, even in the face of peer pressure was something that brought happiness to her. She explains how her decision to “be herself” influenced her feelings about herself:

I liked myself a whole lot more than I had before [Progress]. Because if I’m not happy with myself, then nobody’s going to be happy with me. And I didn’t really, like, know myself I guess that much. I’d never thought about what would I like to do and that kind of thing. It’s always, “Sure, I’ll go along with that.” There was a lot of pressure to change who I was and definitely a lot to start different things that I really didn’t want to do, like drugs and stuff like that. Umm, it didn’t appeal to me and I learned that it didn’t matter—my friends will like me for who I am. It just basically shows don’t try and be something else if you’re not happy with yourself. ‘Cause you can live this way, but you won’t be happy and there’s no point in really doing that—changing yourself if you’re not going to be happy that way. I like me better than I did before.

**Seeing self: Self-esteem.** The second way that some of the young women saw themselves differently had to do with how they felt about themselves. These young women measured their change in how they saw themselves in terms of self-esteem. Antoinette shares:

I had really bad self-esteem when I started Progress and by the end of it I didn’t think as bad of myself as I did before. I have better self-esteem for myself. I don’t know, it just brought up my self-esteem.

Kaija also explains how her self-esteem changed from being in Progress because messages she received there counteracted messages she was receiving elsewhere. Kaija, someone who had heard many put-downs in life, began to notice positive aspects of herself due to the “put-ups” (as Kaija refers to them) that she received at Progress. Kaija explains:

In a way it put a lot more self-esteem in me. “Cause I really didn’t have any when I started out and I think that’s kind of one of the things that lead to the fact “Oh, I don’t want to do this,” but when I was told, you know, that it was to help my self-esteem I thought, “Nothing can do it,” but it did. And, I mean, I’m a lot more positive about myself and other people in life than I was then. Progress helped mainly because they let me realize that I’m not a horrible person like people say. It—in a way it made me feel positive things about myself and all the negative things which I had been told,
that you know, how I’ve been—how I’ve been treated—it made me see things and therefore—and once I started seeing them I started noticing more often. It was just helping me notice things.

For Lauralie liking herself better and having greater self-esteem came in the form of confidence. Lauralie states:

I definitely gained a lot of confidence. I’m more open, ahh, friendlier, more confident, better all-around. [Progress doesn’t] focus on the bad things about you. They try to focus on the good ones and emphasize them—your qualities that you have. And you gain a certain amount of confidence in there. Like before I wouldn’t speak up for anything and now [laugh] I do, like a lot—more than necessary.

Lauralie also shared how this new confidence helped her be brave enough to try new things, such as sports, and that she was able to meet new people and gain more friends with similar interests.

Seeing self: Getting rid of perfect. Although a large part of internal change for these young women centered around finding themselves, discovering who they are, and in essence, being comfortable in their own skin, there was another influence on the view of self that affected how these young women saw themselves in the world and in relation to others. Previously it was discussed how stereotypes about the “perfect girl” who had “perfect clothes, perfect body, and perfect hair” was a standard many of these young women felt confined to and measured by. As part of this journey of self-discovery, there was also a sense of self-forgiveness and acceptance: forgiveness for not reaching this ideal perfection, and acceptance of the “realness” in self and others. As Antoinette put it, “Stereotypes aren’t true. You’re going to be who you’re going to be.” Described here is this third change in view that addresses issues of unrealistic perfectionism.
Catie relates an analogy of when her “insides” met with stereotypes. Catie shares:

Like I always like, it was almost like a sugar coating of who I am like. I pushed [my insides] inside but then put a sugar coating over what I thought I was. And then [Progress] kind of like helped me dissolve that and open up who I really am. Because, I mean, I always thought of myself—my mom uses the term “sugar coating”—and so I always thought of myself as a sugar-coated person. I had this image of who I’m supposed to be and if I’m not that then I’ll never be perfect. And once I broke that sugar coating and realized that, my insides finally released and first tried to find out who I am, I found out I’m a very talkative and funny, funny, really funny person. And I mean I never used to laugh and now I like laugh all the time. That’s really funny.

Just as Catie realized that she wasn’t perfect and didn’t have to be, she also had to reach this point with others. Catie continues to talk about unrealistic standards of perfection as she dealt with group members in Progress:

[Progress] helped me like express my feelings toward them and know that not everyone’s perfect. ‘Cause I used to think that everyone had to be perfect. And I realized that people aren’t perfect. That’s kind of what I realized from them. And I mean, none of them are like perfect either, I mean they’re just normal kids. And that’s what I’ve noticed about myself too, is that I don’t need to be perfect, I just need to be my ownself.

Anne was someone else who also realized that she was not alone in her imperfection. Anne relates how realizing that others weren’t perfect enabled her to feel more “real.”

I had a lot of crap going on in my life. I saw like a different me when I was [at Progress], I think. I saw like the real me, the person that sat here and listened to other people and realized that, “You know, I’m not the only person in this planet that is going through this crap,” and umm, that there was hope for me even though I felt like there wasn’t and that I didn’t think there was any way I could, you know, take back all the things I did. I realized that everybody makes mistakes.

Seeing others. For these young women the event of finding themselves and being comfortable with their “insides” was an experience that brought new freedom, confidence, and self-esteem. Just as changes happened in how these young women saw themselves, there were also some changes going on in how they saw others. For some of these young women,
akin to discovering and finding their own “insides,” was discovering the “insides” of others in their lives and realizing the influence and power they have to affect the lives of others.

At least three of the young women told how they discovered their mothers’ “insides” and how their view of her as a woman and person changed throughout the course of Progress.

Anne relates her new feelings toward her mom:

I was just messed up, so we fought all the time constantly, like to the point of fist fights and umm, I think that I realized that, “Hey, she’s a woman too and she’s been through a lot of the same things I’m going through, you know, why can’t I learn from her instead of fighting her?”, and umm, it kind of opened my eyes in that my parents, my family, umm, I realized that they could help me rather than hurt me. Like once I realized my mom wasn’t such a villain [laugh], you know, I realized that she’s a really, really, really, good person and that she’s probably the one person that I really look up to.

Antoinette also had a strenuous relationship with her mom before Progress and tells of a realization she had with this mother/daughter relationship:

Well, me and my mom had the worst relationship ever because I always blamed all my problems on her because she drug me around form state to state, from guy to guy, and all that, and then I just realized, I’m like, it’s not really her fault, you know, it’s not really anybody’s fault, but there’s nothing that I can do about it to change it, so I might as well go with it. It just made me realize that I need to stop being so bad to my mom because it’s not her fault ya know.

Antoinette then related a time where she and a boyfriend broke up after two years and she blamed her mom because “she taught me to never stay with one guy.” However, since that time Antionette said that she realized that some relationships just don’t work out and that maybe it’s not her mom.

For Catie, the change occurred in seeing her mom as more of a resource in her life.

Catie explains:
Well, my mom, she’s gone through it, I mean she knows what it’s like to go through teenagehood and she knows what that’s like. I mean it just feels really good to talk to someone like that who knows.

Lauralie shared how Progress influenced her to work on other relationships in her family, particularly with her step-dad. For Lauralie, her ability to influence this difficult relationship took the form of being “more open.” Lauralie relates:

I started to open up to my family a bit more after Progress. A little bit more after each session because, ah, I don’t know really. Maybe umm, well my big problems have been with my step-dad. He and I really don’t get along and [people in Progress] were—have been talking with me about it, that umm, it’s never going to get any better if no one makes the effort to try, so you might as well try, at least once, to try and make that effort. We’re never going to have a great awesome relationship or anything, but at least now we can stand to be in the same room with each other and— ’cause it used to be I wouldn’t eat dinner with them.

Lauralie also shared how her openness affected her relationship with her mom too:

Yah, it used to be I would come home and they’d be like, “Oh, how was your day?” “It was fine,” and then I’d go downstairs and like stay there for the rest of the day, and next morning I’d just go to school and it’d repeat and now I can actually like, you know, tell my mom how my day was and if something’s going on that’s bugging me, and that kind of thing.

In addition to seeing family members differently and realizing the potential for influencing those relationships, the power to influence others was taken to a more global perspective for Catie. As the youngest person who had ever participated in Progress, Catie seemed to gain a vital sense of how she could influence others regardless of her age and size. Catie tells:

Even though, like, I was eleven, even though I was little and small, I can still make a big impact on other people’s lives.

Catie then tells about a best girl friend she had in fourth grade who matured early and was really tall. Others would tease this girl and Catie realized that she didn’t need to judge her.
Catie goes on about how she would try and laugh and have a good time with her friend in order to help her friend laugh, which in turn would make Catie feel good. She relates further:

And I mean I make like everyone feel good like that. I think I realized that I helped everyone feel better around me, and not so miserable when they’re around me. And so, I mean, me being more enjoyable around my friends, and my friends are more enjoyable now.

**To Change or Not to Change**

A large part of Progress for these young women centered around change, both applied skill based change and internal change of how they viewed themselves and others. This next section will discuss what factors contribute to change, when it happens, and what the challenges to change are.

**How Change Happens**

Two primary factors are discussed here that contribute to change. The first of these is personal desire. Second is a trusting and supportive group environment.

**Factors of change: Desire.** For these young women, one of the largest factors that contributed to change was a personal desire accompanied with an openness and willingness to change. Fueling this desire to change was also an element of the young women “not wanting to be where we were” and “wanting to be different than staying stuck in the same life.” In essence there had to be first, a reason to change, second, a desire to change, and third actually “doing” something to change. Catie compares her change process as something she had a very active role in. Catie explains:

Some girls are just like, “Whatever, I’m gonna do whatever I want. I’m just gonna come here so I can get it over with and I’m not gonna learn anything, just be my normal self, I’m not gonna change at all.” But then there’s girls that really—they put their foot down and they step in it and they want to do this and they know they wanna change and they really wanna be a better person. And I think that’s how I was. I knew I wanted to be another person—a better person. I think I really put my foot
down and said, “I’m gonna do this” and get it over, well, not get it over with, but just knowing that I’m gonna get down and dirty! And know I’m gonna get all this done! Learn something new so that I can get on with my life.

Often in discussing how and why change happened for them, some young women would compare their desires for change with the lack thereof that they saw in other group members. Lauralie compares her progress with some other young women in group with her:

Well some of the girls, umm, who I know personally and still know and go to school with and everything, umm, part of it is they don’t want—they don’t want to change, and they’re just not even going to try and then that will never happen. You have to want to change. There’s some of those girls in there that were like, “I have better things to do than this,” and the things they had to do weren’t really all that much better, you know, go smoke pot, you know, that kind of thing. It’s not better, You have to want to improve your life. I really wanted to change. I didn’t like the way that I was, it wasn’t working, umm, and I saw this as an opportunity to at least try. And you have to at least try it and give it a chance for it to even have a little effect.

This sense of Progress providing a climate and opportunity to change was also something that Anne felt. Anne discusses what she feels are contributors to change and shares her frustration of those that just wasted the Progress opportunity. Anne relates:

A lot of us didn’t have the best attitude about anything really. I think it’s all about what you really want like deep down inside. Some girls don’t want to change you know, they’re either being forced to come here by their parents or whatever, or they’re just doing it to please their parents or whatever, you know, what I mean? If you come here they—you should be here to be prepared to learn and be prepared to probably change a little bit. And umm, I think there’s one girl that I know who just came here and basically just slept in the corner, and I just—it kind of made me upset, because first of all it’s a little disrespectful since [group members] were talking and she just, you know, all over the corner. But second of all, she’s got this opportunity to possibly change what’s, you know, in her life that’s not working for her. And obviously some things that weren’t working for her. But it frustrated me because she had that opportunity and she was sitting here and she can use it and she didn’t. And I think it’s all about if that person really wants to change and their motivation I guess. Because deep down inside I never liked where I was but I kept doing it because I didn’t know how to get out. And I think it’s all, yah, it’s definitely all in their attitude and whether or not you want to change or not.
Catie also recognized those in group that did not take advantage of the opportunity they had to change things in their life. In her words, it takes desire to get to the “juicy” stuff.

Catie explains:

It really falls into if you really wanna do what they are doing here, ‘cause I mean, if you’re just gonna lay back and be a bump on the pickle, or whatever that saying is, umm, you can’t—you’re not gonna learn anything. But if you really get in there and get to the juicy part, I guess, you’re gonna learn something.

However, not all of these young women wanted to get “down and dirty” or find a “juicy part.” Some readily admit that change takes willingness and desire, but that they just weren’t up for it. Kaija was one of these young women who feels she didn’t get a whole lot out of Progress because she “just didn’t want to get into it.” Kaija shares further about how not “getting into it” influences real change:

Some people just don’t change. A lot of the other girls just kind of put on a—put on a mask there at Progress, and it would seem like, “Oh, this is helping you,” but in reality it wasn’t because they were still their same self everywhere else.

Jerri was someone else who said she did not benefit from being in Progress primarily due to her own frame of mind. Jerri explains:

I was really closed-minded. I just had my defenses up. I wasn’t willing to accept feedback and make it work. I just [didn’t] want to go to an aftercare program when I came home.

But even though Jerri feels she personally didn’t have the right desires to get the most out of Progress she also states that change can happen for someone based on “how open they are to change” and if they are “like, willing to listen and change.”

Change was not something that just magically happened for these young women. Those who felt they made tremendous changes in the program, attribute it not only to desiring to change, but actually taking action to make change happen. Just as this was a
deliberate choice for them, other young women also made deliberate choices not to change—
even though they knew what it would take if they were to change. Kayleigh tells what this
decision was like for her:

I kind of wanted [to change] at first and thought it would help me. I wanted—first I
kind of wanted to change and thought about it and I thought like a lot and I decided
that “I am who I am and I don’t want to change” and so it just kind of—it didn’t
really bother me that they said [I needed to change]. Maybe [others] wanted to
change and I think I’m—I was just fine the way I was.

Similarly, Snoopy also saw herself as someone who did not change much due to
personal choice. Snoopy shares:

I didn’t get a lot out of [Progress]. I think it was just because I knew I wasn’t going
to open up a lot and so it’s why it didn’t really help me.

Factors of change: Environment. Whether the decision was made to change or not to
change these young women acknowledge that either way, positive gains were made in
Progress, even if the gains seemed miniscule. For instance, even though Kaijia stated,
“Progress really didn’t do anything for me,” she still acknowledges that on a scale from one
to ten, her self-esteem raised “probably about three or four” points. While some young
women expressed getting a lot out of Progress, primarily because they chose to, no one
acknowledged that they got absolutely nothing from participating in the group. Antionette
explains this phenomena:

You can’t throw everything out because you don’t like one thing. Like, some girls
don’t think like—if one thing’s bad then it all has to be bad. But I think that, you
know there’s always good in something.

Some of those “good” things that were contributing factors to change were the safety,
support, and structure felt by many of these young women while in Progress. This type of
group atmosphere seemed conducive to self-expression and learning. Lauralie shares about the safety she felt at Progress:

> It was, umm, a really good experience for me, because it was nice to have a place you could go and just sit and talk and not be afraid that they’re going to tell everyone you know about it. [I liked] the confidentiality, that you can speak your mind without being judged for it too harshly.

Anne also had a similar sentiment regarding a sense of security she felt in the group. Anne expresses:

> If somebody wanted to talk about something you talked about it and it was nice being able to come somewhere and being able to spill my guts to somebody and not have to worry about being in trouble, or you know like I couldn’t really tell my parents everything at the time, or I didn’t think I could.

Combined with this sense of safety and security was the feeling of being supported as well. Anne further shares how this was valuable to her:

> I was in need of people that would be there for me. They’re always here when you’re there. [Progress was] just a lot of support, and you know, telling each other we’re worth a lot more than we think we are. And just, you know, telling each other, yah, it was a lot of support and positive reinforcement.

Mutual support with other young women in Progress was something that stood out for Kayleigh as well. She explains:

> It just kind of gave me something to kind of talk to people about and I know people that other people relate to and you just try and let them help you and then in turn you help them.

Snoopy also felt support from the group. She relates how having life experiences in common with the other young women in the Progress enabled her to feel this:

> I was able to open up since the girls, other girls there, were in the same—kind of the same situations.
Lauralie spoke of the group support in terms of feeling worthwhile and accepted.

Lauralie shares:

During the group sessions at the end the girls talk about their day and we get to offer our ideas on them, and nobody there would ever tell you your idea wasn’t any good. It was definitely one of those big things. They never told you that that was the wrong way, you know, that that was never going to work and that it was stupid and they didn’t do that.

For another young woman feeling accepted and supported was also accompanied by a sense of belonging to the group. Catie shares how she felt like an interconnected part of the group:

You just feel more part of it, like sort of like pieces of a puzzle, you feel like you have to be there, I mean, you are a piece of a puzzle and it’s not really good anymore because you lost that piece. But if you feel a piece of it so that if you walk sway they’re all going to lose a piece of themselves, so if you stay, I mean, you feel like a part of everyone. So I thought that was pretty nice.

While the group safety and support may help to set a stage for change, the structure of Progress was helpful in setting some parameters within which change could happen.

Speaking about the value of structure for her, Lauralie shares:

I like a little bit of structure. I can’t stand to not have it. It’s like in reports, that one of the teachers gave me one where you could do a report on anything you want, any kind of report, and I didn’t get my report done because I couldn’t decide. Umm, it’s nice to have that little bit of structure there. And some girls don’t like that, some like it to be their own way and everything, but I really enjoy it.

For some of these young women the structure of Progress provided what they needed in order to stay away from friends who “weren’t exactly the best people to be around” and to also not cause trouble. Jerri explains:

There wasn’t a lot of time after school and stuff to make negative choices. I think it was good structure because it was after school and they tried to help you with, like, issues and it was like educational. We learned about like, umm, alcohol, and like how much a total drink or whatever would do to one organ, kidney, or something.
They had constructive activities. It's like they had ideas of what we're supposed to be doing instead of runnin' around drinking and stuff like that.

Anne also saw Progress as something that helped keep her out of trouble because it kept her busy. Anne explains:

For me, I was like bottom of the bottle. I fell on my butt a bunch of times and I wasn’t going anywhere. I just kept hitting rock bottom over and over again, and I couldn’t get myself out of it. And I think a lot, I think just being here and keeping me occupied, I mean, we were here for a long time during the day, and I, umm, so I think it kept me out of trouble too, having me occupied and my mind on this rather than being so occupied in other things. [I wasn’t] causing trouble being here.

Timing of Change

Personal desire and the Progress environment were major factors that contributed to and facilitated change in these young women. These elements illustrate how change happened on a personal and internal level for these young women. However, also associated with change is the time table of when change occurs. Described here are characteristics associated with timing of change, namely direct influence and delayed impact.

Direct influence. A change that involves direct influence is a type of change that seems to directly influence current, as well as future behavior and choices. The timing of this change can occur either “in the moment” while the young women in participating in Progress, or the change can be seen continual and over time. For example Kaija explains how some “in the moment” change occurred for her. She shares:

I started to think of [Progress] as a positive thing instead of a negative thing. I guess more and more I realized that once I was going through these things I realized that I really did need help and it was probably a good thing I was in [Progress]. But then toward the end [of Progress] I thought, “Oh, wow, I really benefited from this,” ‘cause I thought it was just something I was, you know, just going to sit there through and not even like, but then I really did benefit from it.
Also recognizing the direct influence Progress had on her life choices, Anne relates how being in Progress at age fifteen is influencing her life at age seventeen:

Yah, I'm kind of like, I'm like remembering stuff now, it will come back now. But the overall effects are still there. Well it's a lot more like, now like I don't struggle as much as I used to, but I mean, when I first started like, you know, getting myself—digging myself out of that hole, it was just thinking back in Progress and remembering things people said and now it's just like, it's you know, "that place I was that helped me." And looking back I'm just remembering the times and to not ever go back to how I was. So it's just a reminder I think, that I did good.

Delayed impact. In addition to direct influence, timing of change was also characterized as "delayed impact." One way that this type of timing was manifested was through the acknowledgement that some things experienced in Progress would be more valuable at a future date—that the full impact of Progress will not happen until later. As someone who participated in Progress at a young age of eleven, Catie recognized that some things she was learning in Progress would better benefit her down the road. Catie describes her anticipation for this delayed impact of change:

It was really all really helpful I guess, because now that I'm—learning it at the age of eleven was kind of like, "Well why do I need to know any of this stuff already? I'm never going to do that." But now that I've learned it, now that I'm almost thirteen, I think that since I learned it then, that even though I didn't think I would have needed to know, that it helped me in the future.

Catie further tells of how the other young women in the group helped her gain "long-term advice":

They were really nice to me when they told me everything that I would need to know and some tips on like stuff not to do so that I wouldn't turn out and have stuff happen like what happened to them. Like sneaking out at night, I know some girls did that. They told me not to do that. Basically it was just a lot of good information they gave me not to do because they knew it had messed up their lives.

Antionette was someone who also experienced timing of change as a delayed impact. However, whereas Catie's delayed impact was anticipated as she actively filed away
information to be used at a future date, Antionette’s delayed impact experience was not planned. Antionette relates:

I guess it doesn’t really—didn’t help me then, but it has like since. I don’t know, like I realized when I started going to Progress, well like, my mom found out I was on drugs and put me in rehab, her and my boyfriend did, and I just realized that all the stuff that they said there had been true, because when I was there I said, “This is stupid. This is such a lie, you know. Drugs really aren’t that bad.” I just realized that what they were saying was actually not a lie. It didn’t really affect [me] while I was in it ‘cause I really didn’t care and, I don’t know, I was a druggie I guess and once I got clean I just realized that the things that they told us were actually useful and true, and maybe I should try some of the things that they suggested. And maybe it’d be better.

Antionette also shared specific experiences of when she recalled things from Progress, such as when her parents divorced for the second time and when a friend died. Recognizing that Progress affected her more after she was out of the program, and in ways she hadn’t planned on, Antionette sums up her Progress experience:

It was an experience that you’ll never forget, but ah, I mean, it’s a helpful experience and it’s useful, I mean in your lifetime.

Kayleigh was someone who also experienced timing of change as a delayed impact. Kayleigh decided early in the Progress program that she didn’t want or need to change and that overall, Progress didn’t have a big effect on her. However, Kayleigh does realize now that she did learn some “new stuff.” Kayleigh tries to explain how it was possible that she still “got” something out of Progress when she was trying so hard not to. Kayleigh shares how this “sneaky change” could have happened:

I guess some things happen even if you don’t want them to. I didn’t really want to change but now that it did happened I guess I’m kind of glad that it happened.
Challenges to Change

Change happened for these young women based on personal and environmental factors that contributed to change, as well as timing. However, there were some obstacles that posed as challenges to change. Among these were member inappropriateness, program mixed messages, and a general lack of group understanding or support.

Member inappropriateness. Member inappropriateness refers to having young women in Progress that either weren’t appropriate for the program to begin with, or young women who were kept in Progress when it was obvious they were not progressing or contributing to the group, or even making an attempt to do so. Kaija explains who she feels is appropriate for Progress and relates it to her own experience:

Progress program is a group for girls that are having a hard time understanding what’s going on in their life. And I can say that people, you know, people who get in trouble with the law like I was shouldn’t be in Progress because it doesn’t do anything. I had a lot more serious problems that you know, that uhh, Progress couldn’t have helped me with, which I think is pretty sad because I needed you know, I needed serious help and Progress wasn’t for me. The referrals [to Progress] are more from DHS people than they are from juvenile parts of it. And I think that’s probably one of their problems that they weren’t designed for juvenile kids which is what you know...what kinds of kids workers are trying to put in the program.

While Kaija felt she was inappropriate because of her past problems and current level of need, Jerri felt she was inappropriate because of her lack of progress in the program, which was mitigated by drug use. Jerri, who acknowledges “it’s hard to learn stuff when you’re high,” explains how she felt about how her lack of progress was handled:

I think it’s an OK program. It just wasn’t for me. It was like I’d already been through a lot of treatments and placements so they’re just repeating whatever. It was more me than them. I just don’t think—they shouldn’t have kept me that long when they knew that I wasn’t goin’ graduate of whatever. [I think I should have] got discharged earlier if [I wasn’t] going to learn anything from it.
Snoopy also felt that those who weren’t going to progress in the program should not be part of it. Snoopy explains:

Progress is a program that is about helping girls who want help, but umm, if there are girls that do not want help they really shouldn’t go because they’re not gonna get a lot out of it.

Member inappropriateness for the program can originate from a referral that does not match the focus of Progress, or from the lack of progress and effort demonstrated by a participant. The outcome of either of these scenarios is a challenge to change and growth, not only for the individual young woman herself, but for others in Progress who are wanting to change. Antionette shares how a young woman that was not making progress affected others who were with her in Progress:

I think one disadvantage to things was when you have one negative person in the group—it just brings everyone down. That’s why—that’s why most the girls I think didn’t get anything out of it, because there was this one girl in there...that was just, ttuhuhh, she sat there the whole time and nagged, “This is gay, this is boring, there’s no point in doing this,” and she sat there and screamed and yelled at the leaders and it was pointless. [They should] have kicked her out or try to tell her that she needs to quit, because it’s not only affecting her, it’s affecting the way we’re learning too, ya know.

Program mixed messages. Another challenge to change, in addition to member inappropriateness, was program mixed messages. Some of these young women communicated the feeling of being stuck “between a rock and a hard place” when trying to balance who they felt they were on the “inside” with the expectation of self-change that Progress seemed to exude. Kayleigh communicates her frustration of feeling she’s OK with the way she is, while dealing with feedback from a staff member. Kayleigh shares:

I’ve been the same way forever and I’m kind of—I just don’t turn leaves, and I just have the way I am, and [the leader’s] way, and it seems like a complete difference. They always thought I was trying to be mouthy and I was just trying to be who I am.
Kayleigh added that she feels Progress staff should listen and be helpful but only to a certain point. Kayleigh illustrates further:

[Staff needs] just to be nice and you know, help people to a point but don’t try and change the way they’re thinking. Just try and help them but don’t try and push them in the way you want them.

Another mixed message, felt by Kaija, also dealt with the balance between self-change and program expectation. Kaija asks herself “So now what do you do?” as she relates her predicament:

I don’t know really how to put it because in my mind I think that Progress was kind of two-faced because they told—they told my parents the same thing, you know, that you know, we’re trying to help girls with their self-esteem, you know,...that they were trying to let you know, that you know you can be your own person, you don’t have to be the typical, you know, characteristics of a girl. But at the same time, if you were to act a lot like a guy they would say, “Oh, maybe you should act a little more lady-like,” or you know, like if someone burped or something they’d be like, “That’s not very lady-like. I think you should act a little more like a lady.” You know, it kind of bugged me and I think that’s where Progress went wrong, is that they sat there and they said you know, “This is what girls do; this is what guys do.” They judge you. And they tell you, you know, “You’re too much of a guy, you need to become a girl.” And I think that’s where a lot of people get really, really peeved, because it’s so annoying.

Kaija goes on about what would have made this situation better for her. She continues:

Instead of all the, “That’s not very lady-like” or “You shouldn’t act like that because that’s more of a guy,” I think they said, “Oh, well obviously, err, you know, well you’re not part of, you know, characteristics of being a girl, which is OK, but at some point in time, you know, you need to kind of start acting like one.” I think if they had said it that way it wouldn’t have been a little—not as cruel as they put it as. But the way that they just said it, it just, I don’t know, it just made me feel even worse than I already did.

Lack of support. The effect of these program mixed messages can lead to another challenge to change which is a feeling of lack of understanding or support in the group. This feeling can be characterized as by a concern to bring anything up in group for fear, as Jerri
states, of “being criticized or judged.” Kayleigh relates how her inner conflict about mixed messages lead to a feeling of distrust toward Progress staff. Kayleigh shares:

And sometimes like during group I felt like I wasn’t really able to talk about everything I wanted to talk about ‘cause it just didn’t seem like I could trust them. I guess it was because we always talked about us and never talked about them so it’s kind of like I don’t know if I can trust them.

Kayleigh further shares how this distrust of staff lead to questions regarding staff support and understanding. Kayleigh relates:

They thought that they knew what we were going through. I think it was kind of a fake out thing. They knew what we were really going through, but they didn’t really have any idea.

Kaija was also someone who felt like she had to emotionally “close-up” in order to deal with the program mixed messages. Kaija relates how her innate style of identifying with attitudes and behaviors of males would put her in a position where she felt unsupported. Kaija states:

I felt like I could never be open-minded and say what was really on my mind for fear that people would you know, be like, “What are you? A guy?” I’ve always didn’t speak my mind because a lot of point of views that I have are a lot like a guy’s. And whenever I would you know, try to say that I would stop myself and say, “OK, never mind, I forgot what I was going to say.” I think that in a way they could have supported me a little more in what they did.

Challenges to change for these young women were primarily characterized by member inappropriateness and program mixed messages, both of which posed obstacles to personal growth and development. Program mixed messages also lead to a sense of not feeling understood and supported during the Progress experience.
The purpose of this research was to highlight the voices of female adolescents as they shared their experience of participating in a gender-specific treatment program specifically designed to address the unique contextual issues they face as developing females. The discussion presented here will center on contributions of this research as well as implications for ways to enhance the development of young women.

Contributions and Implications

Social Context

One thing that is understood from this research and reiterated by previous research is that the social context in which young women develop is very salient. Previous research (Basow & Rubin, 1999; Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Pipher, 1994) has described in detail the pressures and mixed messages adolescent young women face as they wrestle with who they feel they really are and who society says they “should” be. It is this struggle that leads to perils described as loss of self, loss of voice, and powerlessness (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). The young women who participated in this research also expressed the pressure and power that gender stereotypes were having on the culture surrounding their development. They described in particular the pressures they felt to look and act a certain way—expectations based purely on their gender. Many of these young women saw themselves as being different from “normal” girls who were “being perfect”, “not doing anything bad”, “gossiping”, or just plain acting “stupid and not have their brain work”. There was also a real struggle to try and be themselves, but still be accepted by their peers. Some of the young women were self-proclaimed tomboys and found it hard to be accepted by other young women in their peer group. Although many of the young women communicated that they
felt the intense pressure to fit in the “box” of typical female behaviors, they also communicated a sense of defiance in response to this pressure. As Kaija described it earlier, “I’m a girl but I will do what I want to do.”

Raising Consciousness

One thing that can be done by parents, educators, and MFTs is to teach young women to appreciate their female identity and resist negative messages, in essence, raising consciousness about society’s messages regarding gender (Denmark, 1999). One way to accomplish this is through education about stereotypes. Parents, educators, and MFTs can battle confining stereotypes and broaden the range of behaviors for the female role. This can be done through the attentive use of discussion, books, role play, or movies (Denmark, 1999). Even if a medium (such as a movie) supports a restricted female gender role, this can still be discussed in relation to stereotypes and other untruths. However, along with broadening the range of the female role, there is also the mixed message in society that a woman must “have it all” in terms of marriage, career, and family (Denmark, 1999). Denmark argues that women must exist in a competitive, self-reliant world (appearing selfish) and also remain nurturing and responsive to others (appearing selfless). These mixed messages are confusing not only because they contradict generally accepted expectations of women in the past, but also because there is a lack of active role models or guidelines to follow that set the example of how to indeed “have it all” (Denmark, 1999; Roberts & Clune, 1999). There is a clear need for those who work with young women to unmask and demystify societal stereotypes and mixed messages.
Finding Insides

In addition to the further insights and descriptions of the contextual issues these developing young women faced, they also addressed what previous research has called the “perils” of female adolescence; namely loss of self, loss of voice, and powerlessness (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). Whereas these are not words these young women used to describe their life circumstances, they do address this idea in terms of how they combated these perils. The contribution of this research is a focus on what many of the young women “got” out of the Progress program that enabled them to find themselves, their voices, and their inner strength. These young women described their success in terms of “finding myself”, “discovering myself”, “liking myself”, and “being myself”. There was a real sense of satisfaction as these young women communicated how finding their “insides” and being comfortable with being themselves helped them to value themselves more. This greater sense of self-value then lead these young women to cultivate the strength and centeredness they needed in order to better cope with life’s challenges. Some of the young women related these inner changes to self-esteem and felt more confident as they learned to accept themselves and be more comfortable in their own skin. In essence, as Antoinette said, to just “be who you’re going to be.”

Support and Channeling

Families, educators, and MFTs can help deal with societal mixed messages and enhance the development of female adolescents by supporting those young women who desire to be on the outside of the “box.” Although young women are socialized from girlhood to have certain traits or aspirations (Denmark, 1999), there should be support for those young women who desire to be outside the “box” of the typical female gender prescribed behaviors. Parents, educators, and MFTs can reframe young women’s at-risk
behavior as a desire to think independently, display self-confidence, and feel in control (Denmark, 1999). It is the job of those working with adolescent females to channel behavior and educate about acceptable or destructive modes of risk taking. This way the self-expression the young woman desires is able to go toward constructive outcomes. Parents and educators can help provide projects and activities that allow for expression of independent thinking and control.

Supporting the discovery and maintenance of strengths and talents in young women is also something that is crucial (Denmark, 1999). Emphasizing and exploring strengths and talents is something in particular that MFTs can do as they work with young women to address the display of at-risk behaviors and problems being faced. Systemically, strengths and talents can be viewed as additional supports and resources the young woman has access to as she deals with challenges in life. Also, developing talents may be a way for a young woman to experience an increase in personal pride and self-esteem (Denmark, 1999).

Training

Another way to enhance the development of young women is through training. First, young women can participate in assertiveness and leadership training. The goal of this would be to help a young woman learn things about herself, trust herself as a source of knowledge, learn how to constructively share what is on her mind, and to be more aware of assertive female role models (Roberts & Clune, 1999). Young women would also learn more about body awareness, emotional awareness, making decisions, and effective ways of communicating. Through the acquisition of these skills it is hoped that young women will feel emotionally empowered and develop a type of resilience that will allow them to
accomplish what is best for themselves as opposed to being manipulated by the desires of others (Denmark, 1999).

Young women can also participate in job and career planning (Denmark, 1999). This allows a young woman to explore non-traditional career options that she may not be aware of. A young woman can then have a career prepared should she choose to enter the workforce.

Training is also needed for parents. Parents need to be taught to be sensitive to the needs as well as the unique issues their young daughters will confront in life. Parents can guide their daughters through praise (praising academic prowess instead of popularity) and teach them to set boundaries and be assertive with others (Denmark, 1999). Parents can also learn to identify assets, talents, and strengths their daughters possess.

MFTs will also need to participate in training programs that help them to be aware of the challenges young women face as they develop. Not only do MFTs need courses and training to be able to identify systemic influences on female development, but MFTs also need to be able to share this knowledge in an understandable way to the family of the young woman. Therapists also need to be trained in how to best support and use young women’s strengths (Roberts & Clune, 1999) and talents as she navigates the crossroads of her adolescence. Training should not only come by book learning and through seminars or conferences, but also through practical experience of working with young women. MFTs could offer groups to young women in addition to other therapy they do. These therapeutic all-female groups would allow young women to connect with other young women who may be facing similar life challenges. It would also allow the therapist valuable learning and
experience of how to work with, listen to, and understand the young women and the issues they are facing.

**Female Relationships**

The third contribution this research makes deals with the importance of relationships in the lives of developing females. An outcome of Progress involvement for these young women was not only improved relationships with peers, but specifically improved relationships with female peers. By nature of the program, an essential element of Progress is its all-female group membership. The group was set up this way in hopes of fostering a supportive network environment for females, comprised of females. While some young women were excited about the comfortableness and understanding that can be anticipated from female peers, other young women approached the group with trepidation since female peers were who they had the most fights and troubles with at school. However, despite these two extremes, the young women walked away from their Progress experience with a better appreciation of female connectedness. Those young women who liked the idea of an all-female group enjoyed the freedom and openness of talking candidly with other young women. Those who negatively anticipated the all-female group experience seemed surprised at their ability to connect with other girls and form a female support system.

Another relational contribution of this research was the influence that Progress involvement had on mother/daughter relationships. For some of these young women, finding their own “insides” was akin to discovering the “insides” of other, in particular, their mothers. During the course of Progress some of the young women were able to “de-villainize” their mothers and form a new connection to them. These mothers were now seen
as understanding resources, listening ears, and as people to look up to who had “older and wiser” experiences to share.

Enhanced Relationships

There is continual need to implement strategies that invite young women to form meaningful relationships with other young women. Schools and educators could deliberately organize school-associated groups that draw young women together where they are able to participate in exercises and activities that are not combined with young men. This will allow those young women who are comfortable with other females to initiate and enjoy those relationships where they find strength and acceptance. It will also allow those young women who doubt their abilities to form relationships with other female peers to experience this phenomenon and perhaps be surprised, as were some of the young women in Progress, that they could form supportive relationships with other young women.

Schools could also support the needs of young women by providing more opportunities for female leadership within the school. There could be special classes or seminars for young women pertaining to leadership skills. Young women could be given opportunity to exercise these skills within the context of all-female groups, clubs, or other forums where leadership can be experienced independent of male competition for it. Also, groups and clubs offered for young women should be outside the “box” in terms of subject matter in order to support those young women who feel they do not fit the stereotypical female mold. For example, a mechanical engineering, mathematics, or field science club could help foster relationships among those young women who feel their personal interests and talents lie outside the “box” of stereotypical female interests.
Other supports to these young women can be mothers, female teachers, and other mother-figures (Roberts & Clune, 1999). These women can help foster female connection and role models and allow for a relationship where the young woman feels supported in her strengths. This type of relationship, where a young woman feels she can experience power and meaning, is referred to as a “hardiness zone” (Roberts & Clune, 1999). For young women who display at-risk behaviors, MFTs can help provide a setting where perhaps mothers and daughters can begin to create a hardiness zone where the young woman feels her strengths are acknowledged, appreciated, and supported. Hardiness zones can also be created within the context of female peer relationships.

Hardiness zones can also be fostered through the community. In particular, communities could offer ways to help strengthen the relationships between young women and their mothers. For instance, communities could host special mother/daughter activities that would not only provide a venue to help strengthen these female relationships, but it would help young women to feel acknowledged and supported.

Characteristics and Timing of Change

A fourth contribution this research makes pertains to both the characteristics and the timing of change. These young women who participated in this research, whether they were successful in the Progress program or not, were able to describe what it takes for an adolescent female to invite change to her life. In essence, the bottom line was desire. All of these young women described that change comes not only from wanting it, but from actually doing something to make it happen. Those young women who felt they changed a lot while in Progress were able to describe their desire and openness and willingness to do something different in their life. Likewise, those who did not successfully complete Progress expressed
that it was their own unopenness and unwillingness that contributed to their non-change. These young women shared that change doesn’t happen by force or coaxing, it happens by choice.

While personal desire and choice are contributors to change, the young women also identified characteristics that were challenges to change. Among these were program mixed messages and member inappropriateness, both of which could jeopardize the female peer connection function of the group.

In regards to change, this research also contributes in relation to timing of change. These young women described two different time lines in which change can happen in the life of an adolescent female. Change can happen directly and immediately with acknowledgement that change is happening “in the moment.” However, it is also possible that the full impact of participating in Progress may not be realized until a future time. This can occur purposively, such as “saving” information for later, or spontaneously, such as remembering things from Progress at useful times or crises points in life. Either way, it is shown that change for these adolescent females occurred at more than one given point in time.

Enhanced Program Development

There needs to be development and establishment of more programs, such as Progress, that focus on the unique strengths and characteristics each young woman has within herself to invite life changes. However, these program need to have integrity in their implementation and not send mixed messages. There needs to be more focus on how to smoothly allow a young woman to be who she wants to be, but at the same time encourage her to evaluate and change her destructive behaviors. Staff of these programs need to be in
touch with the social context of the young women, provide a non-judgmental group atmosphere, and display a positive role model of female leadership and assertiveness.

These programs also need an effective way to measure their impact. Program evaluation needs to be specific and curtailed to the specific details of the program. Measures need to be open enough to allow participants to fully express themselves and their experiences in the program. There also needs to be program accountability to those who may not experience direct “in the moment” effects of programming. Not only is gathering “delayed impact” information important to program effectiveness measures, but it is also important to those young women who have a story to tell about the impression that an all-girls group left on them—even though it is years later.

In addition, communities also need to support and provide opportunities that enable young women to form relationships of meaning and support with one another. There needs to be increased community promotion for groups such as Progress. Support of the Progress underlying framework can be shown by offering a variety of community activities that focus on skills of young women (such as leadership training), or by offering community classes for young women (such as archery, karate, or motorbike racing), where the focus is on non-traditional interests or activities.

**Future Research**

Many of the young women who participated in this research expressed ways that they felt they changed while in Progress. These changes included developed skills, ways in which they viewed themselves, as well as how they saw and related to others differently. However, what is not known is how much of these changes are contributed to by participation in Progress and how much of the change is characterized by normal adolescent growth. In
order to gain a better view of this, future research could include additional interview questions to help differentiate between program change and developmental change. In addition, parents, other family members, and teachers could be asked about changes noticed in the young woman, and to what do they attribute the change.

Future research could also look at data in a longitudinal setting. This research took a cross-sectional type approach by interviewing several young women at different stages of development and progress. Future research design could focus on fewer young women and follow them longitudinally throughout and after their Progress experience.

In conclusion, there is need for additional navigational tools that can help at those crossroads where the “perfect girl” meets the “real girl,” where young women need to call on additional strengths, talents, and resources to combat the pressures that would seek to confine and define them. We need to continue to enable young women to “find their insides”—their unique strengths and qualities that make them who they are—to let them know that they are “good enough” and capable of contributing to the world.
REFERENCES


Family Counseling Center. (1999b). Passages...a day treatment program for teenage girls. [Brochure]. Ames, IA: Youth and Shelter Services, Inc.


Grand Tour Question: What was it like for you to be in the Progress program?

1. In your own words, what is the Progress program? Who is Progress for?

2. What was it like for you to be in a group that was all females?

3. What are issues in your life that you face special as a girl?

4. How do you connect Progress with these issues? How does Progress influence how you deal with these issues?

5. How has being in Progress affected how you feel about yourself?

6. How has being in Progress affected how you make choices?

7. In what ways has being in Progress influenced your relationships with other people? Your family? Peers?

8. How much were your parent(s)/guardian(s) involved with Progress? What was helpful about this? How do you wish this was different?

9. Taking everything into account, what was the most helpful part of Progress? Least helpful?

10. Taking everything into account, what would make Progress more helpful?

11. How would you sum up your experience in Progress?
APPENDIX B: ASSENT FORM SIGNED AT INTERVIEW BY ALL PARTICIPANTS
TITLE OF PROJECT:
Giving Voice to the Adolescent Experience of a Gender-Specific Treatment Program

PRINCIPLE INVESTIGATOR: Lue Turner, M. S.

SUPERVISOR OF PROJECT: Dr. Ron Werner-Wilson, Ph. D.

CONTACT NAME AND PHONE NUMBER FOR QUESTIONS/PROBLEMS:
Lue Turner (515) 232-1816 or Ron Werner-Wilson (515) 294-8671

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH:
To explore the experience of adolescent females who participated in Progress

PROCEDURES/METHODS TO BE USED:
For the purposes of data collection, you will be asked to participate in one interview, scheduled at your convenience. This interview will be documented by the use of an audiotape. Data collection for this research will be done on this specific day and will take approximately 60-90 minutes. The interview will take place at YSS or another mutually agreed upon place.

BENEFITS/RISKS:
There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you as a participant in this research. One benefit gained from your participation includes giving feedback to the program as to what your experience in Progress was like. Your participation is this study is voluntary and you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide against participation, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and the data pertaining to your participation will be destroyed or returned to you.

CONFIDENTIALITY:
Your participation is confidential and this confidentiality will be maintained through: storage of data and notes in a secure location accessible only to the researcher; use of personal and organizational pseudonyms in written reports and oral presentations of this research; and removal of personally identifiable information from field notes, transcripts, and research reports submitted to anyone for researcher feedback or review.

Your signature below acknowledges that you voluntarily agree to participate in this project, that this project has been explained to you, and that your questions have been satisfactorily answered.

Name of Participant ___________________________ Date __________

I certify that the participant has been given adequate time to read and learn about the study and all of her questions have been answered. It is my opinion that the participant understands the purpose, risks, benefits, and procedures that will be followed in this study and has voluntarily agreed to participate.

Investigator signature ___________________________ Date __________
TITLE OF PROJECT:
Giving Voice to the Adolescent Experience of a Gender-Specific Treatment Program

PRINCIPLE INVESTIGATOR: Lue Turner, M. S.

SUPERVISOR OF PROJECT: Dr. Ron Werner-Wilson, Ph. D.

CONTACT NAME AND PHONE NUMBER FOR QUESTIONS/PROBLEMS:
Lue Turner (515) 232-1816 or Ron Werner-Wilson (515) 294-8671

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH:
To explore the experience of adolescent females who participated in Progress

PROCEDURES/METHODS TO BE USED:
For the purposes of data collection, your daughter will be asked to participate in one interview, scheduled at your daughter's convenience. This interview will be documented by the use of an audiotape. Data collection for this research will be done on this specific day and will take approximately 60-90 minutes. The interview will take place at YSS or another mutually agreed upon place.

BENEFITS/RISKS:
There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your daughter as a participant in this research. One benefit gained from you daughter's participation includes giving feedback to the program as to what her experience in Progress was like. Your daughter's participation is this study is voluntary and she may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide against her participation, you may withdraw her from the study at any time without penalty and the data pertaining to her participation will be destroyed or returned to you.

CONFIDENTIALITY:
Your daughter's participation is confidential and this confidentiality will be maintained through: storage of data and notes in a secure location accessible only to the researcher; use of personal and organizational pseudonyms in written reports and oral presentations of this research; and removal of personally identifiable information from field notes, transcripts, and research reports submitted to anyone for researcher feedback or review.

Your signature below acknowledges that you have read this form and you willingly agree to allow your daughter to participate in this project.

Name of Participant (Daughter) Email and Phone number

Parent/Guardian Signature Date
APPENDIX D: RECRUITMENT FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS
Dear [Name of parent or guardian]:

Hello! My name is Lue Turner and I am a graduate student at the University in Marriage and Family Therapy. While you personally may not have met me, for the last three years I have worked as either part-time staff or as a driver for the after-school Progress program your daughter participated in at YSS. At this time I am conducting a research project for my dissertation that involves the Progress program. The purpose of this research is to explore the experiences the girls had in the program and how these experiences were meaningful in their lives.

I would like your permission to conduct a face-to-face interview with your daughter to discuss her experiences of participating in Progress. Your daughter's involvement in this project will help to highlight the uniqueness of gender-specific programs as well as ways Progress was or was not meaningful in your daughter's development.

I know that often during Progress group very sensitive issues or topics were discussed. The purpose of my interview is not to ask about or dwell on these items. Your daughter is free at any time to withdrawal from the interview. The interview is planned to last between 60 and 90 minutes. She will be compensated with a $20 gift card for her participation.

If you allow for your daughter to participate in this research please sign and date the enclosed permission form and return it in the envelope provided by [Date]. Upon receipt of this permission form I will further contact your daughter either via email or telephone to set up an interview time.

If you have any questions about this project please contact by phone or email either me (Lue Turner, 515-232-1816, lturner@iastate.edu) or my supervisor for this project (Dr. Ron Werner-Wilson, 515-294-8671, rwwilson@iastate.edu).

Sincerely,

Lue Turner, M. S.
APPENDIX E: RECRUITMENT FOR DAUGHTERS UNDER EIGHTEEN
[Date]

RE: Progress Program Research

Dear [Participant Name]:

Hello! My name is Lue Turner. You may remember me as someone who worked at Progress either as staff or as a driver when you attended Progress.

At the same time I worked at Progress I was also a student at the University. At this point in my PhD program I am doing a research project about the Progress program. I am hoping that you will want to participate. My purpose is to talk to people like you who have already been in Progress in order to find out what Progress was like for you and what meaning the program has for you in your life.

I am hoping that we can set a time where I can personally sit down with you for an interview. The interview will probably last 60-90 minutes. It will take place at the YSS building or another agreed upon place. **You will receive a $20 gift card for your participation.**

Your participation in this research will be confidential. I will not use your name in my research work and will keep any notes in a safe place. I will tape record (with your permission) our interview and that tape will also be kept in a safe place.

If you decide that you would like to participate in this research, have your parent/guardian sign and mail me the permission form that I included in this packet. When I receive that form I will either call or email to set up an interview time.

If you have any questions please contact me.

Sincerely,

Lue Turner, M. S.
(515) 232-1816
ltturner@iastate.edu
APPENDIX F: RECRUITMENT FOR DAUGHTERS OVER EIGHTEEN
[Date]

RE: Progress Program Research

Dear [Participant Name]:

Hello! My name is Lue Turner. You may remember me as someone who worked at Progress either as staff or as a driver when you attended Progress.

At the same time I worked at Progress I was also a student at the University. At this point in my PhD program I am doing a research project about the Progress program. I am hoping that you will want to participate. My purpose is to talk to people like you who have already been in Progress in order to find out what Progress was like for you and what meaning the program has for you in your life.

I am hoping that we can set a time where I can personally sit down with you for an interview. The interview will probably last 60-90 minutes. It will take place at the YSS building or another agreed upon place. **You will receive a $20 gift card for your participation.**

Your participation in this research will be confidential. I will not use your name in my research work and will keep any notes in a safe place. I will tape record (with your permission) our interview and that tape will also be kept in a safe place.

If you decide that you would like to participate in this research, please sign and mail me the permission form that I included in this packet by [Date]. When I receive that form I will either call or email to set up an interview time.

If you have any questions please contact me.

Sincerely,

Lue Turner, M. S.
(515) 232-1816
lturner@iastate.edu
APPENDIX G: ASSENT FOR DAUGHTERS OVER EIGHTEEN
TITLE OF PROJECT:
Giving Voice to the Adolescent Experience of a Gender-Specific Treatment Program

PRINCIPLE INVESTIGATOR: Lue Turner, M. S.

SUPERVISOR OF PROJECT: Dr. Ron Werner-Wilson, Ph. D.

CONTACT NAME AND PHONE NUMBER FOR QUESTIONS/PROBLEMS:
Lue Turner (515) 232-1816 or Ron Werner-Wilson (515) 294-8671

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH:
To explore the experience of adolescent females who participated in Progress

PROCEDURES/METHODS TO BE USED:
For the purposes of data collection, you will be asked to participate in one interview, scheduled at your convenience. This interview will be documented by the use of an audiotape. Data collection for this research will be done on this specific day and will take approximately 60-90 minutes. The interview will take place at YSS or another mutually agreed upon place.

BENEFITS/RISKS:
There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you as a participant in this research. One benefit gained from your participation includes giving feedback to the program as to what your experience in Progress was like. Your participation is this study is voluntary and you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide against participation, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and the data pertaining to your participation will be destroyed or returned to you.

CONFIDENTIALITY:
Your participation is confidential and this confidentiality will be maintained through: storage of data and notes in a secure location accessible only to the researcher; use of personal and organizational pseudonyms in written reports and oral presentations of this research; and removal of personally identifiable information from field notes, transcripts, and research reports submitted to anyone for researcher feedback or review.

Your signature below acknowledges that you voluntarily agree to participate in this project.

Name of Participant __________________________ Date _______________ Email and Phone number __________________________

Investigator Signature __________________________ Date _______________
APPENDIX H: INTERVIEW SUMMARIES OF PARTICIPANTS
Name: Jerri  
Status: Non-graduate  

"If I didn't get anything out of it, it was me"

For Jerri, Progress was hard because it was all girls. She was used to getting in trouble with girls and it seemed that Progress was putting her in with the crowd that was troublesome for her. She was concerned about the girls being so catty and judgmental—things girls do. Jerri also expressed that at the time, she just did not feel that Progress was the right program for her. She thought the after school structure was OK, but that overall the program did not fit her. Looking back now Jerri thinks that she really had some personal issues to work out first before the group setting would be helpful for her. Now that she has had that chance to work on some personal issues, she feels she would be more open to Progress now than when she was in it. Jerri also strongly thought that because at the time, she was not willing to change, she did not get anything substantial out of Progress. She expressed that having an open mind to feedback would have been critical to her success, and that isn't something she was willing to do at the time. Overall Jerri thought the program was OK and she saw other girls benefit from Progress. Jerri feels she could have gotten more out of Progress had she been more open.
Name: Kayleigh  
Status: Non-graduate

"I just didn’t get what I expected"

Kayleigh talked about Progress in terms of how it was OK and somewhat helpful to be in a group with other girls, but that at times the group was not helpful because of some of the staff practices. Kayleigh thought that in a girls only group there was a sense of understanding about girls troubles and issues, especially things pertaining to sex, things that might not be talked about or understood if there were boys in the group. Kayleigh seemed most frustrated in her experience of Progress in terms of the staff. She expressed not feeling that her life and motives were understood by staff, or that they could see where she was coming from. She thought that staff were at times too intrusive and judgmental or seemed to have all the answers. She thought that staff does need to be like that, but only to a certain point. She felt that there were times she didn’t say all she could have or share what she was thinking because she was worried about staff criticizing her or not hearing her out. Kayleigh expressed that even though Progress didn’t have a big effect on her life, there are small changes she experienced where maybe she didn’t even know she was changing. One thing that Kayleigh shared was about her relationship with Progress drivers. Kayleigh expressed feeling a bond with her drivers and sometimes wished they were the staff at Progress. Kayleigh also expressed that riding to and from group were some of the most enjoyable times for her because she got to talk freely with the other girls. Kayleigh also stated that the one thing she wished she got out of Progress but she didn’t was a greater sense of self-esteem. There seemed to be a great feeling of disappointment and sadness surrounding this. Almost tears and a feeling of longing. She just didn’t get what she expected.
Name: Kaija
Status: Graduate

“\textit{I don’t fit in the box}”

Kaija started by saying that her Progress experience turned out to be OK, but it didn’t start that way because she felt she was sent there as a punishment. She said one thing that made it difficult for her was that she was used to relating to boys, and this was a girls group. Many times Kaija felt struggles with the other girls and leaders over how she should act or things she should say because she felt “more like a boy than a girl.” Kaija spent much effort explaining how girls’ behavior is confined to a box and she doesn’t personally fit in the box—that not every girl fits what a girl is supposed to be like. Kaija seemed to communicate that the idea of operating “outside the box” was part of Progress programming but not always supported by staff and other girls. Kaija also expressed that Progress was influential in improving her self-esteem. She felt Progress did provide an environment where she was able to begin thinking differently about herself than what she had been told her whole life. Kaija also expressed that she felt at the time that Progress was meant for her, but now thinks maybe she had more serious issues to deal with than what Progress was designed to handle. She also commented that some of the topics and practical education pieces of Progress were valuable to her.
Name: Anne  
Status: Non-graduate

"I saw a different me"

Anne expressed that Progress was really a quite positive experience for her. She felt that Progress helped her learn to listen to others, help her deal with anger management, and help her make friends. She also felt that the issues brought up were important and the leaders of the group were quite helpful. She felt that Progress was quite appropriate for her in her life at the time. Anne also expressed that she thought it was really helpful to be in a group that was all girls because it helped her to feel more comfortable and also to feel that she wasn’t alone—she wasn’t the only one dealing with issues. Anne seemed to feel that Progress was a good place for her to find herself, and to realize that she was “not the typical girl” and that was OK. Anne also talked about how her mom was involved in Progress and supportive of the program and that was valuable to Anne. It made her feel like her mom hadn’t given up on her. Anne also expressed that Progress was a time where she “saw a different me—the real me—there was hope for me”. Overall Anne saw the Progress program as being one thing that helped her with life transitions and changes. Anne concluded saying that she felt Progress was an appropriate name for the program as it helped her pass over a bridge in her life.
Lauralie expressed that at first she was not thrilled about being in Progress but eventually she ended up really enjoying her experience. She said that she attended the program while she was in 8th grade and at that time she was really going through a lot with just moving to the area and dealing with classmates who she felt were insensitive and passing judgment on her. Lauralie thought that the group activities in Progress were valuable to her because they focused on things that she was dealing with at the time—like feeling judged for who she was on the outside instead of who she was on the inside. Lauralie stated that she really gained more confidence in Progress and learned to like herself better. Since then she feels she has taken that new confidence and used it in her first year of high school to try and new things and meet new people. Lauralie seems to have really gained a sense from Progress of being at peace with herself and who she is, rather than trying to change for someone else and being someone that she is not happy with. She expressed that this issue of girls changing just to please someone else is a big thing that girls her age deal with. Overall, Lauralie describes her experience in Progress as something “wonderful”, as Progress was a place where she was able to become more open, friendly, and confident.
Antoinette thought that over all her Progress experience was something that was helpful, even though she personally disliked the staff. She thought some of the therapy topics and activities were helpful, like those dealing with anger management and alcoholism. Antoinette made an effort to clarify that although the program was OK, she was not agreeable with staff and did not care for them. She feels that the reason she got anything out of Progress was because she was able to draw this distinction. There also were instances where Antoinette felt that at the time she was in Progress she either didn’t believe some of the information she was receiving, or felt that it wasn’t relevant to her situation. However, since being out of Progress there definitely have come times when she recalls the information and uses it, or realizes that maybe Progress was right after all in the factual information it gave her on certain topics, such as drug use. This seems to lead to Antoinette feeling that while she didn’t like her involvement with Progress at the time she was in it, she is glad now that she was. Looking back, Antoinette feels that what she gained from Progress was more self-esteem, better anger management skills, and a greater sense of how to handle problems. Antoinette also stated that she feels her relationship with her mom got better while she was in Progress. Antoinette also shared that her experience of being with all girls was difficult because girls drive her “nuts”. Especially the “normal” type girls who are gossipy, popular, snotty, and have an aura of perfection around them. Compared to this standard, Antoinette referred to herself as an “outcast”. Antoinette talked about pressure on girls to conform to this sense of perfection and not doing anything wrong and thought that Progress was able to address this for her by saying that stereotypes are not true and “you are going to be who you are going to be”.
Name: Catie
Status: Graduate

“I found my insides”

Catie felt her experience in Progress was unique because she was the youngest girl in the group by at least 2 years. Catie felt that she was able to get a large amount of good feedback and information from the other girls; that although it may not be something she uses now, she will have that information for later. It sounded like the other girls gave her some “long-term advice”—things she will use when she gets to be their ages. Catie expressed that she thinks she gained many skills from Progress, especially about coping with feelings on the inside. She expressed more than once that in Progress she was able to “find her insides”. To Catie this meant that she was able to learn to just be herself and to let her natural abilities and characteristics emerge—a sense of connection to herself. She also expressed that she now realizes that it is the inside of a person that matters more than the outside, and that this knowledge has even influenced how she treats or judges other people. Catie also discussed how being in Progress helped her to gain some other practical skills having to do with associating with others and making friends. Catie also mentioned that while there were some things discussed in Progress that she thought didn’t apply to her, she realizes now as she is getting older that those things that she thought were not valuable, really are.
Name: Snoopy  
Status: Non-graduate

“I got a lot, but I didn’t get a lot”

Snoopy talked about how she felt she learned some things in Progress but that it didn’t really help her much. Snoopy felt she learned and changed some while in the group but that those changes didn’t stay in her life after she stopped going to Progress. Snoopy felt that for her the main factor that determined how much she got out of Progress was her own personal willingness to be “open” and share feelings. Snoopy acknowledges that if she had not been so “closed’ the group could have benefited her more. Snoopy also thought an all girls group was good since girls don’t have as many outlets as boys to “get their problems drained out”. Snoopy also expressed that relationships with her friends improved with things she learned in Progress and that she wishes her friends would attend Progress. Snoopy mentioned that she does feel more confident in ways to deal with peer pressure.
APPENDIX I: IOWA COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
Providing Gender-Specific Services and Programs for Adolescent Female Offenders and Girls in High-Risk Situations

This section offers a synthesis of several sources that have offered various frameworks to understand the essential program elements of quality gender-specific programs and services for adolescent girls. It includes four basic assumptions central to any good juvenile justice program, program components of gender-specific programming for girls, recommendations for overall program design, and a description of staffing issues for programs that seek to serve girls in ways that are meaningful and lasting.

Gender-specific programming for adolescent girls is defined as “comprehensive programming which addresses and supports the psychological development process of female adolescents, while fostering connection within relationships in the context of a safe and nurturing environment” (Lindgren, 1996). Certainly, gender-specific programs and services extend beyond simply targeting adolescent girls as an audience; rather, these programs intentionally serve girls. In addition, they meet the standard of being specific to the female experience and free from gender bias. In order to be effective, gender-specific programs and services must reflect an understanding of female development and the specific issues of contemporary adolescent girls.

Four Basic Assumptions of Gender-Specific Programming for Girls

It is assumed that good juvenile justice programs will adequately meet the following four criteria. To be sure, these four assumptions serve as the basis upon which quality gender-specific program design can take place.

1. Good gender-specific services begin with good services.

Any effective program that serves the needs of adolescent girls must have a solid programmatic base. Certainly, quality juvenile justice programs share basic strengths no matter who their clientele. These strengths include:

- well-trained, competent staff who are involved with and knowledgeable about the youth served.
- effective, ongoing program evaluation.
- thoughtful treatment techniques that are based in current adolescent development theory.
- sensitive assessment techniques that consider offense history and issues of gender development.
- an atmosphere of highly structured activities with specific treatment goals (Maniglia, 1998).

Furthermore, effective juvenile justice programs also include:

- collaboration across traditional and professional boundaries.
- the practice of viewing the adolescent within the context of his/her family and viewing the family within the context of their neighborhood and community.
- the inclusion of parents in collaborative efforts.
the establishment of trusting relationships with the adolescent and his/her family.

- a long-term prevention orientation.
- an organizational culture that is less rule bound and more outcome oriented than traditional approaches (Girls E.T.C., 1997).

2. **Young women are different than young men, so their services must be also.**

Psychological research shows that while there are developmental similarities between the genders, there are unique issues specific to the process of female development. Moreover, juvenile justice research reveals that adolescent females’ patterns of offending often vary in scope and motivation from those of adolescent males. These differences must be considered when designing effective treatment programs. This may result in qualitatively new approaches to traditional treatment modalities as well as slight adaptations in content or approach (Maniglia, 1994).

3. **Equality does not equal sameness.**

In juvenile justice program planning, equality of service delivery does not mean simply allowing adolescent girls access to the services traditionally provided for adolescent boys. Instead, boys and girls must have sameness only in the basic program requirements. These basic program requirements include sameness in the quality of all staff, in the amount of financial support, and in the quality of the physical structure. However, in treatment, equality must be redefined to mean providing opportunities that are equally meaningful to each gender. So, while equal in quality, treatment services may differ depending on whether males or females are served. This redefinition of equality not only embraces an understanding of developmental differences, but legitimizes those differences as valuable indicators of necessary programmatic approaches (Maniglia, 1994).

4. **Services for young women cannot be viewed in isolation from society.**

Very often, the problems presented by teen girls in juvenile justice treatment are based in society’s gender role expectations of girls and women. There is often a connection between women’s roles in greater society, the societal barriers to healthy female growth and development, and the specific treatment issues of girls. It is essential then that staff guide girls to an awareness of this connection. In effect, each girl must recognize her treatment issues as related to larger societal issues and as relative to her specific culture. When successful, this gender-specific treatment approach is impactful on three levels of change:

- individual change (e.g., a girl in drug treatment).
- relational change (e.g., involves the significant relationships that affect the girl who abuses drugs).
- community change (e.g., the girl takes action to alter the cultural and material contexts which may contribute to her problem and/or its solutions) (Valentine Foundation, 1990; Maniglia & Albrecht, 1995).

### Components of Gender-Specific Programming for Girls

Shaped by revealing statistical data and developmental research on female development, the following eleven components are essential to any gender-specific program that attempts to holistically address the developmental needs of adolescent girls who are involved with or at risk for involvement with the juvenile justice system.
1. Programs must provide emotional and physical safety.

Girls need space that is emotionally safe, removed from family and friends who depend on them, and removed from the demands for the attention of adolescent males (Valentine Foundation, 1990). Further, programs are obligated to provide an environment that is safe from any verbal, physical, sexual, and emotional abuse that may be committed by staff. This goes beyond screening possible staff members to include measures that create an environment of safety for the participants, particularly those in residential programs. This may include enhancement of the established safety plan by candidly addressing safety concerns voiced by the participants and then implementing measures to address those concerns. Beyond these safety concerns, programs must also provide an environment where girls are safe from self-inflicted harm.

2. Programs must be culturally appropriate.

To be culturally competent, one must be capable of functioning effectively in the context of cultural differences (Raheân, 1998). This means that program planners and service providers must acknowledge and approach the cultural differences of program participants in ways that support each individual’s cultural identity. Too often program staff and administrators provide services in a culturally neutral way, particularly when issues of race are involved. This approach, however, denies that girls of color and those of non-majority cultural backgrounds “have different experiences of their gender and different experiences with the dominant institutions in the society” (Chesney-Lind, 1997, 93). In order to optimize effectiveness, programs must not ignore cultural differences, but create and provide appropriate services rooted in specific cultures. This means, rather than solely focus on the individual girl, programs must tap girls’ personal and cultural strengths (Valentine Foundation, 1990). Clearly, programs must be shaped by the unique developmental issues facing minority girls, and then build in the particular cultural resources accessible in minority communities (Chesney-Lind, 1997).

3. Programs must be relationship based.

An important goal of gender-specific programs with girls is that of improved relationships. This does not necessarily mean that girls simply learn to get along better with others. For most girls, this approach reinforces the traditional female role expectations of passivity, subordination, and self-sacrificing. Instead, girls must learn skills of assertiveness, appropriate expression of anger, and selection of healthy relationships (Maniglia, 1998).

Furthermore, programs must shift the primary discussion of relationships off of girls’ relationships with males. While those relationship issues are important, girls often lose themselves in those relationships and/or create false selves that focus on the needs of others. Instead, girls need guidance to develop identities that extend beyond their connection to

“Girls of color grow up and do gender in contexts very different from those of their white counterparts. Because racism and poverty are often fellow travelers, these girls are forced by their color and their poverty to deal early and often with problems of violence, drugs, and abuse. Their strategies for coping with these problems, often clever, strong, and daring, also tend to place them outside the conventional expectations of white girls.”

Meda Chesney-Lind, The Female Offender
males. They must learn to place an equal value on their relationships with women and other girls. Rather than seeing other females as potential competition (for attention, for affection, for turf), girls must exchange those habits for the development of trust in and respect for women and other girls. It is important that staff possess the skills to share, without belittling the girls, their observations regarding girls' relationship behaviors with other females. Moreover, girls must learn to seek nurturance and support in their female relationships while accepting help and support from adult women who have their best interests at heart (Valentine Foundation, 1990; Pipher, 1994; Maniglia, 1998).

This approach requires that the process be led by adult women who model genuine respect, trust, and caring for other women and girls. It requires women who, in ongoing relationships with the girls, can create an emotionally safe space for comforting, challenging, nurturing conversations (Myhand & Kivel, 1998). To be sure, the girls must see this component piece mirrored in the lives of female staff and in the relationships among those female staff.

Finally, because this approach may cause girls to separate from old, unhealthy relationships, program planners and staff must be prepared to provide adequate emotional support and to address relationship issues that may arise once the girl leaves the shelter of the program (Maniglia, 1998). Aftercare plans should include explicit ideas on how girls will continue their new relationship patterns as well as how they will stay connected in their new relationships.

Although this approach is best facilitated by female staff, inevitably some programs will employ men to do this work. While there are important roles for positive, non-exploitive men to play in the lives of adolescent girls, there are concerns that must be explicitly addressed in programs that employ men. The presence of a male may restrain girls from speaking openly about very personal or sensitive issues. It may create sexual tension, harmless or not, at a time when girls need to concentrate on themselves. Moreover, sexual issues may be complicated for girls who are survivors of incest or sexual assault. Girls who are eager to develop positive relationships with men may not have the skills to do so; accordingly, they may use compliance, deference, or their sexuality to gain attention from male staff. Men will also bring their own gender role socialization and expectations into their work, which may clash with a gender-specific approach and/or interfere with girls' treatment. Therefore, men who work with adolescent girls must:

- be especially sensitive to girls' patterns of male attention-seeking. Encourage clear and direct communication from individuals and within the group.
- establish and maintain clear boundaries around verbal and physical interactions.
- encourage girls to find, accept, and trust approval from one another and other women.
- understand their own gender role socialization and expectations and do not allow these to interfere with their work (Myhand & Kivel, 1998).
- model non-exploitive relationships with female staff.

4. Programs must provide positive female role models and mentors.
In addition to adult female staff who model healthy relationships, programs must also potentiate girls' relationships "of trust and interdependence with other women already present in their lives. Friends, relatives, neighbors, church and social group members can be critical providers of insight, strategy and strength." Furthermore, girls need
mentors whose lives reflect the realities of the girls' lives. They need mentors who show by example that survival and growth, as well as resistance and change, are possible. Such role models must be from the girls' particular communities as well as from the wider world of women (Valentine Foundation, 1990, 3).

5. Programs must address the abuse in girls' lives.
Research indicates that the majority of girls involved in the juvenile justice system have experienced physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse. A study of girls in juvenile correctional settings revealed that the overwhelming majority (61.2%) of those girls, about half who were of minority backgrounds, had experienced physical abuse. For most, the abuse was repeated. For those who have been sexually abused (54.3%), the perpetrator was usually a family member, family friend, or personal acquaintance (American Correctional Association, 1990). Sadly, it is speculated that statistics underestimate the extent of abuse in the lives of girls, since violence—particularly sexual violence—is underreported. Nonetheless, many researchers suggest that the pervasiveness of abuse in the lives of adolescent girls could be the most significant underlying cause of high-risk behaviors that lead to delinquency (James & Meyerding, 1977; National Institute of Mental Health, 1977; MacVicar & Dillon, 1980; Youth Policy and Law Center, 1982; Bracey, 1983; Chesney-Lind, 1987; Calhoun et al., 1993; Dembo et al, 1995). It is essential that juvenile justice personnel interpret girls' offenses within the gendered context of lives that often include extensive abuse histories. This shift in perspective can help professionals to reinterpret girls' offenses as complex survival strategies rather than simply as unacceptable social behaviors. To be sure, this is not to suggest that a girl's victimization leaves her with no personal accountability; however, considering a girl's personal history illuminates the context within which she moves and makes "choices" (Chesney-Lind, 1997).

Because girls' problem behavior often relates to an abusive and traumatizing home life, it is important that program procedures, particularly those for crisis intervention, be informed by the assumption that adolescent girls have histories of physical and sexual abuse. Many standard crisis protocols have acutely sexual overtones. Requiring groups of men to surround and subdue adolescent girls through physical force as well as requiring disrobing and body searches "strongly convey implied messages: that girls do not have a right to their own bodies, that male intrusion is acceptable, and that violent responses to female behavior is normal" (GAINS Center, 1998, 16). Programs must explore alternatives to current crisis intervention practices that do not retraumatize girls who live in restricted environments.

Other program practices to mitigate abuse retrauma include:
- requiring a female presence at all health care screenings.
- integrating mental health, substance abuse, and victim services.
- training all staff to understand the effects of retraumatization.
- using gender- and culturally-specific criteria to determine variations in mood, perception, and behavior that could signal serious distress.
- providing information about protocols at the initial intake so that the adolescent girl knows what to expect.
- asking about abuse directly and in a manner that is culturally and linguistically sensitive (GAINS Center, 1998).
6. Programs must be strength-based, not deficit-based.  
When girls' behaviors are removed from the gendered context in which they make choices, those behaviors are often recast as symptoms of pathology in mental health systems (Rieker & Jankowski, 1995), relapse in substance abuse systems, and antisocial in the juvenile justice system. Furthermore, the lack of viable options for girls to express their true selves may lead them to act in ways that appear self-destructive, but may be "logical adaptive responses to the world in which they live" (GAINS, 1997, 11). Girls' behaviors become labeled as "anti-social acting out," "manipulative," "attention-seeking," "trouble-making," "deviant," and "delinquent." These labels erode girls' pre-existing low self-esteem and create feelings of shame. Moreover, they distract from the underlying causes of girls' behaviors and intensify the alienation girls feel from school, peers, family, and themselves.

Instead, programs must reframe girls' behaviors as strategies for coping with the problems they face. "Coping with intense feelings of pain, violation, fear, powerlessness, and despair— in many cases without adequate support or even acknowledgment— some girls turn to alcohol and other drugs, silence, food, belligerence, perfectionism, manipulation, and other dangerous activities to survive" (Myhand & Kivel, 1998, 2). Programs must help girls move from just coping to survive to utilizing their experience, support, intelligence, and inner wisdom to develop strategies that lead to their personal success and growth. This means that programs must employ staff who are able and willing to address girls' behaviors from this position, leaving behind the diminishing and shameful labels that so often limit adults' abilities to see the resiliency and strengths of girls who live in high-risk situations.

7. Programs must address sexuality, including pregnancy and parenting.  
Often education around sexuality, when addressed at all, is limited to information about contraception and sexually transmitted infections. While this information is essential, girls need information that extends beyond the possible consequences of sexual acts. Girls also need information about reproductive anatomy and physiology, dealing with pregnancy and motherhood, and confronting the risk of HIV-AIDS. Girls need opportunities to identify their personal sexual limits and to rehearse communicating those limits to a potential partner. They need opportunities to explore media messages about relationships, body image, and gender role expectations. Moreover, girls need opportunities "to explore the meaning and value of sexual pleasure, the establishment and nurture of committed relationships, and the exploration of conflicting cultural messages about sexual behavior" (Valentine Foundation, 1990, 3-4). Further, programs should be inclusive of accurate, unbiased sexuality information that may be meaningful to adolescents who are lesbian or bisexual, who are questioning their sexual orientation, or who have engaged in same-sex sexual behaviors.

Clearly, a program must have at least one staff person who is uniquely skilled at communicating with adolescent girls around sexuality issues. This must go beyond a personal willingness to discuss sexuality to include the possession of accurate information, the ability to empathize, the appropriate use of humor, the appropriate use of self-disclosure, and the ability to objectively communicate the range of sexual values present within the greater community.
8. Programs must provide equitable educational and vocational opportunities. Often, girls involved with the juvenile justice system have not experienced academic success. Their experiences in school settings may have been fraught with educational bias, disciplinary measures, and sexual harassment. However, in a supportive, unbiased learning environment that incorporates a variety of learning styles, many girls can achieve a level of academic success not otherwise attainable. To be sure, girls involved with the juvenile justice system must receive educational opportunities that lead to a shared standard of achievement with girls and boys who are not involved in the juvenile justice system. Education in gender-specific programs must address the academic, social, and life-skill needs of adolescent girls. Academically, girls to a variety of workplaces can help girls see successful women in the workplace and provide that connection.

Although many girls in the juvenile justice system may not have experienced academic success, the recent research about girls and academics may still be relevant in shaping the educational planning of gender-specific programs. Much of this research addresses girls’ abilities in the areas of math and science. Relatedly, girls are far less likely to take advanced computer science courses, using computers “for word processing, the 1990s version of typing” (American Association of University Women, 1998). Girls who report enjoying math and science are more likely to have higher self-esteem, to feel better about their schoolwork, to have more faith in their career aspirations, and to have greater confidence about their appearance than girls who do not enjoy math and science (American Association of University Women, 1992). Therefore, it is important that girl-serving programs stress to girls the importance of taking math and science classes as well as advanced computer science courses. While many emphasize the relationship between girls’ participation in math and science and their future access to high-paying work, this concern should be secondary to the “conviction that girls are fundamentally entitled to develop as competent, intellectual individuals who are encouraged and well-prepared to pursue any areas of study and work they choose” (59). Further, the emphasis on math and science should not diminish the proven verbal skills of girls as these skills are also indispensable to girls’ capacities to achieve across subject areas, to think critically, and to make their voices heard (Phillips, 1998).

Programs should assure that all curricular materials offer girls positive images and balanced information that include the experiences of women and men from all walks of life. Girls should see women from various cultural backgrounds represented in books, videos, posters, and other resources utilized in classroom settings.
Gender-specific programs should be especially mindful of curricular materials. Programs should assure that all curricular materials offer girls positive images and balanced information that include the experiences of women and men from all walks of life. Girls should see women from various cultural backgrounds represented in the books, videos, posters, and other resources utilized in classroom settings.

Moreover, school curricula should deal with issues of power, gender politics, and violence against women. Arts-based curriculum that includes the visual arts, dance, drama, music, and/or creative writing can provide girls alternative ways of expression by encouraging them to find their voice and overcome patterns of silence or passivity. Finally, in addition to using competitive learning models, and because girls tend to value relationships, teachers should incorporate cooperative learning strategies into classroom practice in which problem solving is a group task (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1998; Phillips, 1998).

Linkages with teachers, school guidance personnel, nurses, and board members can further strengthen programs’ abilities to better serve girls in treatment and as they transition into the community (GAINS Center, 1998).

9. Programs must address the unique health needs of females, including nutritional concerns and regular physical activity.

It is essential that programs use a holistic approach in understanding and supporting girls’ health needs. The approach should include alcohol and drug treatment, when necessary, as well as mental health services that are sensitive to issues of gender. Mental health services must avoid the traditionally negative relationship between mental health treatment and females, often characterized by over-medication with psychotropic drugs. Food service personnel must consider the unique nutritional needs of women of child bearing age, integrating recent nutritional research into menu planning. Also, in light of the high rates of sexual abuse among this population, gynecological service providers must be especially sensitive to the emotional responses of girls to standard gynecological procedures. Whenever possible, those services should be provided by a woman.

Girls should also be encouraged to participate in regular physical activity and provided a reasonable range of exercises from which to choose. As often as possible, girls should be encouraged to take an active role in deciding their health treatments, selecting from several options when addressing a health-related concern. Finally, health staff should communicate regularly with program staff, while maintaining confidentiality, and be included in the overall treatment team (Maniglia, 1998).

10. Programs must nurture the spiritual lives of participants.

When planning for the inclusion of spirituality, program staff must look beyond institutionally religious experiences. Indeed, girls with religious backgrounds must be provided opportunities to participate in worship and religious discussions. However, spirituality may also be expressed in other ways through daily time for relaxation, journaling, poetry, or quiet time. Gardening and service projects, when defined by the girls, also provide ways to refreshen their spirits (Maniglia, 1998). Furthermore, program staff can cultivate spiritual awareness by addressing— through one-on-one conversations, circle groups, or other routes— girls’ connections to other living things and to the mystery of the greater Universe. Staff should also allow for girls to explore different spiritual practices and to ask questions, guiding girls to seek the answers themselves. Programs can strengthen this
component by utilizing resources that address spiritual practice in ways that affirm and support girls and women.

11. Programs should involve individual members of girls' families. Efforts must be made to include families in girls' programs and services. Building in structured family activities in which members interact and communicate openly is essential. Specifically, the mother-daughter relationship should be addressed. Of course, this component can be challenging. Many families are closed to outside help and/or lack adequate skills or resources to participate actively. However, for girls from physically or sexually violent family settings, it is essential to provide services as intensely for the family members as for the adolescent girls themselves. Similarly, staff should support multigenerational and extended family placements for girls who cannot return to their families of origin (GAINS Center, 1998, 15).
APPENDIX J: HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL
TO: Lue Turner

FROM: Janell Meldrem, IRB Administrator

PROJECT TITLE: Giving Voice to the Adolescent Experience of a Gender-Specific Treatment Program

RE: IRB ID No.: 03-158

APPROVAL DATE: October 22, 2002 REVIEW DATE: October 15, 2002

LENGTH OF APPROVAL: 1 year CONTINUING REVIEW DATE: October 21, 2003

TYPE OF APPLICATION: ☑ New Project ☐ Continuing Review

Your human subjects research project application, as indicated above, has been approved by the Iowa State University IRB #1 for recruitment of subjects not to exceed the number indicated on the application form. All research for this study must be conducted according to the proposal that was approved by the IRB. If written informed consent is required, the IRB-stamped and dated Informed Consent Document(s), approved by the IRB for this project only, are attached. Please make copies from the attached “masters” for subjects to sign upon agreeing to participate. The original signed Informed Consent Document should be placed in your study files. A copy of the Informed Consent Document should be given to the subject.

You may sign the assent/consent form at the in-person interview as you stated in your email of October 18, 2002.

If this study is sponsored by an external funding source, the original Assurance Certification/Identification form has been forwarded to the Office of Sponsored Programs Administration.

The IRB must conduct continuing review of research at intervals appropriate to the degree of risk, but not less than once per year. Renewal is the PI’s responsibility, but as a reminder, you will receive notices at least 60 days and 30 days prior to the next review. Please note the continuing review date for your study.

Any modification of this research project must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval, prior to implementation. Modifications include but are not limited to: changing the protocol or study procedures, changing investigators or sponsors (funding sources), including additional key personnel, changing the Informed Consent Document, an increase in the total number of subjects anticipated, or adding new materials (e.g., letters, advertisements, questionnaires). Any future correspondence should include the IRB identification number provided and the study title.

You must promptly report any of the following to the IRB: (1) all serious and/or unexpected adverse experiences involving risks to subjects or others; and (2) any other unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

HSRO/ORC 8/02
Your research records may be audited at any time during or after the implementation of your study. Federal and University policy require that all research records be maintained for a period of three (3) years following the close of the research protocol. If the principal investigator terminates association with the University before that time, the signed informed consent documents should be given to the Departmental Executive Officer to be maintained.

Research investigators are expected comply with the University’s Federal Wide Assurance, the Belmont Report, 45 CFR 46 and other applicable regulations prior to conducting the research. These documents are on the Human Subjects Research Office website or are available by calling (515) 294-4566.

Upon completion of the project, a Project Closure Form will need to be submitted to the Human Subjects Research Office to officially close the project.

cc: R. Werner-Wilson
APPENDIX K: SAMPLE PORTION OF TRANSCRIPT
Catie: Well, when I came I was really sad because I didn’t have any friends because I wasn’t like skinny or the right size or anything like that. And they just told me that that doesn’t matter, it’s what I have inside that matters to other people. And that you realize that once you go down the road and get more acquainted, especially in my years now that I’m in middle school and high school you’ll realize that people start to get more mature and they don’t judge you by how you look and stuff they judge you by who you are. And I realize that.

So that was the thing that really connected with these issues. [yah] All of these things you told me that were helpful for you about progress, and that you learned in progress especially about it’s the inside that matters, I just have to be myself…were those things that you thought you got from the other girls or from the leaders or both?

Catie: I would say more toward the girls. Of course the leaders had already faced it, but I mean it was a while back and time has changed since then, and they had just faced it or are facing it now. And so they were able to tell me that even though it may seem like you need to get everything that they have, but if you just believe in yourself and know that you got yourself inside you and that everyone will eventually like you for who you are, you will make friends more. And I realize that now because that’s really who your friends are, the ones who actually know who I am. There are people that I talk to but they really don’t know who I am so they’re just like “whatever”. That’s kind of what I realized from them. And I mean none of them are like perfect either, I mean they’re just normal kids. And that’s what I’ve noticed about myself too, it’s that I don’t need to be perfect I just need to be my own self.

L: Those are some great things to learn. Anything else about how really helped you connect and face those issues?

Catie: Well the only other thing is that I had a really bad problem of teasing people with diseases. And that kind of tied in with it too. Yah, I mean they may look funny and everything but it’s the same thing, it’s who they are inside. And there was one girl here that had a disease, I can’t remember what it was, but she had a slow processing of growing and probably would never really mature, and they helped me realize that it doesn’t matter, it’s just who she is.

L: So you kind of found yourself making fun of and doing things to people that you hated people doing to you? [yah] So that was kind of like a..[it was like Hello][laugh] A Hello moment? [yah] Anything else about how progress was able to help you face these issues or look at them differently?

Catie: Not really. In otherwise by helping me plan again in the future about like AIDS and stuff like that, but you learn over time too. It was just kind of review of what you need to know in the future.
L: What would you say you "got" out of Progress?

Catie: Umm, well, I got, I would say more of the things I got out of it was coping with things. And with them teaching me how to cope with things it really got me to know who I am and what everything around me is and that I just need a... I mean, everyday, you're going to get at least 1 thing that's gonna make you angry and you just need to cope with it 'cause if you don't cope with it you're gonna back up all this other trash and stuff and it's gonna get bigger and bigger and bigger. But if you keep going with your life it's gonna be a nice steady stream.

L: So that is what you would say you "got" out of Progress? [yah]

L: Anything else?

Catie: I would say that was the biggest thing ever.

L: It sounds like from talking with you that you really did get a lot out of Progress [yah]. But you have to know that some girls don't get very much out of it at all. And so I was wondering how do you make sense of it that you got a lot out of it but some girls don't get anything?

Catie: Well that falls under the play of if they're really wanting to know anything about it. Like I mean there's...some girls are just like, "Whatever, I'm gonna do whatever I want. I'm just gonna come here so that I can get it over with and I'm not gonna learn anything, just be my normal self, I'm not gonna change at all". But then there's girls that really...they put their foot down and they step in it and they want to do this and they know they wanna change and they really wanna be a better person. And I think that's how I was. I knew I wanted to be another person/a better person.

L: Well, maybe another person [yah]. You wanted to be a different you.

Catie: Yah, a different part of myself. But I mean, it really falls into, if you really wanna do what they are doing here, 'cause I mean, if you're just gonna lay back and be a bump on the pickle, or whatever that saying is, umm you can't...you're not gonna learn anything. But if you really get in there and get to the juicy part, I guess, you're gonna learn something.

L: Is that how you feel you were?

Catie: Yah. I think I really put my foot down and said "I'm gonna do this" and get it over, well, not get it over with, but just knowing that I'm gonna get down and dirty and know I'm gonna get all this done!, learn something new, so that I can get on with my life.