



The Students
Commission
Centre of Excellence for
Youth Engagement

SHARING THE STORIES



Power to Girls: The Girl Project Report



May, 2017



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Youth Engagement



Contents

Contents.....	2
Executive Summary	3
Sharing the Stories Background	4
Process and Tools to Date	5
Organization of the Report	5
Demographics	6
Quantitative Results.....	8
Families and Caregivers Module	8
Healthy, Close Relationships Module.....	11
Youth Engagement Qualities Module	13
Conclusion.....	18



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Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to gain a greater understanding of how youth are engaged in the Power to Girls' Girl Project program. The quantitative survey results in this report are based on a single time point of data collection and will serve as a baseline from which to examine changes through the course of the program.

The Girl Project used three survey modules to examine the qualities and outcomes of the program:

1. The Families and Caregivers tool examines the extent to which youth have families and guardians equipped to help them thrive.
2. The Healthy, Close Relationships tool examines the extent to which youth form and maintain healthy, close relationships.
3. The Youth Engagement Qualities tool examines the extent to which youth participating in a program are experiencing key qualities of engagement.

In addition, The Girl Project used a custom survey comprised of five open-ended questions to examine youth experience in the program.

Twenty to twenty-one young people from the Girl Project completed surveys. Overall, young people in the Girl Project experienced high quality engagement in the program. According to participants, the Girl Project provides a space for youth to feel heard, respected, and welcomed. Youth in the Girl Project most highly rated the following qualities¹:

- Participants feel respected by the program staff (4.87) and feel safe in the program (4.87).
- Participants feel happy to be in the program (4.67).
- Participants feel like they belong in the program (4.62).

Youth in the Girl Project report feeling belonging and connection in their families and schools, and feel like they have support from their caregivers. Their most highly rated statements are about these connections:

- Participants feel connected to their parents or guardians (4.36)
- Participants feel a great sense of connection to their schools (4.50)

Overall, young people in the Girl Project rated the closeness of their relationships less highly. Interestingly, they report the closeness of their relationships with people in the program higher than their connection with friends and peers. Their experience of lower levels of connection to peers than the aggregate may suggest that the program can provide positive space for young people to work on peer relationships, find folks to give them support when they need it, and forge lasting, close, and caring connections.

¹ The survey statements were scaled from 1 to 5 (1=Strongly Disagree and 5=Strongly Agree) and the average of their responses is reported in parentheses.

Sharing the Stories Background

The Students Commission of Canada (SCC) is the lead organization for the Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement (CEYE). CEYE is a network of youth, organizations, and academics focused on generating evidence and best practices on youth engagement programs, initiatives, and interventions. CEYE has developed a youth engagement definition for the Canadian context as well as a comprehensive youth engagement framework.

In 2011, the Students Commission of Canada identified a consistent gap in the capacity of Canadian youth-serving organizations to effectively tell their story. In fact, most organizations did not have the capacity or resources to rigorously evaluate their programs or compare the effectiveness of their programs with other organizations. As a result, there was a lack of Canadian evidence for youth engagement programs, initiatives, and interventions. Through support and funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the SCC launched the Sharing the Stories (StS) research and evaluation platform. StS includes reliable and valid quantitative and qualitative evaluation tools. More importantly, it includes a team of coaches and analysts who support organizations to effectively tell the story of their programs.

StS is based on a membership model. Each organization pays a relatively small fee to subscribe to the platform. They also agree to pool their data into an anonymized database so that comparisons can be made across programs using similar evaluation tools, processes, and measures. StS now has over 200 unique programs and organizations that subscribe to the platform.

Sharing the Stories Vision

Sharing the Stories is focused on building an anonymized database of information for youth, the youth sector, policy-makers, and funders. The information gleaned from the database supports:

1. **Youth Voice:** StS provides a platform for young people to have their voices heard in the programs and initiatives that work with them.
2. **Youth Sector:** StS provides a platform for organizations to learn about what's working in their programs and what might need to be improved.
3. **Policy-Makers:** StS identifies trends in the youth-serving sector and shares them with policy-makers so that policy can be informed by evidence.
4. **Funders:** The evidence generated from StS informs funders on the effectiveness of their programs.

Sharing the Stories is organized around reporting on change on Three Levels using CEYE's Youth Engagement Framework.

- The individual level focuses on reporting on changes (positive and negative) for individual youth and adult allies.
- The social level focuses on reporting on changes (positive and negative) in relationships. For example: how youth interact with other youth or how youth interact with other adult allies.
- The system level focuses on reporting on changes (positive and negative) for programs, organizations, and policy-makers. For example, how youth influence program design or how youth influence government policy.

Process and Tools to Date

The Girl Project used three *Stepping Up* quantitative survey modules to discover trends and outcomes of the program. The Girl Project chose to use the Families and Caregivers, the Youth Engagement Qualities, and the Healthy, Close Relationships modules.

The Families and Caregivers tool was developed to examine the extent to which youth have families and guardians equipped to help them thrive. The Healthy, Close Relationships tool was developed to examine the extent to which youth form and maintain healthy, close relationships.

The Youth Engagement Qualities tool was developed to examine the extent to which youth participating in a program are experiencing key qualities of engagement. In addition, The Girl Project used a custom survey comprised of five open-ended questions to examine youth experience in the program.

Program	Stepping Up Modules	Other Sharing the Stories Tools
The Girl Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Families and Caregivers Module (20)Healthy, Close Relationships Module (20)Youth Engagement Qualities Module (21)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Custom open-ended survey (19)

Organization of the Report

This report will be broken down into five sections. The sections will be as follows:

Demographics: This section will give an overview and breakdown of the various demographics who took part in the program. The information in this section will be displayed as an infographic to allow for a visual representation of the data.

Families and Caregivers Module: This section is a quantitative analysis of how youth answered the family and caregivers module and is supported by the use of graphs to allow for a visual representation of the data.

Healthy, Close Relationships Module: This section is a quantitative analysis of how youth answered the healthy, close relationships module and is supported by the use of graphs to allow for a visual representation of the data.

Youth Engagement Qualities Module: This section is a quantitative analysis of how youth answered the youth engagement qualities module and is supported by the use of graphs to allow for a visual representation of the data.

Custom Survey - Qualitative Analysis: Power to Girls collected qualitative data through a survey that asked five open-ended questions. The responses have been coded according to theme and sub-theme. Themes and sub-themes will be supported by direct quotations from participants.

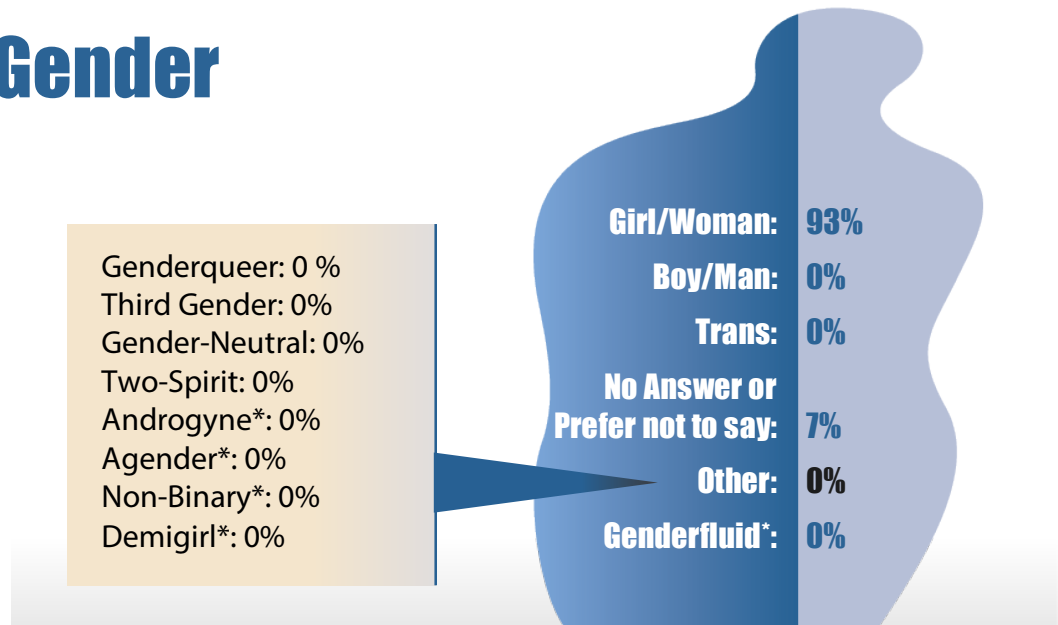
Demographics

12.3

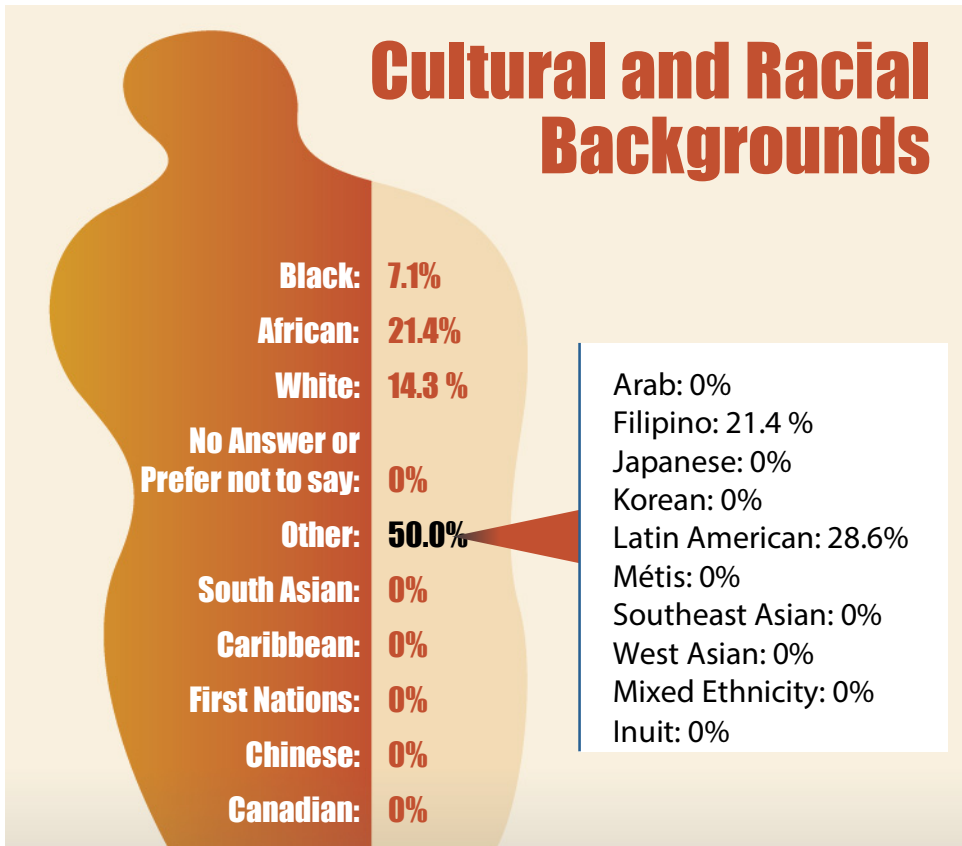
Average Age

This section outlines the demographic breakdown of the Power to Girl's program: The Girl Project

Gender

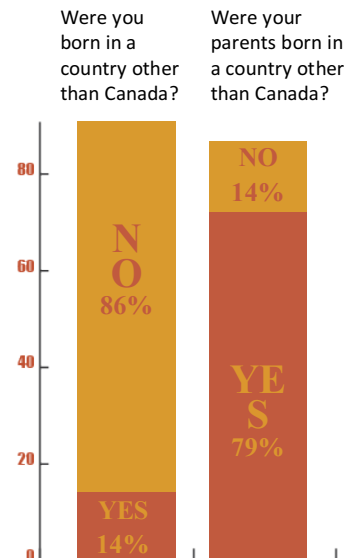


Cultural and Racial Backgrounds

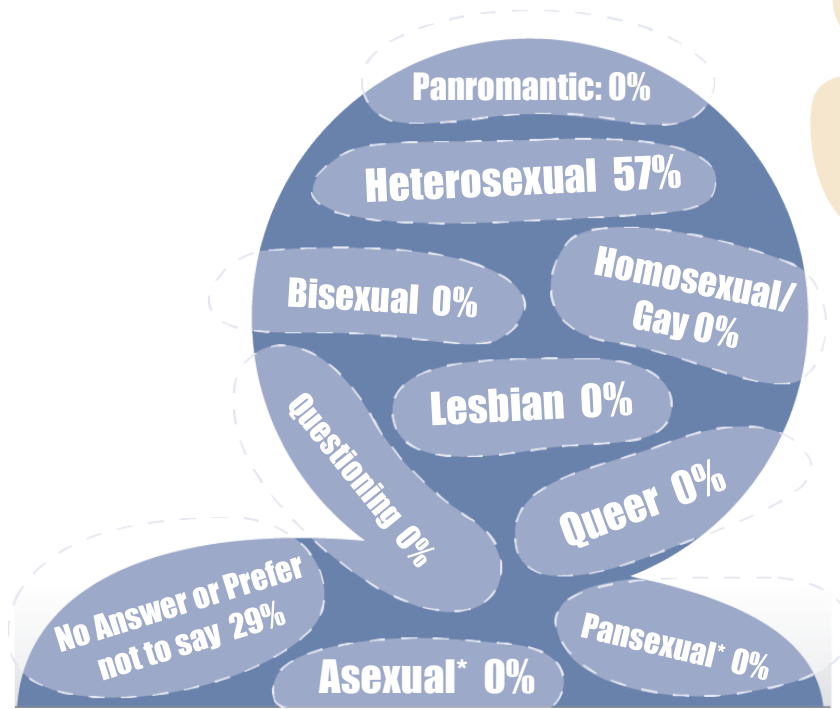


Country of Origin

Participants were asked two questions to determine their country of origin.



Sexual Orientation



79%
English

0%
French

43%
Speak another language

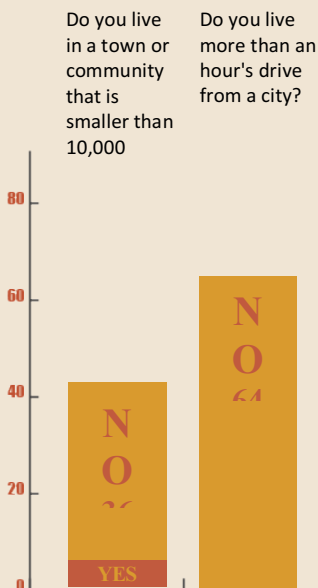
Amaharic 0%, Cantonese 0%, Arabic 0%, Tamil 0%, Bengali 0%, Tagalog 17%, Spanish 25%, Urdu 0%, First Nations Language 0%, Chinese 0%, Somali 0%, Patois 8%, Creole 0%, Twi 18%, Indonesian 0%, Mandarin 0%, Shona 0%, Broken French 0%, American Sign Language 0%, Persian 0%, Dari 0%, Farsi 0%, Vietnamese 8%, Lingala 0%, Tibetan 0%, Polish 8%, Italian 8%

Languages spoken at home



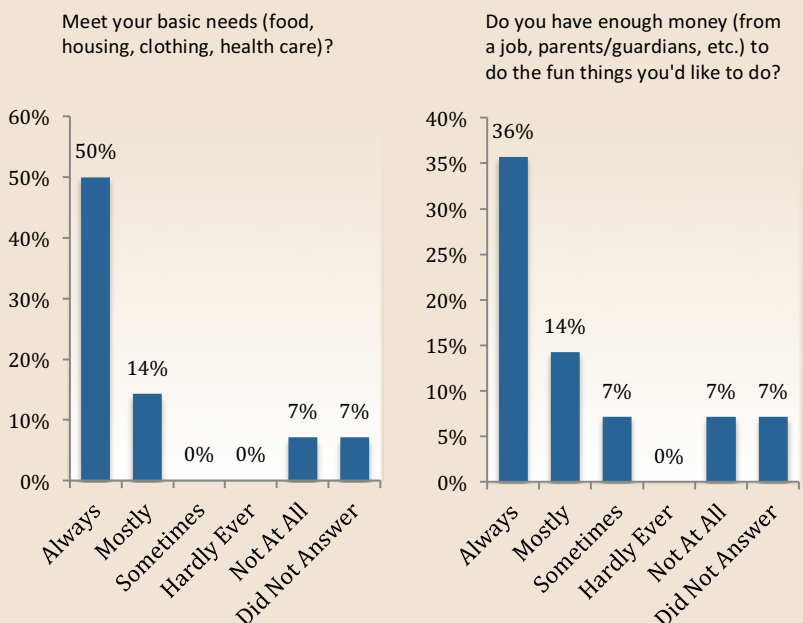
Rural or Urban

Participants were asked two questions to determine whether they lived in rural or urban areas.



Money for Basic Needs & Fun Activities

Finally, participants were asked the degree to which they had enough money to meet their basic needs and participate in fun things



Quantitative Results

Twenty to twenty-one participants filled out the 3 modules used to evaluate the program. Each module consists of 10-20 questions grouped into statistically reliable sets. Reliability is a measure of internal consistency of a set of questions. In other words, each set of questions measures the different aspects of what is being studied.

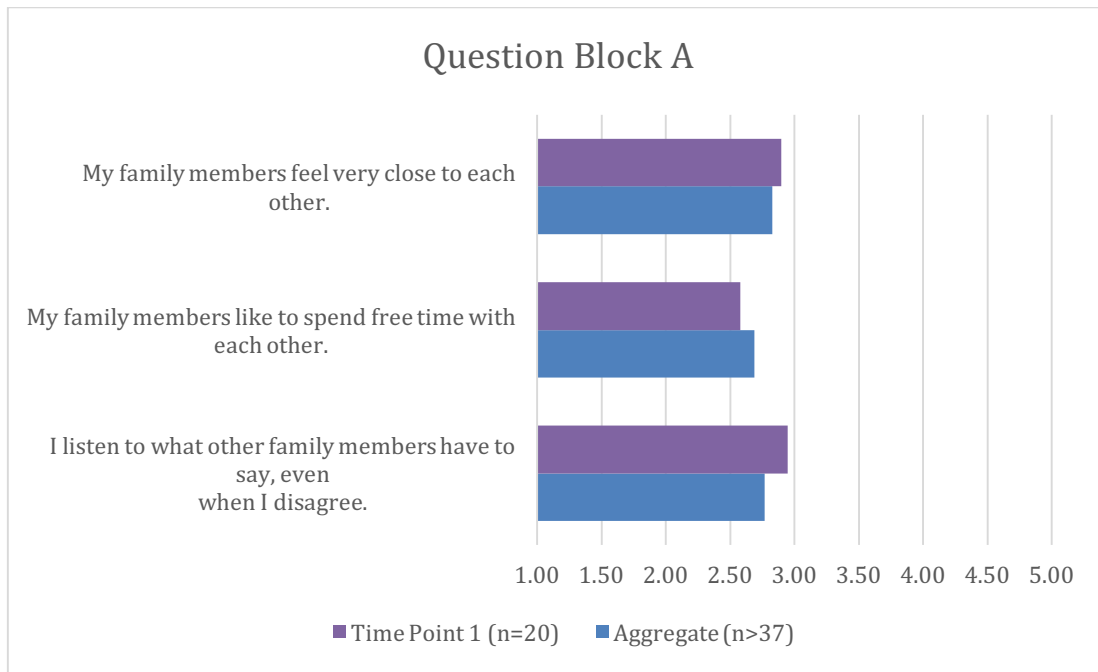
All of the questions within the 3 modules used a 5-point scale to determine the level to which participants agreed or disagreed with the statements:

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

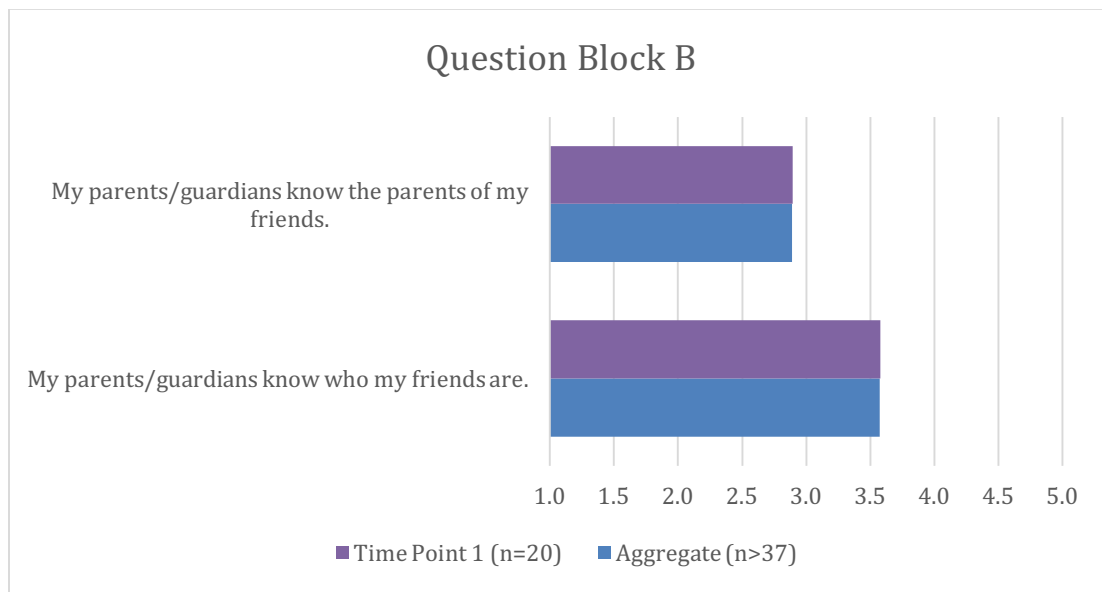
The data is illustrated through the use of graphs and key findings are highlighted to give readers a starting point from which to reflect on the data. The Girl Project data is graphed alongside the *Sharing the Stories* aggregate data. While the aggregate dataset of youth from other programs can provide a useful comparison to contextualize the results, please note that due to the small sample size, comparisons have not been tested statistically. Therefore, the differences between results from youth in the Girl Project and youth from other programs may or may not be statistically significant.

Families and Caregivers Module

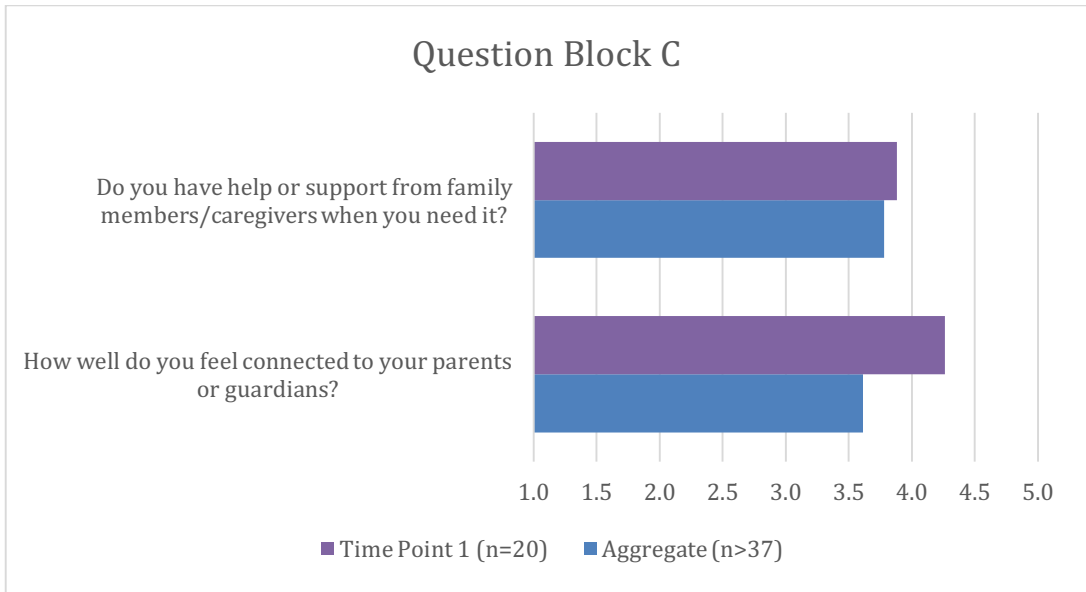
Young people in the Girl Project completed the Families and Caregivers module to examine the extent to which their families and guardians are equipped to help them thrive. The graph below illustrates young people's responses alongside the *Sharing the Stories* aggregate values, which gives context to the data. This particular module has only been filled out by 37 participants outside of those in the Girl Project, so the comparison between the Girl Project and the aggregate should be interpreted with caution due to the small sample size.



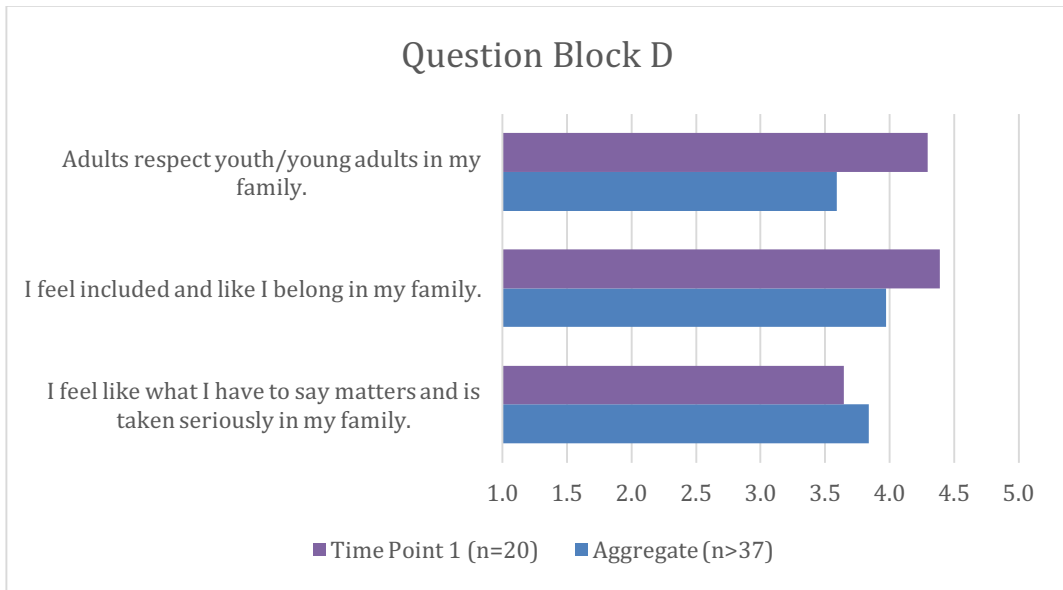
Takeaway: While scores seem to indicate that young people in the Girl Project do not feel particularly close to their families, spend a significant time together, or listen to their families even when they disagree, their scores are relatively close to the aggregate. Although the aggregate is a small sample size, this seems to indicate that Girl Project participants feel similar levels of closeness to their family members as youth in other programs.



Takeaway: The average responses to these statements were also similar to the aggregate values. This seems to indicate that Girl Project participants think that their family members know of and about their friends to a similar extent as youth in other programs.



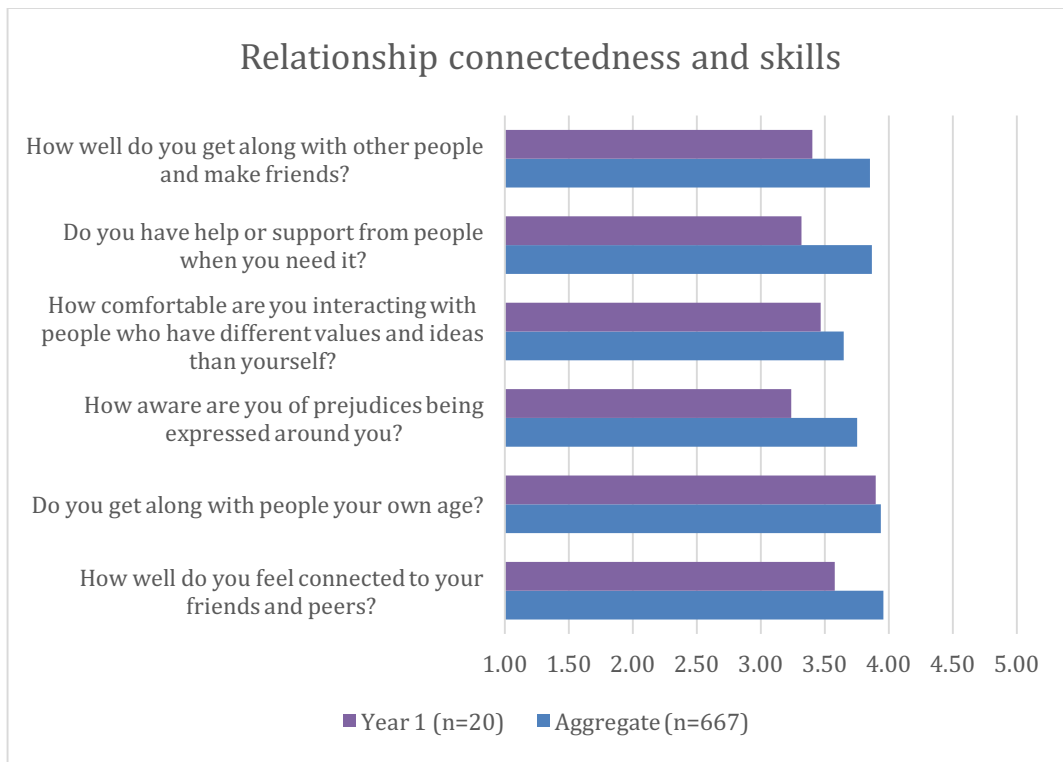
Takeaway: Girl Project participants ranked their feelings of support from and connection to their parents very highly with both statements having average values above 4. In addition, these values seem to indicate that Girl Project participants feel more connected to their parents than youth in other programs. Due to the small sample sizes of the program and the aggregate, this comparison is not statistically significant.



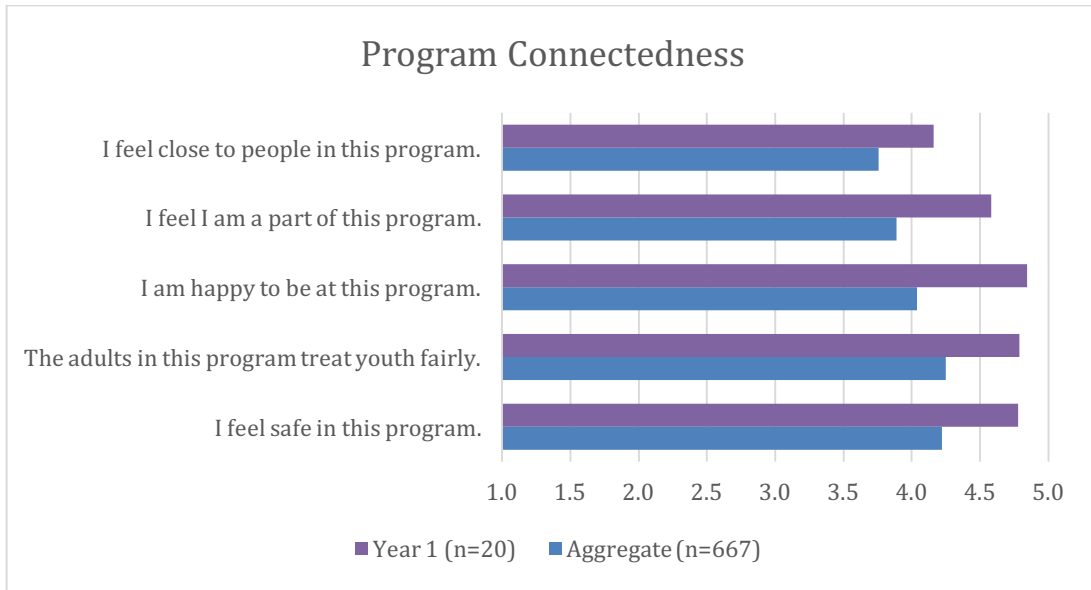
Takeaway: Girl Project participants felt that they really belonged and felt included in their families (4.39). This result was much higher than the aggregate, which would seem to indicate Girl Project participants felt more included in their families than youth in other programs. However, their scores regarding being taken seriously are lower than the aggregate, as well as their other two response scores.

Healthy, Close Relationships Module

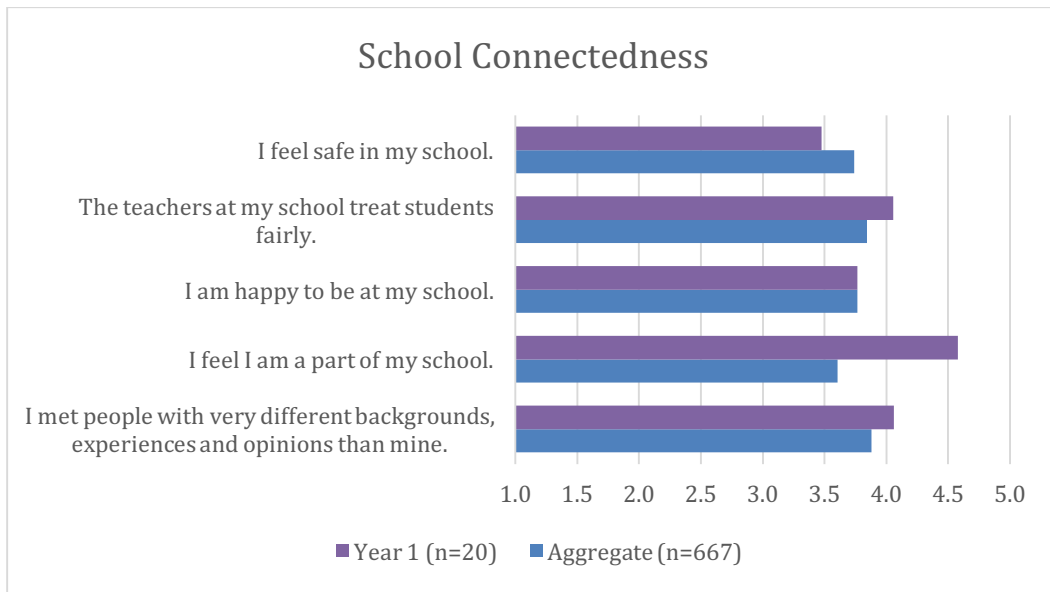
The Girl Project selected the Healthy, Close Relationship module to examine the extent to which youth form and maintain healthy, close relationships. The average of the responses of the participants are graphed below alongside the *Sharing the Stories* aggregate values to give context to the data. This particular module has been filled out by more than 600 participants so the aggregate is therefore a good baseline for comparison.



Takeaway: Overall, participants in the Girl Project report feeling less connected to those around them than the aggregate. In particular, participants in the Girl Project do not feel aware of the prejudices being expressed around them (3.24) as compared to the aggregate (3.75) and do not feel they have help or support from people when they need it (3.32) as compared to the aggregate (3.86).



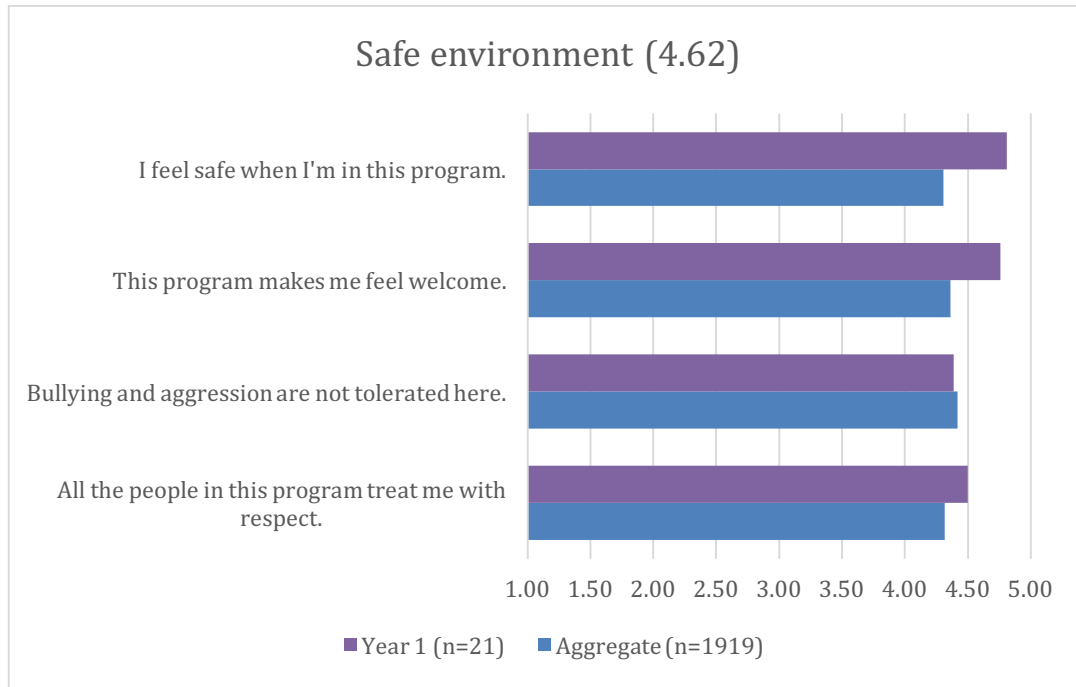
Takeaway: Participants in the Girl Project report a high degree of connectedness to the program. Their scores surpass the aggregate in all categories, with being happy at the program scoring the highest at 4.84.



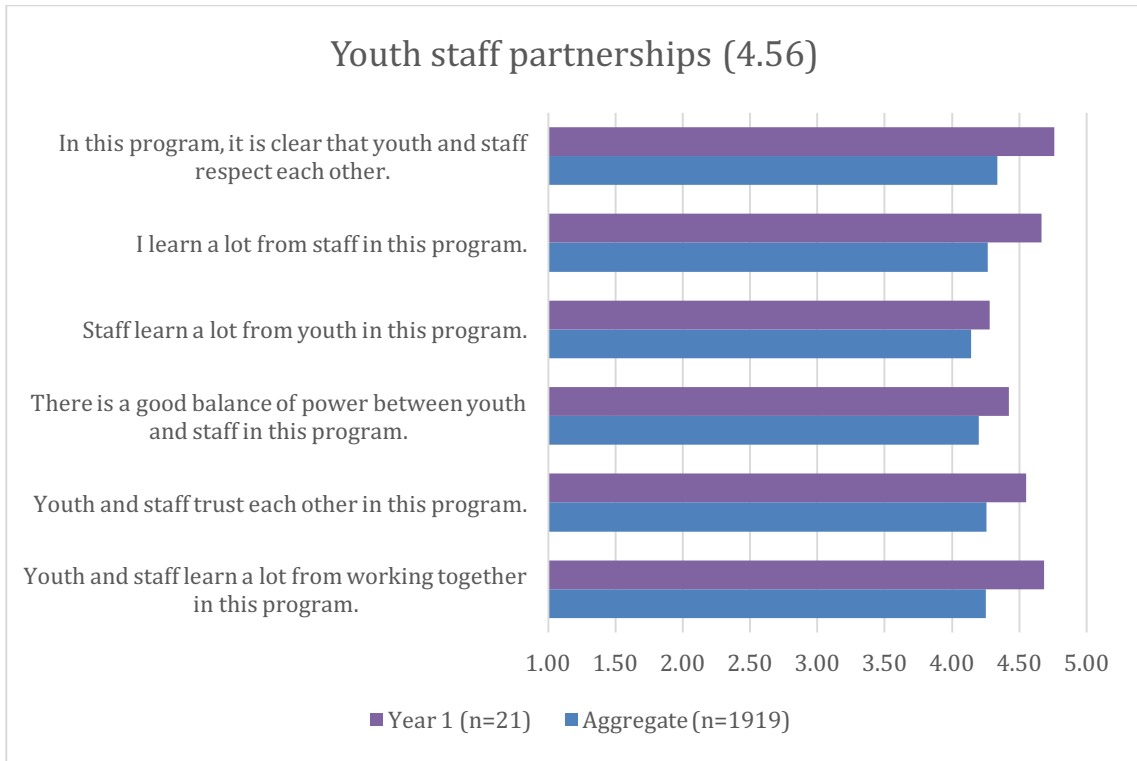
Takeaway: The average responses of School Connectedness seem to indicate participants have a positive connection to their schools. Most of the values were greater than the aggregate. The largest difference between the Girl Project and the aggregate results occurred with respect to the statement “I feel I am a part of my school”; the Girl Project felt more part of their school (4.58) than the aggregate (3.60). This difference may not be statistically significant.

Youth Engagement Qualities Module

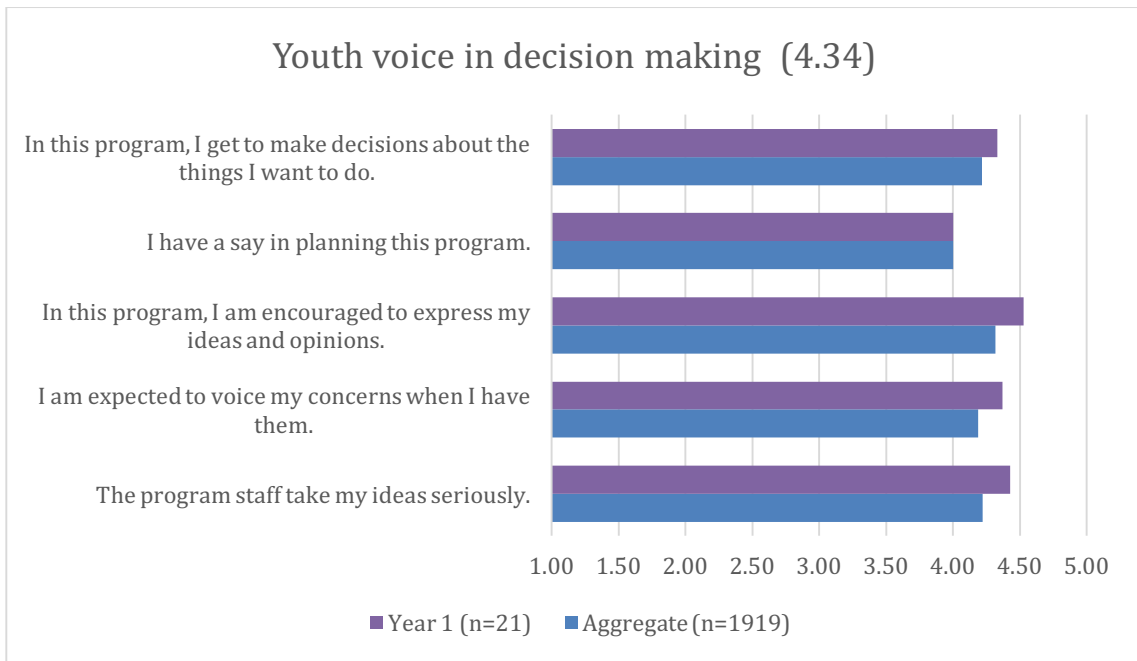
Youth in the Girls Project completed the Youth Engagement Qualities module, which examines the extent to which they are experiencing key qualities of engagement. The average of the responses of the participants are graphed below alongside the *Sharing the Stories* aggregate values to give context to the data. This particular module has been filled out by significantly more participants than the previous module (n=1919) and the aggregate is therefore a better baseline for comparison. However, due to the small sample from the Girls Project, comparisons cannot be statistically tested.



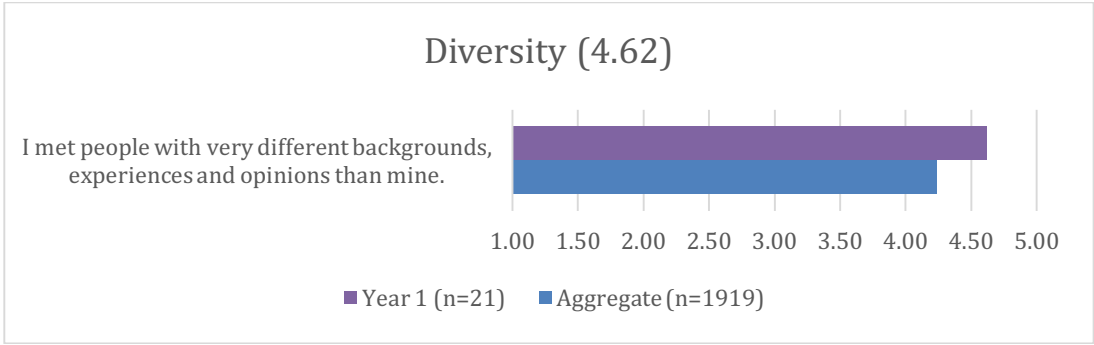
Takeaway: In general, participants in the Girl Project report higher scores than the aggregate scores in regards to feeling safe and welcome in the program. Participants feel they are treated with respect.



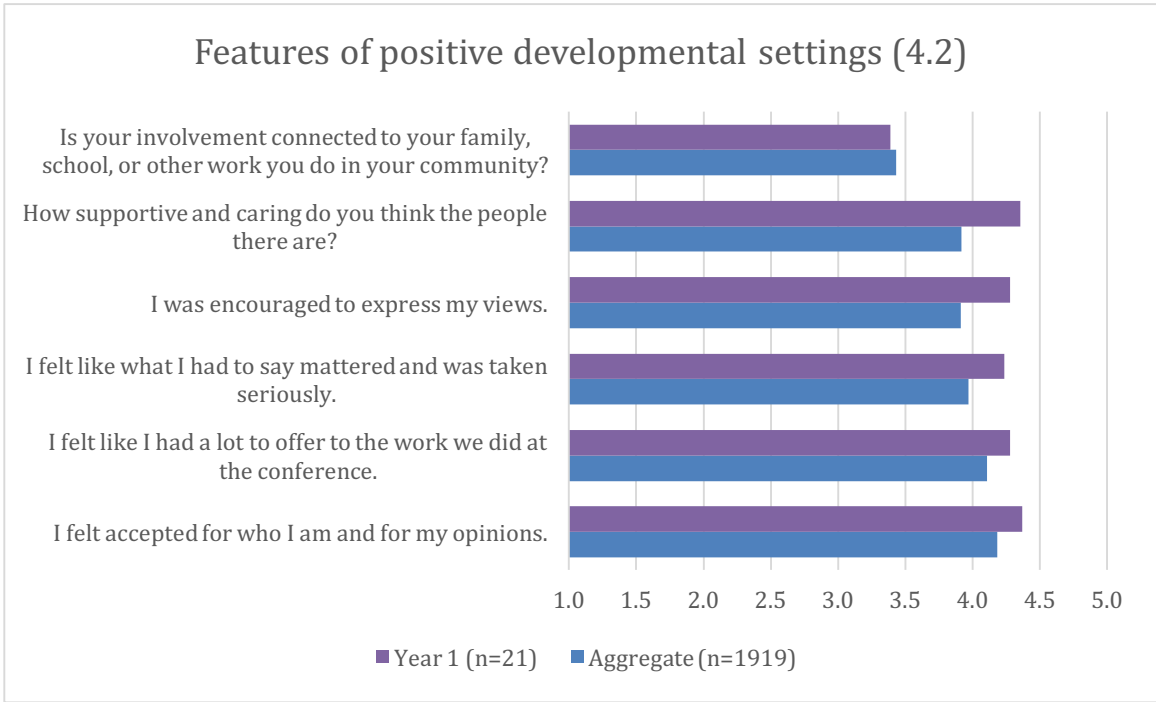
Takeaway: All of the statements in youth-staff partnerships had average values greater than 4 and greater than the aggregate. These results indicate that youth and staff respect and trust each other, learn from one another, and share power in this program.



Takeaway: Participants in the Girl Project feel they have a say in the planning of the program and in making decisions about things they want to do. They feel that their opinions are encouraged and matter. Scores in youth voice in decision making are equal to or greater than the aggregate on all measures.



Takeaway: Participants in the Girl Project feel they have the opportunity to engage diverse populations through this program, with a score slightly higher than the aggregate.



Takeaway: Overall, participants in the Girl Project feel accepted and important. They score this program close to or above the aggregate for all positive developmental settings measures. They feel supported and cared for by the people in the program (4.35), with this score having the greatest disparity with the aggregate (3.92).

Qualitative Analysis

Custom Survey Review

This report includes an analysis of results from a custom survey with 19 youth. The custom survey provided an opportunity for youth to reflect on their experiences, share ideas for improving the program, and share impacts that participation has had on their lives. The custom survey was comprised of the following questions:

- How has this program affected you?
- What have you learned about yourself through this program?
- What have you achieved through the program? Or one thing you hope to achieve after this program?
- What will you do with the information you learned for the future?
- What would you like to change about the program? Or what is one thing you would like the program to include?

The qualitative results have been analysed to identify outcomes at the individual, social and systemic levels as well as to identify areas for program growth and improvement. Outcomes are the impacts of the program on youth and on the program and organization. Below are the results of our qualitative analysis of the Girl Project.

Program Challenges/Improvements

Overall participants reported being very happy with the program. However, some made suggestions for program improvement.

Changing length/duration of program (2)

Two participants suggested the program last longer.

I would like to change the timing and make it end at 6:00 because I feel so confident, and I feel like if they are my sisters and I get to learn more about each other and I love the activities that we do.

Add new program elements (8)

Two youth suggested more art be included, two suggested more field trips, and one suggested including more games. One suggestion seemed of particular importance:

I would like this program to include why we shouldn't commit suicide because of what other people say about us.

Outcomes: Individual Level

Most notably, youth repeatedly shared that this program made them feel more powerful, more confident and more beautiful.

Personal growth – confidence and self-esteem (41)

While it was expressed in many different ways, the Girl Project participants agreed enthusiastically that the program helped increase their levels of confidence and self-esteem. Below are a few examples of their words:

This program affected me because it made me feel good about myself.

I am unique and special in my own way and that I am pretty.

I have learned that I can do more things than I imagined.

This program has helped me gain more self-confidence and I feel like whenever I am asked a question in class I feel confident.

I learned that I shouldn't hate my body for the way it is cuz there's nothing wrong for the way I am. As well that I should embrace my weirdness more and come to this program more often.

Personal growth – leadership (3)

Three youth specifically identified that this program taught them that they should strive towards being leaders.

I learned that I shouldn't judge myself. Also, that I should be a leader not a follower.

Outcomes: Social Level

Sharing knowledge with others (7)

Participants in the Girl Project identified that they intend to share their new learning and skills with those around them, including both peers and children they may have in the future.

I will do the same, telling people that your beautiful and strong and don't think the other way.

I would talk to other youth and tell them to stop listening to people and social media and be your own person

With the information I learned from this program that I will do in the future is that I'll tell my children to always be themselves no matter what.

Conclusion

There were clear positive findings about the qualities of the Girl Project, young people's perceptions of support from their families and caregivers, and the health and closeness of young people's relationships. The Girl Project supports participants to develop confidence and self-esteem, and inspires them to share what they've learned with others.

Overall, the voices found within the data in the report illustrate that youth experienced high quality engagement in the program. The Girl Project provides a space for youth to feel heard, respected, and welcome. Youth in the Girl Project report feeling belonging and connection in their families and feel like they have support from their caregivers. According to youth participants, there is room to develop closer relationships and connections with their families, as well as with friends and peers. Their experience of lower levels of connection to peers than the aggregate may suggest that the program can provide positive space for young people to work on peer relationships, find folks to give them support when they need it, and forge lasting, close, and caring connections.

Additional opportunities for youth to share their stories of the Girl Project will offer a deeper examination of the individual, social, and system level changes that may be occurring as a result of the program and the process. This baseline report provides a starting point for comparison as young people continue through the program.

References

Lawford, H. L., Ramey, H. L., Rose-Krasnor, L., & Proctor, A. S. (2012). Predictors of adolescent successful development after an exchange: The importance of activity qualities and youth input. *Journal of Adolescence, 35*, 1381-1391.