Summer 7-30-2010

Leadership Experiences of Adolescent Girls in a Girl Scouts After School Program: A Phenomenological Approach

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LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN A GIRL SCOUTS AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH

by

Cyndi A. Munson

A THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of
The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Science

Major: Leadership Education

Under the Supervision of Professor Gina S. Matkin

Lincoln, Nebraska

August, 2010
The purpose of this qualitative, interview-based study was to explore the leadership experiences of adolescent girls attending low income schools involved in a Girl Scouts after school program. This research study specifically focused on a Girl Scouts after school programs in a Midwest city. The qualitative study was based on insights obtained from adolescent girls who participated in a Girl Scouts after school program during the 2009-2010 academic year. Participants were individuals actively involved in a Girl Scouts after school program and supplemental activities provided by the program since August 2009. The participants’ ages and grade levels varied between 12 and 15 years of age and 6th and 9th grades for the 2009-2010 academic year. Participants were asked about their experiences in a Girl Scouts after school program through semi-structured, face to face interviews. These interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Each participant’s experience is described by their self-chosen pseudonym.

To explore the leadership experiences of adolescent girls in a Girl Scouts after school program four research questions were developed for the study: How do girls describe their experiences, activities, and interests before joining this Girl Scouts after school program; How do girls describe their experiences, activities, and interests since joining this Girl Scouts after school program; How do girls describe their leadership
philosophies since coming to this Girl Scouts after school program; and How do girls describe how this Girl Scouts after school program has impacted their lives? The study found that the participants describe a positive experience with a Girl Scouts after school program. A Girl Scouts after school program has given each participant insight on leadership, self-awareness, future goals, and involvement. Practitioners who develop after school programs can use the information found in this study to continue creating and providing opportunities for engaging and positive experiences for adolescent girls.
Dedication

This work is dedicated to all of the young women who aspire to be leaders in their schools and communities to make a difference in the lives of others. May you never give up your passions and may all of your dreams come true! Also, to the future graduate students in the Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication Department – good luck on your graduate school and thesis writing journey! You can do it!
Acknowlegments

As I conclude my graduate school journey, I have many people to thank for their support, encouragement and guidance. I could not have accomplished this task alone and so I am grateful for each of you.

Thank you to God. Thank you for providing me opportunities that I could not fathom and to find success in each of them. Most of all, thank you for placing each of the following individuals in my life as they continue to inspire me to be a better daughter, sister, friend, student, and woman. I am so blessed.

Thank you to each of the seven girls that participated in this research study. Thank you for your willingness to be open and share your experiences. Know that your insights go beyond this project, but that they may help other girls that are developing into young women and realizing their potential for their life as you all are.

Thank you to the local Girl Scouts council. Thank you for allowing me to conduct my research with your programs. Also, for giving me the opportunity to make an impact on girls’ lives as a volunteer and staff member. I am forever grateful for the Girl Scouts organization and its mission for girls that is being shared throughout our country and around the world.

Thank you to Dennis Munson, my dad (I am holding back tears as I write this). Thank you for the unconditional love you continue to give to Sandra and me. All that I have accomplished in my 25 years of life is thanks to you believing in me every step of the way. As I share with you my goals and aspirations, you assure me that no dream is too big or far from reach. Because you believe I am capable of anything, I will continue
to pursue each of my dreams, new and old. I will never give up as you haven’t. Your sacrifices have never gone unnoticed. You are the epitome of a father who loves his daughters so much that he would give up anything for their happiness. Thank you for loving me so much that you would give me up to the Cornhusker State and let me move 525 miles away from you to pursue my educational goals. No matter how far I go, your support, encouragement, and love are always with me. I love you so much, Daddy.

Thank you to Sandra, my baby sister. Thank you for always believing in me and having faith in what I am doing in my life. You have shown me how to love and care for others in a way that is unexplainable. You have taught me to laugh and have fun with life. Most importantly, you have taught me how to be a true role model and leader. You continue to inspire me to be the best woman that I can be. I know you have greatness ahead of you. Continue to work hard and put your all into everything. I am so very proud of you. I love you!

Thank you to Dr. Gina Matkin, my advisor, Dr. Jim King, and Dr. Lisa Pennisi, my committee members. Dr. Matkin, thank you for your sweet spirit that shines through each and every day as you teach and advise students. Your guidance has been impeccable. Thank you for always being so kind to me and being the most authentic person I know. Dr. King, thank you for making me feel so welcome in the state of Nebraska and on campus. From the moment I met you, you have always gone out of your way to help me. Not only do you keep me on my toes, but you keep me holding on to my positive attitude. Dr. Pennisi, thank you for your willingness to always help each of your students. You bring so much warmth and calmness to the classroom, especially when some of us (mostly me) were stressed about all that was going on in our lives. To each of
you, thank you for sharing your wisdom with me in order to strengthen my skills as a student, especially in writing and presenting. My interest in research has grown because of each of you. Thank you!

Thank you to the faculty and staff in the Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication Department. Thank you for your wisdom, support, encouragement, and guidance for the past two years. Thank you for being my “home away from home”.

Thank you to Reshell Ray and the entire staff in Student Involvement on East Campus. Reshell, you have been a mentor to me in so many aspects of my life and I am so thankful that our lives crossed paths. Thank you for your constant support and encouragement during my time in Student Involvement. I have learned so much about myself and how to help others during my time spent there. I already miss it so much!

Thank you to all have of my classmates and friends I have made here in Husker Nation. Thank you for your friendship and making my time in Nebraska very enjoyable. A special thanks to those across campuses that have become some of my very best friends, especially David, Molly, Jay, and Ryan. Also, to my fellow Huskers outside of the state of Nebraska, Ali and Mandy. I am looking forward to football season. GO BIG RED!

Thank you to Emily Griffin Overocker. Thank you for your dedication to ensuring that I live a successful life. Thank you for taking the time to invest in my life by allowing me to share with you all that I aspire to be. Graduate school became more than just a thought when you helped it become a reality by bringing me to Nebraska and introducing me to possibilities I could only dream of. Thank you for believing in my dreams just as
much as I do. You are truly a woman of greatness and I only hope to be half as motivated, intelligent, and thoughtful as you are. I am so glad to call you mentor and friend.

Thank you to the administration, faculty, and staff at the University of Central Oklahoma. Thank you for exposing me to great people and experiences that prepared me for this journey. I am so grateful to have attended an institution that is equipped with highly motivating, inspiring, and most of all, caring administrators that continuously encourage me to be the successful woman that I am meant to be. Thank you for all you have done, continue to do, and will do in the future. GO BRONCHOS!

To all of my friends outside of the state of Nebraska, especially Oklahoma and New York City. Thank you for your unending support, encouragement, and love during this time in my life. Leaving Oklahoma to attend graduate school was difficult, but you all made it easier by showing your support through phone calls, text messages, emails, Facebook messages, letters, and even visits to Nebraska. You all will never know how much each of you mean to me and how grateful I am to have your friendship. No matter how many miles or states we are apart, the strength of our friendship will keep us close. Thank you for always having confidence in me and what I aspire to achieve in my life.

And last, but absolutely not least, thank you to Adam. Thank you for encouraging me to “just keep swimming” when I was overwhelmed by the stresses that come with graduate school, thesis writing, and work. Your genuine interest in my passions and my work is uncanny and for that I am grateful. Your continuous support has made this process so much easier. Thank you for your understanding, kind heart, and ability to
listen when I needed you to the most. You have made me so happy and I feel like the luckiest girl in the world! ILSFB.
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Chapter I

Introduction

Some adolescent girls are feeling lost and insecure in their own skin as they take on the challenges of day to day life. They lack self confidence in themselves and the ability to view themselves as having potential. They are not creative, optimistic, or even pursuing their dreams. Instead, they are removing themselves of opportunities to succeed in their interests and passions. When adolescent girls lose their desire to be successful in their passions is uncertain, but there is hope to find a way to reignite those blown out flames (Pipher, 1994, p.19).

“Something dramatic happens to girls in early adolescence. Just as planes and ships disappear mysteriously into the Bermuda Triangle, so do the selves of girls go down in droves. They crash and burn in a social and developmental Bermuda Triangle. In early adolescence, studies show that girls’ IQ scores drop and their math and science scores plummet. They lose their resiliency and optimism and become less curious and inclined to take risks. They lose their assertive, energetic and ‘tomboyish’ personalities and become more deferential, self-critical and depressed. They report great unhappiness with their own bodies (p.19).”

Pipher (1994) explains that as girls move into adolescence they begin to lose their sense of self. Adolescent girls have a difficult time enjoying interests from their childhood; instead, they are busy trying to figure out the changes they are facing emotionally, mentally, and physically. These changes are forcing them to “try on new roles each week—this week the good student, next week the delinquent and the next, the artist” (p. 20). Adolescent girls are in need of opportunities that allow them to embrace the changes they are facing to develop their interests and fulfill their potential.

There is no specific race, ethnic background or socioeconomic status that can escape these challenges. Adolescent girls representing all demographics are facing many
of the same issues (Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008, p. 206). Research has shed some light on girls who are from majority populations and who are from an average socioeconomic status. However, there is very little research focusing on girls from a low socioeconomic status (p. 218). During adolescence, girls need programs that are focused on their unique challenges, especially when they are not being met in other areas such as at home or at school (Sanderson & Richards, 2010, p. 1). It is important that researchers seek to understand the voices of these adolescent girls and find solutions to the challenges that they face.

Community organizations, schools, and adult mentors have witnessed the issues that adolescent girls are facing and have taken steps to decrease their challenges and increase their self-confidence (Schoenberg & Salmond, 2007, p. 10). There are leadership development programs across the United States that are geared toward adolescent girls aimed at increasing their confidence, self-value, and view of leadership. The following is a list of leadership development programs that are currently offered to adolescent girls along with their websites in parentheses: Teen Girl Ministries through Assemblies of God USA (http://tgm.ag.org/), Coastal Studies for Girls: A Science and Leadership School (www.coastalstudiesforgirls.org), GirlVentures (www.girlventures.org), Passages Northwest (www.passagesnw.org), Oasis for Girls (www.sfoasis.org), and Helping Our Teen Girls In Real Life Situations, Inc. (www.helpingourteengirls.org).

The Girl Scouts of the United States of America (GSUSA) is also an organization that has developed leadership programs specifically focused on adolescent girls. Their leadership development programs were founded in the best interest of adolescent girls. GSUSA has developed curriculum for adolescent girls who are involved in GSUSA.
programs to help them succeed in all facets of their life, namely academics, extracurricular activities, work, and social/family relationships (Transforming Leadership Continued, 2009, p. 11).

Although programs exist to help adolescent girls, the true question is whether or not they are effective. Are these programs bringing adolescent girls back to life? Do they help girls feel confident at school, at home, and during activities? Are girls improving their academic performance? Are girls pursuing leadership opportunities in their school and community? If these programs are working, how can they be expanded across our nation to change communities by improving the lives of adolescent girls?

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative, interview-based study was to explore the leadership experiences of adolescent girls attending low income schools who were involved in a Girl Scouts after school program. To explore and understand the effectiveness of a Girl Scouts after school program, the researcher conducted semi-structured, face to face interviews to listen to the stories of adolescent girls involved in a Girl Scouts after school program and the impact it has had on their lives.

**Research Questions**

This qualitative study explored the following four research questions:

1. How do girls describe their experiences, activities, and interests before joining this Girl Scouts after school program?
2. How do girls describe their experiences, activities, and interests since joining this Girl Scouts after school program?
3. How do girls describe their leadership philosophies since coming to this Girl Scouts after school program?

4. How do girls describe how this Girl Scouts after school program has impacted their lives?

**Definition of Terms**

*Academic year:* Participants’ school year, August through June.

*Adolescent girl:* Girl between the ages of 12 and 18.

*After school program:* Program conducted once a week after the school day ends, between 3 and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Four of the participants attended an after school program conducted between 2 and 3 p.m. due to early dismissal.

*Low income schools:* Schools that have 50 percent or more of their students participating in their free/reduced lunch program. The five middle schools and two high schools that provide a Girl Scouts after school program have a percentage rate of 51.10 to 82.20 percent of their students participating in the free/reduced lunch program.

*Supplemental activities:* Activities conducted outside of the after school program time allotted. Activities include, but are not limited to, field trips, overnight trips, interest projects, special events, Girl Scouts sponsored programs, etc.

**Significance of Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the leadership experiences of adolescent girls in the Girl Scout after school program. The significance of this study is based upon the need to give girls attending low income schools an opportunity to voice their leadership experiences. This study focused on girls participating in a Girl Scouts after school program in a large Midwest city. This study will not only allow the
researcher to listen to their stories, but also allow the research findings to help organizations and communities build programs for this population of adolescent girls based on their responses.

**Delimitations**

This qualitative study had a few delimitations when attempting to obtain insights from the participants. There were only seven adolescent girls who were available to participate in the face to face interviews. The seven participants only represented two out of the eight middle and high school after school programs available in the community. Lastly, the researcher required that the participants in the study be involved in the program and its supplemental activities since August 2009.

**Limitations**

The generalizability was affected by a few limitations in this qualitative study. The participants had been involved in programs that allotted them previous experiences which could have steered their thoughts away from a Girl Scouts after school program during the face to face interviews. Some of the participants disclosed information about being intimidated by the tape and digital recorders and may have held back from sharing some of their experiences with a Girl Scouts after school program. Also, the researcher was deeply involved in a Girl Scouts after school program as a former volunteer and former staff member; therefore, the participants may or may not have been completely open during the face to face interviews. Lastly, the researcher initially planned to conduct observations of the participants during a Girl Scouts after school program. However, the observations were not conducted as the after school programs were completed for the academic year during the time of the research study.
Participants

This qualitative study was based on the insights obtained from adolescent girls who participated in a Girl Scouts after school program during the 2009-2010 academic year. Participants were individuals actively involved in the after school program and supplemental activities provided by the program since August 2009. The participants’ ages and grade levels vary between 12 and 15 years of age and 6th and 9th grades for the 2009-2010 academic year.

Conclusion

A Girl Scouts after school program strives to create a safe environment where adolescent girls can experience leadership opportunities. This qualitative study explored the leadership experiences of adolescent girls during their involvement in a Girl Scouts after school program. Chapter 2 provides the literature that is available regarding adolescent girls, mentoring, leadership development, and after school programs. The methodology of this qualitative study is presented in Chapter 3. Interviews were conducted to explore the experiences of the adolescent girls. The findings are presented in Chapter 4 through the following themes: “Lead By Example,” “I Learned More About Myself,” “I Have a Vision For My Future,” and “Get Involved, Stay Involved.” Chapter 5 includes the discussion of the findings of the qualitative study.
CHAPTER II

Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of the literature review was to provide an understanding of the current literature that is available concerning adolescent girls and leadership. Due to the lack of peer reviewed literature focused specifically on adolescent girls of low income schools and after school programs, the researcher decided to review components that associated with the topic, especially adolescent girls, mentoring adolescents, women in leadership, and after school programs. While reviewing the literature, the researcher found a linkage between what is currently available and the topic of this study. Although this is not a comprehensive analysis of existing literature, it provides related information on the research topic.

Adolescent Girls

Publications of numerous high-profile studies of girls’ lives were published during the 1990s. Girls moving into their adolescent stage of life face troubling issues such as a “dramatic decline in self-esteem, body image, and academic performance” (Mazzarella & Pecorca, 2007, p. 6). They begin to face changes that they can’t quite deal with on their own: eating disorders, depression, a low self-esteem and even suicide attempts. Adolescent girls are finding remedy in therapy, many times, the last place one would think to find a young, beautiful life (Pipher, 1994).

It is important for girls to discuss issues concerning their parents, divorce, sex, drugs, alcohol, and violence (Haag, 1999; Shandler, 1999). More importantly, they need help finding solutions for the issues they face. As girls experience changes with their
physical bodies, there is difficulty accepting themselves and continuing their passions for sports, academics, family, and even friends (Shandler, 1999). Girls become more focused on how to be please those around them instead of their own self—becoming the object of their male counterparts and finding themselves to be sexually active at an earlier age than they imagined (Haag, 1999).

There are plenty of reasons to be frustrated when thinking of the challenges that girls face. Much of the blame can be pointed to the media “as girls may have difficulty developing a positive sense of self because of media portrayals of young women as sexual objects with a singular emphasis on appearance” (Manago, Brown, & Leaper, 2009, p. 750). As girls move into figuring out who they are, they are comparing themselves to the women in the media. The media does a poor job of showing women in a light where their intelligence, abilities, and talents are being praised; instead, it is for their outer appearance. Due to this imbalance, girls have a skewed perception of who they are supposed to be and begin to “face incredible pressures to be beautiful and sophisticated, which in junior high means using chemicals and being sexual” (Pipher, 1994, p. 12).

How does all of this change? How do girls find themselves again? What will it take for girls to reach inside of themselves again and show who they really are? In Reviving Ophelia, Pipher provides a very powerful charge, “Long-term plans for helping adolescent girls involved deep-seated and complicated cultural changes—rebuilding a sense of community in our neighborhoods, fighting addictions, changing our schools, promoting gender equality and curtailing violence” (Pipher, 1994, p. 293). Pipher is explaining that all people are responsible for the change that girls face. It is the
responsibility of the community, schools, parents, teachers, and organizations to provide adequate opportunities and resources that girls can choose from to rise above the issues they face. It is important to allow girls to find success in themselves and those around them.

When thinking of different media outlets that influence an adolescent girl’s body image, self-esteem, and values, the typical television, radio, newspaper, and magazines are not the only outlets that need to be worried about. In this teenage-tech savvy world, there is an additional outlet that must be examined: blogging. In her article, Davis (2010) states that, “Blogging has emerged in the United States as a popular way for individuals to share their reflections with others” (p. 145). Adolescents today are equipped with computers and often have unlimited internet access. As a result, they may spend time on various websites, playing online games, and sharing their thoughts and feelings on blogs. For many people, blogs are a place where they can share “personal expressions” and “reflect on their daily experiences” (Davis, 2010, p. 146). In many cases the “online identity” that girls portray are similar to their “offline identity”. Girls also use the internet as a way to continue the development of their friendships as many of them are influenced by each other to join an online blogging account (Davis, 2010, p. 156). As girls continue to face changes during their adolescence blogging can be a positive route to take to share what it is that they are going through. Davis (2010) suggests that while girls are gaining insight into their friends, the girls are also use blogging to gain insight into themselves and their role in society (p. 162).

All while a girl is facing changes due to adolescence, she is also “developing a personal sense of identity.” She is trying to figure out who she is and how she fits in her
community (Manago, Brown, & Leaper, 2009, p. 751). In order to understand where they fit in their community, “youth reflect on the values, ideologies, and traditions of their communities and the possible roles they will undertake in adulthood” (Yates & Youniss, 1998, p. 495). Many girls are also dealing with their feminist identity and what that means to them. In the Manago (2009) article, it is suggested that “a feminist identity may serve as a protective buffer against challenges to a positive identity formation for adolescent girls” by “rejecting the social devaluation of their gender” (p. 752). By placing the focus on their own personal identity and what that looks like for themselves, adolescents may have the ability to ignore the “external media images of cultural appearance standards” (Jones, Vigfusdottir, & Lee, 2004, p. 324).

**Mentoring Adolescents**

Mentoring relationships are not a new concept, especially the mentoring relationship between an adult and an adolescent for purposes of preparing a bright, positive future. In fact, mentoring is a very old idea (Dondero, 1997). Youth to adult mentoring relationships have become vital prevention and intervention methods to help at-risk, vulnerable youth avoid delinquency, school dropout, teen pregnancy and unemployment (Royse, 1999; de Anda, 2001). Mentors are defined as one who listens to, cares for, gives advice to, and shares information and life/career experiences with another, especially an adolescent requiring assistance (Dondero, 1997). Youth serving agencies continuously seek out adults to become volunteer mentors within their community to become a role model who assists youth to stay on a positive life track.

A number of agencies have found success with their mentoring programs. However, programs that expect frequent contact over a long period of time between the
Mentor and their mentee are the most successful (Southwick, Morgan, Vythilingam, & Charney, 2006). Mentoring programs for at-risk youth are growing at a rapid pace across the United States (Keating, Tomishima, Foster, & Alessandri, 2002). Southwick (2006), compared youth who were enrolled in a mentor program to youth who were not enrolled in a mentor program. The study found that mentees that met with their mentors for approximately one year through the Big Brother Big Sister program were 27% less likely to begin drinking, 46% less likely to start using illegal drugs, and 52% less likely to skip a day of school (p.581). As youth and adults continue to develop their mentor relationship, additional results are yielded such as an increase in youth communicating with their adult mentor as they are considered a trusted friend (de Anda, 2001).

The authors indicate that an adult to youth mentoring relationship has a positive effect on the emotional, social and academic performance of adolescents, including adolescent girls. Girls tend to become self-reliant, have a positive image of themselves, and have an optimistic attitude about their life. These notions do not emerge through a school setting alone, rather with the help of a positive mentoring relationship (Maldonado, Quarles, Lacey, & Thompson, 2008). For these positive notions to continue to emerge, approaching mentoring relationships from different perspectives is necessary. The three different perspectives include psychological, social and biological (Southwick, Morgan, Vythilingam, & Charney, 2006). The psychological perspective explains how the mentor undoubtedly enhances resilience in the adolescent by serving as an “external regulator” as their ego capacities and strengths are used until the mentee gradually internalizes them (p. 581). The social perspective provides that as mentors expose their youth mentee to their professional and personal environments, youth acquire a more
stimulating and broader environment. The biological perspective looks at the activation of complex neurobiological circuitry that is associated with reward, attachment, learning, and memory. As the mentor relationship develops, the repetitive imitation of a mentor’s cognitive strategies and behaviors allows the brain to become activated; new neuronal branches and connections are formed, thus causing the mentee to emulate their mentor’s behaviors (Southwick, Morgan, Vythilingam, & Charney, 2006). Knowing and understanding the developmental effects of an adult to youth mentoring relationship through these perspectives allows the mentor to focus on how the relationship should be approached, especially when working with adolescent girls.

As the phenomenon of investing in personal growth and expertise increases in America, mentoring relationships become very important in a competitive, specialized, and professional society (Maldonado, Quarles, Lacey, & Thompson, 2006). Adolescents need to be engaged with adult mentors that have the ability to share their life with them. To steer away from and not engage in negative behaviors, adult mentors are needed to help improve their mentee’s academic achievement, career motivation, expand their life experiences, and redirect them from at-risk behaviors to foster and improve their self-esteem (de Anda, 2001). Adult mentors provide resources to adolescents who, in most cases, do not have access to create the best life possible.

Women in Leadership

“Times have changed, and more women—but not nearly enough—are being given the opportunity to lead in business, academia, and a variety of other professional pursuits. Yet, despite the advances that women have made, they are still underrepresented in higher level positions as leaders” (Denmark, 1993, p. 346). Although women have
been making strides in gaining leadership positions and opportunities since the 1990s, there is still work to be done (Carli & Eagly, 2001, p. 629). The question is raised, how do women begin to make an impact in their communities and in their work force? Carli and Eagly answer that question in their 2001 study by stating, “If women are ever to achieve a status equivalent to that of men, however, they will have to participate equally in those contexts where the most important and far-reaching decisions are made. Women must be present in sizeable numbers in these settings and must perform effectively in order to produce a balance between male and female power” (p. 634). These authors suggest that despite the improvements that have been made for women holding leadership positions, something more needs to be done in terms of developing new women leaders in the upcoming generation.

In 2006, the United Nations convened the very first Global Youth Summit to begin engaging young people in decisions about the future. Youth have important ideas and insights to contribute to the formation and advancement of reform agendas (Connor & Strobel, 2007, p. 275-276). By keeping in mind the current information regarding women advancing as leaders, programs such as the Global Youth Summit provide a pipeline for adolescent girls that strive to be leaders in their schools, communities, and future career industries. These types of opportunities are necessary as “women are less likely than men to assume roles of leadership, either through appointment or by personal choice” (Denmark, 1993, p. 346). Therefore, providing opportunities for girls at an early age may help them feel more confident and prepared to become leaders in the future.

Leadership looks very appealing when asking girls how they view it. Historically, women have been defined as leaders that are communal as they look to family, mentors,
role models and early personal experiences; whereas, males have been more of the autocratic and nonparticipative type of leader (Denmark, 1993, p. 347). With that being said, there is no question that girls and boys look at leadership differently (Schoenberg & Salmond, 2007). In a study when comparing women and men from Spain and the United States, females still had difficulty envisioning themselves as leaders (Killeen, Lopez-Zafra, & Eagly, 2006, p. 319). Since this is the case, it is important that girls have an opportunity to experience leadership on their own with the help of programs to develop their leadership skills (Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008). Girls will begin the discussion of leadership by defining it as an all inclusive model rather than the traditional hierarchal (or “top-down”) model (Schoenberg & Salmond, 2007). Girls also have the tendency to look at leaders as role models and coaches, such as the valued style that Eagly (2007) speaks about by saying, “The leadership style most valued in contemporary organizations are modeled by an outstanding coach’s ability to mentor athletes and foster effective teams” (p. 3). These views need to be nurtured and given an opportunity to blossom (Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008). When girls have the opportunity to explore leadership, talk about it, and then find ways to take action, they feel empowered to view themselves as leaders.

Although girls may take a different stance on leadership than what they see on a regular basis, the support and encouragement of development programs are necessary. Denmark (1993) states that “extracurricular activities play a role in the cultural transmission of gender-role assignments” (p. 346). Many times, what girls believe is not how they react to a situation. As the “top-down” leadership model is more prevalent in our society, girls tend to steer clear of their opportunities to lead—mainly due to the fact that the leadership model they most identify with does not include “authority” and “ego”
(Schoenberg & Salmond, 2007). Much of the fear of entering into a leadership role can be contributed to the fact that girls do not feel that it is desirable behavior for their sex (Eagly & Karau, 2002, p. 574). The consequence of this fear is prejudice and prejudicial behavior (Eagly & Karau, 2002, p. 575). These prejudices can harm a woman’s opportunity to become a leader and pursue the potential that is set for her life. This can also be dangerous when attempting to encourage adolescent girls to become leaders in their schools and communities. Therefore, taking the time to allow girls to voice their view of leadership before and after an opportunity to develop their skills is imperative. When girls are given the chance to participate in a program or intervention, they are more likely to experience a “cognitive shift” concerning leadership and how it should be executed (Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008).

As girls get older and move into the stage of adolescence, they have the desire to lead with a voice and a vision. Girls want to communicate well, resolve conflicts, be a good role model, plan, organize, and have a positive attitude towards change (Schoenberg & Salmond, 2007). These desires are developed as girls see themselves as leaders. More importantly, when they believe that they will be successful leaders—in their schools, in extracurricular activities, at home, and with their friends.

**After School Programs**

As parents and guardians have increasingly engaged in a two-parent income home, a child supervision gap was made between the end of the typical workday and the traditional school day all while the child development study movement was growing. Therefore, “concerns of the safety and development of unsupervised children increased” (Durlak, Mahoney, Bohnert, & Parente, 2010, p. 286). In order to clear the mindset of
after school programs being used as a free “babysitter”, researchers have looked to explore the quality of the after school program that is provided for adolescents. Along, with the quality of the programs, researchers are also looking to see how adolescent engagement plays a role in the outcomes of social competence, academic performance, and self-confidence (Shernoff, 2010).

Many after school programs share the common goal of providing a positive environment with engaging activities that promote positive development of youth; however, many factors come into play when creating and implementing an after school program. Programs vary in location, size, staffing, funding, hours of operation, activities, and structure (Durlak, Mahoney, Bohnert, & Parente, 2010, p. 287). Programs are also available for girl-only and boy-only communities (Schoenberg & Riggins, 2003). As girls move into adolescence, there is a definite need for them to belong. Therefore programs are provided to give opportunities for girls, specifically leadership programs. These programs are designed to help girls cultivate their skills and abilities in order to help their schools and communities. They are necessary as girls need their views to be supported and encouraged in a society where leaders do not look like what they perceive to be true (Girl Scout Research Institute, 2008).

If an after school program can deliver their contents well, they are more likely to have positive impacts (Sheldon, Arbreton, Hopkins, & Grossman, 2010, p.395). After school programs must focus on the needs and desires of the adolescents (Sanderson & Richards, 2010, p. 431). It is important in development that youth have ownership in the decisions being made and the actions that take place with those decisions, especially youth girls. By allowing youth to be engaged in the decision making process along with
the activities that have been chosen for a particular day, the more likely the adolescent will participate and reap a positive experience (Shernoff, 2010, p. 333). While positive experiences are anticipated, there is a possibility that an after school program is not a positive experience for some adolescents. Some of them may engage in conduct problems, increased substance abuse, and negative peer influence (Cross, et al, 2010, p. 371).

In helping girls become leaders through an after school program, girls need to fulfill the needs of themselves and their community (locally and globally). Girls are also in need of a model that moves from one individual leader to a model of shared leadership (Girl Scout Research Institute, 2008). Additionally, single sex programs, or girls-only programs allow girls to succeed, especially as leaders. Girls-only communities help girls build their sense of self when they feel safe and able to develop their skills with trusted peers and adults (Schoenberg & Riggins, 2003).

**Conclusion**

This chapter provided a review of the literature on adolescent girls, mentoring adolescents, women in leadership, and after school programs. The Literature Review was broken down into these four categories as they best relate to the research study on adolescent girls and their leadership experiences. From this review, it seems clear that more research focused on after school programs emphasizing leadership development for adolescent girls attending low income schools is necessary. The literature provided shows that there is a gap within the literature focusing on the above topic. Chapter 3 presents the methodology of this study.
Chapter III

Methodology

Research Design

The qualitative research design was used for this study. This research design was used based on its definition to “explore and understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2009, p. 4). The researcher was interested in exploring the leadership experiences of adolescent girls involved in a Girl Scouts after school programs. To explore and understand their individual experiences, the researcher gathered data by interviewing participants, inductively analyzing data by building general themes, and making interpretations of the meaning of the data (p. 4). The qualitative research design was the best fit for this study based on the researcher’s interest of listening to the experiences of adolescent girls themselves, in their own words.

Phenomenology was the qualitative research approach chosen for this study. The researcher chose this approach as it allowed her to “obtain a view into [her] research participants’ life-worlds and to understand their personal meanings constructed from their ‘lived experiences’” (Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p. 395). As the researcher conducted semi-structured, face to face interviews, the goal was to explore the experiences of adolescent girls in a Girl Scouts after school program. These interviews allowed the participants to share their experiences with the researcher through responses based on the questions provided for them. It was of utmost importance to the researcher that the participants described their own personal experiences with a Girl Scouts after school program (p. 395).
Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative, interview-based study was to explore the leadership experiences of adolescent girls attending low income schools. The study specifically explored the leadership experiences of adolescent girls attending low income schools and who were involved in a Girl Scouts after school program. Currently, research lacks information regarding the experiences of this population, therefore this study will give the participants a chance to voice their experiences. The researcher encouraged girls to share stories about their experiences with a Girl Scouts after school program and how it has impacted their lives.

As girls move into adolescence, they begin to face many issues and they explore different aspects of their lives. Adolescent girls need a supportive atmosphere that allows them to share their ideas and dreams and become the young women they are meant to be (Schoenberg & Salmond, 2007). In order to create an ideal atmosphere where adolescent girls can be themselves and succeed, the researcher explored their experiences with the Girls Scouts after school program. By listening to the participants’ experiences, the researcher will attempt to make a difference in future program development with the findings of this study.

Research Questions

The following four research questions were explored in this qualitative study:

1. How do girls describe their experiences, activities, and interests before joining this Girl Scouts after school program?
2. How do girls describe their experiences, activities, and interests since joining this Girl Scouts after school program?
3. How do girls describe their leadership philosophies since coming to this Girl Scouts after school program?

4. How do girls describe how this Girl Scouts after school program has impacted their lives?

**Institutional Review Board Approval**

Prior to the research study, the researcher completed the training program for human subjects research and was certified by the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI). Later, the researcher was given approval to conduct research through the University of Nebraska-Lincoln’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Appendix A). As stated in the researcher’s IRB application, parents/guardians signed a consent form (Appendix H) and the participants signed a youth assent form (Appendix I). Parents/guardians were given information regarding the research study through a cover letter as well as a copy of the interview questions (Appendix G). The participants were notified that the information that they shared during the interview could be published and shared through journals, conferences, and presentations, but that their identity would remain strictly confidential.

**Site**

The face to face interviews took place in a private room at a University located in a Midwest city. All participants were involved in a Girl Scouts after school program at their respective middle or high schools. The Girl Scouts provides after school programs at two elementary school, five middle schools, three high schools, and two community youth serving agencies. For this study, the researcher focused only on the programs that were held in the middle and high schools.
Sample

Purposeful sampling was used in this qualitative research study. The researcher agrees with Creswell (2009) that it is important to purposefully select participants or sites “that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question” (p.178). Therefore, the researcher specifically chose participants to assist in this study. Girl Scouts after school programs from five middle schools and two high schools in the same Midwest city were eligible and invited to participate in this research study. The researcher sent an email to program facilitators (n = 7) asking them to provide names of girls who attended the after school program and supplemental activities since August 2009 to participate in this research study (Appendix B). Seven out of twenty five adolescent girls were willing and able to participate in this research study. Ages 12 to 15.

Participants were girls involved in a Girl Scouts after school program during the 2009-2010 academic year. Participants were from one middle school and one high school out of the five middle schools and two high schools that have a Girl Scouts after school program. They were recommended by their program facilitator based on their involvement in the after school group and supplemental activities.

Interview Protocol

It is important to use an interview protocol for asking questions and recording answers during a qualitative interview to provide some organization during the time of responses given by participants (Creswell, 2009, p. 183) (Appendix K). For this research study, semi-structured, face to face interviews were conducted. Each interview was recorded by the researcher and transcribed verbatim by an external source. The transcriptionists read and signed a confidentiality agreement stating that they would not
ask or seek the identity of participants nor would they repeat any of the recordings during the transcription process (Appendix L).

Prior to each interview session, a consent letter was sent out to parents/guardians to inform them of the research study and to receive their permission to interview their student.

The face to face interviews with the participants were conducted in a private room located at a University in a Midwest city. Their identity has and will remain confidential. Their responses have only been heard and seen by the researcher and transcriber. Pseudonyms were used to provide a personal feeling to the research while keeping each identity confidential. Participants were given the opportunity to choose their own pseudonym. Collected data were placed in a locked cabinet accessible only to the researcher.

The following questions were asked during the semi-structured, face to face interviews to conduct the qualitative study:

1. Tell me about your experiences, activities, and interests before joining the program.
2. Since joining the program, have your interests, activities, and experiences changed? In what ways?
3. What are you learning from the program? Please give me some specific examples of activities or experiences that have contributed to your learning.
4. What are your thoughts on leadership and what makes a good leader?
5. Have your thoughts on leadership and what makes a good leader changed since coming to the program? If so, how and why?

6. What is different about your life, your goals, and plans for the future since joining the program? Please give some specific examples.

7. What else would you like to tell me about your experiences with the program?

Data Analysis

According to Creswell (2009), data analysis is “an ongoing process involving continual reflection about the data, asking questions, and writing memos throughout the study” (p. 184). Data analysis commenced by recording the face to face interviews with a tape recorder and digital recorder. The tapes that were used to capture the questions and responses from the interviews were sent off to an external transcriptionist to listen and transcribe each interview verbatim. Once the transcriptions were returned to the researcher, she read through each of them while listening to the digital recordings that she kept for herself. The digital recordings were also used as a backup if it was necessary. Again, the researcher read through the transcriptions thoroughly without listening to the recordings to gain a better understanding of the responses provided by the participants. This allowed the researcher to “get a sense of the whole” by reading “all of the transcriptions carefully” (p. 186).

The researcher coded each transcription by hand. The researcher used in vivo coding a majority of the time. In some cases, the researcher used her own words to code the sentences and passages that the participants provided. While coding the transcriptions, the researcher found 338 codes. Words and portions of the participants’
responses were chosen as codes if they made an impression on the researcher. While coding the transcriptions, the researcher read through the interview questions before reading the responses given by the participant. After coding each of the transcriptions, the researcher typed the codes into a word document. The codes were reviewed and ten categories were created by the frequency of codes. The ten categories were hand-written on notebook paper following each of the codes. Then, the categories and codes were typed into a word document for organizational purposes. The ten categories and codes can be found in the Master Code List (Appendix O). Creating the categories for each code allowed the researcher to observe the common responses given by the participants. During this observance, the researcher had many ideas regarding the research based on common responses that kept arising which she developed into themes and subthemes. The themes and subthemes that emerged were universal thoughts shared in each of the participants’ responses. Once the four themes were developed, they were assigned colors using highlighted markers: pink was used for “Lead by Example,” orange was used for “I Learned More About Myself,” blue was used for “I Have a Vision For My Future,” and green was used for “Get Involved, Stay Involved.” The researcher then went back through each of the transcriptions and highlighted the codes according to the themes in which the codes fit best. Afterwards, the themes were typed into a word document with the codes and passages following each of the themes. The four themes and ten subthemes are listed and described in Chapter 4. These themes and subthemes represent the viewpoints of the participants based on the responses they provided during the interviews.
A peer review session was held with a peer reviewer who was given two of seven transcriptions to check for coding agreement. During this session, the researcher and peer reviewer discussed the codes that were developed by the two of them. A more detailed explanation of the peer review session is given later in this chapter in the validity section. After the peer review session, the researcher continued coding the remaining five transcriptions.

*Epoché Bracketing*

The seven semi-structured, face to face interviews were conducted solely by the researcher. Also, the transcriptions were coded by the researcher; therefore, biases may have been brought to the research study. The three key biases include the following:

1. The researcher began her experiences with a Girl Scouts after school program as a volunteer. The volunteer position held by the researcher was that of a program facilitator. The researcher facilitated a Girl Scouts after school program for the 2008-2009 academic year at a middle school in which three of the participants attended. As a result, this may have kept the participants from being fully open during the interviews.

2. The researcher was a staff member for the Girl Scouts for six months. During her employment, she had opportunities to plan and facilitate numerous Girl Scouts after school programs. Therefore, her knowledge of the goals for the program could have influenced the analysis pertaining to the information provided during the interviews.

3. The researcher has a personal passion and dedication to the success of adolescent girls. She has spent much of her time volunteering for
organizations assisting adolescent girls in their development. The researcher has proclaimed herself to be an advocate of adolescent girls by working to find ways to promote a positive lifestyle through education, community involvement, and relationship building.

Along with the three key biases listed above, the researcher brought past lived experiences to the research. She recognized that much of my passion for helping young women comes from her childhood. Growing up, she did not have the presence of her mother during adolescence. However, she built healthy, strong relationships with women in her family, community, and friends’ families. Due to those relationships, she realized how important it was for her to have women in her life that she could look up to and some day emulate. She knows the importance of having a woman to look up to for her own life; therefore, she has dedicated herself to ensuring that all girls have women that they can admire.

The researcher realized the potential biases that may have risen while analyzing the data and reporting the findings. Therefore, the researcher used extra caution to set aside her biases to ensure authentic descriptions of each participant’s experience with a Girl Scouts after school program by refraining from thinking about her own, personal experiences. In order to ensure that these biases were set aside, the researcher solely focused on the participants’ responses. When her own thoughts would arise, the researcher would share the information with the peer reviewer. Although the peer reviewer did not read through each of the transcriptions, she was readily available to analyze the data with the researcher. In order to stay objective, it was important for the researcher to be honest with the peer reviewer when informing her of the codes and
themes being developed. Also, the peer reviewer was asked to inform the researcher when her biases were intertwined with the data. The researcher’s biases were taken very seriously; therefore, she worked to set them aside as best as possible.

**Validity**

In this section of Chapter 3, the validation strategies that the researcher used are provided. To validate the data that the researcher used both member checking and inter-rater coding (cross-check codes) strategies. The use of member checking is to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings through taking the final report or specific descriptions or themes back to participants and determining whether these participants feel that they are accurate (Creswell, 2009, p. 191). The researcher took written notes during the interview process. During the semi-structured, face to face interview, the researcher asked follow up and clarification questions to the participants to ensure that she gained a clear understanding of the responses they were providing. The follow up and clarification questions have been recorded and transcribed just as the responses from the interview.

The inter-rater coding (cross-check codes) strategy allows different researchers to develop codes and compare the results that are independently derived (Creswell, 2009, p. 191). The researcher chose a graduate student from the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to be the peer reviewer for the research study. The purpose of choosing this individual was to decide “whether two or more coders agree on codes used for the same passage of text” (Creswell, 2009, p. 191). The peer reviewer read and signed a confidentiality agreement stating that they would not ask or seek the identity of participants nor would they repeat any seen transcriptions to
anyone (Appendix M). This individual completed and was certified by the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI).

The peer reviewer was given approximately 29% (2 of 7) of the transcriptions to take through the coding process. The peer reviewer was asked to read through each transcription thoroughly in order to understand the responses given by the participants and then to assign codes as they deemed appropriate. The researcher gave the peer reviewer freedom to use in vivo coding, open coding or both coding procedures simultaneously.

According to Creswell (2009), it is recommended that the consistency of the coding agreement be at least 80% or higher for good qualitative reliability (p. 191). Unfortunately, in this research study, the researcher and peer reviewer only reached a 73% agreement for transcription one and a 74% agreement for transcription two. The researcher and peer reviewer conducted a “peer debriefing session” to follow up on the peer review (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This peer debriefing session was used to keep the researcher’s work honest and authentic. During the session, the researcher and the peer reviewer spent time discussing codes made by each party. The percentage did not reach 80% due to codes made by the researcher but not the reviewer and the codes made by the reviewer but not the researcher. However, there were no disagreements between the researcher and peer reviewer on the common codes. Upon discussion of the additional codes, the researcher and the reviewer agreed to all of the additional codes. Many of the additional codes were due to the difference in wording; however, both the researcher and the peer reviewer agreed that although there was a difference in wording, the essence of
the codes were the same. Each additional code was relevant to the research study and was a reflection of the participants’ experiences.

According to Creswell (1998), “during the session, part of the peer reviewer’s role is to listen sympathetically to the researcher’s responses and provide an opportunity for catharsis or further understanding/insights” (p. 202). Although the original coding agreement did not achieve a percentage of 80 or higher agreement, the peer reviewer confirmed qualitative reliability as she sought understanding of the researcher’s responses through deep discussion and asking questions. Prior to the discussions, the researcher and peer reviewer checked over the number of codes made by each person. To ensure accuracy, the researcher and peer reviewer checked their calculations multiple times. Both the researcher and peer reviewer checked their calculations by hand and with an electronic calculator. Once the calculations were confirmed, the researcher and peer reviewer moved on to discussing the codes that were made by the researcher and peer reviewer. The researcher and peer reviewer discussed their thought processes as they were coding each transcription. This allowed for deep discussion regarding the participants’ responses as well as the purpose of the study. An explanation of the peer reviewer’s experience is provided at the end of this study (Appendix N). In addition, a log was kept of codes in agreement, made by the researcher but not the reviewer, made by the reviewer but not the researcher, disagreements, and shared in vivo. Table 1 provides the inter-coder chart used during the peer review session.
Table 1

*Inter-coder Agreement*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transcript Number</th>
<th>In Agreement</th>
<th>Coded by the Reviewer but Not the Researcher</th>
<th>Coded by the Researcher but Not the Reviewer</th>
<th>In Disagreement</th>
<th>Percentage of Agreement</th>
<th>Number of Shared <em>In vivo</em> Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Validity is very important for this research project as it is a “strength of qualitative research and is based on determining whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researchers, the participant, or the readers of an account” (Creswell, 2009, p. 191). The researcher has had a Girl Scouts staff member with ample experience working with this population of adolescent girls and these programs read over the research study throughout the process as well as the end of the research study. The Girl Scouts staff member has ensured that the information provided about the program and the
Girl Scouts organization is accurate and true. This individual has provided strength to the research project through suggestions and comments.
Chapter IV

Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the leadership experiences of adolescent girls involved in a Girl Scouts after school program. This research study was conducted by interviewing seven adolescent girls who were involved in a Girl Scouts after school program during the 2009-2010 academic year. These adolescent girls were also involved in supplemental activities throughout the 2009-2010 academic year. During the semi-structured, face to face interviews, transcription readings, coding process and theme development process, the researcher attempted to understand their experiences with a Girl Scouts after school program and how it has impacted their lives.

Description of Participants

In this qualitative research study, there were seven participants who took part in the interview process. Each participant filled out a demographic and pseudonym form to provide information regarding their racial and ethnic background, age and grade. The racial and ethnic background responses were based on the 2009-2010 Girl Scouts Girl Registration form. The researcher gave the participants the freedom to choose their own pseudonym for this study. Participants placed their pseudonym on the demographic and pseudonym form (Appendix J). Pseudonyms were used to provide a personal feeling to the research study while keeping each participant’s identity confidential. During the interview session, participants provided information on the activities they were involved in before, during, and after their experience with a Girl Scouts after school program. This
information gave further insight of the participant’s interests. Short introductions of each participant’s racial and ethnic background, activities, age and grade for the 2009-2010 academic year are provided below by using their self-chosen pseudonym. Table 2 presents a quick reference of each participant.

Darcy identified herself as White and not Hispanic or Latina. Darcy is involved in dance, volleyball, theater, Jobs Daughters, and student council. Darcy is 15 and was in the 9th grade for the 2009-2010 academic year.

Yana identified herself as Russian and not Hispanic or Latina. Yana is actively involved in her church, sings in the choir, and plays piano. Yana is 15 and was in the 9th grade for the 2009-2010 academic year.

Jodie identified herself as White and not Hispanic or Latina. Jodie is involved in theater and band. Jodie is 14 and was in the 9th grade for the 2009-2010 academic year.

Ellen identified herself as White and not Hispanic or Latina. Ellen is involved in theater and student council. Ellen is 15 and was in the 9th grade for the 2009-2010 academic year.

Serena identified herself as White and not Hispanic or Latina. Serena has been involved in soccer, volleyball, tennis and has worked on computers and websites. Currently, Serena enjoys drawing, painting, and reading. Serena is 14 and was in the 8th grade for the 2009-2010 academic year.

Katherine identified herself as White and not Hispanic of Latina. Katherine is involved in tennis and swimming. Katherine also enjoys drawing, hanging out with
friends, and reading literature. Katherine is 14 and was in the 8th grade for the 2009-2010 academic year.

Sarah identified herself as Black or African American, White, and Hispanic or Latina. Sarah has been involved in gymnastics and is currently running track at her middle school. Sarah is 12 and was in the 6th grade for the 2009-2010 academic year.

Table 2
Participant Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Darcy</td>
<td>White/Not Hispanic or Latina</td>
<td>Dance, volleyball, theater, Jobs Daughters, student council</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yana</td>
<td>Russian/Not Hispanic or Latina</td>
<td>Church, singing, piano</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jodie</td>
<td>White/Not Hispanic or Latina</td>
<td>Band, theater</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen</td>
<td>White/Not Hispanic or Latina</td>
<td>Theater, student council</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serena</td>
<td>White/Not Hispanic or Latina</td>
<td>Soccer, volleyball, tennis, computers, websites, drawing, painting, reading</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katherine</td>
<td>White/Not Hispanic or Latina</td>
<td>Tennis, swimming, drawing, hanging out with friends, reading</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>Black or African American/Hispanic or Latina</td>
<td>Gymnastics, track</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Research Questions**

This qualitative study explored the following four research questions:

1. How do girls describe their experiences, activities, and interests before joining this Girl Scouts after school program?
2. How do girls describe their experiences, activities, and interests since joining this Girl Scouts after school program?
3. How do girls describe their leadership philosophies since coming to this Girl Scouts after school program?
4. How do girls describe how this Girl Scouts after school program has impacted their lives?

**Overview of Themes and Subthemes**

This chapter presents the themes that resulted from the seven interviews that were conducted for this research study. Also found in this chapter is the supporting documentation of those themes in the voices of the adolescent girls involved in a Girl Scouts after school programs. Four themes and nine subthemes emerged as outlined in Table 3. The theme “Lead By Example” discussed the participant’s perspective on leadership as well as leaders and was broken down into three subthemes, including “Role modeling,” “Be responsible,” and “Take control.” The “I Learned More About Myself” theme discussed the different realizations the participants had about themselves when reflecting on their experiences with a Girl Scouts after school program which resulted into two subthemes: “Changes within myself” and “Self-confidence.” The third theme, “I Have a Vision For My Future” discussed the future goals that the participants have set for themselves and was divided into two subthemes: “Go to college” and “Career choices.”
The final theme, “Get Involved, Stay Involved” discussed the feelings the participant’s experienced by being involved in various activities and resulted into two subthemes: “My interests and passions” and “New people and friends.” Following the thematic analysis, the researcher will provide an additional discussion piece providing her own personal experiences that relate to the responses provided by the participants titled “Researcher Reflexivity.”

Table 3
Themes and Subthemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Lead By Example</td>
<td>a. Role modeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Be responsible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Take control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I Learned More About Myself</td>
<td>a. Changes within myself</td>
</tr>
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<td>4. Get Involved, Stay Involved</td>
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**Themes and Subthemes**

**Theme 1: Lead By Example**

Leadership was described by each of the participants as being an “example” and leaders being someone who others can “look up to.” For many of the participants, leaders are people who “help others” and “do good.” Yana said it best by sharing:

“I think leadership – you can make it many different things. But, I really think that a good leader is a person who actually doesn’t force you to do something, he actually puts himself out there as an example. He, himself does the right things and like, you see it and you feel and you know that you should try to be like him.”
For each of the participants, it is apparent that, to them, a leader is someone who they can look up to, someone who they want to be like. Three subthemes emerged within “Lead By Example,” including “Role modeling,” “Be responsible,” and “Take control.”

**Subtheme a: Role modeling.** When describing a leader and what leadership means to them, each participant spoke about role models. The role models who they spoke the most about were their family members. For almost all of the participants, their role models were immediate family members, except for Ellen. Ellen described her aunt as being a good leader in her life:

> Probably my aunt, who lives in Missouri. I think she’s a very good leader. And leaders are also role models, you know, because people always look up to you. I think she’s also a leader and a role model to me and her everyday life.

Yana has a similar experience as Ellen with a family member, only this time, it is her brother who she describes as a role model her in life, by sharing a little bit about him:

> Um, yeh, someone in my life like that would be my brother. Because, I’ve always kind of looked up to him in my life.

For many of these participants, their family members have shown them qualities that they have considered good leadership qualities. By being “loyal” and “considerate of others” these qualities are noticed outside of their families as well. When having these qualities, Darcy and Serena see someone who they can follow when working in a group or on a team. Serena sees something else in her mother that she qualifies as a leader by role modeling someone that she would someday like to be:

> I would say my mom because she’s overcome a lot these past years. Especially being a single mother to two teenage girls and it’s really hard for her, but she’s still juggling jobs – many jobs, and all of her passions are like – she still has time for that and she still leads us and raises us to be better women.
The remainder of the participants continued to describe their family members as role models, Darcy said, “the one person I really admire in my life as a good leader is my grandma. She’s always been someone that I look up to.” Jodie shares that her sister is someone that she has always looked up to because of the way she “helps the family out a lot.” Katherine’s mom “tries to hear everyone” and “compromises” which helps Katherine look up to her. By “knowing them well” and “trusting them”, Sarah looks up to her mom and grandma. All participants indicated that having role models and “strong adult leadership” in their lives is something that is very important to them.

**Subtheme b: Be Responsible.** Being responsible seems to be a necessary quality when thinking about a good leader for these participants. As the girls shared their perspective of good leadership qualities, “being responsible”, whether that was of their tasks or the people they were leading, was at the top of the list and was found as a commonality amongst most of their responses. Serena said, “they [leaders] have to take responsibility for all the people they’re leading.”

Jodie added that leaders “are responsible,” but they are also “outgoing and they’re… not afraid to jump out in front of people and do a lot of crazy stuff… they’re trustworthy.” Here, Jodie has shown that responsibility is a quality that leaders must have, but that it is not the only quality to be dubbed a “good leader.” Serena adds to Jodie’s idea when she stated:

Girl Scouts kind of revealed layers of leadership that I wasn’t aware of. And, it seems that a leader has to have so much more qualities. And if I hadn’t known that, then if I had become a leader, then I don’t think I would have been as great as one.
However, Serena goes on to say that, “You have to have understanding and responsibility and you need to be able to trust and for others to trust in you.” So, although, there are different “layers of leadership” for Serena, responsibility is still a quality that she values in a good leader. Yana spoke more on responsibility by saying, “He takes responsibility in his hands for what he does, for what he is responsible for. He is responsible for what he does.”

Subtheme c: Take control. According to most of the participants, leaders need to know how to take control in order to lead others and “get the job done.” Katherine explained that, leaders need to “stand out and take control” when working with people and ideas in a leadership situation. Jodie added to Katherine’s thought by saying, “[leaders] take control of stuff.”

Ellen spent some time sharing leadership experiences she has had in different student organizations in her high school. When she described a good leader, she specifically spoke about her involvement in student council by stating:

You also have to be a – a good leader is part of that group, even though you might be president of student council. You have to be able to be just one of them or just sitting in there helping you accomplish what you need to get done. And I think another part of a leader is to be able to take control when it needs to be taken. Like if there is a disagreement within the council or within a group of people you need to be able to step in and say – this is what’s going to happen and you will have people who won’t like you because you made that decision. But that’s what’s part of being a good leader. And hopefully, they can understand why you did that at the time, so that everything moves on in a smooth manner.

For Ellen, taking control of what needs to get done by making decisions and getting followers to jump on board is what defines a good leader. Darcy echoed what Ellen shared by providing a personal example:

With the “Dubb Club” (Darcy’s after school program decided to create their own name; however not every group has a personalized name; therefore, they go by a
Girl Scouts after school program) that I’m in with people, we were planning a book drive and we were supposed to make posters and none of the other people were like – oh, I want to do it, and so I’m not the best poster maker at all – but, I mean, I did it because I knew it needed to be done and no one else really wanted to, so I did it.

Darcy has explained that she saw a task that needed to be done, so instead of sitting back and letting someone else take care of it, or in this case, leave the task undone, she took control of the situation and made the posters for her after school group’s book drive event. Serena adds to Darcy’s experience by saying, “You have to take charge for a large group of people which can be really challenging.” Although the participants believe that taking control comes with being a leader, they understand that it is not as easy as it looks.

Before going forward to the next theme, a couple of observations were made and should be noted. The first observation concerns Yana and the pronoun she uses to describe leaders and role models. As Yana was being interviewed, the researcher noticed her using “he” frequently as she described leaders and role models. The researcher made a note about it while interviewing Yana. After reading through Yana’s transcriptions, she made additional notes regarding this occurrence. Yana only used “she” once compared to the multiple times she used “he” when describing leaders and role models. This observation was also brought up in discussion during the peer review session. After reading the transcriptions multiple times and having the discussion with the peer reviewer, the researcher concluded that when describing good leaders and role models, she was describing qualities of her brother rather than general qualities. This conclusion was made by going over the questions and responses of the transcriptions regarding leadership and good leaders. After Yana was asked to describe her thoughts on
leadership, she was asked if there was someone in her life she would consider a good leader. After asking, “Um, is this just like, in general”, the researcher clarified and said that it could be someone in general or someone specific. Once the question was clarified, she responded, “Um, yeh, someone in my life like that would be my brother.” The researcher believes the use of the phrase “like that” was Yana’s way of referring to her thoughts on leadership that were described in the previous question.

Yana was not the only participant that responded this way when asked to describe leadership and a good leader. Almost all of the participants had a difficult time separating their general thoughts on leadership and the individual they considered to be a good leader in their life. Therefore, leadership was not described as a generic concept; instead, the participants described the individuals they considered a good leader in general terms. For these participants, they had to envision a specific person in their life to be a good leader before describing their thoughts on leadership.

Theme 2: I Learned More About Myself

Many of the participants spent time sharing what they had realized about themselves as they progressed through a Girl Scouts after school program. Many of them shared a before and after experience by stating what they were like before joining the Girl Scouts after school group compared to who they have become since then. Most of the participants have noticed changes within themselves and have realized their self-confidence. Yana shares what she learned about herself:

Like, it helped me get to know a lot of like more things that I didn’t know about. Like, I actually got involved in the community and just did way more than I did and just learned so much from like my experiences and just like personal things and like characters. Like, I kind of – it helped me learn like responsibility, respect – because you’re around people and you always have to – you can’t just do things your way because there are other people there and you kind of have to like, make
sure everyone gets what they want. So, it kind of helped me like build a good personality. It helped me build good relationships with other people.

Since many of the girls spoke on these two topics, the two subthemes emerged: “Changes within myself” and “Self-confidence.”

**Subtheme a: Changes within myself.** Serena explains that she has “definitely changed” since joining a Girl Scouts after school program. She adds that she was once an “introvert,” but now she is “more active with other people” and that she doesn’t “necessarily like to be by herself as much anymore” and “likes being around others.” This is a big change for Serena as she always explains that she was shy when she was younger and had difficulty being active with other people when being a part of groups and teams. This is not an uncommon experience as Jodie adds to moving away from shyness by saying, “I learned to, like talk in front of other people.”

Darcy made changes within herself by realizing that she isn’t “always going to be right” and that she “isn’t perfect.” Also, she realized that “there’s room for improvement and that other people’s opinions matter, too”. Ellen also realized the need to be aware of people outside of herself and stated, “I guess I learned that there’s always somebody out there that’s going to need help in the community.” The change that Ellen made within herself was due to the different activities she participated in during the Girl Scouts after school program:

I learned that just from doing different activities within the Girl Scouts by giving books to elementary schools or helping other girls in the program in elementary learn to be more than what they can be and know that they have a voice in the community and that they can do stuff.

Ellen also experienced a “positive change” that allowed her to become “more outgoing.” She explains how a Girl Scouts after school program helped her:
I would say, that they have changed in a positive way. I feel like Girl Scouts have helped me become, I think, more out there with people. To get to know people, I think, better, cause I’m usually one of those persons who be shy and let the other people go up to me. But I think, now since I’ve been in Girl Scouts have been around other girls, I am now more confident to go up to people and say – how you doin’. And, to know em, you know. Cause, like in summer school, you’re in there with nobody – so you actually have to be out there and help people, I mean, just get to know em.

Katherine also made changes within herself by the different activities that have been presented to her in a Girl Scouts after school program. After learning how to make jewelry, she realized that she could use that skill as a way to “sooth her emotions.” So, instead of “yelling at her brother or mom”, she spends time with herself making jewelry to deal with her daily stresses. Sarah also found a technique that would help her overcome feelings of anger. She learned that if she “communicates with others and tells others how she feels”, she would be less likely to stay angry with them, regardless of the issue at hand.

**Subtheme b: Self-confidence.** Darcy realized that since joining a Girl Scouts after school program that she is more self-confident. She shared her realization by stating:

I think I’m more self-confident about myself now and I don’t second-guess myself so much anymore. I just learned that – well, I learned how to be a better leader. But – in that I also learned that a leader can also be a follower.

Ellen had a very similar realization as Darcy. She has realized a positive difference in herself:

And, myself, would have to be – more confident. Just being able to kind of feel that I can do something – that I can get the job done, that I can be whatever I want to be out in the community. That I can someday be the President – who knows.

For Ellen, not only is she realizing her self-confidence, but she is also realizing that she can be someone in her community. She can be a leader in her community. Jodie shares that she, too, can be a leader:
I learned that I can be a better leader. And, when we went to Elliot, I learned to, like talk in front of people I guess and work with kids better.

Prior to having the opportunity to work with younger students, Jodie feared speaking in front of people and big crowds, regardless of the age of the audience. After she was given the skills and an opportunity to speak in front of a group, her self-confidence was developed which helped her realize that she is capable of doing the things that she feared. Serena was a shy girl when she was younger, but has changed since being around the other girls in the after school program:

I learned how to interact with others much easier and how to express myself in a much easier way.

By being involved with the program, Serena has become more confident by getting over her skepticism of “the idea of Girl Scouts and all of the activities” and “soon opened up.” Sarah also realized that opening up and not holding back has helped her understand that “people do not hate” her.

The development of each participant’s self-confidence was confirmed during their face to face interviews. When participants spoke about the changes that they experienced after joining a Girl Scouts after school program, they would speak louder or sit up straighter in chairs. Also, the researcher observed each participant’s smile emerge as they had the opportunity to describe the ways they have changed. Regardless of the change that was made, the participants rarely held back their excitement of having the ability to speak in front of people, accomplish a task, meet new friends, or steer away from their shy personality.
Theme 3: I Have a Vision For My Future

Many of the participants were unsure of their futures. They had not thought a lot about their future in serious detail; however, all of that has changed since joining a Girl Scouts after school program. The participants have thought about colleges to attend and careers they want to pursue. Due to broader interests and passions, they have a better idea of how to incorporate that into their future. The two subthemes that have emerged from the theme “I Have a Vision For My Future”, include “Go to college” and “Career choices.”

Subtheme a: Go to college. All of the participants have aspirations to go to college. They are all interested in pursuing an education based on their interests and passions. During their involvement with a Girl Scouts after school program, they were able to explore new interests to give them a broader sense of what is available to students in terms of higher education.

Yana did not have a clear vision for her future until she joined a Girl Scouts after school program:

Since I joined the program – I actually – like it kind of gave me a clear view of what I want in the future. Like, I didn’t really have any specific plans – I mean I know I want to go to college, but like, I didn’t really, like, know what’s out there – really. Like, I haven’t been involved in anything so that, like I didn’t really know how it really was out there.

Yana goes on to share specific plans that she has for her life post high school:

But, like once I started being involved in the club, I actually knew what I wanted after high school – I actually knew what I wanted to major in. For me, it actually made it pretty clear what I want to major in – what I want to do after high school –like what job am I going to do – whether I am going to actually be – like live on campus or at home, how I’m going to go about things – like just my daily life, things like that.
Serena also shared that her goals have been clarified in terms of pursuing a higher education. She was “unsure of what she wanted to be when she grew up earlier on” even though she had “interests,” they were “just for the moment.” Serena is very passionate about art, but “wants to have a great education in case art doesn’t work out.” Also, although she would “love to study art,” she knows that she “needs to pick other things” as well. For now, she has decided that she will “probably take language – the language I’m learning.” Currently, Serena is learning Japanese, Russian, and Korean.

Ellen has determined her future goals:

Helping me determine what my future goals – like what they should be in the future – you know, going to college – making sure that I do get those scholarships to help with college and to get every opportunity I can to just help pay for all of it – and what I want to be and...

Ellen explained that she wanted to major in education when she goes to college. Jodie, too, would like to major in education when she goes to college. Darcy, like Ellen and Jodie, did not have an “action plan” for her future educational goals. However, since being a part of a Girl Scouts after school program, she has a better idea of what she would like to do after high school:

Since joining the – before joining the program, I don’t – I didn’t – I mean I kind of knew what I wanted to do with my life, I just wasn’t, I didn’t know how to execute that and how to make it reality. and I mean, I’ve kind of looked at the prices for that, not too in depth – I still have a year or two. But, I mean, since joining the program, it’s taught me to that you can never be too prepared. And so, I want to be somewhat prepared when I actually have to look at it for real and make it actually happen.

Here, Darcy has also realized that a plan and executing the plan is necessary when having aspirations of going to college. Katherine has also realized that other variables are necessary when creating future goals. Speakers that attended her after school group helped her realize the possibilities of an education. She wants to “be a
leader in art” and in order to be a leader in art, she “has to have a higher education.” She also knows that she has to be willing to “take risks” when aspiring to be the best in her field.

Sarah would like to go to school for veterinary medicine. She has a “true love” for animals and a “passion for helping”. She had the opportunity to meet a veterinarian and it helped her realized that she could go to college for something she has always been interested in.

Subtheme b: Career choices. Along with the decision to attend college, all of the participants have an idea of what career they would like to pursue. For many of the participants, their career choices are due to their interests and hobbies. Some of the participants share that the possibilities became more realistic for them when they had the opportunity to encounter individuals already in their career field of interest. This was especially true for Katherine and Serena who are both very interested in an art career. They are both very talented artists and share a desire to pursue careers in art. A career in art became reality for Serena when visiting an artist on a Girl Scout trip:

Before I, for some reason I hadn’t considered art as a career. I knew my mom did it, but she wasn’t as successful as famous painters and stuff, so I never considered it until Girl Scouts took us on a trip to see an artist. And, she was so successful and she was just doing what she loved – just simply.

Although Serena’s mom is an artist, it was still difficult for her to realize that she could have a career in art. For Serena, it is important to see someone succeeding in the field she wants to pursue. Serena wants to be good at what she does, she wants to be a success. Katherine, too, wants a career in art, and possibly psychology. For her, the Girl Scouts after school group “opened her up to different careers” that she was not aware of.
Although she wants to be an artist, teaching is also “in the back of her head” since her mom is a “statistics professor.”

Yana “wants to go into nursing.” She shares what has made her want to go into this profession:

I kind of noticed that I kind of like being around people. I can’t really – like I’m not the type of person that just likes sitting around just writing papers. I’m just one of those people that likes to be out there helping people, saving lives, and so that’s really why I chose this profession.

Darcy shares Yana’s passion for helping people, but has a different career choice. Darcy wants to be a homicide investigator and describes why she has chosen this career field:

What kind of made me decide to do that? I don’t know, I’m really into CSI and all that stuff on TV, and so, I mean, when I watched those episodes at the end, when they finally found out who did it, I don’t know, it something inside of me feels good because they gave that person justice and I mean, I want to be that person – so that bring other people justice.

Although Darcy had media influences when thinking about a career choice, the Girl Scouts after school group helped her realize that she wants to “help people” and “do good” which assisted in the decision to choose the profession of a homicide investigator that “brings other people justice.” Sarah is interested in providing a helping hand, too. However, instead of helping people, she would like to help animals. She has “always loved animals” and they “make her happy.” She decided that if she can make a career of what she loves, then she will work hard to “achieve her goal of becoming a veterinarian.”

Jodie and Ellen would both like to go into the field of education. Jodie would like to be an elementary school teacher and Ellen would like to be a behavior disorder teacher. Both participants were inspired to become teachers by individuals in their schools. For Jodie, teachers inspired her to go into education and for Ellen, peers in the
classroom inspired her to become a teacher. Jodie explained that two teachers from middle school encouraged her to become a teacher:

Two teachers. Mr. Brown and Mr. Little. They were just… like, they knew how to teach well, and they didn’t, like, how do I say this… everybody around them, they like talked to the same way and…

She also believes that teachers are “for the most part, fair people” and “sometimes, they are someone you can look up to.”

Ellen also provided her desire to become a teacher:

I would really like to be like the teacher. A behavior disorder teacher – or all the bad kids in school – but they think if you’re understanding – if someone just gives them a chance, they could be somebody better.

Ellen has an aunt that is a behavior disorder teacher, but she is also inspired by having “kids in her classes who have behavior disorders.”

**Theme 4: Get Involved, Stay Involved**

Each participant was involved in some type of activity in and outside of school before and during their involvement with a Girl Scouts after school program. All of the participants shared the activities in which they were involved in and many of them shared the same reasons why they were involved in the various activities, including a Girl Scouts after school program. The theme “Get Involved, Stay Involved” had two subthemes emerge: “My interests and passions” and “New people and friends.”

**Subtheme a: My interests and passions.** For many of the participants, they began their involvement in various activities due to their interests and passions. Participants have participated in sports, the arts, and student council. Some of the participants have been involved longer than others, but they have all at least experienced different opportunities.
Ellen has spent most of her time being involved in student council; however, after joining a Girl Scouts after school program, her friends “encouraged her to get involved in theater.” Darcy who is also very involved in student council, spends much of her time with theater as it is a “passion of hers.” Jodie is involved in the arts as well, her main activity is band, where she states that, “band is a lifestyle.” She really enjoys band as it has always been “an interest for her” and introduced to her by her sister.

Yana enjoys “expanding her talents” in piano and singing in the choir at church. She likes that she can go to church and have “more to do than just listen to the sermons.” She has become more dedicated to singing and playing the piano because of the improvements she has made. Sarah has also worked on talents that she has in gymnastics and track. She enjoys running track because her time spent with her coaches and teammates helps her “learn how to build muscle.”

Serena and Katherine both share a passion and interest in art. Serena enjoys drawing, painting, and “exploring art on her own.” In the past, she participated in soccer, volleyball, and tennis; however, she liked art better because she could “keep to herself.” Katherine enjoys “expressing herself through color combinations” and drawing. She plays sports, mainly tennis, but it is “because her mom pushes her to play.” She is most interested in art and “drawing comics.”

Subtheme b: New people and friends. Each participant expressed how they felt about meeting new people, meeting new friends, developing relationships, and the support and encouragement that each provides. This shows that having people surround them during the adolescent years is very important to them. They are interested in
meeting new people and finding connections with them. Here, they are connected through a Girl Scouts after school program.

“The whole concept of Girl Scouts is to meet other girls,” Serena explains. That is what “definitely helped” her learn to interact with other people. She shares how she has met new people in the after school program:

I finally got to discover more people in my school and I got to make more friends and find out how many different kinds of people there are and I’m sure there’s much more too. But, if kind of got me started – it pushed me along.

Serena started to make new friends, despite her shy, introverted personality. Yana made new friends after opening up as well. She had the opportunity to get to meet new people on a Girl Scout trip to Missouri:

We all gathered up and went to Missouri one summer to visit an artist. And, I Just remember, like there were only two girls in the van that I actually knew. But, like along the way, like I met all the other girls, like memorized their names and like, like, like made, like, they were all – became all my friends.

She also added:

Like, I’m still friends with them now, and like, I still even have pictures from that trip and it’s just a good memory that I have.

Jodie explained that she has become “better friends with the people that were in the group” and that the group “connects.” She said that they were “just a bunch of crazy people that got each other.” She believes that they all connect so well because of the “time they spent together.” Darcy has a similar experience as Jodie of becoming better friends with the girls in her after school program. She explained what helped the friendships develop in her group:

Um, it’s a really good program. I really enjoyed it in my year – yeh. I was taking it after school. I mean it’s a time that like me and some of my friends come together and I mean, we just – we learn stuff but we also have a really fun time and, we kind of talk – actually we can talk about anything and I think we did talk about almost everything. But, I mean, I don’t think anyone was really scared to
show who they really are. So, I think a lot of them learned that. I mean, I did too, through this after school program and the people that helped.

For Darcy, being open and having the ability to be herself allowed her friendships to grow stronger and develop throughout the year. Along with meeting new people, Ellen shared the fun experiences that she had, especially when traveling with her after school group:

Um… probably just getting to know just all the girls – and all the leaders. They were fun, getting to just – getting to know new people – having those experiences, just not being in Lincoln – just having the experiences of actually getting to go to Omaha. Getting to go to a classy little dinner fundraisers that – what – I can’t tell you what it’s called – can’t even remember – going to the Pizza Machine and just hanging out and just having fun because of all the hard work and everything we had done to accomplish to get there, to that.

Ellen found ways to find new friends and build relationships outside of the normal meeting time. While going on trips and celebratory events, she took the initiative to get to know new people and discover new friends. Through these trips, Sarah was able to meet new people that were “older than her” and had a chance to have new people to “look up to.”

**Researcher Reflexivity**

After reading through the transcriptions, coding responses, and emerging themes and subthemes, I could not help but think about my own personal experiences as an adolescent girl to better understand the experiences the participants were sharing with me. Going through the responses given by each of them, I found that I could relate to the girls on some level, either when thinking back on my days in middle school and high school or when thinking about the current issues I face as a young adult woman today. Below, I will reintroduce some of the responses they provided by summing up their thoughts followed by my own personal thoughts and experiences.
For many of the participants, the individuals that each of them had the most direct contact with were described when naming the leaders and role models in their lives. The leaders and role models they described were their mothers, grandmothers, sisters and brothers. Some of the qualities they valued include responsibility, initiative, trustworthiness, and compassion. When thinking back on my own experiences of defining leaders and role models in my life, the first on my list include my own family members, especially my dad and my aunt. As a young girl, these were the two individuals that were the most responsible and trustworthy in my eyes, not to mention the individuals that were constantly in my life. I looked to them for help, advice, and other needs I couldn’t provide on my own. The more I looked up to them as leaders, the more I wanted to be like them, the more I was “role modeling” their behaviors. The theme “Lead by Example” emerged due to the frequency of the participants sharing how leadership is introduced by someone who has come before them who encompasses the qualities that they valued most. Leadership, perhaps good leadership, must be shown to these girls before they can begin practicing leadership on their own.

When girls described the changes within themselves and the development of their self-confidence, they were never on their own; rather, the changes occurred while they were interacting with groups and other people. As the participants were surrounded by people and various activities, they began to learn more about themselves and how they fit into their communities. Prior to the exposure of new people and activities, they were fearful of themselves, other people, and certain tasks. They needed to be exposed to the different possibilities to envision themselves going to college and choosing to pursue
careers. In many cases, if the participants did not “try their hand” at a particular activity, they would not have been aware of what they were capable of.

“If you don’t try, you’ll never know” was a saying that my dad repeated throughout middle school, high school and even today as a young adult. I believe this saying stands true for the participants in this research study. Before trying to speak in front of a crowd, Jodie was terrified to say a word in front of an audience, even if it was a group of elementary school girls. Learning to interact with people, helped Serena understand that she is not the introvert she thought she was; instead, that she really likes being around people. Yana decided to try something new and get involved in her community, after doing so; she built new relationships with people and realized more of her characteristics. Exposure and the act of trying helped many of the participants learn more about themselves and have a better vision of their futures.

Involvement in extracurricular activities and this Girl Scouts after school program was something that each of the participants truly had in common. Each of them were involved in various student organizations and sports offered by their middle school or high school. Additionally, for these participants, it was important for them to be genuinely involved in their various activities and not just on the “sideline” as Yana stated. Even if they did not hold a leadership position, the participants still wanted to serve their organizations and the individuals that were involved in them. For example, Ellen explained that even though she was not elected secretary of student council, she still helped the secretary with some of their duties.
Being more than just a “general member” is something that I can most definitely relate to. When I was beginning my student council/government journey in 8th grade, it was very rare that I joined student organizations to simply “be there” or better yet, “take up space” as I would say. I felt the need to always run for office or take on a project for the organizations I was involved in. It was important for me to be on the “front line” and help as much as I could. I had a difficult time saying “no” to anything that was asked of me, and at times, still struggle with that today. However, as I took on those responsibilities, I felt as though my peers, teachers, and advisors needed me. They needed me to execute whatever duty was assigned to me, which made me feel like a leader of my organizations.

While getting involved and having responsibilities was important to me, so was getting to know the people I was working with. Like the participants in this research study, it was fun for me to meet new people and make new friends. As I got older and became more involved in statewide organizations and programs, I was able to meet other friends around the state, which in turn, made me feel more confident in myself knowing that I had a group of friends and support system in many different places. It was important for the girls in this research study to meet new people and make new friends as they began to understand that that is what made the group worthwhile. They began to see that others, individuals outside of their family and immediate group of friends, believed in them as they took on different tasks. On top of all the lessons they learned about themselves and their development, at the end of the day, each of the girls enjoyed this Girl Scouts after school program because it was fun. It was fun because they had a
chance to “just be girls” and made new friends all while learning a little something about themselves.

**Conclusion**

Each of the seven participants describes a positive experience with a Girl Scouts after school program. The participants openly discussed their activities, their thoughts on leadership, what they have learned about themselves, and their future goals. The shared experiences offer a context to help the researcher better understand how this Girl Scouts after school program has impacted each of the participants’ lives. A Girl Scouts after school program has given these participants an understanding of leadership, self-awareness, future goals, and involvement. Chapter 5 will present the discussion of the findings of the study.
Chapter V  
Discussion  

Purpose Statement  

The purpose of this qualitative, interview-based study was to explore the leadership experiences of girls involved in a Girl Scouts after school program. In order to explore and understand the effectiveness of a Girl Scouts after school program, the researcher conducted semi-structured, face to face interviews to listen to the stories of adolescent girls involved in a Girl Scouts after school program and the role it plays in their lives.  

Discussion of Findings  

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore the leadership experiences of adolescent girls involved in the Girls Scouts after school programs. The researcher was particularly interested in exploring their experiences based on the following four research questions:  

1. How do girls describe their experiences, activities, and interests before joining this Girl Scouts after school program?  
2. How do girls describe their experiences, activities, and interests since joining this Girl Scouts after school program?  
3. How do girls describe their leadership philosophies since coming to this Girl Scouts after school program?  
4. How do girls describe how this Girl Scouts after school program has impacted their lives?
These research questions allowed the researcher to keep a clear focus on exploring and understanding the participants’ experiences with the after school program. Seven interview questions along with follow-up and clarification questions were used during face to face interviews to answer the above. Based on the responses provided by each of the participants and the phenomenological methodology and analysis, the researcher developed insights on their experiences that also coincided with the research questions.

1. **How do girls describe their experiences, activities, and interests before joining this Girl Scouts after school program?**

   Each participant shared in the experiences, activities, and interests they were involved in prior to joining a Girl Scouts after school program. Many of the participants were involved in activities that related to their interests, passions, and talents. Few mentioned that they were attending activities because of their parents. Participants eventually joined a Girl Scouts after school program for many reasons, including the girl-only environment (Schoenberg & Salmond, 2007, p. 10), meeting new friends, or that they just didn’t have anything else to do and anywhere else to go after school. Ellen explains that she would “just sit outside, in the hallway, and hang out with friends” until she learned that she could join the “girls group”. Also, Sarah shares that once “gymnastics and track were over for me, I didn’t have anything else to do, so I joined the after school group.”

   Being involved in extracurricular activities and after school groups like the Girl Scouts allows girls to have another opportunity outside of the classroom to
2. *How do girls describe their experiences, activities, and interests since joining this* 
*Girl Scouts after school program?*

Many of the participants shared that their activities stayed the same for the most part. However, their interests were broadened and found that they were good at things they were not aware of prior to joining the program. Yana said, “I like, want to get involved in the community now, and like, it’s like, you can be involved and not stand on the side lines.” Interests that were not quite developed prior to joining the after school program allowed Ellen to get involved in theater. She stated, “my friends in the girls group got me involved in theater” and “I learned so much about the stage, there is more than just acting and what goes on in front of people.” Participants also opened up and became less shy after meeting new people and friends in the after school program. Serena and Jodie both feel comfortable meeting new people and talking in front of them.

3. *How do girls describe their leadership philosophies since coming to this Girl Scouts after school program?*

For many of the participants, they had a difficult time defining leadership or sharing their opinions on leadership. Instead, to describe leadership, they had someone they have deemed a leader in their life and described qualities of that individual. From there, they were able to describe what leadership meant to them. For almost all of the participants a leader needed to be a role model, someone who was responsible and someone who could take control. Other common responses included someone who thought about others and not just themselves, the idea of leaders being followers, and ensuring that each opinion is heard by the leader of the group. Eagly
(2007) supports the notion of being a role model that “elicits pride and respect and presents a vision” to those that are following their example (p. 3).

For Yana her thoughts on leadership prior to joining a Girl Scouts after school program was centered on being “bossy”. She said, “Before, I just thought leaders were bossy.” She continues by saying, “But, now I like, like know that leaders are someone you look up to, they are not a boss.” Serena also shares that she realized there are “layers of leadership” and that leaders have to have “much more qualities than I thought.” It should also be noted that for each of the participants, they mentioned a family member as a person they considered a good leader in their life. It was easy for them to share the leadership qualities that they saw in their family members, such as loyalty, putting family first, success, overcoming obstacles, and never giving up. Yana and Serena provide thoughts on what makes a good leader that is supported by current research. Eagly (2007) explains that “good leadership is increasingly defined in terms of qualities of a good coach or teachers rather than a highly authoritative person who merely tells others what to do” (p. 3).

4. **How do girls describe how this Girl Scouts after school program has impacted their lives?**

New friends were made, new experiences were had, interests were broadened, futures were made clear, and last but not least, there was enough fun to go around the world and back. For each of the participants, they had an enjoyable experience, one that Serena explained that she “would always remember” especially “the trips and new activities” she was able to experience.
Many studies have shown that structured enrichment programs, such as a Girl Scouts after school program, have “afforded opportunities to strategize long-term goals” (Shernoff, 2010, p. 333). For these participants, the future is bright for each of them as they have an idea of what they would like to do after graduating from high school. This is closer to reality for some more than others, but they are aware of what it is that they would like to accomplish in their lives. Going to college is a top priority for each of the participants as Katherine explained, “to be a top leader, you have to have a good education.” Based on their interests and passions, they are able to picture themselves in the career fields of their choosing. Many of them may change, but they have seen themselves through others and know that they can be “a success, too” as Yana stated.

Implications

The purpose of this research study was to explore the leadership experiences of adolescent girls attending low income schools. While exploring the participants’ individual leadership experience, the researcher also gained insight on their whole experience with a Girl Scouts after school program and how it has impacted their lives. Their responses have given insight to practitioners and individuals that are interested in creating after school programs geared towards adolescent girls. We are now aware of their needs as they are developing self-confidence, future planning, and building relationships. Through positive role models and activities, participants were able to gain their own understanding of leadership for themselves and others. Most importantly, this research study gave the participants an opportunity to voice their own personal experiences with a Girl Scouts after school program.
**Essence**

The essential unifying meaning of all the lived experiences describes an experiential learning process that looks to the future. Each of the participants explained how they have observed, practiced, reflected, and evaluated what has been revealed to them during this Girl Scouts after school program. As they describe their experiences, they each speak about the future by sharing how they have changed and what they plan to do in the coming days, weeks, months, and years. As they described what they have learned about themselves within this program, they have also described how this program has impacted their futures.

**Future Research**

More research is necessary to continue the exploration of leadership experiences among adolescent girls attending low income schools involved in leadership programs. As this study focused on a very small group of adolescent girls involved in a Girl Scouts after school program in a Midwest city, it only gave a small representation of what adolescent girls are experiencing throughout these programs. There are other areas to explore when attempting to understand leadership experiences of adolescent girls.

First, in order to gain a better understanding of the participants, it may be helpful to ask additional questions regarding the participant’s life situation in future research. Asking questions about siblings, parents, income and living arrangements may provide more insight on the individual participant as they share their experiences. In this research study, the researcher chose not to ask additional personal questions. However, after collecting and analyzing the data, the researcher felt that the additional information may
have provided greater insight on the individual and would have made for a more rich
description of each participant.

Second, when exploring leadership programs, researchers should also explore the
relationship between the youth and adult (Schoenberg & Salmond, 2007, p. 9). This study
did not focus on youth and adult mentoring relationships. A few of the participants
brought up the “leaders” in their respective groups as a positive aspect of their
experience. However, adults do play a very vital role in the after school programs as they
do in various Girl Scouts programs (p. 10). The researcher would advise incorporating
the volunteer facilitators in the research study. Along with interviewing the adolescent
girls, interviewing the volunteer facilitators about their personal experiences with their
role and experiences with the girls would add greater depth to the research study.
Exploring this aspect of leadership programs will provide additional information on the
development of the adolescent girl as she experiences opportunities to learn more about
leadership, self-awareness, future goals, and involvement within her school and
community.

Third, look to focus on adolescent girls involved in after school programs from
low income families. This study focused on girls attending low income schools;
therefore, the researcher was uncertain on whether or not the adolescent girl was from a
low income family. Information was not provided regarding the socioeconomic status of
the participant and her family. Since there is a lack of literature focused on this
population of adolescent girls, this research study has given some perspective on what
these girls are experiencing. However, by asking for more detailed information regarding
their socioeconomic status, family and/or living arrangements, interested parties may be
able to provide additional assistance based on their needs as they are typically overlooked (Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008, p. 219).

“Adolescent girls from low-income/working-class backgrounds and/or young women of color may be particularly engaged in a struggle between speaking one’s voice and invisibility, where silence and invisibility can be viewed as compulsory to gaining entry into the dominating patriarchy (p. 219).”

Hoyt & Kennedy (2008) describe that there may be additional struggles that this population of girls may face on top of the challenging issues that a majority of adolescent girls face on a day to day basis. In order to ensure that this population of girls are finding their voice and getting involved in leadership opportunities, practitioners must understand their needs and provide the additional support that may be necessary to aide in their success.

Fourth, in addition to socioeconomic status, adolescent girls of color can and should be more deeply researched (Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008, p. 219). This research study did not specifically seek a particular race or ethnic background of participants. In fact, only two of the participants identified themselves as another race/ethnic background other than White and Not Hispanic or Latina. The researcher was not particularly interested in leadership experiences of adolescent girls specific to any race or ethnic background; instead, the researcher was interested in gaining a general understanding of what adolescent girls were experiencing in a Girl Scouts after school program. Just as focusing on adolescent girls of low income/working class backgrounds, there is a need to focus on adolescent girls color to attend to their needs based on the additional struggles they may face (p. 219).
Fifth, research that gains the parents’ perspective of a Girl Scouts after school program may be an interesting factor to add to the research as well. Parents/guardians could be interviewed to share on their experiences with a Girl Scouts after school program. Also, they can give greater insight on how their daughter is behaving at home and what changes are apparent to them as they spend time with their daughter at the end of the day and in more personal settings.

Lastly, the research study could include demographics of the participants’ community and school. By exploring the current programs provided by the community and school would give insight to the researcher on other factors that play a role in the participant’s life as she is learning more about herself, leadership, and what the future holds. Understanding this information will also provide insight on how the school and community impacts the after school program (Holleman, 2010, p. 411).

**Conclusion**

This study explored the leadership experiences of adolescent girls involved in a Girl Scouts after school programs. During the interviews, participants were able to reflect on their experiences and how a Girl Scouts after school program has impacted their lives. Participants commonly shared stories about their thoughts on leadership, becoming more aware of themselves, clarifying their future aspirations, and the importance of being involved in activities and the lives of others. This study demonstrated the positive experiences had by adolescent girls involved in a Girl Scouts after school program during the 2009-2010 academic year.

It is my hope that this study will help with the continued development of leadership programs for adolescent girls as they face challenging issues in their daily
lives. The findings that are provided in this study are intended to give practitioners insight on the experiences described by the participants themselves to gain a better understanding of their needs within leadership development programs. As practitioners study the findings of this research, areas within their programs can be strengthened in ordered to provide quality programming for girls within their communities. It is with great hope that all adolescent girls will have the opportunity to grow and discover themselves in a safe and positive environment.
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May 24, 2010

Cyndi Munson
Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication
2835 Fletcher Ave Apt 79 Lincoln, NE 68504

Gina Matkin
Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication
300 AGH, UNL, 68583-0709

IRB Number: 20100510642
Project ID: 10642
Project Title: Insights on Leadership Experiences Among Adolescent Girls in Girl Scouts After School Programs

Dear Cyndi:

This letter is to officially notify you of the approval of your project by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. It is the Board’s opinion that you have provided adequate safeguards for the rights and welfare of the participants in this study based on the information provided. Your proposal is in compliance with this institution's Federal Wide Assurance 00002258 and the DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46). This project has been reviewed as Expedited category 7.

Date of EX Review: 05/22/2010

You are authorized to implement this study as of the Date of Final Approval: 05/24/2010. This approval is Valid Until: 05/23/2011.

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:
* Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;
* Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;
* Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;
* Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or
* Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

For projects which continue beyond one year from the starting date, the IRB will request continuing review and update of the research project. Your study will be due for continuing review as indicated above. The investigator must also advise the Board when this study is finished or discontinued by completing the enclosed Protocol Final Report form and returning it to the Institutional Review Board.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 472-6965.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
Mario Scalora, Ph.D.
Chair for the IRB

http://us.mail.yahoo.com/launch?gx=1&rand=15vg240btt1938

7/21/2010
Dear Girl Scout After School Volunteer,

My name is Cyndi Munson and I am a current graduate student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in the Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication Department working towards my Master of Science degree in Leadership Education. I am currently in the process of completing my thesis work. For that reason, I am contacting you to request your assistance.

The title of my thesis project is “Insights on Leadership Experiences Among Adolescent Girls in Girl Scouts After School Programs”.

The purpose of this study is to explore the leadership experiences of girls of low income schools and underserved populations. Research has shown that there are few studies that have focused on leadership experiences from girls in low income schools and underserved populations.

In order to gain insight on their leadership experiences, I am in need of your assistance. Since you all work directly with the girls, I am asking that you all nominate girls to participate in this research study. In order for girls to be nominated, two requirements must be met: 1.) Involved in the Girl Scouts After School Program since August 2009, and 2.) Actively participates in the Girl Scouts After School Program and other activities provided by Girl Scouts.

Once the girls have been nominated, I will come by the after school group to give nominated girls a cover letter explaining the research study, an adult consent form, a youth consent form, and a self-addressed stamped envelope to return the consent letters.

After nomination and given consent, I will conduct face-to-face interviews with the participants and attend groups for observation purposes.

Please submit your nominations to me at cyndi_munson@yahoo.com no later than one week from today. You may also contact me by phone at 580-678-2723. There is not a limit on nominations for this research study. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask!

Thank you in advance for your assistance. I greatly appreciate your involvement in my educational endeavor.

Sincerely,

Cyndi A. Munson
ALEC Graduate Student, Leadership Education
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
cyndi_munson@yahoo.com
M: 580-678-2723
Dear Girl Scout After School Volunteer,

Last week, I sent out an email to you all to nominate girls to participate in a research study to assist in completing my Master’s thesis. Below you will find the email that was sent out to you one week ago from today. If you are willing and able, please submit nominations to me no later than one week from today. If you do not have girls that meet these requirements, please submit an email that says, “N/A”.

Thank you in advance for your assistance in my educational endeavor.

Dear Girl Scout After School Volunteer,

My name is Cyndi Munson and I am a current graduate student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in the Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication Department working towards my Master of Science degree in Leadership Education. I am currently in the process of completing my thesis work. For that reason, I am contacting you to request your assistance.

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Thank you in advance for your assistance. I greatly appreciate your involvement in my educational endeavor.

Sincerely,

Cyndi A. Munson
ALEC Graduate Student, Leadership Education
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
cyndi_munson@yahoo.com
M: 580-678-2723
Dear Girl Scout After School Volunteer,

Thank you for submitting nominations for this research study. Your assistance is greatly appreciated. I look forward to working on my research and learning about each participant’s experiences with the Girl Scouts After School Program.

If you are interested in the findings, please let me know and I will forward you the results of this research study.

Again, thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Cyndi A. Munson
ALEC Graduate Student, Leadership Education
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

cyndi_munson@yahoo.com
580-678-2723
Hello _______________________!

My name is Cyndi Munson and I am a graduate student at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln in the Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication Department. Last week, I sent your student home with a cover letter, adult consent form, and youth assent form for you all to review. These forms were provided for you to be informed of the research study I am conducting for my Master’s thesis project. I have received the signed forms and am now ready to schedule a day and time to interview your student.

I have planned to interview her at her school during her after school group. However, if this time does not work well for you and your student, I can certainly work around your schedule.

Do you have a preference of when you would like your student to be interviewed?

I will call the school to schedule a meeting place for the interview to take place.

Thank you for taking the time to read over the forms, sign them, and send them back to me. I appreciate your efforts in helping me in my educational endeavor and the future of your student’s program.
Hello _______________________!

My name is Cyndi Munson and I am a graduate student at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln in the Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication Department. Last week, I sent your student home with a cover letter, adult consent form, and youth assent form for you all to review. These forms were provided for you to be informed of the research study I am conducting for my Master’s thesis project.

Did you receive these forms?

Answer is YES: Great! If you are willing to allow your student to participate, please send the forms back in the self addressed, stamped envelopes to me. After receiving the forms, I will contact you to schedule a day and time to conduct the interviews with your student.

Answer is NO: I am sorry to hear that. If you are willing to allow your student to participate, I can send you another set of forms to look over. A few days after sending the forms to you, I will contact you to make sure you received them.

Thank you for taking the time to talk to me. I really appreciate your willingness to help me in my educational endeavor and the future of your student’s program.
Dear Parent/Guardian,

My name is Cyndi Munson and I am a current graduate student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in the Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication Department working towards my Master of Science degree in Leadership Education. I am currently in the process of completing my thesis work. The title of my thesis project is “Insights on Leadership Experiences Among Adolescent Girls in Girl Scouts After School Programs”. Since your student is involved in a Girl Scouts after school program, she has been invited to participate in this thesis project.

As a former volunteer and staff member of the Girl Scouts Spirit of Nebraska Council, I have become very interested in the leadership experiences of your student. The purpose of this thesis project is to learn about their experiences prior to, during, and after their involvement in the program. In order to learn about their experiences, with your permission, an interview and observation process must take place.

Attached to this letter, you will find an adult consent form, youth assent form, and self addressed, stamped envelope. The adult consent form is for you, the parent/guardian, to sign if you agree to allow your student to participate in this project. The youth consent form is for your student to sign if they agree to participate in this project. Please send the consent forms back to me, in the mail, by placing them in the self addressed, stamped envelope.

I will be making a follow up phone call once I receive the consent forms from you. This phone call will be made to schedule a day and time to conduct a face-to-face interview with your daughter. Also, if time permits, I will notify you of the date that I will be observing your student’s after school group meeting.

I hope that you will agree to allow your student to participate in this thesis project.

If you have any questions regarding your student’s involvement in this research study or the research study in general, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone at 580.678.2723 or by email at cyndi_munson@yahoo.com.

Sincerely,

Cyndi A. Munson
PARENTAL INFORMED CONSENT FORM

IRB #

INSIGHTS ON LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES AMONG ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN GIRL SCOUTS AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

You are invited to permit your student to participate in this thesis project. The following information is provided in order to help you make an informed decision whether or not to allow your student to participate. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask.

Your student is eligible to participate in this study because your student has been involved in the Girl Scouts after school program in her middle or high school. Your student will also be asked if she is willing to participate.

The purpose of this study is to explore the leadership experiences of girls of low income schools and underserved populations. Few studies have focused on leadership experiences from these populations.

This study will take approximately 60 minutes of your student’s time. This study will be conducted at her middle or high school. In addition, I will observe her behavior during her after school group, if time permits. In order to know and understand her experiences, I will interview her by asking her seven questions focused on her involvement prior to, during, and after the Girl Scouts after school program. I will also ask her a question pertaining to her future aspirations.

There are no known risks associated with this research.

As a result of participation in this thesis project, it is possible that your student’s experiences will impact the continuation and improvement of the Girl Scouts after school program. The information obtained from this thesis project may help to better understand the needs of adolescent girls for leadership development.

Any information obtained during the thesis project which could identify your student will be kept strictly confidential. The audiotape will be kept in a locked box in the investigator’s apartment and will be destroyed at the end of the project on Friday, August 13, 2010. The information obtained in this thesis project may be published in journals or presented at meetings, but your student’s identity will be kept strictly confidential.

Your student’s rights as a participant have been explained to you. You may ask any questions concerning the research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the thesis project. Or you may call the investigator at any time by phone at 580.678.2723. Please contact the investigator:

- if you want to voice concerns or complaints about the thesis project
- in the event of a research related injury

Please contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board at

300 Agricultural Hall / P.O. Box 830700 / Lincoln, NE 68583-0700 / (402) 472-2807 / FAX (402) 472-5863
(402) 472-6965 for the following reasons:
- you wish to talk to someone other than the research staff to obtain answers to
  questions about your rights as a research participant
- to voice concerns or complaints about the research
- to provide input concerning the research process
- in the event the study staff could not be reached

Participation in this thesis project is voluntary. You are free to decide not to enroll your
student in this thesis project. You can refuse to participate or withdraw your child at any time
without harming her or your relationship with the researchers at the University of Nebraska-
Lincoln, (or any other institutions or organizations), or in any other way receive penalty or loss
of benefits in which you are otherwise entitled.

DOCUMENTATIONS OF INFORMED CONSENT

YOU ARE VOLUNTARILY MAKING A DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO ALLOW
YOUR STUDENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS THESIS PROJECT. YOUR SIGNATURE
CERTIFIES THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO ALLOW YOUR CHILD TO
PARTICIPATE HAVING READ AND UNDERSTOOD THE INFORMATION
PRESENTED. YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM TO KEEP.

________________________________________  __________________________
Child’s Name                                            Date

________________________________________  __________________________
Signature of Parent                                     Date

IN MY JUDGEMENT THE PARENT/LEGAL GUARDIAN IS VOLUNTARILY AND
KNOWINGLY GIVING INFORMED CONSENT AND POSSESS THE LEGAL
CAPACITY TO GIVE INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH
STUDY.

________________________________________  __________________________
Signature of Investigator                               Date

IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

PRIMARY INVESTIGATOR
Cyndi A. Munson, M: 580.678.2723
YOUTH ASSENT FORM

INSIGHTS ON LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES AMONG ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN THE GIRL SCOUTS AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

I am inviting you to participate in this thesis project because you are an adolescent girl that has been involved in the Girl Scouts after school program, and I am interested in learning about your leadership experience prior to, during, and after being involved in the program.

This research will take about 60 minutes to do. First, you will fill out a form that will provide information on your racial background and ethnic background. Also, this form will have a place for you to choose a false name, called a pseudonym, in order to keep your identity confidential.

After filling out the form, all you have to do is share your experiences with the Girl Scouts after school program by answering seven questions during a face-to-face interview with me. Each question will be about what activities you enjoy participating in during Girl Scouts and after Girl Scouts. There will also be a question on what you would like to do with your future. Your answers will be recorded so that they can be transcribed into text.

Your responses will be strictly confidential. There will be no way for anyway to know the responses you gave. I may publish a summary of everyone’s responses or present such a summary at a meeting, but your identity and your responses would be totally confidential.

I will also ask your parents/guardians for their permission for you to do this study. Please talk this over with them before you decide whether or not to participate.

If you have any questions at any time, please ask me.

__________________________  _______________________
Signature of Subject        Date

__________________________  _______________________
Signature of Investigator    Date

INVESTIGATOR
Cyndi A. Munson, M: 580.678.2723
DEMOGRAPHIC AND PSEUDONYM FORM

Providing information on your racial background and ethnic background is completely voluntary.

The participant’s racial background is: (please check as many as apply) **

- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- White
- Other (specify ________________ )
- No Response

The participant’s ethnic background is: (please check one) **

- Hispanic or Latina
- Not Hispanic or Latina
- No Response

**The racial background and ethnic background responses are based on the 2009-2010 Girl Scouts Girl Registration form.

The researcher has given the participant the freedom to choose their own pseudonym for this thesis project. A pseudonym is used as a false name in a thesis project to ensure that the participant’s identity is not revealed. Please place the pseudonym you have chosen on the line provided.

PSEUDONYM: ____________________________________________

AGE:__________ GRADE:__________
Interview Protocol

Pseudonym _____________________  Date ______________________

School/Site ____________________  Location ________________

Introduction

Thank you for participating in this research study by agreeing to answer a few questions about your experiences with the Girl Scouts after school program. This interview will last approximately 60 minutes, and with your consent (approval), will be recorded for the purpose of transcription (our conversation will be written out in text) and eventual analysis. You may terminate (end) the interview at any time throughout the process. We will begin the interview now.

Are you ready to begin?

________________________________________________________________________
<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Tell me about your experiences, activities, and interests before joining the program.</td>
<td>Observer Comments:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2) Since joining the program, have your interests, activities, and experiences changed? In what ways?

Observer Comments:
3) **What are you learning from the program?**
   Please give me some specific examples of activities or experiences that have contributed to your learning.

<p>| Observer Comments: |  |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Observer Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4) What are your thoughts on leadership and what makes a good leader?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5) Have your thoughts on leadership and what makes a good leader changed since coming to the program? If so, how and why?</td>
<td>Observer Comments:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) What is different about your life, your goals, and plans for the future since joining the program? Please give some specific examples.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Observer Comments:</td>
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<tr>
<td>7) What else would you like to tell me about your experiences with the program?</td>
<td>Observer Comments:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The interview is now over. Thank you for sharing your experiences with me in this interview!
As a transcriptionist for the Insights on Leadership Experiences Among Adolescent Girls in the Girl Scouts After School Program study, I recognize my responsibility as an ethical transcriptionist. I understand that all data is confidential. Therefore, I will not share this information, nor will I use it in any way for my own research or benefit.

[Signature]

[Date: 6-11-10]
As a data coder/analyst for the Insights on Leadership Experiences Among Adolescent Girls in the Girl Scouts After School Program study, I recognize my responsibility as an ethical researcher. I have been through CITI/IRB Training. I understand that all data is confidential. Therefore, I will not share this information, nor will I use it in any way for my own research or benefit.

Signature

Date
Thursday, July 8, 2010

External Review of Qualitative Study

The following is a summary of my external review completed on a qualitative research study undertaken by Cyndi A. Munson, graduate student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The title for this qualitative study was “Insights on Leadership Experiences Among Adolescent Girls in Girl Scouts After School Programs”.

The following took place during the peer review session:

1. Became familiar with the purpose of the study and the overall research question.
2. Reviewed two sample interview transcripts and met with the researcher to verify coding.
3. Met with the researcher to ask questions and discuss the codes made by the researcher and myself.

From this review, I consider this study to be comprehensive and detailed. Through our discussions the researcher and I realized our codes were very similar and the same themes seemed to be emerging within the two transcripts that I reviewed. I feel that the coding procedure which took place accurately reflects the participants’ viewpoints and will be depicted in that manner throughout the duration of the study. Furthermore, the researcher appears to have been grounded and fair during this project, as she has followed the procedures given to her.

Sincerely,

Mandy Ronen
External Reviewer
MASTER CODE LIST:

Leader
Better leader
Follower
Loyal
Not the say all
Considerate of others
Listener
Caring
Steps up
Initiative
Role model
Look up to
Good person
No clear idea of a good leader
Good leader is a good follower
Does the right thing
Accountable for his actions
Caring
Respectful
Fair
Good example
Role model
Leaders are bossy
More than a boss
Boss gives orders
Leader is an example – someone others want to be
A leader is involved
Cares for others
Can be a better leader
Trustworthy
Responsible
Never tried to lead people
Leader amongst peers
Respectful
Responsible
Be with other leaders
Want to be a leader
Everybody can be a leader in their own way
Someone works with those that have behavior disorders and they can be leaders, too
Everyone has a chance of being a leader
Leaders listen

Leader (cont’d)
Good leaders are a part of the group
Leaders help accomplish goals
Leaders take control
Make decisions and stand by them
Hopefully followers understand
Leaders are role models
Work hard
Take initiative
Get the job done
Take control
Guide people the correct way
A good leader keeps a level head
Considerate of everyone’s opinions and feelings
Confident
Understanding of followers
Know where they are leading the group
Take responsibility of the people they are leading
Leaders have to have so much more qualities
Understanding
Responsibility
Trust others, they trust you
Awareness of what is going on
Take charge
Always room for improvement
Other people’s opinions matter, too
Responsibility
Respect
Think of others/put others first
Look up to leaders
Take control
Before Girl Scouts, someone who could take control
Never gives up
High achieving
Strives for success
Mirror actions
Dedicated
Has morals and values
Set goals
Fair people
Look up to
Look up to you
Activities
Dance
Volleyball
Theater
Jobs Daughters
Student Council
No time for other activities
Scheduling conflicts
No time
Play (piano) better
Enjoys singing
Always go to church
Piano
Choir
Church
Theater
Band
Band is a lifestyle
Same activities as before
Theater
Student Council
Help student body become a better school
No interest in leadership position for Student Council
Didn’t get Secretary of Student Council
Helps Secretary of Student Council
Gained interest in theater
Girl Scout friends encouraged me to get involved in theater
Director/instructors were fantastic people
Learned about a good leader through Student Council
Soccer
Volleyball
Tennis
Liked to draw, paint, and read
Worked on the computer
Kept to myself
Create websites with friends
Liked art styles in comic books
Fancy and big books let me paint my own pictures
Explore art on my own
Japanese

Activities (cont’d)
Korean
Many activities
Sisters were in theater
Meet people with same interest
Busy
Expand talent (piano)

Friendship/Relationships
Good friend
Friendships grow
New people
New friends
Friends
Be around other people
New friends
Build good relationships
Creativity getting to know others
Met girls – opened up to others
New friends
Still friends
Meet new people
Make friends
Someone will save you by being friendly
Build relationships with others
Became better friends with girls in the group
Just sit with friends
Make more friends
Stayed with few friends
Wasn’t friendly
Practice on how to treat others
Experience being around other people
Not just about me
Likes being around people
Hanging out with different people
Get to know people
Learned how to get to know people, especially when you don’t know anyone
Getting to know people
Relationships help with communication
Getting to know all the girls and leaders
Hanging out
Didn’t make friends because I didn’t interact with others
Active with other people now
Discover more people in my school
Found different kinds of people
Concept of Girl Scouts is to meet other girls
How to interact with others
Like being with others, not much as much

**After School Program**
Helping others
Doing good
Personal enjoyment
Open discussions
Fun
Community involvement
Fun
Volunteer
Community involvement (no side lines)
Went into the community
Fun experiences
Fun
Good memories
Discussed and explained Martin Luther
King, Jr.

**After School Program (cont’d)**
Like having other things and activities to do
in my spare time
Remember all the opportunities
Didn’t travel much
Didn’t have very many art supplies
Didn’t know many art techniques
Try new things
So many different places, trips and activities
Thankful for Girl Scouts
Skeptical of Girl Scouts and activities

**Self-awareness/Development**
Self-confident
Be yourself
Learned more about myself personally
Learned more about my characteristics
Develop personality
Success is for me, too
Knows how to work hard and try
Younger kids look up to me
Work better with kids
Outgoing
Know how to help others
More outgoing
More confident
I can do anything – be anything, even
President
More confident
Definitely changed
Girl Scouts taught me to set my mind to
thing and I can achieve them
Have more passions now
Mature
Accomplishment
Unwilling to participate
Learn so much
Treat each other equally
Advise others to get involved
Afraid to get out there
Learn so much
Shy at first
Nervous about being in front of others
Doesn’t like talking in big crowds
Accomplished

Helped little girls
Fun experiences
Learning new stuff about theater
Someone always needs help in the
community
Different activities: donating books, helping
other girls realize their voice in the
community
Going outside of Lincoln: Omaha dinner
Fundraiser, Pizza Machine
Having fun
Celebrate accomplishments
Trip to see an artist
Don’t have to be stereotypical Girl Scout to
be a Girl Scout
Girl Scout is broader – open arms to anyone
that wants to join
Positive change
Used to be shy

Self-awareness/Development
Introvert
Was very shy when I was younger
Didn’t like to talk much
Pushed me along
Definitely helped
Really to myself at first
Didn’t talk much
Soon opened up
Learning about broader interest
Learned how to be polite
How to express myself in an easier way
Wasn’t girly
Despised all things girly

Future plans/Goals
Unsure of future
No plan of action
Be prepared
Make it happen
Media influences
Homicide Detective/Investigator
Good feeling
Bring others to justice
Wants to go to college
Didn’t know what was out there
Know what I want after high school
Clear view of the future
Serious though about the future
Made a decision on college, but open to other schools
Helping people
Saving lives
Go to college
Teaching
Elementary teaching
Determine future goals
Go to college
Apply for scholarships
What to be in the future
Behavior Disorder teacher
Give students a chance
Pursue passions as a career

Future plans/Goals (cont’d)
Definitely art
Didn’t consider art as a career
Keep talent as an artist sharp
Balance a substantial career, like my mom
Great education, in case art doesn’t work
Yes go to college
Would love to study all art, but I know I need to study other subjects, too
Take language
Unsure of what I wanted to be
Interest just for the moment
Successful and doing what she loved

Group/Team
Being a part of a group
Being on a team
Support
People around her
On a team
Group work
Help each other
Exchange ideas
Talk to each other
Work with each other
Together to help others
Hopes to have the group next year
Wishes the group met in the summer
The way the group connects
We get each other
Spend time together
Be a part of a group that is more than family and school
Accepted into something other than what I’m automatically a part of, like family
Togetherness

Family/Home life
Grandma
Family first
Brother
Sister
Helps family
Mom
Aunt
Aunt is a teacher
Mom
Overcoming obstacles
Single mother of two daughters

Family/Home life
Hard for her, but still juggling jobs and passions
She still leads us and raises us to be better women (me and my sisters)

School/Teachers/Academics
Teachers have impacted my life
Teach well
Treated students equally
Middle school teachers
Students could be somebody
Peers in class with disorders inspired me to be a Behavior Disorder teacher
Take control of the classroom
Relationship with students
Teachers are leaders

Leadership
Role modeling
Strong adult leadership
Lead by example
Leadership is about being an example
Expanded thoughts on leadership
Layers of leadership
INTERVIEW #5 - Serena

— maybe your own personal definition of your opinion on leadership and then what makes a good leader.

INT: My definition of leadership is being able to take control when it’s needed and guide people the correct way. And that’s really hard to accomplish. And, what makes a good leader is someone who can do all that while still keeping a level head and still considering everyone’s opinions and feelings.

Q: Are there specific characteristics that you think a good leader possesses? They definitely have to be confident and understanding of the group they’re leading. And, they have to — I guess this is kind of like confidence — they have to know where they are going and where they are leading everyone — because they have to take responsibility for all the people they’re leading.

Q: Okay. Is there anyone specific in your life that you would say is a great leader or a good leader or has good leader characteristics?

INT: I would say my mom because she’s overcome a lot these past years. Especially being a single mother to two teenage girls and it’s really hard for her, but she’s still juggling jobs — many jobs, and all of her passions are like — she still has time for that and she still leads us and raises us to be better women.