Chapter 6
Girls Leading Outward (GLO):
A School-Based Leadership Intervention
to Promote Resilience for At-Risk Middle
School Girls

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Fostering Resilience in At-Risk Minority Youth

Early adolescence often involves significant increases in adjustment problems, including internalizing problems such as depression and anxiety (Karevold, Royse, Yurinom, & Mathisen, 2009), delinquency, and substance use (Parrington, 2004). Further, youth during this time experience decreases in academic achievement (Dettorre, McConahay, & Crostol, 2009; Fredricks & Eichols, 2002; Ryan & Patrick, 2001), which can negatively impact the trajectory of their life. Indeed, it has been estimated that by high school as many as 40–60% of students become chronically disengaged from school (Klem & Connell, 2004). The transition from childhood to adolescence can be especially challenging for at-risk youth, and youth who do not successfully negotiate this critical transition are at increased risk for academic failure and school dropout, as well as serious forms of psychopathology (Bliss, Marsh, & Cravens, 2009). Early adolescent girls, in particular, are at risk as there is evidence that girls tend to experience more adjustment difficulties than boys during this adolescent transition (Deroose & Brooks-Gunn, 2006). For example, by age 15 the gender difference in depressive disorder is at the adult rate of 2:1 for girls to boys (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2001).

Furthermore, the risk for adjustment difficulties resulting from the adolescent transition may be even greater for African-American and Latinx girls, who often live in communities beset by poverty, crime, and failing schools. Many African-American and Latino children are exposed to a disproportionate amount of risk. Research reveals that 33% of African-American and 31% Latino children live in poverty compared to 11% of White children in the United States (Wight, Chau, & Atun, 2011). Poverty has been linked to lower levels of cognitive functioning,

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1 FROM BERTHOLD AND D.H. SASSIKOIDE (Eds.), RESILIENCE INTERVENTIONS FOR YOUTH IN DIVERSE POPULATIONS, THE SPRINGER SERIES ON HUMAN EXCEPTIONALITY, DOI: 10.1007/978-1-4613-9342-5_6 © SPRINGER SCIENCE+BUSINESS MEDIA NEW YORK 2014
social development, psychological adjustment, and self-esteem, and poor academic achievement (Cauce, Cruz, Corona, & Czaja, 2011). Much of the existing research indicates that African-American and Latino youth face significant challenges and that they are more likely to engage in risky behaviors that can hinder positive development and well-being. Data from the National Survey of American and Black Youth indicate that African-American and Latino youth are more likely to engage in risky behaviors such as drug use, alcohol use, and sexual activity. Furthermore, Latino youth have a higher incidence of depression and anxiety than White youth (Sanz, 2009). The rate of depression among Latino youth in the United States is twice as high as that among White youth (Sanz, 2009). Therefore, it is important to develop interventions that can help support the healthy development of Latino youth.

Interventions that promote resilience are important for helping young people overcome challenges and achieve positive outcomes. Resilience is defined as the capacity to adapt and thrive in the face of adversity. It is important to develop interventions that can build resilience in young people, particularly in communities with high levels of poverty and stress. Interventions that promote resilience can help improve academic achievement, reduce behavioral problems, and reduce the risk of mental health problems. Therefore, it is important to develop interventions that can support the healthy development of Latino youth.
Specifically, this program aims to be an ecologically sensitive intervention targeting at-risk Latina and African-American girls with a focus on having sustained at-risk Latina and African-American girls with a focus on having sustained at-risk Latina and African-American girls. This program aims to provide a positive perspective for middle school girls by helping them understand their role as leaders in their community. The program emphasizes the development of leadership skills, building of self-esteem, and fostering a sense of community. By addressing the specific needs and challenges faced by at-risk Latina and African-American girls, the program aims to provide a supportive and empowering environment that promotes personal growth and development.

The Importance of an Ecological Perspective of Resilience

Resilience extends beyond the concept of a fixed individual trait or quality (Luhtanen, 2006) and is best viewed as a multifaceted phenomenon that encompasses individual, relational, and contextual factors (Masten & Minke, 2009). One major framework guiding research on resilience is the ecological systems theory first proposed by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979), which posits that multiple levels of children's development interact (e.g., home, school, community) and influence each other. This theory suggests that intervention can be designed and implemented at any level to affect development, as long as there is a strong link between the context and the child. For example, programs that focus on strengthening family relationships or improving school and community environments may positively influence children's development.

Recent research has highlighted the importance of an ecological perspective in understanding resilience. For instance, Hincich et al. (2011) point out that contextual factors often contain the determining factors leading to the direction and strength of youth outcomes. Particularly in school-linked after-school programs, students' outcomes are linked to the relationship of the program to the peer context and school culture with which the after-school program has inevitable continuity. These authors refer to the acronym PARC, containing key elements that contribute to outcomes: Program, Activity, Relationship, and Culture.

The acronym SAPEF characterizes features of other after-school programs that are likely to have a range of positive effects: Sequenced, Active, Focused, and Explicit (Duralk & Weissberg, 2007). However, there are two important caveats to keep in mind. While we know the potential of after-school programs is considerable, data show structured curricula is less likely to be feasible and appealing to youth than approaches that are problem-based. Problem-based approaches work despite fluctuating attendance and feature strong youth empowerment and input (Duralk, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010). Second, there is a critical need to think in terms of sustainability and scalability. For either to occur, consideration must be given to the reality of staff capabilities. Specifically, more support is needed for structured interventions if they are to have lasting, tangible effects. Unfortunately, the research in this area still does not provide detailed guidelines for program success.

PARC and SAPEF have complementary programmatic concepts, which emphasize the importance of having a coherent program that recognizes the flexibility required in the after-school context. Programs must be engaging, empowering, active, and not directive, and they must have a clear focus and explicit structure. In addition, youth must have an opportunity to have second-order change in the pattern of their relationships, ideally with peers but certainly with adults. Last, and perhaps most important, is the need for the programs to be embedded in cultural and school organizational contexts which lessen the possibility that they will be ignored. When at-risk youth are the program recipients, attention to this ecological reality becomes paramount; for second-order change, students' relationships to their contexts must be affected. As students enter adolescence, the importance of the school social space is particularly important as adolescents' expanding capacity for perspective-taking results in their increased awareness and concern with the opinions of others (Good & Adamo, 2008). For their behavioral changes to be sustainable, their relationships with peers and adults must shift in positive directions.
We believe that this is the reason why many programs for at-risk youth that are well structured on the surface do not ultimately succeed in changing their status. True adherence to an ecological model requires changing the social ecology of the students and their perception by those with whom they interact often in school. However, most after-school programs consist of academic tutoring, academic enrichment, and art or athletics activities in individual class settings with minimal interaction among students and skills over time. Further, most opportunity to build cohesion among students and skills over time. Most after-school programs that address SECD and/or service-learning have a greater awareness of community needs, a stronger sense of civic responsibility, and more concern for social change than nonparticipants (Billig, 2000; Morgan & Streef, 2001).

While service-learning increases student engagement in the learning task, this effect in itself is apparently not sufficient to produce robust student outcomes. Rather, a whole variety of program design characteristics appear to be necessary to shape the impact. These characteristics include a high degree of student responsibility for the service, high degree of student autonomy (students empowered to make decisions, solve problems, and so forth), a high degree of student choice (both in the selection of service to be performed and in the planning and the evaluation of the activity), high degree of direct contact with the service recipient (who receives service of some duration, not short-term, one-shot service), and high-quality reflection activities (reflection that connects the experience with content, skills, and values). Additionally, research suggests that service-learning embedded in a pedagogical structure within the school curriculum yields the greatest positive effects (Wilczynski & Cooney, 2007). Well-prepared teachers who serve as active partners and knowledge mediators (but not as sole decision makers) are critical factors in determining student outcomes (Billig, 2000; Wilczynski & Cooney, 2007). When service-learning meets an authentic community need and includes meaningful planning, service, reflection, and evaluation, it typically succeeds in engaging students in the learning task. Most studies attribute this outcome to having activated students’ sense of purpose, motivation to learn, and changing students’ relationships to peers and adults in their schools (Billig, 2000; Wilczynski & Cooney, 2007).

Service-learning and the way it changes participants’ relationships with those in the community settings can be a source of transformational second-order change for both the students and their participating schools. This is perhaps because of the potential for service-learning to improve participants’ relationships with those in their educational community settings. When teachers evaluate a student’s academic skills, they look for interpersonal skills, study skills, motivation, and engagement, all which are taught to be key components of academic competence (DiPrema, Volpe, & Ellicott, 2002). Teacher preference (i.e., the degree to which a teacher positively or negatively perceives a specific student) has been found to predict adjustment of children in school. Longitudinal studies have found a relationship between low teacher preference and negative academic and social outcomes (Mercer & DeRosier, 2006). Because teachers influence the classroom climate, teacher preference can affect a student’s perception of self as well as peer acceptance of specific social behaviors (e.g., aggressive and prosocial) (Chang et al., 2007; Mercer & DeRosier, 2006).

Social–Emotional and Character Development
and Service-Learning

Research has shown that investment in academic instruction without complementary attention to social and emotional needs and character development may lead to failure in both areas (Adelman & Taylor, 2000). Lack of social–emotional competencies can cause students to become less connected to school as they progress, and this lack of connection can negatively affect their academic performance, behavior, and health (Blum & Lissner, 2000; Durlak & Weissberg, 2007). Problems of social–

emotional functioning often occur in conjunction with academic problems (Barbarin, 2002). This relationship implies that social–emotional development is not separate from academic achievement; instead these areas are dynamic and intertwined and thus, in a school context, are necessary for children to develop and be successful (Klein, 2002). Children who do not obtain the skills needed to develop social–emotional competence are at greater risk of falling behind in school, and have greater chances of behavioral, emotional, academic, and social developmental problems (Aviles, Anderson, & Davila, 2006).

Concerted efforts to inculcate universal values such as compassion, mutual support, and community service are being reconceptualized as vital aspects of high-quality education in a context of globalization (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2004). The adoption of programs that foster these values may be an effective method to help reestablish the unhealthy imbalance in the current public educational system. A focus on personal values and their expression should provide a welcome change in the school environment. Importantly, these factors have national significance and implications; data show that those educational systems with the greatest consistent records of academic success are also those that focus on the character of their students (Elias, Tobin, & Friedlander, 2011).
Teacher preference is based on a number of student behaviors related to academic competence, specifically those areas that the GLO program seeks to target. Teachers, who are high in self-efficacy, display positive classroom behavior, and promote a positive school environment for all students. Participation in school-based service-learning has been shown to increase student engagement and motivation (Babad, 1995; Birch & Ladd, 1995; Wentzel & Asher, 1995). Participation in school-based service-learning may be particularly important for at-risk students, as it provides opportunities for academic and social-emotional skill development (Durlak & Weissberg, 2002).

Given the influence teachers have on student achievement and the potential of the students, the GLO program is designed to target students at-risk girls. By affecting a positive change in the perceptions of teachers, the GLO program aims to have a long-term, sustainable impact on the academic and behavioral trajectories of both at-risk girls and their peers towards adolescence at-risk. GLO is designed to address the challenges faced by at-risk students and provide a supportive environment that fosters positive behavior and academic success. The program seeks to target youth who are at risk and have the potential to be positive opinion leaders, and specifically those who are already experiencing severe academic difficulties. The GLO program is designed to create an alternative setting in the school in which at-risk girls can receive the support they need to succeed academically and behaviorally.

GLO: Girls Leading Outward

GLO is a school-based, SECD after-school program for at-risk adolescent girls. The program focuses on academic and social-emotional skills development, while providing a supportive environment that fosters positive behavior and academic success. The GLO program is designed to create an alternative setting in the school in which at-risk girls can receive the support they need to succeed academically and behaviorally.

The GLO intervention addresses the unique challenges faced by at-risk girls, such as academic difficulties, social-emotional challenges, and leadership development. The program provides a supportive environment that fosters positive behavior and academic success. The GLO program is designed to create an alternative setting in the school in which at-risk girls can receive the support they need to succeed academically and behaviorally.

In its current form, the program is designed to be co-facilitated by an existing school staff member, either a teacher or guidance counselor, along with undergraduate students from a local university. To enable program sustainability, a member of the school staff (e.g., a teacher or school counselor) will be the lead facilitator of the after-school component of the program. Undergraduate facilitators will support the school staff facilitator during the after-school component and provide the curricular and instructional support required for the program. The facilitator design must be evaluated through ongoing research to determine the effectiveness of the program. The program is designed to provide a supportive environment that fosters positive behavior and academic success.

Using community service as a tool to engage students in the program, the GLO program seeks to provide a supportive environment that fosters positive behavior and academic success. The program is designed to create an alternative setting in the school in which at-risk girls can receive the support they need to succeed academically and behaviorally.
resources, particularly university students, may be beneficial, as resources for providing mental health services in schools can be limited. Providing the additional support of student facilitators may help to ensure the feasibility of a program being implemented in a busy school setting where teachers or other school staff may not have the time to implement all parts of the intervention without support.

In addition, and also of strong significance in affecting the girls' mind-sets and behaviors, is the time to implement all parts of the intervention without support. Where teachers or other school staff may not have the time to implement all parts of the intervention without support.

Components of the GLO Program

Participants receive GLO programming weekly for approximately 28 weeks throughout the school year while in seventh grade and eighth grade, with sessions after school and during a lunch period. GLO ideally has 6-10 members per GLO group. Tables 6.1 and 6.2 provide an outline of the GLO after-school program topic.

Table 6.1 Outline of GLO sessions for the seventh-grade curriculum (year 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year: seventh grade</th>
<th>Lesson number</th>
<th>Lesson topic</th>
<th>Main components</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Welcome Session</td>
<td>Introduction to the group</td>
<td>Explain group format and devise group norms/rules together (&quot;GLO Culture&quot;); Rapport building activity; Conduct baseline assessment; Rapport building activity, such as human knot or blind trust game</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Assessment Session (optional)</td>
<td>Introduce &quot;Speak Out,&quot; where group members are asked to state one positive and one negative experience since the last session (Note: this occurs at the beginning of each session)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Identify and reflect on leadership qualities that members already possess and which they want to work towards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
Table 6.2 Outline of GLO sessions for the eighth-grade curriculum (year 2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson number</th>
<th>Lesson topic</th>
<th>Main components</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1             | Welcome Session | • Review GLO and discuss differences between year 1 and year 2  
• Devise group norms/rules together ("GLO Culture")  
• Trust exercises  
• Complete baseline assessment  
• Discuss important leadership qualities and their relevance in GLO and high school  
• Review BEST, FANSO, and Assertiveness  
• Practice with role plays  
• Review assertiveness and practice  
• Introduce IFA: (1) Identify the problem, (2) Say how you feel, (3) Ask for a change  
• Laws of Life Activity (Note: up to two sessions)  
• Discussion on positive outlooks and managing their negative feelings  
• Practice relaxation and mindfulness activities  
• Review different techniques that one can use to avoid getting upset in an argument  
• I-statements activity  
• Review BEST, FANSO, Keep Calm, and I Statement  
• Ask the girls to discuss examples of the above by going over example scenarios  
• Discussion on ways to avoid engaging in relational aggression, such as not attacking someone’s character  
• Discussion with girls about being in uncomfortable situations  
• Recap iFGETS & its relationship to keep calm and FANSO  
• Guest speaker discussion of civic engagement  
• Note: This Project must be completed in time for there to still be three sessions before the end of the program  
• Thank girls for their time in GLO  
• Reflect on GLO experience  
| 2             | Assessment (optional) and Leadership Session | • Conduct post-assessment  
• Hand out certificates and keepsake activity  
| 3             | Review from Year 1: BEST, FANSO, and Assertiveness |  
| 4             | Voice: Assertive Language |  
| 5             | Voice: Mind Project |  
| 6             | Heart: Relaxation and Increasing our Positive Emotions |  
| 7             | Heart: Communicating How You Feel to Others |  
| 8             | Team/Mind: Thinking about Relational Aggression |  
| 9             | Team: Relationship Rules 1 |  
| 10            | Team: Relationship Rules 2 |  
| 11            | Team: Civic Engagement |  
| 12            | Team: Leadership Project |  
| 13            | Reflection Session |  
| 14            | Assessment Session (optional) |  
| 15            | Celebration Session | for the seventh- and eighth-grade curriculums, respectively. The GLO curriculum is designed to focus on four main components of leadership: Voice, Heart, Mind, and Team. The Voice sessions consist of communication skill building. The Heart sessions focus on emotion recognition and regulation. The Mind sessions focus primarily on problem solving skills. The Team sessions consist of the civic engagement and leadership project portion of the program. Assessments are integrated into program delivery in order to measure change systematically in the participants. It is recommended that this assessment occur during the second session and again following completion of the service-learning project (see Tables 6.1 and 6.2). Typical assessments have included measures of students’ sense of mastery and perseverance. It may also be useful to have teachers rate students on their social-emotional competencies in order to assess for changes observed in the school environment. Each after-school session is designed to be approximately 60 min long and includes skills training and a skills reinforcing activity, with a goal of ultimately utilizing the skills they learn for an end-of-year community service project. The duration of the lunch session varies depending on the school bell schedule but tends to run approximately 20-30 min. The curriculum for the first year focuses on building leadership skills, such as effectively communicating ideas and opinions to others, and becoming involved with community service within the school. The curriculum for the second year focuses on maintaining and utilizing the skills learned during the seventh-grade year, as well as mentoring the new seventh-grade GLO girls. Both seventh and eighth graders will engage in various community service-leadership projects within the school setting. Overall, GLO involves five structural elements: after-school programming, service-learning, lunch meetings, in-school support, and undergraduate mentors. After-school programming, GLO is structured primarily as an after-school program. After-school programs provide schools the opportunity to support students in ways not possible during the school day. In high-risk communities, often times the typical dose of school support is simply not enough. After-school programs act as an important supplement and an alternative setting for establishing positive relationships and attitudes. The after-school sessions of GLO are run by the school staff member along with undergraduate co-facilitators. Each after-school session is approximately 60 min long and includes the following three elements: (1) skills training, (2) a skills reinforcing activity, and (3) a service-learning project. Each after-school session of GLO commences with “Speak Out” where the group members and facilitators are asked to briefly check in about one good thing and one bad thing they have experienced over the week since the last group session. Speak Out serves as an opportunity for all group members to get to know each other better, as well as a way for facilitators to gauge the overall mood of the group members before beginning the day’s activities. Further, facilitators are able to build relationships with the participants by sharing relatable experiences from their own lives while modeling what are appropriate ways to share with the group. Following Speak Out, the session focuses on teaching and practicing one SECD skill, such as problem solving, followed by a reinforcing group activity. Each lesson builds off of the prior session, with a quick review of the prior week before introducing the new skill. The lessons are meant to be interactive and often involve role playing to get the girls on their feet and putting the skills into practice. The group activity at the conclusion of the session is meant to reflect the SECD skill while fostering team building and bonding among the participants and the facilitators. Over the course of about 12 weeks, the group will have worked on defining what leadership means to them and learning some of the key leadership skills, including communication, assertiveness, and problem solving.  

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Service-learning. A key component of the GLO program is a service-learning project that is introduced early on in the program and brought to fruition during the latter half of the school year once basic SECD skills have been covered. The purpose of the service-learning is to increase the group’s feeling of empowerment, and to encourage the girls to fully utilize their leadership abilities. The goal is to foster a social process by which these at-risk girls can interact with each other and the larger school setting in positive ways. Successful completion of the service-learning project has the potential to affect both the girls’ perceptions of the school climate and the school setting’s perception of them. The SECD skills learned throughout are meant to lay the foundation for them designing and implementing a service project of their choosing. They are asked to brainstorm different possible projects and come up with a feasible plan for implementing it. During the course of planning, they present their project idea to the school principal or any other staff that they would need approval from. This step allows them to practice their communication and problem-solving skills they learned earlier in the program. It also reinforces to the school administration that these girls are becoming leaders in the larger school community.

In our experience, the service-learning projects that are the most successful are those that involve other members of the school community, and the more other students that are involved the better. Examples of past service-learning projects have included (a) a mural completed by the whole seventh-grade class over a series of lunch periods focused on being yourself that was hung up in the school cafeteria, (b) a campaign raising awareness of individuality with all seventh-grade students writing brief stories about themselves in exchange for dog tags that read, “Everyone Has a Story,” and these stories were then shared with the school staff, and (c) a week of service where the GLO girls visited a nursing home, raised money for an animal shelter by having a lemonade sale, culminating in the GLO girls teaching the other seventh-grade girls some of the key GLO skills and then holding a big sign that said “Sister Event” where all of the seventh-grade girls taught these skills to the second-grade girls. These projects served as a way for the GLO girls to demonstrate the skills they had learned not only to themselves but also to the larger school community and greatly enhanced the GLO girls' leadership roles and visibility.

Lunch sessions. Another component of the weekly program is the school lunch sessions. The school lunch sessions are supervised by the university undergraduate facilitators and typically occur on the same day as the after-school session, which also helps to serve as a reminder that the after-school session will be occurring. Each session occurs during the regularly scheduled lunch period and includes the following two elements: (1) review of the prior after-school session and (2) a skills reinforcing activity that will in turn promote GLO culture within the larger school community. The lunch component reflects literature and our experience regarding the need to ensure continuity between after-school programming and the school culture and context to create a coherent ecological connection for students (Hirsch et al., 2011). It is important to create a method for students to translate what they learn after-school into in-school success. The lunch sessions also serve to provide visibility of the GLO girls in the larger community. Many of the activities involve creating posters that will be hung up around the school to promote the particular SECD skill that was learned the prior week. Depending on the setup of the in the cafeteria at a designated GLO table with the other students then being able to tablecloth with their names and what is important to them that is used at every lunch session to designate the GLO table.

In-school support. Through our experience running the program over the past 10 years, we have learned that it is important to have a member of the school staff take a lead in facilitating the program. This helps the school to take ownership of the program, which we see as essential for sustainability once program developers are no longer in the picture. Having a school staff member be the lead facilitator also allows for more flexibility in the program, and that last minute scheduling changes or timely modifications to the curriculum, as the school staff member often has a better sense of what is going on in the school than facilitators from the outside. In addition, in-school support, along with the lunch meetings, provide visibility, which leads to norm changes and goal/aspiration changes on the part of the group members, as well as changes in respect for these girls and changes in their self-respect. This is all essential for climate change, which is strongly linked to levels of respect in the school.

Undergraduate mentors. We believe that the undergraduate co-facilitators serve not only as a support for the school staff member who is facilitating the program but also as an important mentoring role for the GLO participants. In the current implementation of the program, undergraduates are selected through an interview process based on their past experience in working with youth and prior leadership experiences. They receive training on delivering the program curriculum, with particular emphasis on how to effectively facilitate groups and work with middle school-aged students. They also receive ongoing supervision to address issues as they arise and to provide ongoing feedback. The undergraduates are primarily responsible for leading the lunch session, ideally in pairs, and they also participate in the after-school program. How much they facilitate the after-school program depends on the group members, but in our experience having the undergraduates assist in delivering sections of the curriculum is useful as the GLO participants begin to look up to them as examples of what it means to be leaders. The undergraduates emulate this. The undergraduates also serve as a gateway to discussions about the future. The participants ask a lot of questions to the undergraduates about what their college life is like and seem even more fascinated by this prospect. We believe that involving these older peers models a key component of the GLO intervention, and that it is also feasible as any local 2- or 4-year college can serve as a source of students, mentors fulfilling a similar role with training and supervision, as they would also be able to provide a model of future leadership for the girls.
Sample GLO Lessons

Voice

Two skill-building lessons that form the foundation for much of the GLO program focus on communication skills. During the fourth session, students are introduced to the concept of BEST, which teaches the basics of how to present oneself when communicating with others. It is emphasized that it is important to have good body posture, good eye contact, use good speech, and good tone of voice when speaking, and BEST serves as an acronym to remind them of these four elements of speaking, and BEST from social decision making program (Elia & Brunet, 2005). During this session, facilitators role play communication (Elia & Brunet, 2005). During this session, facilitators role play communication (Elia & Brunet, 2005). During this session, facilitators role play communication (Elia & Brunet, 2005). During this session, facilitators role play communication (Elia & Brunet, 2005). During this session, facilitators role play communication (Elia & Brunet, 2005).

In the subsequent sessions, following a review of “BEST,” communication skills are expanded upon with a discussion of the importance of making sure the person is talking to the person who is listening to them. To introduce this concept, the facilitators ask questions like “First Acknowledge Next Speak Out.”

Mind

The primary lesson in the Mind portion of the curriculum focuses on problem-solving skills. Facilitators emphasize that problem solving and being able to make smart and thought-out decisions is an essential aspect of leadership. The acronym “FIGTSEP,” also from Social Decision Making (Elia & Brunet, 2005), is introduced at an eight-step plan for problem solving: (1) Find the feeling, (2) Identify the problem, (3) Guide yourself with a goal, (4) Think of many possible solutions, (5) Envision consequences, (6) Select the best solution, (7) Plan and be prepared for pitfalls, and (8) Notice what happened and anticipate the failure. The group then practices problem solving by going through one to two situations that they have generated, such as not being invited to a friend’s party or having a teacher that you don’t get along with in school and that gave you a bad grade. Throughout the lesson, facilitators remind group members to use prior communication and emotion regulation skills, such as BEST, FANSO, and KEEP CALM, when working through their possible solution. This problem-solving method becomes important in the planning process of the service-learning project, and it helps the group members strategize how to implement their project.

Lessons Learned: Success Stories and Problems Encountered in Implementation

Over the past several years, we have had two primary sites implementing the GLO program. From 2009 to 2013, GLO was implemented in a middle school that contained grades 4-8. Graduate students from our team along with undergraduate facilitators facilitated this program. School staff was minimally involved. When the program began, there was only an after-school component. While the program was
within the group. It seems as though these activities give the girls a common interest or help them become better aware of themselves. Especially when it came time for towards their service project.

As the girls became more comfortable with the GLO program, their interest and desire to participate often influenced less interested peers. This is a worthwhile tool to have and usually will work well in groups which have established a great bond expressing their opinions, it was particularly effective to discuss topics of which they related to in life, such as teachers understanding students or physical and emotional aggression. In several lunch and after-school sessions, GLO facilitators brought up certain topics and prompted the girls to list out the pros and cons and any have assisted in presenting the girls with a different perspective of common problems and something real in their life into perspective.

In any intervention, there are possible barriers to change that it is important to be aware of. As with the after-school programs, the early sessions are often the most difficult because the participants, and often the facilitators, do not know what to school staff member on site to help facilitate getting permission slips back and figuring out logistics of running the program. Without much assistance from school who invested is essential. There were also many times when other extracurricular activities interfered with GLO and girls were forced to choose one or the other. Thus, this led to low attendance and inconsistency within the group. As GLO is only once per week, it can be useful to have a structured agreement put into place that allows girls to participate in GLO on one day and another extracurricular on the other days of the week. As constant absences diminish the effectiveness of GLO and seem to disrupt the group when certain students do return, figuring out a way to an initial disruption with school administration is important to consider early in program implementation.

In addition, we have found that it is important to screen students with a brief interview discussion in order to engage interest and to become aware of any preexisting conflicts among potential group members. We have come to recognize the importance of having GLO consistently throughout the year as well as continuity into the second year of the program by starting up as early as possible in the eighth-grade school year. While there may be forces that prevent this beyond the control of the group facilitators, it is important to strive for this as much as possible.

During the early sessions, facilitators are often dealing with issues of lack of active participation or lack of focus by many students who are shy or insecure or just lack concentration skills and are not yet fully engaged. This can lead to multiple individuals trying to speak at once or side conversations, which then require more frequent redirection. There may also be participants in the group who previously did not get along with other group members, which may lead to early issues with group dynamics. Early rapport building and team building activities, such as the human knot and working on the tablecloth at lunch, seem to work well in breaking
down initial barriers and helping the girls feel more comfortable with each other. Having frank discussions about group dynamics can also be beneficial. Conflicts of preconceived notions of leadership and how to solve problems may also arise, with some participants thinking physical aggression is an acceptable way to solve problems and stand up for oneself while others believe that this is unacceptable. There may be conflicts in what GLO encourages versus what is taught at home or the school culture at large, GLO is a place to express these differing opinions and to weigh the pros and cons of each approach.

Overall, we have observed that as the sessions progress, there is a better sense of group cohesion. The girls appreciate the structure that allows them to express their thoughts and feelings safely, which leads them to gradually display more respect and participation, taking turns speaking to the group, and giving valuable recaps and participation, taking turns speaking to the group and the others believe that this is unacceptable. There may be conflicts in what GLO encourages versus what is taught at home or the school culture at large. GLO is a place to express these differing opinions and to weigh the pros and cons of each approach.

Initial Research Findings on the Benefits of GLO

Even though GLO has been implemented for over a decade, systematic research on its effectiveness is still in its early stages. However, we believe the results to be promising. Members of our research team are interested in understanding the impact of GLO on the participants’ self-rated self-concept (Piers-Harris, 1964), sense of mastery (RSCA Manual, Prince Embury, 2007), and perseverance (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009), as well as their social–emotional and academic competence (Gresham & Elliott, 1990; LeBuffe, Shapirow, & Naglieri, 2009) as rated by their teachers. Results from the 2008–2010 cohort suggest that GLO increased the girls’ overall self-concept score and their sense of mastery, with the more introverted girls showing greater positive changes (Narkus, Hamed, Reyes, Moccia, & Alphonse, 2011). In addition, GLO participants who showed improvements in teacher-rated social–emotional competence showed gains in self-rated optimism (Hamed, 2012). Initial examination of the 2010–2011 and 2011–2012 seventh-grade cohorts looking at the relationship between baseline characteristics and the program showed that low levels of anxiety and greater self-rated perseverance at the beginning of the program were predictive of participants not dropping out of the program by the end of the school year (Stepney, White, Yerramilli, Zigelboym, & program by the end of the school year (Stepney, White, Yerramilli, Zigelboym, 2013). Future studies will examine the impact of GLO relative to grade-matched control peers over the course of both the seventh- and eighth-grade years.