BUILDING GIRLS’ SKILLS TO COPE WITH CRISES OCCURRING IN INDIAN COUNTRY

Girl-Centered Program Design in Indian Country

Kelly Hallman, PhD (Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma)
Ashley Sarracino, MA (Laguna/Acoma Pueblos)

December 2018

Investments in girls lay the foundation for a community’s future well-being
Life event exercise

Think of the stage in life between age 15-29

• For a young man you know
  – Major event up to that point in his life
    • At what age did it happen?

• For a young woman you know
  – Major event up to that point in her life
    • At what age did it happen?

• Plot these on the life-course graphic

Girls’ physical worlds shrink after puberty

• “Protecting” girls from trafficking, violence, drugs
  ➢ Limits on girls’ social interaction and spatial movement
    • Reduces girls’ access to opportunities
    • Girls build fewer skills

Spatial access by gender and age in one community

Globally, girls tend to have many more life-altering “transitions” as teenagers than do boys

Percent who experience 3 or more life events (school dropout, sexual debut, marriage, child-bearing, death of a parent) between 16-19 years of age (Malawi 2009)

Boys (8%)  Girls (40%)


Girls experience sexual encounters for “non-love” reasons

(15-24-year-old females, Tanzania, 1 community)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERSON TYPE</th>
<th>Most important</th>
<th>Second most important</th>
<th>3rd most important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MEN AGED 40 AND OVER</td>
<td>They offer more money than others</td>
<td>They have comforting words</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOSSES</td>
<td>For the employment purposes/ chances</td>
<td>They offer a lot of money whenever you need it</td>
<td>It feels like a higher class in the community to have a relationship with this kind of man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOCAL WEALTHY MEN</td>
<td>Only for purpose of money</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAXI DRIVERS</td>
<td>Just for the ride from point A to point B. They assist us on transport</td>
<td>They offer some small cash when you are in need</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEXUAL SIDE PARTNERS</td>
<td>They know how to make love/sexual style, energy</td>
<td>Just for comfort words</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEAT BOYS</td>
<td>They wear nice clothes</td>
<td>They are neat most of the time; they might change clothes 3 times a day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOYFRIEND</td>
<td>For the future plans</td>
<td>We exchange and share ideas and problems with them</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Globally, a large percentage of adolescent girls will become single mothers at some point

Some American Indian girls may soon be primary caretakers of a household/family

Source: Annie E. Casey Foundation, KidsCount Data Center
Despite household manager roles, native females have fewer financial assets and skills than Native males

Yet girls’ realities may not be addressed in school, by youth programs, or women’s programs

- Current schooling system
  - May not provide core life skills
  - Some girls not able to attend regularly or finish

- Community programs and services
  - Limited in availability, scope and funding
  - Focus is on after something bad happens
  - Youth programs mix girls and boys
  - Focus on adult women instead of teen girls
IMAGEN: A scalable safety strategy for American Indian girls

VISION: An accessible, neighborhood-based, girl “society” in every rural tribal town and native urban neighborhood

Core principles

• Reach girls in places with greatest need
• Early enough to make a difference
• With appropriate content

Photo Credit: Alex Pattle, Al Jazeera America
How does it work?
The Girl Society - in Community 1

Two-mentor team + Local girls, aged 10-14

A Preventive Talking Circle for Girls

Girl Society meets in a “claimed” local space every week for 9 months

Community Hall

*This space RESERVED for the Girl Society every Saturday 10am-12pm*
Reduction in neighborhood social activity with modernity

Before
colonists, cars, phones

After
colonists, cars, phones

What could a neighborhood “society” provide girls?

• A reliable social support (aside from home/school)
  – If a girl doesn’t show up....mentor checks on her
    *She might be missing or having trouble*

• Culturally-informed, protective skills
  – better identify and access programs & services
  – more effectively negotiate existing challenges
    • Violence
    • Lack of resources
    • Geographic isolation
    • Absent family members
    • Etc., etc.
Skills offered early could help girls better face challenges

Adapted from Girl Effect 2012/13

Skills and well-being are reinforcing

Better school performance & advancement
Improved emotional well-being
Social support in happy and tough times
Prevention and alert system re trafficking and drug involvement
Fewer unplanned pregnancies
Lower risk for STIs, HIV
More financial planning skills & saving
Example topics in a program cycle

– Self- and cultural-awareness
– Tribal history and traditions
– Why a support network: mentors, friends, family
– Communication, relationship, self-regulation skills
– Goal-setting, decision-making
– Safety and well-being
– My body, my health
– Financial plan
– Education plan
– Community improvement project

Thought exercise

• Traditional ceremonies
  – How many for boys and/or men?
  – How many for girls and/or women?
  – How many for both genders together?
We can

1. Better document key life events by age for native girls and for native boys
2. Fortify neighborhood-level safe places for girls (for boys)
3. Consider reclaiming more traditional gendered spaces and ceremonies (“youth” a European concept)

What does the evidence say about girl-centered program impacts?
Community-based girl group program impacts by outcome domain

% of programs with significant beneficial impact
(45 rigorous studies)

Knowledge Attitudes Psychosocial Econ Empower Education HIV related

Beneficial No impact


How has it worked best?

Girls
- 9-14-year-olds
- Groups with age range 4 years or less: (10-12s, 13-15s, 16-19s)
- Groups of 5-20 girls

Guardians and Community
- Guardians are involved (e.g., monthly meetings)
- Girls are linked/introduced to community services/providers

Mentors
- Mentors are paid
- Mentors have similar backgrounds as girls
- Two mentors work together as a team
- Mentors trained for 5 days beforehand
- Mentors meet together 1 day/month

Weekly groups
- Meeting place is walkable for girls, safe, reserved same day & time weekly
- Groups brought together quarterly for fairs or competitions
- When food/snacks are served

Pilot Native Girl’s Program:

White Buffalo Calf Women’s Society

Five Wicincila Society pilot communities
Define content for girl segments using Building Assets Exercise®

Building Assets Exercise
Canvassing in Wicincila communities

Living situations, girls & boys aged 6-24 years (%)

- BOTH PARENTS
- MOTHER (NO FATHER)
- FATHER (NO MOTHER)
- GRANDPARENT (NO PARENT)
- NO PARENT OR GRANDPARENT

Girls ➤ Boys

Pilot feasibility study – Rosebud

1) Select and Establish the **Boundaries of the Program Community** ✓
2) Enumerate the **Universe of Girls** ✓
3) Identify **Segments** for Priority Programming ✓
4) Inventory **Community Assets** and Assess the Current Coverage of Different Segments ✓
5) Identify **Venues for Girl Groups** to Meet at least Weekly over an Entire Year/Seasonal Cycles of Risks ✓
6) Identify **Meaningful Content** Keyed to their Real Lives: Positive, Achievable Protective Metrics 😊
7) Build the Female Infrastructure: Recruit and Train **Mentors** to Guide, Deliver Content, and Sustain Results 😊
8) Mentors deliver **Protective Assets** (health, social, economic, cognitive) through local girl societies
9) Monitor **Attendance**, Track **Indicators**. Assess **Outcomes** (IRB submissions)
Reactions of Native women to IMAGEN concept

• “This girls’ program could be a game changer in our communities and reduce the number of our female relatives who need the domestic violence shelter.” – Executive Director of a native shelter

• “If a program like this had been in my community when I was a girl, some of these things might not have happened to me.” – Female sexual assault survivor support group member

• “I may have been able to make different choices if this had existed before.” – Female survivor of child sexual abuse
High levels of demand

Number of People Who Expressed Interest in Learning More about Girl-Centered Program Design in Indian Country

* N=537 registrants
September 2018 NIWRC webinar (link to resources and recording)

Skill-building workshop #3, Oct 2018

Girl-Centered Program Design In Indian Country

Event Registration & Details

Issues scholarships and meals; Monday, breakfast, lunch, and dinner; Tuesday, breakfast and lunch, provided by organizer. Mileage and ground transportation (excluding rental car costs) eligible for reimbursement with documentation.
Media attention

Duluth public radio interview

Journey to Wellness in Indian Country: tough but necessary conversations for children of color

Parents want to keep their children safe from anything that could harm them— including information. Parents of Black kids need thoughtful conversations with them about how social media treat them. But Kelly Mahan, the director of IMAGEN (Indigenous Adolescent Girls' Empowerment Network) says Native girls are already tuned to the dangers they see around them.

Her program, she says, is not only giving girls skill to deal with risks; it’s also an area where they’re falling through health care and educational cracks. It’s helping to rebuild Native infrastructure. It is empowering and catalyzing new generations of mentors and leaders.

IMAGEN Briefs Series

INDIGENOUS ADOLESCENT GIRLS’ EMPOWERMENT NETWORK (IMAGEN)

A FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND PARTNERSHIP

Step 1: Establishing a Network for Native Girls

Step 2: Adapting the Girl Poster™ for Lakota Communities

IMAGEN 2017
What’s coming?

• IMAGEN Newsletter
• IMAGEN Network Expansion
• IMAGEN Fellows Program
• IMAGEN Webinar Series
• IMAGEN Regional Skill-Building Workshops

PLEASE JOIN US!!!

SIGN UP FOR ANNOUNCEMENTS: https://tinyurl.com/IMAGEN-signup

CONTACT:
hallmankk@gmail.com