

SiHLE Focus Group Report
Focus Group with Participants
Prepared April 2015

Methods

A focus group was conducted with a group of twelve participants of the SiHLE program in March of 2015 in Waterloo, Iowa. The focus group was used to gather information about SiHLE participants' likes/dislikes of the program, lessons learned, and future changes to improve the program's impact.

The following ten questions were asked by trained focus group facilitators to participants of the program. The questions were asked by the same facilitators, who conducted the first focus group.

1. Thinking back to the beginning, when you first heard about SiHLE and decided to go through the program. What made you want to participate?
2. Who do you think the SiHLE program is meant for?
3. What things did you like about the program?
4. What did you not like about the program?
5. Are there things you would change about the program to make it better? If so, what would you change and why?
6. Would you recommend SiHLE to your friends? Why or why not?
7. What did you learn from the program?
8. Was there enough of the information you want to know covered in the program? (was there enough sex education)?
9. Do you feel like you know about different community organizations or resources where you can go to get help or information in the area?
10. What information or skills from SiHLE will you take with you and use next year? What about in 5 years?

The focus group was audio recorded and transcribed for generating this report. General themes were identified and organized to capture a snapshot of the experience of participants in the SHiLE program.

Summary of Findings

The items discussed in the focus group can be found below. There were four specific themes discussed: 1) What Participants Gained 2) Opportunities for Change 4) Real-life Use of Lessons.

What Participants Gained

Support

Seven of the participants identified that SHiLE provided a form of support. There were several types of support identified: new friends found, a place of inclusion, and a positive environment.

Four of the participants identified that they found new friends because of the program. In addition, participants felt that SHiLE was an inclusive place where they felt they “belonged.” Lastly, participants felt that SHiLE was an environment that was positive and allowed them to explore growing up safely. One participant said:

Like, this is a place where I found friends after moving here from Memphis, and you know, its something different that, like, lets me see what its like to be a strong black women.

Identity

Four of the participants mentioned that this program allowed them to explore their identity. Participants mentioned they enjoyed exploring African-American history and its implications on their identity. In addition, participants mentioned that the program built their self-esteem. As one participant said:

[This program] helps young African-American girls to learn different things about themselves and what they came from and gain self-esteem about themselves.

Sense of Purpose

Five participants said the program gave them a sense of some kind of purpose. This purpose came from beating stereotypes, empowerment, and overcoming the challenges of growing up. One participant said:

It helps give me a reason to get out of my house and meet people. Like it teaches me how to fight stereotypes and not be oppressed by the community and ourselves.

Opportunities for Change

Dislikes within Lessons

Participants identified aspects of lessons that they did not enjoy. These are listed below:

- Participants found STD pictures disgusting.
- Many of the videos were too sad and depressing, specifically the one on teenage abuse. Videos seem to just use fear and participants did not like this.
- Participants found the self-harm lesson to be boring.
- Participants wanted action steps on how to get out of an abusive relationship included in the abusive relationship lesson.

Increase Interactions/Role Play

Participants wanted to see lessons include more interaction and less didactic lectures. They suggested more role-play and mingling with other participants to capture real life situations. Furthermore, participants did not want a seating chart. They stated that the seat chart made discussions difficult to complete. Participants said, on the first lesson, they would share their struggles and concerns. But at the next lesson, when they would be asked to dig deeper into a topic, they would be sitting by a new person. Then, they would have to re-establish the topic. As one participant said,

I would actually add more activities so we can experience, like, different thing ...I don't like the seating chart, because, like, I start a lesson with someone. And then, like, the next day I gots to start all over.

Technology-Based Lessons

The participants wanted to see less paper based interactions and more technology. Participants mentioned that there were too many papers in the lessons and the folders made the lessons confusing. They suggested using technology in the lessons. An example of this is using Kahoot! (<https://getkahoot.com/>), which allows participants to log into their mobile devices and interact with the instructor via their phone or tablet. One participant mentioned:

I want less paper, And like, some lessons its like find this piece of paper and then like find this piece of paper and that's confusing and I want more interaction with the instructor. Technology would help.

Real-life Use of Lessons

Participants identified many lessons that were useful in their daily lives. The participants mentioned these lessons as useful:

- How to protect themselves from STDs, in fact, participants found that there was enough sexual health content in the lessons.
- African American history and its implications on the participant's identity.
- How to not be oppressed by the community and themselves.
- How to rethink their sexual health.
- How to help a friend through a problem or situation.
- Participants enjoyed ranting and then brainstorming ways to get through these rants.
- Enjoyed listening to how people thought they should get through their situation.
- Healthy and unhealthy relationships.
- Participants mentioned liking the Sara Bartman lesson several times.

- Participants identified Women's Health Center and Planned Parenthood as services they did not know about before the program.

These were some of the lessons that stuck with participants as things they will use in the future.

Conclusion

SHiLE is an important program to many of its participants. Participants are allowed to explore and learn about ways to become a young African-American woman, protect themselves from abusive relationships and unhealthy sex, and feel empowered. These lessons are provided in an open and inclusive environment. There are opportunities for change by increasing interactions/role play, addressing some of the participant's dislikes, and using technology in the lesson. However, all focus group participants mentioned that they would recommend the program to a friend or family member. This fact identifies the importance of this program to participants by potentially creating a healthy future for themselves and their community.