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Female Dropouts:

The Risk Factors That Contribute to Girls Dropping Out of High School

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### **THESIS ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this research study was to examine ten female students who dropped out of high school and are now currently attending an adult school program. These students had previously attended local Southern California urban continuation high schools. The methodology used in this study was a qualitative approach. Questionnaires were given and the narrative stories of two female students were selected and common themes were identified based on interview data. A narrative inquiry approach was implemented to explore risk factors in depth through the stories of two randomly selected subjects. Through interviews and data collected, this study looks at the variables in the research literature and risk factors identified by the subjects in this study that may have influenced the subjects' decisions to drop out of high school. The results from this study suggest several specific contributing factors associated with female students dropping out. The female students that were interviewed expressed their desire to graduate, but identified a variety of barriers, obstacles, and life issues that may have led to their leaving school prior to graduation.

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## INTRODUCTION

According to California Department of Education, a little over 1,800 female students in San Diego County dropped out of school in the 2010-2011 school year. Although the dropout rate has decreased from previous years, the fact that over 11% of female students dropped out of California schools in that same school year (California Department of Education) is detrimental. These statistics are particularly troubling because the data that points to reasons why girls dropout of school is scarcer than data about why boys dropout of school. Although many girls state that they have a desire to graduate, many of them encounter situations that research has shown to be risk factors that help contribute to their leaving school before graduation.

This qualitative study analyzes the responses of selected female students sent to a continuation high school for a “second chance” to improve in academics but dropped out of school. Although some of these continuation high schools provide various programs to help students considered “at-risk”, some students still make the voluntary decision to drop out of school or are forced to drop out.

Therefore, this qualitative study examines reasons why female students continue to drop out of our schools as evidenced through interviews and personal narratives. Data will provide a lens through which we can view the perspectives of female students and make recommendations to improve their choices based on data analysis and research studies that identify factors that exert positive influence on the decisions female students make about high schools.

### Statement of the Problem

There is a positive correlation between the amount of education individuals receive and the income they will receive throughout their life time. When an individual receives more



education, the chances that they experience a higher income, improve quality of health as well as life style, and a stable psychological well-being over their life span improve (Bengtson, Biblarz, and Roberts 2002). When a student does not finish high school, negative outcomes may become realities in their lives, such as being documented in the criminal justice system and living in poverty (Bengtson, Bilblar, and Roberts 2002).

Several social factors have an impact on high school completion for female students. Lower socioeconomic status, student employment, gender expectations within the family dynamics, gang involvement, academic support, teen pregnancy, substance abuse, self-esteem, and peer pressure can all be associated with a lower likelihood of not completing high school.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to learn more about why female students from local San Diego County continuation high schools dropped out before graduating. In this study, the female students enrolled in an adult school program were interviewed about reasons and factors that influenced their decision to drop out of high school. All young adult female student participants had dropped out of high school and were working to obtain their high school diplomas in adult school.

This study will contribute to the field of education because it will further the conversation about risk-factors many of our female students encounter during their teenage years. It will also bring to light various issues that educators should be aware of and consider when teaching youth, especially female students identified or considered “at-risk” in our schools. The findings of this study will help educators advocate, look for signs of, and possibly create programs to provide

female students the opportunity to complete school, earn a diploma, entertain the prospect of additional education and perhaps experience a more prosperous adult life.

### **Research Question**

Being a teenager can be very difficult because of emotional and personal insecurities; however, when situations that may cause emotional upheavals occur during this challenging time, teenage lives are affected positively or negatively. As educators, we see the potential in all our students, but many of us fail to see risk factors that might be plaguing our female students. By not recognizing these factors, we can miss many alarms, and because we may not recognize pleas for help, the significant decisions our students make often occur without adult guidance. If we cannot intervene, the possibility of our female students choosing to exit school before graduation can be irreversible. The focus question of this study is: What are some of the risk factors that plague our female students in local San Diego County schools that influence their decisions to drop out of high school? The theoretical frame work that will be used for this purpose was the model from Lakota Sioux Indian Circle of Courage.

The four qualities known as the “Circle of Courage” will be examined and used to compare the factors that girls contribute to their decisions of dropping out. The four qualities are as follows:

1.     Belonging: The universal human longing for love is nurtured by relationships of trust with significant persons in our life. (“I am loved.”)
2.     Mastery: Our inborn thirst for learning is nurtured as we gain understanding and competence in coping with the world. (I am good at something.”)

3. Independence: Our desire to exercise free will is nurtured by increased responsibility. (I have the power to make decisions.”)
4. Generosity: Our passion for life is nurtured by concern for others and commitment beyond one’s self. (“I have a purpose for my life.”)

In this study, the researcher’s objective was to interview and analyze questionnaires filled out by ten female students enrolled in a local adult school program located in San Diego County Urban Continuation Schools Program about the various factors that contributed to their decisions to drop out of high school. Two adult female students will be randomly selected to tell their personal stories, as narrative inquiry, to further inform this data collected in the study.

### **Summary**

This chapter presented an introduction, statement of the problem, purpose for the study, and research question. Dropout rates are still a concern in the education field. Districts and outside resources continuously create programs to help students make the decision to stay in school and get a high school diploma. As educators we must recognize the risk factors that some of our students face in order to properly help and support our students. The hypothesis of this study is that female students that are considered to be “at risk” drop out of high school when the qualities of the Circle of Courage are not present. The findings of this study will help educators become aware of the issues faced by young adult female students as well as become more sensitive to their behaviors and sometimes silent requests for help and support. Perhaps, becoming informed will prompt educators to take action to address the needs of young adult female students.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

For several decades there have been many studies as to why boys drop out of school (Sadker, 1996). Although there is a lot of research regarding male dropout rates and factors that contribute to their statistics, the information is scarce for females. Research shows that there are many different factors that put girls “at-risk” for dropping out. These factors include socioeconomic status, student employment, gender expectations within the family dynamics, gang involvement, academic support, teen pregnancy, substance abuse, self-esteem, and peer pressure which all contribute to the dropout rate for girls in the United States (Nieto, 1992). Following is a brief overview of theories and research conducted regarding this topic.

### **Socioeconomic Status**

According to the American Psychological Association (2012), socioeconomic status refers to the commonly conceptualized social standing or class of an individual or group. Socioeconomics is often measured as a combination of education, income, and occupation of the individual or group. According to United States Census Bureau (2010), the percentage of Latinos living in poverty has increased since 2009 from 25.3 percent to 26.6 percent in 2010, which in numbers means, Latinos poverty increased from 12.4 million to 13.2 million (Walt, Proctor & Smith, 2010). When families are classified at this poverty level or in this socioeconomic level, students that belong to these families are more likely to dropout when compared to families from a higher income level (Goldschmidt & Wang 1999; Randolph, Fraser, & Orthner 2006). Poverty and socioeconomic status is a very important factor that contributes to student dropout rates. When the higher socioeconomic status of a family is factored into the equation, there is a greater the chance that students will further their education. As stated by Ramburuth and Charmine (2010), traditionally, higher education has been associated with

moderate to high socioeconomic status, and low socioeconomic status is often equated in society with low initiative and capacity to learn. Socioeconomic status is a major contributing factor that must be closely looked at when researching factors that affect our students and a cause of their dropping out of high school, especially for female students.

### **Student Employment**

Many parents and educators alike see benefits for students to have a job while they are in high school. Students who have jobs learn responsibility and other various skills and services that might help them in the future. Since the 1970's more and more students have sought employment at some point in their high school careers. However, some types of jobs have been found to have negative effects on students and increase their likelihood of dropping out (Gieck 2008). Stearns and Glennie (2006) report that older high school students are more likely to drop out due to more employment opportunities. Older high school students are considered for more employment opportunities. Many older high school students feel like they need to work to help their families financially. High school students that are teen parents also feel like working and providing for their family takes precedence over their education. There are many factors that can have a negative effect on students who are employed while in high school. For example, if jobs tend to be more "adult-type jobs", such as manufacturing jobs, they are more likely to have a strong impact on the dropout process (Entwisle, Alexander, and Olson 2005; McNeal 1997). Jobs such as lawn mowing or babysitting are jobs that would not impact students negatively and increase the probability of students dropping out. Many students considered as disadvantaged or are in a lower socioeconomic level than their peers find that a lot of benefits are derived from working and having a job while they are in high school. Working hours also can affect and increase the chances of a student dropping out. The more hours and more pay a student receives,

the more enticed they are with the wages and the money they are earning. This will increase their chances of dropping out of high school (Entwisle, Alexander, and Olson 2005; McNeal 1997). This factor is not only important for boys but it is also a very important factor for girls, since girls in some family dynamics are not looked at as candidates for college (Crowder, K. & South, S. J. 2003). Therefore, many disadvantaged students are often pressured to earn money to help support their families, which may force them to dropout in order to gain more hours and increase their wages.

### **Family Dynamics and Gender Expectations**

For many of our female students, family dynamics and gender expectations play a major role in the successful completion of a high school diploma. A major influence in high school completion for many students is if parents are married and therefore, students come from a two-parent household. The research of Deleire & Kalil (2002) documented that lower high school completion rates occur among students whose parents are not married. Having both parents or parents that are married seemed to have a more favorable outcome for students rather than students who come from homes where the parents are not married, or from single parent homes. A report conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2010, stated that children who came from single parent homes were more likely to live in poverty, versus children who came from two parent households.

Family participation and family involvement have proven to play a huge role in student achievement as well. As stated before, poverty and low socioeconomic levels play a huge role in the academic achievement of students and could lead to the possibility of the students dropping out of school. A big factor in family dynamics is how much parents participate and take part in their children's academics. According to a study done by Pong (1997), the researcher found that

strong parental involvement could have a positive impact on the educational achievement of middle school students, regardless of their family structure. Although it is a big disadvantage to come from a single parent home, this dynamic can be offset if the parent has strong parental involvement in their student's academic life.

Along with family dynamics and disadvantages that some girls might face during the time of uncertainty, when they make the decision to drop out of high school, many girls find themselves confronted with gender roles and expectations placed on them by their families and society. As many girls move into adolescences they begin to question their roles in their families and society. They are trying to figure out who they are, where they belong, and what they want their life to be like (Holloway 2006). As young girls grow into the hardship of teen years, many suffer through the different gender expectations of their families and society. For example, Rachel Feuer explains how many young Latina girls internalize traditional gender roles that a woman's family and household duties make formal education unnecessary. Many girls are forced to consider and put family expectations first before their own education. Hollinger (1991) argues that parental and societal gender influences affect girls in different ways. Many fear success, they avoid mathematics and science, refuse to assert themselves and lower their expectations for their own academic and career achievement. These different ideas, feelings, and expectations about themselves can be detrimental for girls already dealing with and facing hardships that put them at high risk for dropping out.

Other gender expectations that contribute to high dropout rates for young girls are placed on them by their families. This is more prevalent in Latino households. Since many Latino parents have low expectations of their daughters furthering their education to college, many girls comply with the wishes of their parents and become housewives, caretakers, and/or nurturers of

the home. Some will drop out of school to fulfill the expectation that nurturing others is what girls are expected to do. Girls are typically rewarded for conforming to traditional female roles (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). Although gender roles are slowly yet constantly changing, there are a few roles and expectations that seem obvious for both boys and girls. Because male characteristics are looked upon as more favorable, such as taking on the responsibility to become the bread winner in the family, the career choices that young girls make still reflect the stereotypes that have been laid out as appropriate for females to hold (Sadker, 1996). Although students classified as living in poverty or low socioeconomic status have been identified as having a higher chance of dropping out of high school the cycle has been broken by some women. For example, in her book on Latina women, Flores (1999), Bettina Flores uses her own positive life experience to show other Hispanic women how they can escape cyclical poverty, large-family conditioning, religious repression, and machismo. In other words, Flores, broke the cycle of traditional expectations for Latina women. She went on to become a successful lawyer in Los Angeles, yet chronicles the ostracism she felt every time she went to her parents' home for the holidays. She was belittled by her relatives, and she makes the point that being strong in your own self is what contributed to her ability to stay the course and eventually, over time, change the perspectives of her family.

### **Violence and Gang Involvement**

Studies also indicate that students considered to be disadvantaged due to low socioeconomic status or to their family situations, have a higher risk of being involved in a gang and committing or being the victim of a violent crime (Duke & Stein, 2003). Being involved in a gang and/or being a participant or recipient of a violent attack has great influence on the decision of a student to stay in school or to drop out. Although when we speak about gang violence we



normally think about boys, more and more, research has shown, that girls have become bigger players in this area. Over the past several decades, evidence has shown that young women represent a growing percentage of gang members (Duke & Stein, 2003). Belonging to a gang can have a significant influence on whether a student will stay in school or leave because of the negative stereotypes and experiences that go along with belonging to a gang. Tellez & Estep (1998) found that Chicano gang members generally had negative attitudes towards schooling and received poor treatment by their peers and teachers because they were part of gang. Gangs are not only a form of identity but are also used as an outlet when students do not feel like they belong. The research of Bendtro, Brokenleg and Van Bokern (2002) make it clear that all students need to belong somewhere - to a family, school, or a group. Their model for reclaiming youth at risk pulls from the Lakota Sioux Indian Circle of Courage that served as the foundation for their work with troubled youth. The researchers note that the four qualities of belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity are a must in the lives of all young adults and children no matter who they are or where they come from. In a school setting, many minority students experiencing academic problems often feel alienated from schools, which are typically structured to foster little student participation and involvement (Nieto, 1992). Many of these factors contribute to the decisions students make about dropping out. They can stay and fight, feel paralyzed and withdraw or flee the uncomfortable situation. Such responses not only lead to decisions to drop out of school but can also affect health. For example in their study at the University of Iowa (2009) the researchers note that... “our findings suggest that in people with rapid heart rates it could be beneficial to inhibit the enzyme’s [calcium/clamodulin-dependent protein kinases II] function. When the heart beats to fast, it does not pump well, and if a fast heart rate, persists it can damage the heart’s muscle.” Thus, I would suggest that students’ health

is also affected by the alienation and/or poor treatment they receive in schools (Tellez & Estep, 1998). Community research studies would argue that gangs usually form in areas that are considered to be at the poverty level. Given what we know about the influence of low socioeconomics and the chances of students dropping out from high school, this is a factor that we cannot ignore. In a study done by Crowder and South (2003), the researchers suggest that for students living in poor communities, the importance of education decreases, as they consistently see their poor surroundings compared to the surroundings of some of their peers. Thus the likelihood of dropping out of school as being involved in a gang also increases a student's chances of leaving a situation that is unhealthy and uncomfortable for them, a situation that creates anxiety (Greenberger & Padesky, 1995).

Belonging to a gang carries various "responsibilities" one must take on and act upon as an active member. Most of these activities have to do with carrying out some form of violent attack. Belonging to a gang, depending on the neighborhood, can be a means of survival. I was disappointed to find very little on gang violence in schools by girls. For example, one study conducted by Wang (2000) states, there is even less literature available to account for, or to explain why, female teenagers become affiliated with a gang. In that same study, Wang surveyed 500 middle school "at-risk" girls about gang affiliation and girls' roles in a gang unit. He found that 45% of the girls surveyed agreed that girls in gangs sold drugs and 37% agreed that girls carried weapons for their male counterparts. This can also attribute to girls being excluded from comprehensive high schools. Many schools have a no tolerance policy against selling drugs and bringing weapons to school, and if caught, students face harsh disciplinary consequences such as expulsion from school. For example, the school board policy at San Marcos Unified School District specifically states: "Students who threaten (brandish) others with

a weapon on campus or at a school activity, or while under the jurisdiction of the school district, shall be referred to the Governing Board for expulsion. Belonging to a gang and taking part in violent acts or being a victim of a violent act by their own gang is another major factor for girls contemplating whether to stay in school or dropout. Many feminist criminologists have studied gang activities in young adult females. For example, a 1972 *New York Times* article entitled “Crime Rate of Women Up Sharply Over Men’s” noted that “Women are gaining rapidly in at least one traditional area of male supremacy-crime” (Roberts, 1971, p.1). And in April 2006, *Corrections Today* stated that the number of girls in gangs was on the rise in America. Girls committed robberies and murders like males (Eghigian & Kirby, 2006, pp 48-49).

Girls are involved in more drinking, stealing, gang activity, and fighting. There were also increases in the total number of female departures from traditional female roles. Between 1969 and 1972 national arrests for major crimes show a jump for girls, 306 percent. (p. 95) Robbery rose 30.2% for girls, along with a slight increase in the “other assault” category (FBI, 2010a, p. 239). If more girls are being arrested for crimes, and crimes among girls are on the incline, therefore, there will be fewer girls in schools.

### **Academic Support, High Stakes Test, and School Inclusion and Exclusion**

Feeling like one belongs and making a connection to a teacher or administrator can mean the difference if a student decides to stay in school or drop out. Creating an environment that fosters inclusion and academic support especially for our “at-risk” students is key to insure that female students do not drop out. A qualitative study done by Davison-Aviles, Guerrero, Howarth, and Thomas (1999), looked at reasons why Chicano students dropped out of school. They found that there was a correlation between school experiences and life experiences that included the hardship of attending school and accruing credits, the inability to participate in

school activities, being sent to the alternative programs, and low expectations of teachers and staff. Many girls needed to feel like they belonged and needed to feel that the institution to where they were spending their time was valuing them and their contributions. Sadly, of many students that drop out, say that schools made them feel unwanted. There has been literature written on the cultural mismatch many children felt in schools; in particular, many rejected the school situation saying the school belonged to “them” (Whites) and not “us” (minority students) (Alton-Lee, Nuthall, & Patrick, 1993). The feeling of not belonging is a major contributing factor to the willingness of students to stay in school. With this feeling of alienation or not feeling like they belong, many students are reluctant to seek help or make a connection with a teacher or administrator that can help them stay in school.

Another phenomena contributing to higher dropout rates is the institutionalization of high stake tests. According to Hoyle and Collier (2006), some teachers believe that a single score determines future success for their diverse students. This mind set will create more academic failures and increase the number of school dropouts. Many teachers note and several studies show that putting so much weight on a test that can determine the future of students puts a huge amount of stress on students. In addition, one test score does not accurately show the academic achievement of students who are considered to be “at-risk”. The frustration of not being able to pass the required tests or accurately show how they comprehend text and construct meaning can lead students to give up and drop out, especially if they suffer any of the identified factors.

When a teacher fails to see the signs that a student is needing help academically and a student lacks the confidence in asking questions or asking for help, that is a huge disconnect that can put a student that is considered “at-risk” at a higher chance for dropping out of school. Students considered “at-risk” are in desperate need to receive the academic support to minimize

the chances of them dropping out. Many teachers and administrators take the lack of attendance and the student's history of academic failure as interpretation that the student does not want to learn, when in fact it is the school who has excluded these students through suspensions and expulsions due to overly exercised use of "zero-tolerance" policies by many schools and districts (Brown, 2007).

In the research done by Brown (2007) many districts and schools excluded "at-risk" students from participating in "mainstream" schools by exercising their "zero-tolerance" policies that make suspensions and expulsions as mandatory sanctions for the violation of certain school rules. In her research, she documents the misuse and overuse of these sanctions, particularly among students of color or of low socioeconomic status. Many of these students are being disciplined as a way to correct a behavior; however, many are not receiving the academic support that they might need. Once a student is excluded via suspensions and expulsions from their academics, it is almost inevitable that the student feels alienated from school. There are severe consequences to feelings that result from being transferred out of the comprehensive high school to alternative education programs, secluded from one's friends and social group. Ultimately the student drops out of high school.

### **Teen pregnancy**

According to a report by the U.S. Census Bureau (2011), teen births have decreased since the 1970's. In 1975, 35% of women under the age of 20 had given birth, compared to 19% of women under the age of 20 in 2010. Although the numbers have decreased in this area slightly, it is still a concern and should be considered as a cause factor of girls dropping out of school. A previous research using focus groups revealed that having a baby was believed to have a negative impact on a teen's life, especially in the areas of friends and social life, career goals,

levels of stress, amount of sleep lost, and increasing personal responsibilities (Herrman & Waterhouse, 2010). In the *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 94 Latina adolescents participated in a survey study done by Dogan-Ates and Carrion-Basham (2007) that examined the risk and protective factors of teenage pregnancy in Latinas. They found that the rates of school dropouts are higher among pregnant teens than non-pregnant teens. Their findings revealed that one third of pregnant teens drop out of school either before or right after childbirth (Dogan-Ates and Carrion-Basham, 2007). Although the study showed that teen pregnancy has gone down in numbers, there are many young girls still affected by this factor and as educators we must pay close attention and provide support.

### **Substance Abuse, Self-esteem Issues, and Peer Factors**

Being a teenager is hard in itself, but many of teenagers have to deal with substance abuse, self-esteem and peer pressure issues as well as all the other factors previously discussed and are at a higher risk for dropping out of school. Girls have a higher risk of dropping out if they are involved with drugs, suffer from self-esteem issues and are dealing with more peer pressures than the average teenager.

Very little research has been done on high school girls suffering from substance abuse and being at-risk for dropping out. The little research that I found hinted that girls who admit to having a substance abuse problem run a greater risk of dropping out. Substance abuse for a very long time has been looked at as a “male” problem, yet it is estimated that more than 4.4 million women in the United States need treatment for drug use (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 1994). Drug abuse, especially for Latinas starts from many in the lower grades in high school or middle school. Hispanic youth have been reported to have a higher use of cocaine, crack, methamphetamines and marijuana than other groups (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 1998b).

Having to deal with substance abuse and not receiving the proper treatment for it, is another stress factor that can contribute to or lead to at-risk students dropping out of school.

Self-esteem issues, that is, the lack of self-esteem has become an issue for research. Teenage girls are more likely to lack positive self-esteem because of the awkwardness many of them experience during adolescence. Many girls think of themselves as less worthy than others, perhaps not worthy of success and respect. Therefore they set low expectations for themselves and live up to them. As girls progress from children to adolescents and into adulthood, self-esteem becomes an important underlying factor in relation to achievement (Holloway, 2006). Self-esteem can differ between boys and girls, even though both sexes have their own unique experiences with self-esteem. According to the research done by Holloway (2006), self-esteem for females is a sense of self-confidence which comes from other people's perception of them; whereas, a male's confidence can stem from how they feel about themselves, and not how others perceive them. This is crucial information because as noted by Gurian (2001), there is a gradual loss of self-esteem in girls as they progress through school. As girls gradually lose their self-esteem educators, must see this as a sign that the student might need assistance or support to prevent them from becoming "at-risk" for dropping out. Having a high regard for oneself or having positive self-esteem can help a student develop and achieve or go beyond expectations and not buy into negative peer pressure.

Peer pressure and other peer factors can also be contributing factors as to why female students might drop out of school. Classrooms and schools should be safe places so that students who feel pressured or bullied feel free to talk to adults about these issues. Adolescents, especially young girls that may lack self-esteem, have a great need to feel accepted and welcomed by their peers. High risk behaviors such as depression, feelings of loneliness or not

belong , or self-destructive behaviors, can put students at a higher risk for having factors that might lead to their dropping out of high school. Peer pressure and influence can lead to various types of behaviors. Girls can be influenced by their peers to have sex, try or abuse drugs, smoke or engage in criminal misbehavior. All of these negative behaviors constitute risk factors and increase the chances of student dropout.

Though much more research is being done on girls and factors that contribute to their decisions to dropout, we still have a long way to go. It is very important that community leaders, teachers, administrators, parents, and our students as well, be aware of the different risk factors that can be contributing to putting this population “at-risk” of dropping out of school. If we can truly understand the factors, the dynamics, and all the aspects of societal, familial and peer pressure that our female students must go through, we might be able to service and support this population more effectively. In the chapters to follow, I will present the different stories of various female students who were not able to surpass all these temptations and were pushed out or had to make the decision to leave school before completing their high school educations and receiving their diplomas.



## METHODOLOGY

The previous chapter presented the research on students at risk and the factors that place them at risk. The research also reviewed programs that have been deemed successful in re-training students at risk and providing supports that help students get back on the track to academic success. This chapter presents the methodology used to gather data on female students who have dropped out of the comprehensive high school and attend an adult school program.

The purpose of this research study was to examine ten female students who dropped out of high school and are now currently attending an adult school program. These students had previously attended local Southern California urban continuation high schools. The methodology used in this study was a qualitative approach. Questionnaires were given and the narrative stories of two female students were selected and common themes were identified based on interview data. In the 2010-2011 school year, over 11% of girls dropped out of a California high school (California Department of Education, 2012). Much research has been done as to reasons why boys' drop out, but finding information to the risk factors that pertain to female students is scarce. In this study, I focused on the question of "What are some of the risk factors that plague our female students in local San Diego County schools in making the choice to drop out of high school?"

In this chapter, the design of the methodology will be described. It will also introduce the participants and the reasons why they were chosen for the study. The setting for the study was a local adult school, and it will be expanded as to how it was conducive to the study and how it will impact the findings overall. This chapter will also explain the data that was collected.

## **Methodology Used**

In this study the methodology chosen by the researcher to conduct the study was a qualitative approach consisting of questionnaires and the narrative stories of selected female students. Participants were selected for this study and were asked to fill out a twenty-seven question questionnaire. This study also used narrative inquiry to discover the stories and life experiences of two female students that attended a local adult school program. Random sampling was used to select the two participants who described their educational experiences in more detail. All participants willingly agreed to participate. All participants are adults. Therefore, no parental permissions were required. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time if they felt uncomfortable sharing their stories.

## **Participants**

The adult school in which the study was conducted services adults that have not completed the comprehensive high school requirements for a high school diploma. In the program that I currently run, there are about 35 students enrolled. Out of the 35, seventeen of them are females. All seventeen were approached about participating in the study and ten agreed to participate. Of the ten, two were randomly selected to write their narrative in more detail. Going through their questionnaires, all participants except for one considered their families to be of low-socioeconomics. All the participants were females between the ages of 18-45. Participants who qualified for the study were all previously enrolled in a continuation high school, and are currently enrolled in an adult school program to fulfill their requirements for a high school diploma. Safeguards were presented and signed by all participants outlining the risks and benefits the study might have on them.

**Setting**

This study was conducted at a local adult school located in a school district located in San Diego County. The location was chosen because it lent itself easily to find participants. This school is located in North County, to protect the district, school, and participants' privacy, the city will be given a pseudonym name; it will be Springfield. To protect the name of the school district, school, and the participants' privacy, a pseudonym name will also be given to the school and it will be ABC Adult School. ABC Adult School services the city of Springfield and its surrounding cities. It currently runs two programs.

Program A, which is considered a seat program is available to adults that would like to come in to a class room and continue to work on their course work to obtain a high school diploma. The class is available Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, from 5:00 PM until 9:00 PM. Program B, is considered an independent program. In Program B, adult school students have the opportunity to meet with the teacher once a week to collect and turn in homework. This program facilitates the course completion for adult school students that have odd working hours, a very time consuming home life and cannot come in for Program A. The participants that were chosen for this study participated in Program B.

Program B is very accommodating for our adult school students. The teacher is very flexible and schedules appointments that work with the work and home lives of the students. The teacher herself is of Latino decent, and feels like she can relate to many of the students she services.

The study was conducted in 45 days. Students were given the questionnaires and seven were turned in within two weeks. The other three questionnaires were turned in within in three weeks of when they were given to the participants.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

The data collection procedure was as follows. An informed consent form was given to ten participants (see Appendix A) requesting agreement to participate in the research study. Students were individually surveyed, using a questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 27 questions. Students were aware that participation was voluntary and that questions that they did not feel comfortable with did not have to be answered. Two randomly chosen participants described their educational experiences in more detail through a written narrative. The researcher has been working this program for over five years. She has been able to create a rapport with students and had many willing participants. Due to the relationship built between the teacher and the students, using the questionnaires and the written narratives, proved to be the most adequate method way to obtain the data. All participants were very open and willing to share their information.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter outlined the type of study that was conducted. It described the methodology, the participants, the setting in which the study was conducted, and data collection procedures. The next chapter will present a theme analysis of the data collected.

## FINDINGS

The previous chapter presented the methodology used in this study. This chapter will present the findings that resulted from the 27 item questionnaires and themes that emerged from the personal narratives of two participants.

Factors contributing to female students dropping out of high school are many and complex. In this study several factors and barriers were examined to identify connections between student surveys that expressed their ideas about education and factors that researchers find are contributing factors as to why these girls chose to leave school. The results of the questionnaire will first be presented. Next, the themes that emerged from the personal stories of the two randomly selected students will be presented.

The theoretical frame work that was used for data analysis was the model of the Lakota Sioux Indian's Circle of Courage.

### Results

Tabulations of responses yielded the following findings by question. (Please see Appendix B for sample of questionnaire.) Note that on several questions, some students gave more than one answer.

1. Ages of participants:

All female students were between the ages of 19-35. One student was 19 years old, two students were in their 30s and the other seven were in their twenties.

2. Year you were to graduate:

Students' graduation year varied. Graduation years were as follows: One in 1995, one student in 1996, one in 2004, one in 2006, two in 2007, one in 2008, one in 2009, one in 2010 and one in 2011.

3. At what grade did you drop out of high school?

One student dropped out of high school in 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Six girls dropped out in 11<sup>th</sup> grade and three of them dropped out in 12<sup>th</sup> grade. One student said 10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> grade.

4. What income level would you consider your family to be?

Of the ten participants, six students considered their families to be low economic status or "poor". One student stated they were medium income level. One other student wrote down a figure \$1200. One student considered her family to be of low/medium income level and one declined to state.

5. Did you qualify for free or reduced lunch?

Nine of the ten students qualified for free or reduced lunch. One student said they did not qualify for free or reduced lunch.

6. Did you have a job while you were attending high school? If yes, how many hours a week did you work, and what type of work was it?

Sixty percent of the students said that they did have a job while they were in high school. Four of them did not have a job while they were in school. Of the six that were employed, three of them worked in retail. Two of them worked 30 to 40 hours a week, and the other one worked 10-20 hours a week. One student stated that they worked in the fast food industry working 5-7

hours a week. One student was working as a waitress for 10-15 hours a week. One student worked in a factory 30-40 hours a week.

7. Was your family supportive while you were attending high school?

For this question, 40 percent of the participants answered yes that their family was supportive in their education. Three students answered no. One said “somewhat”, and another said “yes and no”. One did not answer with a yes or a no, simply, “work came first, and then came school”.

8. Did you have certain expectations because you were a female in your household or with your family? If yes, what were some of the expectation?

Fifty percent of the participants answered this question by noting that they were expected to perform “traditional” female roles. Many describe having to come home from work and school and help babysit, clean, and cook. Two participants stated that they were expected to go to school and graduate. Two participants simply responded with “no” they did not have certain expectations, and one said “no” due to her leaving her household.

9. Was there much gang violence near or around your neighborhood?

Seventy percent of the participants answered that there was gang violence around their neighborhood. Only three of them did not consider their neighborhood to have gang violence.

10. Would you consider yourself to be a gang member or affiliated with a gang?

Interestingly although seven out of the ten girls said that their neighborhood was surrounded by gangs, only four of them considered themselves to be involved or affiliated with gangs. Five stated that they were not affiliated, and two answered with “sort of”.

11. Did gangs play a big role in your everyday life?

Sixty percent of the participants stated that gangs did not play a big role in their everyday life. Forty percent of the participants said that gangs were a part of their everyday life.

12. Is English your second or primary language?

Overwhelming seventy percent of the participants said that English was their second language, only three considered English to be their first language.

13. Were you involved in any type of academic support groups or tutoring?

Without a doubt, the vast majority of responses to this question was no. Eight of the ten students were not involved in any type of support group or tutoring. Two of them were placed in A.V.I.D. one participant was “kicked out” after one year of taking the course and the other student had to drop the class when she was sent to her local continuation high school because she got pregnant.

14. Did you pass the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE)? Did you have to take it more than once? How many times?

This question had various different answers. Four of the participants have passed both parts of the CAHSEE. Three of the ladies had passed the English section only and still need to pass the math portion of the test. Three ladies still need both sections of the test to finish. The number of times they took the exam also varied. Two participants took the test at least three times. Three participants took the test two times. Three of them took the test only once. Two students have not taken the test at all.



15. Can you recall and write about a positive incident that you had with a teacher or school staff member that helped you in school?

This particular question, some of the students gave more than one response. Very interesting, not one participant named a school administrator as someone who made a positive impact on them. Seven of the students referred to a teacher that made a class “fun”, “interesting”, or “showed they cared”. One student also mentioned a paraprofessional as someone that helped them in school. Three students named their adult school teacher as a caring and motivational person in their lives. One student could not think of anyone that made a positive impact in their educational life.

16. Can you recall and write about a negative incident that you had with a teacher or school staff member that did not help you in school?

This question as like the one before generated various answers. Three of the participants stated hearing negative comments from teachers. Many heard “you will not make it”, “you should drop out”, and “you will end up pregnant”. These particular comments and events stood out in their minds. Two participants commented that their counselor was not helpful or caring. Two students felt that the whole school did not care. Of these two, one felt that she was an “embarrassment” for the school because she got pregnant. One participant stated that she missed a lot of school and “teachers would always forget my name”. One other student said that school was not easy because teachers did not explain things well and she did not understand the material.

17. Did you belong to any clubs or groups on campus, if yes, which ones?

I was very surprised with the overwhelming results for this question. Ninety percent of the participants did not belong or participate in any groups or clubs on campus. Only one student belonged to a club which was M.E.Ch.A. and she enjoyed her membership for the time she was a member.

18. Did you feel like you belonged and were part of the student body, why or why not?

Again, for this question, an overwhelming amount of participants eighty percent stated that they did not feel like they belonged or fit in the school. Two of them stated that they felt that the school was more for the “white kids” and they felt left out. One student was not sure if they fit in. One student felt like she did not fit in her comprehensive “big school”, but she did feel like she fit in when she transferred to the local continuation high school.

19. Were you a teen mom during high school?

Fifty percent of the participants were teen parents while they attempted to finish their high school academics. One student became a teen mom after she dropped out of school at the age of 17. Forty percent of the participants were not teen mothers.

20. Did you use drugs during high school? If yes, what was your drug of choice?

Sixty percent of the participants stated that they used drugs while in high school. Of the six, four said that marijuana was their drug of choice. One participant used both methamphetamines and marijuana. One participant said she used marijuana, crystal meth, and acid. Forty percent of the participants said they did not use any type of drugs while they were in high school.

21. How many times a week do you think you used drugs?

Of the participants that admitted to using drugs while in school, two of them said they did not use often. Three participants said they used drugs between two to four days. One participant said she used marijuana five to six days a week.

22. Would you consider yourself to be a popular girl in school? Did you have a lot of friends?

Only four of the ten participants considered themselves as popular girls in school. Six of them felt they were not popular. Only three of the participants considered themselves to not have many friends. Seven participants felt like they had a lot of friends at school.

23. Did you attend school regularly? If you ditched school, how many times per week?

I found the answers to this question very interesting. Only four participants considered themselves to consistently go to school each week, but when asked how many days per week they missed school, the answers varied from one to three days a week. Six students did not attend school regularly and they missed at least one day of school and as many as four days of school at a time.

24. How would you deal with peer pressure? Do you feel like you were peer pressured into doing things you did not want to do?

The range of answers also varied for this question. Most participants dealt with peer pressure the only way they knew how, by going along with it (two participants) and one other participant said with drugs. Two participants said that they tried to stay away from the bad influences in their lives. Five participants stated that they had fallen into peer pressure and did

things they did not want to do. The same amount of participants said that they did not feel pressured in doing things they were not willing to do.

25. Looking back at your high school years, did you know that you were going to eventually drop out? Was there an event that “forced” you to drop out of high school?

This question generated many different answers. Only five participants could attribute their leaving school to specific events. Of those five, three of them said it was because they became teen moms and had to work more hours to support their family. Two of the ten said that they left school because they started to work more hours and had to help their family. Two participants blamed themselves for their behavior that jeopardized their education because it got them in trouble with the law. One participant blamed the school and themselves for leaving. They did not feel like they belonged in school.

26. What might have kept you in school?

All but one of the ten participants stated that if they would have had support, help, resources, or a relationship with the staff, it would have helped them stay in school. Five participants also stated that feeling like they belonged to the school would have also helped them stay in school. Only one participant answered the question with “myself”.

27. Anything else you would like to add that you might think is important?

I found this question to generate some of the most interesting answers on the questionnaire. Ninety percent of the participants stated the importance of school. They stated how important an education was to them. Many of them want to finish their high school education to be examples for their children and their families. Two participants also spoke of the

hardships of not having their high school diploma in the work force. They mentioned how difficult it is to “find a job” and they were “scared that my job will find out that I do not have a high school diploma and will fire me”. One of the older participants in the study spoke about the importance of parent involvement and how it is crucial that parents talk to their children of the hardships of not having a high school diploma. One participant spoke about having teachers more involved and being more caring in their students’ lives. One participant spoke about understanding bullying and the ever lasting effects it has on students that have to go through it. A prominent theme in the answers from the participants, was the how proud they are of returning to school. They are using this “second chance” to finish their high school diploma.

### **Theme Analyses of Narrative Stories**

The participants that were randomly picked to write their narrative story were very willing to write their narratives. They were instructed to write the narrative without feeling they would be judged, and not to worry about grammar and spelling. Narratives were analyzed and coded to find the four qualities of the Circle of Courage. The coding system that was created to collect data allowed the research to categorize the data which helped facilitate to see similarities and difference as it pertains to the four qualities of the Circle of Courage. Below, themes that emerged from the narratives will be presented.

Both narratives spoke very much of family and belonging. The similarities in both of the narratives talked about how family played a big role in their lives. One participant spoke very fondly about their large family and the small town they lived in... “the town I grew up in was a small town where everyone knows everyone, and we are a very tight community.” The other participant spoke about how when her father left, her mother, and her two siblings were left to

fend for themselves, but “it gave them a stronger bond between each other”, and she realized the importance of family.

When it came to their education, both students put family before school. Their sense of belonging was with their families, not at school. One participant experienced rejection and exclusion at an early age, “I remember the kids from school making fun of me because I was Mexican.” The other narrative spoke about fighting and being kicked out of school “I got into a fight then I was sent to a continuation school.” Both students felt a sense of rejection whether it was from peers or the school itself.

In the area of mastery, where students feel like they are good at something, the trend in the narratives is that they never felt like they were good in school. For example, one participant learned early on that she might not finish, “I only attended my freshman year because I started to get bad grades. I was sent to a continuation school to try to further my school, but I was not interested in going to school at the time, I dropped out by the age of seventeen.”

A similarity when looking at the quality of independence and the power to make decisions, is that both participants felt “grown up” and independent when they took on full time jobs. One participant states: “I thought I was independent making enough money but soon I had to pay rent and food, I did not have enough and had to get a second job.” The second participant states that independence came to her when she was able to get her own apartment and work full time.

In the theme of generosity and having a purpose for their life, both participants talked about how important school was for them. They not only wanted the satisfaction of finishing for themselves, but they also wanted to do it for their families and their children. One of the

participants stated that “I knew that we weren’t going to make it, and I wanted to go back to school and finish my high school diploma, we are currently finishing and after going to college. Now I know getting an education is important for mine and my son’s future.” The other participant also found their purpose in her children, “Now I truly know what I need to do and that is to go to school so that I could fulfill my dreams and getting my education for my children.” Both participants have renewed their commitment to education because they found their purpose, to give their families a better future.

In this chapter, the data that was collected from the ten participants and their questionnaires was tallied and presented. The narratives of the two randomly selected participants were also analyzed and coded to find similarities and differences and look for underlining themes throughout the narratives. The following chapter will describe the researcher’s recommendation based on the finding of the study. The recommendations will provide information that will seek to help educators foster the qualities of the Circle of Courage to lower the number of females dropping out of high school.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this final chapter the findings of this study will be presented using the theoretical framework of the Circle of Courage. This theoretical framework was used to analyze the data collected, and look for prominent themes found in the questionnaires and narratives. According to Larson and Brendtro (2002), four qualities known as the “Circle of Courage” are essential for the development of courageous youth. These qualities will be used to look for trends and to make recommendations to better understand the issues that plague our female youth. With the information provided, it is the hope of the researcher to bring awareness of different factors, experiences, and difficulties our youth encounter through their teenage years.

1. Belonging: The universal human longing for love is nurtured by relationships of trust with significant persons in our life. (“I am loved.”)

Many of the participants did not have a sense of belonging when it came to finding a place in their high school. Many of them spoke about the schools being for “them” not for “us”. Not having a sense of belonging can be very detrimental for students. It is human nature to feel a sense of belonging, when students feel like they are part of the greater community; they have a greater chance of being and feeling successful. Participants spoke about not feeling connected with their teachers, having a sense that “they did not care.”

When a sense of belonging and the feeling of love exist, students can feel and see that right away. When students were asked about positive interactions with staff members, many spoke about teachers that showed genuine kindness and caring for them. The acts of love, understanding, and acceptance are the positive memories that many of our students have and



hold on too. The same way that students can recognize and remember a positive interaction, the same way they can recognize a negative one as well.

A negative underlying theme throughout the research was a sense of not belonging to part of the community. When students feel like they belong and are part of a community, they are more committed and vested in the experience. Students that felt isolated and rejected ended up feeling that school did not care about them and therefore dropped out.

2.     Mastery: Our inborn thirst for learning is nurtured as we gain understanding and competence in coping with the world. (“I am good at something.”)

Many of our students lack this quality. Mastery was associated to the participant answers that spoke about negative memories about school. Many of them were told over and over again that they were “not worth it.” Participants shared answers that expressed their frustration with educators that did not “explain things” and “would give up on them”. This lack of mastery can have very difficult outcomes for our students. Many feel like they failed by not finish high school and they attribute the feeling to not being able to master the curriculum.

3.     Independence: Our desire to exercise free will is nurtured by increased responsibility. (“I have the power to make decisions.”)

This quality is an area where I believe our students shine. Many of them through life circumstance have had to become independent or make serious life decisions. Sixty percent of the participants in this study were employed while they attended school. Many of them had to work in order to feed and help their families. Although many of them felt in powered by the power to make “adult like” decisions, some of these decisions prove to be detrimental in their future. Participants believed that working and even making the decision to drop out was a choice

of independence, but later on in their lives, they found this decision to be a negative one because they are back in school trying to finish. The fact that these women are back in school, shows they are making powerful decisions. Although all of them are adults, most of them did not feel complete independence because they always struggled with not having their high school diploma.

4. Generosity: Our passion for life is nurtured by concern for others and commitment beyond one's self. ("I have a purpose for my life.")

Many of the participants had made unhealthy choices when they were younger. It was amazing and so empowering to hear their passion for education. All of them want to prove to themselves and their families that they can finish school and have a purpose in the community. These women have a concern for their families' well-being and want to prove to them that they will get their education. It has taken the participants a few years, but they are back in school with a purpose. They have come to realize that education and is important to them, that is their new purpose, to finish their high school diploma.

Through this data collected, we can see that students see the value of learning and what the acquisition of an education can do for them. However, it has taken them several years beyond their original expected graduation date to finally feel, understand, and acquire the qualities offered in the Circle of Courage. As educators, when we analyze and put into practice the qualities that this theoretical frame work presents, I believe it will make us better educators.

Following this framework allows us to create a sense of belonging for our students. When our students feel like they belong to our classrooms, schools, and community, the more positive vested student we will have. By providing a welcoming environment, we can succeed

and help promote the other qualities in the Circle of Courage. We have to show we care for the better of our community; our students belong to this community.

The more our students feel like they belong and feel comfortable in their school setting the easier it will be for them to participate, enjoy, be vested, and reach mastery in their education. This is the area where most of our students lack achievement. As educators we must provide steps that our students can relate to and facilitate the mastery of what we want them to learn. Mastery can be achieved in various ways. Our students have to feel like they are good at something. As educators we must present the information in such a way that is culturally, socially adequate for our student population. Different strategies and forms of delivering the material must be re-examined.

As educators and as part of a community, we strive to empower our students to make independent decisions. We want students to be independent thinkers and be able to make proper decisions when they are adults. Fostering this quality for a group of at risk girls is crucial to their success. Fifty percent of the participants were teen mothers and at a very young age are forced to make decisions that will not only affect them, but also their children. Classes on decision making, life choices, and independent living could help many of our students become the independent thinkers we want them to be.

As we go through life, we want to feel like we have a purpose when we take on a life changing event. The final quality the Circle of Courage is generosity. In the words of a Lakota Elder, "You should be able to give away your most cherished possession without your heart beating faster." In helping others, youth create their own proof of worthiness: they make a positive contribution to another human life (Bendro, Brokenleg, & Van Bokern 2002). If we can

support our students and give them self-worthiness, they will find their purpose and will produce. This is proof in these participants. Many of them had lost hope with the lack of support, drug abuse, long work hours, or new responsibilities. As these participants choose to once again return to school, they all came back with a purpose. They want to make a positive contribution to other human lives. For many of them their new purpose was to make their family proud, to better themselves, or to prove to their children that they can succeed.

More research has to be done as to what we can do for our female students that are at risk. Although this study brings to light a few of the factors that plague many of our at-risk female students, more research should be done as to how more we can prevent them from leaving our school. Using the theoretical frame work of the Circle of Courage, is a good start and a model that we can use as educators to empower our students so that when all these four set values exist, it will create an environment that will ultimately benefit all.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **Informed Consent**

#### **Female Dropouts: The Risk Factors That Contribute to Girls Dropping Out of High School**

##### **Invitation to Participate**

Claudia Hernandez, a graduate student in Master's program at California State University San Marcos (CSUSM), is conducting a study that seeks to identify risk factors that contribute to girls dropping out of high school. You have been contacted because you have been identified as potential participant.

This study has two principal objectives.

1. To explore risk factors that contribute to the decision of girls to drop out of high school.
2. Look at secondary factors that influence girl's decisions.

##### **Requirements of Participation**

During this study as a participant, you will be given a questionnaire to fill out regarding your experience as a high school student.

If further information is required or needs to be explained, interviews will be conducted. The conversational style interview will take place at the participant's school. Interviews should not take longer than one hour.

Randomly, two participants will be selected and will be asked to write a narrative that will go more in depth than the questionnaire about their reasons as to why they decided to drop out.

##### **Risks and Inconveniences**

There are minimal risks to participating in this study. These include:

1. Loss of personal time necessary to participate in the questionnaire, interview, and writing the narrative.
2. Potential breach of confidentiality
3. Questions and/or interview can possibly cause psychological distress.

##### **Safeguards**

Safeguards put in place to minimize risk include:

1. Participants can stop interview at any time at their request.

2. Your interview data will be kept confidential, available only to the research team for analysis purposes. Only the research team will read, evaluate, and analyze the information provided.
3. All questionnaires, interview notes, and narratives will be destroyed following final analysis; no later than June 30, 2013.
4. Pseudonyms for schools, districts, and teachers will be used to minimize the risk of identification. You will be given the opportunity to review your questionnaire, narrative, and interview notes and eliminate any comments or references you feel may be identifiable or have negative connotations with respect to yourself, the district, or school. Your responses will not be linked to your name or address, and there will be no follow-up sessions.

### **Voluntary Participation**

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and may be withdrawn at any time. If the length of the interview becomes inconvenient, you may stop at any time. There are no consequences if you decide not to participate. In particular, your course work, assignments, or grades will not be affected if you choose not to participate.

### **Benefits**

Although your participation will yield minimal or no direct benefits to you, we believe that the study has the potential to help educators understand reasons why girls drop out of high school. In return, educators can put into place strategies, programs, or counseling to help other “at risk” girls.

### **Questions/Contact Information**

This study has been approved by the California State University San Marcos Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you have questions about the study, you may direct those to the researcher, Claudia Hernandez, [herna106@cougars.csusm.edu](mailto:herna106@cougars.csusm.edu), 760-208-5375, or the researcher’s advisor/professor, Dr. Alice Quiocho, [aquiocho@csusm.edu](mailto:aquiocho@csusm.edu). Questions about your rights as a research participant should be directed to the IRB at (760) 750-4029. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

☐ I agree to participate in this research study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant’s Name Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant’s Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher’s Signature

**APPENDIX B**

ID #: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Age: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Year you were to graduate: \_\_\_\_\_

3. At what year did you drop out of high school? (9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, or 12<sup>th</sup>) \_\_\_\_\_

4. What income level would you consider your family to be? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Did you qualify for free or reduced lunch? \_\_\_\_\_

6. Did you have a job while you were attending high school? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, how many hours did you work a week? \_\_\_\_\_ What kind of work was it?

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Was your family supportive while you were attending high school?

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Did you have certain expectations because you were a female in your household or with your family?

If yes, what were some of the expectations?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

9. Were there many gang violence near or around your neighborhood?

\_\_\_\_\_

10. Would you consider yourself a gang member or affiliating with a gang? \_\_\_\_\_

11. Did gangs play a big role in your everyday life? \_\_\_\_\_

12. Is English your second or primary language? \_\_\_\_\_

13. Were you involved in any type of academic support groups or tutoring? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, do you feel like it helped why or why not?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

14. Did you pass the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE)? \_\_\_\_\_

Did you have to take it more than once? \_\_\_\_\_ How many times? \_\_\_\_\_

15. Can you recall and write about a positive incident that you had with a teacher or school staff member that helped you in school? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

16. Can you recall and write about a negative incident that you had with a teacher or school staff member that did not help you in school? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

17. Did you belong to any clubs or groups on campus, if yes, which ones? \_\_\_\_\_

Did you enjoy your membership? \_\_\_\_\_

Did you remain a member? \_\_\_\_\_

18. Did you feel like you belonged and were part of the student body, why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

19. Were you a teen mom during high school? \_\_\_\_\_

20. Did you use drugs during high school? \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, what was your drug of choice? \_\_\_\_\_

21. How many times a week did you use drugs? \_\_\_\_\_

22. Would you consider yourself to be a popular girl in school? \_\_\_\_\_ Did you have a lot of friends? \_\_\_\_\_

23. Did you attend school regularly? \_\_\_\_\_ If you ditched school, how many times per week? \_\_\_\_\_

24. How would you deal with peer pressure? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you feel like you were peer pressured into doing things that you did not want to do? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

25. Looking back at your high school years, did you know that you were going to eventually drop out?  
Was there an event that “forced” you to drop out of high school?

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26. What might have kept you in school?

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27. Anything else you would like to add that you might think is important?

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