THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF GIRLS OF COLOR IN
CRENSHAW, EAST L.A., GARDENA, AND INGLEWOOD

GIRL, YOU CAN DO ANYTHING

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

There are 444,461[1] girls and young women living, growing, and becoming in Los Angeles County. In most circumstances, the voices of nearly half a million people are seemingly hard to discount, hard to overlook. But for girls and gender-expansive youth[2] in Los Angeles (LA) County - particularly girls and young women of color - the systems they access and contend with every day do just that: disenfranchise their voices, de-prioritize their safety, devalue their contributions. Girls and young women practice resilience and resistance, but need partners to begin to shift this prevailing paradigm. There is a way to center and elevate the voices, leadership, and expertise of girls in LA County.

The best way to understand girls' needs is to ask them directly: What do girls need to feel safe? Supported? Valued? Educated? Equal? Hopeful? The best way to meet these needs is to equitably allocate resources - time, money, access, decision making, knowledge - to the things girls say they need to feel safe, healthy, and happy; and, more importantly, to center them in defining the solutions and responses.

About this Report

This report exists because girls in four focal neighborhoods were asked what they need, and Alliance for Girls rallied the champions[3] and resources to relay their voices. It details the landscape of girls' experiences in four LA County neighborhoods, with the goal of informing community stakeholders about what girls need to thrive. With that knowledge, champions can connect girls to pathways that can help them be successful participants in multiple, interlocking systems - community, family, school, juvenile justice/criminal justice, foster care, religion - they navigate daily. Creating the conditions for girls to thrive is both systems change work and case management; embedding girls' needs, ideas, and values within the systems that serve girls will make change. At the same time, creating and resourcing services that individual girls can access will create positive change for girls, their families, and their communities.

An Opportunity to Partner

Promisingly, some of the crucial work of centering, listening, and responding to girls is already occurring in LA County. There are community based organizations and community leaders, including those that made this report possible, doing front-line work. The Los Angeles County Women and Girls Initiative (WGI) is charged with examining the systemic issues that lead to inequitable gender outcomes and recommend changes to improve the quality of life for women and girls in the County. The WGI 2018-2021 Strategic Framework outlines the County's vision for systematically understanding and addressing inequities due to gender and age, focusing on the areas of equitable employment, economic mobility, inclusive services, empowerment, and partnerships. These priority areas represent intersectional barriers which align closely with what girls of color living and attending school in Crenshaw, East LA, Gardena, and Inglewood shared in surveys and listening sessions.

Alliance for Girls continually works to reach more girls and spur more systems change. As part of this strategy, AFG undertook the research represented in this report to understand from the organization's key stakeholders - girls themselves - what they need and how AFG can work to support girls in achieving systemic change. One of AFG's core values is the belief in the power of the collective: systems change needs systems-level engagement, and that requires strong partnerships, which AFG continually works to strengthen and expand.

The WGI and AFG share this view of intersectionality and a belief in the need for systems change to improve outcomes for girls in LA County; aligning our work would increase the reach and speed of change.

Those closest to the problem are closest to the solution. Girls in LA County have the answers - but they need platforms, resources, and partners to listen and respond with them to make change.

METHODOLOGY
AND
FRAMEWORKS

Girls who live and go to school in Crenshaw, East LA, Gardena, and Inglewood are the focus of this report. These four neighborhoods represent parts of Los Angeles (LA) County that have historically been - and largely remain - cut off from civic, cultural, and capital resources and access; these effects are magnified for girls and gender-expansive youth who are further impacted by the intersections of race/ethnicity, primary language, and sex/gender.

To honor this intersectionality and focus on how these interlocking and inseparable factors impact girls' experiences, this report's findings and recommendations are grounded in the social ecological model, intersectionality, and transformational resistance. These frameworks provide a research-based language through which to explore the centrality of race and resistance, multiple levels of influence, and gender and other inequities for girls in Crenshaw, East LA, Gardena, and Inglewood.

Guiding Research Questions

The central question this report seeks to answer is: *What are the experiences of girls of color in different LA County systems?*

To respond holistically to this question, a series of support questions were developed to keep a sharp focus on the key facets of girls' experience. These support questions are:

- How do girls of color in Crenshaw, East LA, Gardena, and Inglewood demonstrate resistance?
- How do girls of color in Crenshaw, East LA, Gardena, and Inglewood describe their experiences across different relationships?
- What do girls of color in Crenshaw, East LA, Gardena, and Inglewood say they need from their community?
- What dreams do girls of color in Crenshaw, East LA, Gardena, and Inglewood envision for their futures?
- What does publicly available, disaggregated data demonstrate about girls' lives in Crenshaw, East LA, Gardena, and Inglewood?

Data Collection and Analyses

Girls from these focal neighborhoods participated in four listening sessions on September 27 and 28, 2018, and answered a survey which helped surface what girls of color are thinking, needing, and doing. Sessions were not recorded because girls opted out of this; instead, Alliance for Girls facilitators took detailed notes to capture each discussion. A total of 48 girls participated in the listening sessions and completed the survey.

ALLIANCE FOR GIRLS' FRAMEWORKS:

AFG's work and research are framed by three independent but interconnected lenses: the Social Ecological Model (SEM), intersectionality, and transformational resistance. Alone, these frameworks capture only parts of an individual's experience in systems of power and oppression. Together, they provide a holistic understanding of a person's experience, as well as of key levers for change.

SEM is a central lens for examining the relationships among various personal and environmental factors, as well as the impact of these on individual outcomes and experiences. SEM recognizes that individual behavior is shaped by the social environment and that to intervene and change negative outcomes, it is imperative to develop strategies at each band of influence, including the individual, interpersonal, organizational, community, and policy (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; McLeroy, Bibeau, Steckler, & Glanz, 1988).

Intersectionality is a key framework for understanding the complex interconnection of identity and structures of power. It recognizes that individuals who live at the margins—based on intersecting factors such as race, gender, class, immigration status, and sexuality—experience oppression in unique ways (Crenshaw, 1991). Despite social, educational, and economic constraints, individuals and communities resist inequities.

Transformational resistance is one lens for understanding how communities oppose social structures and build power for social change. Transformational resistance occurs when people critique oppression and seek social justice, and it is based in validating the experiences of underrepresented communities, challenging dominant ideologies, centralizing intersectionality, and having a commitment to social justice (Solorzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001).

Data from surveys was analyzed for response frequencies. Data from each listening session was analyzed in several rounds using emergent and grounded qualitative methods, with multiple readers, including Alliance for Girls staff and youth researchers, applying coding schemes and interpreting trends. First, Alliance for Girls staff and youth researchers identified recurrent themes. Next, Evaluation Studio external research team read the transcripts and began identifying recurrent themes; the external research team compared the three emergent theme frameworks they developed, and parsed them with the themes identified by Alliance for Girls staff and youth researchers. Finally, with a reconciled set of themes coming from multiple readers, the external research team assigned a set of secondary descriptors to better organize themes for nuance, tone, and meaning. Primary and secondary codes helped surface co-occurring frequencies across listening sessions.

The primary and secondary coding scheme applied to the listening sessions is mapped in Appendix 1 and will be discussed in detail in the next section. Refer to Appendix 2 for the list of questions asked during listening sessions and parent opt-out forms; refer to Appendix 3 for the survey listening session participants completed. It is important to note that the survey instrument and focus group protocol utilized to collect the data in this report were initially developed by youth researchers, including Gabrielle Battle, Maren Frye, Esme Kalbag, Anna Sara Mehouelley, Sofia Orduña, Sasha Mylan, Ruby Williams, and Andrea Zamora, as developed for Alliance for Girls' *Together, We Rise: The Lived Experiences of Girls of Color* report.

In addition, data from the listening sessions and demographic surveys was supported with publicly available research about families, schools, economic opportunity, and safety in the four focal neighborhoods and greater LA County; this helped to situate what girls shared in listening sessions in time and space.

Girls of Color Represented in This Research

Girls self-reported their demographic information. The girls who participated were diverse: ninety-eight percent (98%, or 47 survey takers) self-identified as female, and 2% (or one survey taker) responded "I don't know" about their gender identity (Appendix 4).

The vast majority (78%, or 25 girls) were 12 or 13 years old, with participants overall ranging from 11 to 17 years old (Figure 1, or Appendix 4 for the detailed table).

Figure 1: Age of Listening Session Participants

Age 15 — 2%
Age 17 — 4%
Age 14 — 4%
Age 11 — 12%
Age 13 — 38%
Age 12 — 40%
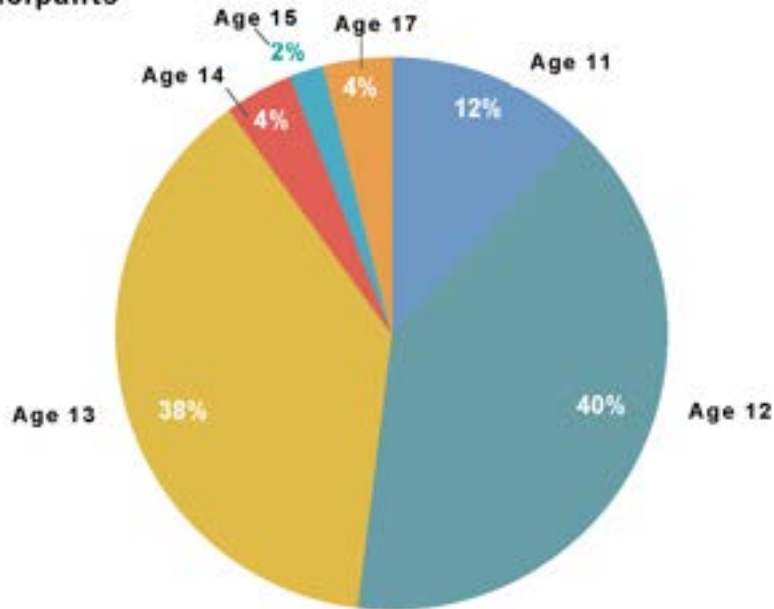
Source: LA Listening Session Survey, n=48.

When self-reporting their city of residence, a plurality (44%, or 21 survey takers) identified Los Angeles, with another 21% (or 10 survey takers) marking Gardena and 16% (or eight survey takers) marking Inglewood; the remaining 19% (or nine survey takers) either skipped this question or marked Carson, East LA, or "CA" (and therefore their city is unknown; Figure 2, or Appendix 4 for the detailed table).

Figure 2: City of Residence of Listening Session Participants

City	Count
LA	21
Gardena	10
Inglewood	8
N/A	4
Other (CA)	2
East LA	2
Carson	1
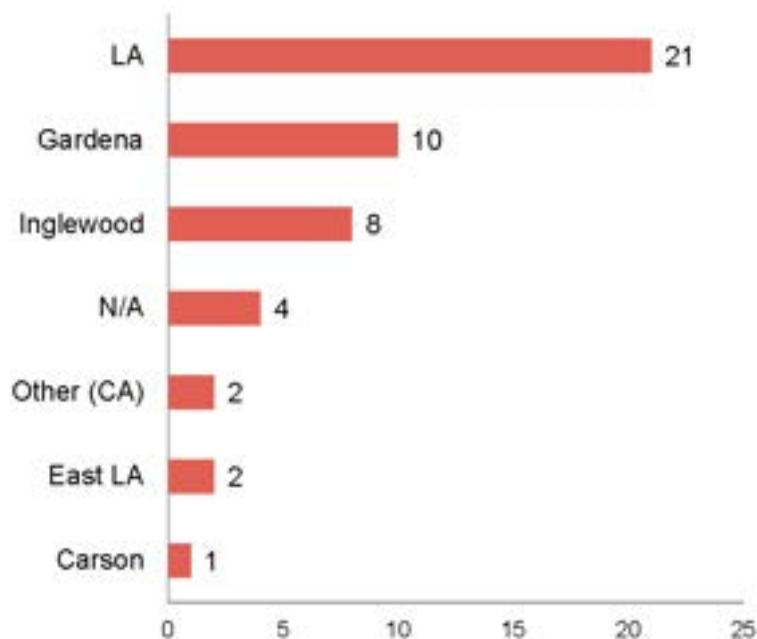
Source: LA Listening Session Survey, n=48.

A majority self-identified as Hispanic/Latinx (58%, or 28 girls), with multi-racial (19%, or nine girls), Black/African-American (17%, or eight girls), and American Indian/Native American (4%, or two girls) girls representing the remainder of the group; one girl selected "Don't know" for her race/ethnicity (Figure 3, or Appendix 4 for the detailed table).

Figure 3: Race/Ethnicity of Listening Session Participants
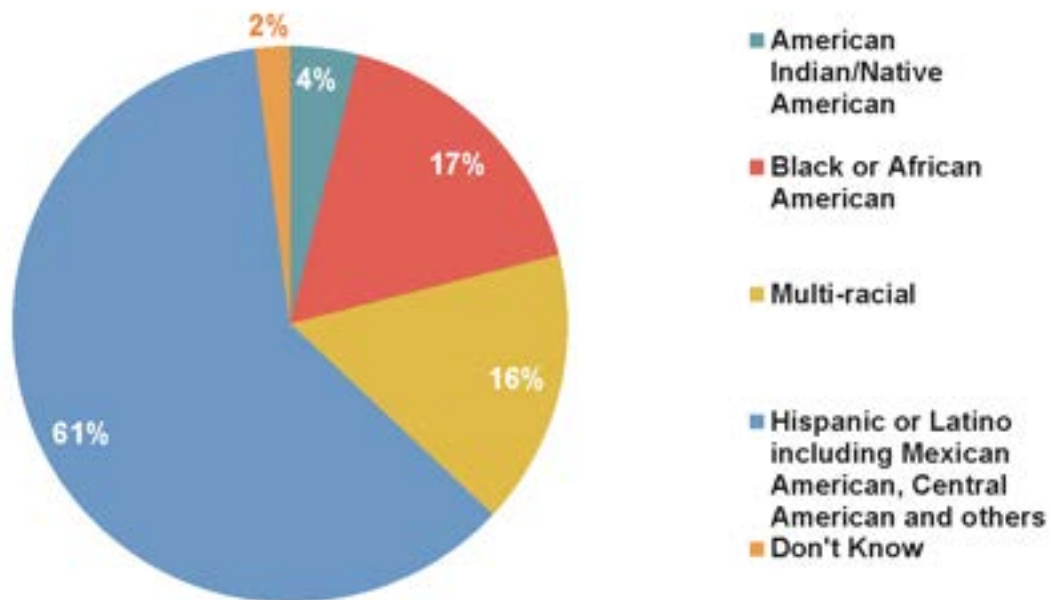
Source: LA Listening Session Survey, n=48.

An overwhelming majority of girls (85%, or 41 survey takers) described their sexual orientation as straight, with another 8% (or four girls) saying "Don't know," and 4% (or two girls) identifying as bisexual (Figure 4, or Appendix 4 for the detailed table). No participants reported identifying as gay, lesbian, or queer, and none refused to respond to the item or preferred instead to self-describe.

Figure 4: Sexual Orientation of Listening Session Participants

Legend:
- Straight
- Don't know
- Bisexual
- Refuse

2%
4%
8%
85%
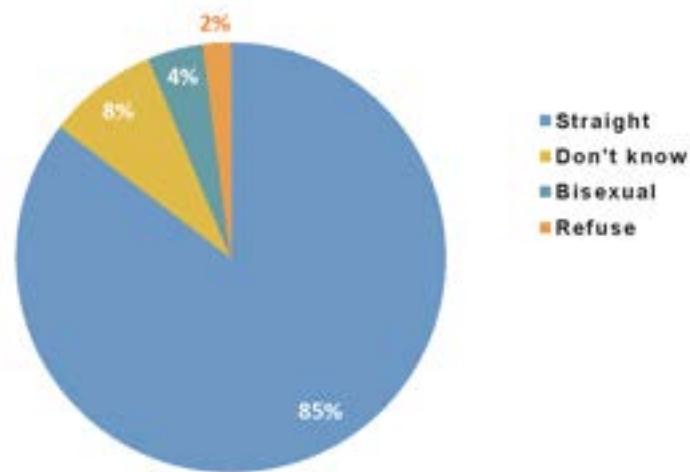
Source: LA Listening Session Survey, n=48.

Girls' belief systems were varied as well: just over three in 10 (31%, or 15 girls) selected "Don't know" for their religion, with another nearly three in 10 (29%, or 14 survey takers) preferring to write-in a response rather than select from the closed-ended options. When the write-in responses are factored in, one-third (or 16 girls) identified as Catholic, 31% (or 15 girls) said "Don't know," 6% each (or three girls) reported "Nothing in particular" and Protestant, 4% (two girls) said Muslim, and 2% (or one girl) opted to self-describe (Appendix 4).

Community demographics and trends are highlighted within the Findings section, with census tract and other neighborhood-specific data used as a complement to girls' data.

Research Limitations

Listening sessions and demographic surveys offer a point-in-time snapshot for what girls participating in listening sessions in four focal neighborhoods are thinking and feeling, but they are bound by some important research caveats. Though the listening sessions were well attended, the number of girls able to participate (n=48) is small relative to the large number of girls in the same age group in LA County (approaching half a million); this impacts the generalizability of the findings. As well, though AFG mobilizes champions to support girls and gender-expansive youth, 47 out of 48 participants self-identified as female (with one participant self-identifying their gender as "Don't know"). Finally, important differences exist in girls' thoughts, emotions, and needs based on their race/ethnicity, age, neighborhood, religion, primary language, and other socio-economic factors; the relatively small sample size and the homogeneity within it limit the degree to which these differences can be explored in this report.

FINDINGS: GIRLS' **VOICES**, GIRLS' **EXPERIENCES**

Girls in LA County exist at the intersection of multiple systems: school, church, culture, language, criminal justice, social media, family, after-school, neighborhood/community, politics, peers, adults, and beyond. Their experiences with these systems are complex and mixed; girls form relationships with and are shaped by the interplay among each system in impactful ways. The experiences, hopes, and needs that girls shared coalesce into four key themes:

- How girls receive **support**
- How girls experience **challenges**
- How girls envision **change**
- How girls **dream** about their futures

These themes emerged consistently and frequently across these four focal neighborhoods of LA County. Along with the four major systems detailed above (and mapped using icons in the analyses that follow), these themes help organize and reveal the underpinnings of the nuanced ways in which girls move through the world. The table on the next page details what girls shared and how their experiences intersect with key systems:

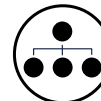## Girls' experiences impact them **across multiple systems**:

	COMMUNITY	SCHOOL	HOME	RELATIONSHIPS
Girls define their needs multiple ways: **SUPPORTS**	Girls **engage positively** through teams, clubs, resource centers, or houses of worship *"When I decided to change religions from Christian to Muslim, my mom and grandpa and the rest of the family were really supportive, grandma bought a hijab with her own money, [and] mom started taking me to the mosque"*	Girls **find support at school**, mostly through friends and sometimes in counselors *"A boy in class has anger issues, he hits girls in class all the time, and the counselor was the only one who helped; he wrote down the names of the students involved, and talked with the boys individually without the girls"*	Girls say their **mothers are their main supports**, primarily as emotional supports but sometimes also as physical supports *"Someone who supports me a lot is my mom, [she's] always there for me, tells me not to give up and don't let anybody tell you I can't do something"*	Girls feel **encouraged by their friends** during tough times *"My friends support me a lot. They encourage me and when I talk about bullies or how things are tough, I see them try their best to help me out and make me feel better"*
CHALLENGES	Girls **experience structural violence** in their community and fear for their safety *"In this neighborhood you gotta be tough because you're [...] put through more than anybody in a better neighborhood would be; there's a lot of stuff going on [here] like assaults"*	Girls **face academic pressure** and the stress of managing workloads, test preparation, and family expectations *"I want to [go to] college, but sometimes I feel like my mom wants me to live up to my sisters - they're succeeding, but I feel like I can't because I'm not as smart or as good as them"*	Girls **feel fathers' lack of support or presence,** coupled with fathers' rigid gender expectations *"The only person I don't feel supports me as much as they could is my father because he doesn't really show up whenever we have events"*	Girls feel they must live up to body image, intelligence, and physical **expectations that others put on them** *"They expect us to dress in high heels or a dress or certain colors [...], there are certain jobs they want us to have"*
CHANGES	Girls **want less structural violence and sexism** in their neighborhoods *"In my community, there's a lot of sexism and so people think, 'you can't do that because you're a girl,' but I say, 'girl you can do anything'"*	Girls **call for centering female experience** and justice *"Make more people (like teachers) more understanding of girls"* *"Take away bullying, [also] make a law that whoever is rich has to give at least have of their money to the poor"*	Girls **seek more respect and support from their family** members, especially male role models *"Get rid of negativity from parents and make them more supportive"* *"Take away low expectations for girls"*	Girls advocate for **better treatment of one another** *"I would want girls to not put each other down and instead support each other"* *"Change the conflict between girls, we should support each other [...], we're stronger together"*
DREAMS	Girls **dream of giving back** to the community *"[I want to] make [my] own support group for people in Inglewood, specifically for women and black women"* *"[I want] to open a homeless shelter, my family and friends support me, but money is a challenge"*	Girls aspire to **graduate from college** *"[My] dream is to go to UCLA and major in education to become a teacher [...]; a lot of schools don't help out with the requirements and certificates you need to get into specific programs"*	Girls want **greater family support** and encouragement *"I want to be an entrepreneur and have my own business, the challenge is where and how to start the business; I want support from my mom, dad, grandma, and turtle"*	Girls **dream of success**, and not letting anyone stop them from reaching their goals *"[I would] tell everybody that there's light at the end of the tunnel and not to give up"* *"There is help when you need it and all you have to do is seek it"*

Girls' Support from Mothers and Friends

Girls centered support (both its existence and absence) as a prevalent factor in all four listening sessions. Girls defined receiving support as having people in your life who show up, listen, and provide encouragement and comfort; the people in girls' lives who do this for them form their support system.

Girls overwhelmingly rely on two groups for support: their mothers and their friends. The support they receive is primarily moral and motivational but sometimes girls receive physical support as well. Girls mentioned mothers as a source of support at the same rate as they mentioned friends in this same context; together, these two sources of comfort account for half of all of the mentions (28 of 56 mentions) of whom girls rely on. Girls' friends were regularly but not exclusively female; only a few girls shared specifically that their relationships with male friends are among their most meaningful.

> *Someone who supports me a lot is my mom, she always supports me when I have something going on, she is always there for me and tells me not to give up and don't let anybody tell me I can't do something.*
> – Girl from **Gardena**

> *When I decided to change religions from Christian to Muslim, my mom and grandpa and the rest of the family were really supportive. My grandma bought a hijab with her own money, and my mom started taking me to the mosque.*
> – Girl from **Inglewood**

Many girls mentioned receiving scant support from their fathers. Of all the times in listening sessions that girls talked about the numerous primary stressors in their lives, 9% of all mentions (or 10 mentions) were about fathers, with another 21% of mentions (or 24 mentions) calling out boys and men in general. When fathers were mentioned as a stressor, it was because they were present but not demonstrating support, or because they were not present when girls needed them. Community-level data can help put girls' lived experiences in context: children in these focal neighborhoods are much more likely to live in a household in which only the mother is present (32% of children), versus in a home in which only the father is present (10% of children); though half (49%) of kids in these areas do live in households with both parents present,[4] the data on single-parent homes track with what girls shared in listening sessions about their own experiences.

I think that the non-support comes mostly from males – [Another girl chiming in] I agree, like the moms are always supporting and the dads are not.
*– Girls from **Gardena***

Some fathers were highlighted as central to girls' support systems: a handful of girls mentioned their fathers attending special events to support them (like a dance competition), or writing a letter of support and motivation (to support a sports tryout). As well, girls brought up positive relationships with their siblings, family in general, and with organizations (like a team, club, resource center, or house of worship). Overall, however, girls find their strongest champions in other women and girls.

Challenges Experienced by Girls

Girls live with multiple obstacles and pressures. Some challenges are community-wide, like gun, community, or state violence. Some challenges relate to school and home, such as academic pressure. And some challenges relate to their gender-identity and the gender-norms placed on them because of their perceived or known gender, like gender-based violence and added domestic responsibilities. This has a tremendous impact on their lives.

Community – which girls conceive of as the nexus of their outward-facing experiences in systems including school, with peers, within their neighborhood, and in other public settings like church – is the space or system at the center of most girls' experiences, but this space also functions as the locus of their challenges. Girls in these four neighborhoods experience significant violence in their neighborhoods and at school; they fear for their safety. Though publicly available data show that crime rates in general[5] have been decreasing across these focal neighborhoods over the last three years, gender-based violence, including rape, doubled between 2014 and 2018;[6] this finding supports at an environmental level what girls shared about their own day-to-day experiences.

In this neighborhood you gotta be tough because you're exposed to a lot of stuff here and you're put through more than anybody in a better neighborhood would be put through.
*– Girl from **Crenshaw***

Girls in listening sessions reported that the behavior and expectations exhibited by boys and men are the number one challenge they face: comments about boys and men account for 21% of the total mentions (or 24 out of 115 mentions) of girls' stressors. Girls shared that boys and men are aggressive, threatening, and adopt attitudes and behaviors of strict gender norms. Girls feel challenged in dealing with words and actions that are sexist and based on body image, stereotypes, and strict gender roles.

> *Girls can't go out, they get cat-called; if a girl is wearing just, like, pants and a crop top, men will whistle at them.*
> *– Girl from Gardena*

Academic pressure is what worries girls most after boys' and men's behavior and expectations; almost one in five comments (17%, or 20 mentions) about stress related to performing academically. For girls this pressure can be both external and internal. Internal pressure is described as the result of their own choices, such as pressure resulting from procrastination, while external pressure comes from not yet having the tools to balance their workload or because their stress is not taken seriously by the adults in their life.

> *School [is my main source of stress]; my mom expects a 3.5 GPA or higher, a point above what my school expects. I'm stressing out because I feel like I have to do everything right.*
> *– Girl from Inglewood*

Judgment, perceptions, and expectations are strongly present for girls across all focal neighborhoods. Girls feel like there is constant pressure coming from peers, men and boys, and the media; this pressure makes girls feel they must live up to a certain body image, have traditionally feminine interests and hobbies, and be popular on social media. Girls internalize these pressures - even while calling them out - and it negatively affects their self-worth. Girls are aware of how these experiences are placed on them because of their gender. Girls of color are also aware that these unfair and disrespectful experiences are also due to their gender and race/ethnicity.

> *It's like caging your true self because at school people could judge you for how you actually are as a girl; you end up putting on a mask to fit in with everyone else so you're not judged.*
> – Girl from **Crenshaw**

> *Having to deal with being a girl of color – it's hard enough being a girl, but being a girl of color on top of that, you have to deal with all these people hating on you, having to look perfect, making sure you don't get in trouble with the police because they misunderstand everything. People don't know what you're going through.*
> – Girl from **Inglewood**

Girls' Recommendations for Change

Though girls carry a heavy mental load of complex challenges, they think a lot about what affirmative systems would look like for them. As a survival technique, girls in Crenshaw, East LA, Gardena, and Inglewood have developed ways to practice resistance and resilience; but they also desire to thrive, and thriving requires systems change. Nearly one in five (17%, or 84) of girls' total listening session comments related to the changes they hope to see in their relationships, neighborhoods, and institutions.

Girls feel trapped by the expectations and behaviors of others, and this is one of the main things they are seeking to change. Girls frequently mention body safety issues of sexual assault, boys wanting sex without a condom, and teen pregnancy/young motherhood as problematic behaviors of men and boys that primarily impact girls. Of all the changes girls want to see, almost one-third (30%, or 25) of their comments spoke of wanting to improve their physical safety, addressing teen pregnancy among their peers, and the changing the negative behaviors of men and boys.

> *Teenage pregnancy [is a major issue], go to any high school and you'll hear about at least two of your friends or someone you know having babies.*
> – Girl from **Inglewood**

> *In my community, there's a lot of sexism and so people think, 'You can't do that because you're a girl.' But I say, 'Girl you can do anything.'*
> – Girl from **Gardena**

Across all four focal neighborhoods, girls shared that they have experiences with muggings, shootings, childhood sexual assault, rape, harassment, and unsafe community spaces. They

described that to be present in these neighborhoods as a teenage girl is to contend with catcalls, drug use on the street and in cars, people frequenting liquor stores, and other signifiers of long-term redlining, structural exclusion, racism, and poverty. Girls feel psychologically and physically unsafe in this environment and seek more girl-positive mental health supports from each other and from the adults in their communities. This is what they need to begin feeling safe and making change.

> *Girls are expected to defend themselves over men because there's a lot of things that happen to girls and women, like get assaulted; girls shouldn't be expected to defend themselves at such an early age because men shouldn't be doing this to any type of women or girls.*
> *– Girl from Crenshaw*

> *[If you had a magic wand, what would you change?]*
>
> *I'd make [my] own support group for people in Inglewood, specifically for women and black women.*
> *– Girl from Inglewood*

Publicly available neighborhood data provide additional context. Youth are more likely to reside in areas saturated by liquor stores[7] and with high community unemployment[8] in these four focal neighborhoods versus the rest of LA County. Globally, over one in 10 girls (11%) was chronically absent[9] from school in LA County during the 2017-18 school year. And in a public middle school student body of 261,285[10] in LA County, there were 30,112 violence-related suspensions [11]- though students may be suspended more than once, as a percentage of the student body this means that 12% of all students in LA County experienced a suspension for violence. Environmental data reflect the communities that girls richly detailed in listening sessions; girls' sharing about their neighborhoods brings to life what these data mean for the young people living and growing in communities impacted in these ways.

Girls sharing during listening sessions think that girls should have more control and more rights; that there should be less violence and more equality; that bullying should be unacceptable; that people should not have low expectations for girls; and that teen pregnancy should not be normalized. As one key remedy, girls believe that community-based, girl- and women-only spaces could offer a platform to address many of these issues while keeping girls and women safe. These spaces would offer a respite from the day-to-day of toxic gender norms and a place to begin reimagining the status quo.

Dreaming a Future beyond Gendered Expectations

Girls aged eleven to seventeen are primed to be thinking about their identities and where they want to go in life. Girls are also thinking about if and how their dreams will be financially possible, and who will support them in their journey. That girls continue to dream in spite of and beyond the hardships they feel highlights how girls practice transformational resistance.

Girls in listening sessions have a mix of specific and general ideas about what will come next: some girls are already thinking about their future job title (like Chief Operating Officer of a bank, Policewoman, Nanotechnician), and some have very broad goals (get rich, be famous, model, have a show like Ellen or Oprah). Almost all girls say they have thought about whether their parents and families will support their goals and about how that presence or absence of support will shape their academic or career journeys. When girls do feel supported in their dreams, it is most often their mothers providing them verbal and material support for the future; however, girls experience a lack of support around their future plans from parents and family members of both sexes, which girls observed is further reinforced culturally and systemically.

> *A lot of girls feel like they don't want to make the same mistakes as women in their life, so they feel like they have to try really hard.*
> – Girl from **Inglewood**

> *When I was little I wanted to be a nurse just like my parents; but recently, when I told some of my family members that I wanted to be a mechanic, my family told me that women can't be mechanics; it's not that they were saying I shouldn't do it, but they were saying that men don't usually allow women to work on their cars.*
> – Girl from **Crenshaw**

While girls are aware of the constraints placed on them and their dreams because of their race and gender, it does not stop them from pursuing their dreams. Girls who dream of a career in entertainment (model, actor, artist, entertainer) already feel pressure to be active and popular on social media and are aware of how much that will be amplified as their careers take off. Girls whose professional goals require a university, graduate, or professional degree are aware of the cost and financial impact of realizing their dreams. Girls are also aware that some careers are assumed to be for white and or male peers and

not for girls because of racist and sexist norms. Regardless of these constraints and challenges, girls are resisting by pursuing their dreams. By creating their own support spaces. By naming toxic gender norms and the way they place restraints on their dreams. This allows girls to utilize resistance to actively make their dreams valid and create the opportunities to make their dreams possible.

My dream is to become a doctor, my mom doesn't have much money and my dad doesn't really support me, but I would like to get a scholarship to college
*– Girl from **Crenshaw***

Females don't get the same opportunities as males do. There are groups that are specifically for females, like a field trip for female science and engineering, but I feel like that's a little condescending because it's telling women they need help to pursue that career.
*– Girl from **Inglewood***

CONCLUSION

Girls in Crenshaw, East LA, Gardena, and Inglewood are the experts of their own lives and know what they need to thrive. Girls in this report, through sharing their stories and experiences, provided a map of what they need to accomplish their dreams. They talked about the support that exists in their lives, including from their mothers and female friends. Girls also talked about their challenges, including gender-based violence and strict gender norms that result in lack of safety, resources, and opportunities.

More than anything, girls talked about what they need. They need committed partners to help ensure that the multiple systems they contend with begin centering and valuing girls. Alliance for Girls and girl champions, including members of the Alliance for Girls and LA County elected officials, can come together to offer platforms, resources, knowledge, and inter-generational leadership to demonstrate that collective power can affect systemic change in LA County.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Map of Coding Framework and Descriptors

PRIMARY STRESSORS	DESIRED CHANGES
Academic Pressure	Access/Opportunity
Boys/Men	Behaviors
Community Violence	Engagement
Fathers	Equality
Gender-Based Violence	Judgment
Girl Drama	Mental Health Support
Gun Violence	Perceptions
Personal Relationships	Physical Safety
Structural Violence	Young Pregnancy

SYSTEMS/SPACES	SUPPORTS
Community	Family
Home	Friend
School	Mother
Social Media	Organization
Social Network	Relative
	Sibling

GENDER-SPECIFIC CHALLENGES	DREAMS
Academic Achievement	Career
Autonomy	College
Body Safety	Family
Domestic Responsibilities	Financial
Dress	Helping Others
Expectations	Personal Development
Periods	
Power	
Value	

IDENTITIES	TOXIC GENDER NORMS
Age	Body Image
Culture	Gender Roles
Gender	Sexism
Race	Stereotypes
SOGIE	

Appendix 2: Listening Session Protocol and Parent Opt-Out Forms

Los Angeles Revised: 8/29/2018

Listening Session Protocol

WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT (3-5 minutes)

We are committed to creating a fun and non-school environment in the room. The room will be set-up in a way that supports an intimate environment. Each person will be welcomed as they come in, asked to sign-in, and provided a name tag to write their first name and preferred gender pronoun.

The coordinator will select who will begin and which questions each person will ask. When a coordinator is not facilitating, they will take notes.

INTRODUCTION (2-5 minutes)

The coordinators will begin by welcoming everyone. They will then announce that we will begin with introductions. Everyone will share their name, preferred pronouns, the school they attend, their grade, and their favorite part of the Los Angeles area. Each coordinator will model first.

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITIES (20 minutes):

A. *As the Wind Blows* (3-5 minutes): Everyone will gather in a circle and stand on an X. The facilitator will describe the instructions. She will start in the middle and begin with "The wind blows if you……..". The next person in the middle will then repeat. The facilitator will have a timer and finish in 3 minutes.

B. *Mapping Your Community* (10-15 minutes): Each participant will be given a sheet of paper and 2 post-it notes. There will be 2 large posters in the front of the room. One poster will have the title "I like my community because" and the other poster will have the title, "Challenges in my community include".

Ask each participant to draw their community and identify in their community their school, home, and any organizations/groups they are a part of. Near each of the locations, they can write the things they like and don't like in their community. On one post-it note, they will write the words associated with what they like in their community. On the other post-it note, they will list the words that describe the challenges in their community. When they are done writing, they will place their respective posters in the front of the room.

AGREEMENTS (2-3 minutes)

The coordinators will spend 2-3 minutes developing agreements for the focus group. Each group must have as an agreement that everything that is said in the group will be held anonymous and confidential, which means no names will be attributed to any specific person and the facilitators or those present will not share what is said with others, only general themes from the sessions will be shared.

Livier will mention that the only time we may have to break confidentiality is to provide resources and support if someone needs them. Additionally, if anyone in the room needs resources and support, she has an MSW and can provide case management support and referrals.

QUESTIONS (40 minutes)

After the agreements, the coordinators will gather everyone and begin to transition to the discussion questions.

Questions:

1. *[Round Robin]* If you had to tell a story about girls/young women in your community, what would it be?
2. Name an experience where you felt supported? Who was involved and what happened?
3. Name an experience where you felt mistreated? Who was involved and what could have made it a better experience for you?
4. *[Round Robin]* What are the biggest issues facing girls/young women from your community today?
5. What are the things that get in the way of your dreams?
6. What issues of safety are or have been a concern for you and/or your friends?
7. What are the prime reasons for stress in your life? How do you deal with stress? What programs/places do you go to get help with your stress?
8. Who are the people/groups that support you? When you need help where do you turn? Who do you ask for help?
9. *[Round Robin]* What do you still need? Want to see different in your community? Lacking in organizations you are a part of?

CLOSING (2-3 minutes)

The coordinators will thank everyone for attending and participating. They will ask each to complete a demographic survey. Livier will collect the survey and provide a gift card.

ALLIANCE
FOR GIRLS

PARENT OPT-OUT FORM

NAME OF YOUR ORGANIZATION HERE and Alliance for Girls (AFG) will be hosting listening sessions with girls to discuss their experiences at school and in the community. Information collected from the listening sessions will informa a needs assessment for girls in Los Angeles. The needs assessment will help the school and the community develop programs, and policies that can better support young girls. The listening sessions will be led by AFG staff trained to conduct feminist research. The listening sessions will also be confidential and anonymous. Participants will be asked to have a conversation about their academic life, after school activities, friends, family, and their goals for the future. They will likely talk about challenges and successes they and their friends have experienced. Your child's participation in the listening session is entirely voluntary and they will not be paid for their time. They will receive a $5 gift card to Jamba Juice. The listening session will be LOCATION OF AGENCY and will last approximately 90 minutes.

You do not have to allow your child to participate in the listening session. If you have any questions about the listening session, please reach out to Director of Programs Livier Gutierrez. She will be leading the listening sessions. She can be reached via email (livier@alliance4girls.org) or cell (510-815-3142).

Please initial and sign below stating if you do or do not want your child to participate in the Alliance for Girls listening session.

_____ ALLOW my child to participate in the listening session.
Initial here

_____ DO NOT ALLOW my child to participate in the listening session.
Initial here

Parent's Name _____

Student's Name _____

Parent's Signature _____ Date _____

FORMULARIO DE PARTICIPACIÓN DE LOS PADRES

<mark>EL NOMBRE DE SU ORGANIZACIÓN AQUÍ</mark> y Alliance for Girls (AFG) estarán organizando sesiones de escucha con niñas para analizar sus experiencias en la escuela y en la comunidad. La información collecteda en las sesiones de escucha informará un informe sobre las experiencias y necesidades de niñas en Los Ángeles. El informe ayudará a la escuela y a la comunidad a desarrollar programas y pólizas para prevenir mejor apoyo a las niñas. Las sesiones de escucha serán dirigidas por personal de AFG capacitado para realizar investigación feministas. Las sesiones de escucha también serán confidenciales y anónimas. Se les pedirá a las participantes que conversen sobre su vida académica, actividades extracurriculares, amiga/os, familia y sus metas para el futuro. Probablemente hablarán sobre los desafios y éxitos que ellas y sus amiga/os han tenido. La participación de su hija en la sesión de escucha es completamente voluntaria y no se les pagará por su tiempo. Recibirán una tarjeta de regalo de S 5 para Jamba Juice. La sesión de escucha será <mark>LOCALIZACIÓN DE LA AGENCIA</mark> y tomará aproximadamente 90 minutos.

Usted tiene la opción de permitir o negar que su hija participe en la sesión de escucha. Si tiene alguna pregunta sobre la sesión de escucha, comuníquese con la Directora de Programas, Livier Gutierrez. Ella dirigirá las sesiones de escucha. Se puede comunicar con ella por correo electrónico (livier@alliance4girls.org) o celular (510-815-3142).

Escriba y firme a continuación si desea o no que su hija participe en la sesión de escucha de Alliance for Girls.

_____
Iniciales   PERMITO que mi hija participe en la sesión de escucha.
aqui

_____
          NO PERMITO que mi hija participe en la sesión de
Iniciales escucha.
aqui

Nombre de el padre/ la madre/ guardian _____

Nombre de la estudiante_____

Firma de el padre/ la madre/ guardián _____ Fecha _____

Appendix 3: Demographic Survey Template

Alliance For Girls – Los Angeles Listening Sessions

Thank you for attending our listening session. This survey asks demographic questions that help us understand who we had the opportunity to hear from. We appreciate you taking a minute to complete it.

*TODAY'S DATE

		/			/				

Month   Day   Year

TODAY'S CITY LOCATION: _____

WHAT IS YOUR ZIPCODE: _____

AGE

GENDER IDENTITY

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Non-Binary
- ☐ Prefer to self-describe (write in): _____
- ☐ Don't Know
- ☐ Refuse

RACE
You may select more than one option

- ☐ American Indian/Native American
- ☐ Asian/Pacific Islander, including:
    - ☐ Bhutanese ☐ Burmese ☐ Cambodian ☐ Chamorro ☐ Chinese ☐ Filipino ☐ Iu Mien ☐ Laotian
    - ☐ Mongolian ☐ Native Hawaiian ☐ Samoan ☐ Tibetan ☐ Tongan ☐ Vietnamese
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ Hispanic or Latino, including Mexican American, Central American, and others
- ☐ White, Caucasian, Anglo, European American
- ☐ Other (write in): _____
- ☐ Don't Know
- ☐ Refuse

DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF...?

- ☐ Straight
- ☐ Gay
- ☐ Lesbian
- ☐ Queer
- ☐ Bisexual
- ☐ Don't know
- ☐ Prefer to self-describe (write in):
- ☐ Refuse

WHAT IS YOUR PRESENT RELIGION, IF ANY?

☐ Protestant

☐ Roman Catholic

☐ Mormon

☐ Orthodox,
such as Greek or Russian Orthodox

☐ Jewish

☐ Muslim

☐ Buddhist

☐ Hindu

☐ Atheist

☐ Agnostic

☐ Nothing in particular

☐ Don't know

☐ Prefer to self-describe (write in):
_____

☐ Refuse

DO YOU HAVE ACCESS TO MENSTRUAL HEALTH EDUCATION OR EDUCATION ABOUT YOUR "PERIOD"?

☐ YES
  ☐ IF YES, ARE YOU INTERESTED IN
  GETTING MORE INFORMATION?

☐ NO
  ☐ IF NO, ARE YOU INTERESTED IN
  GETTING MORE INFORMATION?

WHAT IS ONE OF YOUR LIFELONG DREAMS? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix 4: Demographic Tables

Table 1. Participants' Gender Identity	
Female	98%
Don't know	2%
Male	0%
Non-binary	0%
Refuse	0%
Prefer to self-describe	0%

Table 2. Participants' Age	
11 years old	12%
12 years old	40%
13 years old	38%
14 years old	4%
15 years old	2%
16 years old	0%
17 years old	4%

Table 3. Participants' City of Residence	
Los Angeles	44%
Gardena	21%
Inglewood	16%
Skipped question	9%
East Los Angeles	4%
Unknown	4%
Carson	2%

Note: This survey item was fill-in the blank.

Table 4. Participants' Race/Ethnicity	
Hispanic/Latinx	58%
Multi-racial	19%
Black/African-American	17%
American Indian/Native American	4%
Don't know	2%

Table 5. Participants' Sexual Orientation	
Straight	85%
Don't know	8%
Bisexual	4%
Gay	0%
Lesbian	0%
Queer	0%
Refuse	0%
Prefer to self-describe	0%

Table 6. Participants' Religious Beliefs	
Roman Catholic	33%
Don't know	31%
Nothing in particular	6%
Protestant	6%
Muslim	4%
Prefer to self-describe	2%
Mormon	0%
Orthodox, such as Greek or Russian Orthodox	0%
Jewish	0%
Buddhist	0%
Hindu	0%
Atheist	0%
Agnostic	0%
Refuse	0%

Appendix 5: End Notes

1 California Department of Finance, Race/Ethnic Population with Age and Sex Detail, 1990-1999, 2000-2010, 2010-2060 (Jan. 2018); U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates, Vintage 2017 (Jul. 2018). Counting females between the ages of 11 and 17. (Retrieved from kidsdata.org)

2 "Girls" refers to gender expansive youth (cis girls, trans girls, non-binary youth, gender non-conforming youth, gender queer youth and any girl-identified youth). (Retrieved from Alliance4girls.org)

3 "Champions" refers to individuals who are girls' advocates and educators.

4 U.S. Census Bureau, 2018 American Community Survey (retrieved from kidsdata.org)

5 California Department of Justice Criminal Justice Statistics. (Retrieved from https://openjustice.doj.ca.gov/exploration/crime-statistics/)

6 California Department of Justice Criminal Justice Statistics. (Retrieved from http://www.laalmanac.com/crime/cr02.php)

7 Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. (Retrieved from http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/epi/docs/AOD%20final%20revised%20web%20ed.pdf)

8 California Employment Development Department, Labor Market Information; 2013-17. (Retrieved from kidsdata.org)

9 California Department of Education through the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System; 2017-18. (Retrieved from ed-data.org)

10 *Ibid*

11 *Ibid*