

The “Othering” Effect:
A critical analysis of the financial state of two “Disadvantaged Unincorporated
Communities” in the San Joaquin Valley

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the financial inequalities found in disadvantaged unincorporated communities (DUCs) located in California's San Joaquin Valley. This research addresses the problem that DUCs lack access to consistent public and private dollars that support local infrastructure investments, and a governing structure that does not satisfy the needed capacity to support such endeavors. The lack of consistent financial support, and the limitations within governing policies and structures have perpetuated a cycle of "othering" deeply rooted in these communities. The negative impacts can be seen through overwhelming frustrations from residents battling a system that does not supply adequate services to support long-term growth and financial equality. My research explores the relationship between **policy intent**, **funding support**, and **implementation** of infrastructure projects, specifically projects related to and supporting mobility through a transportation lens. Through previous observation I have found that since the great economic downturn of 2007/2008, DUCs in the San Joaquin Valley have received insufficient public dollars in the form of sales tax revenue and state government funds to support needed transportation infrastructure.

To better understand the financial inequalities that exist in the San Joaquin Valley, I utilize available local and state data to analyze the use of policy to facilitate funding mechanisms that support on-the-ground implementation efforts. For the purposes of this research project my geographical scope is focused on two disadvantaged unincorporated communities located in Merced County: Winton and Planada.

Keywords: Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities, Financial Inequality, Transportation, Mobility, Othering, Fringe

INTRODUCTION

Literature has shown that the San Joaquin Valley's collection of Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities (DUCs) has inadequate access to public and private financial resources that support local investments (PolicyLink, 2013; Kohl-Arenas, 2016; Center for Regional Change, 2017 & 2018). This lack of investment is perpetuated by the fact that individuals living in these areas are frequently excluded from decision-making processes, which creates a system that (in)advertently racializes space and misrepresents the local identity (individually and collectively). Additionally, these areas see less continuous availability of capital to help entice additional investments from financial institutions and corporations, such as, funds that can go towards the required need of matching funds for some grant applications. This is ironic considering that the San Joaquin Valley is home to one of the largest global industries in the world – agriculture! Despite the strength of California's economy – a 2018 Los Angeles Times article claims it is now ranked fifth in the world, surpassing even the United Kingdom (May 4, 2018) – the population in DUCs continues to grow and poverty levels increase¹.

This question surrounding the state of DUCs' financial infrastructure begins with how California's government system defines DUCs. For the purposes of this study, I will be using the state government's definition of "Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities" (DUCs) as areas: a.) Located outside of city limits and spheres of influence; b.) With a median household income of 80 percent or less than the statewide average; and c.) Identified as a fringe (areas inside of City Spheres of Influence), legacy (areas outside of City Spheres of Influence) or island (areas completely inside city limits) (Senate Bill 244, 2011 & Senate Bill 535, 2012). This terminology can be found in several local and state policy documents in use over the past 5-10

¹ California has approximately 450 designated DUCs in the San Joaquin Valley (Center for Regional Change, 2018) with projected growth

years, which will be reviewed and critiqued further in the Case Study and Findings chapter of this thesis.

Over the years, the San Joaquin Valley has been dealing with heightened concerns around exposure to greenhouse gas emissions and concentrated air pollution, lack of access to clean and affordable water, low-wages, and a declining housing market. Unfortunately, the state government has created a process of delineating between unincorporated and incorporated areas that is blanketed across California without a careful analysis of the financial implications of this delineation on certain populations. This process of delineation creates a sense of what Professor John A. Powell² refers to as “Othering”. Powell speaks to the process by which the dominant culture or power racializes one group as privileged and the “other” group as not (Powell, 2015). Through my research I will be positioning this concept of othering into my analysis by looking at: 1.) how DUCs gain access to competitive and often limited funding mechanisms for transportation and infrastructure needs (if at all), and 2.) identifying certain limitations that have been historically placed on DUC populations and their governing structures.

Additionally, public institutions have not acknowledged many of the inequities embedded in the governing structures of California’s DUCs, nor have they identified how political boundaries often hinder mobility (e.g. access to services and education) over time. Careful analysis of the financial realities of DUCs reveal a need to change the narrative around how governments are structured, and the distribution of financial resources. My research question will look at: **What are the patterns of financial inequalities that have led to becoming “disadvantaged” and how do those patterns play out in today’s DUCs?** In order to address this broader question I will be specifically looking at 1.) How past influences affect present circumstances?, 2.) How the national economies affect financial inequalities?, and 3.) How

² Professor Powell teaches at the University of California, Berkeley and leads the Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society

geography affects decision-making processes? I speculate that the following hypotheses³ will provide a better understanding of the current conditions of DUCs:

- *DUCs exist today partially due to the historical policies of the early to mid-1900s that have intentionally limited the amount of financial resources given to racialized unincorporated areas based on a system of “othering”*
- *DUCs received inadequate funding, especially in times of economic downturn*
- *Residents in DUCs are disconnected by County level decision-making bodies, not just by economics or education, but also by geography.*

My research looks specifically at Merced County through the lens of transportation, state grants and other local funding mechanisms, and historical policies. To help organize the overall structure of my thesis I have divided the paper into 4 key areas:

Chapter 1: An overview of some of the scholarly literature that will help frame later discussion around DUCs;

Chapter 2: Review of my methodology and policy content;

Chapter 3: Case studies of two DUCs in the San Joaquin Valley and insight into key findings; and

Chapter 4: A conversation around considerations and recommendations based on some of the key findings.

The History of California’s Patterns of Unincorporation

The history of unincorporated areas has been derived from decades of discriminatory laws and practices that secluded certain populations from various financial institutions and systems. Thanks to a 2013 study led by the Oakland based national research action institute, PolicyLink, in partnership with the California Rural Legal Assistance Inc. and the California

³ Although a conventional hypothesis testing was not able to occur due to limitations discussed in Chapter 3: Methodology, some initial research expectations were identified and discussed using available data

Rural Legal Assistance Foundation, many unincorporated areas are finally being recognized by the United States Census Bureau. This recognition may facilitate in the additional financial resources that some of these areas desperately need, but haven't received. This lack of recognition could be pointed to a collection of policies and systems that were created to segregate and limit predominately people of color and poor white individuals from being able to climb the social and economic ladder. Through laws like the **1913** and **1920 Alien Land Law**, which prohibited any person "ineligible to become citizens" from owning agricultural land or possessing long-term leases over it, resulted in those directly impacted by the law (Japanese, Chinese and Indian) having to become migrant laborers to help make ends meet. Due to these increased economic limitations "Chinese workers and farmers found themselves packed into even more highly constrained towns and districts, living at densities, even in rural areas that far exceeded most white urban neighborhoods..." (Mitchell, 1996, p. 95). Many of the jobs paid very little to no wages (some only paid through housing and food rations), which helped to create a larger divide between the wealthy and the poor. This affected California, specifically the San Joaquin Valley, due to the fact that many migrants were coming to and/or through California and were limited into how they were able to provide for their families. In addition to land ownership laws, many migrants and people of color found themselves limited to where they could rent or own a home. During the Roosevelt administration, the act of "**redlining**" by many mortgage lending companies and housing agencies helped continue the racial and social divide by restricting where people of color could live based on either being offered a higher loan rate than whites or lending companies not wanting to give them a loan at all due to being perceived as a higher risk. The outcome of having to deal with increased obstacles while trying to find a place

to live ended up moving racialized populations decided to more rural, unincorporated areas. Due to the growth of the agricultural and goods movement industries many corporations sought cheap labor, so unincorporated areas became an attractive location as there were jobs available. In some respects these unincorporated areas became a safe haven for those trying to get away from the violent acts that were being seen in urban centers. The population in these areas continued to grow as more laborers were needed and opportunities elsewhere were limited. The federal government inadvertently helped with this growth by instituting policies that encouraged immigration. Between 1924 and 1930 an estimated 58,000 Mexican and Hispanic workers migrated through the San Joaquin Valley each year (Mitchell, 1996, p. 91). Overtime this led to the labeling of Mexican workers as a “natural labor supply for California agriculture” (Mitchell, 1996, p. 91). As the need to grow the profitability of the industry increased and being able to maintain a steady flow of cheap, temporary labor the Federal government intervened. The government implemented work programs like the **Bracero Program**, which facilitated the exchange of cheap labor from Mexico during and after World War II. So, places like Merced County that were rich in agriculture began seeing an increase in representation of migrant workers from places like Mexico, Asia and the South of the United States. Unfortunately, the policies that once encouraged race and class segregation systematically helped to morph unincorporated areas into what we see today.

Based on what can be gleaned from previous research on unincorporated communities, California’s current patterns of unincorporation are not created or sustained under a *one-size fits all* model. Many unincorporated areas from around the state have experienced great financial and political gains by maintaining their unincorporated status, such as, Del Mar Heights in San Diego

County and the rural area of Lake Sherwood in Los Angeles County. Both Del Mar Heights and Lake Sherwood are prime examples that demonstrate how being designated as an unincorporated community (or a Census Designated Place) allows for greater local autonomy, which creates a thriving local economy and allows residents to maintain access to high level services; while other areas have been faced with a struggling economy, lack of sufficient resources, and limited job opportunities. Unfortunately, these latter types of scenarios are common, particularly for those areas that have been historically racialized and politicized by the advertisement of flawed concepts like the “American Dream”. Before moving forward with how certain areas are seeing a continuous decrease in economic and social growth, it’s important to provide some added clarity about the differences between unincorporated and incorporated lands, and the governing bodies that provide oversight to these areas.

According to William Fulton and Paul Shigley (2012), the California governing system is set-up based on a geographical designation outlined through a political process that gives power to a governing body (p.76-78). Essentially those areas designated as a city have jurisdiction over land inside their borders, and counties control what’s left - the “unincorporated” territory. Merced County is governed by five board of supervisors who are elected by residents of the county and represent individual geographical districts (or areas) of the county. Based on local records, the County has a long history of electing predominantly white, male supervisors, as well as members who have a long family history of owning and operating farm lands⁴. Currently, the county has elected a slightly more diverse leadership - based on gender, race/ethnicity, occupation and local affiliations. This can be seen in the newly elected Supervisor Lee Lor (District 2) whose district covers the City of Merced. Born in Connecticut Supervisor Lor moved to Merced at a young age (Merced Sun-Star interview, April 2016), she is the first Hmong

⁴ The list of all Board of Supervisors since 1855 - <http://www.co.merced.ca.us/DocumentCenter/View/88/Board-Member-History?bidId=>

American woman to hold an elected position in the Central Valley (Merced Sun-Star, March 2019), and is one of the youngest supervisors elected to the Merced County Board of Supervisors. The district that she represents does not include a DUC but many of the issues that she is seeking to address does reflect some of the challenges that many DUCs face (e.g. poverty and transportation). In her profession, Supervisor Lor has worked with various local nonprofit organizations and service based agencies as opposed to farming and large agricultural companies like many of her current colleagues and predecessors.

Prior to starting graduate school, I assisted with organizing community workshops and meetings to allow open conversation regarding certain planning efforts that were happening in Winton and Planada. During these convenings I got the sense that in the past most of the Supervisors tended to live in certain areas of their district that fell outside of the more under-resourced areas. This disconnect ended up creating a social and economic barrier between decision-makers and the residents that they represent. Additionally, the travel time between some of the areas that lay on the fringe of city limits and the county offices creates a barrier for some residents who lack access to transportation, from being able to communicate with their representative. This disconnect speaks to a growing challenge within county governments who are facing staff capacity issues, population growth, and geographical challenges. How does one communicate with their elected or appointed representative when they do not have the resources to do so?

In places like Merced County the local government is only one power player that plays a role in deciding how money is spent, helping to build revenue, overseeing available resources, and creating future opportunities for residents. To help combat some of the power dynamics are a cluster of non-profit organizations that are focused on issues related to social and environmental

justice, racial & gender equity, and bringing more resources to DUCs. Over the years I've had the pleasure of working with some of these organizations like Cultiva la Salud, United Way of Merced and Lifeline Community Center. In the past, Cultiva la Salud and United Way of Merced have partnered with the local government on state funded grants, and have worked on projects that required extensive outreach to local residents in order to receive input on a project. For example, Cultiva la Salud has been a vocal advocate for communities like Planada and Winton to make sure financial resources are brought to those areas. They've worked on several Sustainable Communities Planning grants and Active Transportation grants in DUCs. These types of partners are invaluable to the development process for in some cases they have a better relationship with residents than local governments. There are many factors that can come into play when thinking about how an organization builds the trust of residents. One factor that is important is their willingness to go to where the residents are living, working and going to school. These organizations have a tendency to not expect that these residents will have the means or desire to travel to them. This expectation has been driving a divide between some of them more formal institutions, systems and residents.

In addition to NPOs, the large agricultural companies and landowners play a huge role in places like Merced County where the government and residents depend on the industry's ability to drive tax revenue and jobs. The county has been recognized as fifth among all counties in California and sixth in the nation in the annual market value of farm products (2030 General Plan, Merced County). Based on the county's 2013 General Plan there are plans to work towards preserving rich agriculture land and limiting potential conflicts with urban lands. The County has adopted a "Right-to-Farm Ordinance" which highlights a mutual understanding with new development and perspective residents that there may be inconveniences and discomfort

associated with normal farming activities. However, this ordinance does not speak to those existing “towns” or unincorporated areas that have been disenfranchised from certain financial benefits that these types of industries bring due being exposed to a limited system of reliable transportation systems.

In 2005 Merced County welcomed the University of California, Merced campus. This new UC campus helped to simulate a certain appeal to the area for a younger generation that wasn’t already living there or had interest in staying there after high school. It also simulated development around the campus, including housing and small businesses. Large institutions like UC Merced have established a certain level of power as they are able to offer the local economy certain benefits, but those benefits are limited in terms of their reach throughout the county.

Geography plays an active role in counties as local governments seek to juggle how to manage a diverse set of landscape conditions and infrastructure needs that tend to determine the availability and accessibility of resources. Depending on city boundaries some counties may find themselves facing very diverse geographical landscapes that may result in unique challenges for supporting DUC residents and local businesses. For instance, in Merced County it is common to find large segments of agricultural lands down the street from pockets of more densely populated urban communities. Due to this common urban and rural mix found throughout the county there are conflicts between how streets are utilized, who has the right-of-way (pedestrians or diesel trucks), and determining who and what to prioritize when it comes to improvements. There are some that argue that in an advanced capitalist society there is no longer any space or place that can or should be understood as distinctively rural (Marini and Mooney, 2006, p. 91). However, regardless of what you call a particular area, the history of how institutions organized and utilized land has created limitations and challenges in today’s society. An example of these

challenges can be seen in one's ability to move around a specific location, both physically and economically. The pockets of rural neighborhoods (compared to more traditional urban or high density areas) that fall under or in alignment with the national poverty line experience extreme challenges due to the lack of infrastructure and connectivity surrounding these areas.

Planada is an example of how one unincorporated area can incorporate both rural and urban characteristics, and experience extreme challenges due to inadequate infrastructure and limited connection to county services. Some of these infrastructural challenges can result in extreme outcomes, such as, increased pedestrian casualties due to the lack of sidewalks, traffic lights and crosswalks. A more recent example of the heightened local risks is when I attended a community meeting in Planada (September 2017) and residents spoke to the dangers of pedestrians crossing or walking alongside Highway 140 and Santa Fe Avenue. Between the automobiles driving over the speed limit and not paying attention to stop signs, to there being no sidewalks or barriers for pedestrians, and the high frequency of diesel trucks traveling down the roads there have been several fatalities over the years. Unfortunately, many of the roads in Planada are managed by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and not Merced County, so the power dynamics shift and another layer of governance is created for residents. So, essentially in what is already a very convoluted local government structure residents must factor in another layer of an institutionalized power.

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of Disadvantaged Unincorporated Communities (DUCs) has been historically rooted through the basis of three main points: 1.) the use of discriminatory language in state and local policies, 2.) limited funding mechanisms, 3.) and histories of racial and discriminatory governing and funding practices. It has been through these various processes that

many unincorporated communities, specifically in the San Joaquin Valley, have been re-named by the state government as “disadvantaged”, without a concrete understanding of the future financial implications and historical ideologies that have created such a structure. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2005) speaks to the outcome of these types of practices of re-naming spaces that, “the desires for ‘pure,’ uncontaminated, and simple definitions of the native by the settler is often a desire to continue to know and define the Other, whereas the desires by the native to be self-defining and self-naming can be read as a desire to be free, to escape definition, to be complicated, to develop and change, and to be regarded as fully human” (p. 86). In this literature review I will be looking at two different theories to gain a better understanding of how the financial inequalities found in DUCs can be situated in academic discourse. The two theories will include: **Critical Race** and **Environmental Justice**. By looking at critical race theory I am aiming to understand how race intertwines with how we think about one’s connection to a place, the concept of racial ‘othering’, as well as the implicit and explicit biases that play into certain policies and political boundary formations. The second theory will aim to identify correlations between the effects of long-term environmental and social disparities, and the health conditions brought on by mal-distribution of financial resources. Additionally, within the framework of environmental justice I will look at how the process of mis-recognition can foster a systemic culture of “othering”. Between the two theoretical frameworks I will aim to show the correlation that “othering” practices and discriminatory policies have had on the creation of the current social and economic climate of DUCs. I will ultimately conclude through this literature review that policies that drive competitive grant programs, and restricted tax revenue allocations, can only address the symptoms, but in order to see any significant changes across the social and economic spheres we need to begin looking deeply at the root causes of inequalities.

Note: For the purposes of trying to integrate DUCs into some of the larger theoretical frameworks, I will be dividing the theories into three key themes: “Identity through Place”, “Governing with Power”, and “Driven by Financial Capital”.

A.) Critical Race

Identity through Place

The United States has a well-documented history of institutionalized racism that has penetrated throughout social spaces and political conversations⁵. Race has long been a leading factor in many political discussions around who is eligible to gain access to resources and how they are distributed across individual places. Due to this reality certain racialized groups for years were denied access to places like restaurants, schools, public transportation and particular neighborhoods. The effect of having to deal with such realities resulted in many being forcibly removed and confined to segregated places and/or finding it necessary to form “self-defined communities” (i.e. ethnic enclaves) in order to gain some measure of collective control over their existence (Omi and Winant, 2015, p. 143). This process has also demonstrated a practice of “othering”, which is used to justify subordinate status, unequal treatment, to structure oppression and exploitation in numerous ways” (Omi & Winant, 2015, p. 12). John Powell (2015) speaks to the fact that “racial minorities have simultaneously been defined as the other and denied the benefit of membership in American society” (p. 55). So, for many racialized individuals who have wrapped themselves around this concept of the “American Dream” have found themselves unable to fulfill this dream due to a system that was never intended to for them.

⁵ Powell defined institutionalized racialization as “processes and practices of inter-institutional arrangements that continue to distribute racialized outcomes in part because of differences in how groups are situated.” (p. 21)

The San Joaquin Valley has been an example of a place where many people have migrated to with hopes of maintaining the American Dream. The region is made up of a plethora of ethnically and racially diverse groups that bring with them a rich history of languages, customs and traditions. Unfortunately, like many areas throughout the United States the region has a legacy of political injustices and racial discrimination that has led to some of the current patterns of economic inequalities and limited mobility in DUCs. Sociologists have argued that one's identity can be formed by their environment, family members, and other outside influences. If this is indeed the case, one's physical boundaries could also be an influence that is created by a political structure or institution with the power to control. powell speaks to how boundaries take on the meaning(s) that we give them and the social power we ascribe to them (p. 137), which can create division and inequities amongst those that live within and around these boundaries. It also begins the process of labeling (or "othering") certain populations and geographies without the understanding of the internal identity associated with a particular place. powell speaks to the notion that spaces that have been racialized overtime, in turn, races individuals by defining blackness as "inner-city, unemployed, uneducation..., and whiteness as suburban, employed, education..." (2015, p. 68). This process of othering also can lead into what Matt Wray (2006) describes as the use of "stigmatizing boundary terms", which can "simultaneously denote and enact cultural and cognitive divides between in-groups and out-groups, between acceptable and unacceptable identities, between proper and improper behaviors" (p. 23). In *Reinterpreting Metropolitan Space as a Strategy for Social Social*, powell looks at how, "land has been and continues to be used formally and informally as a mechanisms for sorting, ranking, and containing people and opportunity; for restricting interactions between

groups; and for limiting social mobility” (2005, p. 25). Arguably, this negative hierarchical labeling can be seen in the way that people perceive DUCs in California today, and the relationship that boundaries have on those that live within them and outside of them. powell describes the risk of this type of spatial phenomenon in that “the greater the pressure for migration in one direction, the greater the need for protection in the other” (2015, p. 138). Race and the process of othering based on the boundaries that have been set for a particular geographical location and racialized group has played a significant role in a person’s ability to seek outside financial resources. Overtime, those that have found themselves in these spaces have had to rely on developing and/or identifying neutral spaces to seek out help identifying financial opportunities.

Governing with Power

Governing structures and corporations harbor a significant amount of decision-making power when it comes to identifying communities that need resources and where they can access these resources. Historically, we have seen these decisions play out through the creation of policies that on the surface may seem like they are race neutral, but instead speaks to certain biases that still loom in society today. An example of these types of policies can be seen in the way certain neighborhoods are policed and resourced compared to others. Charles S. Aiken (1987) elaborates on these types of policies in his research related to race and municipal underbounding in Mississippi. Through his research he identified 12 unincorporated (or fringe neighborhoods) that had significant Black populations compared to nearby incorporated areas that had high percentages of whites. He discusses how policies, such as federal programs designed to improve the housing options and conditions of low-income families, has played a

significant role in helping to increase population growth in these areas. However, access to basic human needs were limited due to limited infrastructure and a governing body that didn't support such investments. Aiken states that one of the major factors for the relocation of federally sponsored housing from the urban core to the fringes was "fear by white-controlled municipal governments that increases in housing for blacks within the corporate limits will dilute white voting strength" (p. 573). This example of how policies that are promoted as being race neutral might be "neutral in design" but "not necessarily neutral in effect" (powell, 2012, p. 9). This idea speaks to the fact that policies should not be used as a template that is applied across all communities without completing the necessary place-based analysis first. Historically, communities like DUCs have been positioned to conform to a policy template that is not unique to them, resulting in fewer resources and compounding problems. Omi and Winant (2015) present an idea that could be applied to how we support DUCs and when policy can truly become helpful is when the state has initiated reforms, and when it has generated new programs and agencies in response to movement demands (p. 149).

In summary, this perception of the "American Dream" has been restricted by a governing structure that has historically sought to limit and mis-guide racialized groups into believing that they would receive equal opportunities in a society that seeks to "other" them. In order to move past historical unrest racialized groups must be heard in order for resources to be dispersed equitably. Ultimately, if these harmful practices, cultural norms, and institutional arrangements are left unchallenged, the outcomes will remain the same (powell, 2012, p. 23).

Driven by Financial Capital

Much of California has been designed, built and sustained by laborers representing various racialized groups and classes. Each one given a promise of a better life, not just for themselves but the families that they are supporting. As stated in the introduction, agriculture has been one of the leading industries in California primarily due to its history of using cheap labor and the industries position within the geographical and political economies. The San Joaquin Valley has been positioned in the national economy as the mecca of food, however, that status has come on the backs of those that have labored for it. Researchers have found that the rural poor (or those living in urban areas surrounded by large segments of rural lands) are often working but earning too little, are unable to work, or can find only seasonal work (Mitchell, 1996). Aiken compliments this reality check when speaking of the black populations in rural Mississippi around the mid-1900s that resulted in many blacks remaining in poverty (1987, p. 566). In these rural economies where historically the main source of revenue was produced through large industries that depended on the availability of land and cheap labor, Mitchell argues that “California is represented purely as a playground of beauty in which the damned remain quite invisible” (1996, p. 22).

Over the years, researchers have done studies and published reports on communities in the San Joaquin Valley and the economic state that many of them are in. An example of this is the unincorporated area of South Dos Palos located in Merced County. Like many rural areas in the United States South Dos Palos was a destitute area, but was socially accessible to those seeking refuge from the Jim Crow South. African Americans found themselves being one of the first migrant groups to settle in that area, but found life to be extremely familiar from what they experienced in the South along with the challenges of trying to find jobs and other resources. In a

NPR California report interview (California Report, 2019) with local residents it is revealed that African Americans found themselves being secluded from the local White population due to racism and discriminatory policy that restricted their ability to move around freely, but this geographical boundary limited them from having access to the physical infrastructure that they needed to survive. One interviewee spoke to the fact that they did not always have access to running water like the White population living in the town next door. For many African Americans the jobs that were available to them were working back in the fields. Matt Wray speaks to this reality that as “elites closed opportunities and hoarded land and other resources for themselves, fewer freeman were able to achieve the upward mobility they sought” (p. 28).

Devin Fergus (2013) geographical boundaries through another lens - auto insurance companies and how they historically sought to disenfranchise racialized groups based on their use of zip codes to determine how much an individual pays for insurance. In his research on the racial wealth gap part of his argument is that the correlation between the race practices of the past (i.e. redlining) and how the insurance companies have attempted to justify their use of “ZIP code redlining” (p. 288). During the late 80s and throughout the 90s Fergus found that insurance companies would charge higher rates to individuals living in low income neighborhoods and communities of color, while more affluent and white neighborhoods were being offered lower rates. Latino and black civil rights organization saw ZIP code redlining in the historic vein of centuries-long discriminatory practices... and perpetuated the economic hardships and disfranchisement of minorities” (p. 288). powell (2009) relates such practices to the discriminatory policies that are perceived by some as be race-neutral but reality is they “reproduce disparities along racial lines and depressing the life chances of many of us” (p. 24).

In summary, the examples that such thought leaders like Powell and Fergus bring to the conversation around DUCs is that when space is bounded by discriminatory policies the process of othering will remain and without sufficient resources the cycle of poverty will continue.

“The biggest influence on our financial health isn’t how much we save... Nor is it the fund we choose in our 401(k) plans. It is our ZIP code-where we buy and own a house. Pick the right area, and your future is golden. Pick the wrong area, and you’ll always be behind the folks who happened to buy in the right place” - Scott Burns, (Fergus, p. 305)

B.) Environmental Justice

Identity through Place

Historically, environmental justice has been used as a declaration and framework for fighting against the disproportionate amount of environmental risks and social injustices found in communities of color and impoverished neighborhoods. Overtime “the fight for environmental justice in the United States has been shaped by the intertwined dynamics of race, class, place, and health” (London et al, 2015, p. 2). As stated in the Introduction, the San Joaquin Valley has been plagued by negative outcomes stemming from exposure to air pollution, lack of access to clean and affordable water, low-wages, and an unstable housing market. Although there are many interpretations of what environmental justice should be and for whom the movement should be speaking on behalf of, the realities can be visibly seen in the conditions that individuals live in every day. Environmental justice occurs when people do not suffer from the environmental impacts equally. Due to their financial circumstances they can not afford to address such environmental challenges like those that are more financially well off (Dobson, 1998; Margoluis, 2005). The reality is that for certain places that have already been “othered” by

policy and political the link between poverty and environmental degradation is complex (Margoluis, 2005, p. 281).

As I look at how individuals tie themselves to places over time I ask questions related to:

1.) why are certain places like DUCs not being provided with basic amenities or services that encourage and support upward and inward mobility, and 2.) why do DUCs continue to be subjected to harsh environmental and social realities while others are not? Environmental justice theory begins to look at these types of questions by incorporating a framework that encompasses policy, place, and identity. When considering DUCs, distribution should be looked at not just within the geographical and political boundaries set by institutional powers, but on a regional basis so that people that live within DUCs have the opportunity of upward mobility. David Schlosberg provides some overview of how environmental justice looks at recognition and distribution. In **Defining Environmental Justice** (2007), Schlosberg makes a point of “it is not just how much we have, but whether we have what is necessary to enable a more fully functioning life, as we choose to live it” (p. 30). However, society is set-up to value different things differently, which creates a contextual decision-making process to determine the criteria for distribution. (Walzer, 1983: Schlosberg, 2007). Walzer and Schlosberg speak to the importance of understanding the local culture and social meanings in order to determine the process of distribution. This goes back to an earlier point that I made about how we can not treat all DUCs the same, meaning that locally each place must negotiate the different conceptions of (in)justice for themselves (Schlosberg, 2013). The process and lens in which a place uses to define “recognition” and “identity” will determine how one will facilitate the act of distributing goods and services. Schlosberg mentions that it is at this point that potential conflicts and

negotiations around the desired “way of life” can be addressed (2007, p. 45). Within the context of DUCs, the negotiation process must recognize all parties involved with creating the local fabric of a community in order to prioritize certain goods and/or services, determine how to go about financially receiving them, and facilitating the distribution process. Public policy should not be used as a ‘one-size fits all’ attempt to rectify the current climate of all DUCs, but needs to be looked at on an individual basis.

When considering recognition, Schlosberg refers to such theorists as Iris Young, Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth’s contention with the “*lack* of recognition in the social and political realms, demonstrated by various forms of insults, degradation, and devaluation at both the individual and cultural level, [which] inflicts damage to oppressed individuals and communities in the political cultural realms” (2007, p. 14). Schlosberg goes further to discuss the importance of being able to maintain recognition within these types of spaces because one’s identity is “partly shaped by recognition or its absence” (2007, p. 18). This lack of acknowledgement of a racialized group of people, and the place in which they live, has perpetuated a cycle over time of limited distribution of financial resources and capital backing. Currently we see this type of scenario playing out when it comes to migrant workers in the San Joaquin Valley and the devaluation that society has placed on their bodies. Society only recognizes them for their labor, but limits the amount of basic services it offers to them. So, how does someone living in a DUC become recognized in a system that defines its worth through social and political frameworks not intended for them? John Rawls argues that recognition is not only a good; it is also a precondition of membership in the political community (2007, p. 23). This is an unfortunate circumstance given that for decades many people living in these isolated, and shunned

unincorporated areas have historically had limited political power. Schlosberg states, “if recognition does not exist in practice, then the status of those unrecognized as members of the community of justice must be addressed before any good can be distributed to them. We cannot assume recognition as a precondition, or assert it can easily be distributed” (2007, p. 22).

When thinking about a person’s connection to a place, environmental justice as a framework provides some insight into the process. Isabelle Anguelovski (2013) and David Schlosberg (2007) address similar points around the need for building new practices and institutions for sustainability, and the need for recognition and attention to social context. Anguelovski sees the need to further the broader ideas surrounding environmental justice. Anguelovski (2013) emphasizes the “importance of holistic community health, both physical and psychological dimensions of environmental health” (p. 171). Through empirical data she describes the relationship between one’s physical and mental wellbeing when stressing someone’s ability or desire to connect to a place. She states that the social dimensions of EJ activism should not be limited to just “poverty alleviation” and “job creation” but “social aspects of urban sustainability [should] include a focus on community rebuilding, place remaking, and address[ing] trauma and fear of erasure” (p. 171). Schlosberg wrote that, “environmental justice moved from being simply a reflection of social injustice generally to being a statement about the crucial nature of the relation between environment and the provision of justice itself” (2013, p. 51). Schlosberg was speaking about the evolution of environmental justice that did not just focus on one facet of the movement.

In summary, I have provided some insight into how environmental justice theory speaks to place and identity. I have demonstrated the correlation between DUCs and the implications

that these types of places have had to endure related to the long-term effects of mis-recognition and mal-distribution.

Governing with Power

Generally speaking the United States governing and funding structures could be described as overly complex and forever evolving with the times. We could also argue that these traditional structures foster disparities related to the amount of power distribution that they have related to determining how and where basic goods and services are distributed to communities. An example of this is can be seen through the various state and federal funding programs in California that are facilitated through government departments, such as, the California Department of Transportation and their oversight of the Sustainable Communities Grants. This type of grant program provides financial support towards the development of plans related to transportation infrastructure and other similar local needs. However, many of these types of programs stick with the status quo by setting up a process that limits who can receive the funding, and provides stringent guidelines on funding allocations and project oversight. Laura Pulido et al states:

*EJ communities were created through historical processes; they remain so through the maintenance of the **status quo**. While city planners recognize the historical wrongs that led to inequitable land use, they point to these processes to explain existing injustices rather than see **how their own actions contribute to them**. (2016, p. 24)*

It has been argued by many EJ scholars and activists that the journey to environmental justice has been a long one with much more work to be done. Research has demonstrated that as government has gained interest and involvement in the plight to environmental justice the collaboration of EJ advocates and anti-EJ forces on government boards and committees have

prevented meaningful progress (Lievianos, 2012; Pulido, 2016). Pulido goes further by stating that, “co-optation also works by creating processes that require community buy-in but are not actually designed to create significant change” (2016, p. 17). It could be argued with respect to environmental justice and the conditions of DUCs that government and other funding entities have been looked upon as the engines to create significant change. Unfortunately, case studies have shown that these entities may not always be the type of solution based, unbiased problem solvers that we hope they will be. For example, Daniel Faber (2008) argues that after environmental justice related policies passed in the 1970s new federal regulations offered inadequate protection to poor communities of color and working-class neighborhoods (p. 5). Recently, this type of analysis was done in the ethnographic work that Bindi V. Shah (2012) completed in the Richmond and San Pablo, California areas in the 1990s. She looked at the massive environmental and health risks endured by local residents after years of exposure to various pollutants. During one class-action suit brought on by local residents a response from the city and county government agencies “claimed that their hands were tied because the company had been located at this spot long before the residential area that developed around it” (2012, p. 19). Additional frustrations were highlighted in Shah’s report around other sites that had similar concerns that resulted in health defects and untimely deaths. She referred to an example of the Richmond harbor where discarded pesticides were dumped between 1947 and 1966. The company in question had developed a plan to dig up the site and remove the remains to another site in Alabama without proper community input. This plan was completed without consultation with or permission from the communities in Richmond or Mobile. “Eventually, after strong community pressure in both places, these plans were changed” (2012, p. 3). This speaks to

the power of the EJ movement and the importance of maintaining a strong community voice, but it also highlights the fact that there are still inconsistent penalties and lack of government enforcement (Pulido et al, 2016, p. 21).

Schlosberg sees the practice of galvanizing those that are being directly impacted having a growing focus on “resisting, rethinking, and redesigning basic institutions that embody problematic practices connected to our basic material needs” (Schlosberg, 2007, p. 49). This idea that Schlosberg presents is imperative to places that are dealing with social and financial inequalities, particularly within DUCs. However, Julie Sze argues that “it would be utopian and naïve to expect that mere involvement would lead to improvement, especially in a sector whose interests lie in maximizing its profits, and in an ideological context where government acts in active concert with corporations” (Sze, 2005, p. 112). A deeper analysis will be conducted in Chapter 3 (Case Studies and Findings) as I look at the correlation between two DUCs in the San Joaquin Valley, the environment and political structures.

In summary, through the work of social movements we have seen an influx of voices coming together to fight against the systemic injustices that have plagued many institutions and governing structures. Even though it is critical that communities stay involved in important conversations around recognition and access, we must understand the bigger picture of living in a capitalistic society that tends to only cater to a select few.

Driven by Financial Capital

Over the years, corporations and governmental entities have played a substantial role in the plight of environmental and social inequalities that disadvantaged unincorporated communities have found themselves facing. These concerns have been elevated due to the lack

of consistent funding sources distributed to DUCs and a strong revenue base. Specific to the San Joaquin Valley, many DUCs are facing harsh economic and social conditions with limited economic investments to provide support (more in Chapter 3). Sze (2005) discusses how “the interests of communities of color are negatively impacted by energy deregulation, which is disingenuously promoted by its corporate advocates and government allies as a race-neutral policy that benefits everyone equally” (p. 102) Even though her study is specifically looking at ties between the energy industry and race, Sze argues that a corporation’s bottomline and values play a significant role in how government agencies will address contributions made to certain populations and neighborhoods. Pulido et al. (2016) believes that “relying on the state is understandable given that capital is not able to address the needs of vulnerable communities if it impacts profits or flexibility” (p. 13).

There should be no reservation or speculation to say that corporations and funding agencies hold significant power in determining the value and monetary worth of a place due to the over-reliance of their services by local governments. We’ve seen examples of corporate influences on policy decisions around distribution and recognition that may or may not be in the best interest of those that are directly impacted by the policy. Faber discusses the correlation between corporate entities and the EJ movement by explaining how corporations are “burdened by costly environmental, consumer, and occupational safety legislation, [so] U.S. capital is seeking ways to reduce the costs of government regulations in order to compete more effectively” (2008, p. 5). In other words, Faber is arguing that capital, and the various economic systems that drive capital are in direct competition with the regulatory systems that are supposed to be supporting the communities it serves. He goes further to say that

“In short, to sustain the process of capital accumulation and higher profits in the new global economy, American capital is increasingly relying on ecologically unsustainable forms of production that disproportionately impact communities of color and the working class-sectors that are underrepresented in the traditional environmental movement” (2008, pg. 8)

This process creates a shortage of opportunities for communities like DUCs to grow and sustain a competitive local economy. As a result the economic system has resulted in contributing to greater job insecurity, low wages, unsafe working environments and a “general assault on those private and public programs and policies that serve the interests of working Americans... and designed to protect the environment” (2008, p. 23). So what does a community, similar to DUCs in the San Joaquin Valley, do when they do not look like or act like other communities? How does one begin to decipher what the appropriate next steps are in order to rectify an economic system that was not set-up to treat everyone equally? And lastly, how can DUCs work towards building a sustainable local economy? This will be discussed later in my case studies.

Summary of Literature Review

As demonstrated in this literature review there are scholars that argue that the American economy nor political structures were created to support vast communities of color or those that have been “othered” by racially driven policies. It is my belief that the so-called American Dream was never meant for those that didn’t look or act like the dominant culture. I’ve brought in two different theories to gain a better understanding of how the financial inequalities found in DUCs can be situated in academic discourse: Critical Race and Environmental Justice. Between the two theoretical frameworks I have gathered a greater understanding of other historical “othering” practices and discriminatory policies that have perpetuated the current social and

economic climate in DUCs. By bringing the critical race framework into the broader discussion of DUCs I have been able to lift up three key points:

- There are policies that may be neutral in design, but may not be neutral in effect.
- By creating political and social boundaries the process of labeling (or “othering”) certain populations and geographies happens, which establishes certain meanings that are used to determine access to resources.
- When space is bounded by discriminatory policies the access to insufficient resources will result in the continuous cycle of poverty.

Similarly, I’ve looked at the environmental justice framework and have identified three key points:

- This lack of acknowledgement of racialized groups, including the place in which they live, has perpetuated a cycle over time of mis-recognition and mal-distribution.
- Even though there has been significant political changes and wins within the political fight for environmental equality, there are still substantial amounts of political processes that aim to address past wrongs but still stick with the status-quo.
- The various economic systems that drive capital are in direct competition with the regulatory systems that has been created to protect individuals.

The literature review will be used to connect how current policies and funding programs can only address the symptoms, but in order to see any significant changes across the social and economic spheres we need to begin looking deeply at the root causes of inequalities and address them accordingly.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

The findings and recommendations identified in this research are based on the use of quantitative data to help facilitate a conversation around disadvantaged unincorporated communities, and to reveal some of the stark realities of the financial inequalities found in California’s San Joaquin Valley region. Quantitative methods ended up being the primary research strategy used, which included document review and data analysis. Originally, I was

going to use a comprehensive mixed method approach, which included unstructured interviews, participant observations, document review and data analysis. However, there were some challenges and limitations with conducting interviews, as I was not able to directly engage local residents and non-profit leaders in the way that I had originally wanted to connect with them. Although I was able to observe resident interactions between themselves, and county elected officials during community meetings and board meetings, I was not able to formal interview them. This was primarily due to time restrictions, limited travel funds, and overall clarity of where I wanted the research to go. However, during the latter months of my field research (Winter 2018) the political climate in the San Joaquin Valley shifted, which resulted in changes in interviewees availability or willingness to participate. In addition to more logistical concerns, I wanted to be careful on how I entered (and eventually left) the areas where I was collecting data since I did not want to alarm, raise expectations or disappoint anyone. I've always been overly conscious around the "outsider" perception when it comes to extracting information from one area (or culture) for the perceived gains of another. John Long et al (2008) speaks to this idea of the "insider" and "outsider complex" as a researcher. He states that the "insiders have [the] direct knowledge of the organization [or community]", while the "outside researchers may offer expertise, experience, resources and neutrality in conducting experiments, recognizing general patterns and communicating results to others in the research community" (p. 217-238). So, even though I knew that I was not going to be able to conduct a research project using a Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) framework, I knew that I wanted to be respectful of how I engaged with residents, especially those individuals that were already skeptical of an outside researcher. Eliciting some degree of cultural humility, or rather "a process that requires humility

as individuals continually engage with self-reflection and self-critique” (Tervalon and Murray-Garcia, 1998), played a major role in my ability to be able to control what I was willing to do (or not do) through my research. This created some degree of agency within my research, as I was transfixed with continuing to direct my research as a response to the many frustrated voices that I had heard from during my time working in the San Joaquin Valley between 2009-2016. Even though I was not able to formally interview residents, I was afforded several opportunities to speak with representatives from various community-based organizations (CBOs) from throughout the region in a more informal capacity, which provided some needed clarity on my research objectives. The CBOs represented different issue areas and geographical areas throughout the San Joaquin Valley, including environmental and social justice organizations.

For this thesis I’ve chosen to focus on Merced County and the communities of Planada and Winton due to my professional and personal connections to that area. During my eight years working with the Local Government Commission I spent several years developing working relationships with local government staff and non-profit organizations. I’ve worked on several projects in both Planada and Winton, so I felt a level of responsibility to go back to those communities to continue having this discussion around infrastructure improvements, accessibility to financial resources and political conversations, and recognition by those in power.

Overall, each method that I was able to use ended up providing me the ability to paint a picture of some of the financial circumstances found two specific DUCs and how that relates to the broader situation of DUCs, particularly in rural or disconnected areas of the San Joaquin Valley. The four methods that I used for my thesis included the following:

Participant Observation

Between August 2017 and April 2018 I attended 6 community meetings throughout the San Joaquin Valley. I was invited into several of these conversations thanks to connections that I had made through my previous professional work in the San Joaquin Valley. Those meetings were located in Merced County and Kern County DUCs and coordinated by local community-based organizations. The next meeting was a Merced County board of supervisors study session to discuss the county's role in providing un-documented residents in the county healthcare. Over 50 residents were in attendance, along with county staff from various departments and agencies, including the Department of Public Health. Resident participation was organized by the Merced County Building Healthy Communities organization and their partners. In April 2018, I attended a meeting that was organized by a foundation that at the time I was interning with and in the process of completing a separate analysis on their regional grant program located in the San Joaquin Valley. Their grantees were invited to attend a day-long meeting in Fresno to network with other grantees, hear from foundation staff on the latest research findings, and discuss next steps for the network's regional agenda. By participating in these meetings throughout my data collection period I was able to gain a better understanding of some of the common issue areas that DUC residents were discussing with their local leaders and the county responses, along with how engaged residents were at these meetings around a given topic.

Document Review

My primary method was reviewing and analyzing state and local government records, including planning documents, annual budgets and grant program guidelines. Through online platforms I reviewed state records highlighting the availability of state funding to support

transportation planning and project implementation based on a 3-10 year timeframe (depending on when the grant program was established). The funding mechanisms reviewed included the Sustainable Communities Transportation Grants, the Active Transportation Fund, and the Merced County Measure V local transportation sales tax. These types of documents were reviewed in order to gain a better understanding of areas related to, short and long-term planning and development related goals for DUCs, prioritization practices, and determining when and how much funding the county received from the various funding programs. Through my analysis I will be offering up further considerations into the limitations and/or barriers that certain types of funding may create for local jurisdictions.

Policy Content

Finally, I spent time reviewing the various local and state policy documents and the funding programs associated with those policies. I limited my timeframe to the past 10 years with the original intent of the policy being to either fully or partially support DUCs. The policies include: **Senate Bill 1 (Road Repair and Accountability Act of 2017)**, **Senate Bill 99 (Active Transportation Fund)**, and **Local Sales Tax measures**. These specific policies were chosen due to their relevance in helping to define mobility (physically), and allocating various funds to support DUCs. This time frame was determined based on the availability of policy documents, the 2007/2008 economic downturn, and accounting for a typical planning project timeline. A brief description of each policy can be found under Appendix A.

CHAPTER 3: CASE STUDIES & FINDINGS

Background:

Merced County

Merced County is located in the heart of California's San Joaquin Valley. The County spans from the coastal ranges to the foothills of the Sierra Nevada, boarded by Stanislaus County to the north, Fresno and Madera Counties to the south, Mariposa to the east, and Santa Clara and San Benito counties to the west.

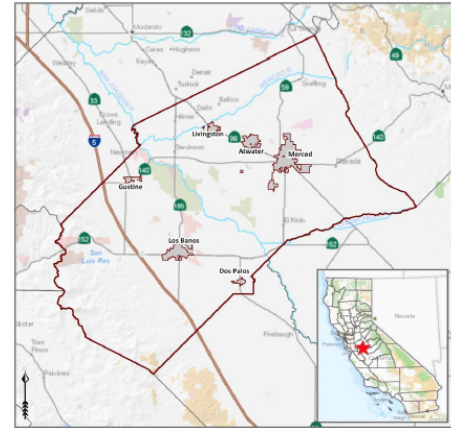


Figure 1: - County Geographical Boundaries – Source: www.co.merced.ca.us

According to the 2030 Merced County General Plan, the County encompasses approximately 1,980+- square miles, of which 1.2 million acres or 98 percent is unincorporated.

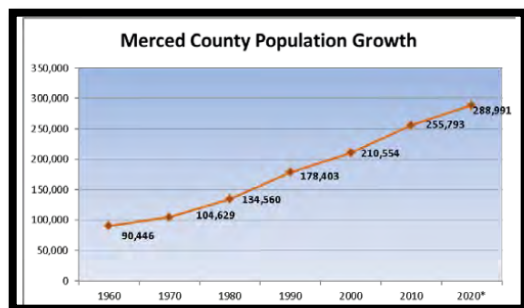


Figure 2: Merced County Population Growth
Source: www.co.merced.ca.us

Approximately 241,128 acres, or 1.9 percent of the total land area, lies within one of the six incorporated cities. Based on the 2010 Census Merced County's population was 255,793 (census.org), which is a significant increase from the 1990 census that captured a population of 178,403. As of January 2015, the Department of Finance estimates the

population for Merced County at 266,134, a 4% increase since the 2010 census. Figure 2 depicts the population growth for Merced County over the last 50 years, with a projection from the California Department of Finance through the year 2020. The population in unincorporated communities has grown between 2000 and 2010 from 77,927 to 89,167 (Merced County 2014-

2015 Annual Budget). This increase highlights that approximately 35% of the Merced County population lives in unincorporated areas.

Winton, CA (Merced County)

A.) Background Winton CDP

The small, unincorporated community of Winton has an estimated population of 10,613 people (US Census 2010) an increase from 8,832 (US Census 2000). First established along the Burlington Northern-Santa Fe (BNSF) Railroad, it is now an agriculturally-oriented town bounded by nut and fruit orchards to the north, east, and west. Other commercial and agricultural activities, such as row crops or grazing, are located further north.

Winton is located 8 miles northwest of the City of Merced and 4 miles south of the Merced River. The community's western boundary is defined by the

Livingston Canal, and its southern edge is shared with the City of Atwater. Winton is close to several significant transportation routes: the Burlington Northern-Santa Fe (BNSF) Railroad bisects the town, while State 99 is located two miles to the south. These corridors facilitate commercial activity and shipping to and from Winton, as an agricultural community. In addition, Winton is located just 2 miles from the Merced County Castle Airport, which supports inter- and intra-state movement of goods for the County (Draft Winton Community Plan, 2018). The county has been working towards getting this back to being a fully functional site that provides needed revenue for the county and jobs for local residents. During a phone conversation with a staff person from the Merced County local agenda formation commission I was informed how

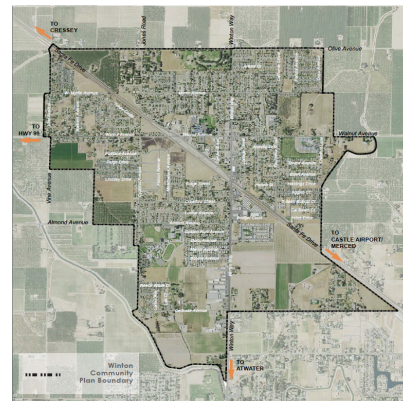


Figure 3: Map of Winton CDP – Winton Community Plan (draft) – Source:
<https://www.co.merced.ca.us/>

vital the airport has been to Winton and the impact that was felt when it closed. provided County of The median household income is 29,787 (2000)

Planada, CA (Merced County)

A.) Background Planada CDP

Planada is a small, rural, unincorporated community located in eastern Merced County approximately seven miles east of the City of Merced along California State Route 140.

Highway 140 is one of the three primary routes for tourists heading to Yosemite

National Park and the Sierra Nevada. The highway bounds the area on the north end and Miles Creek on the south. Highway 99 is approximately five miles west of the community. The University of California, Merced is approximately seven miles northwest of Planada.

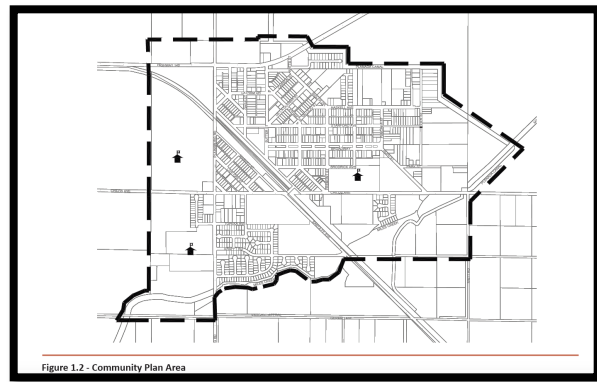


Figure 4: Map of Planada CDP – Planada Community Plan Area (2017) – Source: <https://www.co.merced.ca.us/>



Photo 1: Picture courtesy of Paul Zykofsky, Local Government Commission. The picture captures a street crossing in Planada

The Planada Community Plan Area encompasses approximately 700 acres and is bisected by the Burlington Northern - Santa Fe Railroad. Outside of the built environment of Planada are active farmlands. These farmlands support a diversity of agricultural activities including row crops, nut and fruit orchards, and dairies. (Planada Community Plan, 2017)

Findings and Analysis:

1. DUCs exist today partially due to the historical policies of the early to mid-1900s that have intentionally limited the amount of financial resources given to racialized unincorporated areas based on a system of “othering”

Due to the policies of the early- to mid 1900s that prohibited land ownership, limited economic mobility and restricted geographical location, unincorporated areas have seen significant diversity and class patterns over the decades. In the Introduction I highlighted three policies and programs that spoke to the discriminatory systems and practices that segregated racialized groups and classes from others. The three policies were the 1913 and 1920 Alien Land Law, migrant work programs, and redlining. The San Joaquin Valley, including Merced County, felt the outcomes from these discriminatory policies and can still the systemic injustices today.

The **1913 and 1920 Alien Land Law**, which prohibited any person “ineligible to become citizens” from owning agricultural land or possessing long-term leases over it, resulted in those directly impacted by the law (Japanese, Chinese and Indian) having to become migrant laborers to help make ends meet. Due to these increased economic limitations “Chinese workers and farmers found themselves packed into even more highly constrained towns and districts, living at densities, even in rural areas that far exceeded most white urban neighborhoods...” (Mitchell, 1996). Many migrants from the various Asian ethnic groups and cultures felt the economic burdens that came from being unable to make a living for themselves

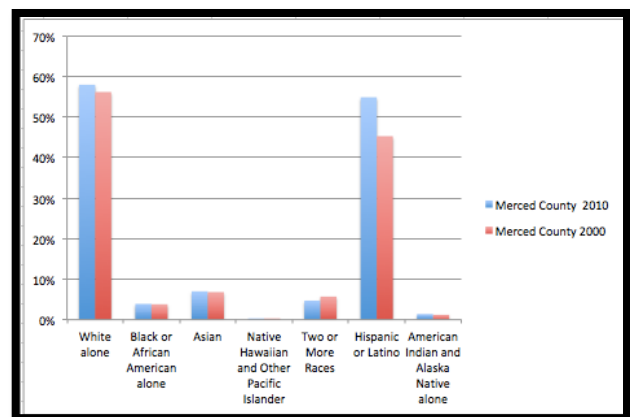


Figure 5: Race & Ethnicity Demographics for Merced County (2000 & 2010) – Source: United States Census

through ownership of agricultural lands. Over the past 30 years the Asian population in Merced County has hovered around 6.8% with a slight increase in 2010. According to projections the Asian population will grow to 8% by 2020 (Census Fact Finder database, retrieved March 18, 2019).

As the need to grow the profitability of the agricultural industry increased during the 20th century the need to maintain cheap, temporary labor became vital. The government implemented work programs like the **Bracero Program**, which facilitated the exchange of cheap labor from Mexico during and after World War II. So, places like Merced County, who were rich in agriculture, began seeing an increase in representation of migrant workers from places like Mexico, Asia and the South of the United States. During an interview with a long-time resident of the unincorporated area of Teviston in Tulare County an African-American resident recalls how Blacks began to compete for agricultural work with migrants from Mexico. For Blacks moving from the Jim Crow South to California found themselves still picking cotton and working in the fields. Now there was greater competition in getting jobs due to the influx of workers coming from Mexico and staying in United States for work. He stated, “the Mexicans were still working in the fields. And all of a sudden, you started lookin’ up, Mexicans bought this land, build a nice house. Better than some of the houses that’s been here” (California Report, February 22, 2019). Today the Latino and Hispanic population is one of the fastest growing racial groups in the San Joaquin Valley. The Latino and Hispanic group makes up almost 55% of the population in Merced County, just behind the white population. Planada and Winton also show a high percentage of individuals who identify as Mexican or Latino. In 2010, Planada had almost 95% Hispanic and Latinos, while Winton had roughly 72% (Figure 6). Based on the two unincorporated area there might be a pattern of the majority of the Hispanic and Latino

population settling in unincorporated areas at least in the past 20 years. From several of my

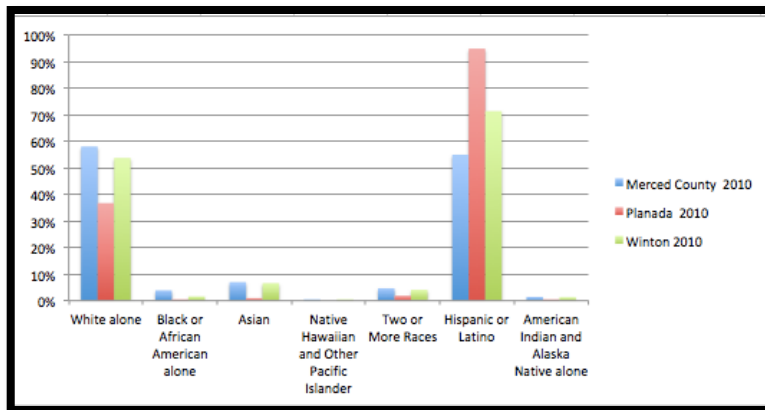


Figure 6: Race & Ethnicity Demographics for Merced County (2010)

Source: United States Census

informal conversations at community meetings I recall residents speaking to the generations of family members that have stayed in the area.

However, there would need to be further study conducted to

determine the long-term patterns. Based on the 2030 Merced County General Plan and the Regional Transportation Plan there are projections of future growth both in Merced County and in Planada and Winton.

During the Roosevelt administration, the act of “**redlining**” by many mortgage lending companies and housing agencies helped continue the racial and social divide by restricting where people of color could live based on being offered a higher loan rate compared to whites or lending companies not wanting to give them a loan at all due to being perceived as a higher risk. The outcome of having to deal with increased obstacles while trying to find a place to live resulted in racialized populations moving out of the urban core and into rural, unincorporated areas. Many of these areas like Planada have just recently been recognized by the United States Census, which is an example of a system that has helped to perpetuate a cycle of othering in county governing processes. Interestingly, according to the 2010 census 65% of the population in Merced County owned their home, however, only 5.5% of the second largest demographic group in the county (Hispanic or Latino) owned their home (retrieved March 18, 2019). Furthermore, places like Planada and Winton who have a high population of racialized groups are faced with

significantly low median household income of \$39,075 and \$41,486, respectively (2010 United States Census; 2030 Merced County General Plan). According to the American Community Survey 2013-2017 the median household income for Winton is expected to decrease from \$41,486 to \$40,985 (note: data for Planada was not found at the time this study was conducted). In 2019, the federal poverty rate for a household/family of 4 people is \$25,750 (the average individuals per households is between 3 and 4), which presents challenges for future financial attainment and mobility in DUCs when they are near the federal poverty rate and have low home ownership rates amongst racialized groups.

2.) DUCs received inadequate funding, especially in times of economic downturn

Merced County, like other County governments in the San Joaquin Valley, was hit hard by the 2007 economic downturn. The effects of the economy trickled through all levels of government, but the impact was greatly seen and felt at that local level through the stalled infrastructure projects, local services being cut, and limited staff to manage the day-to-day administrative activities. In a recent conversation with a staff person from the County, the individual spoke to the fact that the designated department relies significantly on state grants to help fund projects and staff time. This reality is not surprising given the current structure of how governments are able to service their residents and the limitations policies outline for them. With the grants that were available at the start of the 2007 economic downturn, I decided to look specifically at the Active Transportation Fund and the Sustainable Communities Transportation Program to get a better sense of the types of support available to local governments that focused on transportation related projects.

Based on my previous job working with local governments, the Sustainable Communities Grant Program has always been extremely popular by all regions in California as the program allows for local governments to prepare critical plans that can be used to go after implementation funds. Although the amount requested by applicants isn't always guaranteed, the program does allow for a certain percentage of the funds to go towards staff and consultant time. So, the program can be appealing to help address staff retention issues that many local governments were dealing with during the offset of the economic downturn. For example, between 2010-2016 I worked in the communities of Winton and Planada on various projects pertaining to land use and health related issues. I would be apart of a team that assisted county staff on administering

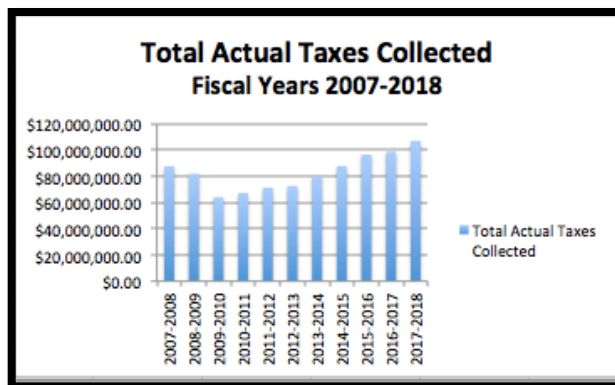


Figure 7: Total Actual Taxes collected (2007-2018)

Source: <http://www.co.merced.ca.us/archive.aspx?AMID=76&Type=&ADID=>

and coordinating activities for the various grants that were received through the California Department of Transportation. We would work primarily with one planner that would provide the necessary oversight of the project. It was during this time that I witnessed the decrease in financial resources available to county governments

through grants and tax revenues, which resulted in the decrease of services and available staff in Planada and Winton. After review of the county budgets between 2007-2018, I noticed that there was a significant lost of tax revenues during the economic downturn. The tax revenue is made up of property taxes, sales taxes, fines, and other charges that the county is able to collect or receive from the state. As can be seen in Figure 7 the county began seeing a significant dip in revenue collected from taxes following the 2007-2008 budget year. The 2009-2010 budget year ended up

being the hardest hit year with the County only collecting \$64,085,432, which is \$23,621,667 less than what was collected during the first year of the economic downturn. The annual budgets highlight the need to be conservative in their hiring practices during this time, which reflected the limited resources available to communities like Planada and Winton. This became visually apparent to me in 2014 during a series of community meetings that I was in charge of organizing along with the Merced County Department of Public Health. The purpose of the meetings were to discuss with residents and community leaders the availability and accessibility that residents have to open green spaces (e.g. parks). During meetings held in unincorporated areas, including Planada and Winton, I heard from residents their frustrations with the low level of park services available to them in the 1 to 2 parks that they do have in their neighborhoods. One could speculate all of the reasons behind the low service levels in these areas, but the minimal staff available definitely plays a role. In fact the 2007-2008 annual budget speaks to the move of having the planning department be combined with the economic development department as a way to help consolidate departmental resources. The County didn't see any significant advances in tax revenue over the next 4-5 years. It wasn't until the 2014-2015 budget year that the County begin to exceed their 2007-2008 tax revenue level of \$87,881,145.

During the fiscal years of low levels of tax revenue available there were a couple of state grant programs that the planning and public works department were able to access. The Active Transportation Fund, created through the California Assembly Bill 99 (2013) and later supported through Senate Bill 1 (2017), aims to support an increase use of active modes of transportation, such as biking and walking. One of the goals of the program is to “ensure that disadvantaged communities fully share in the benefits of the program” (CA AB 99, 2013). The guidelines state that the program ensures that no less than 25 percent of overall program funds benefit

disadvantaged communities during each program cycle. Before the ATP was created, local governments could take advantage of other funding pots from several individual programs, including the Safe Routes to School Program and specified federal and state transportation funds, which are now combined into the ATP.

A.) Active Transportation Fund

During Cycle 1 (2014-2015) of the ATP funding, Merced County Department of Public Works submitted an application⁶ requesting support to complete the “**Walnut Avenue Complete Street Upgrade in Winton**” **Phase 1 project**. The project proposal came after the Merced County Department of Community and Economic Development, Merced County Department of Public Health, the Local Government Commission (LGC), the Merced Bike Coalition, and Cultiva la Salud completed the Winton Walk and Bike Audit and Planning Workshop in September 2013. This project came to fruition after LGC had wrapped up other projects in Winton and was hearing from residents their frustrations with the lack of safe crossings, signage and sidewalks along Walnut Avenue. This particular street is one of the main connectors in Winton as it houses an elementary school and the VFW Post. The street also connects to residential areas and one of the main thoroughfares for good movement, Winton Way. Funding for the workshop and audit was pulled together from various grant sources and resulted in a report being submitted to the County. That report provided additional data that was included in the ATP application. The Walnut Avenue project was awarded \$1,779,000.00 from the ATP funds to complete the estimated \$2,179,000.00 project. Besides construction work the project included funding for a community based outreach program. At the time of my research the infrastructure in phase 1 had been completed, but the non-infrastructure or programming work was ongoing.

⁶ During Cycle 1 of the program 265 projects were provided funding

The following year (2015-2016) the Merced County Public Works Department submitted four applications, including a **“Walnut Avenue Complete Street Upgrade - Segment 2”** proposal to help wrap up the Complete Street project in Winton started the previous year. The other projects included the unincorporated areas of Planada, Beachwood-Franklin and the unincorporated areas of Dos Palos. The Beachwood-Franklin and Winton applications were the only projects approved for ATP funding that year. At the time of my research phase 2 of the Walnut Avenue project in Winton is still ongoing.

During the most recent cycle of ATP funds (2016-2017), the Merced County Public Works Department submitted the **“Plainsburg Road Complete Street Upgrade”** in Planada application again, but was initially not granted funds. The rationale for the application not being awarded funding was not made public. A staff person with the California Department of Transportation stated that comments on grant applications are not posted to the website and only discussed with the applicant. However, due to the passing of Senate Bill 1 in April 2017 the county ended up receiving funding for the Plainsburg project at the end of 2017. To get a better sense on how the county decided to submit the application for Plainsburg Road I inquired about the proposals connection to other planning documents completed by the county’s planning department. I was informed by a representative from the public works department that the proposal connected to the 2003 Planada Community Plan (the 2017 Community Plan hasn’t been adopted yet), but doesn’t recall any reference to the 2013 pedestrian improvement plan (which was completed after receiving a Sustainable Communities Transportation Grant).

Overall, Merced County was able to apply and receive 3 grants from the Active Transportation Fund to work on 2 major projects in Winton and Planada. However, according to the county staff person there were fluctuations in staff capacity levels, Caltrans review and

approval of the required environmental impact report, and agreements with utility companies caused delays in both projects being completed. See Appendix A and C for additional information regarding the state grant process and Merced County's applications.

B.) Sustainable Communities Transportation Grants

The Sustainable Communities Transportation Grant program has experienced many iterations of the program since the early 2000s. The most recent iteration of the program is being primarily supported through Senate Bill 1, the Road Repair and Accountability Act of 2017. The program is intended to encourage local and regional multimodal transportation and land use planning that furthers the region's Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy.

Since 2010, Merced County has received two grants that ended up going towards supporting the unincorporated areas of Beachwood/Franklin and Planada. Both projects focused on the development of a Transportation Improvement Plan to help improve the safety and mobility of residents. The final plans included a comprehensive Safe Routes to School Plan for two neighboring schools in Beachwood/Franklin and a pedestrian-oriented improvement plan for key roadways and intersections in Planada. The Local Government Commission provided support to the Merced County Department Community and Economic Development on both projects, including organizing the community workshops and meetings with stakeholders.

In addition to what the county received, there were four other applications that were awarded funds between 2010-2017, including Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG), and the San Joaquin Council of Governments (SJCOG) on behalf of the other 8 San Joaquin Valley COGs. Between 39-75 applications were awarded each year. The number of submitted applications was not available at the time this review was conducted.

Based on the available data (see Appendix C), the county seemed to prioritize projects for the Sustainable Communities Transportation grant program for Planada more so than Winton. Unfortunately, I was not able to speak with anyone in the planning department to gain a better understanding of why this was the case, so additional discussions are needed on how Merced prioritizes certain areas over another. As was the case for many small to mid-sized local governments in the San Joaquin Valley during the economic downturn, staff was limited and overworked, so there was less time to apply and manage grants large and complex grants. However, based on the county's annual budgets since 2007-2008, Merced relies significantly on aid from other government agencies, such as, state grants, to make-up their anticipated revenues per year. As can be seen in Figure 8, Merced County counts on roughly 50% of their annual budget on outside government aid.

Fig 8: Merced County, Aid from Other Government Agencies
Source: Merced County Annual Budgets (www.co.merced.ca.us)

Budget Year	Aid from Other Government Agencies	Total fiscal year budget	Percentage
2007-2008	\$221,766,800	\$506,500,000	43.78%
2008-2009	\$239,855,676	\$469,900,000	51.04%
2009-2010	\$233,336,264	\$454,100,000	51.38%
2010-2011	\$231,414,848	\$464,400,000	49.83%
2011-2012	\$230,947,136	\$436,300,000	52.93%
2012-2013	\$237,644,999	\$432,000,000	55.01%
2013-2014	\$259,509,631	\$468,800,000	55.36%
2014-2015	\$267,287,807	\$489,200,000	54.64%
2015-2016	\$292,908,913	\$537,100,000	54.54%
2016-2017	\$279,178,412	\$576,600,000	48.42%
2017-2018	\$316,428,559	\$633,800,000	49.93%

C.) Measure V –30 year ½ cent transportation sales tax

Merced County is served by a multimodal transportation system that incorporates highways, railways, airports, pedestrian and bicycle facilities to aid in the movement of people and goods throughout the region (RTP, p. 5). Based on the Merced County General Plan, Winton and Planada are both considered fringe unincorporated areas, which means that both areas must deal with the perilous realities that come from having a lack of resources, infrastructure, while dealing with challenges of living in a urban-rural dynamic area. To help with some of these challenges Merced County has recently adopted their 2030 General Plan, the Planada

Community Plan, and the regional Sustainable Community/ Regional Transportation Plan. As of 2018 the Winton Community Plan is still in the works. The General Plan speaks to forecasted population growth throughout the county over the next 10-20 years, improvement strategies to fix the housing and job deficiencies, and



Picture 2: Road in Winton, CA
Photo credit: Paul Zykoſsky, Local Government Commission

road/transportation infrastructure needs to help connect more people who are living outside of city boundaries. The road and transportation needs come from the realization that out of the 297 miles of Regional Road system and the 2,000+ miles of off-system roads rests in the six local jurisdictions and Merced County (the amount does not include the state highways that are maintained by Caltrans). In the Regional Transportation Plan, the Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG) completed an analysis of the pavement conditions of all of their roads and has given a “at High Risk” rating, which means that pavement preservation is going to be needed throughout the unincorporated areas of the county. The Merced County offices where the

BOS offices are stationed as well as county staff are located in the City of Merced, which is between 25-35 minute drive from Winton and Planada. One goal from the Regional Transportation Plan is to “provide a safe and efficient regional road system that accommodates the demand for movement of people and goods (p. 4).

In an effort to help fund some of the infrastructure projects Merced County residents voted in 2016 on a ½ sales tax measure given that the combination of other funding mechanisms were not going to be enough to cover the amount of work that is going to be needed. With the realities faced from the 2007 economic downturn Merced County starting dealing with budgetary uncertainty stemming from the drastic financial shortfall. The County concluded at the time that due to “decreases in sales tax revenues, reductions in property taxes, and the State’s budget cuts” the amount of accessible revenue was going to be impacted (Annual Budgets). The financial situation continued to present challenges related to providing a consistent level of services with declining resources. During the period from 2008-2016, the Board of Supervisors made significant concessions to maintain a balanced budget. The Board concluded during the 2015-2016 annual budget cycle that public safety was going to be a budgetary priority (2016-2017 Annual Budget). However, during the 2016 budget year the BOS voted to put a ½ sales tax on the ballot. In November 2016, two-thirds of Merced County residents voted to approve a half-cent sales tax to pay for road projects. At the time of inception the MCAG projected the program will generate about \$450 million over 30 years that will be spent on projects that fall under the following categories:

1. Regional Projects, identified in the adopted Regional Transportation Plan (44% of funding)
2. Local Projects, identified by local jurisdictions (50% of funding)
 - a. Alternative Modes Projects, including bicycle, pedestrian, passenger rail, etc. (20% of funding)
3. Transit, support of increased transit service (5% of funding) and

4. Administration for program implementation (1% of funding)

Earlier that same year the MCAG developed an expenditure report that highlights the fact that the passing of a transportation sales tax would align them with other “Self-Help” counties and would help to generate the revenues needed to match most state and federal grants. The premise behind becoming a “self-help” county is that when transportation dollars from the state and federal funds are limited or no longer available to local jurisdictions counties can utilize a “self-imposed” sales tax where the revenue is earmarked to transportation projects. This shift in funding priorities has put a larger burden on the ability that the sales tax measure will continue to provide at least the estimated revenue each year in order to cover transportation projects.

As seen in the proposed 2018-2019 budget (Figure 8: Actual Sales Tax Collected (Annually), the County is estimating that

\$9,018,980 in sales tax revenue was collected during the 2017-2018 fiscal year. This is an increase of \$959,281 between the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 budget cycles. In addition to the revenue increase, the County has begun using dollars from the sales tax measure to support transportation infrastructure

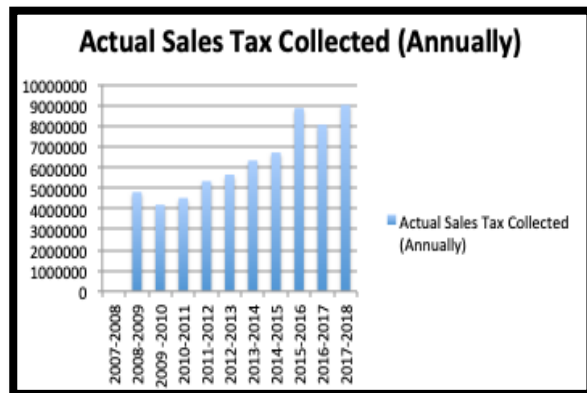


Figure 8: Actual Sales Tax Collected (Annually) –
Source: Merced County Annual Budgets (www.mercedcounty.gov)

throughout the county. During the 2017-2018 fiscal year the county reported no projects were initiated in the Winton or Planada areas. However, the list of funded projects for the 2018-2019 fiscal year anticipates one project in Winton and one project in Planada. According to the County’s 2018-2019 proposed annual budget, the county is looking to use funds collected from Measure V and Senate Bill 1 to pay for transportation related projects within incorporated and

unincorporated areas. Over the duration of the sales tax measure DUCs in Merced County will continue to have to compete with incorporated areas for funding, which will continue to place them at a disadvantage if projects are not prioritized by critical need.

3.) Residents in DUCs are disconnected to County level decision-making bodies, not just by economics or education, but also by geography.

Over the years local governments from around the country has used various forms of community-based participatory practices to receive input from residents related to a specific planning effort. A popular planning term that I have become quite familiar with is a “charrette”, in which the National Charrette Institute describes as “...the Charrette Way brings specialists together for an interrupted work session to break through to a creative solutions” (www.charretteinstitute.org). Merced County has taken very similar approaches in receiving resident feedback by working with consultants and local community based organizations to help organize various workshops, input sessions, and interactive workshops. However, depending on the timeline of the project and available funds this process can seem rushed, with little time for follow-up. However, being able to have access to decision-making bodies, either elected officials or staff, is critical to the financial well-being of of DUCs. The following three examples will speak to how vital this access is to a places who are seeking greater financial stability and political voice.

Over the years I’ve worked with local governments on various charrettees and community-based participatory activities. One of the main concerns that I’ve heard from residents and CBO leaders is that local governments should not expect that residents will be able to get to county offices to participate in feedback sessions. Local governments have begun to see

the detriment that inaccessibility due geography can have in how residents feel like they can connect with their country representatives. In 2015, this understanding became vital when dealing with an area like Winton that is located on the fringe of neighboring cities, but still faces challenges with accessing their governing bodies. It was during that year that I participated in a series of workshops with residents, county staff and several CBOs. The issue that we were trying to tackle was the condition of Winton's park and the concerns with safety and accessibility from residential areas. It was during the feedback and design workshops that residents voiced their concerns to the county parks department staff person of their issues with the park including, excessive trash, gang activity, inaccessible bathrooms, etc. They spoke to the fact that they've tried numerous times to call the county to request services, but have not received regular maintenance. The county parks staff person did acknowledge at the time that they were low on staff so services had been minimized to meet the decreased staff level. Unfortunately, there has not been much done to the park since the Winton Park Revitalization Plan was completed in 2016, and based on the 2017-2018 annual budget staffing for the parks division has remained somewhat steady since 2015, except for 2 additional grounds maintenance workers being added over the past 3 years.

In September 2017, I was invited by community-based organization, Cultiva la Salud, to attend a community meeting that they were hosting with representatives from the county public health and planning departments, and the California Department of Transportation. The meeting was held at a local school in Planada for residents to speak to county and state representatives on their concerns regarding safety issues along nearby roads. The fact that the meeting was held in Planada allowed residents to walk or drive a short distance to get to the meeting as opposed to

driving or carpooling 25-30 minutes to the Merced County offices. A Caltrans representative was present due to one of the roads that was being discussed being under their jurisdiction, which ended up being a hotspot for residents. There were about 45 residents present that day prepared to engage with staff members. One of the unique aspects of the meeting for me was the fact that since majority of the residents spoke Spanish the staff members ended up having to be the ones to wear translation headsets. I've been in situations where if the speakers spoke only English than the residents had to wear headsets, so this was a refreshing shift in power when you witness residents able to speak their primary language and feel comfortable in doing so. During moments where residents stood up to speak I was able hear some common themes around cars speeding down roadways, drivers driving through posted traffic signs, pedestrians worried about getting hit by cars due to not having a safe space to walk, and the increase level of pedestrian/vehicle accidents. I haven't received any updates from my colleague at Cultiva la Salud if there has been any improvements to those areas yet, but with the Measure V sales tax dollars hopefully some of those funds will go towards road improvements that will address residents concerns.

The community meeting Planada was in contrast to the board of supervisors study session that I attended in August 2017. The meeting was held at the board of supervisors chambers in the City of Merced in the early afternoon on a weekday. I've learned that majority of their meetings are held during the day on a weekday, which doesn't allow for individuals that either work during the day and don't have the flexibility to take time off, make low-wages and don't get paid time off, or don't have access to transportation to attend these meetings on a regular basis. According to the 2010 Census American Fact Finder database out of the almost 3700 individuals

over the age of 16 that commute to work everyday, roughly 80% drive a car, truck van alone, while roughly 11% carpool. Fortunately, this particular meeting held at the BOS chambers was completely full. The high attendance of residents was in part due to the organizing efforts from local organizations like the Building Healthy Communities of Merced. The topic that was being discussed was access to healthcare for un-documented and low income residents of Merced County. There were about 75-80 people in attendance with about 25 residents prepared to speak in front of the board. There was at least over half of attendees that spoke a different language other than English so the county provided translators to assist or family members translated. Even though the topic was covering access to healthcare there were some residents who spoke about the challenges that they face coming from the unincorporated areas of the county that have limited services and infrastructure. One woman spoke to the fact that she has not been able to work for over a year due to being sick and that her conditions are worsening due to not having healthcare. She spoke to the fact that she worked long days in the agricultural fields and was susceptible to various toxins being used. She lives in the unincorporated area of Le Grand and doesn't have a car during the day as her husband drives it to work everyday so she is left at home on most days. A Hmong woman, accompanied by her daughter, stood up to speak about the challenges that she is having with paying for certain medications that she needs but can't afford. She mentioned that this was her first time attending a BOS meeting and was encouraged to attend as she feels that the county should help as her elected representatives.

CHAPTER 4: FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Expectations

The San Joaquin Valley's collection of DUCs are a product of policies that were aimed to limit one's ability to attain economic and physical mobility. For centuries these policies created a system aimed to divide racial and class groups along with geographical areas. This has been clearly demonstrated in the San Joaquin Valley region where there are a growing population of DUCs that are dealing with not only limited infrastructure and service needs, but still are seeing the outcomes of the historical policies that brought on such inconceivable realities. Through my professional work, I understood that unincorporated areas were receiving unfair and inequitable treatment, but by doing this more in-depth research (although limited in scope) allowed me the opportunity to contextualize DUCs in a way that I didn't have bandwidth or selection of resources to do while working.

I expected to find a collection of stories told through the experiences of residents, and quantitative data that supported the realities of the financial state of the county. I was hoping that by capturing interviews with residents and local non-profit organizations working in DUCs that I would be able to understand how certain policies and the lack of financial investments directly impacted residents historically and today. My professional experiences only allowed me to get a brief glimpse of the circumstances befallen to these areas, so I was encouraged to begin the process of collecting data to be able to venture a bit further. However, without the interviews from residents and limited access to county staff I am still wondering what I might have been able to glean from those that are directly impacted.

Key Learnings & Future Considerations

Through this research process I have identified three future considerations to help further the conversation around the financial realities of California's DUCs today, which includes the following:

There is an over-reliance by local governments on state grant programs. Through the Merced County case study I have learned that there is an over-reliance on funding mechanisms that are issued through state grant programs. Based on my review of the county's annual budgets and list of priorities I argue that Merced County is operating under a limited and risky funding portfolio. I suspect that Merced County is not the only county in California (or nationally) whose annual budget includes close to 50% of aid coming from government agencies. Subsequently, areas that have been classified as "disadvantaged" are also having to compete with incorporated areas in the county for local funds collected through local taxes. Merced County is an example of DUCs competing with incorporated areas for Measure V sales tax funds, which will not guarantee that areas like Planada or Winton will receive funding every year. I believe that their needs to be more discussion around how to diversify local government funding portfolios so that areas like Merced County aren't having to deal with a significant budget downfall during another economic downturn.

Secondly, there is a **disconnect between DUC residents and local government** that correlates with maintaining a system of "othering". The inefficiencies found with the neglect in infrastructure (new and general maintenance) in DUCs compounds the inequalities found in our governing systems. Unfortunately, due to certain internal guidelines and processes it was extremely difficult to access information related to government programs and to speak with staff members at the local level. Having worked with local and state governments, I was not expecting I would be faced with such challenges trying to get questions answered regarding the county budgets, grant programs, etc. It makes me wonder how residents who are not easily able to access the government buildings are able to navigate through the lack of open communication

from afar. There needs to be more open platforms where the general public can go to access certain information and additional staff that can answer questions.

Lastly, **there are limited opportunities for racialized groups, particularly those that live in DUCs.** Residents living in unincorporated areas that have been plagued by a history of racism and classism are placed on an unequal playing field. They have been consistently othered by government and corporations that sought to devalue their contributions to America and the region. In the San Joaquin Valley this inequality is seen through the low-levels of median household incomes that speak to the low-waged jobs, sub-par living conditions, limited amenities and low homeownership by racialized groups. The fact that the Hispanic or Latino demographic group is the second largest group in Merced County, but is one of the lowest in terms of homeownership, is unsatisfactory. There are too few opportunities available to residents in places like Winton and Planada that limits one's social and economic mobility. More understanding of how these past policies and systems have directly impacted the conditions and decision-making processes needs to occur in order to see more drastic changes occur. This has to be an urgent matter!

“If we can create conditions that support the equitable distribution of resources and opportunities, we can reduce racial and economic disparities in almost every life area”

(powell, 2009, p. 29)

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

1.) Senate Bill (SB) 1. Transportation Funding

Authored by Senator Jim Beall

Approved by Governor Jerry Brown, April 28, 2017

https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180SB1

SB 1 created the Road Maintenance and Rehabilitation Program to address deferred maintenance on the state highway system and the local street and road system. The bill would require the following:

- a. California Transportation Commission to adopt performance criteria, consistent with a specified asset management plan, to ensure efficient use of certain funds available for the program.
- b. The bill would provide for the deposit of various funds for the program in the Road Maintenance and Rehabilitation Account, which the bill would create in the State Transportation Fund, including revenues attributable to a \$0.12 per gallon increase in the motor vehicle fuel (gasoline) tax imposed by the bill with an inflation adjustment, as provided, 50% of a \$0.20 per gallon increase in the diesel excise tax, with an inflation adjustment, as provided, a portion of a new transportation improvement fee imposed under the Vehicle License Fee.
- c. The bill would provide that the fuel excise tax increases take effect on November 1, 2017, the transportation improvement fee takes effect on January 1, 2018, and the zero-emission vehicle registration fee takes effect on July 1, 2020.
- d. The bill would require \$100,000,000 of the funds available for the program to be available annually for expenditure, upon appropriation by the Legislature, on the Active Transportation Program. The bill would require \$400,000,000 of the funds available for the program to be available annually for expenditure, upon appropriation by the Legislature, on state highway bridge and culvert maintenance and rehabilitation.

2.) Senate Bill (SB) 99. Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review. Active Transportation Program.

Approved by Governor Brown, September 26, 2013

SB 99 created the Active Transportation Program, for the purposes of encouraging increased use of active modes of transportation, such as biking and walking. The goals of the program include:

- a. Increase the proportion of trips accomplished by biking and walking.
- b. Increase safety and mobility for nonmotorized users.
- c. Advance the active transportation efforts of regional agencies to achieve greenhouse gas reduction goals
- d. Enhance public health, including reduction of childhood obesity through the use of programs including, but not limited to, projects eligible for Safe Routes to School Program funding.
- e. **Ensure that disadvantaged communities fully share in the benefits of the program.**
- f. Provide a broad spectrum of projects to benefit many types of active transportation users.

The program is funded in the Annual Budget Act from specified federal and state transportation funds. The bill requires that 40% of available funds to be made available for programming by metropolitan planning organizations in urbanized areas with a population greater than 200,000, 10% for small urban and rural regions, and 50% on a statewide bases...” The bill combines the funding from several other programs, including the Safe Routes to School Program. The guidelines include a program that ensure that no less than 25 percent of overall program funds benefit disadvantaged communities during each program cycle. My analysis in Chapter 4 will identify how often Merced County and Kern County are applying and receiving this type of funding support for Winton and Lamont (respectively), and the planning and implementation process that follows.

3.) Local Sales Tax

The local sales tax is an increasingly valuable program to California local governments, especially since the restructuring of property taxes (Proposition 13) in 1978 which limited the amount governments could collect. Now a local jurisdictions’ annual budget relies substantially

on the availability of sales tax revenue to support infrastructure needs, countywide programming efforts, and general services (i.e. safety). It is more common now to see local measures on voting ballots with a request to increase the local sales tax. Kern County has not been able to pass a local tax measure to support transportation needs in the past 3-10 years. In 2008, residents voted down a local tax measure. In July 2018, the Kern County Board of Supervisors approved a plan to place a 1 percent sales tax increase on the November 6th ballot. If passed, the local tax would go from 7.25% to 8.25%. The purpose of Measure I is primarily to “pay for additional sheriff deputies and other county needs” (Morgen, July 2018). Based on the report that was provided by the County Sheriff’s department allocating these funds (or a percentage of the funds) to public safety would be in alignment with the County’s current spending priorities (BOS meeting, July 24, 2018). “The county’s sales tax measure is estimated to raise \$35 million for the county” (Board of Supervisors meeting, July 10, 2018). Subsequent conversations are anticipated to take place if and when the measure is passed to determine exactly where the funds will be redirected to.

In 2016, two-thirds of Merced County residents voted to approve a half-cent sales tax to pay for road projects. As stated in the Expenditure Plan prepared by the Merced County Association of Governments the program aims to generate about \$450 million over 30 years that will be spent on projects that fall under the following categories:

- Regional Projects, identified in the adopted Regional Transportation Plan (44% of funding)
- Local Projects, identified by local jurisdictions (50% of funding)
- Alternative Modes Projects, including bicycles, pedestrian passenger rail, etc. (20% of funding)

- Transit, support of increased transit service (5% of funding), and
- Administration for program implementation (1% of funding) The program avoters in Merced County approved

The plan mentions that funds received from the sales tax measure can help generate the revenues needs to match most state and federal grants, which many grants require a match or a percentage to be contributed to the project from the local government or agency. In many cases some counties and local agencies do not have the funds readily available to cover the match and are unable to apply for some state and federal grants due to this requirement.

Appendix B

Number of Individuals Who Identify Specific With Race and Ethnic Categories

Merced County		
Population	Percent	
	2010	2000
White alone	58%	56.20%
Black or African American alone	3.90%	3.80%
Asian	7%	6.80%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.20%	0.20%
Two or More Races	4.70%	5.70%
Hispanic or Latino	54.90%	45.30%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	1.40%	1.20%

Number of Individuals Who Identify Specific With Race and Ethnic Categories (Planada)

Planada, CDP (4,584) - 2010 Census	
Population	Percent
White alone	36.7
Black or African American alone	0.5
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.5
Asian	1.0
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0
Two or More Races	1.9
Hispanic or Latino	94.8

Number of Individuals Who Identify Specific With Race and Ethnic Categories (Winton)

Winton, CDP (10,613) - 2010 Census	
Population	Percentage
White alone	53.7
Black or African American alone	1.6
American Indian and Alaska Native	1.3
Asian	6.6
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.1
Two or More Races	4.1
Hispanic or Latino	71.3

Appendix C: State Grants

Figure 8: Merced County – Winton, CA
Grant Funding (Active Transportation Fund)

	Cycle 1 (2014-2015)	Cycle 2 (2015-2016)	Cycle 3 (2016-2017)
Applied	X	X	
Did Not Apply			X
Awarded	X	X	
Non-Awarded			
Implementation			X – Completed Phase 1 in 2016

Merced County – Planada, CA
Grant Funding (Active Transportation Fund)

	Cycle 1 (2014-2015)	Cycle 2 (2015-2016)	Cycle 3 (2016-2017)
Applied		X	X
Didn't Submit	X		
Awarded			X
Non-Awarded		X	
Implementation			

Merced County – Winton, CA**Sustainable Communities Transportation Grant**

	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
Applied							
Not Submitted	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Received							
Planning Process							
Implementation							

Merced County – Planada, CA**Sustainable Communities Transportation Grant**

	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
Applied			X				
Not Submitted	X	X		X	X	X	X
Received			X				
Planning Process				X	X		
Implementation							