From Survival to Thriving: Creating New Counter-stories About South Oak Park, Sacramento

By

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THESIS

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Community Development

in the

OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

of the

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

DAVIS

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2020

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Abstract

This study addresses the lack of voices of members of historically marginalized or disenfranchised communities, in shaping dominant cultural narratives by outsiders. Such dominant cultural narratives are often used to justify exclusion of these communities from engagement in decision making and equitable distribution of opportunity structures. The purpose of this study was to conduct a case study to answer the following research question: *What are counter stories about South Oak Park, Sacramento, as told by insider community members, and what themes do these stories suggest for future advocacy by community members to influence decision making by professionals?* The study was conducted with members of Oak Park in south Sacramento, California via semi-structured interviews with residents, business owners and other community members. Twenty-three interviews with community members were conducted to gather initial data. Afterwards, two follow up focus groups were conducted to share preliminary themes from interviews and obtain feedback on preliminary data. These data lead to the following themes: *how can the neighborhood move from "surviving" to "thriving", given disparities in access to resources and reinvestment between north and south Oak Park?* Oak Park's key strengths include the diversity and character of people, place, and history of Black activism to address deep rooted injustices. The main priorities are that everyone should be engaged in deciding what happens to the neighborhood, and that everyone who wishes to stay, be able to do so.

Chapter 1: Introduction

John A. powell (2012) states that all communities are categorized as either "belonging" or "other" through stories that are told about them. Communities that are perceived as "belonging" are desirable ones whose well-being matters and who deserve opportunities to help them grow and prosper. Historically disenfranchised or marginalized communities, in contrast, are designated as "other": undesirable places whose residents' well-being does not matter to society, and undeserving of opportunities. Thus, voices of disenfranchised community members are missing from stories about them, on the basis of their communities being labeled "other". Therefore, these communities do not shape and control stories about their well-being and what they need to thrive. Richard Delgado (1989) states that the dominant group positions themselves as credible decision makers about these communities, while "othered" communities lack the credibility to make decisions about themselves (p. 60). Based upon the designation of marginalized communities as "other", and their exclusion from decision making, distribution of opportunities and opportunity structures are restricted to those deemed to "belong" and kept from communities that are described as "other".

Outsider professionals shape and disseminate the narratives about disenfranchised communities. Research demonstrates that narratives about the low social indicators and outcomes of historically marginalized communities, including higher rates of poverty, lower incomes and levels of educational achievement and attainment, are blamed on these communities (powell 2012). Studies done by professionals of "othered" neighborhoods like south Oak Park, Sacramento, are typically done from a deficit perspective, according to McKnight and Kretzmann (1990). In this perspective, communities are pathologized and blamed for their lower levels of wellbeing and social outcomes. This perspective is widely held by people in the general public in America, and by government decision makers (McKnight and Kretzmann, p. 1). Outcomes include levels of education, income, careers, home ownership, physical and mental health, rates of drug usage, and incarceration.

The credibility of members of these communities is low, because of how their knowledge is perceived by experts. McKnight and Kretzmann state that this negative perception of "othered" communities leads to programs and policies that emphasize solutions by outsider professionals to remedy these deficits (p. 1). These solutions frame assistance being from outside social service programs, while residents just get to be recipients of services, not active creators (McKnight and Kretzmann, p. 1).

Jason Corburn (2003) describes how knowledge is controlled via people who are perceived by society as "experts" or professionals. Members of marginalized communities are viewed as lacking formal education and training, and only have "local knowledge". It is a short but logical step for marginalized communities to have decision making imposed upon them. As an example of this imposition, Jeffrey L. Davidson (1982) and Vicki Been (1994) describe how marginalized communities are subjected to an over siting of "locally undesirable land uses" (LULUs). LULUs are either environmentally hazardous sites or social service treatment programs. These social service LULUs are also known as "Community based treatment centers" (CBTCs), and their over siting in marginalized communities results from the labeling of these communities as "low resistance" (Davidson 1982).

Critical Race scholars (Ladson-Billings 2001, Solarzano and Yosso 2002, and Bell, 2010, seek to center or make visible the voices of marginalized communities. First, they name the underlying narrative, sometimes referred to as the master narrative or majoritarian story (Solarzano and Yosso, 2002), the dominant cultural narrative (Glover 2003 and Richardson 1990), or stock stories (Bell 2010). Then they advocate a strategy named counter storytelling. Counter storytelling elicits stories told by members of marginalized communities that contradict the dominant negative stories told about them by outsiders (Bell 2010, Richardson 1990, Delgado 1989, Solarzano and Yosso 2002).

The purpose of this case study of the South Oak Park neighborhood in Sacramento, California, was to gather stories about the neighborhood from people who have lived and/or worked in the area, and analyze their stories for counter narrative themes for possible future advocacy about the neighborhood. Methods of inquiry included semi-structured interviews and focus groups. In my interviews with residents, business owners and other community leaders, I sought to learn about how the neighborhood has changed over time, what priorities, strengths, hopes, and needs interviewees see for the neighborhood, impressions of the two neighborhood associations in Oak Park and how they could better serve the community, and how interviewees obtained their information about the neighborhood.

From the above, my research question is, *What are hidden counter stories about south Oak Park, Sacramento, as told by insider community members, and what themes do these counter stories suggest for future advocacy by community members with decision makers*?

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Othering and Belonging of Communities

Defining Othering and Belonging

John Powell (2012) states that all societies have systemic ways to distinguish which groups of people are part of "the circle of belonging" and which are outside. He defines belonging in these terms: "your well-being is considered and your ability to help design and give meaning to its structures and institutions is realized" (p. 5).

People who are deemed inside this circle have full access to opportunities to maximize their well-being and to be successful in their lives (powell p. 19). Powell describes the work of Susan Fiske via her Stereotype Content model (Figure 1). The two axes of evaluation are "warmth" on the y axis, and "competence" on the x axis. The higher a group is on the "warmth axis, the more that people have empathy for them. The further to the right a group is on the "competence" axis, the more that the group is seen to have skills useful to society (p. 7).

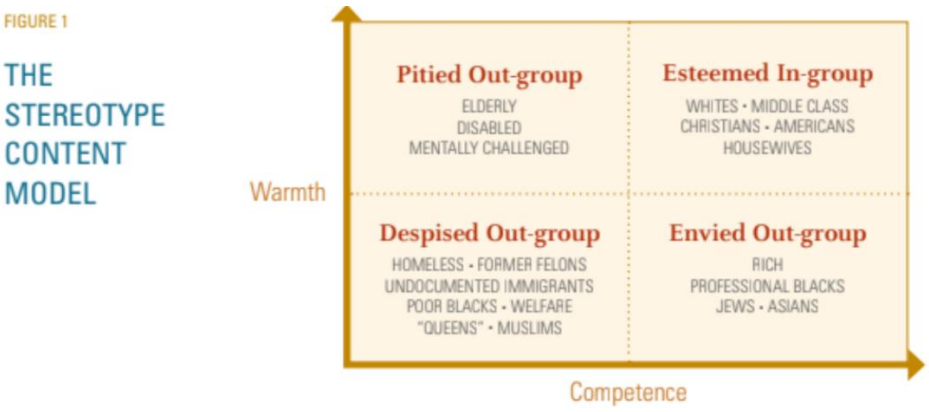

Figure 1: The Stereotype Content Model, from Powell (2012)."Poverty and Race Through a Belongingness Lens." *Policy Matters 1*(5), p. 7

In contrast, some groups are exploited even though they are looked down upon. Although not on this chart, immigrants with legal status from places such as Mexico are more desired for jobs than Black Americans. The groups that are most perceived as useless are in the lower left quadrant, "Despised Out-group", and most severely excluded compared to groups in the other three quadrants. Marginalized communities' residents are viewed as being responsible for their own poverty and poor life outcomes, because they are characterized as "lazy and undeserving" (p. 10). Powell (2012) adds that this view of the most marginalized means that "It is not so much that they cannot speak as they are not likely to be heard" (p. 5).

In many societies, the basis for othering is based on class or some other marker of identity, such as religious beliefs. In the U.S., othering is based on race and ethnicity. Powell uses the term "racialization" to describe this dynamic of othering and belonging. This is not a binary categorization of groups that belong, or groups are on the outside. Powell states that people who are deemed outsiders by seemingly low levels of competence and pity - people of color in poverty, can move right into the group that is envied despite still being deemed low in competence. Black and other people of color who attain higher levels of education and income, for example, can be regarded more highly than their counterparts who fail to obtain more education and higher incomes.

These racialized views of outsider groups tend to lead to policies and systems that isolate and confine or segregate them in certain geographic areas - the least desirable areas of places. Some names that are coded terms to indicate where racial and ethnic "other" groups live are ghettos (Black people), barrios (Latinos) or reservations (Native Americans), and Chinatowns (Asians). All of these "othered" places confine people who are deemed "other" into specific places, and its residents lack access to opportunities. Those opportunities are "hoarded" or kept by those in "belonging" groups. Segregated communities tend to have certain features - the structural inequality encompasses the neighborhood itself, the perceived worth of its residents' homes,

schools are low in quality because they lack access to resources, it is difficult to access stable well paying jobs that offer residents steady career progression, health care access is limited, and environmental pollution is often present (Powell, 2012, p. 5). Powell adds that framing solutions to persistent poverty among communities as a narrative or story of individual fault keeps us from addressing deeper structural reasons for poverty. Communities' poverty is due to a lack of structures and institutions that help them to advance their well-being.

Opportunity structures

Powell (2012) states that "communities of opportunity" and opportunity structures help people to have high levels of well-being and to lead fulfilling lives. These structures include affordable quality housing, grocery stores that sell nourishing food that is affordable, schools that effectively prepare all students to be critical and active citizens who engage civically, job markets that connect people to "meaningful" employment that helps people sustain their basic needs, grow and develop… health care facilities that serve people with many income levels and health coverage (p. 19). Historically, such opportunity structures have been most available to white communities, and least to Black communities.

The othering process for marginalized communities result in further impacts for residents and the places they live in. This is complex, and not a linear process: as people are othered, their communities also experience place-based strategies that shape their communities, as referenced earlier. Since groups of people are labeled "other" according to race and ethnicity, these communities are isolated and segregated via approaches such as redlining (Rothstein, Powell), disinvestment (Richardson 1990).

Othering of people on the basis of knowledge production

Jason Corburn (2003) states that a key question is the types of knowledge that are involved in decision-making, and whose is seen as credible (p. 421). Recognized experts have professional knowledge that comes from the "technical rationality" approach to devise causal models, gather information based on universal principles and theories, and establish the validity of claims. Their knowledge is assessed for validity via institutional processes such as academic peer review and the court system. Thus, the perspectives of experts are perceived as credible, because these have been evaluated on standards that value being objective and fair. Experts, professionals and researchers usually have higher levels of education and income than residents of the communities that they make decisions about.

In contrast, Corburn (2003) states that lower income community members have "local knowledge" that is based on the geographic place they live in, a sense of the community that they live in, cultural traditions, historical memories and life experiences. Their knowledge is built up from years of life experiences, living and working together with each other, and is contextual. Such knowledge is evaluated in public narratives, community stories and street theater, and is much less credible because it is seen by professional experts as subjective and anecdotal (p. 421). These differences in perceptions by society of professionals and community members tend to reinforce the lack of consultation by professionals of community members in diverse communities regarding siting decisions about community-based treatment centers (CBTCs).

Othering of communities in decision making

The places that people live in can be "othered" by decisions about the kinds of programs that are located in their communities. Vicki Been (1994) states that diverse communities like Oak Park have a higher incidence of siting of "locally undesirable land uses" (LULUs), and that often

communities tend to focus on such LULUs as ones that pose environmental challenges (p. 1009). She states that LULUs include social service programs that bring a concentration of subgroups such as people who are experiencing mental illness, substance abuse and addiction, extreme poverty, and being homeless. Been comments that the question of what is fair for siting of LULUs is complex. Some say that racially diverse low-income communities have higher percentages of members who need such services, so they should have a higher proportion of LULUs. Others say that siting should be based on "fair share" or making sure that no community experiences disproportionate siting. Another view states that communities that have had few LULUs should have more LULUs to make up for the historic imbalance of siting of LULUs (p. 1008).

What underlying assumptions about these diverse communities are siting decisions of LULUs based upon? Davidson (1982) states that people in neighborhoods with low social status are racially diverse, have high rates of resident turnover, lower levels of schooling, are employed in lower status occupations, and more people are renters than homeowners. These neighborhoods are perceived as the best areas to site social service LULUs (p. 57), and he describes social service LULUs as Community-based Treatment Centers (CBTCs). CBTC neighborhoods are characterized as "low resistance" because residents of such areas are less likely to protest compared to residents in neighborhoods with higher incomes and levels of education. Community members are perceived as less likely to resist siting of CBTCs because of three possible reasons: neighborhood residents accept "deviant behaviors" of CBTC residents because many in the neighborhood have similar behaviors; neighborhood residents do not care sufficiently to mobilize; neighborhood residents lack social cohesion and resources needed to mobilize collectively - "stable political networks and financial resources" (p. 57). Such siting decisions indicate biases in who has the power to make decisions. People identified by institutions as professionals make such decisions, not community members.

2.2 Critical Race Theory

Differing epistemologies

Why are people and places deemed to be historically marginalized, or historically disenfranchised, experiencing these combined impacts of being discredited as individuals and communities, and shut out of the decision-making process? Ladson-Billings describes the dominant Euro-American epistemology or world view – knowledge and existence arise from the individual according to Descartes. From the Enlightenment, came an emphasis upon rational individualism, techno-rational thinking and the positivist approach. Science became the foundation of what is called "truth". Researchers must maintain distance between themselves and those whom they conduct research upon. A key distinction by Ladson-Billings is that epistemology is a "system of knowing that has an internal logic and external validity" (p. 257). Epistemology is more comprehensive compared to worldview, how people see their world. The dominant paradigm is seen as the only credible perspective of the world (p. 258).

In contrast, many communities of color have different epistemologies about the world. Ladson-Billings states that African epistemology can be described by Ubuntu: "I am because we are" – an individual's knowledge and existence depends upon relationships with others (p. 257). Many scholars from Du Bois onwards have discussed what he calls "double consciousness" or "multiple consciousness - this means that people whose epistemology differs from that of the dominant Western paradigm, are always aware of those differences (pp. 259-260). As an example, this divided awareness means that people who identify as Black have to navigate what it means to be Black in their own communities, and still operate according to Western European cultural norms. The dominant European epistemology leads to stories that denigrate communities whose epistemologies differ, and these will be described next.

Dominant narratives

Daniel Solarzano and Tara Yosso (2002) describe the stories told by outside experts about marginalized communities as the "master narrative", Glover (2003) and Richardson as the "dominant cultural narrative" , and Bell (2010) as stock stories. This master narrative results in "majoritarian stories" told by those with privilege, or those who are seen as "belonging". Solarzano and Yosso state that these majoritarian stories uphold people who are white, middle or upper class, cis-gender and male as "normative points of reference" (p. 28).

Since these narratives are perceived as the only credible ones, it is often difficult for us to consider alternate ways of viewing communities deemed to be "other". Solarzano and Yosso state that these majoritarian stories of deficit are sometimes internalized by the people and communities about whom these are told:. Thus, "bad neighborhoods" and "bad schools" are associated with racial and ethnic minorities and where they live (p. 29). While race is the main factor for othering in the U.S. othering also combines race and class in these designations of "good" and "bad" neighborhoods and schools, superior and inferior performance by students in schools.

Glover (2003) describes the impacts of such narratives upon neighborhoods which have experienced urban disinvestment and decline,

> "Communities often struggle with narratives they dislike. Tragically, damaging images imposed by outsiders are often powerful contributors to the ongoing development of a negative collective identity (Cohen, 1985; Suttles, 1972), as illustrated by communities affected by urban decline" (p. 190).

Over time, Glover adds, this negative collective narrative about the urban community experiencing declines, spreads to areas nearby, and in the overall region. In this case, this can be said of how the Oak Park neighborhood has had a negative narrative imposed upon it by outsiders, as it experienced losses in residents, businesses and increased poverty. Residents come to believe this negative collective or community narrative imposed upon them. When residents internalize

such narratives, this can reduce residents' sense of agency that they have voices and can affect policy decisions about their neighborhood (Glover, p. 194).

Earlier analysis and description by Davidson (1982) of "low resistance neighborhoods", aka Community-based treatment center communities, whose residents are racially diverse with lower levels of income and education, more renters than homeowners, and less likely to mobilize in resistance to siting of social service LULUs or CBTCs, is familiar. This narrative matches previous ones used to label "othered" neighborhoods: dominant cultural narratives, majoritarian stories, stock stories. It is logical for decision makers to see such communities as lacking in political will and the social capital to mobilize collectively.

Counter storytelling

Ladson-Billings describes Critical Race Theory (CRT) as one that is often used by scholars of color to center the voices of people and communities of color whose experiences have been lacking or invisible in academia. For decades researchers described children and families of color as "culturally deprived", "substandard" and "abnormal", and White middle-class families' cultural ways as "normative" or "correct". These are the narratives told by outsiders. CRT challenges assumptions by use of counter-story telling to question dominant narratives about communities of color's experiences and reality (Solarzano and Yosso 2002, Delgado 1989, Bell 2010).

In order to counteract such one-sided views, resident narratives are gathered about their shared histories and experiences, and synthesized into community or counter storytelling narratives (Solarzano and Yosso 2002, Delgado 1989, Bell, 2010). These counter narratives can help community members to see themselves and their neighborhood differently. Richardson (1990) states that collective stories re-center the experiences of groups whose voices have been "silenced or marginalized" in the dominant cultural story (p. 129). As people in such groups tell their

community stories in ways that accurately reflect their experiences, these stories may help empower them to see themselves and their communities more positively, and support them to mobilize to influence decision-making about their neighborhoods.

Bell (2010) states that there are different kinds of stories in evaluating the impacts of race and racism – stock stories, concealed stories, resistance stories and emerging/transforming stories (p. 23 – 24). Concealed stories are those that communities who are historically marginalized know among themselves, but are not widely known. Bell states that the first is what society upholds about the marginalized community, and the last 3 are ones told by the marginalized community. Stock stories are the ones told by outsiders (check), what Solarzano and Yosso describe as majoritarian stories, and Glover as dominant cultural narratives. Resistance stories are ones in which community members describe how they push back against racist structures, and uphold people who are either portrayed as "bad" in stock stories, or missing from stock stories. Martin Luther King was portrayed by mainstream press as a threatening radical, Malcom X even more so during the Civil Rights movement, Rosa Parks was missing from narratives. Emerging/transforming stories are constructed to push back on stock stories, they use concealed and resistance stories to build new counter stories about the community (Bell, pp. 25-26). These concealed stories are what this project proposes to uncover regarding Oak Park.

Counter storytelling as advocacy

As Powell (2012) described earlier, opportunity structures allow communities to strengthen and maintain its members' well-being, and to thrive in society (p. 19). These opportunity structures include housing, schools, grocery stores, health care, and jobs. Powell states that housing is the crucial foundation that provides people access to the other opportunity structures, or prevents access when people are not adequately housed.

Mary Emery and Cornelia Flora (2006) describe seven capitals necessary for all communities to be successful and thriving: natural, cultural, human, social, political, financial and built. Each reflects a type of asset that communities need to have coming in "investing" or "flowing in", "interaction among capitals, and the resulting impacts of combined interactions (pp. 20-21). The interactions between each can be described by what they refer to as "spiraling down or spiraling up" (figure 2, p. 22). As a community declines, people, businesses and other civic organizations leave, jobs are lost, and the kinds of capitals decline. A decline in one tends to lead to a decline in others. Similarly, an increase in one tends to help attract others. This framework will be used briefly in the discussion of results. After use of opportunity structures and community capitals, how communities shape their counter stories as public narratives to advocate effectively will be described next.

Marshall Ganz (2011) describes leadership to mobilize communities for social change as "public narratives". Ganz states that we experience strong emotions regarding situations in our own lives and in our communities that either paralyze us or galvanize us to take action. The task of a leader is to shift people from feeling helpless and powerless, to feeling that "we can make a difference" (pp. 277-278). Ganz states, "Storytelling is the discursive form through which we translate our values into the motivation to act" (p. 280). Telling effective public narratives have three parts: our individual selves, the community, and the "now" urgent situation. In the first two parts, the individual person and the community is "called to action" by their deeply held convictions of what principles matter to them (p. 274). This framework will be used to discuss how counter stories from interviews and focus groups can be used by community members of Oak Park to advocate for desired changes.

Chapter 3: Community Background

3.1 Oak Park History

Oak Park was the first suburb of Sacramento, according to local author William Burg (2013, p. 44). The neighborhood was established in 1887, and annexed to the city of Sacramento in 1911. Local geographer Robin Datel (2010) stated that there were several industries that provided stable jobs for residents, including the annual California State Fair, local railroads and canning companies (p. 3). Businesses thrived and were supported by residents. Datel stated that the most prosperous period was from 1900-1930.

Burg (2013) stated that urban redevelopment occurred in the West End area of Sacramento, due to a narrative that was perpetuated about it by the city. Cities who labeled areas "blighted" enabled them to receive federal funding for redevelopment of the designated areas (p.11). The city of Sacramento described the West end area of downtown as a rundown slum, so the government was able to seize private properties, residential and businesses via "eminent domain" (p. 13). These properties were leased or sold to private developers. Burg does not give exact dates for the urban renewal of the West End in downtown Sacramento. However, Burg described a drastic decline in population of residents between 1950-1970 (p.17). Burg observed that some people left of their own choice, some were involuntarily displaced. Burg commented "By 1970, the vast majority of this population had been removed by redevelopment projects, highway construction and condemnation of homes" (p. 7).

Government and developers had their eye on the West End area because of its proximity to the State Capitol, and labeled the neighborhood "blighted". Residents of the West End were extremely diverse, including African Americans, Latinos, Asians. Burg stated that old photos and reports show the neighborhood was not "blighted". But that dominant narrative was used as the

excuse to seize the lands in the neighborhood and displace its residents. Burg stated that African Americans and Latinos fled to neighborhoods that were not bound by restrictive housing covenants that only permitted White residents to sell homes to other White residents. African American residents fled to Oak Park, Latinos fled to Alkali Flats, and Asians fled to South Side Park.

As Oak Park's population diversified due to many African American residents moving into the neighborhood, Burg (2013) noted that Black civic organizations began moving into the neighborhood, including Shiloh Baptist Church, a Black church that used to be in west end Sacramento (p. 50). Retired professor David Covin (2009), who taught at California State University Sacramento, stated that Black communities have only been represented by government, not served adequately, so Black communities like Oak Park have always had to form their own quasi-governmental organizations (p. 9). There were multiple Black activist organizations that had offices in the neighborhood, including the Black Panthers and the African American newspaper, the Observer. The Black Panthers, contrary to their reputation for violence, had a free breakfast program for children. The Sacramento chapter held free breakfasts at the United Church of Christ in Oak Park (Burg, 2013, p. 63).

Burg (2013) stated that when the State Fair was moved out of Oak Park, to north Sacramento in 1965, poverty entered the neighborhood (p. 58). This was supported by comments by Datel (2010) on poverty rising, and activities including "prostitution, drug dealing and theft" coming into Oak Park (p. 5). White residents and businesses began to leave, the neighborhood began to decline, and the racial demographic of residents became even more predominantly African American with lower incomes. The neighborhood was separated spatially from other areas of the city with the construction of north south highway 99 by 1961 and east west highway 50 by the 1970's (Burg 2013, p. 58).

3.2 Demographics

Currently, Oak Park is usually characterized by the general public and local government as a racially diverse low-income community with negative life outcomes and indicators of social wellbeing. Such indicators include high rates of poverty, Black infant mortality rates, and levels of crime. Demographics indicate that African Americans, Asian Americans and Hispanics are the groups with the highest percentages. Drawing on data from the 2017 American Community Survey (ACS) five year survey found in the Social Explorer program, Here is a map from the Policy Map data base (Figure 2):

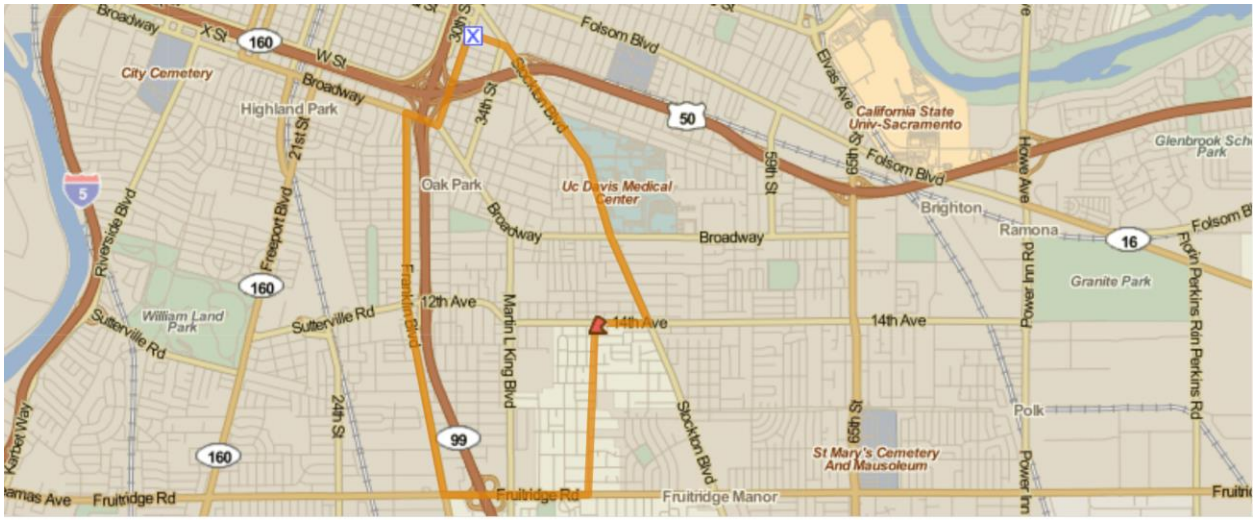

Figure 2: Map of census tracts in Oak Park, based on data from Policy Map, Census 2010. The census tracts that make up Oak Park are bounded in orange.

Here is a map of the two census tracts for North Oak Park (figure 2):

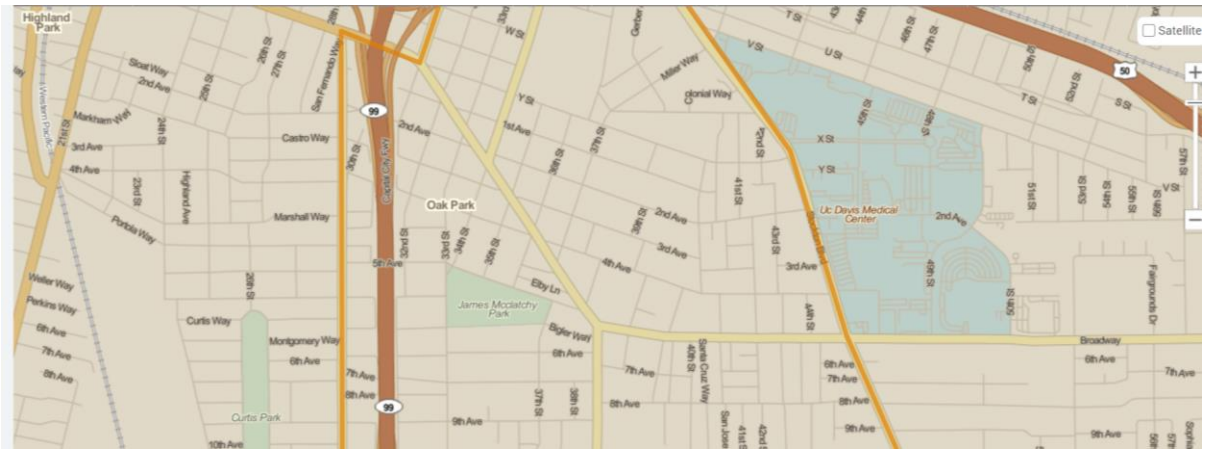

Figure 3: Census tracts in North Oak Park, tracts 27 and 18, from Policy Map, Census 2010

Here is a map of the two census tracts for South Oak Park, tracts 37 and 44.02 (Figure 3):

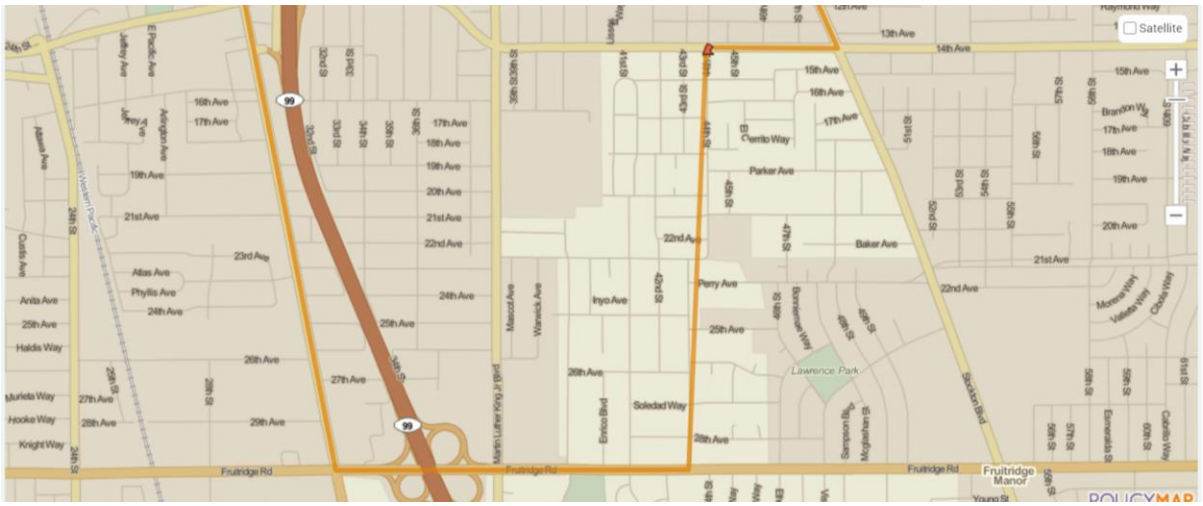

Figure 4: Census tracts in South Oak Park, tracts 37 and 44.02, from Policy Map, Census 2010

Based on these data, I examined demographics for six variables: population by race, families below the poverty level, education for residents age twenty-five years and up with high school or more, median household income by race, housing occupancy by tenant status (owner or renter), and the amount of households paying more than thirty percent of monthly income for housing rent. From table 1 (figure 4), the percentage of White residents ranges from a high of 61.6 percent in North Oak Park, to a low of 39.1 percent in South Oak Park. Black residents range between 11.9 percent in North Oak Park, to a high of 28 percent in Central Oak Park. Asian residents range from 5.2 to 22.3 percent, and Hispanic/Latino residents range from 16.5 to 47.6 percent. These demographics show that at present, Oak Park's residents are still racially diverse, but African American and Asian residents are in the minority. White and Latino residents are in the majority.

Table 1: Population by Race, Oak Park, Sacramento					
	North Oak Park		Central Oak Park	South Oak Park	
	Tract 18	Tract 27	Tract 28	Tract 37	Tract 44.02
White residents, %	61.6	55.9	41.8	44.7	39.1
Black residents, %	11.9	23.8	28.0	13.4	13.3
Asian residents, %	13.4	5.2	6.1	22.3	21.8
Hispanic/Latino residents, %	16.5	30.1	45.8	47.6	46.9

Table 1 – Taken from Social Explorer, based on data from the 2017 American Community Survey, five year estimates

In table 2 below, the rates of poverty for families varies from 11 percent in tract 18 to a high of 32.6 percent in Central Oak Park. Rates of poverty for families in central and south Oak Park are higher than the rates for families in north Oak Park. However, these data are not disaggregated by race and ethnicity, so I am not able to draw further meaningful conclusions from the data – such as whether African American and Latino residents' rates of poverty are higher in South Oak Park

compared to North and Central Oak Park. Nor am I able to determine whether the overall rates of poverty of people of color – Black, Latino and Asian, are higher overall than for White residents.

Table 2: Families below the poverty level, Oak Park, Sacramento				
North Oak Park		Central Oak Park	South Oak Park	
Tract 18, %	Tract 27, %	Tract 28, %	Tract 37, %	Tract 44.02, %
11.1	20.9	32.6	31.5	30.8

Figure 2: Taken from Social Explorer, based on data from the 2017 American Community Survey, five Year estimates

For the third variable, level of educational attainment for residents age twenty five and over, who have completed high school or more, it ranges from a high of 90.1% in North Oak Park, to a low of 54.1% in South Oak Park, as shown in table 3 below. Residents of north Oak Park have higher levels of education, compared to residents in central and south Oak Park. As with table 2 data on poverty rates of residents, since this data is not disaggregated by race and ethnicity, I cannot verify whether White residents have higher levels of formal education than residents of color – Black, Latino and Asian.

Table 3: Education, high school graduate or more, age 25 years and over				
North Oak Park		**Central Oak Park**	**South Oak Park**	
Tract 18, %	Tract 27, %	Tract 28, %	Tract 37, %	Tract 44.02, %
90.1	87.8	67	68.1	54.1

Table 3 – Taken from Social Explorer, based on data from the American Community Survey, 2017 five year estimates

For the fourth variable shown in table 4 (figure 7), median household income by race, for White residents, their income was higher in North Oak Park, $69,537 compared to $32,708 in South Oak Park. For Black residents, median household income ranged from $28,882 in North Oak Park, to a low of $15,769 in South Oak Park. This set of data is the only one in which data were provided by race and ethnicity. Therefore, White residents' incomes for all tracts were the highest, Latino residents' incomes were the next highest, and Black residents' incomes were the lowest. However,

as can be seen, these data were not available for Asian residents in three out of the five census tracts. Thus, I cannot draw conclusions about how Asian residents' incomes in relation to these of Black and Latino – in census tract 37, Asian residents' income is higher than that for Black and Hispanics, but in adjacent tract 44.02, Asian residents' income is higher than that for Black residents, but lower than that for Latino residents. What might be helpful is data on levels of education and types of occupations, to see whether Asian residents in tract 37 have more education and jobs with higher salary levels, compared to their Asian counterparts in tract 44.02.

Table 4: Median Household income by race, Oak Park, Sacramento					
	North Oak Park		**Central Oak Park**	**South Oak Park**	
	Tract 18	Tract 27	Tract 28	Tract 37	Tract 44.02
White residents	$69,539	$45,357	$52,616	$32,708	n/a
Black residents	$28,882	n/a	$32,986	$30,510	$15,769
Asian residents	n/a	n/a	n/a	$38,056	$21,120
Hispanic/Latino residents	$47,857	$31,683	$46,141	$27,038	$38,667

Table 4: Taken from Social Explorer, based on data from the American Community Survey, 2017 five year estimate

The fifth variable examined was housing status of tenants for occupied units according to whether tenants were owners or renters. For both North and South Oak Park, the percentage of owner-occupied units was lower than that of renters. Owner occupied units averaged in the thirtieth percentage, and renters were close to two thirds. This is shown below in table 5 (figure 8).

Table 5: Housing, occupied, tenant status, Oak Park, Sacramento					
	North Oak Park		Central Oak Park	South Oak Park	
	Tract 18	Tract 27	Tract 28	Tract 37	Tract 44.02
Owner occupied, %	32.7	35.1	32.3	35.7	35.0
Renter occupied, %	64.9	64.9	67.7	64.3	64.9

Table 5 – Taken from Social Explorer, based on data from the American Community Survey, 2017 five year estimates

The sixth variable examined in table 6 (figure 9) was the percentage of renter occupied households who paid over 30 percent of monthly income for rent. The total figures for each census tract of renters who pay more than 30 percent of monthly income for rent ranges from 41.8 in North Oak Park, to 63.4 percent in South Oak Park. From this table, we can see that renters who pay more than 30 percent of their monthly income for rent reflects the situation for so many people in California. People are extremely rent burdened, and this supports one of the themes in Findings, of housing being a crucial issue for residents in this neighborhood. These data, limited though they are, and not disaggregated by race and ethnicity, show that residents in south Oak Park have the highest rates of paying too much in monthly income for rent. Residents in Central Oak Park have the next highest percentage of renters who pay more than 30 percent of monthly income for housing. Finally, when we look at tables 5 and 6, these data suggest that more residents rent than own their homes, and that more residents are paying far too much of their monthly incomes in rent. I did not examine data for homeowners to see what percentage of homeowners might be paying mortgage costs that are more than thirty percent of monthly income.

Table 6: Housing, renters paying more than 30% of monthly income for housing					
	North Oak Park		Central Oak Park	South Oak Park	
	Tract 18	Tract 27	Tract 28	Tract 37	Tract 44.02
Renters paying 30-49% of monthly income, %	21.5	18.5	17.3	9.1	16.3
Renters paying 50 % and more, %	20.3	33.9	37.4	49.1	47.1
Total renters paying more than 30 %	41.8	52.4	54.7	58.2	63.4

Table 6: Taken from Social Explorer, based on data from the 2017 American Community Survey, five year estimates

In summary, examination of the above demographic data indicate that White and Latino residents are in the majority, Black and Asian are in the minority. Further, Black residents constitute lower percentages of the overall population in the two south Oak Park tracts, but the poverty rates are higher for residents in south Oak Park. Residents in Central and South Oak Park have lower rates of education than do residents in North Oak Park. Data for median household income indicate that median household income is lowest for Black residents in all five census tracts, and in south Oak Park in particular. Given the data in table 6, the higher percentages of residents in south Oak Park who pay more than 30 and 50 percent of their monthly income for rent is not surprising.

3.3 Opportunity Index databases

Since this study seeks to use an asset-based approach, data on levels of opportunity in the Oak Park neighborhood was examined through two databases: the U.C. Davis Center for Regional

Change's Regional Opportunity Index, and the U.C. Berkeley Haas Institute's California Opportunity Map.

UC Davis Regional Opportunity Index

The Regional Opportunity Index allows researchers to investigate and map opportunity levels for communities by people and place. South Oak Park is encompassed by two census tracts – 37 and partly in 44.02. I checked on opportunity levels for housing. When I mapped opportunities for people in census tract 37, all indicators including housing were rated "low". The housing indices are evaluated on the basis of what the ROI labels as "relative residential stability", home ownership and housing costs. This low rating reflects what interviewees told me - that more residents are renters, not homeowners, and many cannot afford housing in the neighborhood. However, when I examined the ROI mapping of opportunities by place, the same census tract, 37, was rated "high" in several indicators: health/environment, housing and the economy. Here, the place indicators for housing opportunity are based on "housing adequacy" - housing sufficiency and affordability. This seems to show that there is a lot of housing, and that it is affordable. Yet, this does not reflect what interviewees told me - longtime residents who tend to have lower incomes, cannot afford current median housing prices. Earlier data from the American Community Survey for percentages of residents in census tracts in Oak Park who paid more than 30 and 50 percent of their monthly income for rent (table 6, p. 27), but does not disaggregate data by length of residence. However, the theme of housing as an issue will be discussed in chapter 5 on Findings.

Below is an image from my search in the Regional Opportunity Index, for census tract 37 in South Oak Park (figure 10):

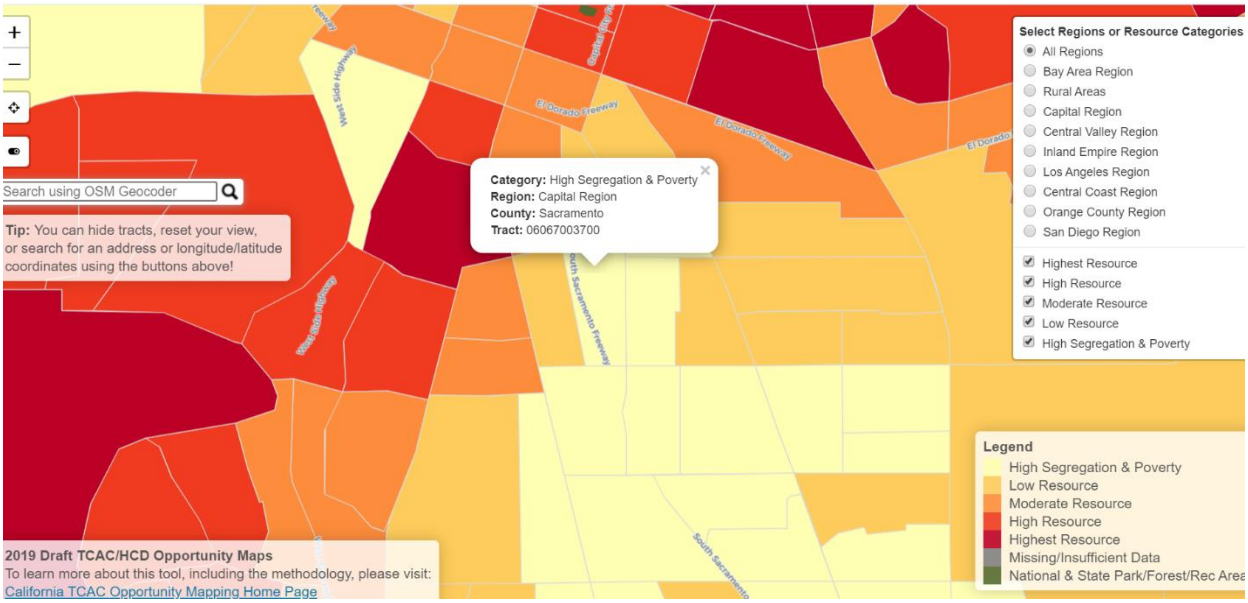

Figure 5: Taken from the UC Davis Center for Regional Change, Regional Opportunity Index results, Opportunity ratings for people in census tract 37

UC Berkeley California Opportunity Map

The UC Berkeley Haas Institute's California Opportunity Map also provides researchers with a tool to examine opportunity levels in communities in California. An initial examination of both census tracts for South Oak Park yielded the following results: both census tracts 37 (figure 11) and 44.02 (figure 12) were rated "High segregation & poverty", but I did not seem to see any further analysis of the levels of segregation and poverty, and opportunity indicators, unlike the UC Davis Regional Opportunity Index. On both maps, the full FIPS code including state ID, county ID and tract ID are included as "06067003700" and "06067004402".

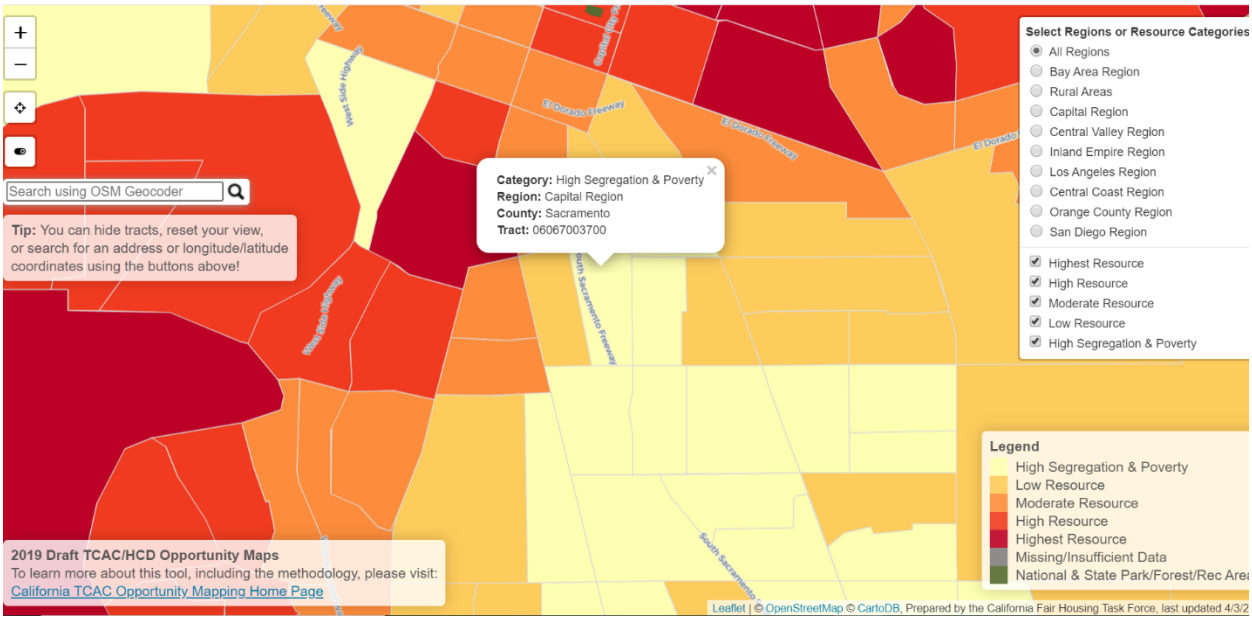

Figure 6: Taken from the UC Berkeley Haas Institute, California Opportunity Map for census tract 37

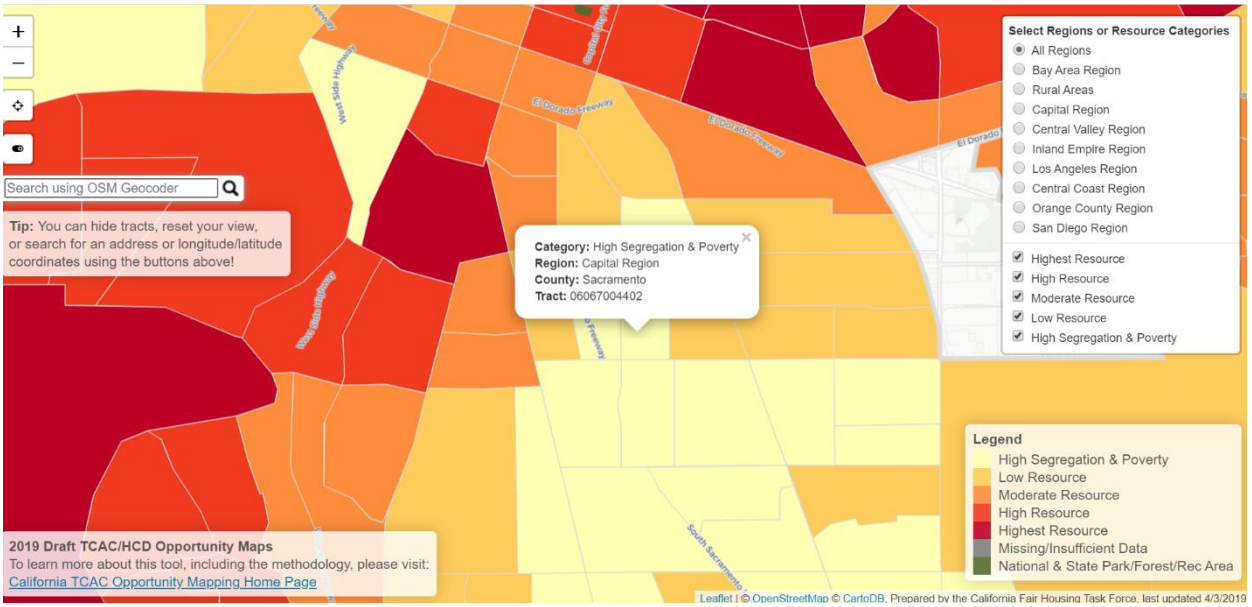

Figure 7: Taken from the UC Berkeley Haas Institute, California Opportunity Map for census tract 44.02

Chapter 4: Research

4.1 South Oak Park Community Association sponsorship of research

I initially spoke with a board member of the South Oak Park Community Association in 2019 about my wish to conduct research that might be of use to the South Oak Park Community Association (SOPCA) and the neighborhood. Since he is a resident who participated in interviews for my project, I will refer to him as resident N, see table of interviewees, p. 38-40. Resident N commented that there is an over-concentration of social service programs in a one-mile radius of the neighborhood: the mental health facility, a transitional housing program, shelter for unhoused people, and people identified as sex offenders. Resident N said that the mental health facility does not serve most residents in Sacramento County, so their programs and services do not benefit people in the county. This facility proposes to triple its capacity to serve patients, and he stated that his concern is, why are so many facilities located in this neighborhood, instead of wealthier communities? He stated that residents who oppose the mental health facility's expansion are being described as "Not in my backyard" (NIMBYs) but he states that he would like to see such facilities distributed more fairly (personal communication, resident N, 03/01/2019). I initially considered conducting my research on this issue, but it is a sensitive one that focuses on a problem, the proposed expansion of a social service program that does not serve most residents in the neighborhood and broader county. Therefore, I talked with resident N about the negative ways that the neighborhood is mostly characterized by outsiders, and asked if he would support a project that sought to gather stories from insider residents and other community members who know and care deeply about Oak Park. He stated that this approach sounded like a good one for my project, and agreed to sponsor my research.

South Oak Park Community Association (SOPCA) was formed approximately six years ago by a group of residents in south Oak Park, according to resident N (personal communication,

August 2, 2019). This group came together out of shared concerns that south Oak Park was not getting the attention that they felt it should. The existing neighborhood Association, Oak Park Neighborhood Association (OPNA), had board members who mostly lived in the north part of the neighborhood. The north part which some residents characterize as the "Broadway triangle", has been getting much more attention and funding for revitalization.

4.2 Assumptions and approach

My choice of research focus and methodologies began with an interest in uncovering the voices of members of a historically marginalized community. This focus stems from the dedication of Critical Race theorists to prioritizing such voices in their research. In addition, Mertens, as cited in Creswell and Creswell (2018), describes the transformative worldview. In this worldview, the researcher focuses on principles of social justice and seeks to address problems of inequity that affect marginalized communities (p. 9). This is done through choosing an issue, then working closely with the community to ensure that community members have a chance to engage in activities such as reviewing interview questions, interview results and analyses. In addition, Vivianne Baur (2009) states in a review of a book on transformative research and evaluation by Donna M. Mertens, one of the main principles is an emphasis "on the strengths of people and communities instead of deficits" (p. 276).

Further, this perspective in my research leads to narrative research, as described by Creswell and Creswell (2018): Narratives or stories are collected from multiple people and combined into a collective narrative (p. 13). Since my study sought to identify new counter stories of the Oak Park neighborhood, I chose to conduct interviews and focus groups with people who are connected to the neighborhood, who know it well and would speak candidly. In addition I followed up my interviews and focus groups by exploring secondary data about the neighborhood in two opportunity index databases. I examined opportunity data for census tracts that encompass South

Oak Park in two opportunity index mapping tools: the UC Davis Center for Regional Change's Regional Opportunity Index, and the UC Berkeley Haas Institute's California Opportunity Map.

4.3 Positionality of the researcher

In this process of conducting narrative inquiry research, some ethical questions arise. One is that of the researcher's own positionality. According to Umemoto (2012), researchers are supposed to maintain an objective distance from the subjects of their research. She instead advocates for an alternate one of "loving attachment": researchers acknowledge their own feelings and sense of connection to people and communities with whom we seek to work (p. 595). This is echoed by what Naples and Gurr (2014) describe as the feminist research perspective. Naples and Gurr comment that this perspective critiques the traditional positivist approach of Cartesian dualism, in which "knowledge is separate and separable from society, is embedded in classical notions of objectivity in research as 'unbiased, value-free and asocial'" (p. 48). Naples and Gurr go on to describe epistemic authority and epistemic privilege. Epistemic authority refers to "whose knowledge is recognized and validated, and whose is silenced" (p. 54), while epistemic privilege is "the opportunity to be *known* as authorities and in being known as authorities, to speak further" (p. 54). This perspective connects back to that of Ladson-Billings, Glover, Solarzano and Yosso: the only ones who can speak on behalf of communities are those with empirical authority and privilege. We recognize people as "professional experts", while community members who only possess "local knowledge", do not have such authority.

Ladson-Billings states that a researcher may begin as an "outsider" and, as time passes, come to be viewed as an "insider". This can be a dilemma for the people she seeks to conduct research with for several reasons. People with whom I am doing research may see me as the one who is qualified to tell their stories, or mistakenly trust that I will do my research in ways that respect their voices, and convey their stories accurately. My advisor stated that I should beware of

coming to believe that I am the only one "who can tell [Oak Park's} stories" (personal communication, D. De la Pena, September 16, 2019).

Second, in doing this kind of research, who is an "insider" or member of a community? Wilmsen et al (2008) state that according to Ballard and Sarathy, to define some people as "insiders" is to exclude some (p. 263). Generally, insiders have shared experiences, knowledge from living and working together, shared cultural norms and traditions, and local knowledge that is place and identity based. According to Griffith (1998) the distinction between researchers as outsiders and community members as insiders is not so simple. Residents from marginalized communities may leave to obtain further education and training that puts them in the "expert" role of researcher and professional. In this process, "insider" residents" can become "outsiders" due to their enhanced levels of education, in comparison to many in their communities of origin (p. 375).

I identify as a cisgender woman of Asian descent and Chinese ethnicity, and am an outsider in many ways: I did not grow up in Sacramento nor the Oak Park neighborhood, and I have a much higher level of education than many residents. A further potential blind spot is the positioning of my racial group in the racial hierarchy of the U.S. As Claire Jean Kim (2000) describes, the racial hierarchy includes two dimensions: American/foreign, and superior/inferior (p. 36). She states that Asian Americans are portrayed as perpetual aliens compared with White people. Asian Americans are placed below White people and above Black people on the superior/inferior scale. With this juxtaposition of opposing narratives about Asian and Black people, if I am not careful, I can feel that I am superior to Black people, and in this case, Black community members of Oak Park. This feeling of internalized superiority could lead to some biases in my analyses and interpretations of results.

Given my positionality as an outsider, I began laying groundwork for my research by volunteering at a few events held by the South Oak Park Community Association. I began by helping with set up for "Celebrate Oak Park" in March 2019, and similarly assisted with set up, registration

and serving lunch at the "3 on 3 Basketball tournament" in June 2019, and spent a couple of days helping a small group of SOPCA members continue painting a mural at the Jack Davis Park near the Fruitridge Collaborative. I have also been attending monthly meetings since last spring, when resident N, my project sponsor invited me to meet members of the organization. I also attended monthly meetings of my sponsoring organization, SOPCA, to meet members and other potential interviewees, and learn more about the neighborhood via information about programs SOPCA members and other organizations offer, topics of discussion about what is important to its attendees. I periodically attended meetings of the Oak Park Neighborhood Association to see if I could meet more people to interview, to learn about the issues that members care about, and to hear about organizations and programs that seek to address these concerns.

4.4 Research approval process by the UC Davis Institutional Review Board

I applied to the UC Davis Institutional Review Board (IRB) in May 2019 for approval of my research project, and it was approved as package number 1435517-1 on July 9, 2019. For the application, I wrote protocol HRP-503 for Surveys, Interviews and focus groups, describing the background of how Oak Park has been characterized in negative terms by outsider professionals, and the intent of my study to conduct interviews and focus groups to gather asset based stories for possible use for future advocacy by community members. In addition, my application contained interview and focus group questions as a supplement to HRP form 503.

4.5 Interview design and selection of participants

Interview question design

I intentionally designed my interview questions to avoid a problem-centered focus. Instead, I used what Diana Whitney and Amanda Trosten-Bloom (2003) describe as appreciative inquiry: "It is based on the notion that human systems, individuals, teams, organizations and communities

grow and change in the direction of what they study. Appreciative Inquiry works by focusing the attention of the organization on its most positive potential - its positive core" (p. 6). Whitney and Trosten state, similarly to what Baur (2009) stated about transformative research (276), the appreciative inquiry approach focuses on strengths-based change, not deficit-based change (pp. 15-16). Questions begin by asking people to look back into the past, then forward to envision what they wish to see in the future. Initially I had written six questions that asked people to self-identify their role(s) with regards to Oak Park (as a resident, business owner, community activist or other), how long they had that role(s), how they have seen the neighborhood change since they had that role(s), priorities that they have based upon how they have seen the neighborhood change over time, strengths of the neighborhood, a hope that they have. I tested the questions with my project sponsor resident N, and he suggested that I ask interviewees the additional questions: what they believe the neighborhood needs and how they want that to happen, their impressions of the neighborhood associations and what these organizations can do to better serve the neighborhood, and lastly, how people obtain their information about the neighborhood. See appendix B for list of final interview questions, p. 75.

Selection and sampling of participants for interviews

In selecting participants to interview, I used judgment or purposive sampling according to Etikon, Musa and Alkassim (2016) - choosing nonrandom participants who will enable me to gain a better understanding of how insiders view the Oak Park neighborhood (p. 2). Choosing the appropriate participants who are familiar with the neighborhood enabled me to conduct interviews which will lead to counter-stories that can be aggregated into an alternative community story. I did this by speaking with my project sponsor, resident N, a long-time resident, board member of South Oak Park Community Association, and a board member of the Oak Park Neighborhood Association. I contacted people based on a list of contacts who are or have been connected to the neighborhood

as residents, business owners, and/or involved with organizations that serve residents. I also inquired of interviewees if there was anyone else whom they would recommend I interview. Lastly, I did meet a few people via introductions from an initial interview. From initial interviewees' recommendations and introductions provided by resident N, I was able to interview a few more people including three business owners and a long-time resident of south Oak Park.

Here is a list of interviewees with brief descriptions and lettering system in table 7 below:

letter	role	gender	race	Length of residence or time in role
A	Resident (identified as community member)	Female	African American	Over ten years
B	Resident	Male	Multiracial	Under five years, has own local nonprofit, board member of SOPCA
C	Business owner	Male	Caucasian	Under five years, coffee shop
D	Business owner and resident	Female	African American	Ten years, owns local art gallery
E	Resident	Male	African American	Over ten years, life-long resident

F	Residents (couple)	Male and female	African American	Under five years; wife is board member of SOPCA
G	Resident	Female	Caucasian	Over ten years
H	Resident	Male	African American	Over ten years
I	Community member	Female	Caucasian	Unknown; interviewee is faculty who resides in Davis
J	Resident	Female	African American	Over ten years
K	Resident	Female	Biracial: Caucasian and Black	Over ten years
L	Business owner and resident	Female	Caucasian	Over ten years, art gallery
M	Resident	Female	Caucasian	Under five years

N	Resident	Male	African American	Over ten years, board member of SOPCA
O	Resident	Female	African American	Over ten years, executive director at local non-profit
P	Former resident	Female	African American	n/a: lives in Curtis Park
Q	Resident	Female	African American	Over ten years, life-long resident, staff at local nonprofit
R	Resident	Female	Other	Seven years, works for local church
S	Community member	Female	African American	n/a; attends local church
T	Resident	Female	Asian American	Over ten years; she and spouse used to have an art gallery in Oak Park
U	Residents (couple)	Male and female	Caucasian	Under five years, both are board members of SOPCA

Table 7: List of people interviewed for this project in 2019

4.6 Data analysis

Interviews

I conducted twenty-one interviews with twenty-three community members from August - October 2019. Of these interviews, twenty were in-person, and one by e-mail. Eleven interviews were conducted in South Oak, eight at residents' homes, three at the Fruitridge Community Collaborative building near Jack Davis Park. The Fruitridge Community Collaborative is a former school building in South Oak Park at the intersection of 44th Street and Roosevelt Avenue, and it houses several nonprofits, including Building Healthy Communities. Four interviews were conducted in North Oak Park at local businesses, four in South Sacramento, with two done at interviewees' work offices and two at local restaurants, and one at the Davis Farmers Market.

All interviews were recorded with an audio recorder, then transcribed personally in Word documents, and brief notes written on transcribed interviews to note basic information about the interviewee(s) and how I had come to interview that person. In order to protect the identities of people whom I interviewed, all will be referred to by a designated letter: A, B… (see table 7 on pp. 33-34 for list of interviewees, interview dates and locations of interviews). Two of the in-person interviews were done with couples who are residents: F and U. One interview was conducted via e-mail with resident H, based upon the recommendation of one of my initial interviewees. More of the interviewees were women (16 people) compared to men (7people). Most were residents (19 people), 3 were business owners, and 2 of the 3 business owners reside in Oak Park. More of the interviewees identify as Black (12), compared to' White (7) and "other" (4). Residents were also characterized by the length of time they have lived in Oak Park. The three groups were: 1. newcomers: less than 5 years (5 people) 2. people who have lived in the neighborhood between 5-

10 years (2 people) and 3. longtime residents who have lived in the neighborhood over 10 years (13 people). Of the four who did not identify themselves as residents, one identifies as a business owner, one is a faculty member of a local university, one is a former resident, and one attends church in Oak Park. Ages ranged from early 30s up to early 60s primarily. Two interviewees were in their 80s.

Focus groups

Two groups were held in November 2019 at the Fruitridge Community Collaborative, one on the same date as the monthly SOPCA meeting, the second on a Saturday morning. Participants were recruited via sharing of a flier on SOPCA's facebook page, by in-person door knocking by a small group of people including myself, and personal invitations by myself to people whom I had interviewed. The first had 14 individuals, and most were connected to an organization. Only 3 out of the 14 had been interviewed. The second group had 7 people. Of the 7 people, 4 had been interviewed by me, and another resident has lived in the neighborhood all of his life.

At each focus group, I presented an overview of my project and preliminary themes, verbally and written on big sheets posted on the walls of the meeting room. Then, participants were asked to review the preliminary themes and provide comments via post it notes on what they saw: any areas that they agreed with, any surprises, or areas of disagreement. Participants were asked to comment on whether there were any issues or priorities that they believed should be included. After they looked at the written summaries and provided comments via post it notes, I facilitated a discussion, asking the group for their impressions: what they agreed with, what I had left out, what they disagreed with. I also checked in with attendees about some seeming contradictions, such as the differences of opinion about whether Oak Park has enough services of the right type as currently provided by the agencies that serve the area.

Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion

5.1 Dominant narratives about Oak Park

After I completed my interviews and focus groups, I interviewed a long time resident to obtain these further insights, at the suggestion of one of my committee members. In this section, I will refer to my source for the following as resident N, a board member of the South Oak Park Community Association (SOPCA), since he was one of my interviewees for this project. In the beginning of my conversation with him, he asked which dominant story I was interested in talking with him about. I specified, the long standing one that describes Oak Park in negative terms, a predominantly Black community with social outcomes that are not great: high rates of crime and poverty, low levels of formal education. Resident N stated that this narrative about Oak Park is changing in areas in which reinvestment is happening, to be much more positive. He said that some people who do not know the neighborhood, think of it as being clean and safe now (personal communication, resident N, 01/25/2020).

Resident N stated that Oak Park has had a negative reputation for years, since the crack epidemic came to the community. He described physical signs of the neighborhood's bad reputation as "broken down cars, abandoned houses, drug users, homeless people, loose dogs". He commented that the neighborhood is viewed by many outsiders as a "dumping ground" for things like illegal dumping of trash. Resident N continued that outsiders feel that people in Oak Park "don't care about their kids when they see them [youth] walking around with their pants hanging down". When outsiders see abandoned houses, they say that residents don't care about their homes, when the true owner might be living out of state in Florida. Outsiders also said that the neighborhood is full of "welfare queens", single mothers with lots of children "living off the system", whereas as N notes, it might be the only place in the city such parents can afford to live with their children.

In addition, resident N commented that when people who used to live in wealthy neighborhoods like Granite Bay (past Roseville in Sacramento County), get into trouble repeatedly with the law and cannot live in their original community anymore, they sometimes come to neighborhoods like Oak Park. He stated that they "continue a criminal lifestyle", don't keep the lawns of their homes mowed, have a lot of people over all the time, play music loudly, there is trash in the yard, and all of these elements contribute toward the bad reputation of the neighborhood.

Resident N also stated that Oak Park used to be a thriving neighborhood and community prior to the crack epidemic, and very family oriented. There were concerts at McClatchy Park, with hundreds of people attending, there was swimming, Little League baseball, Black businesses were thriving, and the Black Panther Party provided free breakfasts for children. Once the crack epidemic hit, families "got broken up, they weren't supporting Black businesses anymore, people started leaving.

Resident N also observed that Black people "are used to being 'problem children', at the center of anything poverty related or controversial, there is very little panic in [our] conversation, we acknowledge the problem then move onto something else". He noted that if such issues were happening to people with racial privilege, these dilemmas would be viewed and treated differently, and receive much more attention. An example is differences in reactions by society to the crack epidemic in Black communities like Oak Park. Black drug users were locked up by the police, vs reactions now to the opioid drug epidemic, "because more users are Caucasian, it's an illness, a national emergency".

5.2 Loss of opportunity structures, disinvestment and decline

Community member A stated that Oak Park was not always known as a "bad neighborhood". Community member A and resident E both noted that the neighborhood residents

were primarily working-class white people, as Burg (2013) and Datel (2010) described earlier. During that time, according to lifelong resident E, the neighborhood was thriving, and people benefited from the fair in multiple ways. Resident E described the neighborhood that he knew as a child:

> "I was born in 1956, all the houses were across the street, we moved around a lot, the early years, for me as a kid, I didn't know downtown, I didn't know anything but Oak Park, there was a theater where my cousin took me, during the 60's…there were five and dime stores, everything was right there, didn't go anywhere else…, all the businesses were bustling, Fruitridge, was where the market was, the state fair was walking distance, almost everybody worked there …, everybody parked cars in our back yard, I made [a] lot of money, …one time I went downtown, it was torn up, dirty, …going to Oak Park, there was a hardware store right where they have that garden, I remember the barber shop, [I] had enough money to go to the pastry shop, going to the churches, which church you want to go to with lemonade" – resident E

Resident A noted changes in the prosperity of the neighborhood:

> "Oak Park hasn't always been known as a bad neighborhood, it was immigrants, they were working class people without formal education, but as Sacramento began to go through renovations Black folks began to move to Oak Park, when I moved here in 1966 it was mostly White folks.., after 1968 the riots, you saw White flight, when highway 99 went in working class families able to sell their homes, they were able to move to Curtis Park" – resident A

Resident E noted that the first wave of disinvestment was urban renewal by the city of Sacramento of the west end. As Burg (2013) mentioned earlier, resident E commented that Blacks, Latinos and Asians were displaced, and Blacks moved to Oak Park. Burg (2013) stated that the California State Fair was located on the east side of Oak Park from 1909 - 1965 (p. 58).

Long-time community member A and lifelong resident E stated that after the California State Fair was relocated to north Sacramento in the 1960s (1965), this harmed the neighborhood – businesses and residents who were White and Black upper and middle class began to leave. As this disinvestment in Oak Park began, the neighborhood's racial and socioeconomic demographics changed. Resident A commented:

> "when my mom moved there in 1950, [there were] very few Blacks, it completely changed,…, the middle class Blacks couldn't move many places, this area between 14th and 33rd was no man's land, so you could move but,…by that time it was 90-95% African American, Latino, there's lot of Blacks coming in, whole mass migration, 1968 to 1970s [in Sacramento], there were base closings, at the same time there was a lot of changes taking place in Oak Park, the Black Panthers, another Black nationalist group on 33rd, they had offices there, …the Police decided to raid the Black Panthers, that was beginning of tipping point, 1968, white flight, all the businesses left, …businesses said we're not investing anything, …the businesses went to Fruitridge, downtown, no more investment, then began slow excruciating process, …middle class Blacks began to move to Meadow View, …by 1970 all white families [were] gone, [Oak Park] became predominantly Black and Latino, the Black upper class went to Meadow View, out near Citrus Heights, …by the early 1980s crack cocaine came through, whatever middle class [that remained] was destroyed" – resident E

Resident E described three waves of disinvestment in Oak Park:

> "when you don't provide loans, it gets disinvested in, my mom bought her house in 1968 for $10,000, today the house [is worth] close to $300,000 or $400,000, the same house, nothing wrong with it, gentrification says now I want to reinvest, this is not a new phenomenon,[the first wave was] when they cleared out Blacks, Latinos, Asians from downtown, Blacks went to Oak Park, Chinese went to Broadway, Latinos went to South Side Park, second wave was when they …said we're going to build [highway] 99, a lot of us had to move, we'll disinvest this side [Oak Park], we'll invest this side, Curtis Park will be fine, …the third wave, pricing people out, pouring money into Oak Park, bringing new houses, new businesses in,… first…is clean out all the low income people, now [the neighborhood is] totally transformed, people that want to live in Oak Park being pushed out to suburbs, suburbs going to become the new ghetto, inner city no longer undesirable, I don't know what the new term for undesirable will be, people being pushed out, forced out, this is not just Sacramento,…[this is] part of [a] national phenomenon, we need to stand up, …those who fight to stay can help shape [the neighborhood], those banking on in [a] crisis, that we will sell [our homes]." – resident E

Along with this altered view of Oak Park as a neighborhood came the dominant narratives that resident N described earlier - that the physical environment is run down, with abandoned homes, broken down cars, houses have bars on windows, dogs needed for protection, [but the] dogs run loose, residents are drug users, homeless or welfare queen single mothers, and parents "don't care about kids walking around with their pants sagging". This paints a picture of a neighborhood whose residents are poverty stricken, tend to engage in criminal behaviors, and whose parents do not discipline their children to dress properly, these parents do not care to work, and prefer to receive public assistance instead. However, the comments of resident A and E indicate that the neighborhood experienced changes in its racial demographics and economic wellbeing as White

residents, and businesses left, after the California State Fair was relocated, highway 99 was constructed and Black residents who were upper or middle class, also left. Systemic disinvestment as described by resident E above, tended to prevent remaining residents from purchasing homes and maintaining homes in good repair. These changes that residents A and E describe contradict some of the dominant narrative mentioned by resident N – that the rundown conditions of houses in the neighborhood is entirely due to residents' lack of responsibility and care.

Resident N stated in a follow up conversation this year, that prior to the introduction of crack into the neighborhood, it was thriving. There were strong Black businesses, and Burg (2013) noted that there were many Black civic organizations. There were many activities for families at places like McClatchy Park, concerts which were well attended, Little League Baseball, and swimming (resident N, 01/25/20). Former resident P stated that when she lived in Oak Park during the 1980's, the neighborhood "has always been that place that if you got evicted and couldn't afford any place else, you came here". Resident U stated that when he grew up in nearby Colonial Heights neighborhood in Sacramento, Oak Park was "known for gang activity and black market". Resident G stated that the neighborhood "has always been said to be unsafe", although she stated that she has never felt unsafe.

Other changes noted by residents

Former resident P stated that the neighborhood has gentrified and become "the hip place to be". She stated that many of the homeless people who live in parks, used to live in the neighborhood. Long-time resident O stated that people used to know each other and "hung out together", but now "people mostly keep to themselves, [houses are] gated". Life-long resident Q stated that violence has been "very bad in the past ten years, the economy was bad, many people lost their jobs, although it has improved in the last three years. Two business owners who are also residents, D and M, noted changes in the arts community. Business owner D stated that there are

less arts organizations than there used to be. Business owner M stated that there are much less "creatives" (artists) who live here, due to rising prices of housing. Newer residents R and U both noted improvements in the amount of illegal dumping of garbage, although U stated that he does not know if this means that the piles of trash are just being moved around.

5.3 Stories of assets and advocacy

After interviewees spoke of the ways in which the Oak Park neighborhood has changed, their stories revealed hidden strengths or assets, and the values behind them, one of the first steps that Ganz (2011) referenced earlier - how are individuals and communities called to act, based upon their values? People's stories of strengths or assets reflect their valuing of the people and place of the Oak Park neighborhood, as this comment by resident N indicates: *"Oak Park is a community with a beautiful soul that has fallen on hard times".*

Strengths of People

Eight Interviewees value the diversity of Oak Park residents, the close-knit relationships, and that people look out for one another. Resident E cited the strength, resilience and creativity of people who "have had to make do with so little for so long". Diversity includes the many different racial and ethnic groups and the rich mix of cultures they have, and the diversity of people from "many walks of life, from professionals to 'gang bangers' ", according to residents K and N. Residents E, F and U praised the sense of community, that there are many who care deeply about helping to make this neighborhood better. Resident Q stated, "the strength, I would say the ones that are still here [have] never given up, we have a really strong neighborhood, we can come together, be peaceful when you live in a neighborhood, our main strength is we trust one another here, and I'm talking from here to 44th, we know and we're going to watch each other, I think our main strength is our trust".

The history of activism by the Black community was mentioned with pride by several people: the neighborhood was home to the Black Panther Party and the NAACP. Interviewee I stated that people have a history of working together across racial lines. Several residents praised the sense of community and caring: resident E, resident couple F, resident couple U, and resident R. Resident E noted that organizations and people "get things done", and that other communities do not have this ability to mobilize. These neighborhood strengths connect to what Emery and Flora (2006) state is part of social capital: that they have the cohesiveness to accomplish things that they desire for the community (p. 21). These organizational strengths in the history of Black civic organizations support the previously identified asset of a strong sense of caring among community members. It takes a core of residents who care enough to come together collectively to work for change.

There has been and continues to be neighbors who care tremendously about helping the community to do well despite severe poverty. One example that resident couples F and U spoke of was the beautification project at Jack Davis Park, close to the Fruitridge Community Collaborative building. The park had gotten run down, and people did not use it much. This project was led by resident F, a board member of SOPCA, she mobilized organizations to help support the revitalization, and a local artist to help paint a mural. The project brought a beautiful new basketball court sponsored by the Kaiser Foundation, a playground for children, and a mural.

Contradiction: Although a top strength identified was the character of people and close caring relationships, current difficulties in connecting with each other came up. Resident O stated that people have forgotten the sense of community that they used to have, and resident N observed that people in the neighborhood "stay in silos" within their ethnic or racial groups, residents keep to themselves when they see others doing "illegal activities, you don't tell on me, I won't tell on you", and lifelong resident O stated that people "have forgotten how to build community" with each

other. Yet, people have not given up, and several talked about the importance of connecting with people. Resident Q stated she does "pop ups" to go around to different people and speak with them, to listen. She observed it takes time to build trust with young people, and they are so used to people making promises, then not following through. Resident Q stated that she believes that programs such as the former summer sports program at California State University Sacramento (CSUS) led by CSUS volunteer students, helped youth from all over the city get to know each other, and she believes such connections lessen the likelihood that youth will fight with each other violently.

Place-based strengths

Seven interviewees commented that they appreciate the beauty and diversity of architecture: resident N, resident E, business owner M, former resident P, and its housing (interviewee I, former resident P, residents U). The location and convenience of the neighborhood was another: it is located close to many other parts of the city (former resident P), and people can bicycle or walk to work downtown (business owner L, residents U). Interviewee I and residents U stated that they felt the diversity of housing types helps to prevent the neighborhood from being gentrified as easily as some other neighborhoods with uniform housing stock. Trees were praised by residents F, interviewee I, and resident N.

Another seeming contradiction is the problem of illegal dumping of garbage, versus the admiration of the built environment in the neighborhood mentioned earlier - that the architecture is pleasing to look at in buildings and homes.

5.4 From surviving to thriving

This emerged as the strongest theme and indicates that people care very much about the future of this neighborhood. Such deep caring seems to contradict one of the aspects of the dominant narrative, that Oak Park's residents do not care about their neighborhood: maintaining its

physical infrastructure and raising their children to be functioning members of society who are active citizens with good education and professional careers. Long-time resident J stated that people need to be able to envision how to get "from where they are, to where they want to be". Resident N stated that when people are asked what they want, they provide "poor people answers" such as affordable housing. Instead, he stated that people must be able to develop themselves economically so that they can earn higher incomes, which leads to more people being able to afford to purchase homes. He stated that people need to be able to see themselves "as part of the fabric of the community" (Resident N). This shift is echoed by business owner and resident D, resident J, and former resident P.

Another part of making such a shift according to resident E, is the need for strategies that "give power to the neighborhood". He stated that there needs to be an entity such as a community development corporation led by residents, that directs investments. Similarly, interviewee I suggested "strategies that empower" but did not specify as resident F did. Recent resident B stated that he would like to see Oak Park Neighborhood Association "to be holder of the vision, rather than hey this is coming up, all of that is protecting, fighting fires, it's not here's our vision, we don't hear that perspective or necessarily been invited into that conversation, taking the charge vs waiting for something to come up, instead of defending firefighting, we don't know why, [the proposed expansion of the mental health facility is bad], why don't we want double the beds [at the mental health facility], if we had a partnership we could develop a relationship [with the mental health facility]"

5.5 Using counter stories for advocacy

As Ganz (2011) stated earlier, stories are the means by which leaders can move community members to take action (p. 280). In creating change, there are three kinds of stories that we can tell. Stories begin with ourselves: what moves us to act, what is important to us? The next level of

storytelling is collective: what principles or values does the community have, that we wish to act upon? And the third is "Stories of Now" - what are the issues motivating us to act? (p. 274).

In this section, I will use the concept described earlier by Powell (2012) of "opportunity structures" that help communities to thrive, and to maintain good outcomes: housing, well-resourced high quality schools and a labor market that supports residents in having careers that they can sustain (p. 19). Interviewees identified opportunity structures that they believe are essential to helping Oak Park shift from surviving to thriving.

Advocacy 1: Housing

Approximately seven Interviewees stated that access to affordable housing is their top issue, whether they identified it as a priority, a hope or a need. This story of need supports what powell (2012) stated earlier: housing is the opportunity structure that allows community members access to all the other opportunity structures necessary for communities to thrive (p. 19). Resident B observed there are many vacant properties, and suggested that we work with the city of Sacramento to reclaim vacant lots, and build 3-D printed homes, which cost much less to construct than homes that are built through other more traditional methods. Others echoed this need for housing (resident E, business owner D, resident G, business owner L, former resident P). This was expressed as a wish to maintain the diversity of the neighborhood, and help everyone to remain who wishes to (resident couple F), others stated they wish residents who feel threatened, get help to remain, and not be displaced by gentrification (resident K, resident M, resident N, former resident P). Resident N stated that he wishes to see a focus on home ownership.

On a deeper level, resident N stated that he feels shifting to home ownership is a matter of people "becoming a part of the fabric of the neighborhood", part of what he described as from "the basics" to "thriving" - that many feel, "I'll just live here as long as I can afford it, but when I can't, I'll

move". If residents can shift towards home ownership, this might contribute towards the generational transfer of wealth that resident N mentioned when I spoke with him recently (personal communication, 01/25/2020). Although this is a story of the need for housing, this theme connects with the appreciation expressed by interviewees for the diversity of people, the many racial and ethnic cultural groups, and people from many social roles. In addition, as people of Oak Park share these stories to advocate for the importance of more housing that helps all to remain, they demonstrate their values and create public narratives that could help people see the importance to the community.

Advocacy 2: Institutions and programs

Another aspect that interviewees stated they believe would help the neighborhood to thrive are assets in the form of institutions and programs. Community member A stated that she feels the neighborhood needs a library and grocery store, because "these places bring people together". This supports what powell (2012) stated earlier - that opportunity structures in neighborhoods include grocery stories that offer healthy affordable foods, and libraries (p. 19). She also stated that the neighborhood needs more free/low cost programming that more middle class neighborhoods tend to have, such as swimming and programs for seniors.

Resident Q made similar comments: swimming lessons, activities for elders, and year round activities, not just summer programs. As resident Q described earlier, she participated in a program that brought youth together from across the city, via volunteers at CSUS. She stated that buses would pick up youth, they would go to the Sac State campus, and play sports together. She said that when people get to know each other, they are less likely to fight with each other. Resident Q also stated that she saw "programs that worked", were taken away from the neighborhood, but does not know why the programs were abolished. She mentioned many possible programs that she wants residents to have , from cooking, to ceramics, metals, drama, music, because "all these things gave

them options". These stories can be used to advocate for the redevelopment of organizations and programs that help to improve community well-being and develop their capacity. These organizations and programs can help support other opportunity structures such as quality affordable housing, well-resourced schools and a strong employment market.

A third, resident N, described efforts that he does periodically with young Black men. He brings young men together at Fruitridge Collaborative Center for a day, takes them to the urban farm across the street, "they get their hands in the dirt, feed chickens", come back to the collaborative and play basketball together, then he takes them to visit Black barbers, talk with men who are successful, Black people running businesses who are thriving, he teaches them some skills for self-defense, "not so that they can beat people up" but take care of themselves, he and his group took the young men to visit a Black owned restaurant in Natomas, "this is real, they are VIP, gives them a glimpse into things they may not know, so that they can see and believe [that they can be successful, and that people who look like them are successful] (follow up conversation, resident N, 01/25/20).

Advocacy 3: Job development, Jobs and Business development

This was another priority mentioned by interviewees, and supports the description by Powell (2012) of an important opportunity structure, a labor market that connects residents to meaningful opportunities for employment (p. 19). In addition, interviewees identified the need for what Emery and Flora (2006) describe as human capital - that people develop their capacities (p. 21).

What are the individual values that people spoke of that drive them to identify this as another priority? Residents Q, E, H, B and former resident P all discussed the value of capacity building: the need for development of local youth and adults' skills to access jobs and careers that

are meaningful, and for those who wish to, to start their own businesses. Resident E stated that he wishes to see job development that "teaches youth to be inventors and creators", rather than only teaching them to install solar panels, training that teaches youth "from start to finish". Resident B has started a nonprofit to teach youth skills such as coding, that they can apply to solving local problems. He observed that there is no local labor force in the neighborhood, and wants residents to "benefit from Aggie Square". Aggie Square is a mixed use housing and retail development project being planned by UC Davis, to be placed in the vicinity of the UC Davis Sacramento campus.

Former resident P emphasized that she wants local residents who have ideas for businesses, to be able to obtain the funding that they need to develop their own businesses. She stated that local business owners know the neighborhood and care about it, so they would be more likely to hire local residents who need work, compared to businesses owned by outsiders. Former resident P stated that she wishes to see large employers like the UC Davis Medical Center, employ more local residents. High lighting organizations like the nonprofit created by resident B to do capacity building with local youth, is important. As local residents receive training this will help them to harness their creativity and resilience. The more that the human capital, the skills and knowledge of people to do more, and to hold higher roles that involve more responsibilities and agency is developed, the more residents and businesses will form a strong and stable core. These activities can be described by Emery and Flora (2006) as part of developing the human capital of residents: people can create and increase their competencies, and in turn, bring in additional knowledge and resources from elsewhere (p. 21).

By connecting the needs for housing with job and business development, the more that residents' advocacy can make a comprehensive case that meeting people's needs will help them to thrive. Resident E, resident B and former resident P's stories point to the needs for education,

training and business development that needs to occur before the labor market can effectively connect residents to job and business opportunities.

5.6 Obstacles to thriving

There were other stories that emerged from interviews that point to barriers that people identified regarding the neighborhood shifting from just "surviving" to truly "thriving".

Inequitable access and distribution of resources between North and South Oak Park

One story of injustice that came up was the inequitable access and distribution of resources between North and South Oak Park residents. Business owner and resident D stated that she saw disparities in terms of the voices and visibility of long-time residents and newcomers. Longtime residents are less visible, while newer residents seem to have "powerful voices". Resident K stated that long-time residents in South Oak Park feel left out of resource distribution, compared to the North area, and feels it is important to bridge those differences. Resident K did not describe what resources people in south Oak Park feel their area is not receiving.

Long-time resident J commented that there needs to be unity and more understanding between residents in North and South Oak Park. She commented that "those with more, learn to give, and those without, learn to accept [sharing of resources]. These disparities reflect differences between long-time residents who tend to have less resources and are Black, and newer residents who tend to be White, with more resources. Yet, recent resident couple F commented that they feel that they are gentrifiers. They are a Black couple who relocated to Sacramento with their children a few years ago.These conflicts between long time Black residents in South Oak Park, and newer White residents in North Oak Park, seem to reflect clashes in cultural capital as described by Emery and Flora (2006): people's epistemologies of the world around them, and "what voices are heard and listened to (p. 21).

Former residents are homeless

Another story of an obstacle for the neighborhood in moving from "survival" to "thriving" is the dilemma of how many people are homeless. Two interviewees, community member A and resident R, expressed concerns. Community member A stated that a group of people tried to help the encampment of homeless people on Stockton Boulevard by getting neighborhood associations not to call the police so readily, obtained a trash dumpster for residents of the encampment, and tried to get students at the UC Davis Medical Center to help. She stated that she warned, if we "break them up they will disperse everywhere, and many who were there used to live in the neighborhood". Resident R told a similar story of a neighbor who used to house several people who had been sleeping in their cars. She stated after he passed away, she wonders what happened to them.

This is not only a problem in the Oak Park neighborhood or Sacramento, it is a huge dilemma in California state. Resident N (personal communication, 01/25/20) stated that 40% of people who are homeless are Black, and this issue does not matter much to society. It begins with the deep sense of disempowerment that he spoke of - that to be Black is to know that the system is not under their control, yet Black families are expected to "still function normally" despite deep traumas. This deep sense of disempowerment and inferiority supports what Glover (2003) stated about dominant cultural narratives: people come to "internalize and believe" such stories about themselves and their neighborhoods.

Illegal dumping of garbage

A further issue emerged from interviews: the physical and psychological impacts of seeing a lot of illegal dumping of garbage. Opinions are somewhat divided. Some feel there needs to be education of community members about differing pick up schedules between the city and county, and residents can call 311 to report illegal dumping. White resident couple U stated that they felt the physical condition reflects a low self-image, lack of pride in the appearance of the neighborhood, and that residents in wealthier neighborhoods do not accept such actions. They stated that if Oak Park residents would "stand up" against illegal dumping, this could lessen. In contrast, resident couple F, a Black couple, stated that they felt the illegal dumping of garbage reflects "underlying inequities in access to economic opportunities", and stated that there is "intentional poverty".

5.7 Neighborhood Associations and how people obtain their information about the neighborhood

Most interviewees expressed positive opinions of the two neighborhood associations - Oak Park Neighborhood Association (OPNA) and South Oak Park Community Association (SOPCA). A few have only attended OPNA meetings, and a few have only attended SOPCA meetings. Some interviewees have not attended either, but are aware of these two, and other neighborhood associations nearby. Those who value neighborhood associations stated that many people are not aware of them, and that these associations need to do "door knocking" to connect with more people, and to mobilize them to become active. A key challenge noted is that it is difficult to engage people between events. Another is that these associations are all volunteer. Resident E stated that he believes the neighborhood needs a community development corporation - one in which staff leads reinvestment in the neighborhood, and is directed by residents. Longtime resident K commented that many longtime residents feel uncomfortable at neighborhood associations because people who attend the meetings tend to have more education, and she referred to herself and others with the

term “hood rats”, saying that she does not want to “be the only hood rat in the room [at a neighborhood association meeting]. This perceived difference between long-time residents and people who tend to attend neighborhood association meetings, connects back to one of the earlier stories of injustice - that there is a perception that long time residents’ voices are not being heard, compared to those of newer residents.

Aspirational wishes expressed included a wish that neighborhood associations hold “difficult” conversations, instead of just passing information along. In addition, people stated that neighborhood associations “be the voice of the neighborhood” and “front line” where residents can share concerns and receive help in addressing those concerns (residents F). Resident B stated that he would like to see OPNA “hold the vision” for the neighborhood, and this connects to earlier comments about shifting from survival mode to thriving. Part of this wish is that if the neighborhood has a vision of what it desires, it will act less in the mode of “putting out fires”.

Interviewees gave a range of responses to how they obtain information about the neighborhood, with “word of mouth” being cited by nine people, followed by use of the internet by seven people, neighborhood associations by two people, meetings by three people, and newspapers by three people. While there may not seem to be a huge difference in the numbers of people who obtained their information about Oak Park from others whom they know versus the internet, people still rely a lot on relationships. Resident A commented that it is sometimes difficult for her to go to the grocery store without someone whom she knows, “complaining” about something that they wish to see improved. A couple of people mentioned specific people whom they trust, who are actively involved with the neighborhood associations. Yet resident J stated that she does not use the internet, so she tends to look out for fliers posted in her area.

Based on results from interviews about the dilemma of how Oak Park can move “from survival to thriving”, I believe that while it is crucial, it is not sufficient for marginalized

communities to develop “opportunity structures” - housing, meaningful jobs and careers, excellent well resourced schools. Along with development and maintenance of such “opportunity structures”, development of the seven capitals described earlier by Emery and Flora (2006) is essential. One in particular, cultural capital - whose voices are heard, and whose are not, is problematic. According to interview results, several people indicated that new residents’ voices are heard most, while those of South Oak Park longtime residents are not heard. Interviewees stated that decision making about the community must include everyone. Development of human capital, financial resources ie funding - all play essential roles in redeveloping communities that have been disinvested as Oak Park has been.

5.8 Focus group results

Feedback given by attendees at the first focus group seemed to mostly confirm findings from the interviews. However, a few additional needs were expressed: the coming upgrade in internet capacity to 5G, resources for families who have elder family members, and a neighborhood patrol of some kind.

At the second focus group, people mostly seemed to agree with results from the interviews, but a clarification emerged in response to my question about a difference in opinion between some who said that Oak Park has many organizations that provide programs and services, and those who felt these programs and services are not sufficient: there are resources in the neighborhood, provided by several organizations, but these resources are crisis oriented. As one participant observed, “After the crisis is over, then what?” Resources are needed which help people get to “thriving”, and these comments support one of the earlier advocacy counter stories about what programs and services Oak Park residents need to thrive.

Finally, I believe, given comments from a couple of interviewees - resident E and interviewee I about the need for "strategies that give power to the neighborhood" or "more opportunities for empowerment", is that these are necessary in addition to opportunity structures that Powell (2012) described earlier. Beyond a community development corporation, other strategies to give power can include effective regular engagement of people in the neighborhood, some visioning to develop neighborhood plans, and advocacy to bring about needed changes.

5.9 Discussion

Limitations of this study

Despite the rich racial and ethnic diversity of people in Oak Park, interviewees were mostly White and Black. Only one interviewee identifies as Japanese American, none as Latino or Latinx, and none as indigenous. Most interviewees identified as either residents or community members. Only three interviewees identified as business owners. Interviewees ranged in age from age thirty up to eighties. Although I did not ask people to state their age, I inadvertently interviewed two people who are in their eighties, in violation of IRB rules that state researchers should avoid conducting research with people who are very young or elderly.

What worked and what did not

In retrospect, I did not collect basic socio-economic status data from interviewees, including race/ethnicity, age, income and level of formal education. I refrained from doing so, because I wanted to prioritize connecting with interviewees, especially African American interviewees. From past experience in doing community work, researchers asking for socio-economic information such as level of formal education could possibly be off-putting, that researchers only value people with high levels of education.

Nor did I ask for their residence to verify the areas of Oak Park that they live in, work in, or operate businesses at. Nor did I have a clear idea of the contributing product to leave behind to benefit my sponsoring organization. Therefore, I failed to include in my application to the IRB, that I would request interviewees' permission to use excerpts of the audio recordings to SOPCA for their future use. Partway through my study I did contact people whom I had interviewed, to ask their permission, but very few gave permission. From past experience in conducting interviews, the best time to request anything of interviewees is when the interviewer is speaking with the interviewee.

I also did not obtain secondary data on the geographic boundaries of the Oak Park neighborhood, ie. identify census tracts and interviewees' addresses where they live, work and/or manage their businesses. This resulted in some questions from one of the participants in the second focus group as to how I defined the neighborhood. Nor did I obtain secondary data, the demographic data discussed in chapter 3.

Yet, if I had obtained some demographic data in the beginning, I could have possibly been looking for interviewees' stories to validate that data, and missed places in which their stories contradicted the data. Focus groups did not yield the amount of feedback that I had hoped for, partly because attendees were a mix of people who had not been interviewed, and some who had. My facilitation was insufficient to hold attendees' interest at the second meeting, and some participants connected more with a few others present, rather than the meeting itself.

Another aspect that did not work as I had hoped, was the omission of questions during interviews and focus groups, to ask participants how they felt these counter stories about Oak Park could be best used. As my advisor asked in comments on a draft of my thesis, would these counter stories be used to "get outsiders to hear the stories that insiders in this community have long known about? Is it to change the audience of these stories, or figure out how how to get them to change outsider narratives? Or is it to elevate the stories within communities themselves to amplify

their potential?" (personal communication, D. De la Pena, June 2019). The above questions are all very insightful, and the people whom I interviewed and met with in focus groups would likely have a range of opinions in response to these questions.

What did work well was the strong support of my project sponsor. He introduced me to members of SOPCA, and invited me to help with two efforts – a small subgrooup of SOPCA members who were helping to advocate against the mental health facility's proposed expansion, and to volunteer at an upcoming event, the 3 on 3 basketball tournament for youth that they held every spring prior to the rise of covid-19 this year. My volunteering at a few events supported or sponsored by SOPCA, while I awaited IRB approval, helped me to meet people and to build relationships with them. These volunteering efforts resulted in stronger connections during some interviews. Participating in meetings with the advocay subgroup of SOPCA members who were concerned about the proposed expansion of the mental health facility, helped me get to know a few members better, despite the subgroup ceasing to meet as the year went on. In addition, my project sponsor generously scheduled the first of my two focus groups during the regular meeting date and time that SOPCA holds its meetings, reserved the room at the Fruitridge Community Collaborative building for both focus groups, created the flier, ordered food for the evening meeting, and mobilized the small group of people who took the flier around to houses in the surrounding area.

My project sponsor's active engagement at every stage of my research: providing advice on possible places to do outreach, differences between finding White vs Black residents, an initial list of possible people to interview, more names, then support for holding focus groups, was crucial to my success. The support of a few other interviewees in providing introductions and other names of people to interview, helped me to expand my initial list of interviewees.

My volunteering at neighborhood events and regular attendance at SOPCA monthly meetings helped me to build social capital with people whom I met at events and meetings. As I

conducted interviews, this regular contact gave me a good foundation upon which to build. In addition, my periodic attendance at monthly OPNA meetings helped me to meet three people whom I interviewed.

Conclusion

Finally, I believe that the counter stories contained in interviews conducted with participants, do indicate that the dominant narrative about Oak Park is not accurate. While I could not establish a one to one countering of each aspect of the long standing dominant narrative as described earlier by resident N, interviewees' comments demonstrated a strong sense of caring about this community. This caring showed in their comments about the physical infrastructure dilemma of illegal dumping, plus social issues including the urgent need for more meaningful job development, strategies to help residents remain who wish to do so, and housing that suits a wide range of residents' needs. In addition, the identification of strengths in people and organizations provides a good counter to the dominant narrative that the neighborhood has negative characteristics.

Implications for further study

Given some of the seeming contradictions and differences of opinions, further research could offer opportunities to residents and other members of the community to conduct their own research using participatory methods such as Photo Voice, peer interviewing, and community mapping. Use of participatory methods by local residents would likely gather many more counter stories that are hidden, stories of resistance, and stories of transformation.

While every historically marginalized community is unique and has their own counter stories to tell as advocacy for collective changes, I believe that each community should gather its own counter stories. After communities do so, it is up to them to identify ways to share their

counter stories and to public decision-making processes that they wish to influence with their counter stories. In addition, communities should consider whether the level of low confidence held by its members about the strengths of their community, indicates that the first level of advocacy should begin within by lifting up counter stories to make them more visible to residents.

Some possible avenues for residents of Oak Park to share these counter stories with others in the neighborhood include the two neighborhood associations, the Oak Park Neighborhood Association and the South Oak Park Community Association. There are also other venues such as the art gallery that resident and business owner D intentionally makes available to groups to come together and collaborate. The Fruitridge Community Collaborative is another site, due to its multiple nonprofit organizations that serve the neighborhood and South Sacramento. Another is the Colonial Heights library on Stockton Boulevard. It would be great to see these stories shared by the people who were interviewed for this project, perhaps in story circles, podcasts on a local radio station, excerpts published in local news papers such as the SNL independent newspaper or the Observer.

Another recommendation is to consider use of community mapping as described by McKnight and Kretzmann (1990). McKnight and Kretzmann state that often, outsiders tend to map disenfranchised urban neighborhoods in terms of "problems, needs, deficiencies" (p. 15). They note that residents of such neighborhoods are taught to only view themselves in terms of these deficits and to be clients of outside agencies. However, communities need to know what their strengths are, and they do this by mapping "assets, capabilities and abilities" (p. 3). They advocate that "a map of neighborhood assets is necessary if local people are to find the way toward "empowerment and renewal" (p. 17). This mapping can help people shift from seeing themselves as passive clients, to knowing that they have the agency and ability to actively generate their own solutions for themselves and their community (p. 4). This supports the comments of interviewees like resident E,

that job training needs to develop local youth to create from start to finish, rather than at a point far down in a green job process such as installing solar panels. Also, capacity building should be resident driven as he mentioned.

Given what they say, I believe that such mapping must primarily be done by insiders. Key areas to map are primary assets. Primary assets include individual ones such as people's abilities and knowledge and local businesses. Oak Park residents' knowledge of the histories and interpersonal abilities such as the "ability to make do with very little", knowledge of the waves of disinvestment that resident E spoke of; local businesses often serve as community hubs, and business owner C, although an outsider, stated that he and his partner sought to create their coffee shop as a community space. I interviewed resident B at business owner C's coffee shop, then resident B introduced me to both business owner C and to a board member of the Oak Park Neighborhood Association. This board member of OPNA introduced me to the person she was meeting with. And the person she was meeting with about an idea to hold community dinners, later met with me as resident K to discuss my questions about Oak Park.

Business owner D provides space at her art gallery to many organizations to gather and have conversations. Here, the Organizational assets include citizens' associations, and the neighborhood associations are good examples. Other citizens' organizations that I did not interview include many who are tenants at the Fruitridge Community Collaborative: Building Healthy Communities, through the Sierra Foundation, or the Black Parallel School Board, the Yisrael Family Farm, Hmong Innnovating Politics and more.

In summary, although each community should seek out its own counter stories and decide how they wish to use them for future advocacy, I hope that the above comments help to indicate some general possibilities. I believe that community mapping can be a powerful support to counter stories. Counter stories can help to initially identify assets, both individual and organizational. As

McKnight and Kretzmann (1990) advocate, communities can use the stories to map its strengths, and based upon mapping results, to "begin to assemble its assets and capabilities into new combinations, new structures of opportunity, new sources of income and control, and new possibilities for production" (p. 3).

I end with a couple of caveats regarding community mapping. While I recommend it as a support to counter story telling, I do not know whether it is best for a community to gather counter stories first, then conduct asset mapping, or whether the mapping should be done prior to gathering of counter stories. Each community is unique, and its members will have a sense of what needs to come first, or whether they wish to use both strategies. The collective efforts of communities like Oak Park to deconstruct the negative dominant narratives about them, and to reconstruct narratives of strength, is the most important. Disseminating these counter stories widely, and doing asset mapping can help disenfranchised communities regain their sense of agency and empowerment. My wish is that marginalized communities like Oak Park realize the many strengths that they have, and draw upon them to advocate collectively to influence decision making.

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Appendix A: Description of Census tract areas in Oak Park

I reviewed data for the following five census tracts: two in north Oak Park, census tract 18, which includes the area east of Broadway Street; census tract 27, which includes the area west of Broadway Street; census tract 28, including areas along Martin Luther King Boulevard, north of twelfth Avenue, and in south Oak Park, census tract 37 (which includes the area close to the exits for CA highway 99, intersected by twelfth Avenue, bounded by Martin Luther King Boulevard on the eastern side of the tract; tract 44.02, between Martin Luther King Boulevard to 44th Street, the west side of 44th Street.

Appendix B: interview Questions

1. Please tell me about how you identify yourself with regards to Oak Park - as a resident, business owner, community leader, etc? (or any other role I have not mentioned)

2. How long have you had that role(s)?

3. How has Oak Park changed since you have been in that role?

4. What are your priorities for Oak Park?

5. What are some strengths of the neighborhood?

6. What is a hope that you have for the neighborhood?

7. What do you think the neighborhood needs, and how would you like to see that happen?*

8. What is your impression of neighborhood associations, and what can they do to better serve the neighborhood?*

9. How do you get your information about the neighborhood?*

*: Questions added by project sponsor resident N

Appendix C: List of Figures and Tables