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The Geography of Community: Understanding the Role of a Regional Comprehensive University as an Anchor Institution in Los Angeles

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The Geography of Community: Understanding the Role of a Regional Comprehensive University as an Anchor Institution in Los Angeles

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by

Zuhey Espinoza

2020

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Geography of Community: An Organizational Place-Building Theory Approach to Understanding the Role of a Regional Comprehensive University as an Anchor Institution in Los Angeles

by

Zuhey Espinoza

Doctor of Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2020

Professor Kimberley Gomez, Chair

This qualitative study explored one Los Angeles regional comprehensive university's role as an anchor institution in its physical context. Departing from the well-researched perspective of universities and their administrators, it investigated the perspective of community members with an Organizational Place-Building Theory lens. The research sought to find how the university serves as an anchor institution in the personal lives and neighborhoods of the participants given the specific social and economic conditions of Los Angeles. Ten alumni from the university who continue to reside in the surrounding neighborhoods shared their relationship to the university as a space participated in an artifact-based mapping interview and education journey mapping. This

data was supplemented by document analysis, and analyzed to identify areas in which the university's plans in the community were or were not perceived by participants. Participants indicated the ways in which lived experiences drove their decisions to attend a nearby regional comprehensive university, and how the place shapes their interactions with the world. Interviews also included reflection on the school's relationship to the Latinx student body, neighborhood poverty, and neighborhood physicality, ultimately indicating that they perceive the university's efforts to be contributive, yet identified areas for improvement. Implications and recommendations based on findings share directions for future research and university-community partnership.

This dissertation of Zuhey Espinoza is approved.

Diane Durkin

Daniel G. Solórzano

Robert Cooper

Kimberley Gomez, Committee Chair

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2020

DEDICATION

To my nieces and nephews (Adrian, Andy, Isa, Benji, Emilio, Eddie, and Zoe), Grandma came to this country as an undocumented immigrant with nothing more than an elementary education. Here I am, one generation later completing a terminal degree. I sought to obtain my doctorate in Educational Leadership because I truly believe that education is and continues to be the greatest equalizer in our society. I hope that you do much good in this world. Along the way, demonstrate rigorous honesty, avail yourself to the things that you don't know, practice random acts of kindness, and fall madly in love. The sky is the limit for you. Dream big, be bold, and always remember your past so that you can unapologetically embrace your future. Love, Tia Chiquis.

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The great social problems of our time, including poverty, poor schooling, racism, and community deterioration will likely not be solved without the active, democratic, collaborative participation of anchor institutions.

—Maurrasse and Harkavy, 2015

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Problem Overview

Los Angeles is considered a global powerhouse and holds many distinctions as the entertainment capital of the world and a center for innovations in fields like food and medicine. For all the positive perceptions of Los Angeles, the story of its diverse population includes a negative side to such social and economic growth for some.

The city is a sprawling metropolitan region where inequities in income, wealth, health, and opportunity have reached historic levels, threatening the region's long-term economic prosperity (Bobo et al., 2000; Florida, 2018; PolicyLink, 2017). Los Angeles faces various challenges, including stagnant wages, a high cost of living, residential sorting and segregation, and the largest homeless population in the nation of any major metropolitan area (Bobo et al., 2000; PolicyLink, 2017). In a study by the Policy Link National Research Institute (2017), Los Angeles loses $379 billion per year in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) due to socio-economic, and racial inequities. This loss in revenue points to racialized structures: since 1980 Los Angeles has become a minority-majority region, with Latinx comprising the city's largest ethnic group (Policy Link, 2017; U.S. Census Quick Facts, n.d.). These disparities ultimately hinder the outcomes of historically marginalized groups such as Latinx, Blacks, and other immigrant groups, thus perpetuating systems of privilege and oppression (Hiraldo, 2010).

Maurrasse and Harkavy (2015) contend that the great social problems of our time, including poverty, poor schooling, racism, and community deterioration will likely not be solved

without the active, democratic, collaborative participation of anchor institutions. While there are state and local policy initiatives as well as nonprofit efforts to address various types of socio-economic, and racial inequalities (Cummings, 2018; Olinsky, 2014; PolicyLink, 2017), in this dissertation, I focused the inquiry on whether and how an organization such as a regional comprehensive university acts as an anchor institution to tackles these disparities in Los Angeles.

The concept of the anchor institution emerged during the late 1990s and early 2000s as a novel way to think about the role of place-based institutions like universities and hospitals in the development of communities, cities, and towns; often colloquially referred to as "Eds & Meds" (Harriel, 2015; Harkavy & Zuckerman, 1999). An anchor institution is commonly defined as a large place-based institution that is deeply rooted in its local geography and leverages its institutional resources to support critical community and economic development in under-resourced neighborhoods by creating access to various opportunities for these communities (CEO for Cities 2010; Ehlenz, 2017; Hodges & Dubb, 2012; Maurrasse, 2013; Porter, 2002, 2010; Taylor & Luter, 2013). Place-based institutions are geographically tied locations that hold significant real estate and number of employees such as universities and academic medical centers (ICIC & CEO for Cities, 2002; Maurrasse, 2013; Porter, 2002). The following four key elements are essential to the definition of anchor institutions in particular: spatial immobility, corporate status, size, and anchor mission such as social purpose, democratic ideals, and movement toward justice (Coalition of Urban Serving Universities, 2010; Harkavy & Zuckerman, 1999; Hodges & Dubb, 2012; ICIC & CEOs for Cities, 2002; Maurrasse, 2005, 2007; Perry et al., 2009; Taylor & Luter, 2013). They play a vital role in addressing societal problems and in building a more democratic, just, and equitable society (Taylor & Luter, 2013).

Today, anchor institutions are acknowledged for their multi-pronged approach to building successful communities and local economies. Anchor institutions help solve some of the most pressing issues in their respective communities such as racial stratification, job displacement, violence, and socio-economic disparities, while also remaining relevant and competitive in a constantly changing knowledge economy (Hodge & Dubb, 2012; Maurrase, 2001; Taylor & Luter, 2013). A prime example is the University of Pennsylvania (UPenn). It is known as the golden standard of anchor institutions because it effectively helped to reduce the crime of its surrounding communities by developing meaningful relationships with elected officials and community leaders; improved public schools in West Philadelphia; and established the foundation for promoting local purchasing (Hodges & Dubb, 2012; McBeth, 2018; Sorrell, 2015).

Currently**,** there is an expansive body of research that examines the impact of anchor institutions at top-tier research universities, private institutions with large endowments, and urban serving institutions (Hahn et al., 2013; Hodges & Dubb, 2012; ICIC & CEO for Cities, 2002; Maurrasse, 2002; Steinacker, 2005; Taylor & Luter, 2013). However, there is limited research on regional comprehensive universities in Los Angeles. For instance, the Institute of Advanced Studies in Culture at the University of Virginia conducted a 2019 survey scan of 100 universities, providing a comprehensive overview of various anchor institutions in the U.S. This survey scan aimed to provide a comprehensive picture of the anchor institution field today, and where it is trending in the near future. However, this national survey did not sample the largest regional comprehensive system in the nation: the California State University System (CSU) and its 23 campuses.

Given the increasing disparities in Los Angeles, this study sought to add to the literature by focusing on a neglected area of inquiry—the potential role of anchor institutions to address inequity in their immediate surrounding neighborhoods from the lens of community stakeholders. I specifically focused on one CSU within the greater metropolitan region of Los Angeles, Golden State University[1] (GSU). Centering on one CSU in Los Angeles allowed for a deeper look at how one broad access institution in the seventh most inequitable city in the nation is integrating its anchor mission in the communities it serves. In addition, it provided a better understanding of some of the strengths and challenges, through the eyes of community stakeholders. The findings contribute to the limited body of research on CSU anchor institutions in Los Angeles. Ultimately, by exploring the degree to which an organization values and invests in its geographical and social location can serve to inform practice about hyperlocal inequity in nearby communities and beyond.

Statement of the Problem

The extant literature on anchor institutions largely focuses on the best practices of institutional leadership in addressing neighborhood disparities at top-tier research universities (R1's), private institutions with large endowments, and urban-serving universities (ICIC & CEO for Cities, 2002; Hahn, et al., 2013; Maurrasse, 2002; Steinacker, 2005, Taylor & Luter, 2013). There is limited scholarly research that focuses on the California State University system (CSUs), unique in its size and placement. Moreover, very little research exists on comprehensive anchor institutions in Los Angeles. Even less is known about the opinions of community stakeholders such as local alumni residents discussing the role of these anchor institutions in their own neighborhoods. The lack of critical research that specifically focuses on Los Angeles-

[1] Golden State University (GSU) is a pseudonym for this study

based CSUs from the perspective of local community stakeholders presented a unique opportunity for further exploration.

Purpose of the Study

This study attempted to fill a critical research gap focused on regional comprehensive anchor institutions in Los Angeles. To target the problem, I interviewed 10 participants, all local community alumni, to understand how they describe the role, if any, of their nearby anchor institution in their personal lives and surrounding communities of Los Angeles. I also engaged in document analysis to understand how this regional comprehensive university has communicated its role as an anchor institution to the larger community, and if this messaging is consistent with the community's perceptions.

Conceptual Framework

This study was situated in the framework of Organizational Place-Building Theory (OPBT). OPBT was originally developed to assess corporate social responsibility in the realm of business. However, in 2007 it was introduced to institutions of higher educations (IHEs) to help explain to what degree or level an organization values and invests in its geographical and social location (Kimball & Thomas, 2012). By focusing on place with an investment in building beyond an institution's physical boundaries, OPBT offers an objective framework that can assess the level of a university's responsibility, intentions, and, most importantly, its contributions to the places within which they interact (Thomas & Cross, 2007). As the movement and literature of anchor institutions continues to expand and gain momentum, OPBT serves as my guiding theory to critically examine the categorization of place, community, and power within the context of institutions of higher education.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided my study:

1. From the perspective of local community alumni, how does a regional comprehensive university serve (if at all) as an anchor institution in their personal lives?
2. From the perspective of local community alumni, how does a regional comprehensive university serve (if at all) as an anchor institution in the local neighborhoods of Los Angeles?
3. What are the differences and similarities (if any) between what the university thinks it is doing (or should be doing) and what the local community alumni think the university is doing (or should be doing) as an anchor institution?

Gap in Research

This study sought to fill a distinct gap by specifically focusing on one regional comprehensive university in a city where inequity continues to widen and persist—Los Angeles. In doing so, I was able to contribute to the limited scholarship on CSU's by providing a deeper look at how a broad access university in one of the most inequitable cities in the nation is integrating its anchor mission in the communities. In addition, it yielded insight into some of the strengths and challenges from the lens of the community members who are also alumni of the university. The findings contributed to the limited body of research that focuses on the voices of community stakeholders from regional comprehensive universities and served to inform practice on university-based community engagement.

Research Design

The primary objective of this study was to comprehend and analyze the participants' experiences and viewpoints in order to better understand the role and function of a regional

anchor institution in Los Angeles. Therefore, a qualitative method of study was utilized to help comprehend the perceptions of local alumni residents. Utilizing snowball sampling, I identified 10 local alumni residents within a 10-mile radius of the university. I interviewed each participant individually for 90 minutes about their perceptions of the role of the university as an anchor institution. My data collection consisted of three phases, including two parts of a 90-minute interview for each participant and a document analysis. The first phase included an individual artifact-based interview with each of the 10 participants and lasted 60 minutes. The second phase consisted of 30-minute education journey mapping with those same participants. Then, in the third phase of data collection, I performed an analysis of relevant documents. Through the primary guiding lens of Organizational Place-Building Theory, I analyzed the socio-spatial narratives of local alumni residents through their lived experiences, and how their understandings relate to place.

Significance of Study

This study's novel findings contributes to three areas of research that currently lack focus. First, it adds to the limited scholarship related to CSU anchor institutions, which serves the most ethnically, economically, and academically diverse student body in the nation (Crawford, 2017). Secondly, this study gives GSU a new frame of reference through which it can better understand the strengths and weaknesses of its impact on local communities. Lastly, it provides rich narratives about how community and alumni stakeholders describe the role of a Los Angeles-based anchor institution in addressing personal and neighborhood disparities. This research can serve to inform university-community engagement practices at other regional comprehensive universities in the greater metropolitan Los Angeles area that are interested in becoming anchor institutions.

Summary

Inequity continues to prevail in Los Angeles, ranging from racial and economic to geographic and spatial. Such disparities continue to hinder outcomes for historically marginalized communities of color in particular, often exacerbating education and work opportunities. University anchor institutions like the CSU studied have taken increasingly proactive approaches in the past decades to address some of the region's most pressing issues such as neighborhood deterioration, racism, unemployment, poverty, and under-resourced K-12 schools in the region. However, there is limited research in three areas: the largest regional comprehensive university system in the nation- the California State University (CSU); CSUs in Los Angeles that serve a large and diverse constituency; and input from those who are said to be the beneficiaries of the university's actions, community and alumni stakeholders. This chapter explains the background of this study's topic and overviews the need and rationale for this study.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

In regions such as Los Angles, inequity[2] of many kinds continues to persist and, in many cases, even widen (Bobo et al., 2000; PolicyLink, 2017). The PolicyLink National Research Institute (2017) declares that the disparities faced by the people of Los Angeles are holding the region back as a whole. Currently, the levels of inequity in Los Angeles are higher than other parts of California, including the Bay Area, San Diego, and San Jose (PolicyLink, 2017). In 1979, Los Angeles ranked 19th in income inequality out of the largest 150 regions, however, today it ranks seventh in income inequality resting between New Orleans, Louisiana and McAllen, Texas. Moreover, since 1979, the highest paid workers have seen their wages increase by 13%, while wages for the lowest paid workers has declined by 25% (Florida, 2014; PolicyLink, 2017). In addition, Los Angeles loses a potential $379 billion per year in GDP because of racial inequities (PolicyLink, 2017). This loss in revenue is racially stratifying because, since the 1980s, Los Angeles has become a minority-majority region, with Latinx comprising the largest ethnic group; it is also projected that by 2045 the nation will also become minority-majority (Frey, 2018; Policy Link, 2017; U.S. Census Quick Facts, n.d.). Further, the high cost of living and stagnant wages continue to racially stratify communities in Los Angeles (Bobo et al., 2000; Cummings, 2018; Florida, 2018; PolicyLink, 2017). Los Angeles communities are often spatially bifurcated by race and income. For example, East Los Angeles is 96.7% Latinx and the median household income is $38,621, whereas Sierra Madre is nearly 80% white and the median household income is more than double than that of East LA at $88,008

[2] Inequity is the absence of full inclusion of residents in the economic, social, and political life of a region due to race, ethnicity, age, gender, neighborhood of residence, or other characteristics (PolicyLink, 2017; Putnam-Walkerly & Russell, 2016).

(Mapping LA, n.d.). The stark contrast between race and household income highlights a grim reality for Los Angeles residents. Nearly one in five of Los Angeles residents live below the poverty line, in which a majority are Latinx, Black native born and Native American (PolicyLink, 2017). These disparities impact students of color in long-term ways, both socially and economically (Hiraldo, 2010).

Over the last 30 years, the American economy has transitioned from manufacturing to a knowledge economy (Cummings, 2018; Florida, 2018). Colleges and universities have been in a unique position to assume the role of engines of social and economic growth in their communities. (ICIC and CEO for Cities, 2011; Harris & Holley, 2016; Taylor & Luter, 2013). For this reason, colleges and universities are uniquely situated to invest in the places that surround them to help create a multiplier effect in the lives of their students and surrounding communities, especially marginalized and communities of color. A growing number of universities have taken a different approach with respect to their tripartite mission of teaching, research and service (Maurrasse & Harkavy, 2015; Oxendine, 2017; Yates & Accardi, 2019). Many colleges and universities now actively partake in external-facing community engagement and identify as anchor institutions. Although there are multiple definitions for an anchor institution, Yates and Accardi (2019) succinctly define an anchor institution as "a place-based enterprise such as a university, hospital, cultural institution, foundation, faith-based organization that are rooted in their local communities by mission, invested capital, or relationships. [These enterprises] control vast economic, human, intellectual, and institutional resources, and have the potential to bring vital and measurable benefits to local communities and their residents over multiple generations" (p. 16). Today, there is an increasing number of universities and colleges across the U.S. that are now placing a strong emphasis on becoming an anchor institution to

address some of the most pressing issues within their surrounding localities and region (CEO for Cities, 2010; Ehlenz, 2018; Hodges & Dubb, 2012; Taylor & Luter, 2013).

In this chapter, I discuss the role that anchor institutions have in their surrounding communities by reviewing relevant literature in the field. I first begin with my conceptual framework of Organizational Place-Building Theory (OPBT) to situate how universities value and invest in their social and geographical locations, and how they can actively create place from space. I then provide historical context about anchor institutions and discuss eras and various typologies. Finally, I provide evidence that both supports and critiques the role of anchor institutions have on place, and illustrate opportunities for further exploration in the literature as it relates to regional comprehensive universities in Los Angeles.

Conceptual Framework

Organizational Place-Building Theory

The conceptual framework supporting this study is Organizational Place-Building Theory (OPBT). OPBT stems from Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) scholarship, which examines the expanding social roles that organizations are expected to play throughout the industrialized world (Thomas et al., 2016). OPBT explains to what degree an organization values and invests in its social and geographical locations, and how it actively creates place from space (Kimball & Thomas, 2012; Thomas & Cross, 2007; Tuan, 2001). Tuan (2001) first described place as a location created by human experiences and meaning. Thomas and Cross (2007) further expanded on Tuan's definition and defined place as both geographic and social, organized around the meaning individuals and groups give to place in its setting. Place can thus be a city, neighborhood, a region, or a physical entity such as a university or classroom. Places take on meaning through the events that occur within it that construct, and its description is fused with

human goals, values, and intention (Kimball & Thomas, 2012; Raykes, 2017; Tomas & Cross, 2007).

Organizational Place-Building Theory (OPBT) has three key elements. First, ***place-building***, which is the process by which all human beings transform the places in which they find themselves into the places in which they live (Kimball & Thomas, 2012; Raykes, 2017). In this way, place-building is essentially a social endeavor, built around the mobilization of people, organizations, and institutions to address issues of community well-being (Kimball & Thomas, 2012; Raykes, 2017). Place-building has five dimensions: *nature, social relationships, material environment, ethics, and economic relationships. Nature* includes the natural as opposed to human-made elements and spaces, such as landscape, earth, geography and natural resources. OPBT asks how an organization relates and contributes to the natural aspects of the environment (Kimball & Thomas, 2012). *Social relationships* include the full spectrum of interactions between an organization's stakeholders. OPBT asks how an organization encourages the development of social capital, and how certain space is treated to reflect its culture and values (Kimball & Thomas, 2012). *Material environment* includes human-made buildings, roads, and buildings an organization occupies and how that space is treated. OPBT identifies the value placed on the physical environment, including the buildings and surrounding landscaping. *Ethics* includes the organization's practices and its implicit and explicit contact with the community. OPBT discusses how organizational practices modeled are within its general field, its culture, and with all its place-keepers. Lastly, the *Economic relationships* dimension includes the organization's level of investment in the fiscal well-being of the community. The OPBT dimension looks at whether the organization seeks to improve the economic viability of the community.

In addition, organizations also have ***agent perspectives*** that focus on place. Agent perspectives are how an organization views place, the meaning it is given, and how this influences their goals and contributions to place. Organizations with an *interdependent* perspective view themselves as a members of a community and recognize that organizations and places are mutually dependent on each other, whereas ones with an *independent* perspective view themselves as occupants of place rather than an integral member of place (Kimball & Thomas, 2012).

Lastly, OPBT has organizational ***place-builders***, determining how the organization conceptualizes itself as a "social actor" in relation to place using a continuum of organizational place-building types. There are four types of place-builders: transformational, contributive, contingent, and exploitive (Kimball & Thomas, 2012). *Transformational* organizations view themselves as change agents acting to improve the lives of individuals and groups in places. *Contributive* organizations conceptualize themselves as investors and contributors to the well-being of places in which they operate. *Contingent* organizations view themselves simply as participants in places. *Exploitive* organizations view themselves as independent agents with little to no obligation to the places in which they are located (Kimball & Thomas, 2012).

OPBT was chosen as the conceptual framework for this study for three reasons. First, OPBT aligns well with the key tenants of anchor institutions which focus on the impact of place-based entities in their respective localities. The framework guides organizations to reevaluating the level or extent of its social responsibility, intentions, and contributions to its space (Kimball & Thomas, 2012; Thomas & Cross, 2007). Second, OPBT is increasingly relevant in a time where institutions of higher education are required to adopt alternative models in order to remain relevant and competitive due to neoliberal policies, continual higher education disinvestment,

and budgetary cuts (Harriel, 2015; Harkavy & Hartley, 2012). Lastly, universities have had a heightened sense of urgency in addressing their surrounding communities' issues as it directly impacts their bottom-line; OBPT serves in the universities' best interests as well as the communities.

Thus, OPBT provides institutions of higher education an opportunity to examine the organizations levels of community engagement, and to take critical stock of their investments. This point is argued by the theory's authors who, in their future research section, state that "participating in place-building research offers the potential for any place-keeper to gain insight into their role in institutional, organizational, and individual place-building, which reflects on the institution's perceived level of community engagement" (Thomas & Kimball, 2012, p. 25). The research application of OPBT in my study can expand and inform the growing discussion among scholars and practitioners on the role of higher education anchor institutions in local communities.

Anchor Institutions

What are Anchor Institutions?

Anchor institutions emerged as a new concept for understanding the role of universities, hospitals, and other place-based institutions in community development (CEO for Cities, 2010; Ehlenz, 2017; Hodges & Dubb, 2012; Maurrasse, 2001; Porter, 2002, 2010; Taylor & Luter, 2013). There is not one mutually agreed upon definition of an anchor institution; however, literature denotes similar characteristics. The label of "anchor institution" is often credited to Harvard economist and professor Michael Porter, who defines anchor institutions as large institutions, typically educational, medical or cultural, that are deeply rooted in their local geographies, and play an integral role in the local economy (CEO for Cities, 2010; Porter, 2002,

2010). Some authors contend that the Aspen Institute coined the term in a 2001 study, defining it as an urban institution with significant community infrastructure, and which is unlikely to move (Ehlenz, 2018; Fulbright-Anderson et al., 2001). Despite conflicting perspectives about the creation of the term, there are commonalities in literature as to what can be labeled an anchor institution. Four key elements are usually associated with the term anchor institution: spatial immobility, mission, size of organization, and corporate status (CEOs for Cities & ICIC, 2002; Fulbright-Anderson et al., 2001; Harkavy & Zukerman, 1999; Hodges & Dubb, 2012; Maurrasse, 2005, 2007; Perry et al., 2009).

Spatial Immobility

The concept of permanence is cited as one of the most important elements. Maurrasse (2005, 2007) notes that anchor institutions are comprised of place-based investments such as real estate, facilities, and infrastructure, and supports major employers and economic assets. Similarly, Porter (2002, 2010) explains that anchor institutions are entities that usually do not tend to move such as educational, medical, or cultural organizations that are deeply entrenched in their communities and play a vital role in the local economy.

Mission

The mission of an anchor institution centers around community. According to the Local Initiatives Support Coalition (LISC) of Los Angeles, anchor institutions are "entities, public, private or nonprofit, that have significant capital investment and mission focus rooted in a particular community" (Local Initiatives Support Coalition, 2019). Dubb et al. (2013) identify an institution's anchor mission as "consciously applying their long-term, place-based economic power, in combination with their human and intellectual resources, to better the long-term welfare of the communities in which they reside" (p. v). In another report Sladek (2017)

describes the college and university anchor mission as a symbiotic relationship between institutions and communities that takes on the most difficult challenges of underserved and under-resourced stakeholders.

Porter and Kramer (2011) contend that if anchor institutions are to successful and sustain their long-term involvement in place, then the concept of "social responsibility" must morph into the notion of "shared value". They view these two concepts as different. Social Responsibility refers to a belief that institutions have a duty and responsibility to engage in actions which are beneficial to society, whereas "shared value" refers to an institution pursing its own interest in a way that also creates value for the surrounding neighborhood. Porter and Kramer (2011) believe that the end game in the "shared value" approach is to optimize the interests of anchor institutions by improving conditions in their host community.

Size of Institution

Anchor institutions tend to be large in size, creating opportunity for them to be a social and physical hub in their spatial community. They can be universities, hospitals, foundations and museums (Cantor et al., 2013; The Local Initiatives Support Corporation, 2019; Walker & East, 2018). For the purpose of this study I will exclusively focus on universities as anchor institutions.

Corporate Status

In order to be an anchor institution, corporate status matters because they are perceived as organizations that do not solely focus on profit; the label is more frequently associated with non-profit entities. The Democracy Collaborative (2010) contends that anchor institutions are non-profit institution that do not move once they become established. Similarly, the Community Wealth Organization (2018) indicates that "anchor institutions are nonprofit institutions that once

established tend not to move location." However, some critics contend that some corporate entities essential to a community can be labeled as anchor institutions, such as utility companies (Fulbright-Anderson et al., 2001).

Historical Background of Institutions of Higher Education as Anchor Institutions

Institutions of higher education (IHEs) are well-placed to lead and develop partnerships in communities as anchor institutions for many reasons (Rodin, 2015). First, IHEs are deeply rooted into their communities and can contribute to a sense of neighborhood identity. They have a symbiotic relationship with their communities, giving IHEs incentive to invest in improvements from which both parties will inevitably benefit. Second, IHEs also contribute to economic growth by generating new ideas that can become the seeds for business development. Examples of business development at IHEs range from developing biotechnology industries to creating local affordable housing, to creating an ecosystem of local small businesses. Third, IHEs work to create and educate future community leaders. Lastly, IHEs can lead other similarly placed potential anchor institutions and spearhead the creation of partnerships.

However, IHEs have not always regarded themselves as engines for social and economic growth in their local community. It was not until American inner cities fell into a state of disrepair, from 1970 until the 1990s, that the nation's colleges and universities were required to re-examine their role in community engagement (Dubb et al., 2013; McBeth, 2018; Taylor & Luter, 2013). In the late 1990s and early 2000s, two economic trends significantly affected urban areas. First, the U.S. economy's base shifted from manufacturing to services (Rodin, 2015). Secondly, a neoliberal approach to governance reduced the role of federal government, and forced state and local government to take on many new duties that were once federal responsibilities (Porter, 2002, 2010; Taylor & Luter, 2013). As urban conditions worsened and

fiscal resources became increasingly scarce, academic and medical institutions, also colloquially known as "eds and meds" emerged as much-needed sources of job growth and economic vitality for their communities (Harkavy & Zuckerman, 1999; Taylor & Luter, 2013). At that point, anchor institutions emerged as a concept for understanding the role of universities, hospitals, and other place-based institutions in community development (Maurrasse & Harkavy, 2015; Taylor & Luter, 2013). Given that the scholarship on anchor institutions is expansive, I focused specifically on institutions of higher education as anchor institutions for the purpose of this study.

Anchor Institution Eras

The scholarship on American institutions of higher education as anchor institutions denotes five important eras. The first era is associated with the Morrill Act of 1862, which was the first federal intervention in U.S. higher education (Ehlenz, 2017; Hodges & Dubb, 2012). The act allocated land for the creation of land-grant colleges as part of the westward expansion efforts, giving states the option to either use the land for a college or sell it and establish an endowment with the proceeds. This effectively extended higher education to include industry and agriculture beyond the traditional liberal arts and theology. This era established the first enduring connection between a university and the regional economy.

The second era is known as the University and the Urban Laboratory (Ehlenz, 2017). This era began in the early twentieth century during the rapid industrialization and urbanization of city centers. The large influx of immigrants and working poor into the cities required universities to look at community engagement differently. Some universities embraced the urban laboratory, engaging with local neighborhoods to address physical and social ills. For example, faculty and students began to leave the confines of the university and to conduct participatory

action research, as well as to provide basic education, public health, and other social services to the working poor in their surrounding areas. However, over the course of time, the priorities of university anchors changed and community partnerships around social issues declined.

The third era emerged as a result of World War II, when universities were seen as a tool for urban renewal (Ehlenz, 2017). University anchors during this time period were focused on eliminating neighborhood blight and expanding the campus footprint. In addition, universities were mandated by the federal government to expand their research and grow their enrollment via the GI Bill (O'Mara, 2012). During this time, universities were focused on removing physical, social, and economic deterioration from neighborhoods and largely disengaged with the community, returning into their scholarly enclaves (Perry et al., 2009). In other words, more often than not, universities did not consult with their surrounding communities. Such urban renewal came at the expense of the community. University-affiliated facilities required large scale demolition projects and population displacement. Subsequently, discord and mistrust characterized this era and revealed a disconnect between the university and community interests (O'Mara, 2012, Perry et al., 2009).

The fourth era centered on university-community partnerships as an attempt to repair the contentious relationship of the prior era. There was a large emphasis on outreach such as civic engagement, academic-based community research, and service learning as a means of intellectual neighborhood engagement and service delivery (Hodges & Dubb, 2012; Rodin, 2015). A significant portion of current anchor institution literature, case studies, and self-studies of university-community partnerships focuses on this era (Ehlenz, 2017; Hodges & Dubb, 2012; O'Mara, 2012).

Although university-community partnerships continue to persist, the fifth and current era primarily focuses neighborhood revitalization. In this era, university anchors act as city developers and planners, largely motivated by the deterioration in university neighborhoods during the 1980s and 1990s including rising crime and property disinvestment (Hodges & Dubb, 2012; Rodin, 2015). In addition, a decrease in federal research funding has shifted the focus of many universities from national to local issues. University anchors continue to feel the consequences of the urban renewal era and recognize this fifth era as an opportunity to intervene in place in a less hegemonic way (Ehlenz, 2017; O'Mara, 2012). Present day scholarship is borne primarily of the fourth and fifth era of university anchors.

Typology of Anchor Institutions

Looking for holistic research on universities, not individual programs, Hodges and Dubb (2012) categorized university anchor institutions into three major groups. They visited 10 universities and interviewed administrators and community members regarding general partnerships between diverse types of universities. Based on their observations, their typology of how universities economically act with communities involved operating as facilitators, conveners or leaders. ***Facilitators*** have limited resources and choose to use them for educational opportunities, but their resources are often spread thinly. ***Conveners*** have monetary resources, but instead of making decisions for the neighborhood, they create coalitions with residents and community-based organizations and make investments strategically; often, the neighborhoods in which they invest are not adjacent to the campus. ***Leaders*** have lots of monetary resources and use them to develop adjacent areas to their campuses in the interest of its students and faculty, but the community does not have much power in deciding how the resources are used. This typology explains how universities with different economic power approach community

development, and through this typology, Hodges and Dubb create a compelling definition of the anchor institution mission: “to consciously and strategically apply their long-term, place based economic power, in combination with their human intellectual resources, to better the welfare of the communities in which they reside” (p. 12).

Benefits of Anchor Institutions

Proponents of anchor institutions contend that these entities can create opportunities for the surrounding communities by creating new vehicles for community engagement, to supporting local businesses, developing high quality educational and health services, creating mechanisms for local hiring and contracting, and catalyzing community economic development through direct capital investment (CEO for Cities 2010; Ehlenz, 2017, Dubb et al., 2013; Harkavy, 2015; Maurrasse, 2001; Taylor & Luter, 2013). The literature on anchor institutions characterizes these entities as committed to intentionally apply their place-based economic power and human capital in partnership with the community to mutually benefit the long-term well-being of both. Anchor institutions bring powerful benefits to their neighboring communities by aligning their resources and business operations with their missions (Abel & Deitz, 2012; Sladek, 2017; Smith et al., 2017). Institutions can have an especially important impact on underserved and under-resourced stakeholders (Sladek, 2017).

Scholarship on anchor institutions often highlights the University of Pennsylvania (UPenn), the University of Chicago, and Virginia Commonwealth University to describe the positive impact that these establishments have had in their surrounding communities (CEO for Cities, 2010). UPenn is often touted as the “golden standard” of anchor institutions (McBeth, 2018; Sorrell, 2015). The large research university effectively helped reduce crime in the surrounding communities by developing meaningful relationships with elected officials and

community leaders; improving public schools in West Philadelphia; and establishing a foundation for promoting local purchasing (Hodges & Dubb, 2012; Sorrell, 2015). Similarly, the University of Chicago launched a number of community development programs to understand and improve the Hyde Park community. These included initiatives to increase economic opportunities, hire locally, and revitalize retail (Harriel 2015; Sorrell, 2015). Vice President David Greene indicated in 2012 that it was time for the university to "rethink its relationship with the neighborhood...because over the years and particularly in the 1950s and 1960s, there was a lot of development aimed at creating a barrier around the campus, and we're now trying to reverse that trend" (Sharoff, 2012). Similarly, the University of Virginia Commonwealth aligned its university mission with community engagement and tailored a revitalization strategy to the institution and place (CEO for Cities, 2010; Harkavy, 2015). In these descriptions, a university operates like large businesses and leverages its financial and commercial clout to spur local economic development and expand its community outreach (CEOs for Cities, 2010; Porter, 1997, 2016). Ultimately, this exemplifies how university anchor institutions can act as "powerful economic engines" that can strategically drive revitalization in their adjacent communities (Abel & Deitz, 2012; CEOs for Cities, 2010).

Criticism of Anchor Institutions

While proponents of anchor institutions contend that they stimulate regional civic, social, and economic growth through various university-community endeavors, some critics argue that anchor institutions exacerbate issues of inequity for local community residents (Baldwin, 2017; Bates, 1997; Brown et al., 2016; Harrison & Glasmeier, 1997). Instead of building community wealth in local neighborhoods, this view suggests that anchor institutions, also called "eds and meds" along with hospitals, are hampering community wealth due to an imbalance of economic

power between the university and community member (Brown et. al., 2016, p. 85). Thus, in some instances, community mistrust and displacement have become emblematic of university-community relationships (Baldwin, 2017; Brown et. al., 2016).

In addition, anchor institutions have been criticized for an overreliance on private sector solutions and "wishful thinking" (Bates, 1997; Harrison & Glasmeier, 1997). Baldwin (2017) has questioned the economic expansion initiatives of several large universities that are swallowing communities and generating considerable revenues with questionable public benefits. For example, although UPenn is often touted as the standard model to follow, there is also criticism about their approach. UPenn, along with Drexel University expanded into the West Philadelphia communities such as Black Bottom in the 1960s, and anywhere between 550 and 2,653 people were displaced by the University City Science Center (Brown et. al, 2016; Carlson 1999). Similarly, John Hopkins University and its medical institution displaced 800 African American households in the 1950s and 1960s as part of the Broadway Project (Baldwin, 2017; Brown et al., 2016). In the 2000s, the university partnered with Baltimore City and East Baltimore incorporated to create a biotech park and displace over 700 African American households in the process (Brown et al., 2016). In 2002, the university created the Minority Inclusion Agreement, which promised to create 8,000 jobs and establish a community redevelopment fund. Nearly 20 years later, the promises have remained largely unfulfilled (Brown et al., 2016).

In the same vein, the University of Chicago partnered with government entities to redevelop Hyde Park and Woodlawn communities, displacing thousands of black residents (Baldwin, 2017; Brown et al., 2016). Since 2005, the university has expanded its efforts toward the south of their campus. These moves have created a sense of fear related to gentrification by Woodlawn Residents (Brown et al., 2016). The neighborhood's racial lines continue to exist

despite concerted efforts by the university to diversify the ethnic composition of what was once called the "America's most segregated city" (Bolger, 2016, p. 134). In Los Angeles, the University of Southern California redeveloped the University Park community with a $1.1 billion project (Brown et al., 2016). The project was expected to create 12,000 jobs, new student housing, and new retail opportunities (Brown et al., 2016). Despite the USC's commitment to bolster affordable non-student housing, opponents continue to worry about further gentrification and displacement of residents and small businesses, given that in recent history the university has partnered with city officials to invoke eminent domain on certain properties (Baldwin, 2017; Brown et al., 2016).

While universities are well meaning in their approach, there is a significant disconnect between the city and the university. In the aforementioned examples, nearby communities have viewed universities as acting more in self-interest than their own self-interest (Harriel, 2015; Holley & Harris, 2018). These conflicting views of the role that anchor institutions play within a community context presents a unique opportunity for further exploration among community stakeholders.

Gap in Research

Acting like an anchor institution can take many forms. From creating new vehicles for community engagement, to supporting local businesses, developing high quality educational and health services, creating mechanisms for local hiring and contracting, or catalyzing community economic development through direct capital investment. Researchers are now conducting national scans of the anchor population and their endeavors. Hodges and Dubb (2012) provided a comprehensive account of the role played by universities who have sought to consciously apply their long-term economic power, in combination with their human and intellectual resources, to

better the long-term welfare of the communities in which they reside. In 2014, the Coalition of Urban Serving Universities (USU) conducted one of the longest national studies. The 10-year national study examined in-depth surveys on the costs and benefits associated with anchor institutions university-community engagement. Another study produced a field guide that consisted of a national scan of 100 urban universities and colleges to understand the trends withing the field of anchor institutions (Yates & Accardi, 2019). The goal of the field guide was to illuminate the institutional infrastructure needed to create and sustain effective, equitable, and enduring partnerships of mutual benefits and to support the advancement of the field over the next generation.

While there is an expansive body of anchor institution literature on private Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) (Birch, 2014; Yates & Accardi, 2019), research-focused IHEs (Birch, 2014; Ehlenz & Birch, 2014), and even some state and land grant IHEs (CEO for Cities, 2010; Friedman et al., 2014), there is limited research on the largest regional comprehensive system in the state of California: the California State University system. There is even less research on Los Angeles-based CSUs as anchor institutions. In the following sections, I briefly describe regional comprehensive universities, the role of the California State University (CSU) System as an anchor entity, and on one Los Angeles-based CSU as an anchor institution. I then conclude this section by highlighting the importance of this study as it relates to the increasing inequity in Los Angeles, and the role anchor institutions can play in addressing these issues.

Regional Comprehensive Universities

The American Association of State Colleges and Universities, which historically is known for representing comprehensive universities defines these types of universities as, “public colleges, universities, and systems whose members share a learning and teaching centered

culture, a historic commitment to underserved populations, and a dedication to research and creativity that advances their regions' economic progress and cultural development" (Schneider & Deane, 2015, p. 7). Among all types of four-year colleges, regional comprehensive universities enroll the largest proportion of underrepresented students, including military veterans, adult learners, ethnic minorities, first-generation students, and immigrants (Orphan, 2018). They are considered the workhorses of American post-secondary education, but they are often overlooked by researchers and policymakers, who tend to focus on elite institutions and community colleges (Schneider & Deane, 2015). Regional comprehensive universities enroll nearly 70% of all undergraduate four-year students at public institutions (Schneider & Deane, 2015). As a result of their perceived second-tier status, comprehensive universities and colleges constantly have to catch up to other more well-known institutions (Schneider & Deane, 2015). In addition, these institutions often have small endowments, rely heavily on tuition revenue, and have felt the effect of shrinking state appropriations. Regional four-year universities may be the undistinguished "middle child" of higher education, but they also have the potential and responsibility to become engines of postsecondary attainment and upward mobility for the majority of Americans (Schneider & Deane, 2015).

The Role of the California State University (CSU) System an Anchor Entity

The CSU system plays a vital role for the state of California. With 23 campuses spread across the state of California, it is the nation's largest four-year public comprehensive university system. As part of the California Master Plan, the CSU was designated to select from among the top one-third (33.3%) of graduating high school students and its primary mission is to educate undergraduates and graduates, including the ability to grant professional and teacher education degrees (Burdman, 2009). The CSU is responsible for educating the most ethnically,

economically, and academically diverse student body in the nation, and awards nearly half of the state's baccalaureates (Crawford, 2017). More than one third of CSU students are first-generation college students and provides more than half of all undergraduate degrees earned by California's Latinx, African American, and Native American students. In particular, 21 of the 23 CSU campuses are currently recognized by the Department of Education as Hispanic Serving Institutions (CSU Factbook, 2018; Crawford, 2017). A Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI)[3] is defined as an institution of higher education that has an enrollment of undergraduate full-time equivalent students that is at least 25% Latinx students (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

The CSU, in its large-scale organizational capacity, is an anchor institution. From a financial standpoint, it is an economic engine for the state of California. The CSU educates approximately 480,000 students at a time and sustains more than 150,000 jobs across the state. Currently, one in 10 employees in California is a CSU graduate, and CSU related expenditures create more than $17 billion in economic activity. In addition, for every dollar the state invests in the CSU, the CSU returns $5.43 (CSU Factbook, 2018).

Key studies on CSUs as anchor institutions highlight various forms of effort. Dietrick et al. (2011) discuss CSU San Bernardino's model of community engagement. Both CSU San Jose (Grodach, 2010) and CSU Pomona (Lane, 2012) are lauded for their neighborhood revitalization efforts. Maurrasse (2007) commends CSU Fresno for its ability to help shape its city's identity in the Silicon Valley. Hodges & Dubb (2012) examined CSU Monterey Bay's service-learning model. Martin (2010) acknowledged CSU East Bay and CSU Fresno for its university partnerships, and CSU San Bernardino for its focus on entrepreneurship. It is evident from the

[3] The term *Hispanic* and *Latinx* is used interchangeably

existing literature that the social and economic reach of the CSU is vast, and that each campus provides a unique development opportunity to its region.

Los Angeles CSUs as Anchor Institutions

There are five CSUs within the greater Los Angeles region: California State University Los Angeles, Pomona, Dominguez Hills, Northridge, and Long Beach. In 2013, these five CSU's established the CSU5, a regional consortium intended to use its collective power to explore and address regional needs. In this capacity, the five universities in the region are not only serving as individual anchors, but as a collective body that is able to create a greater impact on the communities served. However, despite their attempt to develop a more coordinated structure to address regional needs, there is limited research dedicated to each of these CSUs. In a report of National Data and Survey Findings on Urban Universities as Anchor Institutions, researchers Friedman et al. (2014) acknowledged California State University Long Beach, Los Angeles, Fullerton, and Northridge, along with two other CSUs outside Los Angeles, CSU East Bay and CSU Fresno, in their report. However, only CSU Fresno and Northridge were used as case studies of anchor institutional efforts. CSU Fresno was commended for its capacity building and robust development of community partnerships, while CSU Northridge was lauded for its partnerships with local government and communities agencies. In 2010, the CEO for Cities and Living Cities produced a report using six cases of anchor institutions focusing largely on state institutions, which did not include any CSUs. Most recently, in 2019, the Institute of Advanced Studies in Culture at the University of Virginia conducted a survey scan of 100 universities, providing a comprehensive overview of various anchor institutions in the U.S. (Yates & Accardi, 2019). This survey scan provides a picture of the anchor institution field today, and where it is trending in the near future, but did not sample the California State University (CSU) and its 23

campuses. The lack of mention about the CSUs in the existing anchor institution literature indicates an opportunity for further exploration, especially within the context of a mega-region such as Los Angeles.

Recently, however, Gomez et al. (2019) did examine one Los Angeles based CSU anchor institution, highlighting the work of Golden State University (GSU).[4] Gomez et al.'s (2019) article largely focuses on success indicators for establishing an engaged anchor mission mindset and structure; more than three dozen initiatives and collaborating institutions are highlighted in the article, illustrating the broad reach and diversity of GSU's partnerships across Los Angeles. However, this article does not illustrate community opinions or viewpoints on its role as an anchor institution. Taylor and Luter (2013) contend that "the literature on anchor institutions has a critical lacuna; we know very little about the role that anchor institutions play in solving societal problems and revitalizing communities, cities, towns and villages...there is a need to gain more insight into the multiple way that anchors can contribute to the building of successful communities and local economies from the lens of the community" (p. 11). Thus, a critical next step is an in-depth study on community stakeholders' viewpoints about how community stakeholders view the role of their regional anchor institution.

Implications for CSU Anchor Institutions in Los Angeles

The faces of students attending institutions of higher education are changing. According to a report by the American Council on Education, students of color made up just 29.6% of the undergraduate population in 1996, but made up 45.2% of students in 2016 (Espinosa et al., 2019). The majority of students of color either attend community colleges or comprehensive universities, such as the CSU system. Yet racial, income, and spatial inequity is high and

[4] Golden State University is a pseudonym.

persistent, especially in regions like Los Angeles where, Black, Latinx, and Native American students go on to earn significantly less than their white counterparts after graduation despite earning the same baccalaureate degree. According to a PolicyLink Report (2017), "unemployment decreases and wages increase with higher educational attainment, yet racial and gender gaps persist in the labor market...the racial gap persists for Latinx, Blacks, and Native Americans even among college graduates in Los Angeles" (p. 5).

Velez & Solórzano (2017) makes a strong case for paying greater attention to the ways spaces are racialized, and how this in turn plays a role in reproducing educational inequities on a local level. Strengthened communities of color are necessary for the nation's economic growth and prosperity. Using the power of anchor institutions to lead and contribute to communities is one way forward. However, community engagement is a two-way street. Universities tout their engagement efforts, but little is often said about what community and alumni stakeholders think of those efforts. Long-term success requires anchor institutions to deeply understand the issues impacting their communities, and empower members of those communities. In listening to its alumni and community, anchor institutions can build deeper, stronger and more trusting relationships between the communities they serve.

Summary

Los Angeles is a global powerhouse, yet inequity hampers its vitality and economic growth. Institutions of higher education with purposeful intent, also known as anchor institutions, are in a unique position to act as engines of social and economic growth in the region. There is limited research on the role of Los Angeles regional comprehensive universities from the perspective of community stakeholders. In responding to this gap in the research, Organizational Place-Building Theory was used as the conceptual framework to understand to

what degree an organization values and invests in its geographical and social location. The literature demonstrates a need to further explore the role of community and alumni stakeholders as part of institutional engagement led by anchor entities**.**

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Over the course of 30 years, anchor institutions of higher education have contributed to the economic and social fabric of communities. Literature suggests that anchor institutions have a direct self-interest in ensuring their surrounding communities are healthy and safe (Birch, 2014; Dubb et al., 2013). However, studies are most often one sided, representing the university's perspective; the viewpoints of community stakeholders, especially of local alumni residents, is rarely prioritized (Ehlenz, 2015; Fulbright-Anderson et al., 2001). Therefore, the motivation for this study was to understand how local alumni residents of Golden State University (GSU) describe the role of their anchor institution in their personal lives and neighborhoods of Los Angeles. To my knowledge, the viewpoints of local alumni residents of a regional comprehensive anchor institution specifically located in Los Angeles have not been studied. To probe this inquiry, I engaged in a qualitative study of local alumni residents from one regional comprehensive anchor institution in Los Angeles. My study was centered around the following three research questions:

1. From the perspective of local community alumni, how does a regional comprehensive university serve (if at all) as an anchor institution in their personal lives?
2. From the perspective of local community alumni, how does a regional comprehensive university serve (if at all) as an anchor institution in the local neighborhoods of Los Angeles?
3. What are the differences and similarities (if any) between what the university thinks it is doing (or should be doing) and what the local community alumni think the university is doing (or should be doing) as an anchor institution?

Research Design

To address the aforementioned research questions, this study required a qualitative research methodology, as the primary objective was to further engage in deep inquiry based on the participants' experiences and viewpoints. A qualitative approach allowed for me, as the researcher, to understand how my participants interpreted their experiences, constructed their worlds, and what meaning they attributed to their experiences and knowledge around place (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Central to qualitative research is the understanding that the participant is the expert and best authority to explain their experiences, and it is through dialogue that the researcher can discover and engage with ideas that challenge conventional wisdom or accepted theories (Fraser, 2004).

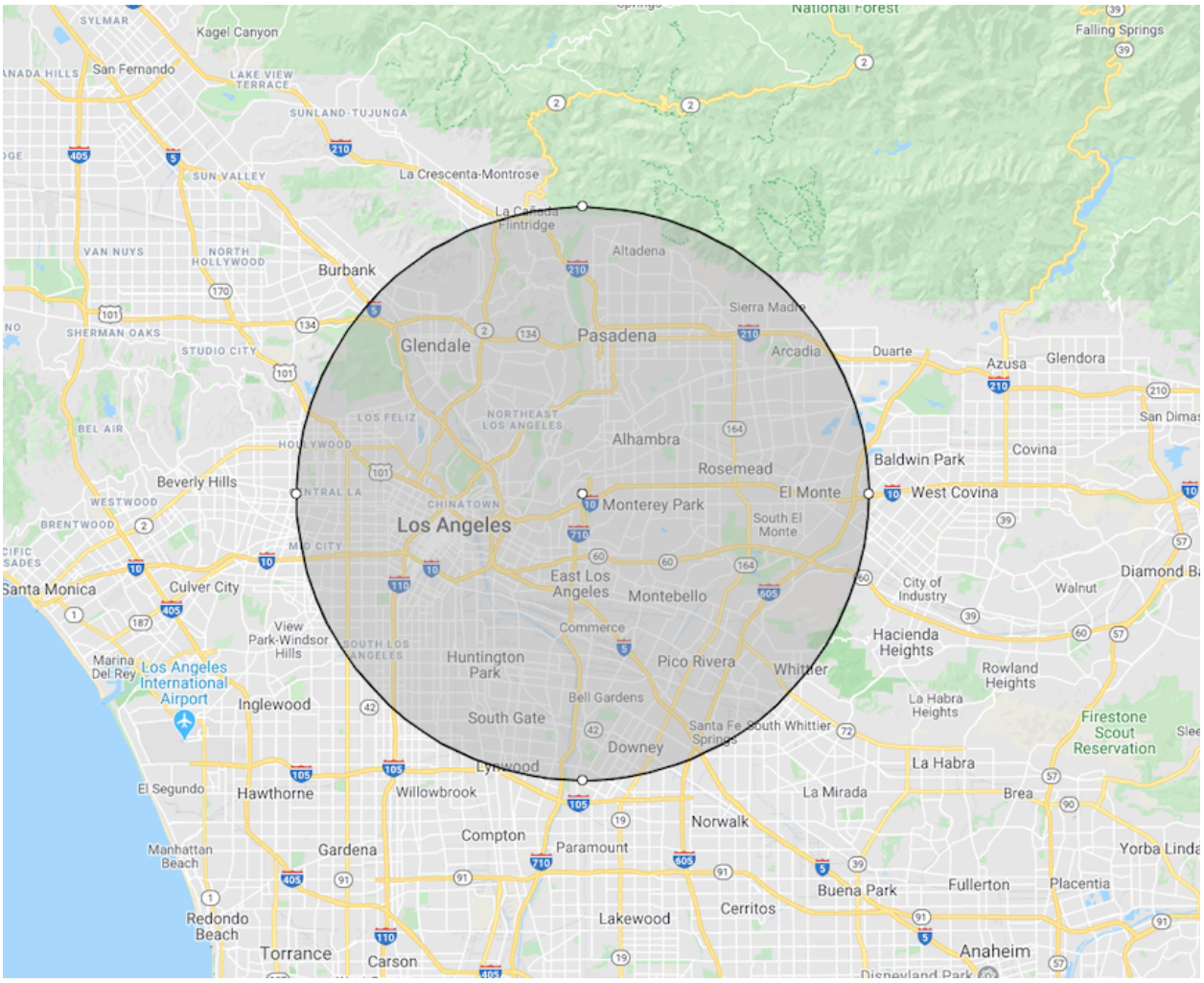
Site Selection

The site for this study focused on communities within a 10-mile radius of GSU (See Figure 1). GSU and its surrounding communities were chosen for several reasons to make the results both relevant and useful. First, GSU has been selected as an anchor institution by the National Coalition of Urban & Metropolitan Universities (CUMU) as part of a new effort to uplift and transform the economic and social well-being of communities across the nation (Beck, 2018). Though it is one of two universities in California selected by CUMU, and the only university in Los Angeles with this distinction, it has not been studied for its successes and areas for improvement. Second, GSU's demographics are reflective of the demographics of Los Angeles, which make the findings a more impactful contribution to the literature. As a Hispanic-Serving Institution, over 64% of the student population at Golden State University identify as Latinx/Hispanic. Currently, Latinx make up the largest ethnic group in the city and county of Los Angeles with 48.6% of the population (U.S. Census QuickFacts, n.d.). In addition, approximately

70% of alumni from GSU reside in Los Angeles, suggesting that many have a strong sense of place as relevant to this study (Beck, 2018; Gomez et al., 2019). Focusing on a hyperlocal region of a 10-mile radius allowed for a more nuanced examination of what anchor institutions signify to local alumni residents in relation to their neighborhood and physical proximity to the university.

Figure 1

A 10-Mile Radius from Golden State University



Note. The red star indicates GSU while the shaded area indicates everything in a 10-mile radius from GSU (Map Developers, 2020).

Sample Selection

I identified 10 community members who are alumni of Golden State University for this study. I interviewed members who represent a cross-section of experiences in their communities, such as those who belong to community service organizations, local schools, community colleges, and small businesses. The cross-section of participants provided a fuller sense of how local community alumni perceive the university's efforts based on personal experiences (See Table 1).

Table 1

Demographics of Participants

Pseudonym	Age	Ethnicity	Residence	Distance to Golden State University	Occupation
Maria	Late 20s	Latinx	Maywood	6.1 miles	Executive Assistant
Stella	Late 20s	Latinx	East Los Angeles	3.4 miles	Social Worker
Paul	Mid 30s	Latinx	East Los Angeles	3.4 miles	Community College Professor
Albert	Mid 30s	Latinx	City Terrace	1.5 miles	Community Bank Teller
Jessica	Early 20s	Latinx	South Gate	9.7 miles	Event Planner
Diana	Late 30s	Latinx	Cudahy	9.1. miles	Veteran Affairs Specialist
Elisa	Mid 30s	Latinx	Huntington Park	8.5 miles	Community College Advisor
Kathleen	Mid 30s	Latinx	El Sereno	1.5 miles	High School Counselor
John	Late 30s	Latinx	Boyle Heights	5.7 miles	Economist, Non-profit
Daniel	Late 40s	Latinx	El Sereno	1.5 miles	Community Relations, Private University

This target population was critical to my study because very little is known about how community stakeholders with close ties to the university as alumni describe the role of Golden State University's anchor role within the context of their personal experiences and local neighborhoods. Friedman et al. (2014) noted that for any university to embrace the anchor role, the commitment must stem from the leadership structure first. To evaluate the reaches of the leadership's stated commitment, I assessed individuals who are geographically impacted by university decisions and its anchor institution endeavor. An external audit of community stakeholders who can speak to the impact of the university's anchor role in their personal lives as an alumni and local community member was a pragmatic first step to augmenting GSU's further endeavors. This study ultimately allowed for a holistic overview of the university's role as an anchor institution within the context of the surrounding communities, and how it is addressing inequities in Los Angeles.

Snowball Sampling

I used an iterative snowball sampling methodology to select my target population for the study. Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling technique by which existing study subjects recruit future subjects from among their acquaintances. As a result, the sample group grows like a rolling snowball, building up until enough data is gathered to be useful for research. (Creswell, 2018). Although snowball sampling is usually used when participants are difficult to identify, this sampling technique is the most appropriate data collection method for my research study for two reasons. First, snowball sampling allowed for a more nuanced understanding of the relationship and social networks between individuals and an anchor institution. Second, this technique allows for an organic approach that examines associations to place through close relationships.

My selection criteria for the snowball sampling methodology was to work exclusively with individuals with a strong grasp of their neighborhood; by participating, they were able to convey their narrative and lived experiences around space. Thus, only participants who had lived in their respective communities for at least five years, and who continued to live no more than 10 miles away from Golden State University, were eligible to partake in my study.

Access and Role Management

In my current role as an administrator at Golden State University, one of my duties is to interface with external stakeholders, including elected officials, community-based organizations, and businesses. Throughout my entire study, my role as a researcher took precedence over my role as a university administrator. I identified potential leads in the population largely through my personal network, then sent a mass introductory email to my contacts and posted an announcement of my study on Facebook. In the email and Facebook post, I introduced myself and my chair, explained the purpose and the requirements of my study, and included my contact information for those interested in participating. I received three initial leads that served as the center of my chain referral methodology. These three individuals then forwarded my inquiry to people that fit the description of my study, who sent it to others, and so forth. I offered $30 Amazon gift cards to all participants. Participants were asked to review and sign a letter of consent which specified that their involvement was voluntary, no harm would be inflicted upon any of them, and that they did not have to provide any other names in order to participate in my study. Anonymity throughout the entire process was honored and unique participant identifiers (i.e., pseudonyms) were assigned to each individual. My data reached a point of saturation after 10 participants' 90-minute in-depth interviews.

Pilot Study

To prepare for this study, I conducted a pilot test on January 20, 2020 with one local community member/alumnus. As a result of this pilot, I was able to test and fine-tune my research questions, identify central themes and potential codes, and refine my interview instrument and technique before collecting data. The pilot process allowed for the thorough examination of my qualitative approach and provided a glimpse into how it would impact the larger in-depth study.

Data Collection

My data collection consisted of three phases, including two parts of a 90-minute interview for each participant and a document analysis. The first phase included an individual artifact-based interview with each of the 10 participants and lasted 60 minutes. The second phase consisted of 30-minute education journey mapping with those same participants. Then, in the third phase of data collection, I performed an analysis of relevant documents. Each method contributed depth and substance to my research; the first two involved gathering perceptions and personal experiences of place, community and institutions of higher education, which were then cross-compared with multiple document sources in the third phase to determine commonalities, differences, and nuances in the research. The three phases of my study allowed for the triangulation of my findings.

Phase One: Artifact-Based Interviews

The first 60 minutes of each interview entailed an interactive semi-structured artifact-based interview which incorporated the usage of a mapping activity. A semi-structured approach allows for the researcher to focus on the inquiry being studied by allowing each participant to create the narrative to be told rather than having it forced into a structured box (Maxwell, 2013).

The semi-structured interview method was appropriate because it allowed some flexibility for me as the researcher and the participants to explore responses on a deeper level, thereby making the final product a more authentic representation of their experiences. In addition, using a map as a point of reference during the interview helped contextualize and analyze the socio-spatial relationships between place (Kimball & Thomas, 2012) and race (Morrison et al., 2017; Velez & Solórzano, 2017), and the role of anchor institutions (CEOs for Cities & ICIC, 2002; Fulbright-Anderson et al., 2001; Harkavy & Zukerman, 1999; Dubb et al., 2013; Perry et al., 2009; Maurrasse, 2005, 2007; Taylor & Luter, 2013).

As part of my process, I placed a map of Los Angeles in front of each participant and asked them a series of questions (See Appendix A). I designed a color-coded system and asked a series of questions to each participant. I then asked participants to take part in a four-step process with the colors. First, I asked participants to place **red** dots in the neighborhoods that they perceived to be socio-economically "distressed" and "unsafe." Then, they were to place **green** dots for those neighborhoods that they perceived as socio-economically "well off" and "safe." Third, I asked participants to place **yellow** dots where they believed the majority of Golden State University students resided. Lastly, I asked participants to place **blue** stickers where they believed alumni of Golden State University now live. Each color was assigned to a meaning for this exercise so participants could visualize differences in the Los Angeles region (See Table 2).

Table 2

Assigned Color and Meaning of Mapping Exercise

Color	**Meaning**
Red	Socio-economically 'distressed' and 'unsafe'
Green	Socio-economically 'well-off' and 'safe'
Yellow	Where students reside
Blue	Where alumni reside

I used a general interview protocol, but incorporated probing questions as needed (See Appendix A). I instructed the participants toward various tasks throughout the activity and asked them to explain their reasoning throughout. I video-recorded the interviews, but only captured the participants' hands and map. Confidentiality and anonymity were held to the highest standard. The objective of this interactive activity was to examine a group of people that are either understudied or ignored in the literature. In doing so, I was be able to identify relationships and associations to better check if any alignment existed between the university's projected anchor mission and the actual community benefits or harm. The artifact-based interviews and activity helped address my second research question, which explores the role of the university in the physical community.

The purpose of combining interviews with a mapping activity was to visually immerse participants into Los Angeles, the anchor university, and the communities in which they reside. More importantly, the map served as a safe space to ensure that participants provided the most candid and concrete responses, rather than "elevator pitches." Utilizing a mapping artifact as part of the interview process was a unique and innovative approach to help visually understand the inquiry and intersectionality of anchor institutions, community, and place as it relates to the participants' personal experiences. In addition, mapping gives the power to the community participants and marginalized people of color, who have historically been excluded from the map-making process (Morrison et al., 2017; Velez & Solórzano, 2017).

Phase Two: Education Journey Mapping

The last 30 minutes of my semi-structured interactive interview focused on education journey mapping. Annamma (2017) contends that education journey mapping serves as a useful tool with concrete elements in which one can observe the interaction, voice, and knowledge of

participants as an act of humanizing research. In addition, it allows for "the commitment to exploring the individual spatial and temporal journeys of [people] while situating them in the larger social reality of racism and white supremacy" (Morrison et al., 2017, p. 38). It is important to note that education journey maps cannot stand alone as rigorous and credible. Annamma (2017) notes that educational journey mapping should be part of a larger body of data as a commitment to "methodological pluralism" that analyzes textual narratives such as interviews, and visual narratives such as education journey mapping (p. 38). This study adapted Annamma's (2017) educational journey mapping prompt to help facilitate the second part of my interactive interview (See Appendix A). Education journey mapping allowed me to better understand the participants' experiences as it relates to their educational and personal trajectory. It also helped gather responses to research question one, which elaborated on the role of the university in their personal lives.

Phase Three: Document Analysis

In addition to these two forms of data collection from the participants, I analyzed existing public documents, websites, brochures, and other media platforms to help determine if what is being actively promoted by the university lines up with the reality of my participants. In addition, I reviewed strategic plans to further substantiate the connection between the community and the anchor university. Document analysis contributed to research question three, which focused on the gap between the goals and norms of the university and the realities experienced by participants.

Alignment of Research Questions and Data Collection Methods and Sources

With each participant, I conducted a 90-minute semi-structured interview that consisted of an artifact-based interview and education journey mapping, and then followed the interviews

with document analysis. I used document analysis to contextualize my findings within the field of anchor institutions, and cross-compared the participants' personal narratives to the university's efforts. This ultimately allowed for me to either substantiate, refute, or provide more nuance to the existing literature. Table 3 highlights the alignment between my research questions and data sources.

Table 3

Alignment of Research Questions and Methods/Sources

Research Questions	**Data Collection Methods**
Research Question 1: From the perspective of local community alumni, how does a regional comprehensive university serve (if at all) as an anchor institution in their personal lives?	Education journal mapping
Research Question 2: From the perspective of local community alumni, how does a regional comprehensive university serve (if at all) as an anchor institution in their local neighborhoods of Los Angeles?	Artifact-based mapping interview
Research Question 3: What are the differences and similarities (if any) between what the university thinks it is doing (or should be doing) and what the local community alumni think the university is doing (or should be doing) as an anchor institution?	Document analysis Education journey mapping Artifact-based mapping interview

Data Analysis

The qualitative nature of this study called for data to be analyzed as it was collected (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I used a combination of coding and thematic analysis for research questions 2 and 3, and narrative data analysis for research question 1 to ensure a holistic approach for my study. In phase one of my study, I conducted an artifact-based interview, in

which I used coding/thematic analysis. The codes were inductively developed throughout the analysis process by using three types of coding: open, axial and selective (Straus & Corbin, 1998; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Open coding took place at the beginning of data analysis and accounts such as events, actions, and interactions were compared with each other. During this phase accounts are grouped together to create categories and subcategories—in this case, neighborhoods. This process of grouping the data by similarities after careful comparison and analysis enables the researcher to avoid her own biases and to focus more strictly on what the data demonstrates (Straus & Corbin, 1998). The second phase was axial coding, which examined the relationships between categories and subcategories that were evaluated against the data (Straus & Corbin, 1998). I coded the qualitative responses, grouping them into broad categories and subcategories. Lastly, during the selective coding phase, all categories that emerged were unified to develop interpretive themes, which I used to analyze the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). After employing these three types of coding, I developed a code book of my findings for research questions two and three.

During the second phase of my study, I used narrative data analysis for education journey mapping. Narrative analysis is an approach whereby the researcher analyzes the stories people create and engages in inquiry through written, spoken, or visual representation. This approach helped me understand how and why people talk about their lives as a story of place, and the development of their identity as a result of those stories (Gilbert, 2008). For my study, participants were given a large piece of paper and markers and asked to map their education journey from when they started school to now within the context of their community. They were asked to include people, places, obstacles, and opportunities that they faced throughout their lives, and draw the relationship with Golden State University. It was a freeform exercise in

which participants were asked to sketch or create a flow chart. They were encouraged to use different colors to show their feelings, whether using symbols like lines and arrows or words. They were encouraged to be creative and then given an opportunity to explain their drawing to me. As the researcher, I explained to the participants that there was not a right or wrong way to do their journey map, and to ultimately have fun with the process. After each participant concluded this part of the exercise, I wrote individual stories for each of the 10 participants, and used those stories to conduct cross-case analysis to see what themes emerged across the 10 interviews. Education journey mapping served as a useful tool to humanize my research.

In phase three of my study, I examined various documents to cross-compare with my other sources, the interactive artifact-based interview and education journey mapping. The emerging themes from phases one and two provided an understanding of what participants believed was the role of the university as an anchor institution. Then, in phase three, I was able to examine my emerging themes and determine whether they were in line with or contradictory to what the university said and did. I also used the existing literature on the role of anchor institutions as a reference in this process.

Throughout each phase of the data analysis process I used "in vivo" coding vis-à-vis video and audio recording within 24 hours of the interview to ensure reliability. The utilization of in-vivo coding was essential for my study because it is a method of verbatim coding that honors the participant's voice (Saldaña, 2016). I transcribed my interviews using Temi recording software on my iPhone, and used a tape recorder as backup. After each interactive interview and journey mapping exercise concluded, I manually coded and organized my emerging themes and subthemes. Additionally, I created a table with quotes and emerging themes from the artifact-based interview and educational journey mapping exercise, and assigned the corresponding

research question. Creating this table helped validate the reliability of my findings. Next, I manually read the transcripts, labeled and color-coded relevant blurbs, decided which codes were the most important, and created categories by bringing several codes together. Then, I labeled categories and decided which were the most relevant and how they were connected to each other and decided whether there was a hierarchy among the categories. I also created various analytic memos to keep track of my emerging ideas, and about the relationship between anchor institutions and local community alumni. My memos helped articulate my findings and implications later in the study. I also asked an additional researcher to independently review and code my transcripts for inter-rater reliability. Participants also had the opportunity to read through the transcripts, validate their accuracy, and add clarity or more detail to any responses. No participants made any additions or corrections to the transcripts. This part of the data analysis process enhanced validity by allowing participants to view transcripts, themes, and case analysis for review, clarity, and confirmation (Creswell, 2018). Through this process I was able to successfully address research questions 1-3.

Ethical Issues

I positioned myself as a researcher first rather than an administrator at Golden State University as a way to develop mutual understanding and trust with participants. In my role as an administrator at GSU, I did not have hold authority or power over participants given the nature of the snowball sampling methodology. Each potential participant engaged in this study on a purely voluntary basis. To ensure that no ethical issues arose, I also ensured confidentiality and anonymity to the site and participants by using pseudonyms and unique participant identifiers. I kept all personal data in password-protected devices and deleted it after my dissertation was completed. I backed up my data by keeping everything on my laptop, as well as copies on

Google Docs and an external hard drive. No ethical issues emerged from this study, as all participation was voluntary. In order to ensure the information recorded was accurate, I provided an opportunity for check-ins with participants to review their transcripts before I reported my findings.

Positionality

I am a native Angeleno and live in Los Angeles County. I am a self-identified Latina, daughter of immigrant parents, and an employee of the California State University (CSU) System. This set of characteristics could have affected how I interacted with the participants, and how I interpreted the findings. For example, one of the primary reasons why I chose to work at GSU is because I believe in its mission and its students. When I walk on the campus, I see myself in many ways. I see young inner-city students of color that are eager for an opportunity to change their circumstances, and ideally provide a better life for their loved ones through the power of higher education. The connection that I feel could have led me to over-project some of the positive findings, and thus I triangulated my data to ensure reliability.

I was also cognizant of my positionality and practiced proactive reflexivity both by triangulating data and by constantly reflecting on myself as the researcher in order to provide a more effective and impartial analysis (Creswell, 2018). As such, I examined and consciously acknowledged that as a researcher I brought certain assumptions and preconceptions that could have potentially shaped the outcome of my study. For example, in my personal and scholarly life, I am guided by the idea in education that all spaces, histories, and dynamics are racialized. Because this study considered the role of race in students' perspectives, it was imperative to practice detached and impartial observation for my study to most effectively analyze participant responses.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

The biggest issue challenging the credibility and trustworthiness of my study was my role as an administrator at GSU, my positionality, and my general reactivity to the findings. In an effort to minimize the effects, I positioned myself as a researcher first, and used a journal to denote my personal thought process and emotions throughout the interactive artifact-based interview and education journey mapping activity. Journaling allowed for an opportunity to account and reflect on my own personal biases, assumptions, and reactivity (Creswell, 2018). It also allowed me to note any changes or improvements needed to my interview protocol as I moved forward with my findings and implications.

Limitations

Given the nature of my qualitative research and decision to conduct snowball sampling, generalizability was not attainable or relevant for this study. The aim of qualitative research as it relates to generalizability is to make logical generalizations to a theoretical understanding of a similar class of phenomena or inquiry rather than probabilistic generalizations to a population (Creswell, 2018; Saldaña, 2016). My findings are not generalizable, but the discussion provides an in-depth look at the lived experiences and viewpoints of local alumni residents, and how they view their alma matter as an anchor institution. My overall objective was to contribute to the limited existing literature related to local alumni of regional comprehensive anchor institutions in Los Angeles.

Summary

Using the lens of Organizational Place-Building Theory, this qualitative study sought to understand to what degree an organization values and invests in its geographical and social location (Kimball & Thomas, 2012), centering on the perspective of local alumni residents of a

regional comprehensive anchor institution in Los Angeles. The qualitative approach of my study allowed for my findings to be inductively examined and categorized. The unique blend of artifact-based interviews, education journey mapping, and document analysis provided triangulation and qualitative reliability throughout the study (Maxwell, 2013). Focusing my research on local community stakeholders/alumni within a 10-mile radius of a regional comprehensive anchor institution in Los Angeles helped address a distinct gap in the existing body of literature.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter reports the findings of a qualitative research study that focuses on 10 local community alumni who live and/or work within a 10-mile radius of one regional comprehensive anchor institution, Golden State University. The interview data was collected between March 1st and March 13th, 2020 and explored how 10 individuals described the role of their alma mater as an anchor institution in their personal lives and its role within their surrounding communities. I utilized multiple qualitative data sources including an artifact-based mapping interview, education journey mapping, and document analysis to gain a deeper understanding of their lived experiences and of the surrounding communities in relation to the university's efforts. The first two generated sources—the artifact-based mapping interview and the education journey mapping—produced findings that spoke to the impact of GSU on the community and on their alumni, whereas the last source helped me compare these perceptions to the university's own claims and goals as evidenced in their publicly available documents. Organizational Place-Building Theory framed both the planning of my study and provided analytic guidance as I aimed to understand the degree to which GSU, as an anchor institution, values and invests in its geographical and social locations.

I sought to address the following three research questions:

1. From the perspective of local community alumni, how does a regional comprehensive university serve (if at all) as an anchor institution in their personal lives?
2. From the perspective of local community alumni, how does a regional comprehensive university serve (if at all) as an anchor institution in the local neighborhoods of Los Angeles?

3. What are the differences and similarities (if any) between what the university thinks it is doing (or should be doing) and what the local community alumni think the university is doing (or should be doing) as an anchor institution?

Principal Findings

The qualitative analysis conducted in my study revealed the interrelationships between people and places, and how place-based entities such as anchor institutions play an influential factor in this dynamic relationship. Analysis of the data produced seven principal findings in response to my original research questions. First, participants affirmed that their lived experiences influenced their decision to attend a nearby regional comprehensive university. Second, participants affirmed that neighborhoods in Los Angeles are racialized, and subsequently shaped how they view and interact with the world. Third, participants credit GSU for creating a safe space for the Latinx community by building a strong sense of belonging for them. Fourth, participants believed that GSU does play an active role in decreasing individual poverty by serving as a large regional employer in the region or by creating upward mobility for graduates. Fifth, GSU's typology as an anchor institution is a *convener* given that it is able to provide more resources in the form of human capital than monetary funding to the community. Sixth, study participants confirmed that GSU has revitalized the local neighborhood through campus beautification efforts, increased public safety, and viewed campus infrastructure as a benefit for the community. However, my seventh and final finding reveals that participants firmly believed that GSU does not do enough to help under-served K-12 schools in the surrounding communities vis-à-vis university-community partnerships, and that some of GSU's institutional policies have an adverse impact on nearby communities of color. Consequently, participants believe that places with power have the potential to reproduce educational inequities

in their localities, in which GSU is no exception. The participants of my study revealed a complex assessment, both affirmative and critical, of GSU. In the following sections, I will discuss my findings in greater depth.

Finding 1: Participants' Lived Experiences Influenced Their Decision to Attend a Nearby Regional Comprehensive Anchor Institution

The first finding was based on reports of personal circumstances that participants shared. Their lived experiences represent the kinds of decisions local populations make in regard to GSU. All of the participants agreed that their personal circumstances and growing up in their respective neighborhoods shaped and defined how they view the world, and ultimately played a defining factor in pursuing a post-secondary education at a nearby regional comprehensive university. Their narratives as nearby residents of the university, but also as alumni provide a window of opportunity for organizations such as regional anchor institutions to more intimately understand the people they serve as part of their mission.

Educational journey mapping helped me to documenting graduates' experiences**.** The participants were encouraged to not think in binaries in this activity, and instead to give descriptive, raw responses about themselves. As a result, I was able to engage with the participants in an open manner centering their experiences, memories, and beliefs. In a sense, I became an observer in the creation of their own introspective research. In doing so, I was able to better understand the participants' personal lives and local neighborhoods in relation to place—to Golden State University.

Personal Experiences

The majority of the participants experienced personal challenges, familial responsibilities and resource limitations that forced them to be place-bound students. These experiences limited

them in various social and academic ways. For example, Stella's father passed away, Elisa's mother was diagnosed with cancer, and Albert was battling depression and obesity. Daniel and Kathleen came from single-parent homes and encountered financial hardships. John was discouraged to attend university altogether due to his undocumented status. The choice to stay near home to have familial support, or to fulfill caretaking and financial duties, was crucial for many participants. These additional, personal barriers prevented participants from considering other post-secondary institutions.

At times, these factors also inhibited their success even if participants did stay near home. For instance, Jessica was a caretaker for her younger siblings while her parents worked multiple jobs. These additional responsibilities at home often left Jessica taxed and exhausted, and she was unable to fully focus on her studies. After she failed all her courses during her freshman year at GSU, she was academically dismissed from the university and had to retake her courses at a community college before re-applying to GSU years later. Another example is Maria, who always wanted to dorm and study abroad, but knew that her family could not financially afford those enriching collegiate experiences without getting into significant debt. Stella challenged people who told her to "just get married, and have kids" and asserted: "I didn't just want to become a statistic and feed into the stereotype of being a young uneducated Latina…I knew there was more to me." Diana came back to school in her early thirties after serving in the United States armed forces. She struggled to connect with her younger classmates and her sense of isolation led her to reconsider whether or not returning to school was the right choice.

Three participants reported that they chose Golden State University because it was the only option close to home, and it was accessible and affordable. Albert indicated: "I didn't have a car, and because Golden State University was so close (1.5 miles), I was easily able to take the

bus to school and back home again." Daniel believed that since he was not a good student in high school, GSU "was the only viable option" but that while at GSU he "learned how to be an excellent student, and connected with mentors." He further stated: "I don't think I would have gotten the same level of care and exposure at another university, because I don't think all universities have programs geared for at-risk, first-generation students like GSU did." In the same vein, Kathleen attended GSU because she was working full time and needed a convenient university near her workplace and home and John decided to attend GSU because as an undocumented student he would have to pay expensive international student fees elsewhere. GSU was thus the only affordable option for John and his scholarship provider.

The participants' personal experiences reflect the existing literature on the importance of regional comprehensive universities. Among all types of four-year colleges, regional comprehensive universities enroll the largest proportion of underrepresented students, including military veterans, adult learners, ethnic minorities, first-generation students, and immigrants (Orphan, 2018). Each participant in my study was either a minority, first generation student, military veteran, immigrant, adult learner, or, usually, a combination of these categories. GSU was characterized as a place in which students with odds stacked against them could make both academic and personal gains. Using the maps that the students created, I zoomed in on these experiences to understand the challenges and opportunities the participants personally faced.

Neighborhood Experiences

Nearly all of the participants (nine out of 10) talked about police brutality, gang violence, and petty theft in their communities. Albert, for example, discussed how people in his East Los Angeles neighborhood were "either on social assistance or dealing with unfair cops," continuing: "I don't feel like I have a positive relationship with the police. I've never been arrested; I've

never been to jail. But, I feel like I've been mistreated by the police all my life in my own neighborhood…so I decided to get my education and empower my community, especially young men of color." Relatedly, Stella and Maria discussed their relationship with the police. They reflected on the subpar police response rate to emergency calls from local residents and how that impacted their decision to attend college. Stella gave an example during her mapping exercise:

> I live in East LA and if you call the cops, they take forever to get to where you're at. I've personally had a bad experience. I once called the police, and they took like an hour and a half to get there. So, like what are they doing? I'm understanding because I'm a social worker. I've worked with cops, so I understand, but how are the people in my community feeling? What about if it's a real big crime or something worse than what happened to me? What are [the police] actually doing? Obviously they may be understaffed but they have to be a little faster, because I'm sure in Beverly Hills the response rate is a lot faster…I see it, and feel it and that's why I decided to go to school to become a social worker to help people in my community, and now I'm getting my masters to be better equipped to help ever more people.

Similarly, Maria who grew up in Maywood, a small city with a population of 27,000 situated South East of Los Angeles discussed her city's reputation of government corruption scandals and how that hindered her sense of safety in her own community. Her neighborhood experiences propelled her to pursue her post-secondary degree. She explained:

> I don't feel safe in my community, and I don't feel like the police makes us feel safe either. We don't have a Maywood Sheriff's station and we don't have a police department anymore just for Maywood. I see how the sheriffs treat us, especially those who are

undocumented or don't speak English, like my parents…I didn't want to be treated like that, so I decided to better myself and go to college.

Gang violence and petty theft were also realities for many participants of this study. Paul and Kathleen talked about growing up in Northeast Los Angeles during the 1990s and early 2000s and how that impacted their association to their neighborhood, and overall identity. Paul remembered the constant vandalism of property in the form of "tagging" seen on his way to school every day: "You know [tagging] does something to you, it makes you feel sad and not proud of your community, and where you come from." Kathleen also recounted the difficulties associated with the gang mentality: "back in the days, it wasn't safe to walk down your streets, you would get jumped just because you had confidence." Similarly, Elisa who grew up in Southeast Los Angeles also mentioned some of the drawbacks in her community, including petty theft, "usually at night but sometimes…you would see car jackings or someone getting their purse snatched in the middle of the day," explaining that this made her feel unsafe walking to the bus stop. Despite these difficult circumstances and in some cases, motivated by them, the participants in this study prioritized completing their degree.

In the next section, I provide results of a neighborhood mapping exercise that each participant completed as a part of the interview process. Participants provided insightful geographical contexts of how participants view GSU and various neighborhoods in Los Angeles, and the relationship they have to those places. The participants' reported lived experiences discussed in the Finding 1, dovetailed into the mapping exercise of my study.

Finding 2: Participants Believe Neighborhoods Are Racialized in Los Angeles

In the second finding, the data indicated the participants' awareness of economic and social disparities in Los Angeles, particularly through the lens of race and racial segregation.

Through the mapping exercise, participants offered a bifurcated picture of Los Angeles, in which places such as neighborhoods are divided largely by racial group (Florida, 2018; Florida & Mellander, 2014).

Bifurcated Neighborhoods

To designate neighborhoods in Los Angeles that they perceived to be socio-economically "well-off" and/or "safe," participants placed green dotted stickers on the map. By and large, participants placed green dots on the map and identified the following Los Angeles neighborhoods as well-off and safe: Alhambra, Downey, Whittier, Monrovia, South Pasadena, San Marino, La Crescenta, the beach communities (Manhattan, Hermosa, Santa Monica, Redondo, Rancho Palos Verdes, Malibu), Beverly Hills, Pasadena, and Arcadia. Paul of East Los Angeles asserted that the "green dotted" neighborhoods were more maintained and had more investments whereas red dotted neighborhoods where "poor brown people" live are likelier to be filled with "apartment complexes and rundown streets." He continued:

> In these communities things are taken out of it, not put into it. And that's because the owners of these properties often don't live in East Los Angeles. I live in East LA and I am a homeowner, but usually it's a ton of renters. And so, East Los Angeles is where you get your passive income for investment properties that you don't have to fix up, and you don't have to look at every day so that you can live over there [pointing to San Marino, South Pasadena, Arcadia]. Honestly, I don't know much about redlining, but we have never really had an opportunity to live in those neighborhoods.

Paul's observation supports research and policy literature on racial and geographical inequities in Los Angeles. As noted in the literature review of this study, racial stratification hinders Los Angeles's ability to outperform other large metropolitan regions (Bobo et al., 2000; Cummings,

2018; PolicyLink, 2017). This racial segregation is particularly problematic because Los Angeles is a minority-majority region, with Latinx comprising the largest ethnic group (Policy Link, 2017; U.S. Census Quick Facts, n.d.). These disparities found in neighborhoods hinder the outcomes of historically marginalized groups, including Latinx, Blacks, and other immigrant groups, and create limits on where they live, work or attend school, and belong.

Next, participants placed red dots on the Los Angeles area map and identified the following neighborhoods in Los Angeles that they considered to be socio-economically distressed and unsafe. The majority of the participants labeled Huntington Park, East Los Angeles, Maywood, Cudahy, Bell, Bell Gardens, Florence-Graham, Walnut Park, South Los Angeles, South Gate, Lynwood, and Commerce. Seventy percent of the participants referred to the larger concentration of Latinx, immigrants, and people with limited college exposure in the red colored communities, especially along the 710 Freeway corridor. John explained while placing red dots on the map, that the areas around the 710 corridor are heavily affected by the port, including by "politics and public contamination." He described the South East area, defined by the biggest population growth in the 1990s from 1980s immigration, as a place with "a lot of poverty and violence like the same type found in the South, like Watts or Compton." He also believed that in these communities the racial tensions were between people of color: "I want to say the tensions that happen usually happen between the African American and the Latinx community because those two communities are competing for jobs in order to bring "bread to their home." John's comment aligned with the personal narrative of each of the participants, who all grew up and currently live within a 10-mile radius of the university. The neighborhoods in which participants currently reside are either in the South East or East of Los Angeles.

Third, participants placed yellow dotted stickers on the map to identify where they believe the majority of the students grew up or currently reside in. Huntington Park, East LA, El Monte, Montebello, El Sereno, Alhambra, Maywood, Bell, Bell Gardens, Cudahy, and Lynwood were identified on the map. There was noticeable overlap in terms of where GSU students come from and the socio-economically distressed and unsafe communities as identified by red dots on the participants' maps. During her interview, Elisa stated: "most of [GSU] students come from the crappy areas of LA." Document analysis of GSU student demographics reports substantiates Elisa and other participants' observations from the mapping exercise. Gomez et. al (2019) describes the current student demographic profile as 88.5% of undergraduate students with demonstrated financial need, 72% who are low income and eligible for Pell Grants and 58% who are first generation college students. Approximately 64% of current students are Latinx, 83% come from Los Angeles, 50% come from within an eight-mile radius of the university, and 75% from within a 14-mile radius, and approximately 70% of alumni reside in Los Angeles.

Finally, reflecting on areas where they believe GSU alumni tend to reside, the majority of the study's participants placed blue stickers in the same communities that they originally grew up in, including East LA, Huntington Park, and Maywood. In addition, seven out 10 explained that a large majority of alumni eventually tend to move eastward along the 10 freeway to neighborhoods or cities such as West Covina, Hacienda Heights, Whittier, Pico Rivera, Pomona, and Ontario. The participants indicated that GSU alumni tend to move to those areas once they have families of their own because purchasing a home within city limits is not an option for far too many people, even after graduating from GSU. They cited the high cost of housing, unsafe neighborhoods, and poor school districts as reasons for leaving the neighborhoods directly adjacent to GSU.

Upon completing the color-coded artifact-based exercise, I asked each participant to describe what they saw on the map. Their responses converged with respect to the location of red, yellow, and green on the maps. First, they reported that there is a centralization of red in neighborhoods along the 710 Freeway from GSU heading southbound to Long Beach. Golden State University serves as an invisible wall between the red and green communities. For example, communities south of GSU such as East LA, Maywood, Cudahy, Bell, and Florence-Graham have similar characteristics: lower socioeconomic status of its residents, largely Hispanic, lower education levels, high immigrant percentages, high rates of poverty, high crime rates, and poorly performing schools. They also observed an overlap of the red and yellow communities, indicating that students who attend Golden State University tend to live in neighborhoods perceived as distressed and unsafe. The participants' observations are in line with the information acquired from GSU reports discussing the demographics of its student body population. Lastly, those who live in green dotted communities are less likely to attend GSU. Daniel, who lives in El Sereno, has children attending private schools in Pasadena and indicated that the majority of the students who attend school with his children are less likely to attend GSU because "they more than likely have parents who for the most part are white, attended college themselves, and perceive [GSU] as less prestigious, and only see GSU as a backup university." Daniel's observation encapsulates how places are perceived, valued and invested in, and ultimately racialized, and how they can continue to reproduce educational inequities and perpetuate hegemonic systems on a local level. This finding informs the next discussion—the role of gentrification in participants' neighborhoods, and the presence of GSU.

Gentrification

While not an essential focus of my study, more than half of the participants mentioned gentrification as a concern for their neighborhoods. Only a few of the participants, however, directly attributed gentrification to the university. They expressed that gentrification was more of a result of the high cost of living in Los Angeles in general. For instance, John, Albert, Maria, Kathleen, and Paul explained that as the cost of living continues to increase in Los Angeles, more and more students and their families have no choice but to move eastward, or to less desirable parts of Los Angeles. In addition, participants indicated that the westside of Los Angeles was out of reach for them if they wanted to become homeowners because it is "closer to the beach and way more expensive."

Six of the 10 participants believed GSU did not intentionally contribute to the issue of gentrification. However, the participants did believe gentrification had unintended consequences for students of color in their surrounding communities. The existing literature suggests that if anchor institutions are not careful in their approach to economic development and neighborhood revitalization, they can cause more harm than good. Instead of building community wealth in local neighborhoods, an imbalance of power between the university and local community members can occur (Baldwin, 2017; Bates, 1997; Brown et. al., 2016). A class example is the University of Pennsylvania, whose University Science Center displaced hundreds or thousands people from West Philadelphia over a 10- to 15-year period (Brown et al., 2016; Carlson, 1999). As is common in many university towns, people were pushed out of their community as a result of the university's expansion efforts in their communities.

Paul discussed the impact of gentrification in his hometown of Highland Park. Paul asserted that, now, "people look different and are mostly white, and purchasing a home in that

area is nearly impossible…and not to say that diversity isn't important, but power differentials are interesting factors because there are winners and losers, and usually it's the poorer brown folks that suffer the repercussion of gentrification." Similarly, Kimberly felt that El Sereno, which is nearby GSU, was still a "rough" area when she purchased her home, but now sees more and more white people moving into the neighborhood, and, as a result, the property value of homes in her neighborhood has more than tripled. She elaborated: "I'm always checking out houses on Zillow, and you always see how realtors always mention GSU as a desirable feature…like I could never afford to buy a home in El Sereno in today's market, and question how some working-class people even manage to afford to pay their mortgage now." Ultimately, the participants discussion about gentrification and the changing demographics of their community sheds light on the important role GSU can play in either supporting their neighborhood or exacerbating the issues.

Finding 3: Participants Believe the University Creates a Safe Space for Latinx Communities

As a Hispanic-serving institution (HSI), participants described perceiving GSU as actively supportive for Latinx communities, including a sense of belonging at the school for Latinx students. Perrakis and Hagedorn (2010) offered specific qualitative data about the experiences of students, faculty, and administrators working at another urban HSI. Data from their study suggested that the campus status as an HSI influences and shapes the experiences of those who work and study there; nevertheless, in many cases students remain unaware of the significance or meaning of HSI status. Graduates of GSU, with over 64% of the students identifying as Latinx (i.e. Hispanic), were influenced and shaped by their experiences at an HSI, with all participants indicating a positive association and strong sense of belonging as a result of

the majority Latinx/Hispanic population in the institution. In fact, it was one of the primary reasons six of the 10 participants chose to attend GSU versus other nearby options, both public and private. However, less than half of the participants, all of whom work in education, were not able to discuss on a more specific level what it meant for GSU to be an HSI. For example, participants did not note any school programs geared toward the Latinx student body population, and were unclear on how funding or programming was impacted by the HSI designation. Overall, despite the majority of participants not being able to fully articulate the discrete organizational benefits as an HSI, they recognized that it influenced their collegiate experience in a favorable way. The literature suggests that this sense of benefit derived from connections to an institution and may be connected to a sense of belonging and trust (Laden, 2004; Perrakis & Hagedorn 2010).

Sense of Belonging and Trust

Participants in the study indicated a sense of belonging around GSU and trust in the campus values. Porter and Kramer (2011) contend that if anchor institutions are to sustain their involvement in the inner city, they must develop values that are shared with the community and pursue its own interests in a way that also creates value for the surrounding neighborhood. Interviews revealed that all participants shared values that contributed to a sense of belonging to, and trust in, the university. For example, Stella recollects: "people look like me and that's something I can really appreciate. Although I am an educated person, I don't feel comfortable when I'm in Calabasas because there are so many rich white people in that area, and they make me feel like an outsider. However, when I'm at GSU, I feel like I belong."

Paul had similar experiences as a student in a fraternity at GSU and later as a Greek advisor at another regional comprehensive university. As a student, Paul was in a fraternity that

has a largely white membership at other university campuses; however, at GSU, he realized that "there's a lot that comes with being around people who look like you." He continued:

> At GSU, which is a Hispanic-serving institution, you're among essentially your folks, your people. And so, it just feels more empowering. It feels like you have that sense of ownership of your area. At GSU it was where a lot of like these Southeast LA and East LA students, and also not so high-level performing students congregated at and we made it our own place of empowerment…I also think because there is such a large Latinx population here at GSU, I didn't have to worry about being a minority in a white fraternity because everyone here is like me, Latinx [...] [t]here is something very powerful about being in an environment [in which] I was able to be just a college student.

He described feeling that students had much more agency at GSU, compared to his former institution, where parents and white students held power over the students of color. Likewise, Elisa also chose GSU because it "felt like home" to her. She discussed how closely connected she feels to her Mexican heritage and how GSU was essentially an extension of who she was because "demographically it was what fit for me because it gave me more of a sense of belonging. It's not a huge campus either. I think that serving Latinx and people of color, is something that I feel proud of. You know, I also embraced diversity, but the fact that there's a lot of Latinx, that's what made sense for me. That's what really caught my attention."

In addition, Jessica had an opportunity to attend another university but chose GSU because she felt connected to the student population of the university. Jessica explained her decision: "the majority of the people who attended have similar experiences as me, we understand where we came from, and as a result were able to connect better." In addition, Diana attended GSU because "that where everyone from the neighborhood goes to school." Ultimately,

the testimony of the participants for this study highlights the power that place has on building a strong sense of belonging, comfort, and the impact on a person's psyche. In the next section, I describe the power that participants ascribe to GSU with respect to how it can help to alleviate the conditions of poverty so prevalent in its surrounding communities.

Finding 4: Participants Believe the University Plays an Active Role in Decreasing Poverty

During the artifact-based interview process of my study, the vast majority of participants described GSU as a robust "hub" for the local economy and surrounding communities. The participants described the university as influential in being a large regional employer and a place of upward mobility. However, despite these attributes, stagnant wages, high cost of living, and an influx of new residents moving into their neighborhoods also uncovered negative sentiments toward related gentrification.

Large Regional Employer

The participants of this study described Golden State University as an "equalizer" and considered the institution to be a big part of the local economy. Several of the participants described the university as a large regional employer providing stable employment and benefits to a myriad of individuals living in the surrounding neighborhoods. Most of the participants have a direct relationship with, or knowledge of what it means to be employed by GSU; this involved working as students, having a relative or close friend that works for the university and/or currently working at the university. Maria and Stella both started their professional trajectory as student assistants at GSU, and their experiences in that role were transformative for their personal and professional development. Maria asserted that "someone took a chance on me when I came to orientation as an [incoming] freshman and offered me a job on the spot, and that basically gave me my current career. Ever since then I've worked in an office or school in the

field of education." Similarly, Stella talked about her time as a student assistant for a Vice President and how it impacted her decision to pursue a career in social work: "I saw how much she [Vice President] really cared about people, and it made me realize that I too wanted to work with people, and help them better themselves. That's when I knew that I wanted to pursue my master's degree in social work as well." Kathleen and Daniel had related viewpoints about the role of the university in the local economy. Daniel contended that "GSU is an equalizer because it moves working class students and helps them change from being low-income to becoming a teacher or becoming a police officer, or a firefighter. I think that's a big part of the local economy, and I don't think GSU gets enough credit for that."

Similarly, once Kathleen decided that she was going to pursue teaching as a career, she made the conscientious decision to only apply to GSU for her teaching credentialing program. She stated that many of her friends had been through GSU's program, and that "it just made the most sense, financially and geographically." Though two other programs were closer to home, she felt that they were "not an option for a credential program" because GSU is more affordable and reflective of the population that she wanted to serve such as first-generation, low-income, and inner-city youth.

The findings in this study align with existing literature about the vital role that institutions of higher education represent for local and national economies. In the United States, nearly 2,000 institutions of higher education are located in central cities, representing more than half of all universities and colleges in the country (Coalition of Urban Serving Universities 2010; Initiative for a Competitive Inner City and CEOs for Cities, 2010). These urban universities are often among the largest employers and landowners within their cities, generating massive economic development impacts (Ehlenz, 2016; Perry et al., 2009). In the case of GSU, 3,100 people are

employed by the institution, and 86% of those employees live in Los Angeles County (Gomez et al., 2019). In addition, over the last nine years, the university has tracked several procurement measures that affect the local community and the public good. GSU is the only university in the 23-campus California State University (CSU) system that has exceeded the system's Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise procurement goals in each year measured, doubling the goal in eight of those years (Gomez et al., 2019). Similarly, GSU exceeded the system's small-business procurement goals in eight of those nine years, and had the highest average percentage spend, again leading the CSU ([Golden State University], 2018b). Further, local businesses receive approximately 10% of the university's procurement spending (Gomez et al., 2019). This impact may continue to grow; recent data showed that, of public sector employers in Los Angeles County, GSU had the highest percentage gain in workforce from 2017 to 2018, at 23%, and its budget grew by $14 million (Fine, 2018). GSU's impact illustrates a robust community benefit.

Upward Mobility

The majority of the participants noted that although some people have negative perceptions of the university such as being "ghetto," "rundown," "a back-up plan," "just a commuter school," and "the school for poor Hispanics," they felt these were misnomers. GSU has long viewed itself as an engine of social mobility because of its success in educating its diverse students, many of whom are the first in their families to attend college. Several of the participants mentioned that over the past five years, the university has increased in value due to new university leadership, messaging, increased selectivity, and campus expansion efforts. Stella contended that GSU "is the best kept secret in Los Angeles because of its affordability and access," which was one of the reasons why she chose to return for her master's in social work. Paul expressed a similar sentiment:

> You know, I think it was essentially career-wise, education-wise, kind of my saving grace…to be honest, I wasn't necessarily proud to go to [Golden State University] in 2003. It was not a popular school, especially in the world of USC and UCLA, even Fullerton, or Pomona. [GSU] was essentially at the bottom of the pecking order of all four-year universities relative to my area…people associate it like a little ghetto. A little run down. That it's not a prestigious university. So, at the time that I came here, it was all about like, man, maybe I'll try to transfer to a UC. And now as an alumni and having a taste of the entire education system…I am really glad that I came here and not anywhere else. I truly feel that my degree has increased in its value since I left. I have many friends who went to many prestigious universities who feel bogged down by their student debt and all that stuff. And so, I now consider myself extremely lucky to have gone to [GSU].

The document analysis inquiry supported Stella and Paul's perception of GSU as helpful to students' socioeconomic mobility. A 2017 study by the Equality of Opportunity Project ranked GSU as number one in the nation for the upward mobility of its students, revealing that, compared to the average of these other institutions, Golden State University has generally propelled a higher percentage of students from the bottom fifth of income into the top fifth of U.S. earners (Chetty et al., 2017). Participants' personal experiences with upward mobility highlight the power that GSU has not only for its students, but also the local economy and region.

Finding 5: The Typology of Golden State University as Anchor Institution is the Convener

In conducting this study, I was able to determine the typology of Golden State University as an anchor institution. As noted in the literature review of this study, Hodges and Dubb (2012) created a typology that describes how universities engage with communities, as either

facilitators, *conveners*, or *leaders*. Based on the 10 interviews conducted, the data suggests that GSU's relationship to the community can best be described as a *convener* anchor institution. Hodges and Dubb (2012) describe a *convener* anchor institution as able to provide more resources in the form of human capital than monetary funding to the community.

By examining and determining the typology of GSU, I was able to build a schema based on the data of the level and type of institutional support and leadership, funding and resources, the nature of community relationships, and strategic priorities. GSU's service learning, coalition building, and addressing community needs in non-adjacent communities to the university confirms its typology as a convener.

Service- Learning

GSU leverages its human capital through its central mission of "engagement, service and the public good" (CSU Community Engagement, 2020). Since March 2014, GSU adopted a revised General Education (GE) framework that is outcome-based and carries distinctive and innovative features, such as a new service-learning requirement, an enhanced writing component, and a strengthened and expanded diversity requirement (CSU Community Engagement, 2020). The new GE program is closely aligned with the university's strategic plan. The service-learning requirement is the defining feature of the new GE policy, with a distinctive focus on engagement with the surrounding communities and the greater Los Angeles area. Community engagement has long been a tradition at GSU, and service learning affords GSU students the opportunity to develop the capacity for meaningful engagement with diverse communities and make well-informed, ethical, and socially responsible decisions.

A majority of the participants actively engaged in service-learning activities during their time as students at GSU. For example, Jessica mentioned her involvement with the university's

Center for Engagement, Service, and the Public Good (EPIC) as instrumental in her personal and professional development: “It’s kind of a public service program. [EPIC] does good for the community by giving back. All the jobs that I have had are all in public service because it’s important for me to give back to my community. During my time here, I kind of keyed in on EPIC and I volunteered making Christmas cards, and creating boxes for donations in South Los Angeles, East Los Angeles and other less fortunate communities.” Jessica’s involvement exemplifies a general sense of commitment towards community service for most of the participants.

Coalition Building

Conveners also make investments strategically by creating coalitions with residents and community-based organizations (CBOs). They tend to value collaborative decision making rather than unilateral decision making (Hodges & Dubb, 2012). According to GSU’s university engagement page, it has nearly 175 community partners in education, legal, medical and social service (Golden State University Community Partners Directory, n.d.). During interviews, participants mentioned at least six different university-community partnerships that they were either directly involved with during their time as students, or became aware of as alumni. For example, the Grifols summer academy, Go East LA, and Mind Matters were programs mentioned as flagship partnerships for the university. The Grifols summer academy is a program in conjunction with a local high school that invites youth to participate in a two-week summer science academy to encourage youth to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering and math fields. A former participant of the Grifols program stated that “at Garfield, we don’t really have labs, and this is the only opportunity we have to see and work in a lab” (Palma, 2015). Similarly, GO East LA is a pathway program for college and career success. It was created in

2014 to promote greater academic outcomes for all East L.A. students by focusing on college awareness, preparation, completion, and career readiness (Go East LA, n.d.). Lastly, Mind Matters is a nationally recognized model for improving the inner and physical well-being of students by providing vital behavioral health services, resources, and basic needs (CSU Development, n.d.). In sum, participants had positive associations with these programs, recognizing and expressing appreciation for the university's continuous effort to strengthen ties with the local neighborhoods.

Moreover, conveners invest in neighborhoods that they perceive have the greatest need, and not necessarily in the communities adjacent to the campus. Participants described various concerted efforts by the university in certain neighborhoods with demonstrated need, and other neighborhoods not adjacent to the campus. For example, about half of the participants identified Go East LA and Grifols Summer Academy as instrumental programs in East Los Angeles. East Los Angeles is not closest to GSU but demonstrates a higher need than the three immediate surrounding communities of the campus. The median household incomes and education levels for East Los Angeles are significantly lower than Alhambra, Monterey Park, and El Sereno. The median household income in East Los Angeles is $38,621, in comparison to Alhambra's $53,224, Monterey Park's $55,210, and El Sereno's $45,866. The level of education for residents 25 years of age and older with a four-year degree was also significantly less for East Los Angeles, at 3.7% versus Alhambra at 27.5%, Monterey Park at 25.1%, and El Sereno at nearly 10% (LA Department of City Planning; Los Angeles Times, Mapping LA, n.d.; U.S. Census Quick Facts, n.d.). Overall, participants were enthusiastic about GSU's efforts to build inroads by creating coalitions and programs that extended into the broader community.

Addressing Community Needs in Non-Adjacent Communities

The use of document analysis helped me to identify and highlight one of the university's flagship strategic initiatives focusing on non-adjacent communities with the greatest need. In 2016, the Pat Brown Institute at GSU was approached to serve on the South East Los Angeles (SELA) Collaborative board alongside many educational, social service, environmental justice, economic development, and other non-profits and public agencies to address some of the most pressing issues in that region (Gomez et. al, 2019). The SELA region is known as a historically under-resourced area and encompasses eight cities and two unincorporated areas in Los Angeles County: Bell, Bell Gardens, Cudahy, Florence-Firestone, Huntington Park, Lynwood, Maywood, South Gate, Vernon, and Walnut Park. It is home to some 440,000 people, where approximately 44% are immigrants, roughly 10% higher than the Los Angeles County average. The area is burdened with underperforming schools, high levels of unemployment and underemployment, a lack of services for children aged 0-5, significant environmental hazards, and limited access and resources to quality health services. In a recent report, SELA is pegged as a "non-profit desert" in which residents lack access to the services and benefits that nonprofit organizations provide elsewhere in Los Angeles County (CCF & PBI, 2017; Gomez et. al, 2019).

The SELA region is personal to the majority of the participants. More than half of the participants grew up or currently live in the SELA region. They discussed in depth some of the challenges that their communities face on daily basis. For example, more than a quarter of residents in the SELA region (25.4%) live below the poverty line (Barbosa & Anguiano, 2017). Each participant that lived in that region also lived below the poverty line. The median unemployment rate (9.4%) is likewise higher than that of both LA County (7.8%) and California (7.7%). Participants discussed how parents worked "under the table" to help provide for the

family. In terms of educational attainment, 51.36% of residents have a high school diploma or higher (including some college), compared with 78.2% countywide and 82.5% statewide, and only 6.85% of SELA have earned a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 31.2% across the county and 32.6% statewide (Barbosa & Anguiano, 2017; Bowie & Franco, 2020). All of the participants who grew up or lived in the SELA region are the first in their family to pursue a post-secondary degree.

With its proximity to freeways, train yards, and large industrial plants, SELA also presents significant environmental hazards. It has an average pollution burden score of 7.17, compared with an LA County average of 6.19 and state average of 5.17, yet one out of every five SELA residents lack health insurance, compared to one of seven in LA County and one in 10 statewide (Bowie & Franco, 2020). Participants who still lived in the SELA region pointed to abhorrent environmental injustices in their communities. John discussed the Exide contamination debacle that spewed toxic contaminants as lead and arsenic into surrounding communities, and how the community is still dealing with the aftermath years of contamination. Similarly, Diana talked about a recent incident where a Delta airplane had an emergency dumping of fuel on schools near her neighborhood. She exclaimed, "like seriously, there would have been hell to pay if that happened in a rich neighborhood, but the folks here are too busy with life or scared to speak out." Despite GSU's large focus on the SELA region, very few of the participants were familiar with the SELA Collaborative and what the university did to support that region. Those participants who were unfamiliar with the SELA Collaborative expressed an interest in learning more about the university's efforts. These findings demonstrate a disconnect between what GSU's public reports and social media indicate the institution is doing, and what some local

community members perceive the university is doing, an incongruity that will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Finding 6: Participants Affirm the University is Helping to Improve the Community's Appearance and Reduce Deterioration

Though anchor institutions are grounded in a physical place, they play an active role in shaping the built and social environment of their communities including through revitalization efforts, increases in safety, and engagement with transportation efforts (Friedman et al., 2014). Over the last decade, scholars in the field have produced a body of literature to document the scale and scope of the university investments addressing neighborhood deterioration with revitalization efforts (Dubb & Howard, 2013; Ehlenz, 2017; Fulbright-Anderson et al., 2001). Studies have focused on the perspective of the university, whereas this study contributes the viewpoint of community stakeholders (Ehlenz, 2017; Fulbright-Anderson et al., 2001). Participants in my study primarily focused on GSU's engagement with the community through the expansion of the campus presence, beautification and safety of place, and on-campus infrastructure.

Campus Expansion

Anchor institutions are integral to the fabric of local community life and have the potential to strengthen community infrastructure not only economically but also through educational training and leadership opportunities. GSU has taken a keen interest in expanding into the downtown area of Los Angeles. The vast majority of the 10 participants applauded the new satellite campus, which is only five miles away from the main campus. However, half of those participants questioned why the university did not consider a "needy" neighborhood for a satellite campus such as the southeast LA area. Based on document analysis, it appears the

university is focusing on a niche population of working professionals, and those in career transitions seeking personal enrichment in Los Angeles's important downtown commercial centers, including the Figueroa Corridor, the Arts District, the Fashion District, and the Civic Center. The President of GSU stated that GSU's "mission is to provide high-quality university teaching in the heart of Los Angeles…we will bring the resources of [GSU] to students downtown, where they work and live" (GSU DTLA, 2016).

The downtown Los Angeles campus clearly expands the university's reach. Jorge and Diana questioned the rationale for the downtown expansion. Diana argued: "if the majority of the people that attend Golden State University come from East Los Angeles and the South East Los Angeles region, and getting classes is already hard as it is, then why isn't the university considering a satellite campus in the South East LA region like South gate, or Cudahy…like where there is a real need for additional services and resources?" This exemplifies a conflict between the participants perceiving higher need in other areas and the university's desire to tap into a competitive market in order to further expand brand recognition outside of the immediate campus.

Campus Beautification

In addition to providing greater security, anchor institutions improve the quality of life in their communities through beautification initiatives. According to Friedman et al. (2014), 64% of anchor institutions in urban areas are engaged in beautification efforts on and outside of their campus, spending an average of $311,000 annually. Three of the participants—Paul, Kathleen, and Daniel—indicated that GSU has drastically improved the campus through beautification efforts. Paul discussed how he appreciates the new shrubbery, banners, and student union on campus. Kathleen talked about how the "university in and of itself isn't the prettiest school," but

that maintenance has drastically bettered the appearance of the university from the flowers on the walkway, the new track and field, and field lights. Daniel believed the new marketing strategy and beautification of the campus drastically increased student pride, and even noticed more people proudly wearing GSU gear around town, which is something he did not notice before 2016. Kathleen and Daniel, both of El Sereno, discussed how the value of their homes has exponentially increased as a result of being directly adjacent to the university, and have noticed a significant rise in their property as a result of GSU's beautification efforts.

Campus Infrastructure

On-campus infrastructure creates a spillover effect that can bring benefits to nearby communities (Friedman et al., 2014). Participants identified critical infrastructure like GSU's Center for the Arts and the Metro transportation hub as benefits for the at large community. However, some participants noted that GSU is not seen as a place where people can engage in activities; there are no Division 1 sports, and it is largely a commuter school. Participants argued that because the university is not particularly exclusive or prestigious, it lacks brand recognition compared to other universities. Subsequently GSU is not seen as a destination, but more as a "pass-through" for the community.

Half of the participants indicated that although they perceive the university as being well-intentioned in addressing distressed and challenging communities, GSU lacks the cache and monetary resources to give surrounding neighborhoods a form of status. The vast majority of the participants made a clear distinction between GSU and other local institutions with medical institutions and large endowments that are able to make a larger imprint on the local communities. For example, Daniel discussed the significant difference between GSU and USC. He mentioned: "[GSU] is not seen as a destination such as USC...the women and men's soccer

team is good, but you don't hear about people spending their Saturday evening at [GSU]. This in a way, hurts how people perceive the university." As an anchor institution, GSU is ultimately limited by its four-year university function and is less likely to serve as a place in the community than schools that draw the weekend crowds as Paul described.

Public Safety

As stewards of place, safety is a paramount concern in every community and on every university campus (Cantor et al., 2013; Friedman et al., 2014). Participants who live directly adjacent to the university described feeling safe as a result of GSU's public safety efforts spilling over into their streets. As an El Sereno resident, Kathleen talked about the positive impact of having public safety patrolling her neighborhood: "I know that sometimes campus police patrols our area…and I was like, oh wow, they're in the area. That's cool you know. Having another set of public safety patrol is kind of nice, because you know that there are other people, not just LAPD that are in the position to maintain safety." Similarly, Paul agreed that the neighborhood has become much safer since GSU public safety patrols the surrounding neighborhoods. He mentions, "I've noticed a big difference in terms of safety…I see public safety officers chatting with local residents and that's cool to see." In these instance, public safety officers at GSU created a sense of stability through community engagement tactics.

Finding 7: Participants Believe the University Does Not Do Enough to Engage With Under-Resourced K-12 Schools in Their Local Communities

Despite the general consensus of the university's positive impact on the community, interviews with participants indicate that, in the eyes of the alumni, the university does not sufficiently contribute to efforts addressing poor schooling in their neighborhoods. Participants

described a lack of outreach and messaging around community partnerships and academic impaction as two significant areas for improvement.

Community Partnerships and Outreach

The majority of the participants attended schools in the Los Angeles public school system, Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). All of the participants indicated that they came from challenging primary and secondary schools. For example, Kathleen noticed that her white counterparts in the adjacent community of South Pasadena would attend the nearby elementary schools, but would not attend the nearby middle or high school because it was too dangerous during the early 1990s and 2000s, which she ultimately believed "hurts the neighborhood because it is automatically saying that students in these specific public schools are less than those who have the luxury to opt out of LAUSD to attend better funded schools with less brown kids." Kathleen's experience highlights a larger systemic issue. LAUSD is the second largest public-school district in the United States, with over 673,000 students from diverse ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds (LAUSD Finger Tip Facts, 2020). Latinx make up 73% of the student population. In fact, several of the participants discussed GSU as essentially an extension of LAUSD. For example, Diana stated that "anyone that was going to college from my high school, or any other nearby LAUSD school usually just came to GSU…my brother came to GSU and is now a teacher for LAUSD… it's like a full circle." Similarly, when participants were asked what they considered to be the community during the first part of the artifact-based mapping exercise, Kimberly answered, "basically anyone who went to LAUSD is considered part of the community."

GSU has multiple established partnerships with LAUSD. One often touted community partnership is Great Outcomes East LA (GO East LA). This partnership is a collaboration

between LAUSD, East Los Angeles College, and GSU to promote a college-going culture and greater educational outcomes for all East L.A. students. The GO East LA initiative offers all eligible students at a local high school guaranteed admission to East L.A. College or GSU. The initiative also serves students in the nearby feeder middle and elementary schools (Golden State University, GO East LA webpage, n.d.). In his interview, Daniel explained he had heard of GO East LA:

> They touted it as a real positive example of [GSU] leadership with community colleges and working with LAUSD. We actually went to one event a year and a half ago, which is great to see. So, it's a great program…it's a really good opportunity for GSU to work on its strengths, which is taking kids from surrounding neighborhoods schools and getting them into a great academic university to prepare them for the future.

Despite GSU's efforts to partner with local schools, just over half of the participants claimed that the university should take more ownership of the communities that it serves, especially as an HSI. They indicated that the university did not do enough outreach efforts in their respective communities. Maria of Maywood, Elisa of Huntington Park, John of Boyle Heights, and Jessica of South Gate indicated that they do not see GSU advertisements and/or messaging in their own communities. They also recounted their experiences of GSU during their formative K-12 years, and only remember GSU being an active presence during college fairs. Several of the participants believed GSU misses opportunities to actively promote a strong going culture in their own backyard outside of the superficial college fair attendance. In addition, six of 10 participants (Maria, Elisa, Stella, Paul, Diana, and Albert) indicated that GSU's attempt at community partnerships with local high schools by sending a student ambassador every so often

is not impactful enough. The participants' feedback indicated this as an area needing much more improvement for the university.

University Impaction

Impaction was not an essential focus on my study; however, I soon realized that it was a dominant concern for my participants. More than half of the participants discussed academic impaction as a dilemma surrounding Latinx communities near the university. The term impaction is used to describe a campus receiving more eligible applicants at the first-time freshman or transfer student level (Horton, 2017). At the point of impaction, a university must determine its capacity and how many new students it can accept. Impaction also means that campuses invoke "supplementary admission criteria," either for the program or for students who reside outside the campus's local area. The campus's standards for admitting students thus become higher when it is impacted (Horton, 2017). Diana asked: "now that the university is impacted, where will our neighborhood kids go? Who will they turn to?" Similarly, Daniel used himself as an example to highlight how impaction would have hindered his life outcomes, stating: "If GSU was impacted when I was applying to college, my life trajectory would have definitely been different. I'm pretty sure that I would have gone to community college, lacked the discipline to finish and never would have graduated with my degree…I probably wouldn't have received the incredible mentorship that I did at GSU, met my wife, or provide the life that I do for my kids now." These findings serve to reveal how a systemic problem at the institutional level unintendedly hinders the local community.

By and large, participants believe that places with power have the potential to reproduce educational inequities in their localities, in which GSU is no exception. As a broad access university participants assumed that GSU would be readily accessible to those who meet the

minimum requirements. However, the landscape of higher education continues to evolve, and the work of anchor institutions is more critical than ever.

Summary

This chapter reports the findings from interviews with 10 local community alumni within a 10-mile radius of one Hispanic-serving regional comprehensive university. These findings describe the degree to which participants view an anchor institution as investing in its geographical and social location. As a "convener" anchor institution, GSU plays an active role in decreasing poverty by acting as a large regional employer and creating upward mobility for graduates. In addition, GSU creates a safe space for the Latinx community, revitalizes neighborhoods through campus beautification, and provides public safety. However, participants also discussed how place is racialized, and continues to reproduce educational inequities. They expressed that GSU is not doing enough to address the local populations with community partnerships and neighborhood outreach.

In some instances, there is a disconnect between what the university believes it is doing and what community stakeholders experiences in their personal lives and local neighborhoods. For instance, addressing needs in adjacent communities, campus expansion and impaction were some of the points of contention. These observations are critical and are explored further in Chapter 5 of my study.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of my study was to examine how local residential alumni of a regional comprehensive university described the role of their alma mater, Golden State University, as an anchor institution in their personal lives and with respect to local Los Angeles neighborhoods. As described in previous chapters, an anchor institution is a large place-based institution that is deeply rooted in its local geography and leverages its institutional resources to support critical community and economic development in their nearby communities (CEO for Cities, 2010; Ehlenz, 2017; Maurrasse, 2002; Porter, 2002, 2010; Taylor & Luter, 2013). Over the course of 30 years, the literature on anchor institutions indicates that they can play a vital role in addressing societal problems to help build a more democratic, just, and equitable society (CEOs for Cities, 2010; Hodges & Dubb, 2012; Maurrasse, 2005, 2007; Perry et al., 2009).

Through an in-depth, semi-structured interview process using artifact-based mapping and education journey mapping, as well as through structured document analysis, I gathered data that led to a better understanding of the perspectives of local community alumni. I also examined some of the differences and similarities between the community stakeholders' perceptions of the university, as an anchor institution; through document analysis, I compared these perceptions to what the university communicates about the purpose of its activities, and the benefit it purports to have on the neighborhoods.

The results of this study add to the limited body of literature that focuses on regional comprehensive anchor institutions in Los Angeles. It also confirms, to university practitioners, the community members', and especially local residential alumni perceptions', of the importance of people, places, and power as universities continue to cultivate their anchor missions. Existing

literature on the role of anchor institutions primarily center the inquiry within an organizational or administrative perspective (Ehlenz, 2017; Harris & Holley, 2016; Hodges & Dubb, 2012; Taylor & Luter, 2013). In response, this study highlighted the voices of those stakeholders who are typically not included in the existing literature: residential alumni of anchor institutions. In examining GSU from the perspective of residential alumni, the findings here contributed the voices and views of some of the very people who occupy and share those spaces.

In this chapter, I discuss these key findings and explain this study's significance to the greater body of research on anchor institutions, and its relationship to Organizational Place-Building Theory (OPBT). I then identify the limitations of my study, and present recommendations for practice and implications for future research. The research questions that guided this inquiry were:

1. From the perspective of local community alumni, how does a regional comprehensive university serve (if at all) as an anchor institution in their personal lives?
2. From the perspective of local community alumni, how does a regional comprehensive university serve (if at all) as an anchor institution in their local neighborhoods of Los Angeles?
3. What are the differences and similarities (if any) between what the university thinks it is doing (or should be doing) and what the local community alumni think the university is doing (or should be doing) as an anchor institution?

Discussion

Research Question One

Research question one sought to understand how local residential alumni described the role of GSU as an anchor institution in their personal lives. Organizational Place-Building

Theory (OPBT) describes place as both geographic and social, and as organized around the meaning individuals and groups give to place in its setting (Thomas & Cross, 2007). The participants in this study gave significant meaning to GSU and its particular physical and social setting. Their testimonies highlight the power that place has on building a strong sense of belonging, comfort, and the impact on a person's psyche. For community members, GSU is much more than an anchor institution, acting as a place of opportunity for personal and professional transformation.

Personal and Neighborhood Experiences

All of the participants in my study encountered challenges and setbacks in their personal lives and respective neighborhoods. They were candid about why they chose to attend GSU versus other nearby institutions; the biggest contributing factors to their decision was access and affordability to the institution itself, followed by familial obligations and other responsibilities. This particular insight matters because at times, regional comprehensive universities have been perceived as the "undistinguished middle child of higher education," and "non-marquee" institutions of last resort (Orphan, 2018). However, based on my in-depth study, participants experience these institutions as places of transformative opportunity that have the potential to create a positive multiplier effect for individuals, neighborhoods, and entire regions. In areas like Los Angeles where inequity continues to widen and persist, regional comprehensive anchor institutions are now more essential than ever for place-bound students and the community.

Sense of Belonging and Trust

My study revealed that participants believe that GSU as an anchor institution creates a safe space for the Latinx community in particular, and that they hold a general trust for the institution. This unique discovery provides greater nuance to the existing discussion on anchor

institutions, which generally suggests that communities tend to mistrust anchor universities, and thus do not consider these institutions safe spaces (Baldwin, 2017; Brown et al., 2016, Hahn et. al, 2013). Usually, this attitude of mistrust is reflected in previous negative relationships and treatment experienced by community members from the university due to an inherent imbalance of power, lack of buy-in and consideration for projects impacting their neighborhoods. As a result of these fraught university-community relationships noted in the literature, universities often find it valuable to partner with local community-based organizations (CBOs) to work through a trusted institution in the community in order to regain positive community visibility and trust (Hahn et. al., 2013). However, for GSU, community mistrust was not a point of contention, and having to work with local CBOs in order to build inroads with the community was a central theme. The community members who participated in this study already viewed GSU in a positive light and pointed to non-CBO partnerships as successful resources. All of the participants had a strong sense of belonging and expressed trust towards GSU, and more than half specifically chose this anchor university for its inclusivity toward the Latinx community.

Although being Latinx or Hispanic was not a requirement for my study, all of participants identified as Latinx or Hispanic, reflecting both the majority of the GSU student population and the majority of the community population. Moreover, participants intuitively knew or heard that GSU was a Hispanic-serving institution, and also recognized that it influenced their collegiate experience, despite not being able to fully articulate the actual organizational benefits as an HSI. The participants' experiences parallels what literature suggests, namely that this designation is important as it provides additional institutional federal funding streams, but for most students this designation is nebulous at best (Laden, 2004; Perrakis & Hagedorn, 2010). For GSU, the lack of concrete alumni perception is an opportunity to fully embrace and clarify its HSI

designation to students and other stakeholders. This study helps acknowledge the magnitude that designation carries for students, alumni and the greater surrounding communities.

Upward Mobility

Participants believed the university plays an active role in decreasing poverty. This finding was chiefly substantiated by personal examples of upward mobility. In my study, participants did not use the term "anchor institution" to describe GSU during the interview process. They did, however use words and phrases such as "hub," "anchor," "large employer for the east side," "a place of opportunity," "accessible and affordable," and "a place that transformed my life" as ways to describe the role and impact of GSU on their lives and livelihood. Each participant is a working professional that is successful in their respective field. Interestingly, all participants are in professions aligned with GSU's central mission of "engagement, service and the public good," from jobs as economist, community bank teller, to high school counselor. In addition, participants mentioned that, in comparison to their parents or relatives who did not have an opportunity to pursue a post-secondary degree, they are financially better off.

Recent research indicates that regional comprehensive universities have become a vital pipeline into the middle class (Schneider & Deane, 2015; Orphan, 2018). This finding affirms what is known about GSU, ranked number one in the country for students' upward mobility in a national study of 2000 colleges and universities conducted by the Equality of Opportunity Project (EOP).[5] GSU has propelled the highest percentage of students from the bottom fifth of income into the top fifth of U.S. earners. These findings are increasingly pertinent because the

[5] Based on records from more than 2,000, GSU has propelled the highest earners (Chetty et. al, 2017).

scholarship of anchor institutions continues to actively examine the role of regional comprehensive universities in particular.

Research Question Two

Research question two examined how local residential alumni described the role of GSU as an anchor institution in their neighborhoods of Los Angeles. Framing my study with OPBT offered an objective framework to assess the level of GSU's responsibility, intentions, and, most importantly, its contributions to the places within which it operates. In addressing this question, I first had to understand the "lay of the land" from the perspective of local alumni residents. I discovered that GSU's responsibility and intention are cohesive, and that they do, in fact, contribute to neighborhood revitalization in the surrounding communities despite being limited by its four-year function and limited resources. However, there are other deeper and more complex issues that continue to produce disparities in certain neighborhoods in Los Angeles.

Neighborhood Revitalization

The discoveries made in my study largely reinforce the literature on university-led neighborhood revitalization scholarship. Existing literature highlights how long-term rooted investments made by anchor institutions in particular locations have the ability to transform neighborhoods, cities, and region. (Ehlenz, 2015; Hahn et al., 2013.; Hodges & Dubb, 2012; Perry & Menendez, 2010; Yates & Accardi, 2017). Ehlenz's (2015) mixed method study using a national survey of 65 universities confirms that universities are, in fact, improving neighborhoods. Similarly, in their 10-year qualitative study of 13 anchor institutions, Friedman et al. (2014) ascertained that anchor institutions grounded in place play an active role in shaping the built and social environment of their communities. This commitment takes on many forms, including real estate investment and development, ensuring the safety and beauty of place, and

engaging in transportation issues, especially since many urban campuses have a strong commuter base. The findings in my study partly substantiate Ehlenz (2015) and Friedman et al.'s (2014) assertions. GSU is, in fact, perceived as playing a contributive role in improving the community's appearance and reducing deterioration. Spillover effects of the university's beautification efforts, public safety acting as steward of place, and existing on-campus infrastructure such as the university's Fine Arts Complex and transportation depot are all community benefits. Yet, lacking cache and monetary resources of other nearby institutions with medical institutions and larger endowments, GSU has a limited ability to make a larger imprint on the local communities. GSU, much like other regional comprehensives, is ultimately limited by its four-year university function.

Bifurcated, Racialized, and Gentrified Neighborhoods

Local procurement, neighborhood revitalization, and university-community partnerships are often discussed in anchor institution literature (CEO for Cities, 2010; Ehlenz, 2017; Florida & Gates, 2006; Maurrasse, 2002; Porter, 2010; Taylor & Luter, 2013). While GSU seems to contribute to neighborhood revitalization it its surrounding communities, there are other deeper and more complex issues that continue to reproduce disparities in certain neighborhoods in Los Angeles.

The findings from my study reveal that participants believe neighborhoods in Los Angeles are racialized, which plays a significant role in perpetuating educational inequities in their specific neighborhoods. Currently, GSU is working with community-based organizations (CBOs) to tackle pertinent challenges in the South East Los Angeles, which a majority of the student population comes from. However, as highlighted in chapter 4 of my study, very few participants were aware of GSU's efforts as part of the South East Los Angeles Collaborative.

The finding captures a key two-part dynamic. First, the university's revitalization efforts go beyond physical real estate-like endeavor. GSU works in thought-partnership with CBOs to expand research and service learning in non-academic settings. Second and more importantly, there is a clear window of opportunity to actively engage alumni in that region, given that so many of the participants live in the SELA region of Los Angeles and are unaware of GSU's current efforts.

Research Question Three

Research question three examined the differences and similarities between what GSU thinks it is doing as an anchor institution, and what the local community alumni think the university is doing as an anchor institution. From an Organizational Place-Based Theory (OPBT) agent perspective, GSU is interdependent and views itself as a member of a community; however, as a place-builder it is still largely contributive, and not entirely transformative. Based on the findings of my study, there is room for improvement between what the university believes it is doing and what residential alumni stakeholders believe the university is doing, or should be doing. The points of contention were largely centered on community partnerships and impaction.

Community Partnerships and Outreach

Although GSU highlights its nearly 175 community partners in education, legal, medical and social services ([Golden State University] Community Partners Directory, n.d.), the majority of the participants were unaware of GSU's wide reaching level of engagement and community partnerships. This lack of awareness from vested GSU alumni sheds light on an opportunity for more targeted messaging to this specific audience. If GSU alumni are unaware of these partnerships, it is even less likely that the general community population would be aware and able to take advantage of them. Seventy percent of alumni stay and build roots in Los Angeles.

Although GSU may be limited in financial capital, if it continues to invest in the human capital of those communities more extensively, then those alumni who stay nearby can reinvest back into the very communities that they came from. By building a positive association with GSU, community members attend or encourage their children to attend GSU, and contribute to GSU's future growth and success, thus complementing the cycle of community engagement and service for the public good.

Impaction

Despite participants describing GSU as a place of belonging, trust, and upward mobility, most were concerned about the effects of impaction, which GSU declared in 2019. As discussed in Chapter 4, impaction refers to the state of a campus that has received more eligible applicants than possible to intake. In response, the campus invokes supplementary admission standards that reduce the number of students to match the limited capacity (Horton, 2017). Although impaction was not an essential focus of my study, participants had strong opinions on this process, and the more stringent admissions standards meant to compensate for the lack of space and resources. Many agreed with Orphan (2018) in its criticism of regional comprehensive universities for elevating research and admissions requirements and acting in the vein of elite universities. When this happens, GSU, and other anchor institutions, may function as gatekeepers in a community, and limit the academic trajectories and potential upward mobility of some of its members. This finding, then, offers a complicating perspective on the role of anchor institutions, which are touted for local procurement, job creation, and neighborhood revitalization.

Issues of institutional enrollment such as impaction are not usually discussed in scholarship. Although this is a larger systems issue, this finding highlights the need for institutions of higher education like GSU to continue to provide broad access to their

surrounding communities. If increasing selectivity is inevitable, then it becomes more urgently imperative that GSU work with K-12 schools to help propel students towards academic and life success. Ultimately, if GSU aspires to move from a contributive place-builder to a truly transformative institution that improves the lives of individuals and groups in all places as described in Organizational Place-Building Theory, then it is imperative that GSU continues to seek input from residential alumni, and align their institutional priorities with the needs of the community.

Limitations

While the findings uncovered by this study can inform future regional comprehensive universities seeking to become more intentional place-building agents as anchor institutions, it is limited in its lack of generalizability. This study included rich and multi-faceted in-depth data from a wide array of individuals closely connected to one regional comprehensive university as alumni, neighbors, and vested community stakeholders in Los Angeles. Although the findings are not generalizable to a broader audience, the findings illuminates the experiences of these individuals and provides insight into the community perspective on comparable situations. I attempted to make logical generalizations to a theoretical understanding of a similar class of phenomena rather than large scale generalizations to a population.

Another limitation to my study was the issue of reactivity. While I employed data collection and analytic methods to prevent bias, and limited discussion of my study with any professional colleagues before, during, and after the interviews to prevent bias based on my positionality, I am cognizant that my affiliation with Golden State University exposed me to greater insight about the institution and its efforts. My positionality could have influenced my data collection and data analysis.

Lastly, my snowball sampling technique was also a limitation for this study. Although I was interested in interviewing participants within a 10-mile geographic radius, my participants were concentrated in East Los Angeles and South East Los Angeles. I did not capture the voices of participants who live north of the university in the more affluent neighborhoods of Alhambra, Monterey Park, South Pasadena, and Pasadena. Similarly, all 10 of my participants identified as Latinx or Hispanic. Future studies might explore whether students from other ethnic backgrounds shared in their views of the university.

Implications for Future Research

Adding Methods of Study

Although anchor institution research has gained significant traction since the late 1990s and early 2000s, there is still room for expansion related to regional comprehensive universities, and institutions with an increasingly diverse student population. This study used qualitative methods, which helped give voice to community members in relation to one educational anchor institution. Further studies could expand on these findings by adding quantitative components, like survey instruments, to respond to related research questions or creating larger scale qualitative data collection.

Revisiting Revitalization

While much of the existing literature on anchor institutions suggests that we are in the fifth and most recent era which focuses primarily on university-led neighborhood revitalization efforts (Ehlenz, 2017), my study suggests that the notion of neighborhood revitalization extends far beyond what the university is physically doing to help the communities they serve. My study analyzed and synthesized the personal narrative of vested community stakeholders to not only determine the physical benefits of GSU, but also the non-tangible benefits. The way in which

participants discussed GSU as an anchor institution impacting their lives provides greater nuance to the subject of university engagement. Future studies could examine, in further depth, the relationship between anchor institutions and social and economic neighborhood revitalization.

Examining the Effects of Impaction

This study found that community members reacted strongly to GSU's recent decision to declare itself impacted. Because impaction is a phenomenon at many regional comprehensive universities across the nation, it merits further study at GSU and elsewhere. Specifically, the field would benefit from a study focused on community-level responses to impaction, including school responses, resident attitudes toward the school, and changes in the proportion of students local to universities' neighborhoods. Further data about the effect that the impaction of an educational anchor institution has on the surrounding neighborhoods could be either qualitative or quantitative, or both.

Recommendations for Future Practice

Recommendations for Golden State University

This study indicates several key recommendations for practitioners at GSU and beyond. Participants' perceptions were at odds with the university's goals in multiple ways, including about gentrification caused by GSU, the communication of opportunities to the neighborhood, and the results of GSU's impaction. These are key areas where administrators should plan for new pathways of communication and collaboration with its nearby areas. Publicizing their current partnerships and efforts, as well as creating new ones, will achieve their goals as well as give community members more ways to engage with the university.

Recommendations for Institutions of Higher Education

Community and alumni voices should be considered in the decision-making process as anchor institutions of higher education continue to expand their mission. Because each place where an anchor institution is unique, stakeholders must be consulted to understand and meet the neighborhood's needs. This should focus on the experiences of students of color in particular. For example, Hispanic-serving anchor institutions of higher education should receive greater scholarly and public attention. Increasingly, more Latinx and other ethnic minorities are enrolling at comprehensive anchor institutions; therefore, more scholarly and monetary emphasis should be placed on these schools to best support their students.

Though anchor institutions of higher education range in mission, place, and demographics, peer learning among these institutions can create encouraging examples and helpful dialogue across universities about how they execute their anchor engagement practices. The opportunity to collaborate between institutions would lead to local practices migrating with appropriate adaptations to new settings.

Recommendations for Educational Collaborators

Some issues around university-community engagement require more collaboration from the community, the government, community-based organizations, and alumni. In creating opportunities for feedback and collective input on large-scale decisions (systems level, state-wide, etc.), community members could become more cognizant of the strengths and challenges faced by comprehensive anchor institutions. In this capacity, more stakeholders could offer different kinds of support so that comprehensive anchor institutions can continue to pursue their distinctive missions of enlarging college access and serving the economic and civic needs of surrounding regions.

In order to strengthen educational access and regional development, a larger audience must put more emphasis on regional comprehensive universities such as the CSU system and recognize its campuses as anchor institutions. For far too long, regional comprehensives been seen as the "undistinguished middle child of higher education" and "non-marquee" institutions of last resort. Key players in education, from policymakers to other public as well as private institutions, should collaborate with regional comprehensive universities in a mutually beneficial discussion around supporting local neighborhoods. My study highlighted and valued the role of a regional comprehensive university in its physical and social context, and captured the voices of local residential alumni to provide greater insight into the role that their anchor institution has created for them, and their communities.

Personal Reflection

My mother and the neighborhood in which I grew up have single-handedly defined and shaped my present outlook. I am the daughter of a Mexican immigrant mother who had no formal education, limited resources, and a strong work ethic. I am the product of Highland Park, a place that was once plagued by gangs, drugs, violence, and under-performing schools; now a victim of gentrification. During my formative years, my mother taught me the value of an education and hard work, whereas my childhood neighborhood showed me the importance of remaining deeply grounded by my roots and community. In the process of this study, I saw snippets of my formative years in the participants' personal and neighborhood stories. In essence, their stories are my stories, and their struggle is my struggle. I also saw the collective identity of communities and how they are formed by stories, and how these stories are rooted in place. Learning individual perspectives through their generous narratives provided revealing characteristics about the participants' experiences and the places that formed their identities.

This study made glaringly apparent that the nexus between institutions of higher education and communities yields significant power, a relationship ripe for study under the current conditions of a global pandemic and racial unrest. Leveraging the capital, human resources, and economic output of regional comprehensive anchor institutions presents a significant opportunity to address some of the most persistent socioeconomic challenges that perpetuate inequity in the Los Angeles region. The factors that GSU and institutions like it are poised to address include the lack of living wage jobs and strong K-16 partnerships, effects of racial and class structures, and unsafe neighborhoods. Promoting meaningful dialogue and institutionalizing collaboration between anchor institutions with local neighborhoods connects physical spaces and economic power to the knowledge and keen insight of people. Ultimately, this bridge holds the potential to create vibrant communities and mutually beneficial, sustainable local ecosystems.

Appendix A

Artifact-based Mapping Interview, Education Journey Mapping, and Debrief Protocol

Thank you for willingness to participate in this interactive interview. The entire interview will last approximately 90 minutes, and will be divided into two parts. The first part is an artifact-based mapping interactive interview and will last 50 minutes. The second part is a 30-minute education journey mapping exercise. There is no right or wrong answer so please feel free to openly engage with me (the researcher) if you have any questions or comments along the way. Everything that you say and do will remain confidential and anonymous. I will audio record and video record the map and your hands ONLY. If at any time you do not feel comfortable or need to pause please let me know. The purpose of this interview is to get a sense of your personal experiences, what you think about Golden State University[6], and how you relate to the university and the nearby communities in a visual manner. The last 10 minutes are for a casual debrief and clean up.

You have a couple of markers and stickers in front of you and will be asked to use them throughout the interview. I will read instructions for you to follow, and ask you a series of questions. Again, the purpose of this exercise is to be an interactive and immersive experience between the research (myself), and you. It's more of a conversation so feel free to chime in at any time. Before we begin, do you have any questions? [Pause for a while]. Okay, great let's begin (See Table 3):

Table 3

Interview Protocol

Part I: Artifact-based Interactive Interview	(60 minutes)
Okay, so tell me a little bit about yourself?	RQ 1
Where do you grow up? (Can you show me on the map?)	RQ 1, 2
How was it growing up there? (Can you tell me a bit more about your experiences growing up there?)	RQ 1, 2

[6] Pseudonym used is Golden State University (GSU).

Is there a memory that you associate with your neighborhood?	RQ 2
How would you describe your hometown to a complete stranger from when you grew up there to now?	RQ 2
Do you rent or own? Who do you live with?	RQ 2
When did you graduate from Golden State University?	RQ 1
What were the reason that decided to attend Golden State University?	RQ 1
How was your experience at Golden State University?	RQ 1
What are some memorable experiences during your time at Golden State University (whether positive or negative)?	RQ 1
How is GSU connected to some of the communities in which you grew up?	RQ 2
What is your relationship with the university campus as an alumni?	RQ 1
How often do you frequent the campus? And in what capacity?	RQ 1, 2
Okay, so you have this map in front of you and you have some stickers in front of you. Can you pick up the red stickers and place a red sticker anywhere on the map that you think is considered a "distressed" or "unsafe" neighborhood, and explain to me your rationale or reasons?	RQ 2
Okay, now let's do the opposite. Can you place green stickers anywhere on the map that you consider to be "safe" or "better off" neighborhoods, and explain to me your rationale or reasoning?	RQ 2
Great, now can you place yellow stickers where you believe (based your experiences as an alumni) that most students from Golden State University live? Explain.	RQ 2
Now, can you place blue stickers where you believe alumni reside (based on your experiences now as an alumni)? Explain.	RQ 2
Okay, I'd like for you to take some time to look at the map, and explain what you see (i.e. do any relationships, patterns, personal stories come to mind?).	RQ 1, 2
How involved do you think Golden State University is in the local communities? What do you consider to be 'local communities'? Explain please.	RQ 2

Why do you think Golden State University is involved in those communities that you just mentioned?	RQ 2
Okay, I'm going to ask you a loaded question so feel free to seek clarification if you don't fully understand (again, I'd like to reiterate that there is no right or wrong answer). Okay ready?	
What do you think are some of the biggest challenges facing Los Angeles? Explain.	RQ 2
Based on your experiences or personal knowledge, why do you think that is the case? (re: biggest challenges facing LA)	RQ 3
How, if at all, do you see Golden State University in helping to address those issues?	RQ 3
Do you think a university has a responsibility towards local communities? (Yes/No) Explain?	RQ 2
How, if at all, do you see Golden State University taking responsibility for its local communities?	RQ 2
How do you think other communities in LA view Golden State University?	RQ 3
What alignment, if at all, do you see between what the university says it is doing and what the community believes it doing?	RQ 3
What are some challenges that you have observed in that alignment or lack thereof?	RQ 3
What are some strengths, if any, that you have observed in that alignment or lack thereof?	RQ3
Okay, I'm going to pause here to see if you have any clarifying questions? Need a mini-break, etc.	
Great. We are now transitioning to the second part of the interview.	

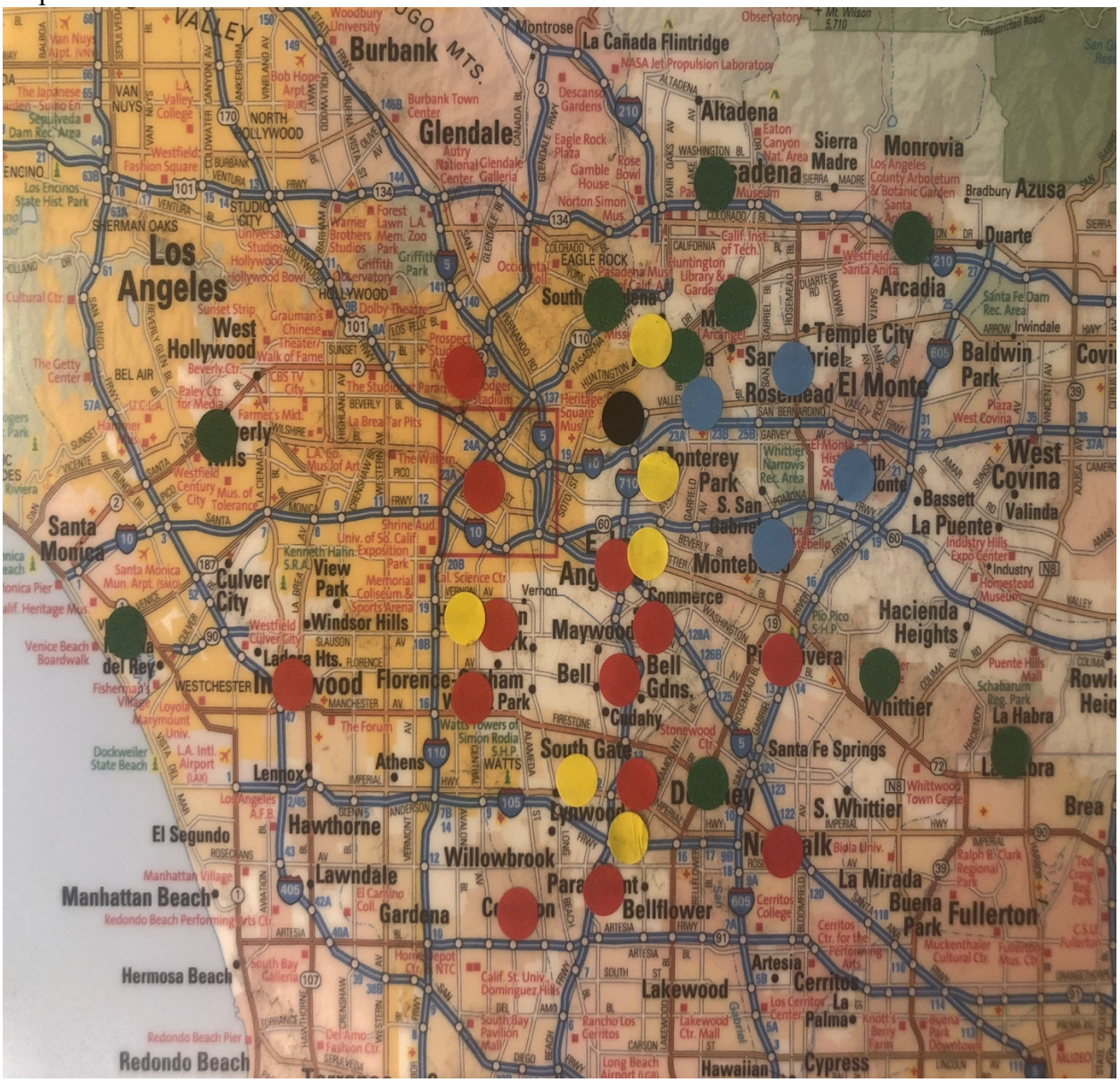
PART II: Education Journey Mapping[7] Protocol	(30 minutes)
Okay, you will get 20 minutes to draw, and 10 minutes to discuss your drawing with me. At the 15-minute mark, I will let you that you only have 5 minutes left for drawing. Any questions? Great. Let's begin.	
[Read Prompt slowly] Please map your education journey from when you started school to now. Include people, places, obstacles, and opportunities that you faced. Draw your relationship with [Golden State University]. You can include what works for you and/or what doesn't. You can use different colors to show different feelings, use symbols like lines and arrows or words. These are just suggestions. Be as creative as you like and, if you don't want to draw you can make more of a flow chart. Afterwards you will get a chance to explain it to me. Remember there's no right or wrong to do this. Have fun!	RQ 1, 2, 3
I have a printed a copy of the prompt for you to have while you draw.	
Any questions before we begin?	
Okay, 15 minutes have passed. You have 5 minutes to wrap up your drawing, and then we will take the last 10 minutes to chat about your drawing.	
Great. Thank you for sharing your education journey with me.	
I'd like to transition at this point to debrief this entire interview experience.	
PART III: Debrief	(10 minutes)
How are feeling?	
Do you have any follow-up questions, comments, suggestions or concerns? Or anything you'd like to get off your chest that we didn't get a chance to discuss?	
Thank you very much for your time. This concludes our interview.	

[7] This education journey mapping prompt is adapted from Subini Ancy Annamma's work in developing it as a qualitative methodology (Annamma, 2017).

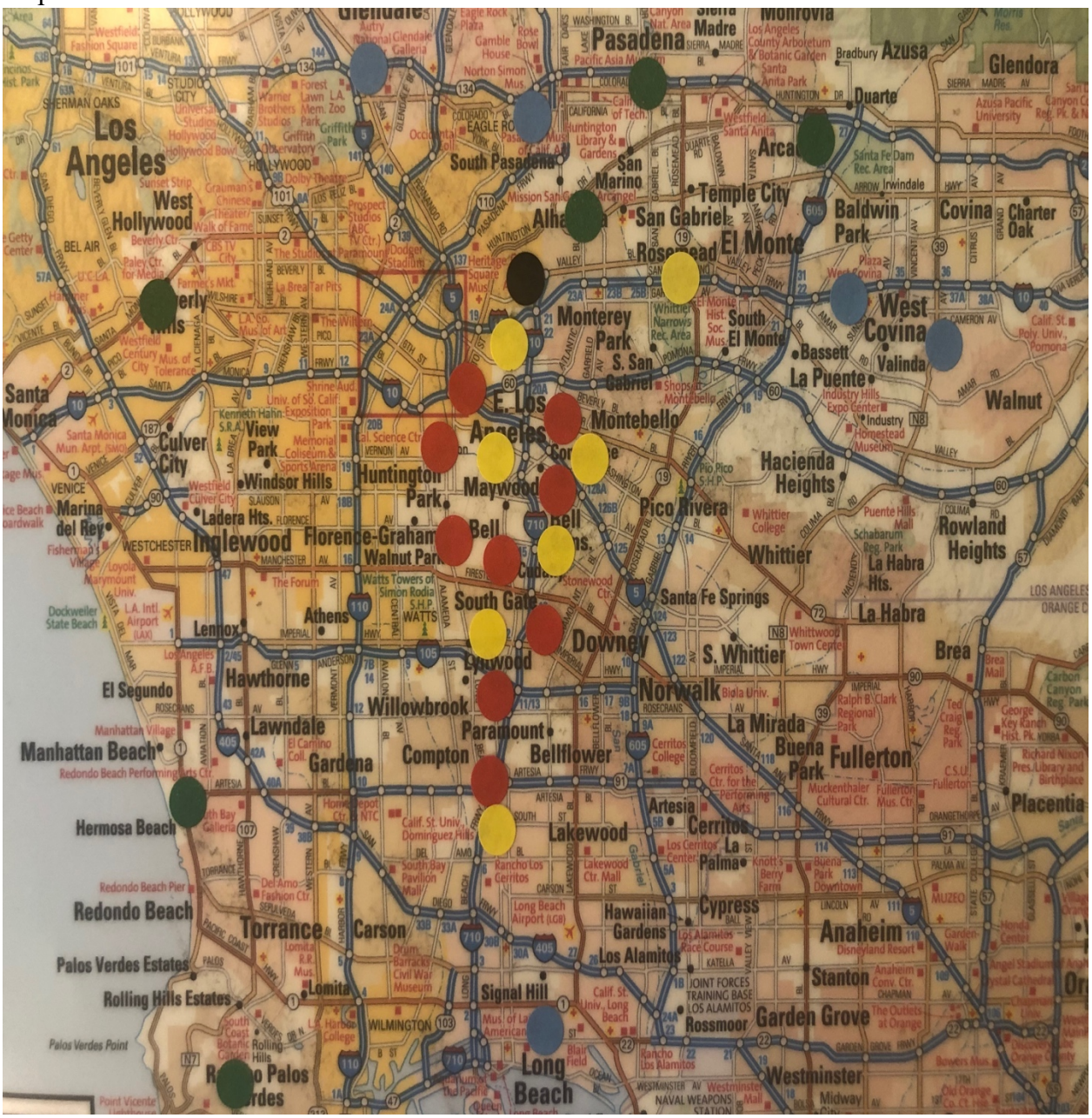
Appendix B

Artifact-Based Mapping Exercise

Map 1: Albert



Map 2: Maria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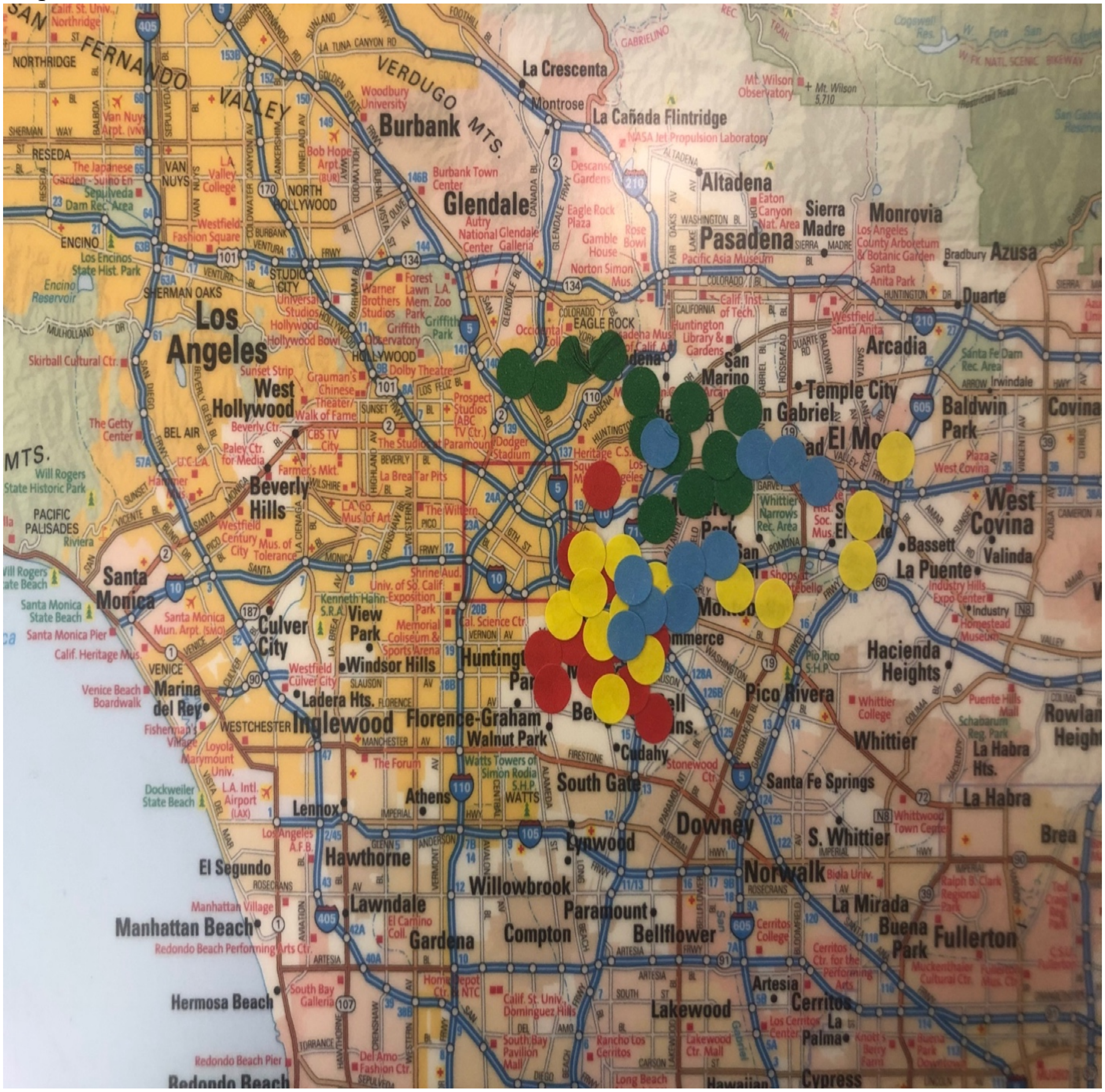
Azusa
Duarte
Los Angeles
West Hollywood
South Pasadena
San Marino
Temple City
San Gabriel
El Monte
Baldwin Park
Covina
Charter Oak
Monterey Park
South El Monte
West Covina
Bassett
La Puente
Valinda
Walnut
Santa Monica
Culver City
Montebello
Hacienda Heights
Windsor Hills
Huntington Park
Maywood
Pico Rivera
Rowland Heights
Marina del Rey
Ladera Hts.
Inglewood
Florence-Graham
Bell
Whittier
La Habra Hts.
Santa Fe Springs
La Habra
Athens
Lennox
Downey
S. Whittier
Brea
El Segundo
Hawthorne
Norwalk
Willowbrook
Lawndale
Paramount
La Mirada
Manhattan Beach
Gardena
Compton
Bellflower
Buena Park
Fullerton
Hermosa Beach
Lakewood
Artesia
Cerritos
La Palma
Placentia
Redondo Beach
Torrance
Carson
Hawaiian Gardens
Cypress
Anaheim
Palos Verdes Estates
Los Alamitos
Stanton
Rolling Hills Estates
Lomita
Signal Hill
Garden Grove
Rossmoor
Palos Verdes Point
Long Beach
Westminster

Map 3: Paul



SAN FERNANDO VALLEY
NORTHRIDGE
VERDUGO MTS.
La Crescenta
Montrose
La Cañada Flintridge
Burbank
Glendale
Altadena
Pasadena
Sierra Madre
Monrovia
Azusa
Duarte
Arcadia
San Marino
Temple City
Baldwin Park
Covina
West Covina
El Monte
La Puente
Valinda
Bassett
Hacienda Heights
RESEDA
VAN NUYS
NORTH HOLLYWOOD
ENCINO
SHERMAN OAKS
Los Angeles
West Hollywood
BEL AIR
Beverly Hills
PACIFIC PALISADES
Santa Monica
Culver City
View Park
Windsor Hills
VENICE
Marina del Rey
Ladera Hts.
WESTCHESTER
Inglewood
Florence-Graham
Walnut Park
Huntington Park
Cudahy
South Gate
Athens
Lennox
El Segundo
Hawthorne
Willowbrook
Lynwood
Downey
S. Whittier
La Habra
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Pico Rivera
Santa Fe Springs
Norwalk
La Mirada
Buena Park
Fullerton
Manhattan Beach
Lawndale
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Bellflower
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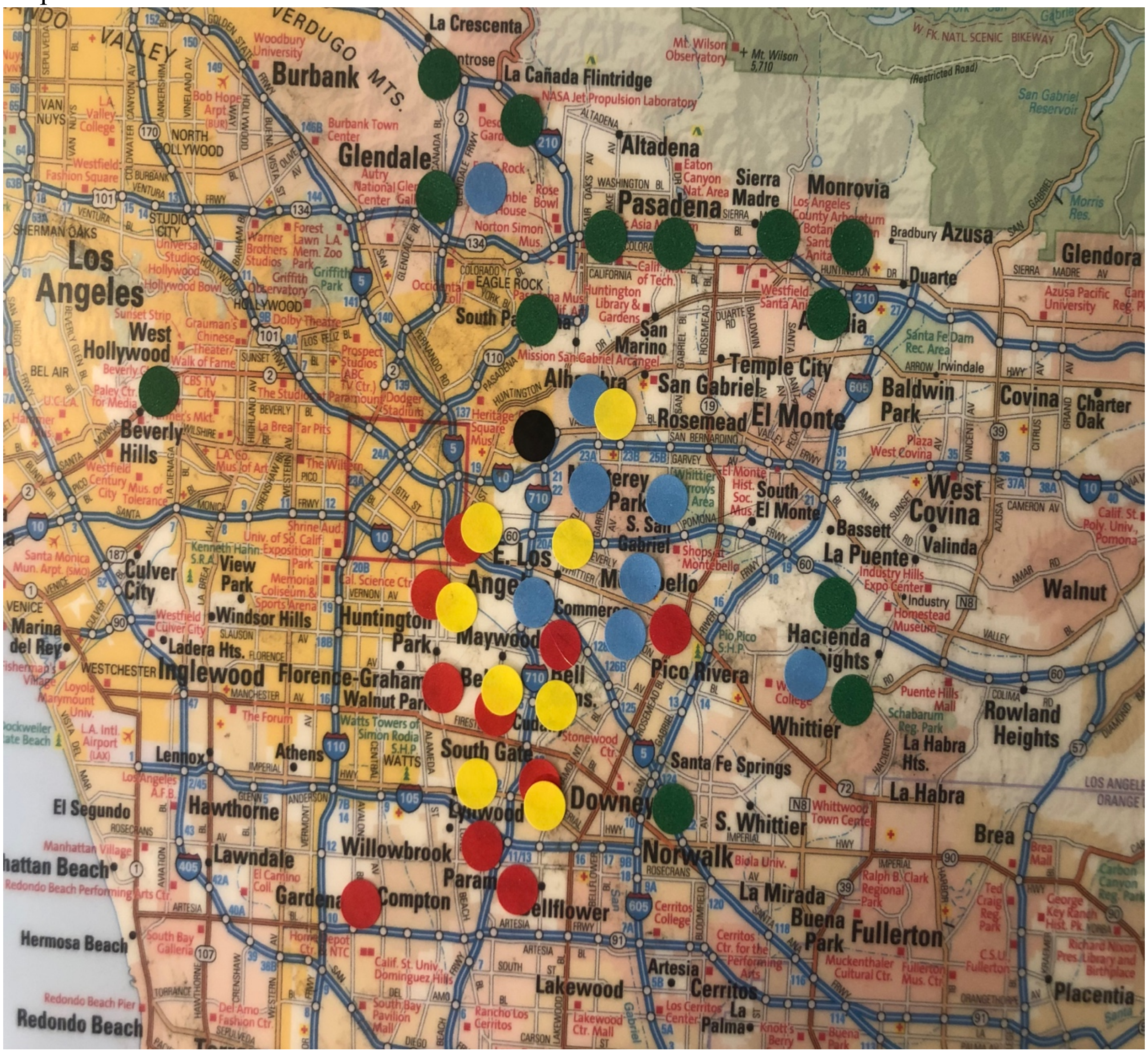
Lakewood
Artesia
Cerritos
La Palma
Redondo Beach
Rowland Heights

Map 4: Daniel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Beverly Hills
San Marino
San Gabriel
Temple City
Rosemead
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El Segundo
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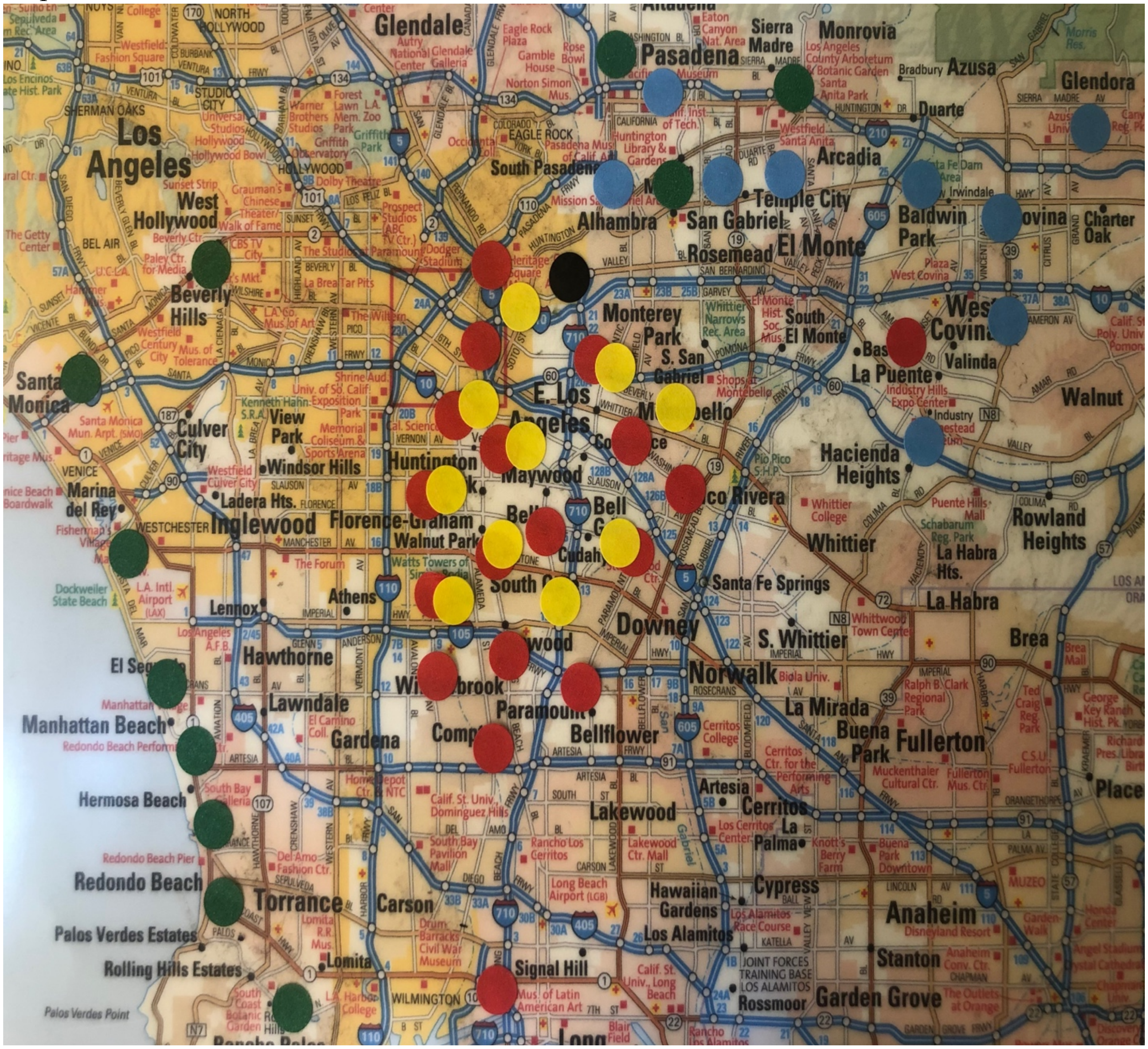
Willowbrook
Compton
Gardena
Norwalk
S. Whittier
Brea
La Mirada
Buena Park
Fullerton
Hermosa Beach
Redondo Beach
Lakewood
Artesia
Cerritos
La Palma
Placentia
Marina del Rey

Map 5: Elisa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San Gabriel
Temple City
Rosemead
El Monte
Baldwin Park
Covina
Charter Oak
Santa Monica
Culver City
View Park
Windsor Hills
Monterey Park
S. San Gabriel
South El Monte
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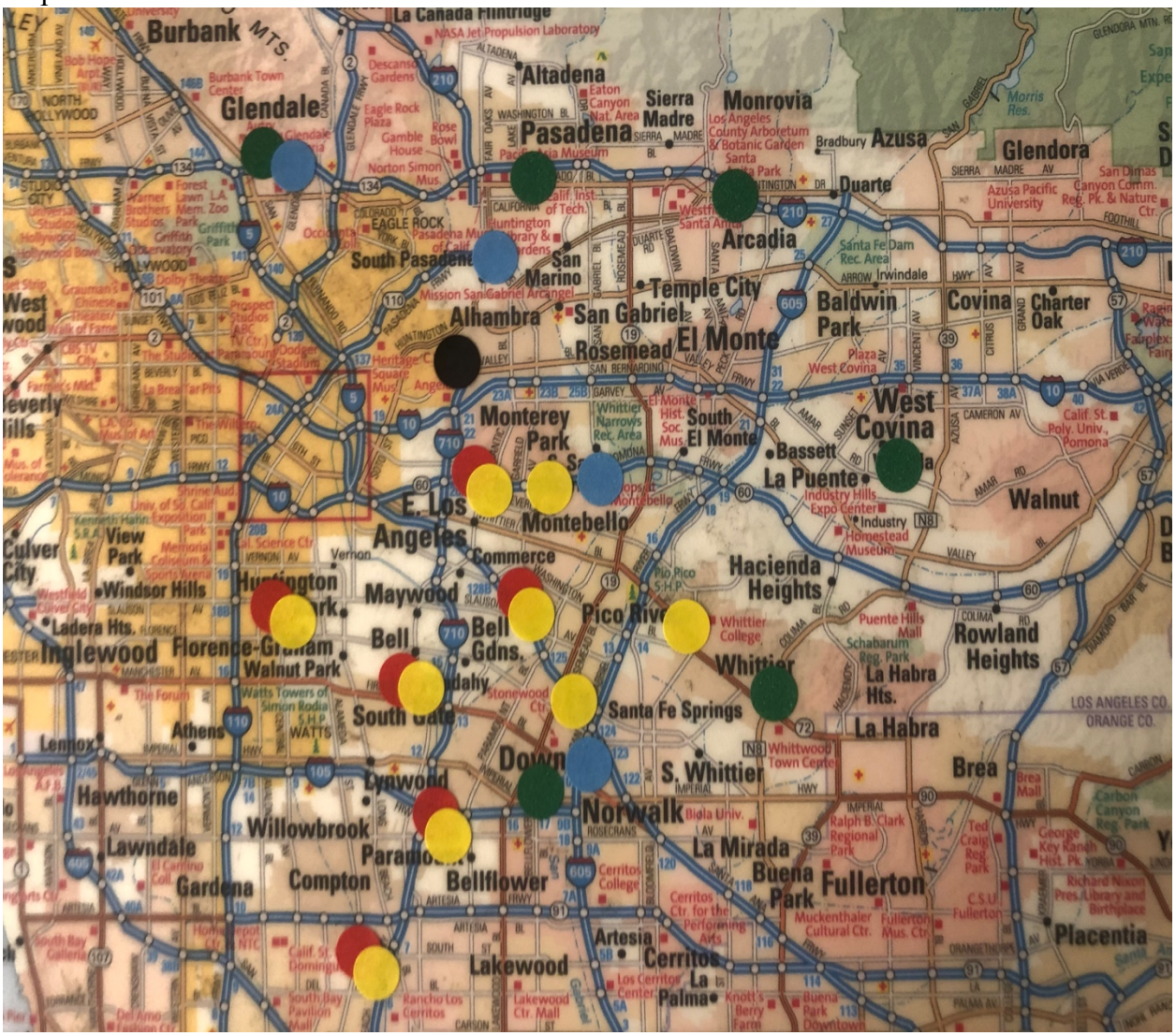
Hawthorne
Downey
S. Whittier
Norwalk
Brea
El Segundo
Lawndale
Manhattan Beach
Gardena
Paramount
Bellflower
La Mirada
Buena Park
Fullerton
Hermosa Beach
Lakewood
Artesia
Cerritos
La Palma
Redondo Beach
Torrance
Carson
Hawaiian Gardens
Cypress
Anaheim
Palos Verdes Estates
Rolling Hills Estates
Lomita
Signal Hill
Los Alamitos
Stanton
Rossmoor
Garden Grove

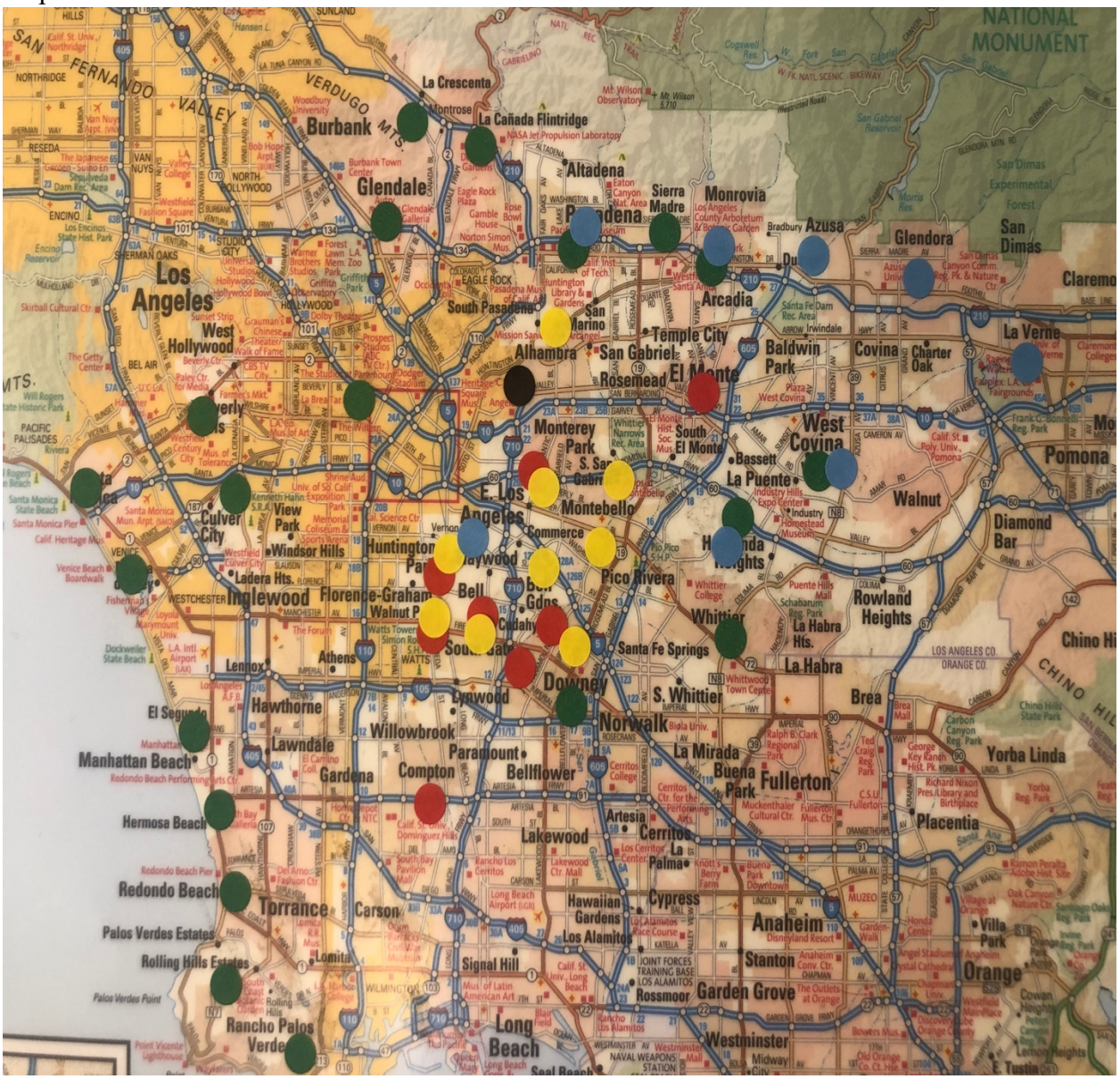
Map 6: John


SAN GABRIEL MOUNTAINS NATIONAL MONUMENT
La Crescenta
Burbank
Glendale
La Cañada Flintridge
Altadena
Pasadena
Sierra Madre
Monrovia
Azusa
Glendora
San Dimas
Upland
Claremont
Los Angeles
West Hollywood
Beverly Hills
South Pasadena
San Gabriel
Rosemead
El Monte
Baldwin Park
La Verne
Monterey Park
S. San Gabriel
South El Monte
West Covina
Montclair
Pomona
Ontario
Culver City
Huntington Park
Maywood
Bell
Bell Gdns.
Pico Rivera
Hacienda Heights
Rowland Heights
Walnut
Diamond Bar
Chino
Chino Hills
Inglewood
Florence-Graham
Walnut Park
South Gate
Whittier
La Habra
Santa Fe Springs
S. Whittier
Brea
Hawthorne
Lawndale
Willowbrook
Compton
Paramount
Bellflower
Norwalk
La Mirada
Buena Park
Fullerton
Yorba Linda
Placentia
Gardena
Lakewood
Artesia
Cerritos
Hermosa Beach
Redondo Beach
Torrance
Carson
Hawaiian Gardens
Cypress
Anaheim
Palos Verdes Estates
Rolling Hills Estates
Lomita
Signal Hill
Los Alamitos
Stanton
Garden Grove
Orange
Rancho Palos Verdes
Long Beach
Seal Beach
Rossmoor
Westminster
E. Tustin

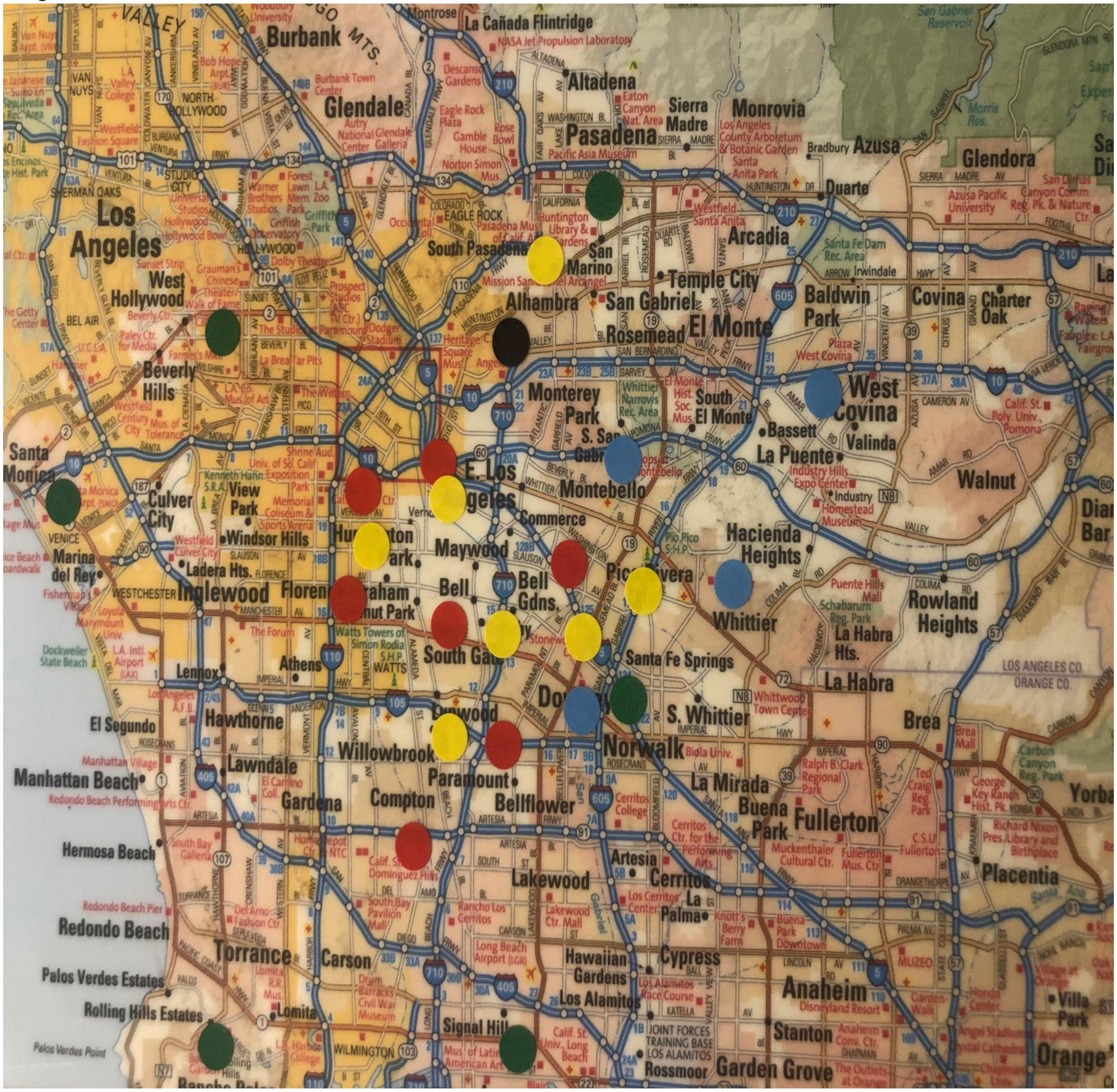
Map 7: Jessica



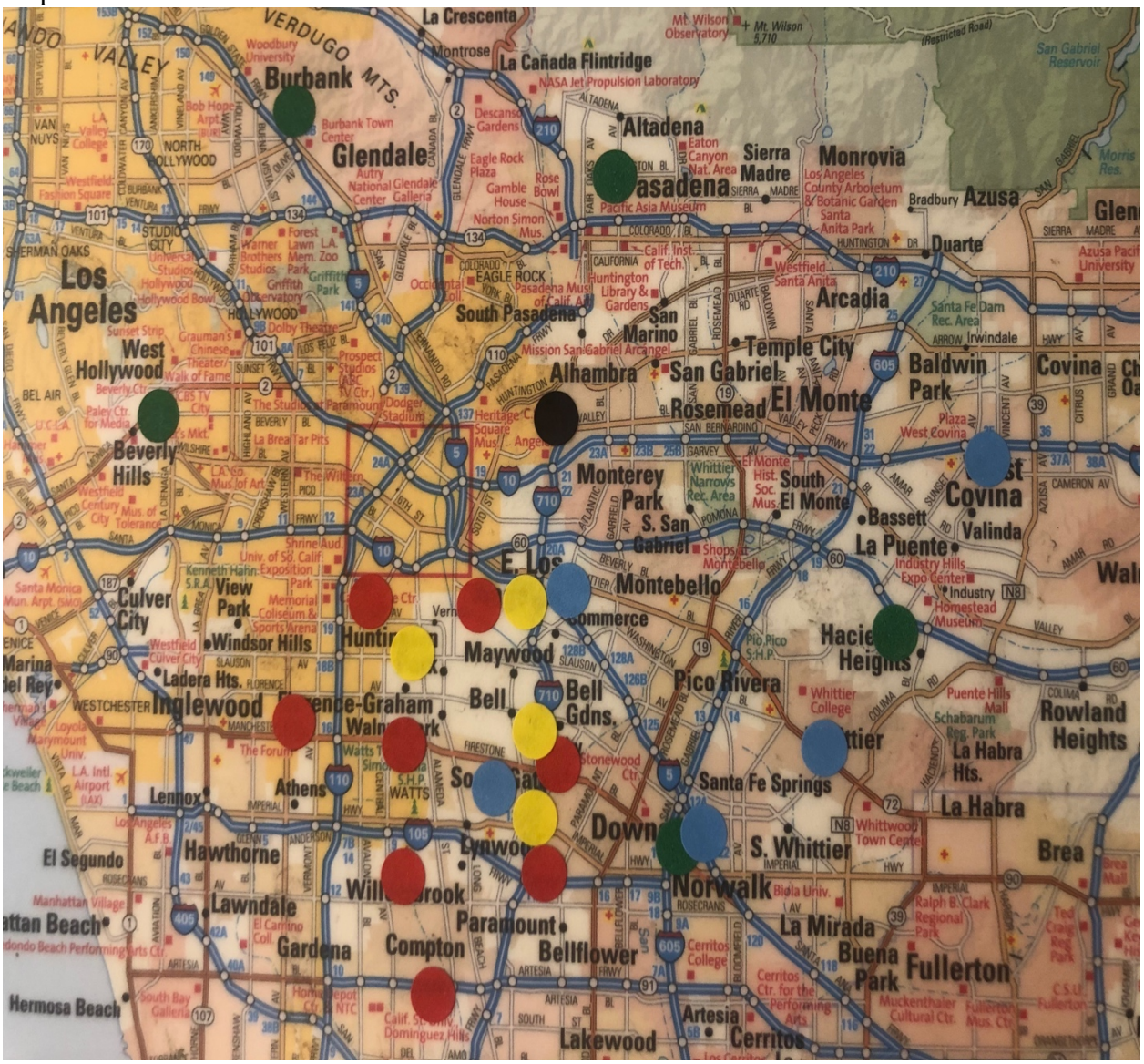
Map 8: Kathleen



Map 9: Stella



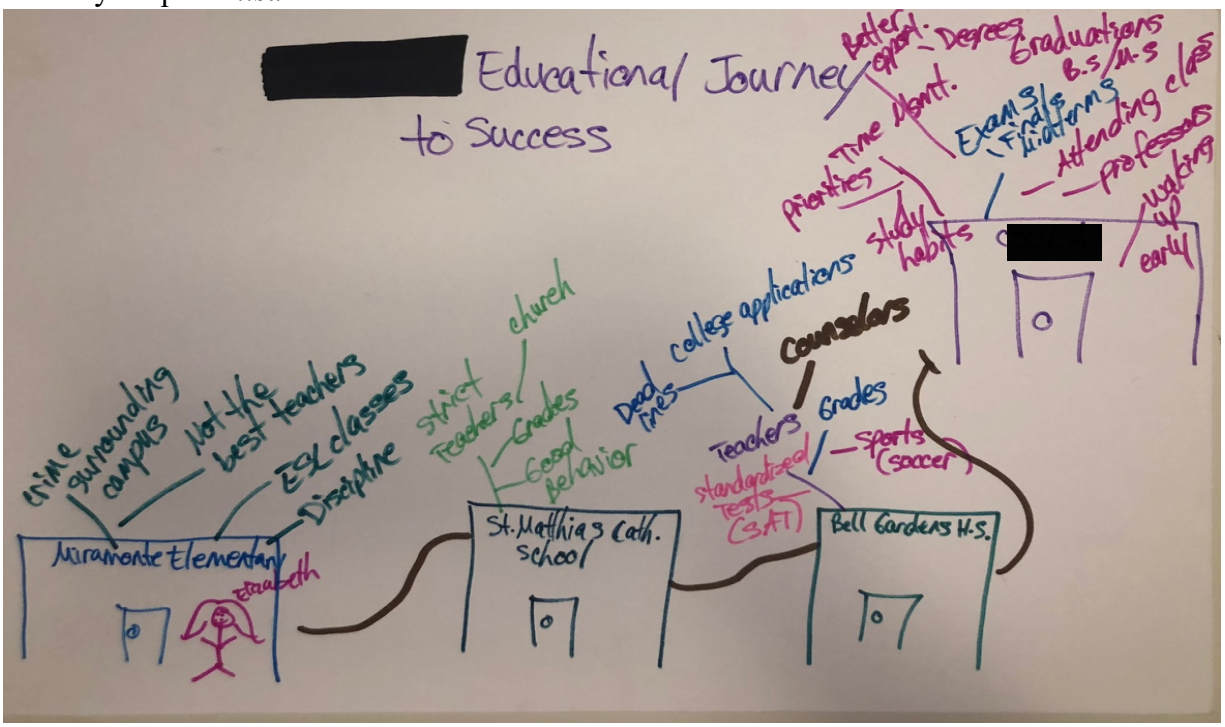
Map 10: Diana


La Crescenta
Montrose
La Cañada Flintridge
Burbank
Glendale
Altadena
Pasadena
Monrovia
Azusa
Duarte
Arcadia
Los Angeles
West Hollywood
Beverly Hills
South Pasadena
San Marino
Temple City
Alhambra
San Gabriel
Rosemead
El Monte
Baldwin Park
Covina
Monterey Park
South El Monte
S. San Gabriel
Bassett
La Puente
Valinda
Montebello
Commerce
Culver City
Windsor Hills
Maywood
Bell
Bell Gdns.
Pico Rivera
Whittier
Rowland Heights
La Habra Hts.
Inglewood
Ladera Hts.
Lennox
Athens
Santa Fe Springs
La Habra
Hawthorne
El Segundo
Lawndale
Gardena
Compton
Paramount
Bellflower
Norwalk
S. Whittier
Brea
La Mirada
Buena Park
Fullerton
Hermosa Beach
Artesia
Cerritos
Lakewood

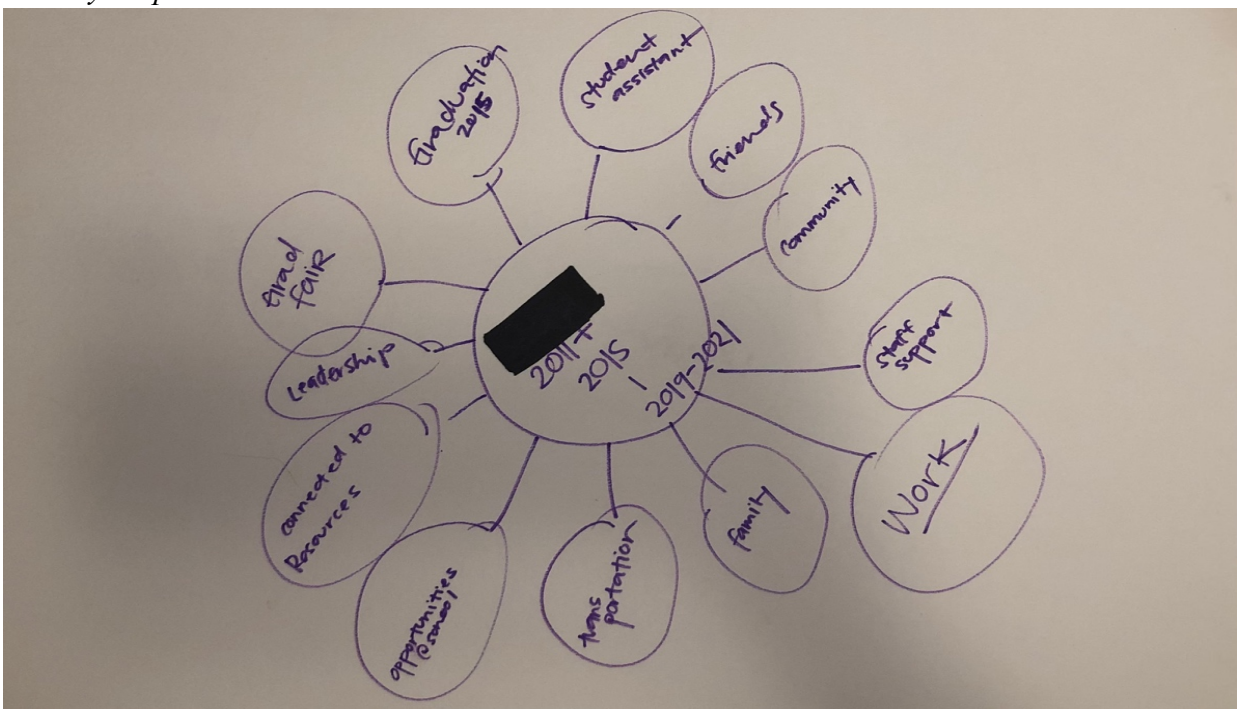
Appendix C

Education Journey Maps

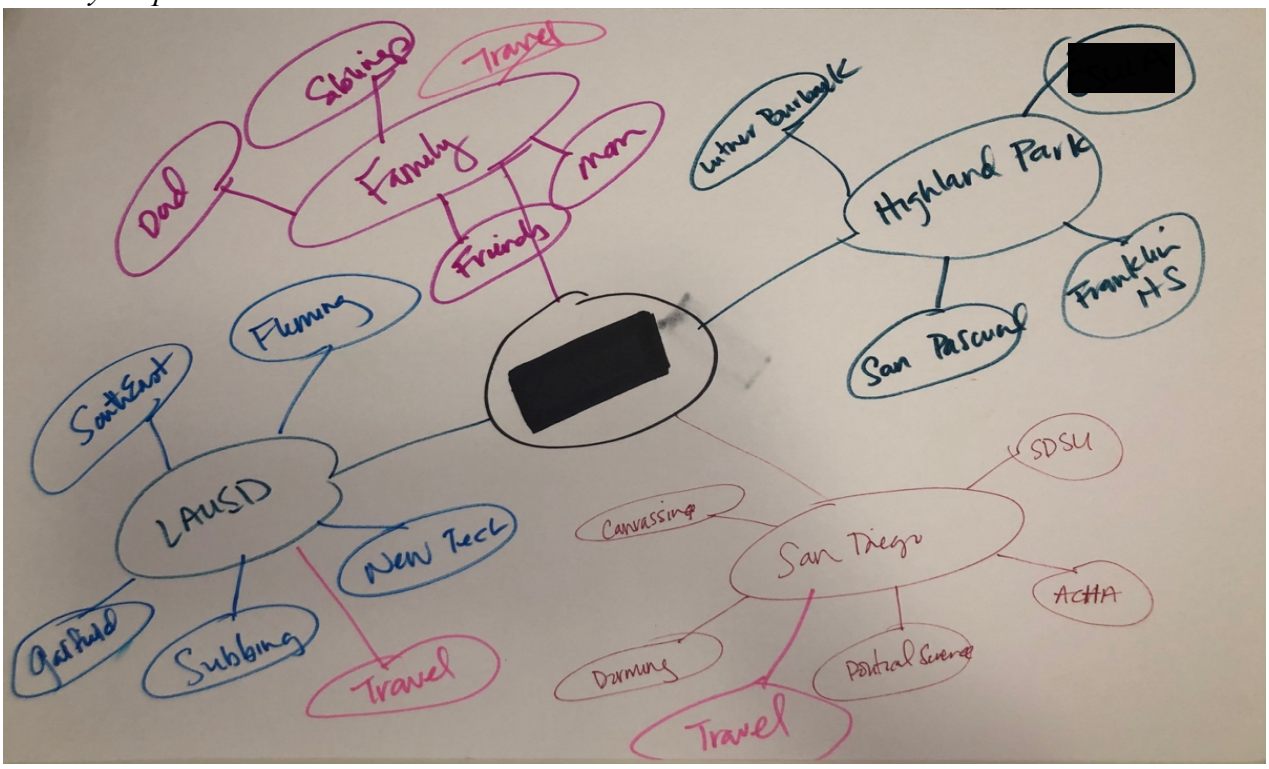
Journey Map 1: *Elisa*



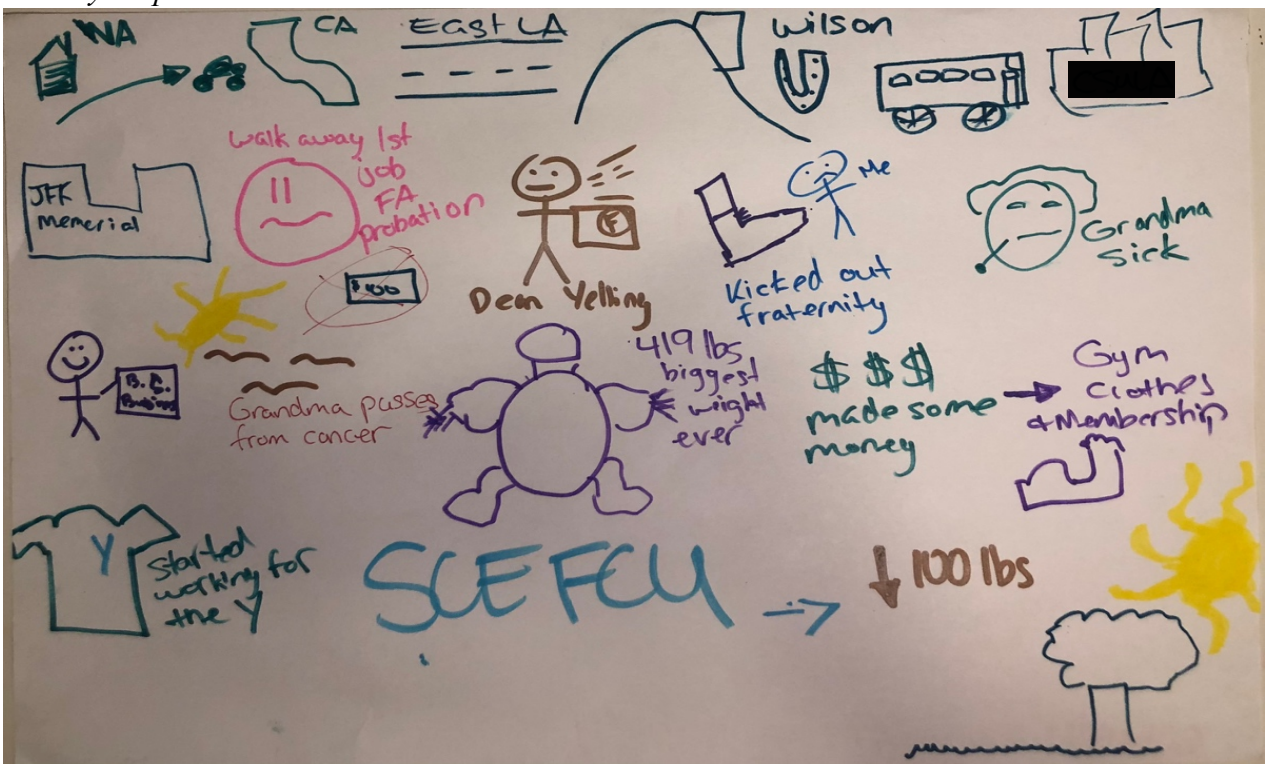
Journey Map 2: Stella



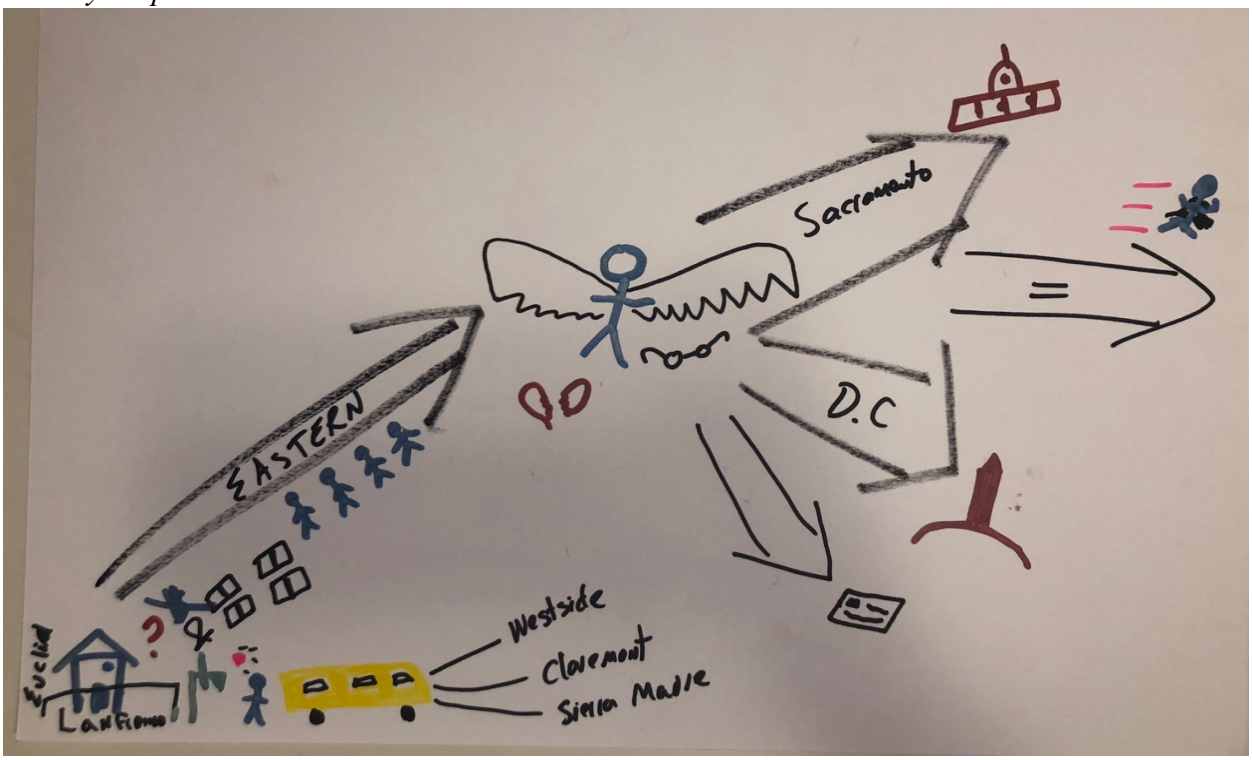
Journey Map 3: Kathleen



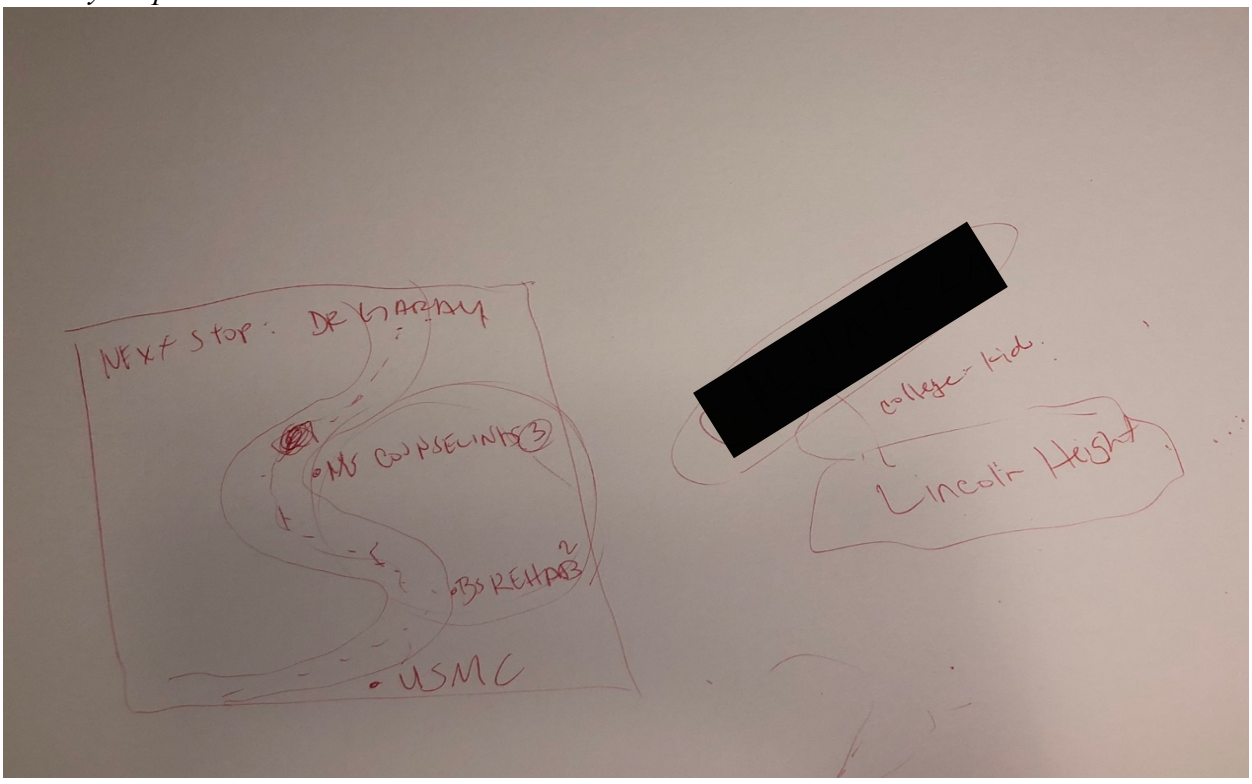
Journey Map 4: Albert



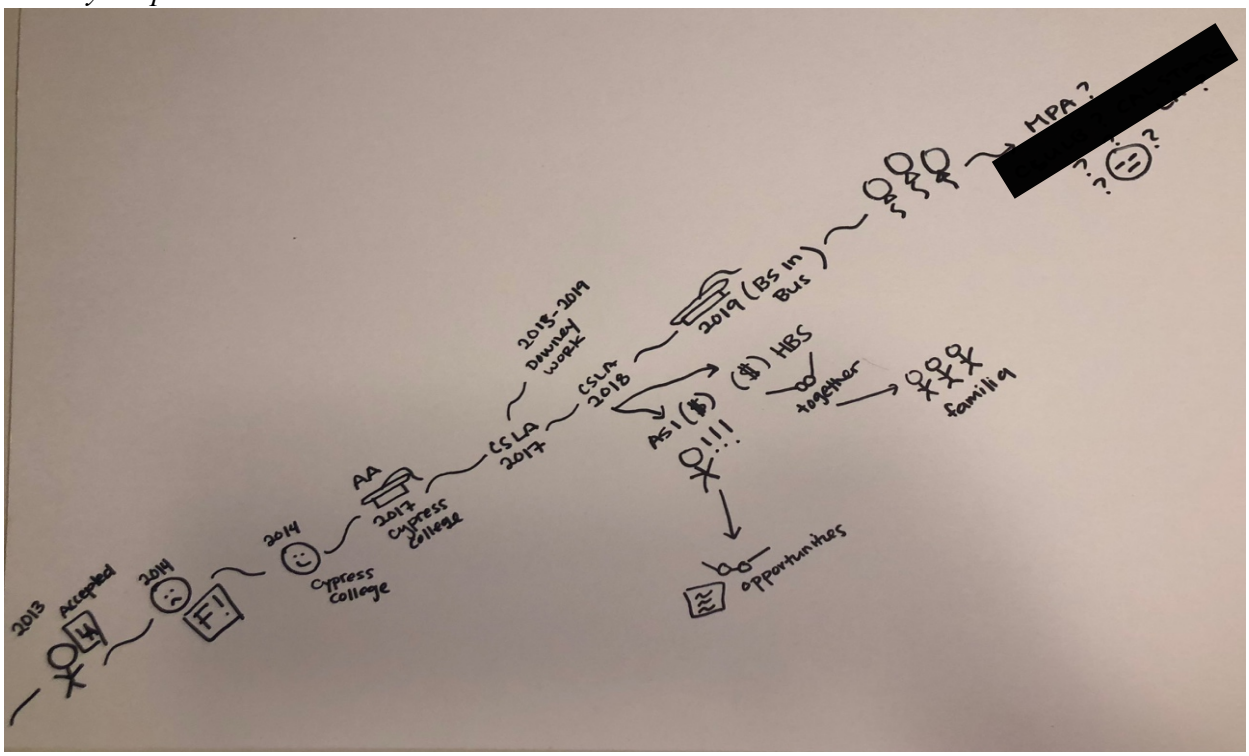
Journey Map 5: Daniel



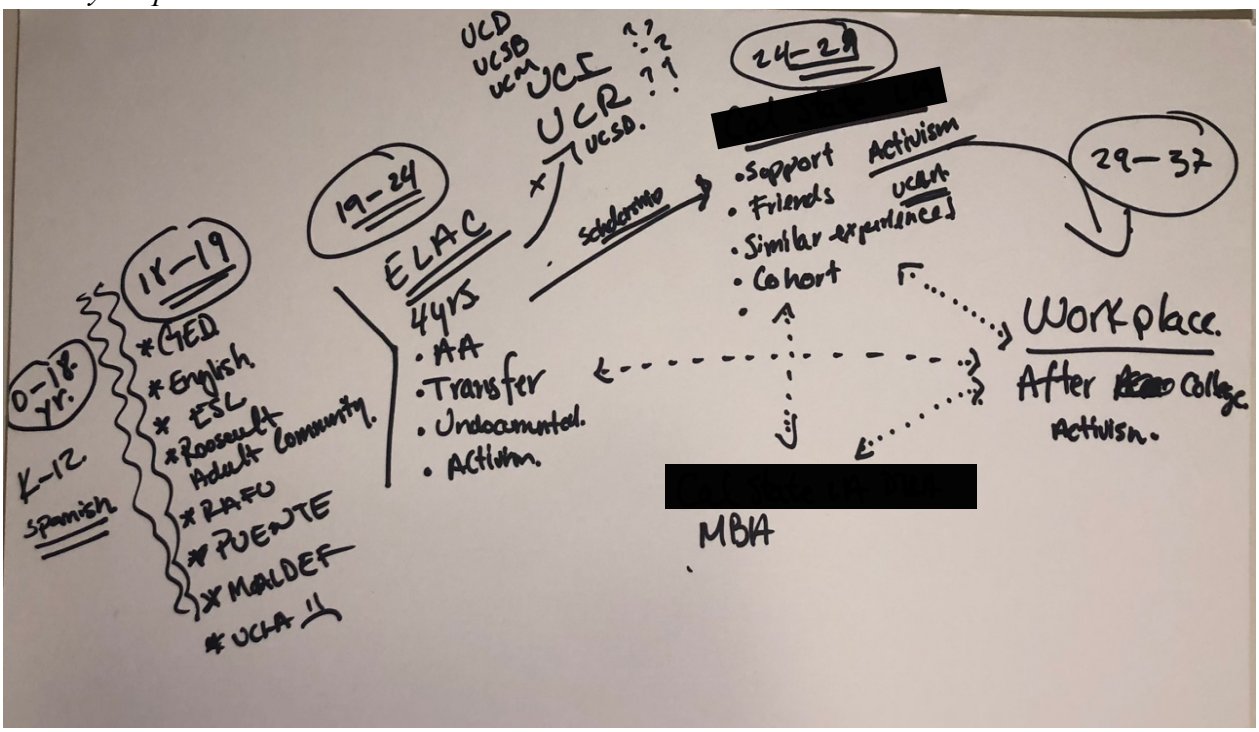
Journey Map 6: Diana



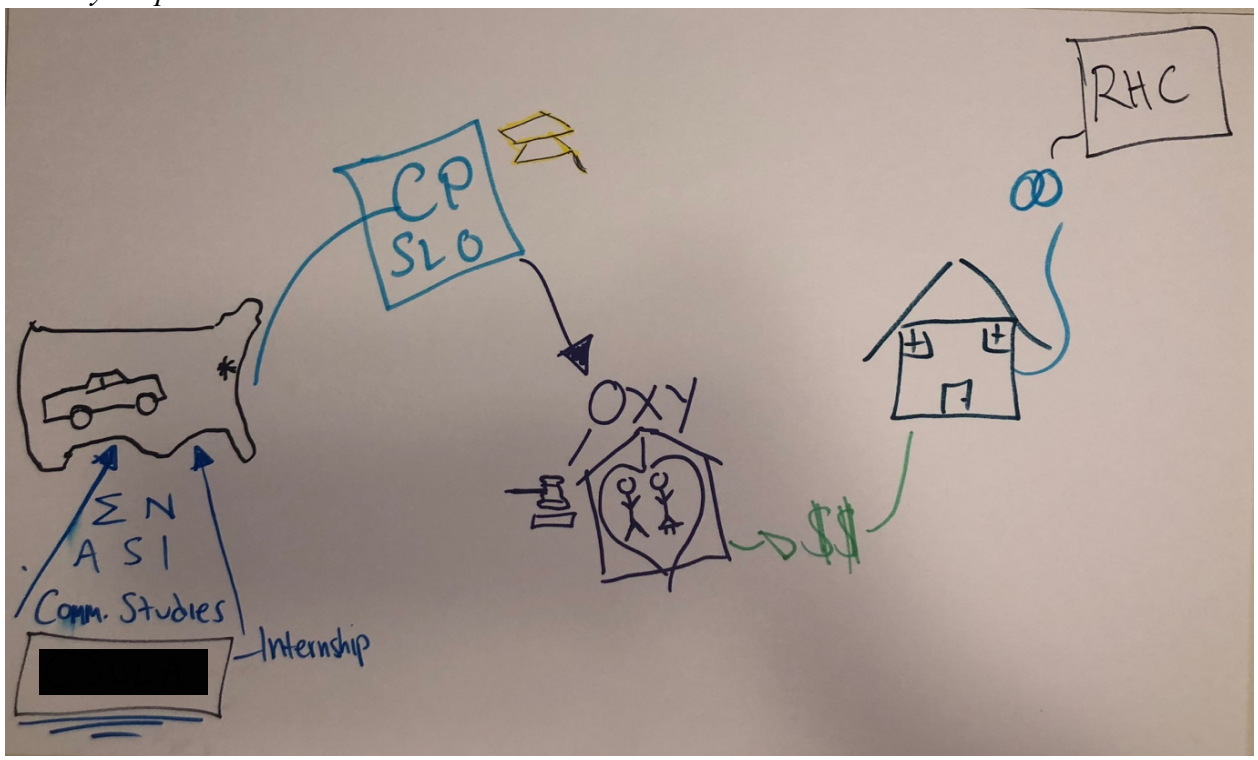
Journey Map 7: Jessica



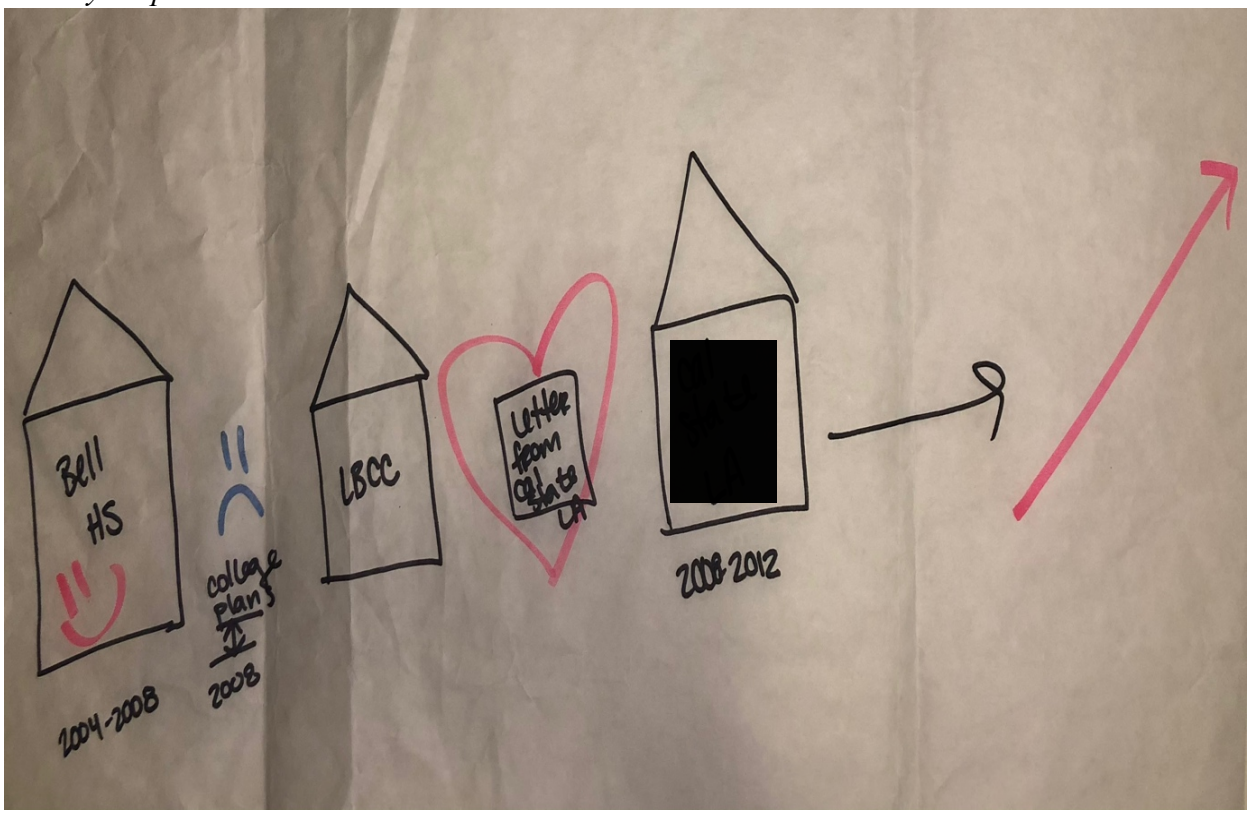
Journey Map 8: John



Journey Map 9: Paul



Journey Map 10: Maria



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