

The Small Town Dilemma

Understanding the Spatial Imagination of Rural California and the Implications of Physical Place in
Access to Higher Education for Black, Indigenous, & People of Color (BIPOC)

Alexis Atsilvsgi Zaragoza

Advisor: Dr. Clancy Wilmott
University of California Berkeley, Department of Geography

Positionality:

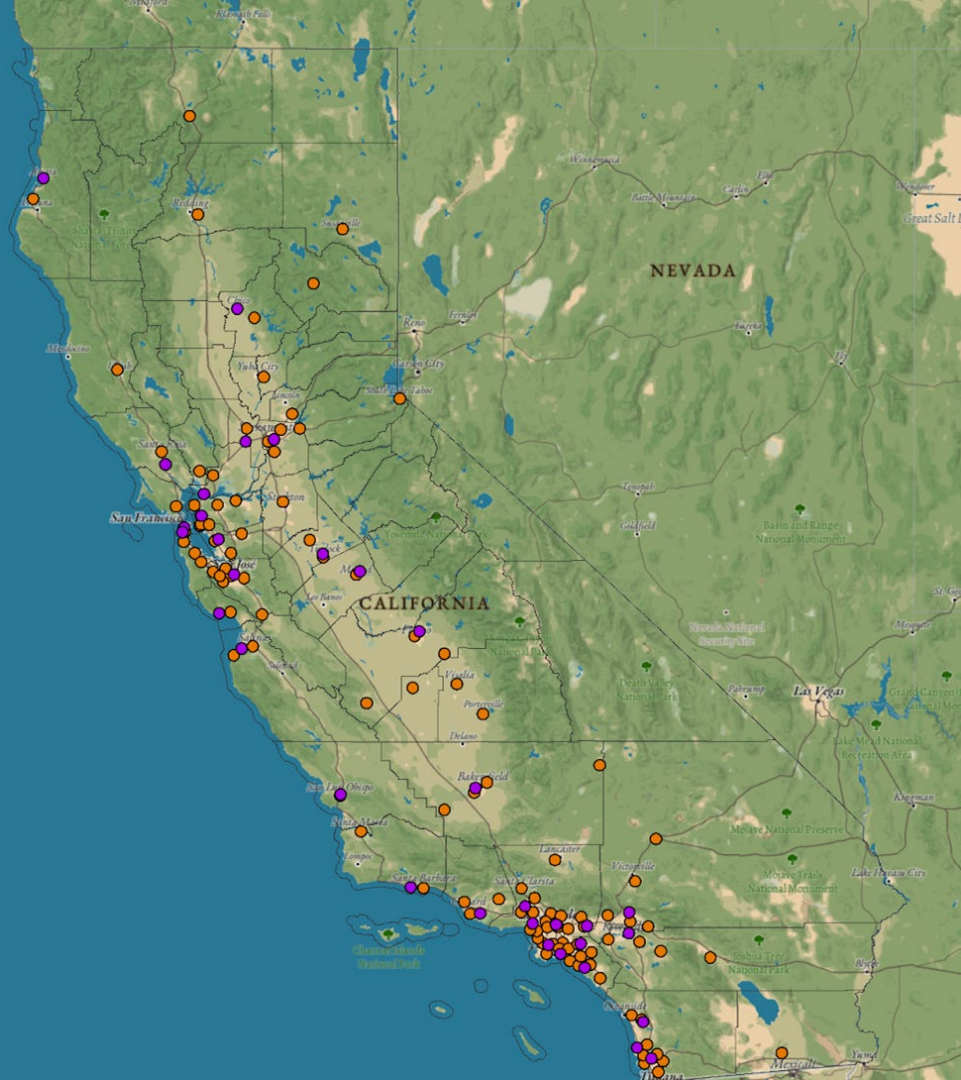
- Aniyunwiya (Cherokee) and Chicana
- Transfer Student from Modesto Junior College and current Undergraduate Student at UC Berkeley
- Family from the reservation in Oklahoma and moved in the 70's
- Grandfather in the bracero program and my father came to the United States in the mid-90's
- Born and raised in the Central Valley
- UC Board of Admissions, Board of Governors for the CA Community Colleges, and UC Board of Regents

Mixed Methods:

- Proximity maps as areas of influence
- Commuting maps to understand concepts of time in rural v. urban economic landscapes + explore edgelands of the Bay Area in the Central Valley*
- Mixing singular value decomposition and agglomerative clustering to more accurately display racial geographies of the Valley*
- Literary landscape analysis of the Valley: understanding the emotional shift in feelings of environment and urbanization through historical poetry and prose
- Community mapping at the high school level*

Geography of California

- State 4-Year Universities
- State 2-Year Universities





What does it look like to be rural in California?

“The State of
Jefferson”,
Poor and Rich
Farmers

Poverty?
Poor
Education?
Cheap
Housing?

Migrant
Workers,
Diversity

Diverse Rurality and Economic Reality

LOWER EDUCATION, HIGHER POVERTY

Studies show that there is a general correlation between the proportion of adults who don't have a high school diploma and higher poverty rates in California counties. Click a bubble representing a county to see details.

● Valley counties ● Other CA counties

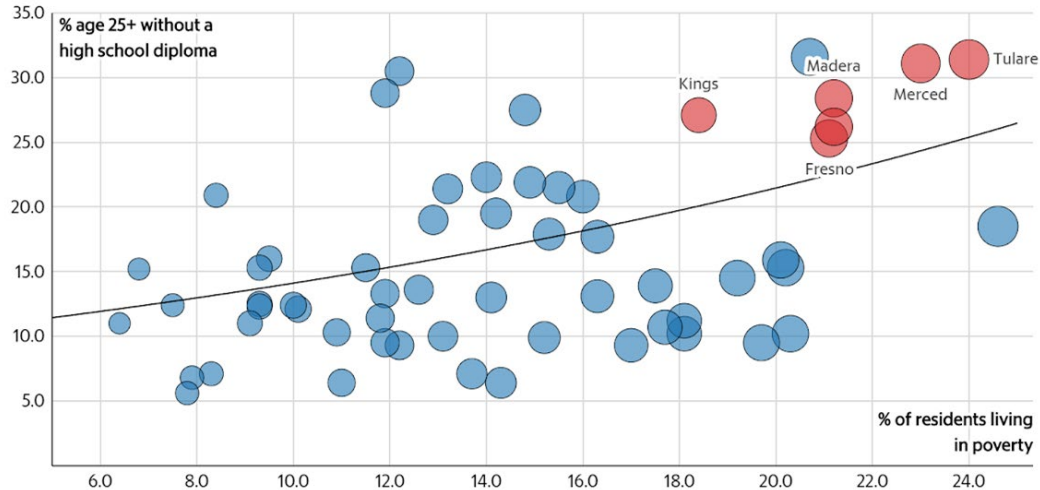
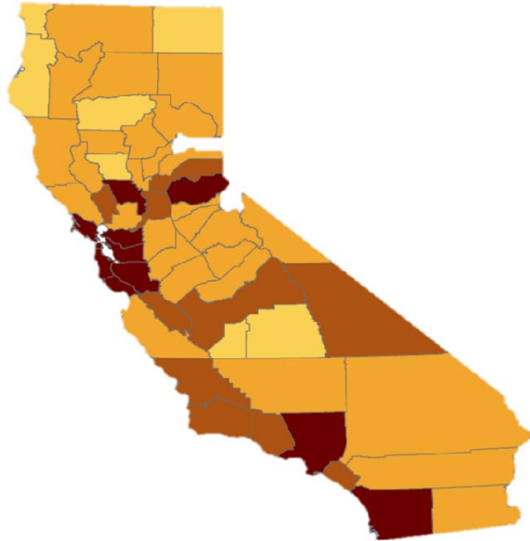
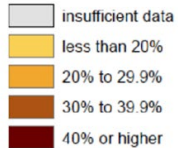


Chart: Tim Sheehan / The Fresno Bee • Source: U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, 2017 1- and 5-year estimates • [Get the data](#)

**Percent of Recent High School Graduates Completing A-G Courses,
by County 2014**

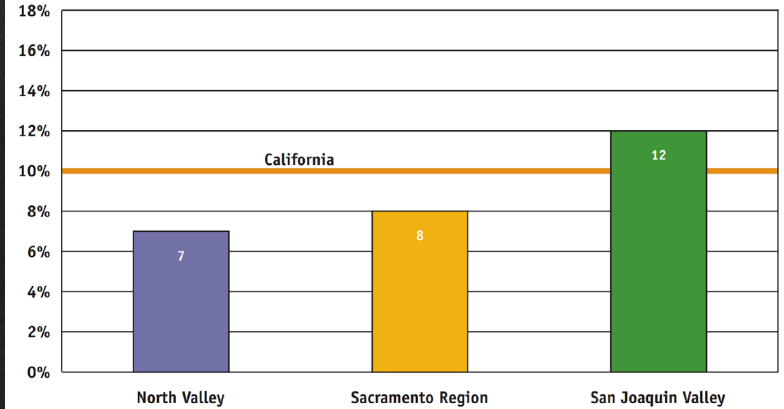


Percent



Source: Public Policy Institute of California, 2014.

**Percent of Youth (Age 16-19) Unemployed and Not in School
2000**



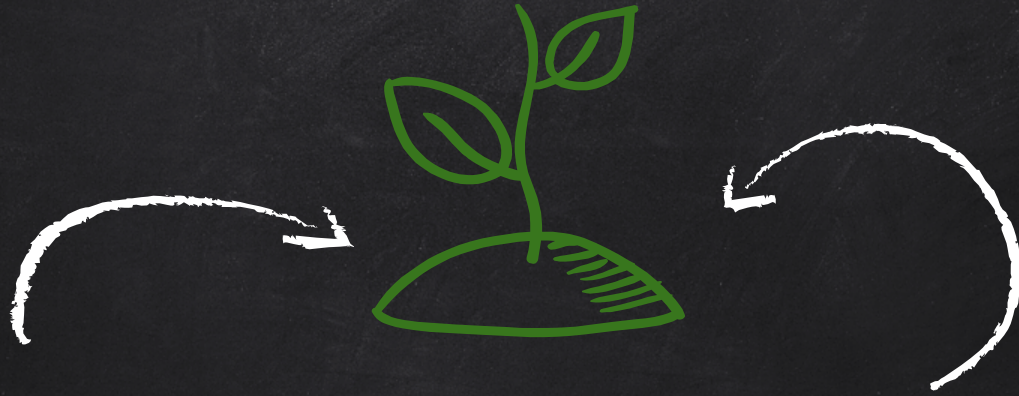
Source: Kids Count, Census 2000

X Overall, the Valley has lower third grade reading scores than the state; only 45% of third graders scored above the fiftieth percentile, compared to 47% statewide. The San Joaquin Valley exhibited the lowest scores

Hate in California



- X California ranks No. 1 in the nation with 79 active hate groups, six of which operate in Sacramento area
- X Southern Poverty Law study also left out 13 active groups because they were active but not topping the list, meaning this is not the full list



The Forgotten California Rural Imaginary

Living in a place that is not typically studied, where most data from your racial/ethnic groups come from urban centers, and the mixed reality of poorly resourced schools alongside the pressure of living within an area of violent white supremacy is not considered.

The Forgotten Narrative

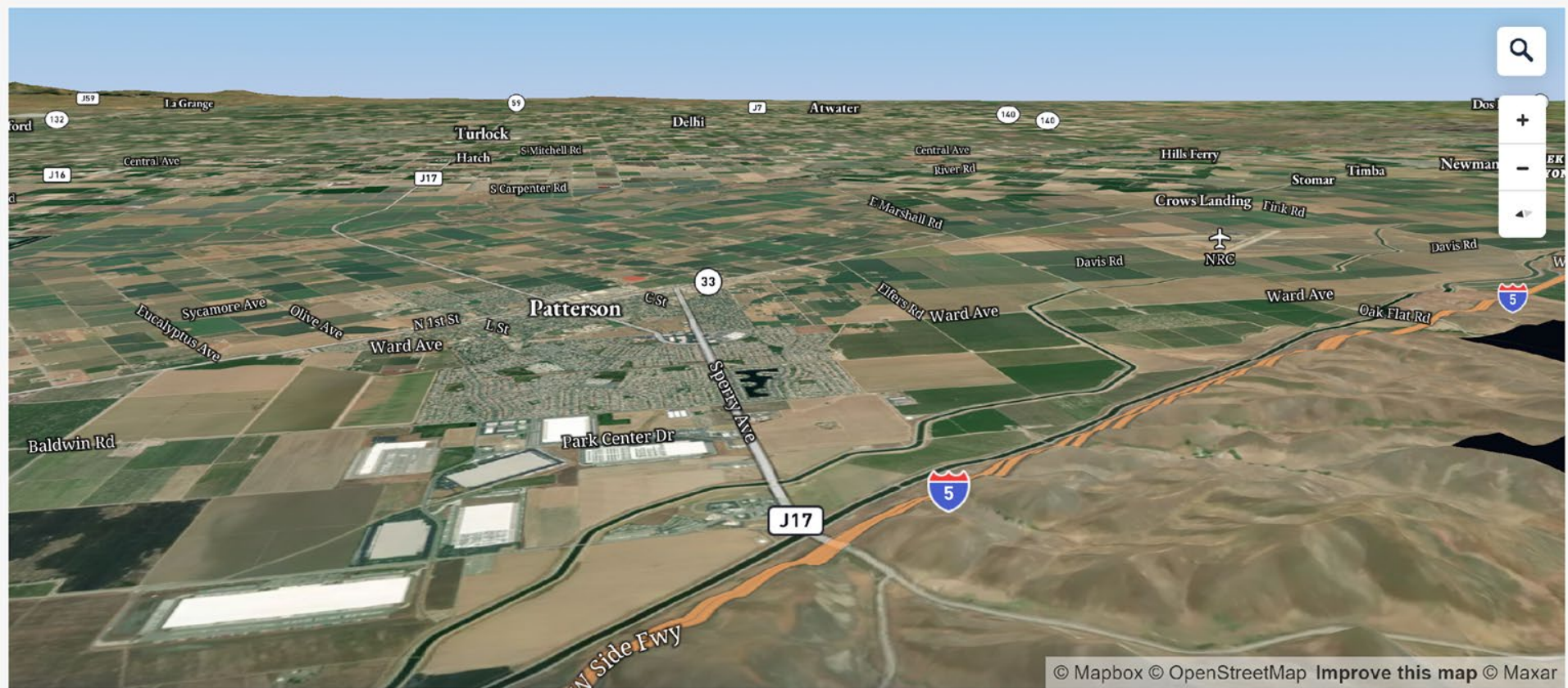
Being a student in the Central Valley creates a unique spatial imaginary. When looking at the influence of *where* a student is, we find a reality that is vastly different from the rest of the state.

The question that accompanies *where* is *why*?

Geographic variation in school choice is one large factor of why students may be hesitant to apply to the UC system, or take longer to graduate community college. It may even be the reason why they never choose to go to college at all- due to lack of perceived choice.

A Different Way of Understanding Opportunity:

Mapping Hope: A Case Study of Patterson, CA



© Mapbox © OpenStreetMap Improve this map © Maxar



Patterson
alejrz

Copy this style to your account

Copy

Source:
<https://api.mapbox.com/styles/v1/alejrz/cl04uk2bi00pu16kd1g4vp1ra.html?>

[Web Viewer Terms](#) | [Privacy & Cookies](#)

Edit

Corporate Takeover: The Early Amazon City

EDUCATION

Patterson High program opening doors to distribution center jobs

By Nan Austin

naustin@modbee.com



UPDATED OCTOBER 26, 2021 2:09 PM



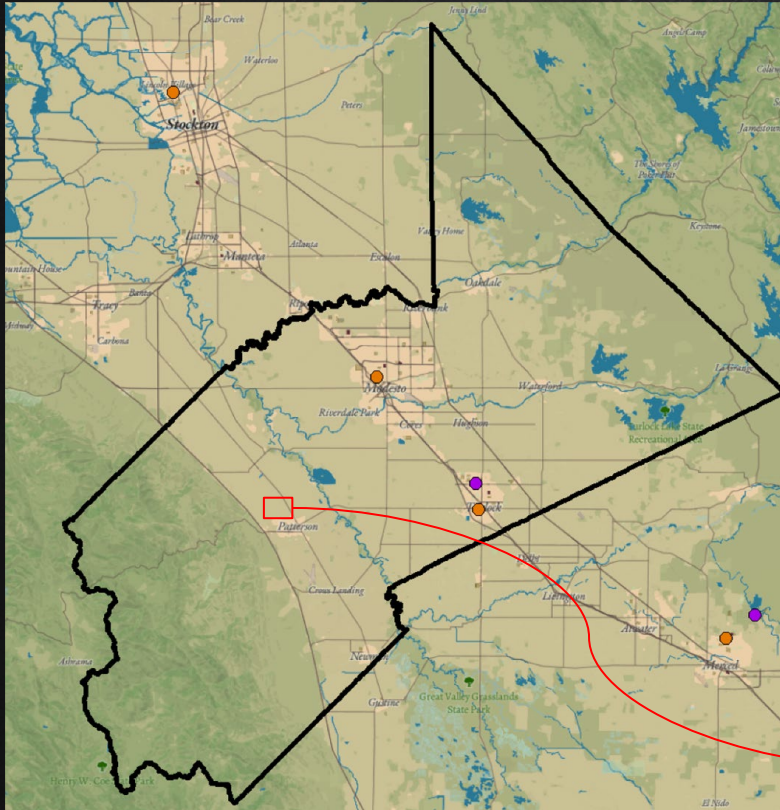
Mario Prado

► Fozzt/ift10

Amazon Is Creating Company Towns Across the United States

- X Promise of a \$16 per hour job right out of high school
- X Training for forklift driving, truck driving, and an operating warehouse on the high school campus
- X All alongside a school that only offers 4 eligible AP classes (local activism has pushed this to 7 in the past two years)

Proximity as Feeling



Case Study: Patterson High School

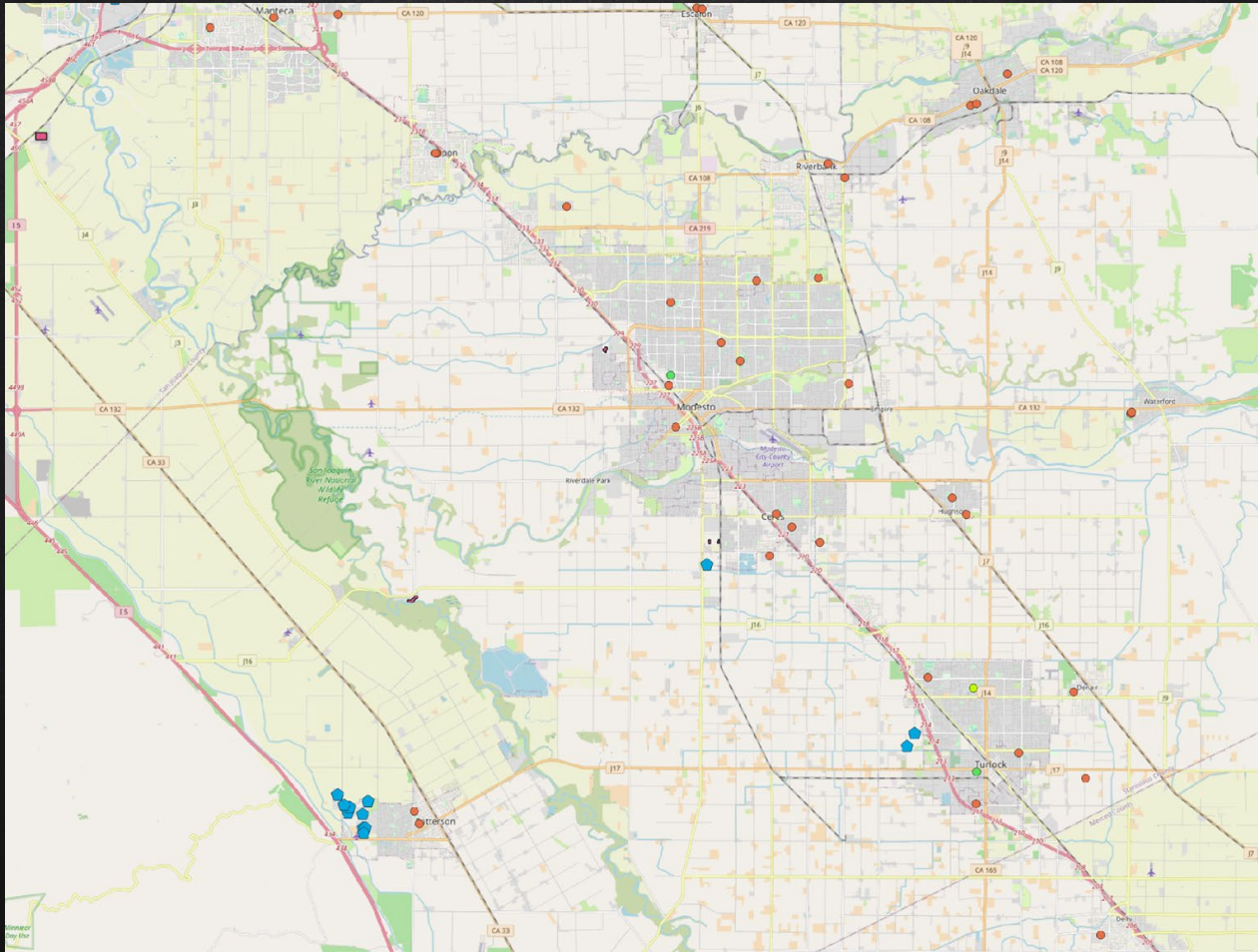
1 Bus Stop

45 Minutes to the Closest Community College
or CSU (State 4-Year College)

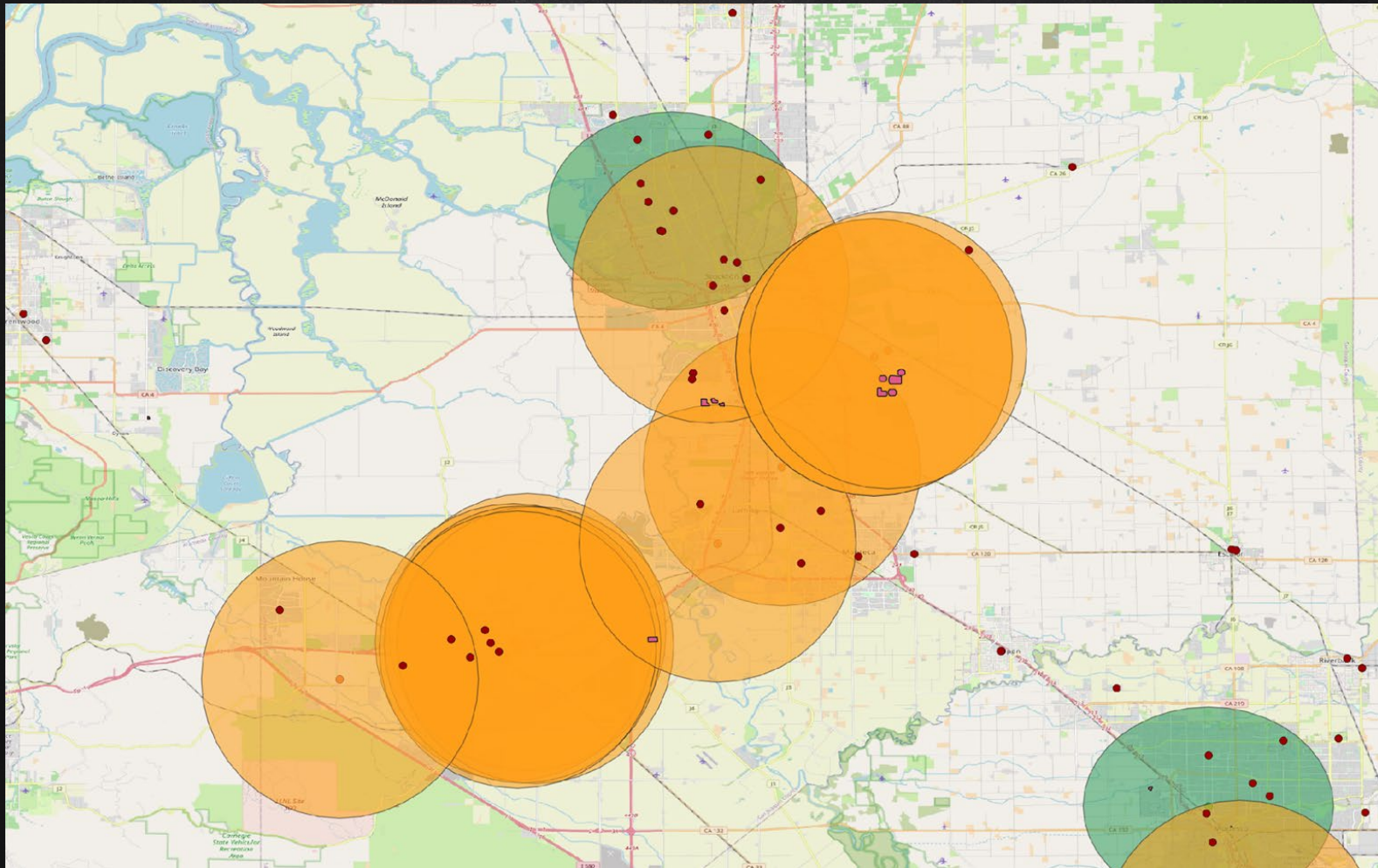
2 Hours to the Nearest UC (University of
California)

9 Warehouses Total

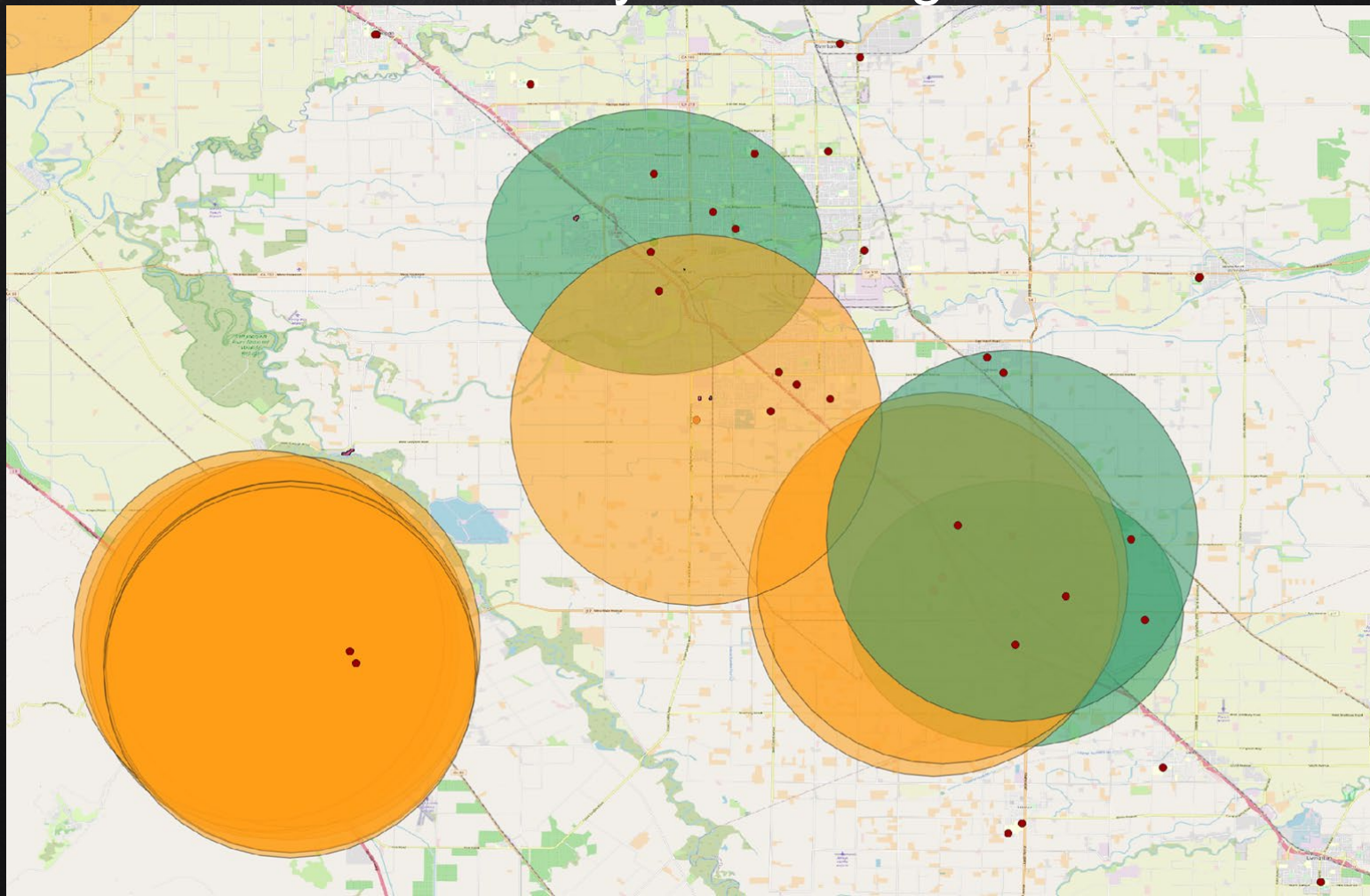
Proximity as Feeling



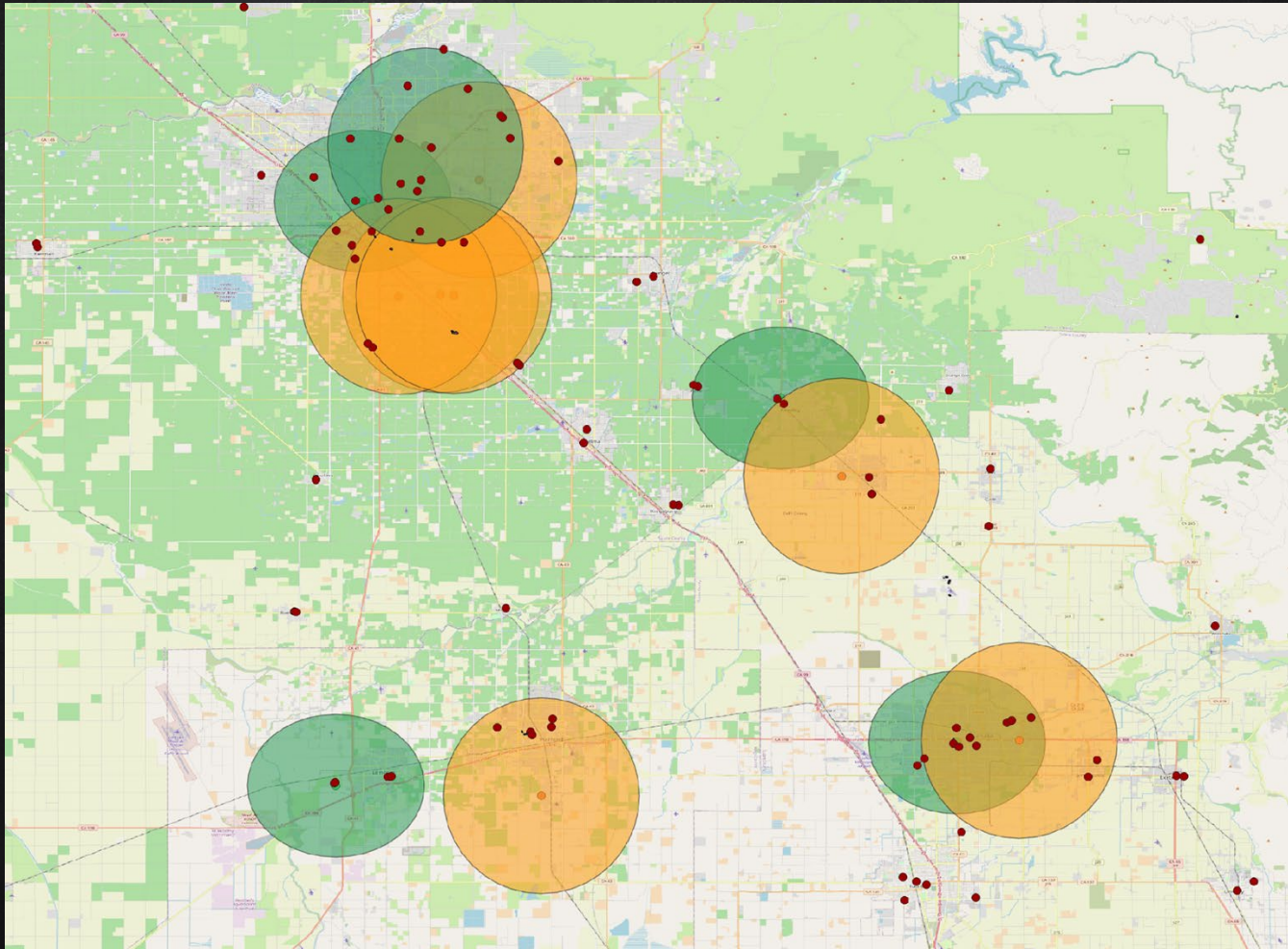
Proximity as Feeling



Proximity as Feeling



Proximity as Feeling



Proximity as Feeling:

When Prisons Come to Town

AKA

“Work at the Prisons or Go to Prison”

Spatiality of Prisons in California



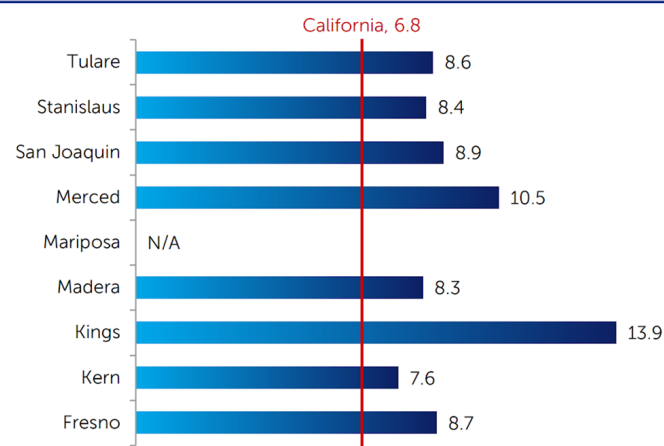
- X People of color but specifically Black people are extracted and removed from the cities for political and social domination in rural areas
- X In addition, this gives rural white people power over Black prisoners and prisoners of color, facilitating white supremacy, while simultaneously constricting their economic activity.
- X We see this along the 99 corridor, which is also used as a sphere of influence economically for workers of color throughout the Central Valley

Gilmore, Ruth Wilson. 2007. Golden gulag: prisons, surplus, crisis, and opposition in globalizing California.

What makes the rural experience in
California unique to BIPOC
students and families?

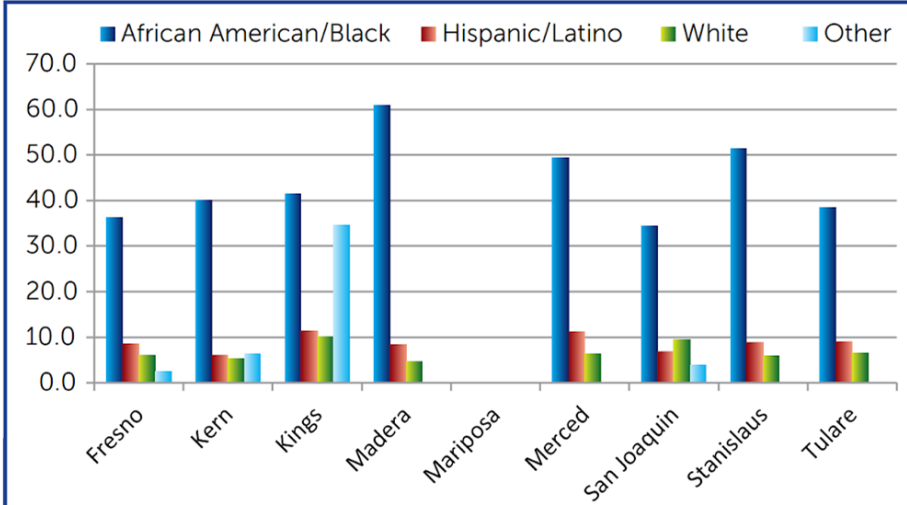
Black Children Targeted by Incarceration

Figure 9. Number of juvenile felony arrests per 1,000 youth ages 10-17



Source: As cited on kidsdata.org, California Department of Justice, Criminal Justice Statistics Center, Monthly Arrest and Citation Register (MACR) Data Files; CJSC published tables (Jul. 2015). California Department of Finance, Race/Ethnic Population with Age and Sex Detail, 1990-1999, 2000-2010, 2010-2060 (Jul. 2015).

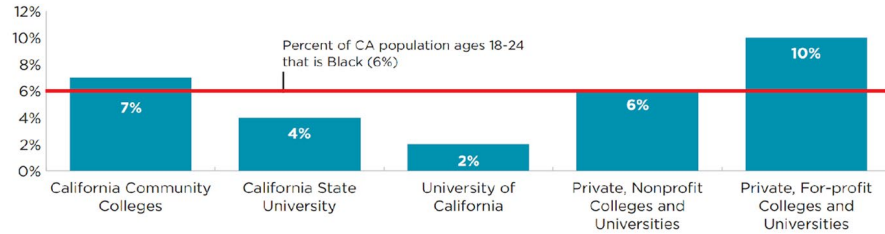
Figure 10. Number of juvenile felony arrests per 1,000 youth ages 10-17, by race/ethnicity



Source: Ibid Figure 9. Other combines the categories two or more races and no race identified. Asians, Pacific Islanders, Filipinos and American Indians/Alaska Natives are omitted due to small numbers.

Black Students

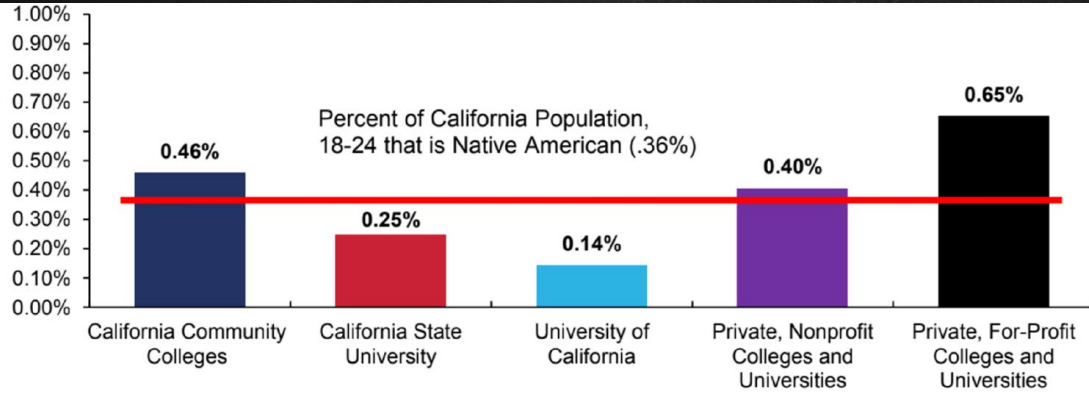
Figure 12. Black students are underrepresented at the CSU and UC, and are significantly overrepresented at for-profit colleges



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample, 2016; National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall Component, 2017

X Little to no research on Black students in rural California

Native Students in California



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample, 2016; National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 12-month Enrollment Component, 2017

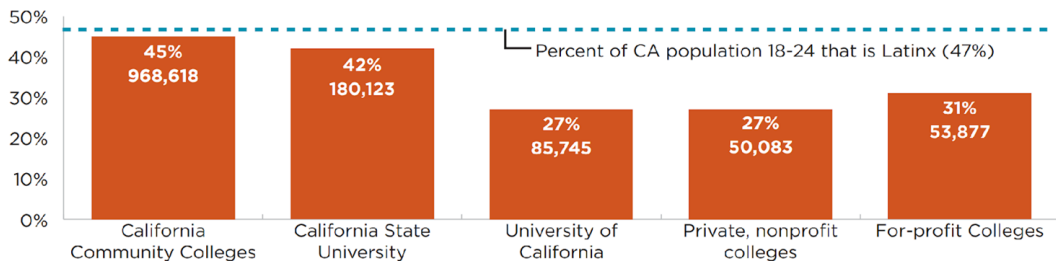
Of the 2,500 Native American high school graduates in 2017, only 715 completed the coursework necessary to be eligible to apply to California's public four-year universities.

This means that nearly 1,800 (71 percent) Native American graduates were ineligible to even apply to CSU and UC campuses.

Latino/a Students in California

Figure 8. Latinx students are underrepresented across all sectors of higher education in California

PERCENT OF TOTAL UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS THAT ARE LATINX



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample, 2016; National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall Component, 2017

- x Across seven Central Valley and Coastal counties, MORE THAN TWO IN THREE people under age 25 are Latino.
- x By high school, one in five Latino students does not graduate with his or her class. Of the 12th grade students who do graduate, only a third complete A-G requirements.

In Admissions: Undermatching

Undermatching: students who would otherwise be eligible for higher ranking colleges but do not feel worthy of applying vs. Overmatching, the process of students who do not otherwise qualify for higher ranking schools but will apply based on confidence from their privileged backgrounds

Distracted by the path laid out by racial capitalism, creating a rural region that is more rich in corporate extractive jobs and imprisonment, especially targeting areas with no higher education institutions and that are primarily non-white.

This causes the emotional landscape of the region to have a lower capacity for how much students are *allowed* to have hope and *for what*.

“To be truly radical is to make hope possible, rather than despair convincing”

-Raymond Williams

Some Solutions:

- X Rural Studies as an extension of Urban Studies: gentrification and the prison problem are dual ended and constantly moving between urban and rural spatialities
- X More Universities: expanding UC to satellite areas, funding a CSU Stockton, and branching out the community colleges such as in the expansion of Los Banos Campus through Merced College
- X Data by race in the Central Valley
- X Debating the effects of warehouses on High School campuses and what opportunities we want young people to have

Thank you!

+ [Bibliography \(Link\)](#)