Project Prepared: Building Community through Disaster Preparedness in San José's Japantown and Hensley Historic District

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Project Prepared: Building Community through Disaster Preparedness in San José's Japantown and Hensley Historic District

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Abstract

Disaster preparedness efforts and the need for disaster-prepared communities in San José have substantially increased the need for more involvement at the community level. This project is a collaboration with Japantown Prepared and Hensley Historic District to understand how to build a stronger, more cohesive community through disaster preparedness. I explored how risk perception and vulnerability to disasters varied among research participants, how their views of disaster influenced their own preparedness and mitigation strategies, and explored questions concerning resources or assets within the community that people would need in the event of a disaster. By addressing these core questions, Project Prepared aimed to achieve create a locale-specific and community-centered approach to disaster planning in Japantown and Hensley Historic District. Project Prepared also intended to encourage residents to feel a stronger sense of connection and commitment to their community (particularly among populations in the community that are at most risk during a disaster, such as those experiencing homelessness, senior citizens, families with young children and immigrants with limited English proficiency). Efforts to increase community members' connection included personally inviting community members to attend meetings and disaster preparedness events. Project Prepared aimed to increase overall engagement and participation from the broader community, rather than relying solely on the small group currently dedicated to disaster preparedness and helped implement solutions to increase engagement. I developed a project to address the preparedness gap between different stakeholders and residents in Japantown and Hensley Historic District and inform my project community partners on best practices, drawn from interviews and participant observation.

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I would like to thank the San José Department of Anthropology staff for their support throughout this research, and I would specifically like to thank Dr. A.J. Faas, Dr. Jan English-Lueck, and Dr. Roberto Gonzalez for their dedication to and support for this project. I would also like to thank our community partners CommUniverCity, particularly Jennifer Goto, who helped me connect to various stakeholders in the Japantown and Hensley neighborhoods. This project would not have been possible without the commitment and collaboration from our community partners that have been working tirelessly for several years to make their communities disaster-prepared. Rich Saito, Jim McClure, Jeff Oldham, Mary Tucker and many others from Japantown and Hensley Historic District inspired and motivated me to support their efforts and I hope my research helped guide their disaster work. Lastly, I would like to thank my family and friends who supported me throughout all of this. Without your support, none of this would have been possible. Thank you.

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Chapter One: Meet the Project

Introduction

In collaboration with Japantown Prepared, Dr. A.J. Faas and I designed Project Prepared to help build disaster preparedness in two neighboring communities, Japantown and the Hensley Historic District, in San José, California. With a population of just over one million residents, San José is home to numerous neighborhood associations. Some have taken proactive measures to prepare their residents for disasters and The City of San José's Emergency Operations Plan has identified numerous potential hazards and disasters that can affect the region: civil unrest, dam failure, earthquakes, floods, hazardous materials accident, insect pest infestation, power failure, prolonged heat wave, transportation accident (including roadway, rail and air), weapons of mass destruction-chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, explosive terrorism, wildland/urban interface fires, and lastly, winter storm (City of San José 2018).

As a major metropolitan region, San José is underprepared for a major disaster and needs additional support for disaster preparedness. In 2015, the City of San José Office of Emergency Services conducted a City-wide emergency management readiness assessment that included core capabilities such as: community resilience, planning, mass care services, situational assessment, public information and warning, housing and operational coordination. The assessment was based on the United States Department of Homeland Security Core Capabilities and found that San José was underprepared in most of the major capabilities (reported in percentages), particularly among community resilience (3%), planning (4%) and mass care services (4%) with

a paltry budget of $56,000 (Jacobson 2016). Almost concurrently, the City was addressing the heavy floods that affected several downtown neighborhoods near Coyote Creek in the winter of 2017. The flooding displaced approximately fourteen thousand residents from their homes, demonstrated the disaster readiness gaps highlighted in the assessment, and served as a very real reminder that disasters are not uncommon and that many neighborhoods in San José are vulnerable to the damage they can cause throughout the city.

In this project, I focus on two neighborhoods in San José: Japantown and the Hensley Historic District. These adjacent neighborhoods, both within proximity to downtown San José, have actively identified the hazards that exist within or near their boundaries, and neighborhood leaders formed organizations dedicated to informing residents of and preparing them for potential disasters in San José. Japantown Prepared is led by retired public safety personnel and several other professionals who are well-known in their community. Japantown Prepared was initiated through the now-defunct city-wide disaster preparedness program *San José Prepared*, which provided resources and training to help prepare San José residents for disaster. Japantown Prepared's mission includes helping residents, businesses and organizations get prepared for, respond to, and survive an emergency or disaster situation (Japantown Prepared 2019). While Japantown Prepared is supported and led by key community members with experience working in public safety, Japantown Prepared leaders have acknowledged that without input and contributions from the broader community, their efforts are mostly unknown to the community. As such, community-centric solutions that are backed by community members' opinions and feedback are included in the final list of recommendations for Japantown Prepared.

Although Hensley Historic District does not have its own formal organization or website dedicated to disaster preparedness, it has aligned itself with Japantown Prepared's mission and

vision. The partnership between Hensley Historic District and Japantown Prepared has allowed both neighborhoods access to the San José Community Action and Pride (CAP) grant to implement projects, including disaster preparedness efforts (Sustainable San José 3D 2015). Having recognized that both neighborhoods benefit from these efforts, Japantown Prepared and Hensley Historic District leaders often collaborate for events and have also acknowledged that in a major disaster, Japantown will likely see an influx of Japantown and Hensley residents in need of supplies and assistance. The city-wide initiative *San José Prepared* was inactive during the research period but both organizations continued their work despite the lack of city resources. The City Office of Emergency Management has since established a new program called *Be Prepared*, and provides resources, classes and information for various types of emergencies (City of San José 2018).

This chapter introduces the two communities and explores the historical foundation of these communities as well as the current events that impact them. Here I discuss the current disaster preparedness measures in Japantown and Hensley Historic District, as well as the City-wide efforts to create disaster prepared communities and the challenges, issues and topics that these communities face related to both disaster preparedness and community involvement. Lastly, I present the goals of my project, outline the intended benefits for the project partners, and discuss the recommendations.

Japantown and Hensley Historic District

Japantown is a historically diverse community, one of the oldest neighborhoods in San José, and one of the last three remaining Japantowns in the United States. Before it became a Japanese enclave, the neighborhood was a refuge for Chinese migrant workers and an established

Chinatown. In the late 1800s, Japanese farm workers settled in Santa Clara Valley, and they were drawn to Chinatown, as it made Japanese migrants feel safe from anti-Asian racism. By the early twentieth century, Japanese workers established their own community alongside Chinatown. As more Japanese women settled in the area, a more permanent family life was established. Japantown flourished through the early-mid twentieth century, until anti-Japanese sentiments grew during World War II, and the United States government forced all people of Japanese ancestry to relocate to internment camps. After the war ended, the United State government allowed Japanese citizens and residents to return to their homes and Japantown began a protracted period of resettling and rebuilding the community.

Situated north of downtown San José, Japantown is currently home to single- and multi-family residents, assisted living facilities for the elderly, and numerous businesses that extend along the main corridor of Jackson Street. Today, locals consider the neighborhood a tourist and dining a destination, and many of the businesses maintain their cultural and historical roots. In 2011, members of the Japantown Business Association agreed to build disaster preparedness in the neighborhood and formed Japantown Prepared as a part of the City's *San José Prepared* initiative (Japantown Prepared 2019).

Hensley Historic District, also one of the oldest and most diverse neighborhoods in the city, was named after Samuel J. Hensley, a prominent San José resident in the late 1800s. The neighborhood is defined by a portion of the former Hensley estate and most of the single-family homes in the district were built between 1865 and 1930. The neighborhood is home to over 225 buildings, many of them Victorian homes and has the highest concentration of Victorian homes and buildings in San José. Through the years, most of these homes have been converted into boarding houses and multi-family homes, and in the 1960s, when suburban development and

housing grew in popularity, many homeowners left the neighborhood in favor of the less-centrally located neighborhoods. It was not until 1988 that the San José City Council began the process of preserving the neighborhood and in 1989, the Hensley District became a designated City landmark. The 1990s brought resurgence in neighborhood restoration with residents' efforts to maintain and preserve their historic homes (City of San José 2003).

Problem Statement

Since Hensley Historic District and Japantown are historic neighborhoods near downtown San José in one of the most diverse city council districts (City of San José 2012), they house numerous public and cultural landmarks such as museums, historic buildings, and restaurants. The deeply valuable cultural heritage in both neighborhoods, the diverse population, and the known hazards highlight the need for increased preparedness. These combined factors highlight a real need for a culturally responsive and appropriate approach to disaster preparedness but also present unique challenges in order to accomplish the creation of a culturally appropriate disaster preparedness plan. Multiple languages, household incomes, and varying degrees of housing stability all played major roles in the overall disaster readiness in the community. Real estate prices skyrocketed with the expansion of the tech industry and population growth and the research site experienced a neighborhood revival during the research period. New housing complexes and a thriving business district along the main corridor have attracted young professionals, students, and business owners to live and operate in these neighborhoods. With a growing population and a new wave of residents, it was important to increase disaster preparedness measures. While long-term residents have traditionally been more involved in community affairs than other residents, the increase of younger residents presents new challenges to the communities. Long-term residents, such as homeowners, are more likely to

be more invested in their neighborhoods and actively participate in community events and associations. Other residents, such as renters, typically do not engage as much in these activities, and as a result, may seem less invested in their communities.

Additionally, few people are involved in disaster preparedness efforts and, in some cases, those who are most actively involved do not live in proximity of the area. The lack of community involvement presents a very specific challenge; if faced with a disaster, these communities need residents who are informed and prepared to cope with the issues that disasters present, such as limited access to resources. Acknowledging these challenges, Hensley and Japantown leaders have established their goals to encourage active participation from residents (especially among those who typically do not interact with the community) to build stronger partnerships among residents and build disaster preparedness.

What is perhaps most alarming is the neighborhood's surrounding hazards and risks. Given the neighborhood's proximity to the Guadalupe floodplains, its population of vulnerable residents (such as elderly residents or homeless people in the area) and the historic landmarks located within the building, there is considerable interest to protect the neighborhood from a disaster. The area is within a 100-year flood risk stretching from the northern-most point of the neighborhood near Muwekma Ohlone Middle School to Jackson Street, which is a major business and community hub in the neighborhood (Esri 2019). In addition to the floodplains, there is a Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) natural gas transmission pipeline that runs through the neighborhood along Taylor Street. Any kind of leak, explosion or other disaster associated with the pipeline would devastate the surrounding area (Pacific Gas and Electric 2019).

Lastly, Union Pacific freight trains run through the two neighborhoods and pose several

risks to the community. The railroad tracks have been known to attract homeless encampments, especially since the forced closure of the infamous encampment, The Jungle, along the banks of Coyote Creek in 2014 (Allen-Price 2014). Since then, homelessness in the city has become more complex as Jungle residents have spread out through the region, often in public spaces where they can hide themselves, such as railroad tracks. At the time of the encampment's closure, over 300 residents were living there and forced hundreds of Jungle residents out of the community they created (KQED 2016). Some chose to resettle along the Union Pacific railroad tracks that run through Japantown and Hensley Historic District and there needs to be special consideration taken for homeless residents in Japantown and Hensley Historic District when planning for disasters.

Union Pacific transports anything from agricultural products to chemicals and industrial products and, in a similar vein to the presence of PG&E's gas pipeline, a crash, explosion or other train-related disaster could devastate the community. More specifically, an incident along the railway can bring substantial harm to some of the most vulnerable populations in the area. Disaster outcomes vary widely across societal groups and disasters are often most devastating to Latinos (particularly those who are not proficient in English) and women, mostly due to the deeply entrenched social inequities that influence and shape the unequal distribution of resources and information (Diaz 2008; Enarson and Morrow 1998). Age and disability also disproportionately represent disaster-vulnerable populations (Phillips and Fordham 2010). However, the most significant indicator of disaster vulnerability is poverty (Fothergill and Peek 2004; Faas 2016). Those living in poverty are most at-risk in the event of a disaster, which places a multitude of Japantown and Hensley residents at a disadvantage before a disaster even strikes, further cementing the urgent need to build a strong foundation of disaster prepared communities

in these neighborhoods.

Effectively, the identified hazards in the neighborhood put schools, residents (particularly senior living facilities, homeless, women and Latinos) businesses (including historic establishments) and places of worship at severe risk of a disaster (Esri 2019; Pacific Gas and Electric 2019; Union Pacific 2019; Donner and Rodríguez 2019), with limited community resources to withstand a disaster at this large of a scale. Thus, it is imperative to foster a sense of responsibility among residents to become involved in disaster preparedness. Focusing on these issues allowed me to address theoretical questions regarding community involvement, sense of responsibility to one's community and observe the social constructions of reality engaging cultural, social and physical environments in the discussion of risk perception and preparedness. Project Prepared provides a framework for understanding the ties between risk perception and disaster preparedness among Japantown and Hensley residents.

Project Goals and Objectives

This project was designed to assist community leaders reach out to residents more effectively. A significant goal of this project was to increase community engagement by incorporating the ideas, concerns, and values of neighborhood residents, Project Prepared enabled a more thorough understanding of the motivations behind disaster preparedness. A site-specific disaster mitigation plan can help facilitate dialogue between stakeholders in diverse, urban communities, such as Japantown and Hensley.

Since its inception, Japantown Prepared has been involved in neighborhood associations and events; they have established designated meet-up locations, disaster-related resources, and different types of trainings and classes designed to build disaster preparedness within their

neighborhoods. Disaster preparedness leaders in Japantown and Hensley Historic District found it difficult to reach out to community members outside of the core group of residents and volunteers. Different audiences that do not always have the same needs can make outreach and engagement difficult. In addition, studies suggest that emergency preparedness and risk perception are deeply interconnected with the community's cultural beliefs regarding risk and uncertainty (Oliver-Smith 1996; Boholm 2003) meaning that even within the neighborhood there could be vastly different attitudes towards disasters and preparedness measures.

Values, barriers, challenges, and assets are unique to each community, and I took into consideration the distinct cultures of Japantown and Hensley Historic District through ethnographic fieldwork, in-depth interviews, and community mapping to help understand what might motivate the diverse residents to become more involved in disaster preparedness efforts. Given Japantown and Hensley's location, circumstances and diversity, I developed this project in collaboration with Japantown Prepared and Hensley Historic District to understand how to build a stronger community through disaster preparedness. I explored how risk perception and vulnerability vary among residents, how their views of disaster influence their own preparedness and mitigation strategies and explored questions about resources or assets of the community that people would need to know in a disaster situation. My objective was to use the results to form an in-depth understanding of the different barriers, challenges, and assets in this community, which I would then use to create feasible recommendations. By addressing these core questions, my intention was to achieve the following: create a locale-specific and community-centered approach to disaster preparedness, encourage residents to feel a stronger sense of connection and commitment and lastly, to increase overall engagement and participation. The goals of this project were to: (a) build social cohesion among residents; (b) discern residents' attitudes toward

disaster preparedness by gauging what they perceive as risks; and (c) use this information to build knowledge and awareness of steps to facilitate disaster preparedness in a way that encourages community members and residents to actively participate. Ultimately, these findings will inform Japantown Prepared endeavors and shift attitudes towards disaster preparedness in a way that will increase community involvement in disaster preparedness efforts.

Focusing on these goals, I developed a project to address the preparedness gap between different stakeholders and residents in Japantown and Hensley Historic District. This project was rooted in ethnographic research that included participant observation, in-depth interviews, and community mapping in Japantown and Hensley Historic District. The final project deliverable is the list of recommended interventions that are tailored to the concerns, values, and assets of residents of the Japantown and Hensley neighborhoods.

I designed this research project with the intent to identify key assets and challenges in Japantown and Hensley Historic District and assess community attitudes toward disaster preparedness. During my period of fieldwork, Hensley Historic District was in the early stages of developing its disaster preparedness plans, while Japantown Prepared already had experience in developing programs and materials for disaster awareness, as well as monthly meetings and community events. Japantown Prepared and organizations within the neighborhood worked with me early in the project to help me understand their needs to increase awareness and recruit new participants. I conducted research for Project Prepared using ethnographic methods, which included community mapping, participant observation, and semi-structured, in-depth interviews. I coded data for emergent themes (residential status and history, resource availability, communication, disaster risk and safety, and place attachment) to understand the kinds of threats that faced neighbors should a disaster occur as well as the community attitudes towards disaster

preparedness, understanding community involvement and motivation to become more involved as well as connecting this to disaster preparedness, specifically connecting this to disaster preparedness groups in the area. Interviews were held at the participants' location of choice, and through support from CommUniverCity, I offered a five-dollar Target gift card as a compensation for their time. Through the combined efforts between student researchers and me, we interviewed nineteen individuals for a total of seventeen interviews (two interviews were conducted with couples who chose to be interviewed together).

Deliverables

Through the research, data collection and analysis, my goal was to provide disaster resources informed by the research findings for residents, businesses, and organizations to refer to and use. The final deliverable was presented to the leaders of Japantown Prepared and Hensley Historic District in the form of a project report outlining the research findings and resources to use among residents, businesses, and organizations in Japantown and Hensley Historic District. By creating a dialogue surrounding emergency preparedness, more neighbors will become better acquainted with one another and will likely be more invested in the neighborhood and community at large.

This project report is broken down into five, distinct chapters. Chapter 2 summarizes the relevant literature that informed the theoretical background of this research. I focused mainly on disaster literature, particularly disaster anthropology. I explored the political ecology approach, the adaptive capacity approach, and the importance of local and traditional knowledge. I also explored the role of perceived risk, risk assessment and disaster preparedness within the local context. Lastly, chapter 2 discusses the relationship between social cohesion and disaster preparedness.

In chapter 3, I detail the processes, methodologies and activities I conducted during the research period and my methodology for conducting the data analysis. Chapter 4 goes into depth with the analysis and discusses the prevalent themes and finding supported by interviews and research data to support my finings. The major themes included, disaster risk and preparedness, residential status and its relationship to disaster-readiness, factors that influenced place attachment and social cohesion, barriers and facilitators to communication and resource availability. Lastly, chapter 5 discusses the themes and findings uncovered in the research in greater depth and offers suggestions and recommendations based on my research findings. I also discuss the outcomes, limitations of my research and my reflections on these limitations, and offer suggested opportunities for future work.

Chapter 2: Review of Relevant Literature

Introduction

A disaster can truly devastate the communities of Hensley Historic District and Japantown. Historic buildings and landmarks that are central to the community face considerable risk should a disaster strike. This project was designed with the intention to use this knowledge to inform disaster preparedness plans and measures that are both meaningful and specific to residents' unique needs and circumstances. Despite the existing differences between residents, my research aimed to gain their perspectives, beliefs, and values regarding community and neighborhood participation and disaster preparedness. By obtaining their perspectives, my project helped organize Japantown residents, encouraged more people to become engaged in neighborhood events, and identified residents' concerns regarding disaster preparedness. In this chapter, I introduce the anthropological approach to understanding disasters and review the major concepts that informed this project. Ultimately, if residents are prepared for disasters, they are more likely to be able to adapt to changes brought upon by them. These perspectives provide new ways to think about disasters and offer approaches to preparedness rooted in these concepts. Through these perspectives, I formulated research questions to answer questions pertaining to disasters, community cohesion and preparedness in San José.

The Political Ecology of Disasters

In recent decades, many contemporary anthropologists who study disasters have grown increasingly interested in adaptation, agency, and resilience. Many agree that disasters are products of the relationships between people and their environments—deeply rooted in the historical and structural processes that have shaped societies (Oliver-Smith 1996, 1999). This approach, known as political ecology, studies of the relationships and interactions among

humans, their culture, biology and physical environments (Faas 2016, 17). Under this framework, researchers argue that the poor and marginalized are most likely to live in a disaster-vulnerable area and less likely to have necessary resources and institutional support when faced with hazards and disasters.

Political ecologists argue that deeply entrenched inequalities are direct results of marginalization through political protection and decision making, inadequate infrastructure to cope with hazardous conditions, and inadequate resources to cope with a disaster before during or after the event. Social concepts and processes such as economic practices and political issues have environmental implications, and environmental phenomena (earthquakes, hurricanes, and droughts) are socially expressed (Oliver-Smith 2013). This approach stresses the relevance and importance of understanding disasters as deeply-rooted, historical processes that intertwine culture, communities and their environments, and it allows anthropologists to study and reexamine the cultural, structural and societal foundations of a group, community or state (Oliver-Smith 2013). Early disaster studies focused on disaster management and response as opposed to prevention, which led to the long-held belief that disasters are natural. Environmental phenomena may be hazardous, but disasters are produced by social conditions that unequally distribute risk, safety, wealth, and prestige (Prior and Erikson 2013; Oliver-Smith 1996; Oliver-Smith 1999).

Disasters often reveal a society's ability (or, in many cases, inability) to adapt to a changing environment, as well as the deeper sociological processes at play that contribute to a society's vulnerability to disasters (Hoffman 2010). The concept of vulnerability, which Faas (2016, 14) defines as the unequal distribution of capacities to anticipate, cope with, and recover from disaster, has influenced disaster research in three ways. According to Faas (2016, 14),

vulnerability has allowed researchers to focus on the ways humans influence and play a role in disasters. Secondly, it allows researchers to treat disasters as historically and socially produced phenomena, drawing on the fact that vulnerability is unevenly distributed. Rather than treating disasters as discreet one-off occurrences, the devastating effects are direct results of human processes prior to and after the event of a disaster. Treating disasters as temporary events does little to address the vulnerabilities populations face daily. Lastly, vulnerability opened the political discussion surrounding disasters and their subsequent analysis by bringing to light the challenges faced by disadvantaged groups and the uneven distributions that create vulnerabilities. However, vulnerability is extremely complex and measuring it in one context does not make it easily translatable into other contexts (Faas 2016).

When misinterpreted, the concept of vulnerability can create a narrative of affected communities as passive and powerless by allowing outside forces to shape the narrative of disaster-affected populations and regions. Living in a disaster-vulnerable community does not make individuals passive or powerless; vulnerability is socially constructed through years of policies, cultural, social, political and economic factors that allow for it to negatively affect populations and individuals in targeted geographic locations (Faas 2016; Marino and Faas 2020). Rather than focusing on the effects of disasters in societies, vulnerability allows researchers to dissect and analyze the identifiable, social features that led to vulnerable communities and how to address them (Oliver-Smith 2013). Marino and Faas (2020) build further on the concept of vulnerability and state that we need to reframe the concept of vulnerability and at-risk communities away from the concept as people susceptible to harm and risk in the event of a disaster, but rather as diverse subjects, cultures, and institutions that have been made vulnerable over to processes of suppression, oppression, and erasure (Marino and Faas 2020). Framing the

people who are most at-risk to disasters as "vulnerable" may inadvertently remove their agency, resourcefulness and capacity to withstand and overcome challenges. However, what they are vulnerable to are the issues present in society such as oppression, racism, and inequities that intensify damage from a disaster. A community in a disaster-vulnerable area, therefore, is not necessarily disaster-vulnerable but rather it is a symptom of the systemic, ongoing processes and oppression that have not only neglected them but have contributed to its current state.

At-risk communities often have less representation and, therefore, less power in the arena of disaster aid and distribution and the impacts of natural hazards unequally distributed and disproportionately affect certain populations; the impacts of disasters are unevenly distributed among the lines of gender, race, class, and ethnic distinctions (Faas and Barrios 2015). The destruction of edifices, communities and infrastructure forces stakeholders to decide on what to rebuild and when. Governments, nonprofit institutions and public policy play decisive role in these processes. Public policy, then, becomes a guiding force that ultimately determines which histories are conducive to recovery, and which are restored. Oliver-Smith argues that disasters are contexts in which political solidarity, activism and new agendas, can develop new power relations. Power and politics play crucial roles in the extent of disasters that occur as well as in aid distribution (Oliver-Smith 1999) and agencies, communities, and practitioners should scrutinize the role of politics in disaster preparedness more closely.

The processes that determine disaster aid and recovery also influence governmental or economic policies that continuously undermine traditional knowledge. Much of the world's deforestation, desertification, erosion, and extreme conditions (such as droughts) can be attributed to these policies. In addition to the lasting effects of colonialism, industrialization, and urbanization have allowed for a concentration of people to congregate in already vulnerable

areas, potentially increasing the region's vulnerability to disasters (Oliver-Smith 1999). Historically, researchers believed that those who lived in vulnerable areas lived there due to their poor knowledge of disasters or were generally uninformed about the risks. However, many of them are well-aware of the dangers but are often forced to stay there because they have no other choice than to live in these areas (Oliver-Smith 1996). Disasters throw shockwaves through societies and inequalities are thrown to the forefront and people are forced to come face-to-face with the issues that have gone unaddressed in societies over indefinite time (Hoffman 2010; Oliver Smith 1999; Faas and Barrios 2015). Disasters, then, become more than naturally occurring phenomena—they have the capacity to reveal a society's vulnerabilities, which is why it is crucial to recognize these vulnerabilities and address them in order to improve their ability to adapt to changing circumstances. In the context of Japantown Prepared's work, these findings highlight some of the underlying structural and social vulnerabilities that place more people at risk of disasters. Conversely, these findings also allowed me to lean into the concept that recognizing and addressing these vulnerabilities are the first step in adaptation and mitigation strategies. This crucial step will help local organizations assist the community in a way that is equitable and supports some of the most vulnerable communities, populations and neighborhoods in San José.

Resilience and Adaptability

The concepts of resilience and adaptability are so interwoven into disaster research and studies and yet, there are no agreed upon definitions of these concepts. In part, these terms lend themselves to the various sub-disciplines that focus on disaster research, but at the same time, there is a certain level of uncertainty surrounding some of the most fundamental concepts in disaster and preparedness research (Prior and Erikson 2013). These concepts are wide-reaching

and have become synonymous with disaster preparedness, but need to be dissected through a more critical lens.

Resilience raises questions and concerns when framed in terms of disasters. Initially used by ecologists to describe an ecological system's ability to return to its former state after undergoing a disturbance, this term eventually made its way to social scientists who then began to use it in a socio-cultural context (Barrios 2016). Resilience was used to describe social systems and their abilities to withstand sudden or slow changes without collapsing (Oliver-Smith 1999). Over time, resilience has played a powerful role in the development of disaster plans and resources. Resilience to disasters became the ability to plan for, recover from and adapt to actual or potential adverse events (Oliver-Smith 2013, 277). However, resilience fails to address the root of the issues that lead to vulnerability. This concept raises several questions regarding whether communities should strive to rebuild to their prior lives, and what, exactly, are these social groups building resilience to. Despite the concept's prevalence, framing disaster outreach and resources around resilience, has not led to reduction in disaster damages or losses, throughout the world. It has been overused and under-scrutinized as a concept.

Disasters tend to sweep the old ways of life away, which raises the question: can life return to how it once was? And, perhaps more importantly, *should* life return to how it once was? Resilience-focused approaches to disasters rely on facilitating adaptability through building disaster mitigation strategies (Hoffman 2016). While well-intentioned, this paradigm shifts focus away from the underlying causes of vulnerability, such as the political ecology, political economy, and the lasting consequences of colonialism (Barrios 2016; Oliver-Smith 2013).

One of the biggest issues with the concept of resilience is the idea that communities that have gone through a disaster should strive to return to how things once were. Oftentimes, the

communities most affected by disasters have been heavily influenced by the same political and economic forces that are responsible, in part, for the destruction caused by natural phenomena. The concept of resilience not only allows for communities to maintain their status quo, but also allows for the system that put them in a vulnerable position to continue operating as usual. It also raises questions regarding reconstruction and the narrative of rebuilding communities. In many instances, that voice is stripped from the affected communities and decision-making is handled by those in power; these bureaucratic powers define what gets rebuild, how it is rebuild, and as Barrios (2016) notes, often favors upper middle-class, highly education populations—— inevitable and purposely excluding those who do not meet those standards.

Despite its shortcomings, resilience is a concept that has become widely accepted and associated with disasters, making it difficult to avoid completely. However, there are several options for rethinking resilience from an anthropological perspective (Barrios 2016). First, disaster specialists should recognize that hazards are not disasters and that policy makers should focus on identifying and creating practices that help address vulnerabilities that lead to disasters. Second, mitigation specialists should acknowledge that disaster-affected localities do not exist as independent entities. Third, resilience efforts that focus on the system should recognize that disasters are products of the social system in place and should be treated as such and ultimately may become so widespread that no resilience-program will be able to help counteract. Lastly, resilience, recovery and reconstruction should be heavily influenced by the localities affected by the disaster. The populations most affected by the disaster should be directly involved in reconstruction efforts (Barrios 2016, 33). As climate change and its consequences become increasingly common and normalized, adaptability is a feature of societies and cultures as it shapes the environment we live in and, by acknowledging this, we can see that disasters may

strike specific localities, but it is most probable that other localities are also vulnerable and affected by the same policies that have led to disasters in other areas.

Adaptability is a fundamental feature of societies because it helps people shape the environments in the form of technology, beliefs, and behavior. Adaptations are part of the general knowledge and practice in a culture within a particular environment (Oliver-Smith 2013, 278). This concept raises the question of whether the losses and damages inflicted by a naturally recurring hazard indicate that the group or society's adaptivity has failed (Oliver-Smith 2013). This logic equates vulnerability as a failure to adapt. Communities, groups or societies that live in or near a hazard and effectively expose themselves to hazards are in this position due to the fundamental imbalance of power that perpetuates social vulnerability. It is not indicative of an inability to adapt, as is often the narrative.

With the increased frequency of sudden onset and slow onset disasters, adaptation is a term that has been taken for granted. The strategies, projects, and policy implementations we see today do little to address the fundamental issues; climate change policy does little to address the ways in which systemic vulnerability has been put in place through unequal distribution of resources, wealth and securities, which ultimately are the underlying cause of vulnerability and adaptive failures. In addition to this, loss and damage is verbiage often used to describe "liability and compensation," which is often avoided altogether (Oliver-Smith 2013). Referring to liability and compensation as loss and damage keeps the conversation at a surface level, focusing on the hazard itself rather than addressing the responsibility of the issues (Oliver-Smith 2013). Development has played a major role in producing these phenomena, particularly when discussing adaptability. Economic policies that encourage development to take a certain course play a role in the poor infrastructure and the ensuing risks, and economically, these practices are

rewarded which continue the drive to continue to build and develop in these ways. If societies and decision-makers truly address disasters as they exist today, it is crucial they address not only these concepts, but the bigger questions and underlying issues that they fail to address. This is a crucial concept in the context of Japantown Prepared. The community is located in a disaster vulnerable area, and most alarmingly, is home to some of the most vulnerable populations in the area, such as individuals experiencing homelessness, housing-insecure individuals, or immigrants with limited English proficiency. Identifying and addressing the social, economic and cultural hegemony that intensify disasters, is the first step in counteracting the harm presented by inequitable development and policies.

Adaptive Capacity and the Importance of Local and Traditional Knowledge

One of the issues commonly addressed by disaster researchers is the need for policy-makers and implementations to consider local culture. It is well-documented by anthropologists and little has come to fruition. Drawing from Foucault's concept of biopolitics, Faas and Barrios (2015) argue that local cultures are very rarely considered when developing disaster reduction plans; this level of cultural insensitivity subverts not only the people affected but their knowledge and adaptive practices. Citing a devastating earthquake that affected Peru in 1970, Oliver-Smith (1999) notes that the use of "natural" to describe disasters is inherently incorrect and does little to address the processes that allowed this "natural" disaster to take the toll that it did. In this case, pre-Columbian practices were in place for many years that could have subverted much of the destruction. Colonialism contributed to their reduced vulnerability and should be addressed as a determining factor, further illustrating the need to consider local culture when building disaster preparedness (Oliver-Smith 1999). Understanding this culture concept is

challenging enough but when placed in the context of a disaster, these relationships and practices become much more challenging and complex.

While financial and natural resources are important, skills and opportunities to implement changes in individuals' livelihoods and lifestyles are equally important. Adaptive capacity depends on the recognition of the need to adapt, a belief that adaptation is possible and desirable, the willingness to undertake adaptation, the availability of resources necessary for implementation of adaptation measures, the ability to deploy resources in an appropriate way and external constraints, barriers and enablers of implementation. Along with the relationship between resources, structure and agency there are structural aspects such as class, religion, gender, ethnicity and customs that affect adaptive capacity (Brown and Westaway 2011). Researchers have identified four major factors in building resilience and adaptive capacity in social-ecological systems: Learning to live with change and uncertainty, nurturing diversity for reorganization and renewal, combining different types of knowledge for learning, creating opportunity for self-organization (Brown and Westaway 2011).

Disaster research helps address issues and potential for change. In many instances, disasters have been influential in inciting social and cultural change, due to a disaster's ability to disrupt normal processes that function to fulfill the needs of a community's members, new arrangements and adjustments may be created for the community to be able to fulfill these needs once more. Culture is constantly evolving to fulfill certain needs, and a disaster, in many ways, is a force that serves as a vehicle for social change and development. In fact, traditional people have demonstrated capacities to respond to and adapt to hazards (Oliver-Smith 1996). Local and traditional knowledge is often as valuable (if not more) than resources or assistance brought from outside of the community in question. During reconstruction periods, issues surrounding

ambivalence seem to arise, and reconstruction serves as an opportunity to assess where social change is needed. Disasters often shed light to underlying issues within a community or society often, prompting social change. However, some people or communities fared considerably well before the disaster, and may work toward persistence as opposed to change in order to preserve the status quo (Oliver-Smith 1996, 313). Still, the question whether cultural change happens after a disaster is still debated. While anthropologists generally agree that culture is not static and is subject to change over time, Hoffman notes that populations resist change (2016, 40) and this resistance is often strongest among the dominant class. San José is well-known for its innovation, technology and is in the heart of Silicon Valley. This is arguably the dominant culture, and will likely try to maintain the status quo following a disaster. However, given the existing research surrounding adaptive capacity and local knowledge, it is worth noting that various other local populations and cultures in San José offer a breadth of knowledge surrounding adaptability. Although unconventional, individuals who have experienced homelessness, have had to adapt to extremely difficult conditions. Their input can offer guidance, knowledge or best practices for navigating a disaster and can inform reconstruction efforts in a way that supports San José's most vulnerable community.

Perceived Risk, Risk Assessment and Disaster Preparation

When discussing risk, disaster preparedness and mitigation are often included in this conversation. According to Tim Prior and Christine Erikson (2013), disaster preparation fulfills two objectives: to reduce vulnerability to a potential threat and to increase the resilience of the public exposed to a threat. They also discuss the role disaster preparedness plays in a social system's adaptive capacity, which allows a society or social system to evolve in a way that accommodates hazards rather than letting them become disastrous. This capacity allows them to

become better equipped to respond both proactively and reactively (Prior and Erikson 2013). Applied anthropologists have taken an interest in understanding how to manage and mitigate disasters, especially by taking into consideration site-specific circumstances that affect the implementation of disaster management plans. Warning systems alone are inadequate preparations for disaster (Oliver-Smith 1996), as are expert response plans (Faas and Barrios 2015). In addition to addressing the root causes of disaster, it is important to meaningfully engage and prepare communities to anticipate, prevent, mitigate, and respond to hazards and reduce vulnerabilities by building local capacities (Faas 2017).

Anthropologists have approached risk perception by conceptualizing it in its own sociocultural context. The way people perceive and assess risk perception is deeply-rooted in cultural norms and values that help shape the relationships that humans have with their physical and social environments (Oliver-Smith 1996). This focus allows researchers to address more theoretical questions and observe social constructions of reality engaging cultural, social, physical and cosmological environments in the discussion of risk perception, assessment and mitigation. Åsa Boholm (2003) states that risk, in particular perceived risk, is not as simplistic as previous research has portrayed in the past. While risk is often considered a matter of straightforward statistical calculations, a distinction exists between objective and subjective risk that serves as a baseline for many social scientists studying risk. Objective risk is the phenomena that is naturally-occurring in the world that can be harmful whereas subjective risk is largely informed by cultural values and beliefs and involves elements such as "knowledge, degree of novelty and familiarity, degree of personal control and catastrophic potential (Boholm 2003, 161)." Ultimately, risk is a contextual concept: what is considered a risk depends on factors such

as social relationships, power relations and hierarchies, cultural beliefs, knowledge, existing discourse, and knowledge on disaster and risk.

In practice, the relationship between objective and subjective is problematic in the sense that objective risk is the opinion informed by scientific standards and subjective risk from this perspective is viewed as the uninformed and irrational opinions of the public (Oliver-Smith 1996). Often, subjective risk and risk perception are both imbedded in the cultural norms and values that serve as the foundation of societies and shape our relationships with the physical and social environments (Oliver-Smith 1996). This focus also allows for researchers to address more theoretical questions and observe the social constructions of reality engaging cultural, social, physical and cosmological environments in the discussion of risk perception, assessment and mitigation. Project Prepared provides a framework for understanding the ties between risk perception and disaster preparedness among Japantown and Hensley residents.

Social Cohesion and Community Conflict

A strong sense of cohesion, attachment, and responsibility to one's community play a pivotal role in adapting to hazards and preparing for disasters. Engagement and interactions positively impact preparedness efforts and cannot be sustained by information or resources alone. Disaster preparedness should be accompanied by a strong community and an individual's sense of connectedness to that community. Engaging people, especially those who live in disaster-vulnerable communities, in the process of building mitigation and risk communication strategies have shown to be a more successful strategy than simply sharing information, resources or other passive mitigation strategies in building disaster preparedness (Prior and Erikson 2013). In this sense, building social networks, a sense of community and self-efficacy have a strong role to play in preparedness; those who view their community as a resource are

more invested and have a stronger sense of responsibility. With regards to disaster preparedness, a sense of responsibility can evoke the response that Japantown and Hensley need to help create prepared, knowledgeable residents.

Building disaster preparedness also presents the opportunity to build social cohesion. Some social psychologists focus on sense of place and responsibility tied to one's community to help build resilience against disasters. Branda Nowell and Neil Boyd (2010) explore some leading perspectives of psychological sense of community and conclude that a psychological sense of community is deeply connected in two concepts: viewing community as a resource and viewing community as a responsibility. Research has shown that actively involving people and communities in disaster preparedness activities are more effective strategies than traditional routes such as providing passive information or resources. In addition to community engagement and social cohesion, it is imperative that preparedness is undertaken at a household level. If one household expresses interest in becoming better prepared, it often has a domino-like effect. Conversely, a household that is wholly unprepared for hazards poses as a risk for other neighborhood households in the neighborhood (Prior and Erikson 2013).

Taking into consideration the heterogeneity of the neighborhoods involved in Project Prepared, we take a deeper look into the different levels of involvement in community affairs as described by Riger and Lavrakas (1981): which ranges from young professionals who are least involved in community affairs to older, lifelong residents who are most invested in their communities. From this research, we can see that there is a strong correlation between life cycles, age and presence of children to community ties. McMillan and Lorion (2020) build on this concept of life cycles, community psychology and community ties to advocate for a

paradigm shift that moves away from individual to systemic changes that build social bridges rather than alienate individuals.

Given that communities and societies exist with a multitude of individuals who may not always share beliefs, values or cultural backgrounds, conflict is pertinent to the discussion of social cohesion, and, when faced with a disaster, existing conflicts can become magnified and intensified and new conflicts can arise. These community connections are an integral part of the recovery process (Faas and Barrios 2015). Existing networks need to be more closely analyzed, as their roles often dictate interactions during a disaster. There is also potential for mobilizing community resources, emphasizing the importance of understanding the community at hand. Additionally, there is a strong need to understand a community's vulnerable populations, such as the elderly, mentally/physically disabled, and children. Community interactions often develop in pre-disaster systems, especially with social relationships associated with specific institutions and their relation to post-disaster response, interaction and the distribution and allocation of resources (Oliver-Smith 1996).

Today, natural hazard research has shifted away from a perspective that has focused mostly on the technological ways to control hazards and now emphasizes the social and behavioral element of disasters (Prior and Erikson 2013). If a society fails to withstand a major disaster or disruption typical within its environment, then that society has not developed in a sustainable way (Oliver-Smith 1996, 304). Applied anthropology has a substantial role to play in the development of research in the realm of disaster studies, particularly when discussing perception and assessment of risk. Currently, there is potential in applied anthropology for theory building—especially in the issues of human-environmental relations and sociocultural change (Oliver-Smith 1999). Disasters of nearly every nature are potential threats in San José, and have

the capacity to devastate local neighborhoods and residents. This research allowed me to delve deeper into the needs of the communities in question and build their capacities to withstand disasters using their existing knowledge, skills and resources.

Chapter 3: Methodology

I chose to implement ethnographic methods for this project. Student researchers and I participated in community canvassing, participant observation, and semi-structured in-depth interviews. These methods gave me a deeper understanding of Japantown and Hensley communities and I explored existing and potential connections between people in the research area. With the goal of identifying social roles, positions and bridges, I examined various community networks, with attention to connectedness and gaps between people and places. Japantown and Hensley Historic District populations have differing needs and abilities. Many residents remain uninvolved in disaster preparedness efforts, despite the available disaster resources in the community. Due to these factors, ethnographic methods worked well with the communities and populations in question and allowed me to explore the issues in depth (Brennan-Horley et al. 2010; Stoffle et al. 1991).

In early meetings with the project steering committee, comprised of community partners in Japantown and Hensley Historic District, we identified the lack of neighborhood involvement from the general public as one of the key issues. Our goal was to find innovative ways to garner sustained involvement from residents, business owners, and community members. Acknowledging the challenges presented, Hensley Historic District and Japantown leaders aimed to build stronger partnerships among residents and build disaster preparedness community wide. The steering committee and I identified solutions to the challenges presented by setting broad goals to change behaviors and norms with regards to disaster preparedness (Trotter 1999, 30). Japantown and Hensley Historic District have strong historical and cultural roots that have considerably shaped the way people interact with their surroundings and this project examined facets of the community that would have otherwise been difficult to observe. My methodology

gave me a more nuanced understanding of the cultures and populations in these communities. Although I engaged in multiple methods throughout the project, I focused mostly on participant observation, interviews, steering committee meetings, and my collaboration with two San José State University research methods classes.

In this chapter, I describe the research site population and explore the relationship between the history of the neighborhoods, the physical environment and demographics, which presented both challenges and assets for the project. Following this introduction, I detail the specific methods and strategies we used at each phase of the project, including the participant data and recruitment information. Finally, I share an overview of my activities as a graduate student researcher that supported two research methods-driven classes. For these activities, the methodologies reflected the sensitive nature of this topic and drew from previous research that asked and addressed similar questions about disaster preparedness.

Research Site Demographics

Japantown is a small, yet densely populated neighborhood that is situated just north of Downtown San José. The neighborhood is well-known and revered for its historic roots and business district. As of 2016, the neighborhood is approximately 0.25 square miles and had a population of 4,044. The average household size in Japantown was 2.5, slightly smaller than the city-wide average of 3.1 persons. Nearly half (42.5%) of Japantown households are married couples with children and there is also a high number of single-mother households (25.2%) as compared to city-wide households. Just over ten percent of Japantown residents do not speak English very well or at all, and seventeen percent of Japantown residents live below the poverty level, all higher than the city-wide averages (City-Data 2019).

Hensley Historic District is also one of San José's oldest neighborhoods. The neighborhood is mostly comprised of single-family homes that were built between 1865 and 1930. Hensley Historic District has the highest concentration of Victorian homes and buildings in San José. In 1988, the San José City Council began the process of preserving the neighborhood. By 1989, Hensley Historic District became a designated City of San José landmark, which brought a resurgence in neighborhood restoration efforts to preserve historic homes, efforts that continue to this day (City of San José 2003). Hensley Historic District is also a densely populated neighborhood; as of 2016, the 0.108 square mile neighborhood had a population of 1,385. The average household size is 20.5, due in large part to multiplexes and converted single-family homes. Hensley Historic District has a disproportionately high percentage of single-mother households (123.5%) as compared to the rest of San José (4.5%) and a slightly larger percentage (16.7%) of people who do not speak English very well or at all as compared to the city average (11.8%). Hensley Historic District residents are also more likely to live in poverty; nearly a third (27.6%) of Hensley residents live below the poverty level which is more than double the San José average of 10.7% (City-Data 2019).

The demographics gave insight into the kinds of populations that resided within the research area, including hidden populations. Hidden populations often exist outside of institutional settings and go largely undetected. They are most at risk due to the clandestine nature of their activities and tend to be the most difficult to reach as they are not restrained by traditional boundaries, characteristics or easily-defined distributions (Singer 1999). Social concealment is a primary concern when identifying hidden populations, particularly regarding the homeless population and undocumented residents dispersed among Hensley Historic District and Japantown. Social concealment is a mechanism some groups use to intentionally hide,

disguise or conceal activities or behaviors (Singer 1999), which adversely affects research efforts among hidden populations. They tend to be wary of research efforts and may feel targeted for their work, housing or immigration status (Yosso 2005).

Japantown and Hensley Historic District both have diverse residents and community members, some of whom fit this description of hidden populations, including people living below the poverty level, those who are not proficient in English, or undocumented immigrants. These are groups that largely remain uninvolved or undetected for different reasons, including social stigma, language barriers, and other commitments, such as work or family care (Yosso 2005; Timmer 2015), making ethnography a natural fit for studying hidden populations (Cromley 1999). Since ethnography is a locally based and locale-sensitive research method, it allows researchers to take in subjects' points of view and build rapport with them over extended periods of time and establish trust among researchers and participants.

Steering Committee Meetings/Research Assistant Activities

Through this project, I met with neighborhood leaders from Japantown and Hensley Historic District. The steering committee was comprised of Mary Tucker of Hensley Neighborhood Association, and Rich Saito, Jim McClure, Jeff Oldham, and Helen Hayashi of Japantown, and Jennifer Goto of CommUniverCity. We met periodically to guide/discuss the direction of the research activities, strengths, barriers and challenges presented in the research area, deliverables and class activities for the two research methods classes.

Ethnographic Methods Graduate Student Coordinator Activities

During the fall 2016 semester, I worked with Dr. Jan English-Lueck to coordinate the fieldwork activities in her undergraduate course on Ethnographic Methods. Students in this

course conducted fieldwork and collected data that were vital to this project. Over the course of several visits to the course, I introduced the project, the community partners, discussed the research methods used, debriefed the activities and lastly, had class presentations for the community partners.

We formed twenty student teams that surveyed the neighborhoods block by block. I asked students to observe the following: infrastructure, buildings and their use (such as commercial, residential and public spaces), transportation corridors (such as streets, sidewalks, railroad tracks) and the role these landscapes can play in the event of a disaster. I also asked students to record sensory details of the areas surveyed and to observe ways people engage with their neighborhoods and the kinds of environments that encouraged or inhibited social relationships (Schensul et al. 1999, 31-32). The purpose was to map the spatial distribution of vulnerable populations or hidden populations, emergency resources, shelters, infrastructure, structural and social barriers.

Drawing from previous research methods (Prior and Erikson 2013; Nowell and Boyd 2010; Casagrande et al. 2015), my project relied heavily on interview data. The sampling and recruitment strategy was straightforward: I recruited anyone who had some connection to Japantown and/or Hensley Historic District, with particular focus on the more vulnerable populations I identified (homeless, seniors, and those with limited English proficiency). The fall 2016 Ethnographic Methods class had about 40 students (enrollment fluctuated throughout the semester) and my goal was to recruit enough participants for students to conduct one-on-one interviews I recruited project participants on a voluntary basis through various means. I conducted outreach at festivals, community organization meetings, such as Japantown Coalition, Japantown Community Congress, Japantown Neighborhood Association, Japantown Business

Association, Hensley Neighborhood Association, The Salvation Army, the Victorian Preservation Association, senior centers, senior living facilities and school administrators at the local elementary school, Grant Elementary School. I presented at several community meetings including Hensley Neighborhood Association, Japantown Community Congress, Japantown Neighborhood Association and Japantown Business Association. I attended community events whenever possible: I went to Obon Festival, Viva Calle Open Streets Fair and visited the Japantown Farmers Market. I reached out to organizations that work or were based in the research area. Lastly, I informally met with local residents and their networks at Roy's Station; I spoke to people one-on-one, usually with one of the steering committee members there to introduce me to their networks.

I had varying degrees of success during the recruitment phase. As anticipated, many of the people who were interested in participating in the project were those who were already involved in Japantown Prepared or other neighborhood groups. I had a more difficult time recruiting less visible participants, particularly those I had identified as disaster vulnerable before I started my recruitment efforts. Initially, I had planned to recruit enough participants to reflect the diversity within the research area but given my network, I found myself recruiting some of the already well-informed and well-connected members of the neighborhood. However, through personal connections and the connections student researchers made during the project, we were able to recruit more people other than "the usual suspects." In the end, we had recruited twenty-five individuals and nineteen people sat down for an interview.

The in-depth interviews with volunteers were mostly about community involvement and connecting this data to disaster preparedness, specifically to inform local preparedness efforts. I included questions about place attachment, community involvement, knowledge of

neighborhood groups, previous disaster experience and general preparedness knowledge in the interviews. I aimed to interview individuals who were more vulnerable to disasters including renters, the elderly, and families with young children. I also spoke to homeowners, organizational leaders, business owners and other key members of the community. In total, through the combined efforts of student researchers and me, we conducted seventeen interviews with nineteen participants (two of the interviews were with couples who chose to be interviewed together) between October and December 2016. Interviews lasted from forty-five minutes to an hour and participants ranged from lifelong Japantown and Hensley residents, business owners, new residents and community members such as employees of local businesses.

Student researchers and I transcribed, analyzed and uncovered recurring codes from the data we collected: residential history and status, work/business history and status, resource availability, ego-centric and socio-centric networks, disaster and disruption, risk and safety, community change, community cohesion, place attachment and community conflicts. This informed outreach and disaster preparedness suggestions, based on the interviewees' personal experiences and participant observation. At the end of the semester, student groups shared their insights and recommendations from the data collection and analysis.

Organizational Studies Graduate Student Coordinator Activities

In the spring 2017 semester, I worked with Dr. A.J. Faas and his Organizational Studies capstone class to implement some of the more feasible ideas developed the previous semester. I introduced students to the project and participated in an in-class panel to answer questions about the work that was previously done in the fall semester. Students read the interview transcripts and recommendations from the previous semester's Ethnographic Methods course and drew on these data to propose their own projects to advance preparedness in Japantown and to develop

Japantown Prepared as an organization. After students reviewed the project ideas, interviews and disaster-resources, they formulated their own projects to implement. Students then "pitched" their proposals to community partners and everyone in attendance voted for their top projects, based on feasibility of implementation, interest and community need.

Disaster Preparedness Workshop

Organizational Studies students organized and promoted a disaster workshop in which community partners presented information on disasters, how to prepare for them and demonstrated how to build a disaster kit. They canvassed the neighborhood to invite residents, business owners and community members. Japantown Prepared offered gas valve shut-off wrenches as door prizes for those in attendance. Attendees included community partners from San José State University, CommUniverCity, the Franklin-McKinley Neighborhood Association and neighborhood residents.

Students held the workshop in early March, weeks after the Coyote Creek Flood, which may account for the noticeably increased interest in disaster preparedness among residents. Following the presentation and a small group breakout session, there was a forum for questions that our community partners expertly handled. Concerns included household preparedness and general disaster preparation tips. Workshop participants posed several "what-if" scenarios, such as the concern of being the only household prepared in the neighborhood would mark them as targets for robbery, looters, or unprepared neighbors who may try to take advantage of their supplies. People also brought up questions regarding pet safety during a disaster and how to better prepare for pets in the event of a disaster. Most of their concerns were consistent with the recurrent themes in my research, particularly the theme of disaster preparedness as an individual's responsibility as opposed to a community-wide effort

Analysis

I analyzed the data we collected during the fall semester by coding the interviews and participant observation exercises for relevant and recurring themes across the data. I coded the data by reading through each interview and I highlighted sections by color-coding key statements and themes. Through this process, I uncovered eleven themes: residential history and status, work and business history and status, resource availability, ego-centric and socio-centric networks, disasters and disruption, risk and safety, community conflict, community change, community cohesion, place attachment, and lastly, agency and social cohesion. Ultimately, I used the individual analysis of each interview and compared individual interview findings to the entire set of interviews as a whole. This helped me narrow down the broader themes and connections between the interviews and the participant observation data to six key themes in my research: residential status and history, resource availability, communication, disaster and safety, and place attachment. Once I had a clearer understanding of the themes, I identified solutions by working with student researchers and the steering committee. My goal was to use these findings to change behaviors and attitudes towards disaster preparedness and to inform my community partners on best practices for engaging more people (Schensul and LeCompte 2013). The positions and roles of social network members play a vital role in the flow of communication within a network and those who are more central to the network often have control over the dissemination of information (Trotter 1999, 33; Yosso 2005; Brown and Westaway 2011). Drawing from this research, I identified cultural boundaries that existed within the communities to conduct outreach to those who have been historically excluded, such as immigrant mothers with limited English proficiency or individuals experiencing homelessness.

By placing emphasis on ethnography, I was able to develop a complex portrait of preparedness potentials and challenges in the communities and to identify salient themes in the data. Open-ended methods, such as semi-structured in-depth interviews, are sensitive to the threats of disasters and the potentially traumatic feelings that conversations about disasters may uncover (Trotter 1999; Stoffle et al. 1991).

Chapter 4: Thematic Analysis and Discussion

In the following sections, I discuss the effects of these indicators in neighborhood involvement and disaster preparedness. I asked questions concerning employment and disaster preparedness to understand how these factors influenced neighborhood involvement and explored how they impacted participants' connectedness to their communities. I explore how residential history, status and tenure in the neighborhood influence social cohesion, the different ways residents and community members define resources (particularly the divide between the collective resources and individual resources), communication, disaster risk & safety, place attachment

Residential History and Status

For the purpose of this research, I grouped community members in Japantown and Hensley into renters, homeowners, and at-large community members. At-large community members included individuals who did not necessarily live in the research area but considered themselves community members through various means of participation, such as employment, owning a business, or a history of time spent in the community[1]. Through my research, I found that residential status, work status, and tenure in the neighborhood were among the top indicators of community involvement in Japantown and Hensley. Homeowners, lifelong residents, and local business owners were the most involved in multiple facets of community life whereas renters, new residents, and especially non-English speakers, homeless or housing-insecure, and families with young children were least involved in community life. I found that residential

[1] The homeless population represented one of the populations most at risk during a disaster. Unfortunately, I had a very limited scope of understanding about this population and its ties to the neighborhood; I did not have any participants who were experiencing homelessness at the time of the interviews (only one participant referred to her past experiences with homelessness, which I highlight later in this chapter).

status and history in the neighborhood influenced social cohesion in the community; those who have lived longest in the neighborhood exhibited a stronger sense of belonging and connectedness in the community. Social cohesion refers to the extent to which individuals in a society are bonded together through shared associations (e.g., civil society, social settings, employers), responsibilities, and similar values and norms (Bruhn 2009; Fonseca et al. 2019). When I framed my research findings in this context, I noticed that those who felt the strongest sense of social cohesion were people who, for the most part, fit into this definition. Long-term residents, business owners, homeowners expressed the strongest sense of community cohesion. Chad*, a Japantown resident and business owner, shared his business's history in the community and how it influenced his involvement:

> "I'm a third-generation…actually, my family has a business is Essentials Company; it's the oldest Japanese-American business in Japantown. It is the only one that existed prior to World War II. So, because of our roots, I felt I should get involved."

His family's longstanding business has deeply impacted his sense of connection to his neighborhood and sense of responsibility to his neighbors. Chad was also heavily invested in several neighborhood organizations, including *Japantown Prepared*.

Many others, however, had limited opportunities to become involved in these organizations, often citing cost and time restraints. Katherine, a Japantown renter, stated: "I think providing people with the basics and having things that are maybe more on the affordable end. I think for a lot of people it is a deal-breaker. It's like 'oh, I can't afford that. I'm trying to make rent.'" For renters, new residents, or non-English speakers, homeless or housing-insecure, and families with young children, a lack of participation did not necessarily indicate a lack of interest, but rather a lack of accessibility, time, funds or knowledge about community events.

* All names have been changed to pseudonyms

Residential status influenced people's abilities to prepare for a disaster and access to safe housing played a definitive role in her ability to prepare for a disaster. Housing instability made it difficult to think in terms of preparing for an uncertain future:

> "I think the least safe was probably when I was homeless or struggling to find a place to live… just 'cause it's like, when you're living on that immediate of a future. I think that's the most unsafe you can feel. It's...you know, most people have their jobs, have their homes and they can think years ahead, you know? And when you're homeless, you're thinking, 'okay, how can I make it to the next day?' That's the most unsafe I felt." –Jane, Hensley renter

These factors are particularly relevant when taking into consideration the social, cultural and historical reasons why some residents feel a stronger sense of social cohesion (Faas 2016; Marino and Faas 2020). Vulnerability and social capital play defining roles in the everyday lives of people and can create divisions among community members and residents (Yosso 2005). These divisions can become intensified in the wake of a disaster.

Vulnerability is not a local, one-off phenomenon; it is a direct result of historical, structural policies, action (or, in many cases, inaction) that create and perpetuate vulnerabilities. Political processes, such as the criminalization of migration, homelessness, the marginalization of people of color and low socioeconomic status, have historically discouraged civic engagement and community involvement. In Japantown and Hensley, I noticed that this specifically resulted in a much more insular and closed-off community among the identified at-risk populations and they effectively hid themselves from the public eye. Yosso (2005) discusses the role of social capital in communities and how factors such as homeownership, income levels, and tenure in the community increase community involvement; moreover, more involved community members have more influence in the arena of community life and decision-making. However, Yosso argues that historically marginalized populations have as much knowledge and resources to add and should not be discounted.

Resource Availability

I was interested in learning what kinds of resources people associated with disasters at the household level and community level. The adaptive capacity framework (Brown and Westaway 2011) illustrates that resources stretch beyond supplies and can include people, facilities, communications and warning technologies, equipment, materials and supplies, funding, information about hazards or threats, and special expertise (Ready.gov 2019). Japantown Prepared volunteers reflected the adaptive capacity framework in practice; they utilized knowledge from retired public safety professionals, work with local organizations for storage facilities, multiple organizations within Japantown and San José, including the San José State University Department of Anthropology, and have extensive knowledge about the hazards and threats in the area. I learned that most participants associated resource availability with individual resources as opposed to community resources, indicating a gap between Japantown Prepared efforts and resident knowledge about the resources available to them.

When asked about disaster resources, many interviewees had a narrow definition. Many associated resources primarily with household supplies and referred primarily to their individual efforts to prepare for a disaster. This finding was in stark contrast of the adaptive capacity framework (Brown and Westaway 2011) and suggested that many residents lacked knowledge of existing community resources. Although Japantown Prepared has worked extensively to build resources and support at the community level, many interviewees did not discuss the resources available to the community. This finding reveals how the deeply entrenched bureaucracies and modern liberal democracies do not recognize collective resources and historical claims, proving only capable of recognizing individual property and individual claims to rights as citizens (Marino and Faas 2020, 8). In this sense, culturally valued knowledge, resources, and capacities

have been undermined by a more individualistic approach. These structural biases towards individual rights and responsibilities are reflected in participants' definitions and cultural perceptions of disaster resources. More specifically, individualism is reflected in the predominant belief that preparing for a disaster is an individual's responsibility rather than a communal responsibility.

Communication

Participants wanted to see Japantown Prepared use multiple forms of communication and media. For many people, this was crucial in order to be more inclusive to a wider range of people in the neighborhood and to keep residents informed about community events and updates such as disaster and emergency preparedness efforts. Participants often mentioned increasing community organizations' use of social media tools to garner more interest and engagement, as well as connecting with individuals on a more personal level, such as extending personal invitations to events. The following quote illustrates these sentiments:

> "Well, it would be, just being educated." I know that [disaster organizations] had meetings. We haven't gone to them, but if they were better advertised, then maybe more people would go. I don't know what is actually in place or the resources we already have. There might be stuff that we may not be aware of. I know that this is a safe place, I don't know…Even in the neighborhoods, I don't know of anything. It's kind of like you're on your own." – Reba, a Japantown renter

Many participants stated that although social media was important, traditional forms of media, such as newsletter can also be effective for residents who may not have reliable internet or access to social media. A Fuji Towers senior resident, Carol, stated: "for elderly people, email is not [an option]. For young ones, yes. For the youth, cell phone and email is very fast but for elderly, even cell, some elderly use the cellphone but many elderly don't even like the cellphone. They have to come to give a talk, make an appointment, and set a date." Her statement illustrates effective outreach to all community members requires organizers and community leaders to cater

to the needs of stakeholders, especially those who are most vulnerable to disasters and implement a model that focuses on equitable access to resources and information.

There was a sense that at-risk populations did not connect with their neighborhood. Some residents, such as Billy, a senior renter in Japantown, offered his perspective on the lack of involvement: "for some, their primary language is Chinese and others' primary language is Spanish, and so, all the biases we have prevent people from speaking up." This issue presented an opportunity for community leaders to engage a largely uninvolved group in their neighborhoods and create spaces, forums or events where people are given space to comfortably communicate in their preferred language(s), and feel closer to their community.

Cooperation and communication in a pre-disaster setting have a substantial impact on cooperation and communication during and after a disaster. Research has shown that cooperation is a key factor in disaster response (Hoffman 2010; Oliver Smith 1999; Casagrande et al. 2015; Faas 2017). Cooperation among community members has proven to be a key element during disaster response, in the aftermath of disaster, and often during prolonged recovery processes (Faas et al. 2017). People often end up communicating and coordinating with different people than they expected during/after an emergency, and Faas and colleagues (2017) recommend identifying new ways to foster the development of radically inclusive interaction prior to emergencies. Communication issues in a pre-disaster setting can have catastrophic outcomes in a disaster, thus making it imperative to address/confront communication issues in a pre-disaster setting and bridge existing social and cultural network gaps before a disaster.

When anticipating what would happen in a disaster, attitudes and behaviors do not always align. My research revealed that residents who have lived in the neighborhood longer expected cooperation while newer residents expected chaos. Katherine, a fairly new resident to Japantown,

stated: “I think it would just be chaos, and it would kind of be just every person for themselves.” Compared to more established participants, such as James, who shared “we’re always looking out for each other” when asked to share how he envisioned a disaster in his community. However, he also stated that it would be harder to look out for everyone, especially those who live in apartments. Other participants, such as Michael, who lives in an apartment in Japantown, expressed feeling left out and uninformed about upcoming meetings, events or general information: “I know that there is Japantown association. But I do not know how they function or meet or anything.” Faas and colleagues (2017) revealed that cognitive models do not always reflect practice in a disaster, thus highlighting the need to bridge existing social and cultural network gaps before a disaster, which could become intensified in the wake of a disaster.

At the time of my fieldwork, Japantown Prepared lacked consistent, social media presence and communication, but has since created a much more robust communication plan. Since my research, Japantown has expanded its social media presence as well as its communication efforts and now has multiple social media accounts, a website and an SJSU-affiliated social media internship. Also, in collaboration with the Organizational Studies students, Japantown Prepared now has a Business Certification program that trains Japantown businesses in preparedness and certifies them with a sticker in the window and other publicity. Despite having and maintaining a robust communications and social media plan, there is still room for improvement. The next step should be to create more inclusive online and print resources that are available in multiple languages, in particular Spanish and Chinese. This will inform and educate more people in the neighborhood about ways to prepare for a disaster and reach a broader audience.

Disasters, Risk and Safety

I had several questions that focused on disasters and disruptions locally, nationally or abroad. There were two key indicators that emerged from the analysis that revealed how seriously people considered the threat of a disaster. The first indicator was tenure in the neighborhood—lifelong residents were the most aware of potential threats and had experienced some form of disaster in the Bay Area. Many of them recalled the lasting impacts they had on the community. These participants expressed the most knowledge about disasters and in some cases spoke most confidently about feeling prepared since they have experienced disasters in a local setting. The second indicator of preparedness included interviewees who previously lived in disaster or severe weather regions. These individuals also expressed considerable knowledge and lived experience. People who lived through a previous disaster locally or lived in a disaster-prone area were more likely to be prepared for a disaster. Their attitudes were shaped by previous experiences and disasters.

Risk perception needs to be understood within the context and culture of the group (Boholm 2003). Trust and differing world views play a substantial role in risk perception and Japantown Prepared should be viewed as a trusted source for all residents. Past experience of disasters is the predominant indicator and people will usually repeat what they did last time, provided that they stayed safe (Baer et al. 2019). When probed, many interviewees expressed that they would stay in their neighborhood in the event of a disaster. Jonathan, a Hensley homeowner, shared: "unless there was a fire going through the neighborhood, I think we would stay whether or not we could use the house. It survived 1908 and 1989 so, you never know." In an area where disasters are not as commonly experienced as other areas of the country (such as hurricanes in the gulf coast) People who have lived in Japantown and Hensley the longest were

more likely to have experienced some kind of earthquake, flood, fire or other local disaster within these neighborhoods and experienced it firsthand, and most likely in their homes. Despite the experience and knowledge many expressed, few people stated that they had a disaster plan in place, indicative of a lack of connection between disaster preparedness and their everyday lives.

Richard Stoffle and colleagues (1988) explored the level of trust in the agencies involved in previous projects and found that trust became a key factor in risk perception. Checker (2007) builds on this and argues that risk perception is difficult to assess and nearly impossible to predict. Many people tend to think it's a matter of education and/or information, (which many interviewee participants echoed) but has since been disproven (Stoffle et al. 1988). Additionally, our own political inclinations are often emotional and therefore pre-intellectual. Lastly, Checker highlighted (2007) that environmental justice issues correlate very closely with social equity issues, giving many people enough reason to be distrustful of official sources, even the most well-informed and well-meaning among them. While no interview participants voiced distrust in *Japantown Prepared*, this information becomes a significant factor when reaching out to disaster-risk individuals who have historically been disenfranchised, particularly those experiencing homelessness or undocumented immigrants with limited English proficiency.

Place Attachment

Place attachment is defined by numerous factors. Geography and a sense of belonging are key to the concept and Tomaney (2015) defines place attachment as a sense of place, belonging and safety in the community. This kind of social cohesion plays a definitive role in a person's sense of place attachment and was present in the culture and history of the neighborhood, specifically among businesses and homes found in the neighborhood. Historical and cultural

connection in the community were crucial factors in the development of sense of place attachment among residents.

Many people interviewed expressed that Japantown and Hensley were destinations for families and young professionals. Interviewees attributed it to several factors including its close-knit community, the local history, the cultural and architectural appeal, and the prevalence of family-owned businesses. These factors contributed to the neighborhood's small-town feeling and contributed to the appeal of Japantown and Hensley, which has fostered a strong sense of place attachment among many project participants. They also influenced place attachment particularly among homeowners, business owners and lifelong residents. This attachment also influenced their sense of responsibility, belonging in the neighborhoods as well as their willingness to volunteer. Neighborhood attachment and pride were expressed by participating in community events, such as dumpster days, meetings and cleanups, public art, such as murals and time spent in the community. Japantown resident Steve said:

> "Knowing that San José's Japantown is one of four remaining in North America is sort of a huge deal. And to have visited the other Japantown communities and to know how special San José's Japantown is, I think it's one of the reasons it's very attractive…It's everything. I think Japantown, we've realized that it's something that if we let it, it could disappear. This Japantown is really, sort of, about the local mom-and-pop shops. It is very resistant to, like, a Starbucks or a McDonald's coming in. We feel it is very precious that way as a cultural community. And knowing that it has, you know, history in the Chinese-American community and then the Japanese-American community, and knowing that today, it is a very diverse place. You have an Ethiopian place. You have an African-American Baptist church. We have a Christian Wesley Methodist Church. We have a Buddhist temple down the street…that's diversity. Even though it is called Japantown, this is a diverse, rich place."

Drawing from interview data and previous research (Fonseca et al. 2019; Tomaney 2015; Bruhn 2009), those who were most involved in their neighborhood had the strongest sense of place attachment and were often well-established residents of their communities. Many of them had considerable influence in the neighborhood and expressed feeling connected to their

communities due to their longevity and the lifelong connections fostered with other community members over time. As a result, they were often part of many major decision-making processes and event coordination, as indicated by their involvement in local groups and organizations. Although these strong relationships helped maintain and improve community affairs, one unintended consequence was that those who were not included in these conversations felt disempowered, which was consistent with Yosso's work surrounding community cultural wealth (2005). Among renters and new residents, it was difficult to find and recruit participants, further illustrating the difficulties faced when trying to foster that same sense of responsibility that long-term residents felt. Many had yet to develop the deep connection that long-term residents have fostered.

Murzyn-Kupisz and Działek (2013) found that place attachment is fairly common when residents find the historic environment valuable in their communities. Heritage is a major contributor to place attachment, builds a stronger sense place and contributes to social capital within a society. These are characteristics that I observed throughout my research. Homeowners and lifelong residents' sense of place attachment was connected to their homes and expressed the most interest in maintaining the architectural integrity of the neighborhood. This was exemplified by Jonathan: "people that are interested in the old houses…they generally spend way too much money into their house to fix it up and restore it. So, they're dedicated." Edna had similar thoughts on place attachment in the neighborhood:

> "I feel sad when things happen... torn down or burned or whatever, because we can't really replace them. People that lived here in the past dropped by and said 'hey, we lived here in 1953,' and we welcomed them to come in and have a look at how it is now. This is a kit house from Sears and Roebuck, from what I understand…There was a huge amount of people here at the time. They have a whole history of the Noble house because they kept everything."

Newer residents to the neighborhoods were more difficult to assess. Many were young professionals and new to the area or commuters who did not have much free time to spend in the neighborhoods and were not homeowners. Many felt that they did not have enough information about the local organizations to become active members. Jane, a renter living in Hensley, stated: "on a community level...there isn't much going on. So, I'm kind of lost on that. I always hear one thing or another. It's like everyone wants to do their own thing." This was an area of opportunity to continue to build community, increase awareness and foster a sense of safety and security among all residents, without regards to homeownership or longevity in the neighborhood (i.e. lifelong residents). These factors may unintentionally become gatekeeping behaviors within the community.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In this chapter, I provide programmatic recommendations for Japantown Prepared based on project findings. I reflect on the project goals, outcomes and the limitations of my research and offer my personal insights regarding the research. Lastly, I offer opportunities for future work with Project Prepared and Japantown Prepared. I learned from residents, community members, and business owners about the different ways they interact with their communities, and uncovered ways to relate these activities to disaster preparedness efforts. Although it was difficult to successfully reach out to some of the more disaster-risk populations in the neighborhood, such as non-English speakers or individuals experiencing homelessness, the research activities yielded valuable information on ways to better incorporate the opinions, concerns and needs of all community members and residents.

Recommendations Based on Key Project Findings

Based on the themes I uncovered in my research, the following section is a combination of suggestions made during the research period and others derived from my own subsequent data analysis. In a neighborhood that is so culturally diverse, many of the different cultures represented in the community emphasize the importance of building resources collectively as opposed to individually. Namely, more targeted interventions can foster the development of mutual aid and can help local leadership reconsider the role community plays in resources and responsibilities in preparedness.

While inclusive outreach is an important facet of community involvement, Japantown Prepared needs to change how they garner and sustain community involvement. For instance, if someone works more than 40 hours a week, or works multiple, minimum wage jobs to afford

housing costs, it makes little to no difference to conduct outreach for a two-hour bi-weekly meeting; nor would this information be particularly valuable for the person answering the door (A.J. Faas, personal communication via email, September 2020). The current model is best suited for residents who work a traditional, nine-to-five job Monday through Friday. However, this option is not feasible for many others and Japantown Prepared would benefit by developing programmatic changes to be more inclusive.

In order to gain broader support from the community, Japantown Prepared should provide resources that are multilingual, culturally sensitive and relevant to residents' lives, and a local example of a model that incorporates these features is the *promotores* ("promoters") model of leadership development. The *promotores* model has been successfully implemented in other communities of San José that have experienced similar issues related to historical power imbalances (Somos Mayfair 2020). The *promotores* leadership model empowers and supports local residents in historically disadvantaged neighborhoods to take ownership in decision-making processes in their community, organize neighbors, facilitate workshops, and guide programmatic implementation based on their needs (Somos Mayfair 2020). Respectful, culturally relevant programmatic changes like these have successfully mobilized marginalized communities and individuals in San José.

Some examples of how Somos Mayfair has cultivated neighborhood leadership on a number of causes include the housing crisis and Valley Palms Unidos has empowered residents to campaign for traffic safety issues. For those whom I identified as disaster-risk populations in Japantown and Hensley, formal meetings in public spaces can trigger anxiety, stress and may not be welcoming environments. This issue presented an opportunity for community leaders to engage largely uninvolved groups in their neighborhood and create spaces, forums or events

where people are given space to comfortably communicate in their preferred language(s), and feel closer to their community. Somos Mayfair and Valley Palms Unidos have successfully incorporated the voices of residents who would otherwise remain uninvolved through the *promotores* model. A key feature of the *promotores* model is that it supports residents by providing a stipend for member involvement, meals and childcare for meetings, which are often limitations for community members who struggle to attend neighborhood events. With this in mind, Japantown Prepared can think beyond CERT training and meetings to garner increased community involvement.

My research demonstrated that people were more responsive to social events (such as festivals and community potlucks) rather than formal meetings. These events encouraged people to socialize and get to know their neighbors. The Hensley Neighborhood Association successfully hosts several potluck-style events throughout the year to encourage residents to develop stronger connections with one another. Hosting a disaster preparedness-themed event tied to National Preparedness Month in September or National Night Out in August would be great entry points for Japantown Prepared to host a similar event. Community-building events can be time and labor-intensive, especially initially. However, the pay-off in terms of community awareness and the potential of building a more locally-based disaster team would offset this disadvantage.

There were a lot of vulnerable populations that had specific disaster-related needs, particularly the families at Grant Elementary School. Working closely with local schools and their parent groups (for example, the Parent Teacher Association or the English Learner Advisory Committee are two common parent groups in schools) is a way to directly reach local families. James, a Japantown Prepared volunteer stated:

> "A couple years ago we wanted to help out the community. I had suggested that we help out Grant Elementary School which is down on 10th Street so we did start that. We do after school, we have some volunteers help out individual children and then also help out at some of the festivals, so I think it's really working out well over there. Teachers really appreciate the help because a lot of them are, I would say a lot of the parents do not speak English. So their reading skills are really below standards I would say."

Although this specific project that James shared was not directly related to disaster preparedness, it provided an entryway to implement disaster-readiness projects with families with school-aged children and limited English proficiency—key populations I identified as being most at-risk for a disaster and schools are often considered safe zones for engagement and support. Churches and religious organizations in the area are also valuable assets in the community, as many residents were affiliated with these establishments and they are also widely considered safe zones. The Buddhist Temple and Wesley Methodist Church are already involved with Japantown Prepared at a leadership-level but extending this involvement to their communities would be a great way to involve members, increase their connections to the social networks and volunteer for disaster preparedness efforts.

One interesting finding that unfolded as the interviews concluded was that many people, especially those with limited disaster experience or who had more immediate concerns, such as paying rent, the threat of a disaster was treated as a hypothetical situation as opposed to a real threat. They did not feel it was urgent enough in their daily lives compared to other needs, such as paying rent and buying groceries. Japantown Prepared can offer support to the community that extends beyond disaster preparedness and incorporate comprehensive support to the community that assists residents address their most pressing needs. Lastly, a suggestion that emerged from the initial data analysis for the neighborhoods is to establish a disaster registration system in which flyers are sent home with predetermined meet up locations to choose from. Residents can

then drop them off or mail them back. This would help determine, roughly, how many people to anticipate at each location and help them prepare accordingly.

Outcomes, Key Takeaways and Reflections

Through research activities and analysis, I gained a more nuanced understanding of Japantown, Hensley Historic District and their residents. My research shed light on residents' relationships with their neighborhoods and how they relate to issues such as community involvement, peoples' attitudes towards disasters and their level of knowledge and preparation. Research participants increased their awareness of potential disasters in San José and the Bay Area. As interviews concluded, many participants stated that they felt more cognizant of the risk of disasters in their area and some felt compelled to take action, such as replacing expired canned food. My research will allow Japantown Prepared to use this information to become better equipped to address cultural differences in disaster preparedness outreach. This project reached more people who would not have otherwise known about our Japantown Prepared or how to prepare for disasters. Additionally, Project Prepared provided our community partners with valuable insights into the needs of community members and some knowledge on how they can reach out to them more effectively. Lastly, Project Prepared helped our community partners accomplish goals that they have not been able to accomplish without outside help, such as mapping the neighborhood resources and vulnerabilities and we hosted an event that was promoted heavily by student researchers.

The goals of this project were to help increase community engagement in people who normally do not engage in neighborhood and community events and to help identify challenges, assets and vulnerabilities to disasters at a local level. The aim was to garner more participation

from residents and community members. Community engagement and involvement are issues in many volunteer-based organizations, and oftentimes, it becomes a small, tight-knit group doing the work of many, as is the case for Japantown Prepared. This project aimed to increase the connectivity between the weaker connections in the neighborhoods by encouraging people who do not normally take part in neighborhood events or spend time in their community to become more active neighbors. Research participants shared that they wanted to be involved, but did not find entryways to become involved that fit their needs. My goal was to assist Japantown Prepared in fostering a more cohesive and ultimately disaster-prepared community.

I conducted most of the fieldwork between July of 2016 and March 0f 2017 and the timing of the fieldwork shaped the outcomes of this research. The interviews, conducted in the fall of 2016, reflected many prevalent issues in San José, such as community changes, increasing cost of living, and homelessness, all of which continue to be pressing issues throughout San José, particularly neighborhoods in the downtown area. People expressed interest in becoming involved in disaster preparedness, or were interested in making themselves and their households more prepared.

Throughout the interview phase, disasters were mostly discussed as hypothetical situations or historic events rather than a present need. Unprecedented rain that following winter, however, changed that. San José experienced a disastrous flood. A history of floodplain mismanagement, miscommunication between the City of San José and the Santa Clara Valley Water District, and a legacy of deeply rooted social inequities all contributed to a precarious situation and, in February of 2017, after two consecutive atmospheric rivers, the Anderson Dam had reached capacity and began to overflow; forcing 14,000 residents out of their homes as flood water began to rise (Mercury News 2017). By July 2017, five months after the flooding, there

were still an estimated 200 residents that have not been able to return to their homes and living in temporary housing (Sykes 2017). The flooding was most severe in low-income Vietnamese and Hispanic neighborhoods where there were many senior citizens and/or people who spoke little English.

Considering the bulk of my research was conducted before the Coyote Creek Flood impacted San José, the event would have influenced peoples' attitudes and ultimately, my findings. This research may have produced a completely different perspective on the severity of a disaster and the possibility of an event happening again. However, in the latter half of the project, the flood and its aftermath were very much a presence in the research activities and influenced the way people interacted with related events. On March 4, 2017, approximately three weeks after the flooding, SJSU Organizational Studies students hosted a well-attended disaster preparedness workshop at the Salvation Army aimed at showing residents and community members how to prepare for disasters and supplies to include in emergency kits. The fact that this event took place so soon after the flood garnered more interest from the community.

The Coyote Creek Flood helped facilitate a dialogue around disaster preparedness at various levels. At the bureaucratic level, it revealed some of the previously identified strengths and weaknesses The City of San José rolled out in real time. There was not a significant body of information regarding previous flood events and protocol in San José, which made it difficult to access information regarding the causes and impacts of previous events; having this information would have significantly increased efficiency and decision-making processes, and should be considered if another disaster occurs in San José. Before this flood, the Office of Emergency Services had extremely limited staffing and resources and the City has since committed to increase resources for this department to manage preparedness efforts and emergency

management. Lastly, the City's communication to residents about the rising waters were subpar and many were evacuated in the middle of the night; my research will contribute to future disaster preparedness plans for San José and knowledge about the community's attitudes and behaviors towards disasters.

Lastly, I would like to reflect on my decision to conduct this research using anthropological methodologies and perspective to inform my research and findings. Anthropology is a discipline that leans into the nuances and subtleties of local cultures through fieldwork and participant observation. Although many other disciplines, namely sociology and human geography, tackle similar research questions regarding community involvement, connection, relocation and resettlement and disaster preparedness, anthropology allows for an in-depth look into the daily lives of participants, and the participants actively inform the research process by considering their experiences, thoughts and ideas regarding the topic at hand. My recommendations were greatly informed by research participants' feedback and experiences they shared. Relying on anthropological methodologies allowed me to draw meaningful connections between participants' interviews to the research and recommendations. More precisely, the anthropological approach allowed me to examine the long-term impacts cultural hegemony has on a society's ability to prevent, withstand and recover from disasters, and the negative impacts this hegemony has on often unheard voices. Much of the key research that informed my project highlighted the detrimental effects of inequitable development and resource allocation on populations. In addition, poorer and more marginalized populations are more likely to live in more disaster-prone areas due to these factors and are less likely to have as many resources available to them in the event of a disaster. Highlighting this societal shortcoming from the

anthropological perspective allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the issues that disaster preparedness work faces in San José, and informed my project.

Limitations of Research

I learned about the different kinds of at-risk populations that reside in Japantown and Hensley—renters/nonpermanent residents, families with young children, mono-lingual Spanish speakers, undocumented immigrants, elderly and homeless. However, many of them proved to be difficult to recruit or approach during my research activities. One of the main objectives of the project was to focus on these disaster-risk populations and help neighborhood leaders better assist them and address their needs and concerns. Although I set out to uncover the voices of people who do not voice their opinions, this objective became the most difficult to achieve. I did not find many opportunities to connect with individuals who would be defined by the project as at-risk populations. Additionally, the majority of the participants I recruited were acquaintances/ contacts of key members of Japantown Prepared. As such, many of them had some kind of ongoing involvement in neighborhood organizations. Although their perspectives were valuable and provided insight into neighborhood issues, we were missing the voices of those at-risk and hidden populations and I did not want to include anything about homeless people, undocumented immigrants or people with limited English without providing them an opportunity to tell me firsthand what their experiences have been.

Opportunities for Future Research

There were several opportunities that I recognized as extensions of Project Prepared that could lead to new research endeavors. An opportunity for expansion is to work with those who were displaced or impacted by the Coyote Creek Flood. Coyote Creek flooding during the second phase of my project. This disaster had a noticeable impact on my research activities and as previous research has demonstrated (Barrios 2016; Oliver-Smith 2013), existing societal

conditions, disasters and their aftermath often have lasting negative impacts on those whose lives were disrupted. An expansion of Project Prepared can investigate the trauma associated with disasters and displacement, with particular focus on the impacts of the Coyote Creek Flood. Exploring the trauma associated with disasters and displacement provides additional opportunities to examine how a disaster disrupts lives (often inequitably) and allow researchers to understand how people across various cultural, socioeconomic or geographical backgrounds cope with major disruptions. An in-depth analysis of their lived experiences can be very helpful to understand disasters from multiple perspectives and use the information to advise future disaster preparedness plans, with close attention to resettlement, patterns of communication and pre-disaster societal conditions. This proposed research would require a much deeper level rapport building, as it is a very sensitive subject area. Relatedly, and perhaps more specifically, this could also be an opportunity to work closer with homeless populations who were likely hit hardest by the flooding.

With climate change and climate action having become a youth-led movement in recent years, a future disaster project could collaborate with organizations that foster youth leadership and help facilitate a conversation that focuses on the impacts climate change have on disasters locally, nationally or internationally. Given the momentum behind the climate strikes, it would be beneficial to explore the youth-led climate action movement as a tie-in to disaster-preparedness work and inspire even more students to link disaster-prepared efforts to the climate action movement. This is an area of opportunity to collaborate with the Silicon Valley Youth Climate Action group and we already know that the increased severity and impact of disasters go hand in hand with socio-economic and environmental factors, including climate change inaction (Hoffman 2010; Oliver Smith 1999; Faas and Barrios 2015). This movement is an opportunity to

engage current students and future leaders to incorporate disaster preparedness education in their mission.

The Future of Project Prepared and Japantown Prepared

I hope that through my research activities, partnerships with local groups and the experiences following the Coyote Creek Flood, Project Prepared facilitated the much-needed dialogue surrounding disasters. My research efforts engaged stakeholders in preparedness efforts to support some of the most at-risk residents in the area and encourage their participation in preparedness activities. Although many of the targeted demographics and populations were difficult to recruit, my research offered insights into the needs of all residents and how to engage more meaningfully with their needs. Additionally, Japantown Prepared has established a strong, working relationship with numerous businesses, organizations and institutions across San José, including the San José State University Anthropology Department. I think this trajectory has proven extremely beneficial to Japantown Prepared and I would like to see more collaboration across various sectors. Lastly, given the demonstrated need I uncovered in my research and the cost of some of the recommendations I offered, I would like to see Japantown Prepared pursue grant funding to support increased disaster preparedness initiatives, particularly leaning into the *promotores* model of community engagement that will allow for more participation from a wider range of neighborhood residents and community members.

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Appendix A: Interview Instrument

TITLE OF THE STUDY: Project Prepared: Assessing Community-Based Disaster Preparedness in San José's Japantown and Hensley Neighborhoods Revised Interview Questions

RESEARCHERS: San José State University Ethnographic Methods students, Applied Anthropology graduate student Vanessa Castro, and Professors Jan.English-Lueck and AJ Faas.

Purpose. The goals of this project are to: (a) identify key organizations and groups included in and excluded from disaster planning and preparation and map the relationships between them; (b) assess community attitudes toward disaster preparedness and risk perception; (c) map resources, assets and challenges within the community that people would need to know in a disaster; (d) create publiclyavailable information and resources to promote disaster preparedness and plans in partner neighborhoods; and (e) encourage more residents and community members to participate actively. This will help bridge gaps between different stakeholders and residents in partner neighborhoods, such as business owners, long-term residents, renters, students, young professionals, and senior citizens. The proposed project will begin with ethnographic research in Japantown, including participant observation, in-depth interviews, and community mapping. The final project deliverable will include a toolkit of disaster preparedness measures and resources tailored to the concerns, values, and assets of residents of the partner neighborhoods.

Target population: Residents, business people, and others whose activities center on the Japantown and Hensley neighborhoods. People involved with community centers whose activities would be relevant in a crisis.

Goals and Objectives:

1. obtain general background information about the interviewee's involvement with the community,

2. obtain a deep, rich description of the interviewee's live experiences and social relationships in the designated neighborhoods;

3. establish the larger context of engagement to assess involvement in the appropriate community agencies connected to disaster preparedness

4. complement participant-observations.

Place. Selected locations in Japantown and Hensley neighborhoods.

Materials Needed

1. Pens and notebook;
2. Recording device that can download files (fully charged or with a spare device or charger);
3. timepiece or watch;
4. Map as eliciting device
5. Two copies of the consent form.

Procedure and Prompts

[Introduce yourself, the project and have the person sign the informed consent form. Use a recording device, with permission, and take notes about the setting, mood, and circumstances.]

1. Tell me where you have lived.

   Probe: Tell me where you are originally from.

   Probe: How did you get to this neighborhood?

   Probe: How many years have you lived in your present neighborhood?

   Probe: Do you own your home or rent it?

   Probe: (if the interviewee rents or leases) Describe your household's relationship with your landlords and how you communicate with them.

2. Tell me about your typical day. Where do you go? What do you do?

   Probe: How does that change over the week?

3. Tell me about your family and friends. Where do they live?
4. Tell me about the ways you connect to this neighborhood? [point to the map] Probe: What do you do in the neighborhood?

   Probe: How do you participate in the neighborhood?

5. What does this neighborhood mean to you?

   Probe: What aspects of the neighborhood are most important to you?

6. What experiences have you had with disasters or significant disruptions to your life?

Probe: [for stories] Tell me about them…What happened?

7. In your everyday life, what makes you feel safe?

   Probe: Can you tell me of a time you felt safe?

   Probe: Can you tell me of a time you felt unsafe?

8. Think about the community organizations in your neighborhood that you know about. Tell me about them.

   Probe: What are they like? What do they do?

   Probe: Are you involved with them?

   Probe: What would have to change for you to become more involved with them?

   Probe: What is the most effective way these organizations can communicate with you?

   Probe: How/when did you first learn about emergency preparedness in Japantown (Hensley Neighborhood)?

9. I want you to think about what it means to feel "safe" in your community. What does that mean to you?

   Probe: What could be done to make your community safer?

   Probe: What are some actions you and your neighbors could do to help your community?

   Probe: What you can do to make it safer?

10. Think about someone you know you would call a responsible citizen. Tell me about that person (you need not use names)

    Probe: What does that person do?

11. Now think of someone you know who you would can irresponsible. Tell me about that person (you need not use names)

    Probe: What does that person do?

12. Now I want you to imagine that a disaster occurs in your community. Tell me about that event? What would it be?

    Probe: What would you do that first day?

    Probe: Where would you go?

    Probe: What would you do after that first week?

    Probe: Who would you reach out to in order to get help?

Probe: Who would you try to help?

Probe: Based on your experience in the community, what complications would you anticipate

13. Do you expect to be living in this neighborhood two years from now? Five years from now? Ten years from now?

Probe: What would influence your choice of living/working here?

Probe: How would a disaster event effect your choices? Probe: What else do you think could happen, to your family (business, clients)

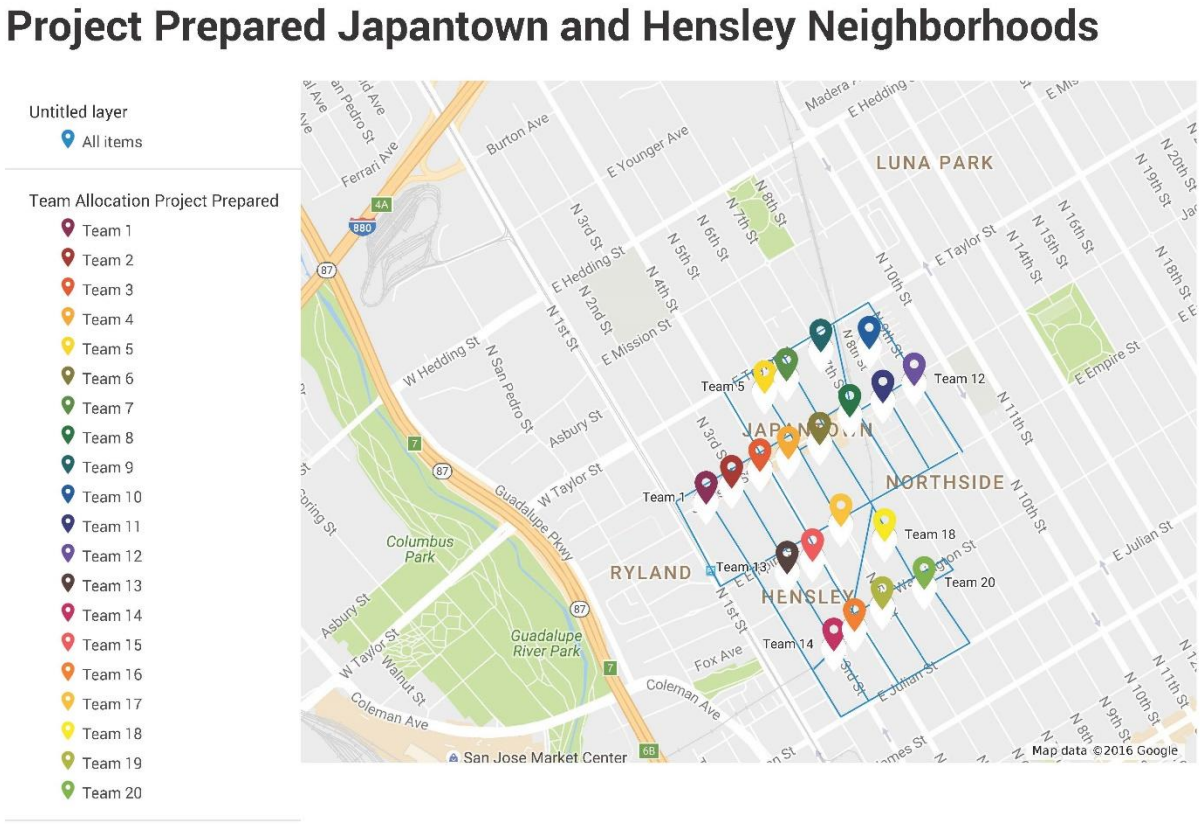
Probe: What would need to happen for you to feel safe and connected to the neighborhood in the future?

14. Is there anything you would like to tell me that I have not asked about?

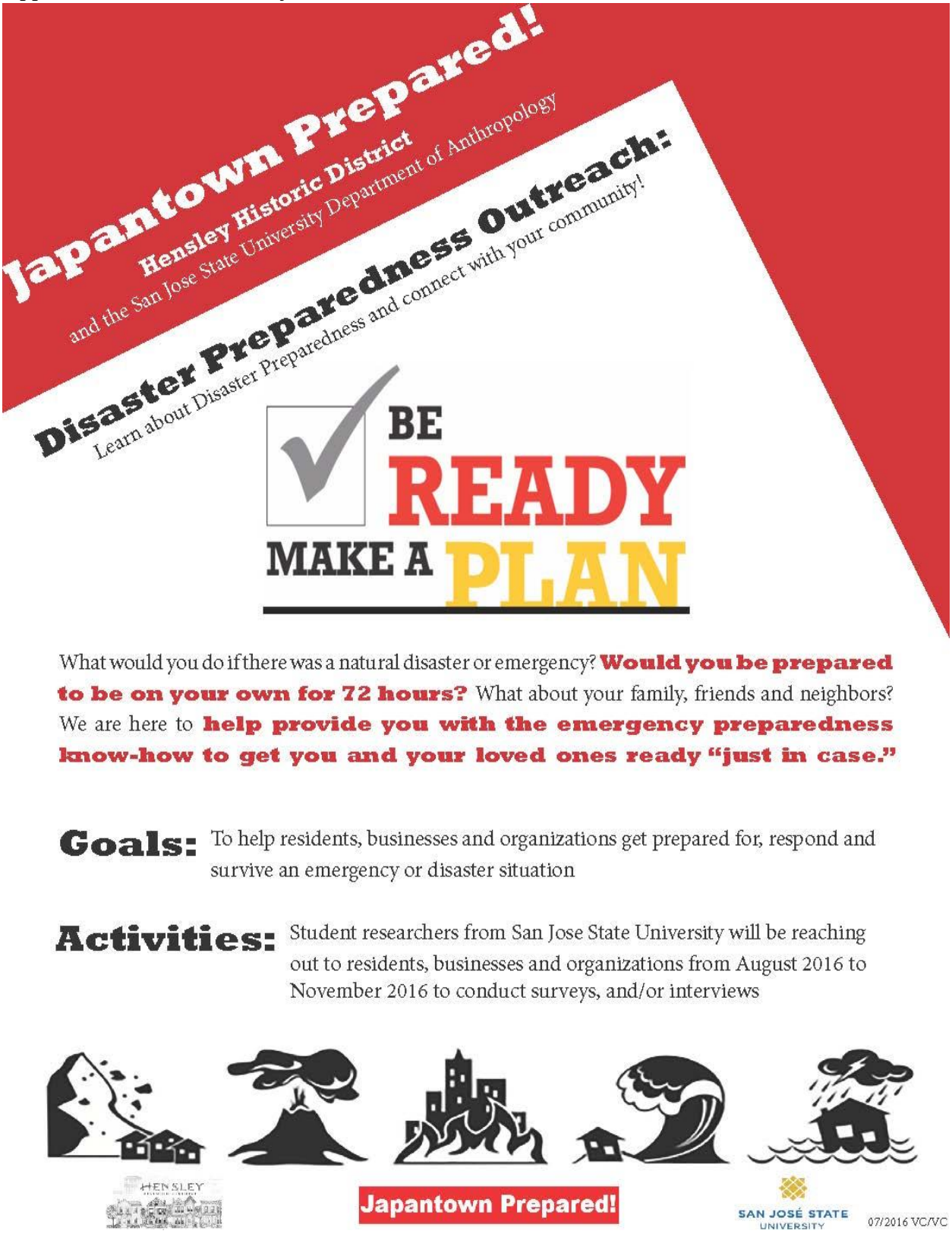
[Thank the person for giving you time and leave contact information should they have more they want to add.]

Transcribe as soon as possible.

Appendix B: Research Area Map



Appendix C: Promotional Flyer



Appendix D: Project Prepared Executive Summary

Project Prepared Executive Summary

This report summarizes my findings and recommendations for Project Prepared. The findings stem from the research conducted in two neighboring San José communities: Japantown and Hensley Historic District. My research assessed participants' attitudes toward disaster preparedness and supported the local disaster-readiness organization, Japantown Prepared. Japantown Prepared has made great strides to provide disaster preparedness training, education, and resources to Japantown and the surrounding community, but lacked sustained involvement from community members and residents. This report is part of the larger collaboration between Japantown Prepared and the San Jose State University Department of Anthropology, and the findings I discuss in this report are drawn from the interviews and activities I conducted during the research period between fall 2016 and spring 2017. The goal of my project was to help stakeholders in Japantown and Hensley create publicly-available information, resources and plans to promote disaster preparedness and to encourage more residents and community members to become actively involved in community organizations. Through my research efforts, student researchers and I interacted with numerous stakeholders and residents in these neighborhoods including: business owners, long-term residents, renters, students, young professionals, and senior citizens. The following section highlights the key themes, findings and trends of my research.

Project Prepared Executive Summary
Vanessa Castro

Residential Status and History in Neighborhood

Residential status and tenure in the neighborhood impacted a person's connection to their community. From the data collected, I noticed that homeowners, business owners, and long-term (in many cases, lifetime) residents felt the strongest sense of connection to their neighborhood. Others, particularly new residents, renters, those with limited English proficiency or housing-insecure individuals were least involved in their neighborhood. Vulnerability to adverse living conditions (such as housing instability) contributed to a person's ability to become involved in community life.

Resource Availability

Many research participants narrowly defined disaster resources. Most people associated disaster readiness resources exclusively at the household and individual level, as opposed to referring to the numerous existing community resources. I drew from the adaptive capacity framework (Brown and Westaway 2011) to encourage a paradigm shift that moves away from the individualistic mindset many interviewees shared to a more community-based understanding of disaster resources, such as neighbors, local organizations and shared cultural knowledge that can help residents navigate and survive a disaster.

Communication

Communication was a common theme among all interviews. Many participants stated that an increased use of social media and other communication tools would help them engage with preparedness efforts. However, for some residents, communication is difficult to address, especially considering different language requirements. I incorporated previous disaster research to discuss ways communication and cooperation can profoundly influence preparedness efforts and argue that inclusive communication strategies are key to a successful communication plan.

Project Prepared Executive Summary
Vanessa Castro

Disasters, Risk, and Safety

I explored how research participants regarded disasters, risk and safety in their daily lives. Risk perception was shaped from numerous factors, ranging from trust in local organizations to past experience with disasters. From the interviews, the following key indicators emerged:

- Tenure in the neighborhood: lifelong residents were more attuned to the history of local disasters and felt most prepared for future disasters.
- Experience in non-local disasters: those who relocated from other disaster-prone regions also spoke confidently to their ability to weather a disaster.

Place Attachment

Interviewees across the board displayed some sense of attachment to the community. The most common factors that influenced their attachment to the neighborhood included: the history and local culture, tenure in the neighborhood and cultural/heritage ties. I also explored the ways in which the values that encouraged place attachment may have unintentional consequences that led to some people to feel alienated from the community.

Recommendations

I reflect on my project and offer ideas, solutions and implementable interventions for Japantown Prepared to build on my project findings. This report can create a more inclusive, cohesive environment that encourages involvement from all community members with different capacities to become involved in disaster preparedness efforts. My recommendations include:

- Multilingual, multimedia outreach was among the most commonly suggested interventions that participants suggested. From this, I recommend building culturally-relevant and flexible paid opportunities to contribute Japantown Prepared. Other neighborhoods in San Jose have had similar issues regarding community involvement through the *promotores* model of civic and community engagement, which builds on local capacity and provides paid stipends to participants.
- Extending Japantown Prepared services to support other needs in the community, such as housing or addressing food insecurity, can broaden Japantown Prepared's

reach. Creating more events that are social and networking opportunities rather than formal meetings.

- Through student research activities, home registration where flyers are sent out and can be filled out with household information and ability/willingness to help/contribute.
- Create a partnership with parent groups/parent volunteers at local schools and places of worship. Schools and places of worship are often designated as safe spaces for those who feel more vulnerable in the community, such as undocumented immigrants. Although the Buddhist Temple and Wesley Methodist Church are already involved with Japantown Prepared at the leadership, extending this partnership to their networks will broaden Japantown Prepared's reach across the community.

Next Steps and Future Projects

Lastly, I discuss some of the of the next steps and future projects that could emerge from my research. The discussion includes the following project and research ideas:

- A collaboration with youth-led climate organizations to educate and inspire more students to incorporate disaster preparedness in climate action advocacy and work can effectively garner more support from local advocacy groups and adolescents. Climate action has become a youth-led movement in recent years, and, as research shows, climate change has had drastic impacts in the frequency and intensity of disasters. This is a natural connection to climate action work and can positively impact Japantown Prepared's outreach efforts.
- Given the devastating impact of the Coyote Creek Flood, this project should be followed up with a study to dissect and form a deeper understand of the disaster-related trauma that the event caused to thousands of San José residents. Following up my research with an in-depth study or project working with those who lived through the flooding and displacement can inform future disaster mitigation projects in a way that is culturally-sensitive to the needs of the community and the lived experiences of those who lost their homes due to the flooding.