

EXPLORING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ISSUES IN LATINO COMMUNITIES IN THE
TREASURE VALLEY IN IDAHO

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores environmental justice issues in Latino communities in the Treasure Valley in Idaho. Given the little work focused on environmental justice issues of Latino communities, specifically in the Treasure Valley in Idaho. This thesis aims to, firstly determine whether environmental justice issues of Latino communities are relevant to environmental and social organizations in the Treasure Valley. As part of this, I also aim to unpack why environmental issues in Latino communities are or are not relevant to local social and environmental organizations. I suspected this may be connected to the complex immigration status of Latino groups, however, I discovered that the lack of funding and research, and community awareness challenged these organizations to attend to environmental justice issues. Second, this thesis aims to bring visibility to the Latino community that is often neglected in policy and research regarding environmental justice, which has mostly focused on African-American communities. Finally, a third and related aim is to contribute to the development of a wider vision of environmental justice issues of minority groups by expanding this framework to Hispanic-Latino communities in the Treasure Valley, Idaho.

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GENERAL AUDIENCIA ABSTRACT

Disproportionate exposure to toxic waste, proximity to highways and industry facilities, and lack of access to clean water and food, are some of the environmental justice issues that minority groups in the United States daily face daily. The term environmental justice has evolved with different approaches and lines of thought that built on of vulnerable communities' mobilizations for social justice issues present in vulnerable communities. This study explores to what extent environmental justice issues in Latino communities are relevant to environmental and social organizations in the Treasure Valley in Idaho. Building on the existing literature on environmental justice and based on semi-structured interviews, this study finds that environmental justice issues are relevant to these organizations, but that social injustices, -a lack of political attention to this issue and a related absence of strategic funding and research hinder these organizations' ability to address environmental justice issues.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Most of the studies in environmental justice have primarily focused on African-American communities (Taylor, 2000); (Benford, 2005); (Agyeman et al. 2016). Given the significance of the Latino population in the United States, the literature on environmental justice requires the development of more research focusing on the Latino community. In the context of the Latino community in the Treasure Valley in Idaho, I am not aware of research work or studies that specifically explored environmental justice issues within the Latino population.¹Therefore, the purpose of this thesis sought to determine whether environmental justice issues in Latino communities are relevant to or not environmental and social organizations of the Treasure Valley in Idaho. Based on conducting semi-structured interviews to executive staff of environmental and social organizations in the Treasure Valley in Idaho, I concluded that while environmental justice issues are relevant to these organizations, there are challenges that greatly impact the attending of these issues.

The State of Idaho is well known for its agriculture and wilderness areas. Given the prevalence of crops grown, the state's economy largely depends on agri-businesses, which relies on migrant labor. The robust agricultural sector in Idaho has attracted seasonal workers from both within the United States and across international borders; many of these workers are of Hispanic- Latino origin. Considering that Idaho's agricultural sector depends on the migrant labor, I suspect that agri-business corporations play a decisive role in shaping the political agenda of policymakers in the region. The disadvantaged position that migrant and undocumented workers could to some extent explain the absence of social mobilization over

¹ As for 4/16/2019, there is no data found on environmental justice movements in the state of Idaho.
<https://ejatlas.org/featured/blockadia>

environmental justice (EJ) issues and also understanding why there has not been strategic funding and research over EJ issues in the region. The invisibility of the EJ issues in Latino communities is tied to the interest of political elite and agri-business corporations who benefit from the marginalization of Latino workers.

In this thesis, I firstly provide an overview about the Latino population in Idaho in order to get a better picture about the significance of addressing environmental justice issues in this community, where I provide more details about the significance of the Latino population within the state of Idaho. Then, in the following chapter (III) I discuss several definitions of environmental justice and I provide a chronological review of the history of environmental mobilizing movements and the history of environmental justice research. Next, I turn to discuss the development of the methods used for this thesis where I provide detailed information about the procedures, interviews and organizations that participated in this research study. In chapter V, I discuss the results of the interviews conducted, an analysis of the findings, and finally in chapter VI, I offer some general conclusions where I discuss some of the challenges that the organizations interviewed face in attending the environmental justice issues identified by them, and where further research can go.

CHAPTER II: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND ON LATINO DEMOGRAPHICS IN IDAHO

Historically, the Latino population in the US stem out of the Spanish settlements in the 16th and 17th centuries. Throughout the last century the US population increased dramatically, historians recognize this period of the history as the “Baby boom”. During the 20th century, the United States experienced a large migratory wave not only from European countries, but also from Latin- American countries where people fled from violence, poverty, and dictatorial regimes – especially Cuban asylees.

One important reason to focus on Latino communities is because they are a growing minority, it is predicted that by 2060, around 30 percent of U.S citizens will be of Latino origin (Del Campo et al., 2016, p. i). At state level, the Hispanic-Latino population constitutes 12 percent of the entire population in Idaho ² and 85 percent of Idaho’s Hispanics are Mexican or of Mexican descent which led to the opening of a Mexican Consulate in Boise in 2008 (Mcfarland, 2015, August 15). According to the Idaho Commission on Hispanic Affairs, the Treasure Valley region in Idaho – which comprises the counties of Ada, Boise, Canyon, Gem, Owyhee, Payette, and Washington , see Figure 1– has the largest concentration of Latino population in Idaho, having Canyon and Ada County the lead in Latino population in Idaho³.

In terms of education, Hispanics accounted for 42 percent of the enrollment growth in Idaho’s public schools in the last five years, according to a new report from the University of

² See Pew Research Center. See: <http://www.pewhispanic.org/fact-sheet/latinos-in-the-2016-election-idaho/>

³ According to the Idaho Commission on Hispanic Affairs, the Latino population in Canyon County is 49,941 While in Ada county is 32,905. See: https://icha.idaho.gov/menus/idaho_counties.asp

Idaho’s McClure Center for Public Policy Research (Russell, 2016, June 12). Moreover, in terms of economy, the state of Idaho depends on the agricultural sector in which Latino farmworkers account for the 32.4 percent of the labor force in the region (Howard, 2013, October 8). Considering the significance in terms of socio-economic factors, Latino communities in Idaho – especially in the Treasure Valley, constitute an important focus of study, and therefore, exploring environmental issues faced by this community will in all likelihood become more relevant and noticeable.

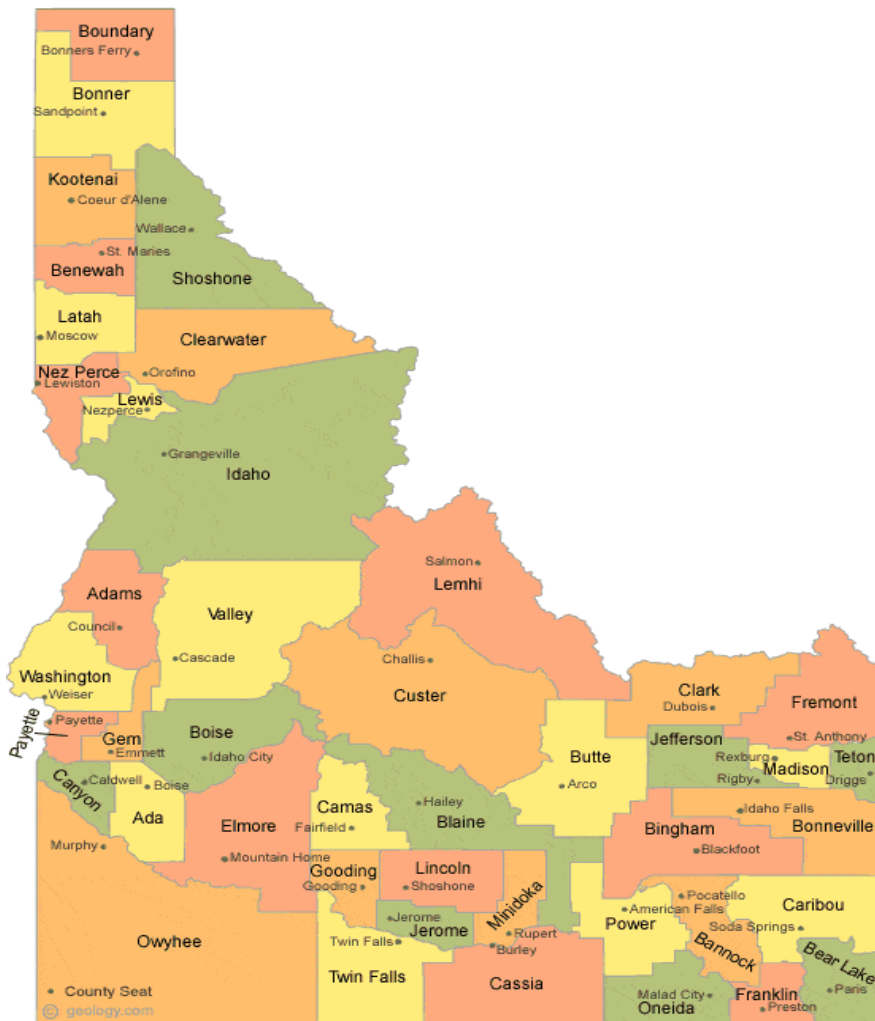


Figure 1: Map of the State of Idaho
 Source: <https://geology.com/state-map/idaho.shtml>

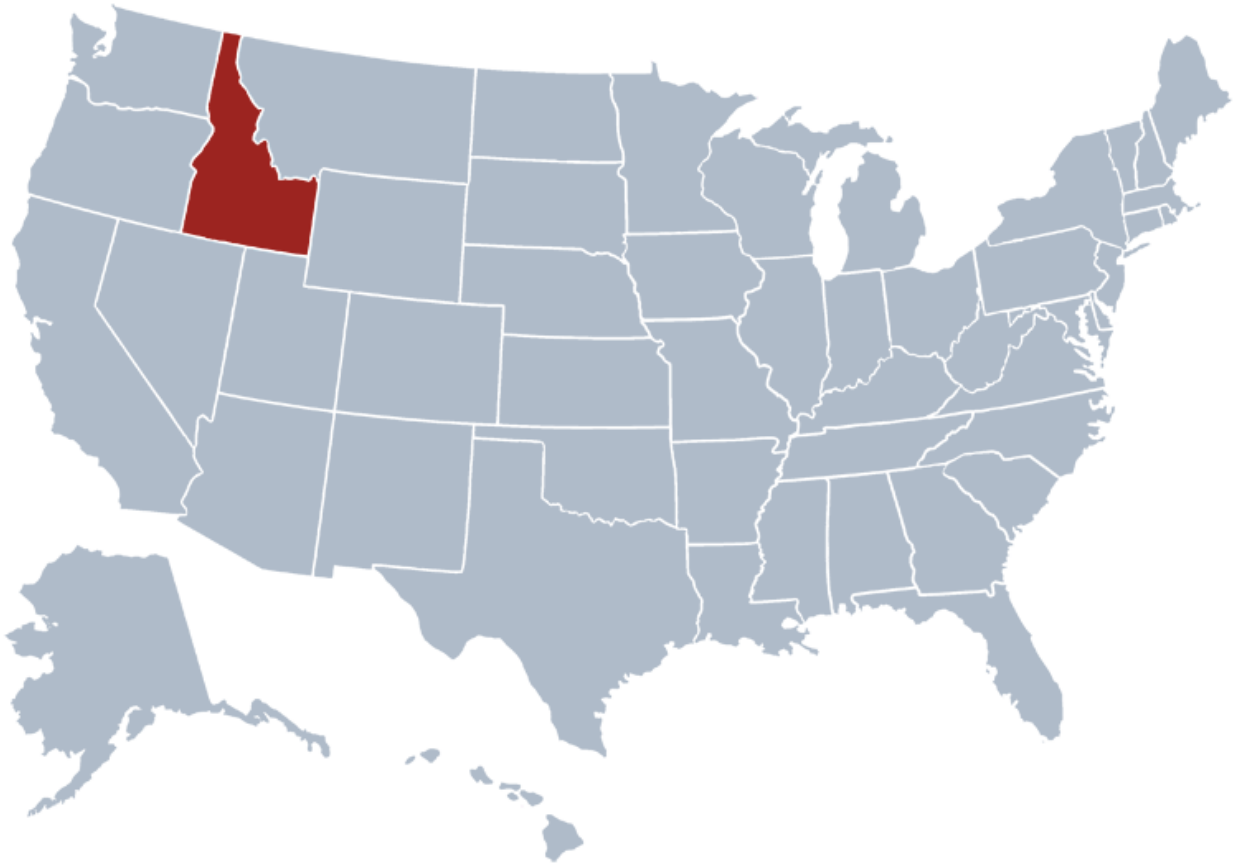


Figure 2: Map of the United States with the location of the State of Idaho.

Source: <https://www.50states.com/idaho.htm>

CHAPTER III: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This literature review covers the discussion of several definitions of environmental justice and offers a chronological review of the history of environmental mobilizing movements and the history of environmental justice research. The discussion is divided into three sub-sections, the first sub-section provides a discussion of different concepts of environmental justice as well as my own definition of environmental justice. The second sub-section explores the evolution of environmental justice thought by discussing the approaches and notions that have been developed within the literature of environmental justice. In this section, I discuss the similarity of arguments of different authors in studying environmental justice as a social movement – the so-called environmental justice movement. The third sub-section is an extension of the second sub-section and provides a detailed discussion of Latino environmentalism and activism, offering a background for the study of environmental justice issues in Latino communities in the United States.

Definitions of Environmental Justice

Defining environmental justice has been a challenging task for scholars. Some authors stress that the difficulty in developing one universal concept of environmental justice relies on the multiplicity of the term of justice (Walker, 2012, p. 4). Considering the multiplicity of meanings of justice, scholars, researchers and policymakers have found it challenging to establish an exhaustive meaning of environmental justice. Regardless of the distinct approaches in conceptualizing environmental justice, scholarly work and research have often linked the terms of equity and racism (Rosenbaum, 2016, pg. 146).

The relationship between equity and racism is crucial as it serves as the foundation from which to understand the emergence of environmental justice movements that helped bring visibility to communities of color whom policymakers had neglected. Indeed, the emergence of environmental justice as an arena⁴ of activism, and an area of research and policy is inseparable from the political mobilization of minority communities against environmental injustices, as I explain below.

Given this linkage between minority groups – such as African-American communities – with environmental rights, the United States Environmental Protection Agency provided an objective-based definition of environmental justice to address the claims of citizens mobilized by environmental justice movements:

“Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies... fair treatment means no group of people should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, governmental and commercial operations or policies” (US Environmental Protection Agency 2008)

This definition of environmental justice focuses on the inclusion of all groups of *people*. The emphasis given to the human world is predominantly reductionist as it does not include the aesthetic, spiritual, and cultural values that nature can provide to us. Also, this definition does not offer an extension of the negative impacts that environmental issues, such as climate change,

⁴ In this context, the concept of arena serves as a metaphor to illustrate how the different paradigms on environmental justice have transformed to give shape to forms of activism. Turner (1974, pg. 17) stressed “...[arenas] are concrete settings in which paradigms become transformed into metaphors and symbols with reference to which political power is mobilized and which there is a trial of strength between influential paradigms-bearers”.

can pose to vulnerable communities. Concerning climate change, the Hurricane Katrina in 2005 is a clear example of how environmental justice issues arise within African-American communities after the storm. The socio-economic disparities present in New Orleans made the effects of the disaster worse on the communities of color due to their living conditions (Dobson, 2007, p. 17-18). Another factor that made difficult for these communities to cope with the effects storm was their exposure to the toxicity of the waters – given the proximity of their neighborhood to factories (Morse, 2008, p. 2). Having stressed these arguments, I consider that the EPA’s definition of environmental justice aims to cover “basic” environmental demands that do not go beyond the categories of race, economic and social status. Regardless of the reductionist definition that the EPA offers on environmental justice, some scholars have developed other concepts on environmental justice that include important features. For example, Bunyan Bryant provides a normative-oriented definition of environmental justice in which he incorporates cultural norms, values and rules to the understanding of environmental justice.

“Environmental justice refers to those cultural norms, values, rules, regulations, behaviors, policies and decisions to support sustainable communities, where people can interact with confidence that their environment is safe, nurturing and productive...Environmental justice is supported by decent paying and safe jobs, quality schools and recreation; decent housing and adequate health care; democratic decision making and personal empowerment; and communities free of violence, drugs and poverty.” (Bryant, 1995, pg. 6)

First, the author stresses that the idea of environmental justice is defined by the interplay of societal aspects – such as cultural norms, rules, regulations, etc. – with the environment. In addition, he introduces the term of “sustainable communities” to stress importance of environmental justice issues for future generations. The incorporation of “sustainability” into the definition of environmental justice is innovative, considering that the EPA’s definition does not

address this term. Sustainability sometimes associated with sustainable development, constitutes a principle in environmental policy (Beder, 2013, p. 13). According to Sharon Beder (2013), the term sustainable development argues for the development of the needs of the present without compromising the ability to meet the needs for future generations. Other authors have argued that sustainable development is merely anthropocentric as it focuses on meeting economic goals to supply the human population and future generations, excluding the environment (Cao, 2015, p. 21).

The introduction of sustainable communities to the definition of environmental justice provides an expansion to the thought of EJ as the concept of sustainability incorporates elements of justice and equity in regards to future generations. In addition, Bryant incorporates economic values to the concept of environmental justice by stressing equal opportunities in labor, education and health, which correlates with the Equal Opportunity Act. Other definitions of environmental justice focus on stressing the different notions of justice. In this regard, Walker (2012) conceives environmental justice in terms of three concepts of justice a) Distributive justice b) Procedural justice and c) Justice as recognition. The combination of justice in terms of the distribution of resources and risks, in terms of participation in decisions and in terms of recognizing who is being protected or left behind constitute a pivotal tool to understand environmental justice (Walker, 2012, p. 10).

Considering the different perspectives in defining environmental justice, I have come to define environmental justice as: “Environmental Justice is the recognition of the fundamental rights and the equal treatment to all members of the world ecosystem” This definition is very generic, but it provides inclusiveness by stressing “all members of the global ecosystem.”. The global ecosystem involves all the aspects of the planet – including plants, animals, and natural

resources. The term global ecosystem sometimes referred to Biosphere, Ecosphere and Gaia make reference to not only the natural resources, but also to the elements that are part of the planet, such as the atmosphere (Huggett, 1999, p. 495). Other authors, such as Benito Cao (2015), refer to global ecosystem in terms of services in order to capture the importance of the resources such as water, air, and lands that nature provides for us that are the essential for our survival.

Overall, the concept of environmental justice entails a set of different notions of justice that vary from the contextual and cultural setting. Given the multiplicity of the definition of EJ, scholars and policymakers have adopted a general concept that includes notions of equity, fairness and justice to all groups of people, and also, references the non-human world. The development of one agreed definition on environmental justice is likely impossible due to the plurality of definitions of justice.

The History of Environmental Justice Thought

The literature on environmental justice is inseparable from the history of environmental justice mobilizing due to the significance of such movements in bringing concerns of injustice and inequality to the US national political agenda. To understand how environmental justice movements enabled the introduction of concerns on race, class, fairness and equity to the environmental justice discourse, we need to begin by tracing the origins of environmental justice movements. The social mobilization over environmental issues is often related to wildlife protection and conservationism as the early environmental activism in the US focused on such concerns of mainstream environmentalism (Pulido, 1996, p. 22; Rosenbaum 2017, p. 244- 245: Taylor, 2000, p. 514). During the 1960s, the establishment of social movements, such as the civil rights movement, provided the opportunity to African-American communities to bring into light social concerns, such as race and class to the environmental justice discourse.

Indeed, the consolidation of environmental justice movements helped to bring attention to concerns of race and class that were neglected by mainstream environmentalism, but where do environmental justice movements come from, how have such movements changed national policy, and how did they become relevant to research on environmental justice? To answer these questions, we need to rely on historical accounts and case studies conducted by several social movement theorists – specifically Stella Capek, Robert D. Benford, Laura Pulido, Dorceta Taylor and others – who provided concepts and frames to explain how social movements, such as environmental justice movements mobilize against injustice.

The early foundations on environmental justice movements are identified by the events that occurred in 1982 when an African-American community in Warren County, North Carolina manifested their concerns from their exposure to the toxic waste facility in their neighborhood (Benford, 2005, p 40); (Agyeman et al., 2016, p. 323). The concerns of the community reached the national government attention forcing them to analyze the social, racial and economic disparities between environmental hazards exposures in communities of color. Capek (1993) provided an analysis of another environmental justice movement that took place in 1984 and which mobilized over toxic waste exposure in the community of the Carver Terrace in the city of Texarkana, Texas. She argued that the African-American community of the neighborhood of Carver Terrace helped to bring back these concerns of race and class that communities of color have struggled with.

The events occurred in Texas and North Carolina catalyzed a powerful social movement that provided the emergence of a field of research in environmental justice that aims to understand how communities mobilize against injustice and racism. This field of research is defined as the Environmental Justice Movement (EJM). The Environmental Justice Movement does not

constitute one single environmental movement, but is a representation of grassroots local movements, national movements, and global movements that mobilize over environmental justice issues – that firstly argues about the unequal toxic exposure in minority groups. In other words, the EJM is the line of thought on environmental justice that conceives environmental justice as an environmental mobilizing movement.

Continuing with this line of thought, the early environmental justice movements in the US have fought over toxic wastes and were concerned with issues of race and class (Taylor, 2000, p. 508; Walker 2012, p. 18). Out of these issues environmental justice movements began to mobilize which lead to the emergence of several concepts, one of these is the concept of Environmental Justice Frame (EJF). Social movement theorists have based on concepts of frames to understand how the social mobilization on the ground enables the development of a common language that mobilizes communities of people over specific issues, ideas, or discourses. Hence, the concept of EJF is pivotal for the study of environmental justice as it helps us to explore the evolution of the environmental justice mobilizing and provides scholars the conceptual tools to interpret how communities of people produce frames of meaning. Then, what does the concept of EJF entail? The concept of EJF is the process in which we make sense of the claims that environmental justice movements are making, but also it stems historically out of the mobilizations on the ground. Several scholars (Capek, 1993; Taylor, 2000; Benford & Snow, 2005; Walker, 2012) have based their studies on environmental justice movements through the notion EJF. Overall, the concept of frame serves as a conceptual tool for social movement theorists to explain the existence of environmental justice movements.

Considering the importance of the concept of frame within the study of environmental justice movements, some scholars, such as Benford & Snow (2000) argue that social movements

aim to persuade individuals to mobilize through collective action frames. They argue that collective action frames are “a set of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimize the activities and campaigns of a social movement organization” (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 614). In other words, collective action frames act as communication entities that engage members of a community to participate in collective actions, and at the same time, such entities create patterns of sense of belonging to their members leading them to take action, e.g. participating in demonstrations, supporting policies, etc. Taylor (2000, p. 511) stresses that collective action frames are useful for activists to highlight and define unjust social conditions.

Given the significance of collective action frames within the development of concepts of frames and discourses, some scholars, such as Benford (2005) argue that collective actions facilitated the introduction of concerns of race and class to the early environmental justice movements. Benford (2005) argued that first mobilization over environmental justice was conceived under the frame of ‘environmental racism’ instead of under the notion of “environmental justice” frame. Based on the notion of frame, Benford argues that the term environmental racism emerged from the case of the African-American community in Warren County due to its significance in connecting concerns of racism with environmental rights. The case of Warren County constitutes a clear example of how the notion of environmental racism gained force through the establishment of environmental activism in communities of color. However, Benford argues that the emergence of environmental activism has shifted from the notion of environmental racism to environmental justice as other environmental justice movements have emerged to incorporate new concerns in social justice, such as immigration rights, housing, education, health care, transportation, food, and many others (Benford, 2005, p. 48).

Considering that the foundations on environmental justice rely on the analysis of environmental justice movements under the notion of the EJM, some authors adopt a similar posture in understanding environmental justice as an umbrella of the concept of frames. In regards to the notion of the frame, the EJM is considered as a fundamental piece in developing an empirical analysis and theory of environmental justice (Walker, 2012, p. 16-17). Walker's work in *Environmental Justice: Concepts, Evidence and Politics* analyzes the evolution of the EJM by distinguishing two approaches or trends of studying environmental justice. The first approach is the notion of Environmental Justice Frame and the second approach articulates claims about environmental justice, which he denominates as "Claim-making". Walker (2012) uses the term 'claim-making' to explain the different ways in which we can make claims from what we can perceive and interpret about the world around us. From Walker's perspective, we should not only understand environmental justice under the lenses of a set frames and paradigms but also through the claims that communities of people make in response to environmental concerns. However, the frame of 'claim-making' has already been recognized in the literature of environmental justice, as Capek (1993) identifies forms of environmental activism based on claims. Based on the arguments from Capek, Benford and Walker, the architecture of the EJM is predominantly grounded on environmental activism which consequently led the EJM to become the focus regarding the study environmental justice. For Walker, the notion of EJM helps to identify and explain the concepts of frames that communities of people have created in their struggles for EJ – for example the environmental racism frame, which argues specifically about the disproportionate exposure to environmental hazards of racial minority groups. The emphasis of environmental racism concerning how racially groups face greater social injustices in comparison to other racial groups, such as white Caucasian communities.

So far, the discussion on the environmental justice literature has focused on the similarity of several scholars in conceiving the notion of EJF as the intellectual and theoretical framework to analyze environmental justice movements. In the 1990s, the phenomena of globalization not only enabled the expansion of capitals, but also the expansion of thoughts and discourses on environmental justice and environmental mobilization over environmental justice issues. Given the emergence of new thinking in environmental justice, some authors such as Taylor (2000) have demonstrated the narrowness of the environmental justice literature due to its focus on race and class, and toxic wastes (Agyeman et. Al, 2016, p. 328). Taylor (2000) stresses that the Environmental Justice Frame is a master frame that provides flexible channels of interpretation and analysis of social movements, such as the EJM. Given this flexibility, activists link racism, environmental justice and environmentalism into one frame, which constrains the analysis of environmental justice (Taylor, 2000, p. 514). For Taylor, the study of environmental justice movements has been dominated under the analysis of discourses about injustice that the notion of EJF has argued for, and therefore, the environmental justice discourse deems the development of a new environmental paradigm. She defines this new environmental paradigm as the Environmental Justice Paradigm (EJP).

Taylor (2000) conceives the idea of paradigm as a body of ideas, concepts, propositions, values, and goals that influences the way we conceive the world (Taylor, 2000, p. 528). The concept of EJP entails notions of social mobilization that can relate to the concept of EJF, however, the EJP involves a set of social constructions or paradigms that emerge from a wide array of environmental thinking. She distinguishes three main environmental paradigms within the history of EJ, which are: a) the exploitative capitalist paradigm (ECP) that took place in the 19th century characterized by the Industrial Revolution, the Romantic environmental paradigm (REP) which

took off in the 60's and 70's emerging from the early environmentalism focused on wildlife protection, and the new environmental paradigm (NEP) which provides a broader vision of environmental issues by including economic and political aspects. Taylor argues that the NEP is the dominant environmental paradigm which entails principles of sustainability, environmental protection, environmental policy, and environmental planning (Taylor, 2000, p. 528). However, Taylor argues that the NEP does not include environmental justice, and therefore, she stresses that the environmental justice thought represents a new paradigm – the EJP. Overall, Taylor considers the EJP as a product of the evolution of the environmental justice movements by stressing that the mobilizing power that environmental activism entails has facilitated the construction of new paradigms of environmental thought. Agyeman et al. (2016) referenced Taylor's work by stressing that the EJP has expanded the environmental justice discourse by adding values and social features such as autonomy, self-determination, sustainability, that have been absent from the EJP (Agyeman et al., 2016, p. 328). Nevertheless, Agyeman et al. (2016) identify salient trends and directions, such as climate justice, that have emerged in the last recent years within the environmental justice research.

Today, nations all over the world have already started to experience the effects of climate change. The increase of temperatures, the intensification of droughts and storms, ice melting, rising sea levels, and others environmental issues are just a few of the examples of climate change. A great majority of the scientific community has agreed that the sea level will continue to rise even if gas emissions were to be stopped. The increase on sea levels will negatively impact the economy and the living conditions of inhabitants who live in coastal cities (Houghton, 2015, p. 169). Given the importance of climate change and its impacts, some Environmental justice groups have added climate justice to their campaigns (Walker, 2012, p. 179). Climate justice has become an important

focus to understand the social mobilization around environmental issues caused by climate change, such as global warming. Indeed, climate justice has become a new topic of the study of environmental justice movements. Environmental issues such as global warming, intensive droughts and hurricanes constitute a threat to vulnerable communities that are at risk. Some scholars argue that the development of environmental policies, acts and regulations to address climate change have accentuated the importance of climate justice (Rosenbaum, 2012, p.146).

In sum, tracing from contributions of social movements theorists, such as Capek, Benford, Walker, Taylor, Agyeman et al. and others, these trends on theorizing environmental justice attempt to illustrate to us how the idea of environmental justice is conceived by communities and how such communities address environmental justice issues by empowering themselves to produce social movements that pursue justice and equity. The discussion of the different approaches, notions, and trends that environmental justice scholars provide are based on one similar vein of arguments that conceive environmental justice as a social movement: The Environmental Justice Movement (EJM). Several authors, such as Capek, Taylor, Benford and Walker have based their analysis of the social movements, such as the EJM, through social movement framing perspectives. Therefore, the notion of framing has dominated the literature of environmental justice the past decades due to its flexibility in interpreting and analyzing social movements.

On the other hand, some scholars (Benford, 2005; Taylor, 2000;) have acknowledged that the notion of the EJM has evolved due to the incorporation of new topics – such as immigration, education, housing and others, as I previously mentioned – that have emerged from the expansion of the EJM. Agyeman et al. argue that all of these approaches in understanding environmental justice have shift from focusing on inequity and racism to new emerging themes, such as climate change. The incorporation of climate change, presented as climate justice within the literature on

environmental justice, demonstrates the expansion of the environmental justice discourse. Overall, all these trends, frames and approaches in environmental justice stem out of the social mobilization on the ground and provide scholars with interpretations on how communities state their claims using collective frame actions.

Environmental Justice and Latino Environmentalism

The previous sub-chapter discussed the different notions and trends within the environmental justice literature. This sub-chapter discusses the environmental justice literature in Latino communities in the US. Given the focus on the analysis of social movements in communities of color over toxic contamination, the literature on environmental justice has been narrowed and limited to the discussion of environmental activism over race and toxic waste (Taylor, 2000; Benford & Snow, 2000; Walker, 2012). Therefore, several authors such as Laura Pulido started to question this narrowness by exploring two case studies in Latino communities in the Southwest. Pulido's work in *Environmentalism and Economic Justice: Two Chicano Struggles in the Southwest* (1996) offers a critique of mainstream environmentalism by arguing that their trends in examining poor and minority groups lack the conceptual tools to analyze their conceptions of quality of life and racial subordination.

Despite the little discussion on environmental justice in Latino communities, Pulido provides an important analysis of justice and economic struggles in Latino communities that are fundamental for this thesis. Stressing the importance of analyzing the presence of economic disparities between white and Hispanic-Latino communities in the Southwest, Pulido introduces the concept of "subaltern environmentalism" which is helpful in thinking about exploring environmental justice issues in the Treasure Valley.

The concept of subaltern environmentalism serves as a foundation for the development of new framing of environmental justice as it recognizes the social and environmental subordination that minority groups and ethnic groups face in our contemporary society. Although the environmental justice discourse over concerns of race and class have been dominant, Pulido considers that the concept of subaltern environmentalism can help us to interpret social and economic struggles of subordinated groups – that are often identified as agricultural migrant workers (Pulido, 1996, p. 19). The term Subaltern has its roots in specific literature, postcolonialism. The postcolonial theory also called *Postcolonialism* analyzes the literature of the nations that were at one time under the power of a foreign empire, especially European powers. Edward Said's work (1978) in *Orientalism* greatly contributed to the postcolonial theory as he provided a historical analysis about different approaches adopted by scholars in studying the 'Orient' (the East). Said attempts to demonstrate that Western cultures – predominantly European – had misunderstood the civilizations of the orient by tracing wrong assumptions that gained strength against the Orient. Said's work is useful in thinking of the socio-economic and cultural status of the colonies and how they were perceived by the privilege classes in terms of power.

According to Pulido, the concept of subaltern environmentalism provides scholars a different way to analyze environmental justice issues in minority groups as the idea of subaltern environmentalism provides a closer examination of social and economic struggles in communities of people (Pulido, 1996, p. 19). The study of ethnic and racial groups, such Latino communities, require the analysis of multiple aspects, therefore, Pulido uses the term subaltern to gauge the social mobilization around environmental justice issues in Latino populations.

Some authors, such as Gordon (1997) has contested Pulido's concept of subaltern environmentalism by arguing that its focus on racial subordination leaves little room for the

analysis of other factors that involve environmental justice, such as gender and class. Nevertheless, years later Pulido & Pena (1998, p. 33) discuss the importance of incorporating such social categories and racial identity in studying environmental justice issues in minority groups. Moreover, Gordon (1997) identifies another problem with Pulido's work in Environmentalism and Economic Justice namely the generalization that she gives to Latino farm workers who she identifies as marginalized groups at risk. Despite such critics, Pulido's contributions to the environmental justice literature highlights the role of Latino environmental activism as it has enabled the expansion of environmental justice literature (Egan, 2002, p. 23).

Continuing the discussion on Latino activism, the analysis of Latino environmentalism has placed significant emphasis on farm workers' health and occupational safety. For instance, Agyeman et al. (2016, p. 325) discussed the role of Latino communities in framing the principles of the Environmental Justice Movement approach by stressing the social campaigns that Latino activists made in order to correct environmental injustices – such as their great exposure to pesticides that industrial and farmer workers have experienced.

Since this thesis aims to explore environmental justice issues in Latino communities in the Treasure Valley in Idaho, the case studies that Pulido conducted in the Southwest help trace interpretations on culture, race, and identity that have framed discussions of Latino activism. Considering the significant population of Latino farm workers in Idaho, Pulido's concept of subaltern environmentalism could facilitate the interpretation of environmental justice issues in Latino communities and also could help to determine the relevance of such concerns to social and environmental organizations across the Treasure Valley in Idaho.

CHAPTER IV: METHODS

Introduction

In the literature review chapter, I discussed the history of environmental mobilizing movements and the history of environmental justice research. I highlighted the importance of how the evolution of the environmental justice discourse has facilitated the incorporation of new topics and trends – such as climate justice– apart from the traditional focus on racial and economic disparities between white and non-white communities. In this chapter, I provide a discussion about the research methods that I decided to use for this thesis. Next, I turn to explain the reasons why I chose such methods instead of employing other research designs that could have matched with the goals of this thesis. Then, I discuss the steps that I took for the development of the methodology chosen. In the end of this chapter, I provided a brief information about the organizations that granted me interviews and the staff that I interviewed.

Methodology

The purpose of this thesis aimed to answer my central research question, which is: are environmental justice issues in Latino communities relevant to environmental and social organizations in the Treasure Valley? Determining the relevance of environmental justice issues for environmental and social organizations in the Treasure Valley required the collection and analysis of data from primary and secondary sources. The methods that I chose for this thesis are qualitative methods by employing a case study design in order to demonstrate the existence of environmental injustice of Latino communities in the Treasure Valley in Idaho.

Given the lack of research of environmental justice in minority groups in Treasure Valley in Idaho, specifically in Latino communities, I decided to explore my research question through

interviews. The interview results constitute the primary source of information for this thesis. In addition, I considered pivotal to include in this research the analysis of public data that could complement with the information that the interviewees provided regarding existing environmental issues in the Treasure Valley, such as water and air quality. The aim of using primary and secondary sources – such as interviews and public data (e.g. reports, newspaper articles) – is twofold: First, to determine the importance of environmental justice issues for environmental and social organizations, and, secondly, to gauge the interest of such organizations in community engagement in environmental justice issues.

The reason for employing qualitative methods relies on the analysis of the different narratives, and lines of thought that have emerged in studying social movements, such as the Environmental Justice Movement. The analysis of the case studies on environmental justice – such as Capek (1993), Taylor (2000), Pulido (1996), (Pulido & Pena, 1998) serve as a scholarly reference to this study and is helpful in exploring the case of the Latino community in the Treasure Valley regarding environmental justice issues. The research design of case studies deals with a wide scope of academic fields. For instance, researchers often employ a case studies design to evaluate a case, event, activity, or one or more individuals (Creswell, 2014, p. 14).

For this study, the collection of qualitative data through interviews is indispensable and pivotal to answer the central research question of this thesis as there is lack of information on topics of environmental justice in minority groups in the Treasure Valley in Idaho. Therefore, I decided to conduct semi-structured interviews as the primary source of information as this interview technique offers the researcher most detailed and rich data. In-depth interviews involve conducting individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their thoughts, ideas and perspectives on a particular situation (Boyce & Neale, 2006, p. 3). Given the flexibility

of in-depth interviews, I felt that this type of interview chosen offered me a good opportunity to get a great quality of information from the participants which helped me to draw conclusions on the existence and relevance of environmental justice issues in Latino communities.

On the other hand, there are two powerful motives that led me to decide to use interviews as a research instrument: time and community integration. Before starting my fieldwork in Idaho, I anticipated that building relationships with the Latino community would be easier due to the fact that I am a Latina woman whose native language is Spanish. However, this did not help me as much as I thought it would. Shortly after I moved to Idaho, I started to work in school district as a Migrant Liaison. This job offered me the opportunity not only to work with migrant students and their families but also to establish contact with non-profit organizations whose work targeted Latino families. I considered that my job and my cultural background would have been an advantage to build relationships with the Latino community in a very limited period – approximately four months. However, this was not the case. Building relationships with communities takes time regardless of the researcher's language skills and background (Hertel & Van Cott, 2009, p. 306).

Having stressed the reasons of choosing the methods for this research, it is important to note that there were other valid qualitative methods that I could have chosen for the development of this thesis. One of these is ethnographic research which is helpful in analyzing and interpreting qualitative data. Incorporating ethnographic research design was an alternative method for this thesis. Nevertheless, time plays a determining factor for the development and establishment of relationships with local communities. Ethnographic research designs involve a more signifying contact with the researcher and the participants within a specific group, and data collection often involves participant observation and conducting interviews (Creswell, 2014, p. 14). Given the

direct involvement of the researcher within the community that ethnographic research requires, the employment of this method was not possible due to the limitations of time; nevertheless, interviews constitute ethnographically-informed fieldwork. Having stressed reasons of time and community integration, I decided to employ a case study qualitative research design as my research method to meet with the timeline of this research study.

Procedures

After deciding on the research methods and design, the next step I took was to create a list of environmental organizations and social organizations in the Treasure Valley – all non-profit and community-based – that could potentially deal with environmental concerns and social issues. Currently, the State of Idaho does not count with a large number of environmental organizations – there are approximately twenty-four registered environmental organizations in Idaho. A great portion of the non-profit sector in Idaho constitutes religious and spiritual related organizations that make up about 22.8 percent of non-profit jobs in the state. In regard to social organizations, the Treasure Valley has a considerable amount of community-based organizations, which are mostly located in Boise, the capital of Idaho. Despite the large presence of Latinos in the Treasure Valley, very few organizations focus their work on the Latino community in Idaho. The list below shows the names of organizations across the valley that I identified as potential participants for this research.

- Boise Valley Habitat for Humanity
- Centro de Comunidad y Justicia (Center for Community and Justice)
- Community Council of Idaho
- Golden Eagle Audubon Society

- Hispanic Cultural Center of Idaho
- Idaho Community Action Network
- Idaho Community Foundation
- Idaho Conversation League
- Idaho Office for Refugees
- Idaho Rivers United
- Sierra Club
- United Vision of Idaho

Next, I created a comparison chart from the list and organize these organizations accordingly to the interests of this research (e.g. environmental justice, Latino affairs). Table 1 illustrates which organizations address or at least recognize environmental justice issues and which organizations focus on Latino communities. The organizations that I marked with a question mark under the categorization of ‘Address EJ issues’ means that there is no information known that establishes the existence of environmental justice projects, campaigns, or action plans. Under the category ‘interested in Latino communities’ the question mark does not mean that such organizations do not serve the Latino community, rather indicates that there are not known programs or services targeting Latino communities. Among the listed organizations, four of them gained my attention: Centro de Comunidad y Justicia, Community Council of Idaho, Idaho Conservation League, and Sierra Club due to their focus on community outreach and addressing environmental and social justice issues.

Organization name	Address EJ issues	Interested in Latino communities
Boise Valley Habitat for Humanity	?	?
Centro de Comunidad y Justicia	?	Yes
Community Council of Idaho	?	Yes
Golden Eagle Audubon Society	?	?
Hispanic Cultural Center of Idaho	?	Yes
Idaho Community Action Network	?	?
Idaho Community Foundation	?	?
Idaho Conservation League	?	?
Idaho Office for Refugees	?	?
Idaho Rivers United	?	?
Sierra Club	Yes	?
United Vision of Idaho	?	?

Table 1: Social and environmental organizations in Idaho that recognize or address environmental justice issues.

Interviews

After identifying the organizations that could potentially participate in this study, I proceed to contact such organizations to conduct interviews. I contacted some staff members of the organizations above via e-mail, phone and in person. However, only two of the listed organizations showed their interest in participating in the study. The two organizations that granted me their verbal and written consent to conduct an in-person interview were: Idaho Conservation League and Centro de Comunidad y Justicia (Center for Community and Justice). Before I began reaching out to the organizations listed above, I expected that some of these organizations would turn down the invitation to participate in this study. However, the overall participation rate was lower than I expected. To this date, no other organization has

agreed to participate in this research study, except for the Centro de Comunidad y Justicia and the Idaho Conservation League which both kindly accepted the invitation and were very open to answer all the questions I asked.

Prior to conducting the interviews, I expected that speaking with individuals whose native language was Spanish could create some linguistic biases that could affect my neutrality and objectivity in analyzing their responses. Despite there were moments where one of the participants spoke in Spanish to share some personal experiences, this did not affect the flow of the conversation as those lived experiences served as example of environmental justice issues. My concern in conducting interviews with Spanish speakers relied more on the possibilities for those conversations to take an unexpected direction, such as an upsetting personal experience or unrelated information that could confuse the answer of the participant. But this was not the case.

Organizations

Idaho Conservation League

The Idaho Conservation League is an environmental non-profit organization with headquarters in Boise, Idaho. Its mission is to protect Idaho's water, air and public lands⁵. I interviewed Austin Walkins, Senior Conservation Associate at the ICL (Idaho Conservation League). During my conversation with Austin Walkins, he briefly shared the history of the ICL, its mission, and what is his role within the organization:

...we are the oldest state-based conservation organization and our mission has always been three critical things, protect clean air, clean water and public lands throughout the state of Idaho. So, that's the broad mission. I particularly focus on the first two things: clean air and clean water. So, I do a lot of policy development, regulatory oversight, making sure that the rules

⁵ See the Idaho Conservation League's website: <https://www.idahoconservation.org/about/mission-and-vision/>

are putting in place to protect human health, wildlife, species, they are sufficient and protective enough on the air and water quality front...⁶

Walkins has a strong background in science, he has a B.S and M.S in Geology. Therefore, I considered that his thoughts greatly benefited this research in terms of exploring the environmental issues that Latino communities are facing in Idaho, specifically in the Treasure Valley.

Centro de Comunidad y Justicia (Center for Community and Justice)

The Centro de Comunidad y Justicia is a community-based non-profit organization focused on serving the Latino communities across Idaho. The mission of Centro de Comunidad y Justicia is to serve low-income Latino families and immigrant families in need of health, education, and affordable family-based immigration services⁷. I interviewed the Executive Director of this organization, Sam Byrd who provided me with more details about the organization's mission:

... Centro de Comunidad y Justicia works essentially to address the health and education, and also other social needs that exist within the Latino community in Idaho. Basically, we focus on education, we also do some immigration. As a community-based organization, we respond to the needs of the community, we reflect of what the community really needs, and although immigration was not on our screen as justice issue, it is a justice issue, and so, part of...parte de nuestro nombre es justicia, esto es la parte de justicia [part of our name is justice, this is the part of justice]...⁸

⁶ Austin Walkins (2019), Senior Conservation Associate at the Idaho Conservation League, in conversation with the author, (March, 11) Boise, Idaho, United States.

⁷ See Centro de Comunidad y Justicia's website: <https://comunidadyjusticiaidaho.org/>

⁸ Sam Byrd (2019), Executive Director at Centro de Comunidad y Justicia, in conversation with the author, (March, 15) Boise, Idaho, United States.

In conversation with Byrd, he provided information about his cultural background. He is of Hispanic-Latino origin, bilingual and grew up working in the fields, as he stressed:

... I came through the fields in Nissa (a town in Idaho), in Idaho, in Arizona, in Oregon, in California, that's how I grew up ...⁹

Considering that this thesis focused to explore environmental justice issues in Latino communities, I found Byrd's cultural and occupational background very important to not only analyze the environmental issues that environmental organizations have identified, such as the ICL, but also the social justice issues that the Latino community in the Treasure Valley are experiencing.

Interview Questions

The next step consisted of conducting the interviews to the responding organizations. The interviews entailed to answer a set of ten questions, in Table 2 below. The first questions aim to provide a general information about the organizations. Questions 3 and 4 explore how such organizations understand environmental justice and whether their work identify or address environmental justice issues in their community, specifically within the Latino community. Question 5 explores how relevant environmental justice issues are to them, which responds my central research question. Questions 6, 7 and 8 address specific topics such as racism and community work within the Latino community. The last questions serve as supplement to the previous questions.

⁹ Sam Byrd (2019), Executive Director at Centro de Comunidad y Justicia, in conversation with the author, (March, 15) Boise, Idaho, United States.

Interview Questions

1. Could you briefly describe your organization's mission and vision and your role in the organization?
2. Does your organization provide any type of community engagement? If so, please elaborate.
3. Does your organization work with environmental justice? If so, how does your organization understand environmental justice? If no, why not?
4. Speaking of Environmental Justice, has your organization ever been aware of any environmental justice issues in the Treasure Valley? If so, did such issues specifically target or affect Latino communities?
5. Based on the principles and objectives of your organization, are environmental justice issues relevant to your organization? If yes, why? If no, why not?
6. Following the discussion on Environmental Justice, does your organization - create and develop educational programs, social campaigns, community-based projects or any other initiatives that identify and address environmental justice issues in minority groups, especially Hispanic-Latino communities?
7. Does your organization believe that Environmental Racism is occurring within the Treasure Valley region? If so, what issues has your organization identified and what alternatives or measures has the organization employed to cope with it?
8. Could you tell me about some of the challenges that you as a (Title/ Position) had to face in dealing with environmental concerns and more specifically with Environmental Justice issues in minority groups?
9. In relation to the previous question, what contribution has your organization done to help the community cope with the challenges that your organization has identified? Please mention how successfully your organization has coped with such challenges e.g. has your organization been recognized or awarded by the community for their services?
10. What do you think your organization should add or provide to engage other organizations or the community towards more awareness of Environmental Justice issues, specifically addressing Latino communities in the Treasure Valley?

Table 2: Semi-structured interview questions.

CHAPTER V: UNDERSTANDING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN THE TREASURE VALLEY IN IDAHO

Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the key results of the interviews with the two organizations that granted their consent in participating in this research study: Centro de Comunidad y Justicia (Center for Community and Justice) and Idaho Conservation League. The responses of the participants aimed to answer my research question: are environmental justice issues relevant to environmental and social organizations in the Treasure Valley? Based on the answers, I discovered that while environmental justice issues, specifically in Latino communities, are relevant to these organizations, certain challenges limit their work in addressing environmental justice issues. This chapter is divided into four subsections. The first subsection discusses the responses of both organizations in terms of how they understood environmental justice and which environmental justice issues they identified in Latino communities. The second subsection discusses the environmental issues identified across the Treasure Valley in more detail, while the third subsection discusses the social justice issues that Latino communities are facing, and, finally, the fourth subsection discusses the relevance of environmental justice issues to these organizations. In this last subsection, I also discuss that funding, research and community awareness are some of the challenges and limitations of these organizations in addressing environmental justice.

Defining Environmental Justice

The term environmental justice is relatively new to academia and policy. As I previously discussed, the dominant literature on environmental justice has understood environmental justice in terms of social mobilizing which brought concerns of race and class to the mainstream

environmentalism. The tendency for scholars has been to study environmental justice as a social movement, therefore, important attention is given to the analysis of environmental justice mobilizing through framing processes and paradigms. In the context of exploring environmental justice issues in Latino communities in the Treasure Valley, I expected to find some policy-based conceptions on environmental justice. However, I discovered that the organizations interviewed differed in their understanding of EJ.

The definition of environmental justice for each organization reflected their different approaches in understanding environmental justice. Considering the ICL (Idaho Conservation League) is an environmental organization, I expected that their approach would be more attached to environmental principles and policies. In regard to Centro de Comunidad y Justicia, I also expected to find the same conception and understanding of environmental justice as this organization focuses on addressing health issues. However, I discovered that for Centro de Comunidad y Justicia, environmental justice is seen as an occupational related issue. This reinforces what I discussed in the literature chapter where I stressed that environmental justice offers a wide array of definitions due to its multiplicity in terms of justice, fairness and equity.

From the perspective of environmental organizations, the ICL embraced a policy-oriented definition of environmental justice. Austin Walkins, Senior Conservation Associate at the ICL conceived environmental justice as a basic human right that should be given to everyone regardless of their background.

... I think that what we see as environmental justice is...what we see is... access to clean, safe, beautiful environment is a basic human right. No one should have to breathe the air and be concerned about their health, no one should have to drink water and be like: is this going to make sick? If you and your family go out and catch a fish and eat that fish, you shouldn't be concerned of mercury levels and that's regardless your background ...whether you are a hunter, just a recreationist, you shouldn't be concerned

about the environmental conditions... the basic human right is to be able to enjoy the environment is how we see it ...¹⁰

Based on this perspective, environmental justice is understood as a policy principle as he specifically stated that environmental justice is a basic human right. Looking back on the literature on environmental justice, I could not find a specific definition that incorporated Human Rights principles. Nevertheless, Beder in *Environmental Principles and Policies* stresses that after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, environmental concerns became more relevant to the international community forcing them to include environmental rights as Human Rights principle (Beder, 2013, p. 5). Considering that environmental concerns have become relevant to policymakers to the extent of producing legislature, such as the Water Clean Act. Environmental justice is more visible as environmental policy than as a Human Rights principle in the literature.

Continuing analyzing Walkins's thoughts on EJ, the EPA's definition on environmental justice discussed in chapter III matches with Walkins' understanding of environmental justice in terms of inclusiveness, as he stressed no one should bear with unhealthy environmental conditions regardless of their background. Walkins continued by adding the importance of considering some consumption patterns (e.g. diet, food restrictions, etc.) of certain populations when it comes to the analysis of environmental justice issues, as he stresses:

...So, the environmental justice component in certain populations, if your culture says eats more fish, then pollution of our water ways is significantly impacting you... and your culture and we are seeing this especially when we deem what is safe for polluting levels...So, some cultures may eat more fish, but if we are not setting, if we are not using their consumption rates in

¹⁰ Austin Walkins (2019), Senior Conservation Associate at the Idaho Conservation League, in conversation with the author, (March, 11) Boise, Idaho, United States.

that equation, they may not be as protected as others... we do not think that's fair and we see that as an environmental justice issue...¹¹

The cultural component that Walkins added to his definition on environmental justice links normative-based conceptions in understanding environmental justice. Back in chapter III, Bryant's definition on EJ provided the incorporation of cultural norms, values, behaviors and decisions to support sustainable communities. Analyzing Walkins's thoughts and taking into account cultural norms and values, dietary norms are part of some culture's traditions. Walkins example of fish consumption is fundamental to understand how environmental issues can impact people's cultures and traditions. Returning to the literature, the concept of Environmental Justice Paradigm can be applied to Walkins's understanding of environmental justice. Walkins's understanding of EJ is an example of how the EJP accommodates social components, such as cultural values and traditions, to the environmental justice discourse. Paradigms, as well as frames, enable individuals to build thoughts and ideas from their relationship with the environment. In this context, Walkin's conception of EJ is attached to his background and practice as senior staff of an environmental organization.

On the other hand, from the perspective of social organizations, Centro de Comunidad y Justicia (Center for Community and Justicia) understands EJ as a social issue. Its executive director, Sam Byrd, related the experiences he lived first-hand as a farm worker with environmental justice issues. Byrd mentioned two occupational issues that he considered as part of the idea of EJ. The first issue involves the poor conditions that he faced as a Latino farm worker (e.g. the lack of bathrooms in the workplace) and the second concern was his exposure to hazardous pesticides.

¹¹ Austin Walkins (2019), Senior Conservation Associate at the Idaho Conservation League, in conversation with the author, (March, 11) Boise, Idaho, United States.

Returning to the concept of ‘framing’, the occupational issues are an example how the scope of EJF has evolved. It was previously mentioned that the Environmental Justice Frame has incorporated new elements into the umbrella of environmental justice thought, one of these concerns occupational hazards exposure, for example pesticides. The concept of ‘framing’ as it was discussed refers to the different ways in which we can make sense of what happens in the world around us. In this context, the two interviewees interpret or ‘frame’ EJ issues differently as both have different backgrounds and experiences. Framing processes constitute ways in which individuals can trace interpretations about their relationship with the environment. The result of these framing processes is the development of ideas that ultimately give shape to a line of thought or discourse, in this case, the concept of EJ.

... I remember that when I worked for a farmer association here in Idaho we’re dealing with issues in the fields and specifically, I remember many advocacies helped us to provide bathrooms in the field. They didn’t exist and so, the idea [of environmental justice] is that and the other one is pesticides, that is the first kind of environmental justice issues that came on the radar... people would come early and literally *envenaban a la gente* (poisoned the people) in the South West, where people, farmers come in the spring and in many cases we are not hearing that these farmers are out there being sprayed on or they are coming into the fields too soon after having sprayed on (the fields). But we see it all the time, people working in the field over here...¹²

The links between environmental justice and occupational issues that Byrd provided is a clear example of how his interpretation of EJ is shaped through the experiences that he had as a farm worker. As I explained above, the concept of ‘framing’ enables flexible patterns of analysis to understand why his conception of EJ differs from Walkins’s definition of EJ. Moreover, Byrd’s interpretation of EJ issues is tightly connected with Laura Pulido’s work in *Environmentalism and*

¹² Sam Byrd (2019), Executive Director at Centro de Comunidad y Justicia, in conversation with the author, (March, 15) Boise, Idaho, United States.

Economic Justice. Pulido noted that pesticides have been a central environmental issue to mainstream environmentalism but for Latino farm workers pesticides constitute a health concern with an environmental component (Pulido, pg. 58). Given Byrd's occupational and cultural background, there is a clear linkage between hazardous environmental exposure and Latino farm workers. Analyzing Byrd's thoughts on environmental justice I found his argument about the working conditions of farm workers very compelling due to the presence of Latino farm activism within the EJ literature. For instance, Pulido (1996, p. xiv) stressed the several campaigns organized by Latino farm workers in the late 60's and early 70's that constituted a mobilizing force to help the Latino community improve their social, economic and environmental conditions in their workplace.

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, Byrd's experience growing up as a migrant worker and Walkins's expertise in exploring environmental issues were important to understand their conceptions on EJ. Their differences in thinking of environmental justice may be linked to their own personal socio-cultural backgrounds. Looking back into the literature, the concept of EJ entails the understanding of multiple definitions of justice, and therefore, it is arbitrary to judge what idea of EJ should be practiced and adopted in grassroots organizations, in policy and in academia. Drawing from the responses of both organization members, their idea of EJ is related to their occupational area and lived experiences, and both thoughts are valid. Certainly, from the environmental organization perspective, concerns on natural resources conservation and protection (e.g air, water and land) are extremely important. But, from the point of view of a community-based organization, the idea of EJ is closely linked to social justice issues, such as the working conditions of employees, and their health issues. Nevertheless, I found a common ground from both organization's perspectives of EJ and it corresponds to the link between environmental issues

(e.g. air quality and water quality issues) with people's life quality especially within the Latino community as I discuss below. Having stressed the perspectives of these organizations in terms of understanding environmental justice, I turn now to discuss the environmental justice issues that such organizations have identified and/or are aware of.

Environmental issues in the Latino community: Air & Water Quality issues

Prior to conducting the interviews, I anticipated to find that environmental justice issues exist in the Treasure Valley of Idaho, especially within Latino communities. Based on the early cases of environmental justice – specifically Capek (1993) and Snow & Benford (2005), who identified disproportionate exposures of communities of color to toxic waste and air pollution – I assumed that some of these environmental justice issues in the Treasure Valley would be connected to air and water quality due to the proximity of Latino populations to factories and major state highways. However, I discovered a series of additional and related more specifically the issues that came up were – wildfire smoke, housing conditions and groundwater contamination, which situate Latino communities in disadvantage in comparison to most of the population of the Treasure Valley, largely represented by white of Caucasian origin, according to the US Census Bureau¹³.

When I asked both organizations if they have ever been aware of any environmental justice issues in this region, they both answered 'yes' and they emphasized two issues: air and water quality. This proves that my assumption of air quality issues was true but also provided me a better picture of the situation for Latino communities in the Treasure Valley regarding these

¹³ See Idaho Demographics: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/id>

environmental issues. For instance, Walkins associated the presence of minority groups – such as Latino communities – in areas where air contamination is higher than in others, as he stressed:

...we are seeing a lot with air quality issues and this is the Treasure Valley, where we see the highest Latino populations. We also see ... there is an association with lower incomes and so there is usually socio-economic statuses in those places. We see a lot of industrial development or their closer proximity to major highways... and so are not only those communities exposed to more air pollution or air pollution at higher levels than other communities that live far further from those. So, that itself, it is an environmental justice issue...¹⁴

The proximity of low-income populations to roads with high traffic concentration – such as interstates – is an environmental justice issue that has been discussed in the EJ literature (Agyerman et al., 2016, p. 324; Rosenbaum, 2017, p. 147; Walker, 2012, p. 2). Looking back into the history of environmental justice, the social, economic and racial disparities between environmental hazard exposures in disadvantaged groups has been the leading trend within the study of EJ. In the context of the Latino community in the Treasure Valley, their high exposure to environmental hazards seem to follow this trend. Some studies have corroborated the disproportionate burden faced by minority groups. For instance, Gochfeld, M., & Burger, J. (2011, p. 53) demonstrated that minority and low-income populations have a higher risk of developing health issues from the disproportionate exposure to environmental risk factors (e.g. air pollution, water contamination, noise).

Continuing this line of thought, Byrd stressed his concerns about the exposure of the Latino population to air pollution and its relation to health issues. He identified a clear relationship between the living conditions of Latino communities and the disproportionate

¹⁴ Austin Walkins (2019), Senior Conservation Associate at the Idaho Conservation League, in conversation with the author, (March, 11) Boise, Idaho, United States.

environmental effects that these communities face. Byrd conceived the existing environmental issues of Latino communities mainly as a justice issue; however, he believed that these poor living conditions were associated with environmental issues that largely affect vulnerable communities.

... In the context of health, community health, you can't ignore it, you can't ignore the connections between certain conditions, health conditions that Latinx communities in Idaho which I believe environmental issues, you know, there is no justice because if you take a look of housing quality, water quality, you take a look of houses [homes]that are being built in places where are environmental contaminated, you know, that's where the Latino community lives....¹⁵

Byrd did not make clear in the interview which places he believed were built on contaminated land and I could not find any information about this online. Another issue identified by one of the organizations in regard to air quality targets Latino communities, specifically Latino farm workers. Walkins stressed that many agricultural workers are of Hispanic-Latino origin and they are more exposed to hazardous environmental conditions such as wildfire smoke exposure during the summer months.

...Many farm workers, agricultural workers have Latino heritage and in the summer months when we have some of the worst air quality from all the wildfire smoke not only in Idaho but throughout the west. A lot of times people are working through that and you know there is no option to get out of that... I mean farms are outside, so again, that's impacting their health and they are breathing that smoke when others are able to do more jobs indoors or maybe take a couple of days off during the worst air quality periods ...¹⁶

The exposure of farm workers to air quality issues, such as wildfire smoke was something that I did not consider to be included as environmental justice issue. However, I later

¹⁵Sam Byrd (2019), Executive Director at Centro de Comunidad y Justicia, in conversation with the author, (March, 15) Boise, Idaho, United States.

¹⁶ Austin Walkins (2019), Senior Conservation Associate at the Idaho Conservation League, in conversation with the author, (March, 11) Boise, Idaho, United States.

realized that agricultural workers mainly work outside and their exposure to environmental hazards such as pesticides, irrigation and weather conditions are greater than in comparison to other occupational jobs.

Air quality being a major environmental justice issue for Latino communities. In this regard, I learned that the ICL has developed a project that consists of monitoring the air quality of the Treasure Valley, where there is a high concentration of Latino populations. Walkins emphasized that the importance of this project does not only rely on monitoring the air but also in engaging the community to participate in this matter, as he stressed:

... we're trying to get this low-cost air monitors, and we are trying to deploy those to various locations throughout south western Idaho and not just install them but have the community members install them and kind of manage them. Basically, we are trying to run the back end on the program but have them take a lot of the ownership and the goal is once we get few monitors installed, they'll know their community...¹⁷

Community engagement is essential to create awareness of environmental issues that communities such as the Latino community in the Treasure Valley face. Walkins's point about engaging the community to participate in environmental projects led me to Byrd's response about a project in the city of Nampa in the Treasure Valley that specifically addressed water quality issues. He mentioned that he was aware of someone who worked for the city of Nampa regarding water issues. However, he did not mention what project or what the work was specifically.

... I do know that some cities, the city of Nampa have been specifically because I know a Mexicana woman who used to work there and she has done things specific to water issues in Nampa and I think there is a couple of related issues that really was trying to get attention to get policymakers,

¹⁷ Austin Walkins (2019), Senior Conservation Associate at the Idaho Conservation League, in conversation with the author, (March, 11) Boise, Idaho, United States.

city folks, to pay really attention and these are generally speaking low income area. I would say 50% or maybe in some cases 80% Latino....¹⁸

Prior to conducting the interviews, I conducted preliminary research online, exploring websites from federal and state agencies about programs related to address environmental justice issues and I found only one that specifically targeted Latino communities in the Treasure Valley. In 2011, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) provided funding to the city of Nampa to develop a stormwater program. The project aimed to reached out to the Latino community and engage them to participate in providing alternatives to reduce the pollution in water bodies. Back to Byrd's response, I believe that this was the program that he referred to, as it aimed to engage the Latino community in the city of Nampa. Intrigued with this finding, I searched on the EPA's website for more information about it, and I could not locate any further details except for a brief description of the project.¹⁹ However, I continued my search and eventually found more information about the planning and community outreach of the project on the Urban Water Learning Network website, which is funded by the EPA Office of Water²⁰. To this date, I could not find any more details about the outcomes of this project beyond what is already accessible to the public. Considering that the EPA has provided funding to reach out to the Latino community and engage their participation in water issues, I think this is a milestone toward the relevance of environmental justice issues in Latino communities in the Treasure Valley. Nevertheless, it is not clear how successful the stormwater program has been due the lack of information found.

¹⁸Sam Byrd (2019), Executive Director at Centro de Comunidad y Justicia, in conversation with the author, (March, 15) Boise, Idaho, United States. .

¹⁹ See EPA's website about Nampa: <https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/making-visible-difference-communities-idaho>

²⁰ See Urban Waters Network on Nampa stormwater project: <http://www.urbanwaterslearningnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/EPA-Nampa-Urban-Waters-Fact-Sheet-Jan-2014.pdf>

Continuing with water-related issues, Walkins mentioned that groundwater contamination is another environmental issue that is largely affecting low-income populations. He explained that during the summer, some water bodies form toxic algae, and some people go to these places without knowing the harm these waters can cause. He pointed out the need of state and federal environmental agencies to post notices in Spanish, so people could be aware of the toxicity of these waters.

... We've been encouraging different entities whether is state or federal environmental agencies to do more with posting notices in Spanish ... We have these water bodies or lakes that are very warm and get this really nutrient rich, water that flows into them and it is just the perfect conditions for toxic algae to form, and so, sometimes people would go up and post notices on facebook but a lot of times the warnings are only in English...²¹

The limited English skills of some Latinos may not be seen as an environmental justice issue but, in circumstances where there is a presence of a hazard, language becomes an important aspect and tool of environmental justice. The availability of information in other languages is a pivotal tool regarding risk management. Thinking of potential risks and dangers from the exposure to toxic waters, I remembered my experience working as trainer in hazardous chemicals. I had the opportunity to teach hospitality workers of Hispanic-Latino origin the OSHA's hazard communication program, which aims to ensure that workers know how to identify hazardous chemicals in their workplace. During my job, one of the aspects that caught my attention was the lack of bilingual postings, where in some cases employees were unaware of the existence of a hazard.

²¹ Austin Walkins (2019), Senior Conservation Associate at the Idaho Conservation League, in conservation with the author, (March, 11) Boise, Idaho, United States.

Overall, based on both organizations' responses the identification of environmental issues targeting Latino communities were more complex than I thought they would be. As I mentioned earlier, my expectation was to find one or two major environmental issues. However, after conducting the interviews my understanding of environmental justice issues in Latino communities has expanded to give more room to other issues that are directly and indirectly related to environmental issues. Next, I will discuss which were some issues in terms of social justice that have an environmental component attached to them.

Social justice issues in the Latino community: Immigration, Education and Health issues

In previous chapters, I stressed the significance of Latinos within the workforce in Idaho, especially in the agricultural sector. The State of Idaho is known for its large production of potatoes, onions, alfalfa and other crops and, therefore, there is always a great demand of agricultural and seasonal farm workers. According to government data, Latino farm workers make up 32.4 percent of the entire number of farmworkers in Idaho. However, there is a determining factor that should be considered when it comes to exploring environmental justice, which is the immigration status of Latino farmworkers. A study conducted by the Pew Research Center demonstrated that 3.1 percent of the workers in Idaho are undocumented – 79 percent of them are Mexican immigrants – and also showed that agriculture is the occupation with the most unauthorized immigrant workers.²² Considering the importance of Latinos in the workforce in Idaho, specifically in the agriculture sector, the immigration component plays a determining factor

²² U.S. unauthorized immigrant population estimates by state, 2016 (2019). Pew Research Center. Hispanic Trends. See: <https://www.pewhispanic.org/interactives/u-s-unauthorized-immigrants-by-state/>

in shaping not only the lives of migrant workers but also how federal, state and non-profit organizations address the needs of migrant workers in terms of environmental justice issues.

In my conversation with Sam Byrd, he recalled how immigration topics became a major concern to Centro de Comunidad y Justicia. Byrd stressed that immigration issues came on their radar in one of their outreach activities in schools across the Treasure Valley, as he noted:

... Y un padre que esta en el board viene y me dice: ¿es que me están preguntando por que no ofrecemos servicios de inmigración? [So, a father that was present at the board meeting came to me and said: they are asking me (other parents) why aren't we offering immigration services? So, it went on my report and then he came back and he said: 'But don't you think if we a community-based organization and we want to respond to the needs of the community and the community asks us to do something, don't you think we should? And that's how we got involved...'²³

The interest of the Latino community regarding immigration services corresponded to the high percentage of Latino agricultural/seasonal workers and their children who also work in the fields. It is important to note while in the United States has Child Labor Laws that apply to young workers in agriculture, children over 12 years old can legally conduct any agricultural job.²⁴ Therefore, many migrant children of Latino origin work in farms throughout the year, which affects in some cases their academic performance due to continuous moves not only within the national border but also internationally. The laws restrict the working hours of young agricultural workers; but reality shows us that many of migrant children move during the school year with their parents due to economic necessity. Analyzing how the immigration status affects Latino populations in the Treasure Valley, my work as Migrant Liaison at a school has helped me to reflect these issues as I directly deal with migrant students and parents.

²³Sam Byrd (2019), Executive Director at Centro de Comunidad y Justicia, in conversation with the author, (March, 15) Boise, Idaho, United States.

²⁴ See OSHA regulations regarding child labor. <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/youth/agriculture/other.html>

During my job, I noticed that many migrant families who have seasonal jobs move several times thought the year, which forces them to live temporarily in trailer parks or share a house with other families. Considering the existence of socio-economic constraints in Latino communities, especially within migrant undocumented farm workers, Byrd stressed that the combination of other factors as labor and education situate Latino communities in disadvantage in terms of health. As Byrd stressed, the socio-economic conditions of Latino populations along with immigration status make these communities vulnerable and willing to accept and to live in deplorable conditions that might compromise their well-being. Thinking on a broader sense, all these factors are related to environmental health:

... All the factors that contribute to low income, being undocumented, low educated, working on jobs that don't pay much and don't provide much of insurance, etc. So, I believe that because our families are forced to live, and work in conditions that environmental unfriendly or are quite harmful to them...²⁵

Considering the socio-economic, race, cultural background and language barriers, Latino communities are exposed to increased chances of developing health issues. Byrd pointed out that a research study funded by the National Institute of Health and conducted by the Idaho Partnership for Hispanic Health – where Centro de Comunidad y Justicia participated – found health disparities within Latino populations in South Western Idaho.²⁶ Byrd stressed that despite the compelling evidence from this research study, the living conditions of Latino communities have not improved, in contrast, they have worsened. Byrd did not specifically mention what environmental health conditions he identified; however, I think these issues are tied with water-related issues.

²⁵Sam Byrd (2019), Executive Director at Centro de Comunidad y Justicia, in conversation with the author, (March, 15) Boise, Idaho, United States.

²⁶ The research study was published as a report. Hispanic Health Disparities in SW Idaho (2007) See https://icha.idaho.gov/docs/IPHH_Legislative_Report.pdf

... we were the community-based organization to run a project funded by the National Institute of Health and we knocked on doors, Ada, Payette, Canyon county... We were invited to the homes, we knocked on doors, and after being in three hours, you realize the existence of environmental health conditions. The conditions in which they live have not changed for twenty, thirty years. In fact, I think they are worse compared to where they should be. ...²⁷

Even though the research study conducted by the Idaho Partnership for Hispanic Health does not show the correlation of health issues with environmental justice issues, there is an environmental component that does not help the situation rather it extends the gap between Latino communities and other communities. For instance, diabetes is associated with the lack of accessibility to healthy food within Latino communities, as Byrd stressed:

...Along the freeway, cuando pasas en Caldwell, en cada lado del freeway eso es pura raza, ya no es comida corriente son pura comida mala porque eso es una combinación de cosas, las viviendas horrible, [when you drive through Caldwell, on each side of the interstate, it is just Latino communities there is no proper food it is all unhealthy food, it is a combination of things, terrible housing conditions] ...it is a crime! Es un crimen! It is an environmental crime, that really hasn't seen and doesn't even know justice ...²⁸

Drawing from Byrd's comments, there is a particular attention to the nutrition conditions of Latino populations. Food justice is also a trend that has recently emerged within the environmental justice literature along with climate justice. For instance, Agyeman et al. (2016) argued that the emerging themes in environmental justice respond to the urban development of the contemporary world. The vast and rapid urban development has enabled the creation of jobs leading people to move to urban populated areas where they can easily commute to their jobs. Given the increasing urban population, the spaces to grow food have become scarcer. Food justice

²⁷Sam Byrd (2019), Executive Director at Centro de Comunidad y Justicia, in conversation with the author, (March, 15) Boise, Idaho, United States.

²⁸Sam Byrd (2019), Executive Director at Centro de Comunidad y Justicia, in conversation with the author, (March, 15) Boise, Idaho, United States.

has become, along with other emerging themes such as climate justice, a major focus within justice themes (Agyeman et al., 2016, pg. 331). On the other hand, Byrd mentioned about the housing conditions that some Latino communities live in. He later at the end of the interview provided further details about what he meant by “terrible” housing conditions, as he noted:

... the city of Nampa has done some work, in northern of Nampa where there is a high concentration of Latinos...they [the city of Nampa employees] looked at environmental health connections, lead base paints specifically ...²⁹

It was not clear whether what the study found concerning the housing conditions of Latinos living in the city of Nampa, and Byrd did not mention other examples other than lead base paint. Given the health and economic disparities among Latino communities, Byrd believed the necessity to raise awareness within the youth Latino populations. He mentioned about an environmental educational project called ‘*Raices*’ which aimed to teach the Latino youth about the social, economic and political factors that affects their health and well-being. Byrd handed me a copy of the Raices Environmental Education Project and showed pictures of the activities that students made for the project. This is a promising project that could greatly benefit migrant students due to its focus on advocacy and community engagement. Unfortunately, they were unable to continue with the project as the school semester finished and they ran out of funds:

...The project ‘raices’ ... there were fifteen students, three or four of the participants developed a community garden system and then they got all the plants donated, they planted everything and then what they did was they donated that food and then they were trying to give awareness to the community ...³⁰

²⁹Sam Byrd (2019), Executive Director at Centro de Comunidad y Justicia, in conversation with the author, (March, 15) Boise, Idaho, United States.

³⁰Sam Byrd (2019), Executive Director at Centro de Comunidad y Justicia, in conversation with the author, (March, 15) Boise, Idaho, United States.

In the next subsection, I discuss whether the environmental justice issues identified by these organizations are relevant or not.

The Relevance of Environmental Justice issues

Overall, both organizations have a clear understanding about what environmental justice entails and about the issues that Latino communities are experiencing in terms of environmental justice. Based on their responses, I consider that both organizations are aware of some environmental issues (e.g. air quality, water quality and pesticides) that largely affect Latino communities. Nevertheless, I wanted to explore more to find out whether these environmental justice issues are relevant or not to these organizations. I expected to find that environmental justice issues in Latino communities are not relevant to environmental organizations and social organizations in the Treasure Valley due to the lack of research and community awareness in terms of environmental justice. Even though both organizations are more recognized for their community service, I discovered that environmental justice issues are relevant to these organizations.

I asked both respondents if environmental justice issues are relevant to their organizations and their answer was 'yes'. Considering the focus of mainstream environmentalism on protection, preservation and conservation of wildlife, natural resources and public lands, I expected that this focus would be a determining factor for environmental organizations, such the Idaho Conservation League, to address environmental justice issues. I discovered that the ICL is providing room to the needs of minorities in terms of environmental justice through, for example, the development of projects that engage the community to measure the air quality levels. Exploring the central research question, I also noted how important climate justice has

become for this organization. Concerning this theme, Walkins made an interesting remark on how climate change is acting as an equalizer as everyone is being impacted by the consequences of climate change (e.g. wildfires, floods, etc.).

...just climate change is in a sense a great equalizer because is going to affect everyone, but at the same time we still see disproportionate effects. I mentioned about the wildfires on agricultural workers, they are baring more of the burnt-outs than others are and so, we are working on climate change issues and lessening Idaho's contribution to climate change., simultaneously we need to make sure that we are doing everything we can to protect all people from the effects of climate change...³¹

Looking back into the literature, I mentioned how climate justice has recently being included within the scope of environmental justice. The early environmental justice mobilizing brought concerns on race and class into the mainstream environmentalism, now climate change has been incorporated within the environmental justice discourse. The concept of 'framing' helps us to understand how climate justice has been incorporated into environmental justice thought. The impacts of climate change have become more notorious throughout the last decades, forcing the international community to evaluate and rethink the current environmental legislation. The Paris Agreement (2016) is an example of how framing processes act on a larger scale. In the context of environmental justice in the Treasure Valley, climate justice has become a great focus for environmental organizations in terms of environmental justice. Thinking on a broader sense, the effects of climate change will affect everyone, but within low-income populations – including Latino communities –there will be disproportionate effects as Walkins stressed.

³¹ Austin Walkins (2019), Senior Conservation Associate at the Idaho Conservation League, in conservation with the author, (March, 11) Boise, Idaho, United States.

In relation to this question, for Centro de Comunidad y Justicia, environmental justice issues are relevant due to the focus of this organization in serving the Latino community. Byrd stressed:

...Yes [it is relevant], because the people of the communities we serve are directly impacted by environmental issues, you know, that require a lot of justice work to be done. We wanted to deal with the issue of equity and health, specifically around environmental health, when we say health we think more, you know not so much environmental, but if you truly want to respond to the needs of the community and if you are really doing that work, you know that this is an issue and you'll know that is not being addressed...³²

The effects of environmental justice issues on the health and well-being of Latino populations is a significant topic for this organization. Therefore, their participation in funded programs – e.g. the Idaho Partnership for Hispanic Health research study and the ‘*Raices*’ project – demonstrate their interest not only in identifying EJ issues but also in looking for ways to attend such issues.

Despite the great efforts of both organizations in attending the environmental and social justice issues that they have identified in the Latino communities, there are some challenges they have to face in their attempt to reduce the disproportionate exposure of the Latino communities to environmental hazards. I turn to these below.

Challenges to addressing EJ issues in Latino communities: Funding, Research and Community Awareness

Drawing from the participant’s responses on environmental justice issues in Latino communities, I conclude that there is still a lot of work to be done to determine to what extent

³² Sam Byrd (2019), Executive Director at Centro de Comunidad y Justicia, in conversation with the author, (March, 15) Boise, Idaho, United States.

these environmental issues are affecting the Latino communities in the Treasure Valley. The problem does not seem to be identifying environmental justice issues rather addressing them. Analyzing the interview responses, I identified two major challenges that both organizations have in attending environmental justice issues, specifically in Latino communities which are: funding, research and community awareness.

When I started this research, I was surprised by the lack of publications and projects around environmental justice in Latino communities in the Treasure Valley. I found two projects that were related to this thesis work, which were already mentioned: the stormwater program by the EPA and the report from the Idaho Partnership of Hispanic Health. The limited funding can explain to some extent the lack of research on environmental justice issues in Latino communities across the Valley. From Walkins's perspective, funding has always been an issue:

... I think we could do more, but funding is always the current issue. There are many people out there funding good things, and we always appreciate that. And, you don't necessarily want to take money away from someone doing that work but at the same time without economic support or the financial support to work to go out and work for these communities it just can't happen sometimes, and that is a challenge. ...³³

For Byrd, funding is an issue as well, however, his concern relies on how research can be used to influence policy. Funding and research are two powerful instruments of information that can help mobilize communities of people around environmental or social justice issues. Byrd stressed that one of the challenges that he believes that organizations as Centro de Comunidad y Justicia faces is the lack of research to compel policymakers to address environmental justice issues.

³³ Austin Walkins (2019), Senior Conservation Associate at the Idaho Conservation League, in conversation with the author, (March, 11) Boise, Idaho, United States.

... one challenge that we have in terms of taking research and basically trying to turn into something where it results in plan strategy to address some of those concerns ...³⁴

Considering that there has not been strategic funding and research in EJ issues in the Treasure Valley, I suspect that there are economic and political interests that inhibit a greater attention to EJ issues in this region. It was previously mentioned that the state of Idaho's economy relies on the agricultural sector and the Latino labor force. Arguably, one reason for the lack of attention to EJ issues is due to the interest of certain elites to keep EJ issues invisible and off the radar of Latino communities. It is necessary the development of further research to explore.

From this research, it is clear that the Latino community in the Treasure Valley is aware of their disadvantaged situation in terms of socio-economic status, immigration status, educational or cultural background. Hence, environmental justice issues might not be a top priority for them given the importance of other issues in their lives, including financial situation, family, health and others. The awareness of environmental problems within the Latino community in Idaho might something secondary to its members. In regards to this, Walkins stressed that Latino communities have other concerns that are already a priority to them:

... environmental concerns may be not be their [people] top concern. We are talking about a community that have jobs, or multiple jobs, they have family to take care of, they also want to have a wife, they want to have fun, maybe in their current life they have room for one or two issues, maybe one issue is social justice or economic opportunities ...³⁵

The Latino population in the Treasure Valley, as it was noted in previous chapters, is largely engaged in activities of agriculture. Therefore, their time is limited to work and spend time

³⁴ Sam Byrd (2019), Executive Director at Centro de Comunidad y Justicia, in conversation with the author, (March, 15) Boise, Idaho, United States.

³⁵ Sam Byrd (2019), Executive Director at Centro de Comunidad y Justicia, in conversation with the author, (March, 15) Boise, Idaho, United States.

with their families. Considering that some of the migrant families that work in the fields move throughout the year due to harvest seasons, they do not have time or opportunity to engage or participate in environmental campaigns or programs. For Byrd, the Latino community is busy working, trying to support their families and I suspect this may be a major reason why many Latino communities do not mobilize against environmental injustice in Idaho:

... I think that the way we do this, it is really trying to figure out how we engage ourselves, la comunidad [the community] isn't coming to us and saying it because they are busy trying to survive, they aren't coming to us and then they say: what are we gonna do anyway? Pa que me quejo? [why should I complain about?] And so then continue to live in those conditions...³⁶

Byrd's arguments concerning the Latino's community position over EJ issues is very powerful. From his perspective, the Latino community in the Treasure Valley is aware to some extent that they live in poor conditions that can jeopardize their health and wellness. But, why do people keep a low profile and not mobilize over these issues? One reason why the community does not mobilize can be tied to the broader structures of capitalism that create conditions of subalternity. In the literature on environmental justice, specifically Pulido's work, there was some activism around pesticides and environmental health awareness within Latino communities in the Southwest. However, in the context of Idaho, Latino communities have not come together to mobilize themselves to produce a social change that can bring socio-economic and health issues to light. I suspect that there is no mobilization over EJ from the Latino community due to the power that agri-business industries have on the state's economy. Considering that a great percentage of the agricultural workers are Latino and some undocumented, the conditions of marginalization place these workers in disadvantaged position leaving them with no voice due to their fear to lose

³⁶ Sam Byrd (2019), Executive Director at Centro de Comunidad y Justicia, in conversation with the author, (March, 15) Boise, Idaho, United States.

their jobs. The notions of ‘subaltern environmentalism’ traced by Pulido serve as a foundation to understand the lack of mobilization over EJ in Latino communities in Idaho as the system (capitalism) enables the exploitation of the Latino laborer, and therefore, their vulnerability to EJ issues.

It is not clear to what extent corporations influence policymakers to address and attend EJ issues, however, it is clear that EJ issues largely impact the Latino community in the Treasure Valley. The Latino community is aware that they do not live in the best conditions, but at the same time they rather not take actions to demand better conditions. Would this be related to the lack of research and funding to raise awareness in the community in addressing environmental justice issues? Or is the Latino community in Idaho more concerned about other social justice issues such as immigration, labor and education? I turn to answer these questions in the conclusion of this chapter.

There are many questions that have arisen from this research and my hope is that the research on environmental justice in Latino communities in the Northwest continues, especially in the state of Idaho, where there is a significant Latino population whose workforce is indispensable to the economy and functioning of this state.

Conclusion

After analyzing the responses of the two organizations interviewed: Centro de Comunidad y Justicia and the Idaho Conservation League. I found that these organizations have identified some environmental issues and social justice issues, such as water-related issues, air quality issues, housing conditions, immigration, education and labor, that specifically affect Latino communities. Based on the responses of both organizations, I could deduce that water and

air-related issues were the most important environmental justice issues for both organizations given their connection to health issues within the Latino community. The identification of these environmental justice issues did not represent a challenge for these organizations, rather was the implementation of the projects and programs to attend such issues.

The interviews conducted aimed to answer my central research question, which sought to find whether environmental justice issues in Latino communities were relevant or not to these organizations. Based on the responses of both organizations, I can conclude that environmental and social organizations find relevance in environmental justice issues that they have identified. While these organizations have been able to identify and attend to some of the environmental justice issues that affect Latino populations, these organizations face significant challenges to expand and continue their work regarding environmental justice, such as the lack of funding and research, and the lack of community awareness.

The lack of community awareness of the Latino community can explain to some extent by the absence of environmental justice movements in the Treasure Valley. However, I believe that the biggest concern relies on the lack of research that could influence policymakers to create legislature and funding to address the environmental justice issues that minority communities, such as Latino populations, face. This is arguably in a cyclical relationship with the lack of interest by policymakers to bring attention to EJ issues there due to local elite's interests.

CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSIONS

The early literature on environmental justice focused on the environmental justice movements and how such movements have brought concerns of race and class to mainstream environmentalism. The first cases of EJ demonstrated how African-American communities pioneered in environmental justice activism and achieved influencing policymakers to change policy to correct their conditions of environmental exposure. In the context of Latino communities in the Treasure Valley, I aimed to answer my central research question: Are environmental justice issues in Latino communities relevant to environmental and social organizations? I anticipated that EJ issues in Latino communities were not relevant given the lack of research in this region. However, after interviewing a couple of non-profit organizations I discovered that EJ issues are relevant to them due to their interest identifying and attempting to address these EJ issues by the development of programs and projects, for example the project 'raices'.

Environmental justice issues in Latino communities are relevant to environmental and social organizations, at least the ones interviewed, as they have a clear understanding of the EJ issues that minority groups are facing. Nevertheless, generalizations should be made with caution as this study was limited to one-off interviews with two organizations, who had different approaches to EJ. This poses a limitation to this study, and therefore, a more plausible outcome could have been developed if more organizations would have given their consent to participate. Despite the limits of this thesis, the information obtained from the interviews with executive staff from the Idaho Conservation League and Centro de Comunidad y Justicia are crucial for the analysis of the understanding of EJ issues in non-profit organizations.

While these organizations have identified environmental justice issues, there are some social justice issues, especially immigration, that limit Latino populations from mobilizing against environmental injustice. As it was noted a great part of the Latino population in Idaho engaged in jobs involving agriculture. Some of these jobs are seasonal, and therefore, many Latino families temporarily move to other states following a harvest season. Other families move back to Mexico during the winter to reduce expenses and wait there until the harvest season. Having stressed this, the issue of immigration is relevant in exploring environmental justice issues of Latino communities in Idaho as some migrant families do not settle for long periods of time, and therefore, their sense of belongingness can be affected.

The literature on environmental justice has recognized the importance of social mobilization to produce social change that could influence policymakers to improve and change the conditions of life of the communities that are being impacted by environmental and social justice issues. The disadvantage of migrant Latino families in the Treasure Valley is one of the reasons why the environmental justice mobilization is absent. Given the focus of the EJ literature on explaining why and how environmental justice movements emerge, I find pivotal the development of further research to explore the reasons behind the absence of EJ activism in vulnerable communities, such as Latino communities. Further research needs to be orientated to answer these questions: How have political and economic structures in Idaho hindered mobilization? How can the marginalization of Latino issues as a minority issue be challenged in order to influence policy and encourage Latino communities to mobilize over EJ issues? These questions deem to be answered with the cooperation of the academic community and the Latino community. Certainly, people have priorities such as work, family and other issues to be concerned about. Environmental justice issues might be relevant to them, but their job is not to

correct these issues, it is the state and federal government that should be accountable for improving the living conditions of minority groups. Therefore, I believe that county offices, municipalities, and state agencies should be more accountable for these issues. I mentioned about some existing work in addressing these issues, however, there is still a lack of research and funding that make it difficult for governmental entities such as the EPA, and the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality to work together with public universities, and other state and federal agencies to develop more programs that can not only locate environmental justice issues but also provide funding for further research.

The Latino population in Idaho is in constant growth and so are the needs of this community. Therefore, the need for further research is pivotal to continue the work of programs that have already been developed, such as the stormwater program in the city of Nampa funded by the EPA. The funding of research programs is what could empower vulnerable communities to participate and engage environmental campaigns and activist groups, which could influence the development of policy aimed to improve their conditions of subalternity. Addressing environmental justice issues in Latino communities does not only require environmental and social organizations to continue their work in bringing these concerns into light and engage the community to take ownership of the projects and programs they develop, but also require the social mobilization of the Latino communities over these issues. But, how could the Latino community in Idaho mobilize around the environmental issues that are largely affecting them more? I believe that by producing more research like this, can hopefully reach out to the public and governmental agencies and encourage them to take action to support more research and funding towards the awareness of environmental justice issues in the Treasure Valley.

Appendix A: Interview with Austin Walkins

March 11th, 2019

Ana M. Camargo: Could you briefly describe your organization's mission and vision and your role in the organization?

Austin Walkins: The Idaho Conservation League started back in 1973 really as voice for clean air, clean water and beautiful landscapes in Idaho. So, we are the oldest state-based conservation organization and our mission has always been those kinds of three critical things, protect clean air, clean water and public lands throughout the state of Idaho. So, that's the broad mission. I particularly focus on the first two things: clean air and clean water. So, I do a lot of policy development, regulatory oversight, making sure that the rules are putting in place to protect human health, wildlife, species, they are sufficient and protective enough on the air and water quality front.

Ana M. Camargo: Does your organization provide any type of community engagement? If so, please elaborate.

Austin Walkins: Yeah, so we hm ... how should I start with this? So it all started back in 1973... the reason we are called the Idaho Conservation League, is a kind of a cool story, we used to be, there were volunteering groups out there that came together to form this league of conservation for Idaho, that's kind of a cool part of our name/ history. Community engagement has always been a big focus of us. We have three offices throughout the state. Here in Boise, we have the main office, we have the office up north in Sandpoint, and an office in Ketchum. Each office has a community engagement staffer, someone who is primarily role is to reach out to community members, let them know not only what we are working on and how to get them involved on what we are working on, but also learn on what they are concerned about. Sometimes... sometimes our supporters are the ones telling us "hey, something is going on, we don't know what this means, can you look at into this?" And so, it is very much a two-way street in that regard. And was that, did that fully answer the question?

Ana M. Camargo: Yes.

Ana M. Camargo: Does your organization work with environmental justice? If so, how does your organization understand environmental justice? If no, why not?

Austin Walkins: So, I don't know if we intentionally ever worked like specifically within an environmental justice group. The work that we have done have always has been ... you know... focused regardless of race, religion, income, socio-economic status. You know, we want to protect clean air, clean water and pristine landscapes for everyone. So, while environmental justice maybe over the last years hasn't been an essential thesis of what our mission has been about. I think it always been there. That is changing a little bit over the past few years where

actually really having a concentrated effort on environmental justice issues and in large part ... climate change plays a big role on that, we've seen it in climate change, the impacts that we are seeing today from climate change are having the biggest impacts on a lot of ... you know... social or economic, socio-economic classes so... a varying impacts based on socio-economic classes. We are realizing... you know... we need to do more targeted work within environmental justice... communities and to the second part of that question you know what we see as environmental justice. I think that what we see is ... access to clean, safe, beautiful environment is a basic human right. No one should have to breath the air and be concerned about their health; no one should have to drink water and be like "is this gonna make sick?" If you and your family go out and catch a fish and eat that fish, you shouldn't be concerned of mercury levels and that's regardless of your background ... whether you are a hunter, just a recreationist, you shouldn't be concerned about the environmental conditions... the basic human right is to be able to enjoy the environment is how we see it and currently that's not the case. So, the environmental justice component in certain populations, if your culture says eats more fish, then population of our water ways is significantly impacting you... and your culture and we are seeing this especially when we deem what is safe for polluting levels. It is kind of a side note, but an interesting thing about some water quality standards and about water quality regulations, a lot of times, it is just like a number, like you can just have this much of mercury in the river. A lot of times, it's an equation. So, there is a number of variables, one of those is fish consumption. How much fish people eat out of that river, and that varies depending on people, depending on cultures. So, some cultures may eat more fish, but if we are not setting, if we are not using their consumption rates in that equation, they may not be as protected as others... we do not think that's fair and we see that as an environmental justice issue.

Ana M. Camargo: Speaking of Environmental Justice, has your organization ever been aware of any environmental justice issues in the Treasure Valley? If so, did such issues specifically target or affect Latino communities?

Austin Walkins: Yes... two of them come into my mind. There is a few of them. One we are seeing a lot with air quality issues and this is the Treasure Valley, where we see the highest Latino populations. We also see ... there is an association with lower incomes and so there is usually socio-economic statuses in those places. We see a lot of industrial development or their closer proximity to major highways... and so are not only those communities exposed to more air pollution or air pollution at higher levels than other communities that live far further from those. So, that itself, it is an environmental justice issue. But also, when we make rules, these rules are looking at things at finer resolution to capture those microclimates or micro pockets of air pollution, so they look at the Treasure Valley and they say, "Treasure Valley wise is great, air quality is great". But they might not look at a community that is in between of a bunch of industrial facilities and i 84 (interstate 84) that has a high Latino population and Treasure Valley wide the air quality might be great... but that specific community block might have many levels of pollution. There is that on the air pollution front and ties on the climate change aspect. Many farm workers, agricultural workers have Latino heritage and in the summer months when we have some of the worst air quality from all the wildfire smoke not only in Idaho but throughout the west. A lot of times people are working through that and you know there is no option to get

out of that... I mean farms are outside, so again, that's impacting their health and they are breathing that smoke when others are able to do more jobs indoors or maybe take a couple of days off during the worst air quality periods. So those are two of the air quality ones. Another one, this is a little broader, this in the Treasure Valley and the Magic Valley as well, not necessarily in Latino communities. We see a strong correlation with lower income communities that is ground water contamination. We've been encouraging different entities whether is state or federal environmental agencies to do more with posting notices in Spanish. Like, one of the big issues in the summer time is that we have harmful algae bloom. We have these water bodies or lakes that are very warm and get this real nutrient rich, water that flows into them and it is just the perfect conditions for toxic algae to form, and so, sometimes people would go up and post notices on Facebook but a lot of times the warnings are only in English. And, it's like the people who use this, might not speak English, and that's another thing we would like to see, those bilingual postings.

Ana M. Camargo: Based on the principles and objectives of your organization, are environmental justice issues relevant to your organization? If yes, why? If no, why not?

Austin Walkins: Yes, I think that one of the things that I love is that "there is no justice without climate justice" and I think that we do represent all Idahoans. The work that we do to keep this state an amazing place to live is for all Idahoans. And so, you know, we can't do that for a specific group, we have to make sure we protect everyone to keep water clean for everyone. So, if there is a particular group that is being left behind or mistreated or disproportionate affected that plays directly into our role because we are not doing our job if we are not protecting the air and water for them as well. I think on a broader scale, not only in Idaho but everywhere just climate change is in a sense a great equalizer because is going to affect everyone, but at the same time we still see disproportionate effects. I mentioned about the wildfires on agricultural workers, they are baring more of the burnt-outs than others are and so, we are working on climate change issues and lessening Idaho's contribution to climate change., simultaneously we need to make sure that we are doing everything we can to protect all people from the effects of climate change. So whether that's ... you know keeping people safe during periods of wildfires or you know making sure people understand that... people like to recreate on those water bodies, spring runouts and more. We are seeing more flooding just from the instantaneous spring, when spring gets here, the ice melts so quick, so making sure when people recreate, they know how to spot signs of danger, those sort of things.

Ana M. Camargo: Following the discussion on Environmental Justice, does your organization - create and develop educational programs, social campaigns, community-based projects or any other initiatives that identify and address environmental justice issues in minority groups, especially Hispanic-Latino communities?

Austin Walkins: Yes, so we have of the projects we have going on right now is we are trying to ... if you look where air quality monitoring station ... so the actually machines that record air quality data, there are concentrated more in the Boise area and the EPA can do some modeling to estimate what air pollution is at other places but is not the same as having a dedicated air monitor there. And so, one of the projects we have been doing, specifically targeting kind of south

western Idaho where are receive high concentration of Latino populations and lower income populations. So, we're trying to get this low-cost air monitors, so there is the small kind of DIY air monitors that cost about \$200, and we are trying to deploy those to various locations throughout south western Idaho and not just install them but have the community members install them and kind of manage them. Basically, we are trying to run the back end on the program but have them take a lot of the ownership and the goal is once we get few monitors installed, they know their community.

We have recreational outings. Over the past years, we have had groups of refugees, Latino groups of lower income kids. Anyone who wasn't always... you know ... if you go out in the wildness it's pretty much 'white-washed', most people are very affluent, Caucasian, so we try to do different programs that take other groups and give them the opportunity, provide them all the equipment, show them where to go, take them out there and oversee the experience to make sure they get to go to cool places, just as much as anyone. So, we've done that. And the last one I'll say and then again this is related to air pollution. We are doing transportation work. In Idaho, we have in the Treasure Valley, specifically homes are affordable out in Nampa and Caldwell but most of the jobs are in Boise. So, a lot of people commute, and that commute route just adds more pollution. So, we kind of have two fronts in that. We are working to get better mass transit, so people today, tomorrow can take the bus, get less cars on the road, and then at the same time, see how we can switch our transportation from being polluting fossil fuels vehicles to cleaner electric vehicles. Here in Idaho, we have one of the cleanest grids in the nation and it's only getting better with the work that my college Ben Otto and others are doing bringing more solar, wind, more renewable resources. While bringing down coal, that's really targeting wester part of the state, not specifically Latinos, but they are the largest populations.

Ana M. Camargo: Does your organization believe that Environmental Racism is occurring within the Treasure Valley region? If so, what issues has your organization identified and what alternatives or measures has the organization employed to cope with it?

Austin Walkins: I'm a white male. So, I come from a place with privilege. So my response to this is what I have seen, it's not to imply that maybe it's totally correct, others from different experiences might say something different. So, I want to start with that, so I don't know if we have seen environmental racism, and that's why I kind of wanted to open with ... that's from my point of privilege. I think mostly if we see any sort of discrimination it's mostly based on socio-economic status, so I think you see more polluting industries in poor communities, and I think we have seen that discrimination here in the Treasure Valley. There is a race and cultural component to that because the makeup of those communities they have a higher Latino population versus other parts of the Treasure Valley. But I don't, you know, from my perspective I don't know if racism, if race or culture, if that influence the decision at all. I think it is more an economic decision "oh, these are the cheapest places to build on". You know and I think the public process as well, it takes a lot of to be engaged in these issues, we are a staff of twenty people who are professionally trained to know what steps need to be followed, where meetings are. If you are a community member who some big polluting factory is in your neighborhood, but you have a job, you don't know when they meet, you don't know when you can come in and

when you can't come in. You know, most environmental regulations have a public input requirement, the general public I mean, you would have to have an extremely engaged public person to know when to do that and when to not do that. Again, I don't know, I think people take advantage of that, but I don't think race, from my experience, I don't think race plays into it. I think they would be just like to take advantage of poorly informed white person or a Latino person. So, I don't think racism is a motivator but then again, that's from my point of privilege.

Ana M. Camargo: Could you tell me about some of the challenges that you as a (Title/ Position) had to face in dealing with environmental concerns and more specifically with Environmental Justice issues in minority groups?

Austin Walkins: So, I'll talk about dealing with the regulating agencies and I'll talk about dealing with the community. You know on the regulating agency side; I think it is still an uphill battle to recognize that this is an issue. I mentioned that we've pushed a couple of different times to trying to get bilingual notices and some of the push are "oh, they should use google translate". Well, you are assuming they have internet access, maybe they don't. You know, it is just, we see it as agency's job to serve the community not the community's job to like the agency shouldn't create job for community members. They are there to serve them, and that's has been frustrating to deal with it. Getting them to recognize when things are an issue too. We have several laws, Clean Water Act, State Drinking Water Act, those are all federal laws set to protect air and water quality and these things are the law, but they are not always perfect. A law takes a long time to develop and science is pretty quick. Someone is probably doing a study right now like the in some places is not enough, it needs to be more protective, and you will have an agency saying, "we are following the law." The challenge is to get those agencies to getting to go more in light of pressuring and immediate issues.

On the community side, one thing we experience in organizations is ... you know... some folks... environmental concerns may be not be their top concern. We are talking about a community that have jobs, or multiple jobs, they have family to take care of, they also want to have a wife, they want to have fun, maybe in their current life they have room for one or two issues, maybe one issue is social justice or economic opportunities, and those are great things. We are happy to see them working on those but when we show up and say "hey, there is also this big environmental problem", they just have too much on their plate, they don't have any time to dedicate to that issue. So, it is a logistical challenge, it requires a lot time, and energy, commitment, these don't change overnight. And, that can be tough for people, especially in the middle of experiencing something negative, and when I tell them that this something that is gonna take months to go through the process, they are like "man, I am breathing this air today, tomorrow and the next week". So, that is challenging, and I think, the last thing on that front, this is kind of again, pretty broad. I think we could do more, but funding is always the current issue. There is so many people out there funding good things, and we always appreciate that. And, you don't necessarily wanna take money away from someone doing that work but at the same time without economic support or the financial support to work to go out and work for these communities it just can't happen sometimes, and that is a challenge.

Ana M. Camargo: In relation to the previous question, what contribution has your organization done to help the community cope with the challenges that your organization has identified? Please mention how successfully your organization has coped with such challenges e.g. has your organization been recognized or awarded by the community for their services?

Austin Walkins: Starting with the last question. No, we haven't been recognized at least in the Latino communities. I think over the years, we worked in various communities out of state of Idaho. I know we have got different community awards and recognitions, but I don't think anything specific from Latino communities. Like, I said in the beginning of this one, you know, we're quickly ramping up for the past couple of years that we have to do more advocacy with Latino communities. Part of that, we are still trying to figure out, and we always been working on this is that meeting them where they are, identifying those opportunities where it's something pressing that they are concerned about, and also our skill sets can be beneficial. Transportation seems like a really good nexus of these things because hits so many things, better transportation access can provide people more economic and job opportunities while at the same time cleaner air. One of the thing we've tried to do is ... you never wanna go to a community expecting to know the answers, when you don't even know what questions they have, and so, we did this last summer, we reached out to Nampa and Caldwell and we did a bilingual survey (English and Spanish) asking them about what they thought about transportation. And you know, this is kind of ... before we put all our eggs in one basket... "oh, our primary focus is going to be build a light rail connecting Caldwell to Boise... you know... we wanted to make sure that the community wasn't like "hey, I really want a bike lane" "I am never gonna ride on a rail" "don't build a light rail, I want a bike lane" and that is the case at all, but those were the things we wanted to make sure that the work we were proposing and the ideas we were proposing had the buying from the community. We actually found some really interesting take away from that, people they were really concerned about safety and they were really concerned about air quality. This could have something to do with folks who have moved to the Treasure Valley from more congested areas. Sitting in traffic wasn't a big of deal as we thought it would be, people were, you know, I think nowadays cars have any form of entertainment imaginable and I think some people like that their commute is an hour, and their favorite podcast is an hour, so their commute home is, they get to list to their podcast. So, that's good for us to know 'cause is like... Okay if we are gonna get community members involved on these projects, we need to talk about in terms of resonate with them. We are talking about reducing traffic... they don't care about the traffic; they care about air quality and safety. So, that's just an example. I think that making sure we always meeting folks where they are and not assuming we know the answers, is the critical first step for us.

Ana M. Camargo: What do you think your organization should add or provide to engage other organizations or the community towards more awareness of Environmental Justice issues, specifically addressing Latino communities in the Treasure Valley?

Austin Walkins: Yeah, I think... so I am gonna go back a little, this is some of ICL history, this is not related to environmental justice work, but back in 2015 ICL under the leadership of Rick Johnson, our executive director, got the boulder-white cloud wildness passed and Mike Simpson

got it passed, one of our representatives of the State of Idaho proposed the bill. And, Rick would tell stories about uhm, Mike Simpson is republican, ICL doesn't take any political affiliation, but you know people were like "why is this group of environmentalists working with this conservative republican?". And, Rick started this relationship, ten, twenty years ago, you know, I don't even know how long ago. But the two came together and realized the benefits of working together and now not only the boulder-white cloud passed, but the ICL has a good relationship with Mike Simpson and its office thanks to Rick that we have ... you know, we can be considering an environmental topic and called them up and say 'hey, what's your perspective on this?' 'What would a conservative republican be concerned about this? And what should we be thinking about?' and it helps us to understand not assuming that we have the answers and taking all the questions and really making policy or making decisions that benefits everyone, and I think that relationship is a such a good example of environmental justice relationship where ... you know the answer might not be clear like 'oh, what good is to engage with this community?' and it's like well, ten years from now, you know as they help us with environmental issues and we do our part and help them with economic opportunities or social justice issues. You know, having that relationship and basically that rising tide raising all ships mentality and brings us to the point, you know, you have such as strong community network, something could come up that is environmentally related and you know the community members, you know how to get community buying, you know who to talk to about what concerns or questions they have and likewise they have that same opportunity, something could come up and 'hey we need ICL' or 'we have this proposal, would you guys mind support it?' and I think reaching out across you media bubble and engaging as many people as you can on the issues you care about, more buying and more support from a more diverse coalition, it is always a good thing. At times, it can slow the process down, you can think that you have a great idea 'oh we are going to move this to the finish line in 2 years' and some group comes on and say 'well, you haven't thought about this' and now it's taking five years. But in the end, at the end of these five years is probably gonna have a better product that would it been if it would have done in two years. So, I think that is a huge benefit from bringing in diverse voices. You know here, everyone's concerns, thoughts, and the best available policy development, decisions, projects, you name it. Make sure it is guided by the most input from the most group of stakeholders. That's the biggest input that I would see or the biggest benefit that I would see, that I would pitch to other groups of why it is so beneficial to target any sort of community, whether is Latino or refugee community or lower income or anyone who is underrepresented.

Appendix B: Interview with Sam Byrd

March 15th, 2019

Ana M. Camargo: Could you briefly describe your organization's mission and vision and your role in the organization?

Sam Byrd: So, Centro de Comunidad y Justicia works essentially to address the health and education, and also other social needs that exist within the Latino community in Idaho. Basically, we focus on education, we also do some immigration. As a community-based organization, we respond to the needs of the community, we reflect of what the community really needs, and although immigration was not on our screen as justice issue, it is a justice issue, and so, part of... parte de nuestro nombre es justicia, esto es la parte de justicia [part of our name is justice, this is the part of justice]

Ana M. Camargo: Ana M. Camargo: Does your organization provide any type of community engagement? If so, please elaborate.

Sam Byrd: Yes, we have a couple of ways that reach out to the Latinx communities in Idaho, and that would be ... is one on one contact... not so much one on one, but you know, we go to the schools, we go to churches, we go to fiestas, we go to ... parent meetings, migrant education, English second language parents, and so that's one of the best ways that we can engage to the community because they are there. They care about their children, for their education. And so, what we see is just a wonderful way, what a better way to help their children in school, so we do that. The other thing we do, we do móviles [mobiles]. Basically, mobiles, we don't have a lot of offices throughout the state. What we chose to do is essentially to do outreach and to do mobile outreach, so we pack out the staff and we actually go to that community. It is another way of engaging the community and then, we use social media a lot. We use it in a way that, frankly I am not a person of social media, but what we do find is that it is an excellent way to reach out and we are posting things right now on Medicaid and support for Medicaid expansion which is legislature. That's one of the best ways we can reach out. Esas son las tres maneras de poder hacer [these are the three ways to make] engagements, probably the best way is to engage them in policy.

Ana M. Camargo: Does your organization work with environmental justice? If so, how does your organization understand environmental justice? If no, why not?

Sam Byrd: So, I'm gonna say that I wish we work more in the area of environmental justice and to be quite honest with you, we understand ... I have a good understanding of really what does mean. I can't tell you that I did come in to do this work it was not something that was describe as such. I remember that when I worked for a farmer association here in Idaho and continued to work here for it... when we're dealing with issues in the fields and specifically, I remember many advocacies helped us to provide bathrooms in the field. They didn't exist and so, the idea

is that and the other one is pesticides, that is the first kind of environmental justice issues that came on the radar because you know, people would come early and literally envenenaban a la gente [poisoned the people] in the South West, where people, farmers come in the spring and in many cases we are not hearing that these farmers are out there being sprayed on or they are coming into the fields too soon after having sprayed on (in the fields). But we see it all the time, people working in the field over here, there is a continuous field and an airplane, you know, come in and dropping so in totally that's what it really brought the kind of the whole environmental, the bathrooms stuff because we thought 'wait a minute, water, no potable water, air...' and that's how it started and maybe that's not really an environmental justice issue but to us, you know, the pesticide thing, certainly clarifies it. And then, we have a small project, we call it 'raices' (roots). Raices environmental education project and we got funded by a national organization. Basically, they wanted us to take a look and do some organizing groups on environmental issues, so we know enough to know that there is more work to be done. We know frankly in Idaho, I don't think anybody is doing this work, specifically directed to the Latinx community. I just think that we need to do whatever we need to do, if it is research which I think is a big part of this... we need to compel people through facts and then use that analysis of people like you to be able to take action that properly address those environmental issues... so enough to be scary Ana (laughs) ... enough to pay attention to that.

Ana M. Camargo: Speaking of Environmental Justice, has your organization ever been aware of any environmental justice issues in the Treasure Valley? If so, did such issues specifically target or affect Latino communities?

Sam Byrd: I can tell you that I am aware of... anything except from this project. I do know that some cities, the city of Nampa has been specifically because I know a Mexicana woman who used to work there and she has done things specific to water issues in Nampa and I think there is a couple of related issues that really was trying to get attention to get policymakers, city folks, to pay really attention and these are generally speaking low income area. I would say 50% or maybe in some cases 80% Latino. So, no, I can't really think of a major issue, but again with the exception of the work that was early done with farm workers that is continues to this day around pesticides. But water issues, lead painting issues and old housing, the most where our families lived in nada, that I can remember, no. Nada.

Ana M. Camargo: Based on the principles and objectives of your organization, are environmental justice issues relevant to your organization? If yes, why? If no, why not?

Sam Byrd: Yes, because the people of the communities we serve are directly impacted by environmental issues, you know, that require a lot justice work to be done. We wanted to deal with the issue of equity and health, specifically around environmental health, when we say health we think more, you know not so much environmental, but if you truly want to respond to the needs of the community and if you are really doing that work, you know that this is an issue and you'll know that is not being addressed. In the context of health, community health, you can't ignore it, you can't ignore the connections between certain conditions, health conditions that Latinx communities in Idaho which I believe environmental issues, you know, there is no justice because if you take a look of housing quality, water quality, you take a look of homes that are

being built in places where are environmental contaminated, you know, that's where the Latino community lives. I can take you right now and I can show you conditions of house that you will see that there is has to be something environmental connected to what is happening. So, I will say that you know, that this is something. If I have to say that we need a lot of work in a number of areas, I would probably say that we are not doing enough, so how do we do that? That is the question.

Ana M. Camargo: Following the discussion on Environmental Justice, does your organization - create and develop educational programs, social campaigns, community-based projects or any other initiatives that identify and address environmental justice issues in minority groups, especially Hispanic-Latino communities? And I think you mentioned 'raices'

Sam Byrd: The project 'raices' is one and then a research study we made, we were the community-based organization to run a project funded by the National Institute of Health and we knocked on doors, Ada, Payette, Canyon county. We were in ten areas and in fact on of the few researchers, people about your age Ana who were on undergrad and grad school and who I hired for that summer term was part of the University of Washington Health Institute. We were invited to the homes, we knocked on doors, and after being in three hours, you realize the existence of environmental health conditions. The conditions in which they live have not changed for twenty, thirty years In fact, I think they are worse compared to where they should be. You know, when you knock on doors, you can tell that there is going to be outside factors that are definitely gonna impact the health of the community. As we sat down and we did those interviews, it was clear. You know, they would talk about things were symptomatic in terms of allergies, or reacting to certain things that you know, even an adult can say that there is something in here that is causing this and they had an idea that they were getting sick, they really didn't know why. Then again, I wish we aren't doing educational programs right now, specifically to this. We have done it with other things. I am gonna keep saying it, you know this, your research will hopefully help us. I guess that there is one thing I would ask you, that I did ask when we started is that sharing your research with us because what we can do is to use your research. Your point six here is this how we can do this because no lo podemos hacer [we cannot do it] without this. Somehow the power of this, the cities, I bet you there are cities and local planners, there are people out there looking at water and looking at other sort of things ... especially because our communities are changing but the thing is there still hasn't been the connection to ... it is beginning to see that there is a certain negative health outcomes but there is nothing that compels it, that forces it, me entiendes?[you know what I mean?] To be able to pay attention to that and unfortunately as Latinx organizations, there is no strategic funding because the need, la comunidad te esta diciendo [the community is telling you] if you knock on any door, you know that this is an issue. If you look at some of the health conditions, I'm not a doctor but I can tell you that there are certain things that are environmentally unfriendly, but with regard to specific environmental justice issues and specifically our doing something specific not only identifying those, we have done a good job with that, we probably need to do more. Identification does not appear to be the problem. Awareness, if you talk to most Latino leaders, they would say 'sabes que? [you know what?] You are right'. If you talk to the community, health clinics, the ones in Payette, I bet they'll tell you that they see an evidence of this is related to housing, but this what we need to do

to create and develop those educational programs, specifically around environmental justice, I'll sign up in a second!

Ana M. Camargo: Does your organization believe that Environmental Racism is occurring within the Treasure Valley region? If so, what issues has your organization identified and what alternatives or measures has the organization employed to cope with it?

Sam Byrd: So, yes. I believe that there is environmental racism that is occurring, and you know although, but I do believe that it would explain in the way as a social difference, an economic difference if you'll find them related to that. All the factors that contribute to low income, being undocumented, low educated, working on jobs that don't pay much and don't provide much of insurance, etc. So, I believe that because our families are forced to live, and work in conditions that environmental unfriendly or are quite harmful to them. I think that essentially this is occurring. I don't think we would, I don't know how far we get using the term racism but I clearly believe that is the proper description of it because you know, I'm not an educated person but it would seem to me, you know if you take a look at this, you would see that there are some complying reasons for health purposes, you know wanting to do the right thing or you really want to address health equity with the community then I think that we would understand their differences that closely follow differences around race. So, I don't think it's coincidental. We don't tend to get very far with this. I am beginning to see planning groups in Idaho, environmental groups, progressive land planning and they are beginning to do more outreach with regard to the Latino community and specifically around environmental concerns. So, I also wanna give here in the Treasure Valley that there is a recognition that race is a difference that makes a difference, and so that's healthy pa'lla vamos! Me entiendes? [we are getting there; you know what I mean?] Now, and you will begin to see Latinx people are working on these environmental organizations in Boise, Idaho pa'lla vamos![we are getting there] So, I think that there is a progressive part of our community and probably the people who have done their research around environmental issues and their impact and then compare it to where? is this having an impact? I think that they are gonna make, they'll come up with a causal, you know, this is the reason why it is occurring. But again, you know, you don't hear that term enough, and I like it because it makes you pay attention. It puts you on a defense, you know, as advocates people from different ethnic, racial groups, we know that this is an issue. Race matter across almost everything we do and for us to think that does not matter in terms of what is happening environmentally, I wouldn't think we would be ignorant.

Ana M. Camargo: Could you tell me about some of the challenges that you as a (Title/ Position) had to face in dealing with environmental concerns and more specifically with Environmental Justice issues in minority groups?

Sam Byrd: I mentioned that one challenge that we have in terms of taking research and basically trying to turn into something where it results in plan strategy to address some of those concerns. So, if there was some way that we can see cities and municipalities see that's to their best interest that economically I think we can make the argument economically we certainly we make it, you know, it is the moral right thing to do. But I think that, that's still a big challenge, it is not a on radar, Ana. It is almost like justice has become a luxury, that what we are basically is to keep up.

We just have to make sure that it doesn't get any worse and Latinx groups are assaulted when it comes to the condition of their work and life and so I think the challenge is how do I as a person who works in a community find a way to do more in this regard and then, how do I as a member, as an organization, how do I or we begin to look at ways to collaborate with other sister organizations and other organizations that you know, so we can really do in this regard, we haven't quite found that. So, research would not help to predominate culture but hopefully help us deal with environmental issues and concerns, but hopefully it'll also motivate ourselves, our own community to be able, un amigo dice [a friend says]: 'we don't realize the water we swim' ay que bonita metafora! [what beautiful metaphor!] Because it is. The people don't realize the water they swim. So, we need to create awareness on that because conciencia pos [awareness, well] you might be able to deny it, not because they don't know it and if we can build that level of consciousness uff! [wow] So, again research is not only needed to compel the predominant culture but also to compel ourselves as a community, es como una agenda, una agenda para nosotros [it is like an agenda, an agenda for us].

Ana M. Camargo: In relation to the previous question, what contribution has your organization done to help the community cope with the challenges that your organization has identified? Please mention how successfully your organization has coped with such challenges e.g. has your organization been recognized or awarded by the community for their services?

Sam Byrd: So, let me start with the first. This is how we have been rewarded by the community and that is, you know, they have come to say 'Ay yo los conozco' 'I know who you are' 'we know your work, you have been in schools' 'I have heard of you'. That's something that we are rewarded. Nosotros no somos nada si no responde la comunidad [we are nothing without the community's response]. So, half of our money is state/federal money because we make HIV testing, STD testing, pregnancy prevention with Latinx teens. Also, other half comes from the fees of services of immigration. We came up with a model that is not unique to us, there are hundreds of these across the country, but there wasn't one in Idaho and we realized again, if we want people to help people with health equity issues, we want the community to deal with educational equity issues, it is a luxury, es un privilegio. So we needed to do is to address, I came back and I was organizing literally outings in schools, organizing parents and we got a grant twenty thousand dollars I went all over the state that's how we got established and it was a good way to do it I went to all the Latino parents, everywhere. I am not kidding I was in snowstorms, quien sabe que y yo terco, terco [who knows what, but I was stubborn, stubborn] but we got this grant, we gotta do it. So, I came to a board meeting and the board says how is it going out there? Nombre tremendo, está creciendo la comunidad [amazing, the community is growing] the community is growing like crazy because in the schools you can see the diversity and so they say (people on the board meeting) y que dice la gente? [what do the people say] Well, we are actually doing parental involving training and we get twenty, thirty people to show up y les dabamos [and we gave them] two, three hours y si nos invitaban otra vez ahi ibamos [and if they would invite us again, we would go]. And so anyway, we have a curriculum it is developed by the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund in California and it is very, parents are advocates and it is a very cool concept, and basically says if we teach Latinx parents about what they can do to support their children, they will, so that's what we are doing. So, anyway

come back to the board meeting, ¿como te esta yendo? [how is it going?] (people on the board meeting continue asking) No pues los padres estan respondiendo [Well, the parents are responding] (people on the board meeting) ¿Y les gusta? [do they like it (the trainings)] Pues claro, si les gusta [well of course, they like it] Y un padre que esta en el board viene y me dice: ¿es que me están preguntando por que no ofrecemos servicios de inmigración? [a father on the board meeting comes to me and says: they (parents) are asking me why don't we offer immigration services?] So, it went on my report and then he came back and he said: 'But don't you think if we a community-based organization and we want to respond to the needs of the community and the community asks us to do something, don't you think we should? And that's how we got involved. So, it is the same thing with this, and we ... I am an ex farmer, I barely graduated from university, I am 65 years old, I am turning 65 years old, I came through the fields in Nissa, in Idaho, in Arizona, in Oregon, in California, that's how I grew up and so the idea is that, we were living, you know, day a day, y de veras no tenias tiempo de [and really, you did not have time to] to think about anything, you couldn't, you didn't feel that you couldn't do anything, you are just trying to survive. I am no longer that farmer raised but you know Ana, la gente, miles de gente que todavia estan ahi [the people, thousands of people are still there] Y digo [and I say] Oh my God, for all the work we've done, for all the credit we have been given, we don't deserve it because frankly no ha cambiado [it has not changed]. It is the same thing, here there is an issue that truly now we are beginning to get the research, but we know that we gotta do something, pero como le hacemos? [how can we do it?] I am convinced that what you are doing, estas creando conciencia [you are raising awareness], you know, hopefully, how do we take the research you are receiving, that it provides you with the educational progress and achievement that you want, but hopefully we also invite you back and we take your research and the research of people like you and we what do 'mira [look], we know this is important' 'we know what she has done, she has provided us the framework, has provided us kinda el empujarnos [to move towards], to move on that direction'. So again, in relation to what do we help, I think it help us by paying attention to those things that don't necessarily bring us funding, es como un negocio, es como una familia [it is like a business, it is like a family] but instead what we gotta be doing is we have to do something about it, we don't have any money, ni modo! [oh well] But we got research now, we know that we have, we know that is on people's radar. We know that is important. So, I think that poquito a poquito [little by little], I think that that's how, that's what I would like to do, can we advance this in some fashion rather than is like project comienza [starts], te dan dinero [they give you money], it's like this one we did 'raices', great project and there are good stuff here that I would recommend you take a look at this community risk exposure (he hands to me the copy of the project 'raices') and I am gonna give this to you, pero [but]basically this is the description, but see EG screen, this is amazing stuff here and if we take this, we can map communities here, we can map them accordingly to where they live, we can take a look of who lives there, because it tells us who lives there, you know, it give us race, ethnicity, it give us also certain rates of health conditions as a result I believe of some environmental issues that they are facing where they live. And if you look at this, in fact, if you should just take a moment to map this out, take a place in Caldwell, Idaho. Take it where la raza (Latinx communities) is, you know, where they live. Along the freeway, cuando pasas en Caldwell, en cada lado del freeway eso es pura raza, ya no es comida corriente son pura comida

mala porque eso es una combinación de cosas, las viviendas horrible, I mean pobrecita gente wow, todavía la gente esta viviendo igual, no solo los mexicanos [when you drive through Caldwell on the freeway, it is full of race (Latinos), there is no healthy food, it is just bad food food, there is still people living the same, not only Mexicans] But if you take a look at some of the stuff and you map it out 'Oh my goodness!' it is un[a] crime! Es un crimen! [it is a crime!] It is an environmental crime, that really hasn't seen and doesn't even know justice. Todavía ni comenzamos [we have not even started] to build. This is my opinion. Now, I think that the way we do this, it is really trying to figure out how we engage ourselves, la comunidad [the community] isn't coming to us and saying it because they are busy trying to survive, they aren't coming to us and then they say: what are we gonna do anyway? Pa que me quejo? [what should I complain about?] And so, then continue to live in those conditions. So again, I am gonna go back to the point I made earlier. So, it is possible if we compel policymakers, cities, counties and ourselves to do something about this? Is it possible that we create some consciousness with the communities that are most affected? They would demand something to be done. It just like we know diabetes it is a health issue, or do we know that we got higher rates of heart diseases, it is on our rader, we get it. But do we get that some of these conditions are being caused by medical environmental issues that we are blind to? Yo pienso que si. So, pero como le hacemos? [I think so, but how can we do this?] If one thing came out of this, it is going out and talking to the Latino community about the waters in which they swim, think of the power that that would create because if you create that, you know, they would always think about that. And somebody like you will say: 'let's do something about it' yo de veras creo en lo que estas haciendo [I truly believe in what you are doing]. Think about it, we haven't had this kind of work done.

This woman in Nampa told me Nampa has done some work, around mostly Latinos they looked at environmental health connections, lead base paint, all those homes we also found a high use of room freshers porque, si tu vas a las casas mexicanas vas a ver eso [because, if you go to the Mexican homes you will see that] they have done some work about environmental health issues, the when we knocked at these doors. There were high levels of respiratory issues, ah es que son campesinos [ah it is because they are farmers] uhm we think it is due to the housing conditions.

Ana M. Camargo: What do you think your organization should add or provide to engage other organizations or the community towards more awareness of Environmental Justice issues, specifically addressing Latino communities in the Treasure Valley?

Sam Byrd: Like I mentioned, I need to go out and share this presentation that I shared with you, with my colleagues with other Latino (a) leaders. We are so busy, then sometimes, you know, I am glad to come to us. It is an opportunity. But I think that what we really need to do more and go out and talk to cities like Nampa, Caldwell so we create this level of consciousness. Come back and we run a project, lets a write a project. I am trying to reach out. We are so busy. One of the things we need is funding. It is not like we don't want to address environmental justice issues, it is that none is funding that. It is no magic. We are interested in it.

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