

Crawford Community Kaleidoscope Project

In honor of Dr. Mark David Mann, graduate of Crawford High School

FINAL REPORT

Submitted by
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A Crawford High School student examines the neighborhood landscape while conducting research for the Crawford Community Kaleidoscope Project.

The YESS Research Center at SDSU thanks Dr. and Mrs. Norman Mann for their generous support of this project. We also want to thank the staff of Crawford High School for being welcoming and supportive throughout the process, especially Principal Dr. Richard Lawrence, Jr. and Social Studies teachers Ken Flaherty and Jody Herman.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Purpose:

The purpose of the project was to investigate how cultural diversity plays out at a neighborhood scale and to illustrate how people of vastly different cultural backgrounds can co-exist, develop strong connections to place, and even thrive within a local environment where differences.

Study area:

The project study area included the Crawford High School campus and the surrounding neighborhoods where students reside with their families.

Project methodology:

This was a participatory project in which a university-based team of researchers engaged and trained a group of high school students to conduct research about their own community. The project tapped into the perspectives and experiences of individual members of the community through interviews, photography, and landscape analysis. Student researchers acquired research and technical skills and gained experience with community leadership. They also produced a rich collection of materials representing the neighborhood through the eyes of people who live and work there.

Project team:

- SDSU Geography Department: Dr. Stuart Aitken, Dr. Thomas Herman, Elliot Pearson, and Jasmine Arpagian
- Crawford High School Staff: Social Studies Teacher Ken Flaherty, Student Teacher Jody Herman, Educational Aide Latonia Miller
- Crawford High School Students: Omar (Yahya) Ahmed, Nimo Ali, Aweyso Aweyso, Julio Camacho, Victor Cecena, Esther Cing, Annilene (Annie) Contreras, Sa Je Da, Betsy Frausto, Cesar Garcia, Sacid Jama, Abraham Lara, Leonilo Latorena, Ngea Lay, Terrell D. Lewis-Ray, Cesar Licon, Malaysia McBride, Celina (Lili) Mendoza-Sosa, Vanessa Montalvo, Juan Nava, Divine Ngabire, Yliam Perez, Pray Reh, Pedro Romero, Johnathan Santizo Santos, Robert Selmon, Asma Shareef, Shell Shell, Mya (MT) Thein, Adam Vargas, Mario Velarde Pacheco, Asma Shareef, Adam Vargas, Angela Vilda, Carlos Zambrano

Project outcomes:

- The project engaged 105 individuals, each of whom contributed some information through an interview, focus group discussion, or photographs of the neighborhood. The assembled voices reflect a great deal of the diversity of the Crawford community.

- The project trained an extremely diverse group of 34 high school students, nearly all refugees and immigrants, in research methods and mapping and provided them with an opportunity to exercise community leadership. The entire group of students also had the opportunity to visit and tour the SDSU campus (see photo, below) and participate in some computer-assisted mapping in one of the Geography Department labs.
- The students created an interactive digital map of the Crawford community that incorporated interview excerpts and photographs of the neighborhood landscape. The map was then incorporated into a website by a smaller group of 6 students working at SDSU during the summer of 20016. The site is designed to be the primary mechanism for sharing the results of the project with the community and the wider public. **Please visit the project website at crawfordmap.sdsu.edu!**
- A group of Crawford students gave a presentation about their experience with the project to a group of San Diego County teachers as part of a California Geographic Alliance teacher training workshop in July 2016.
- SDSU graduate student Elliot Pearson has developed a master's thesis research project related to the fieldwork conducted with Crawford students as part of this project.



The students from Mr. Flaherty's 11th grade World History and Geography class gather for a photo on the campus of San Diego State University.

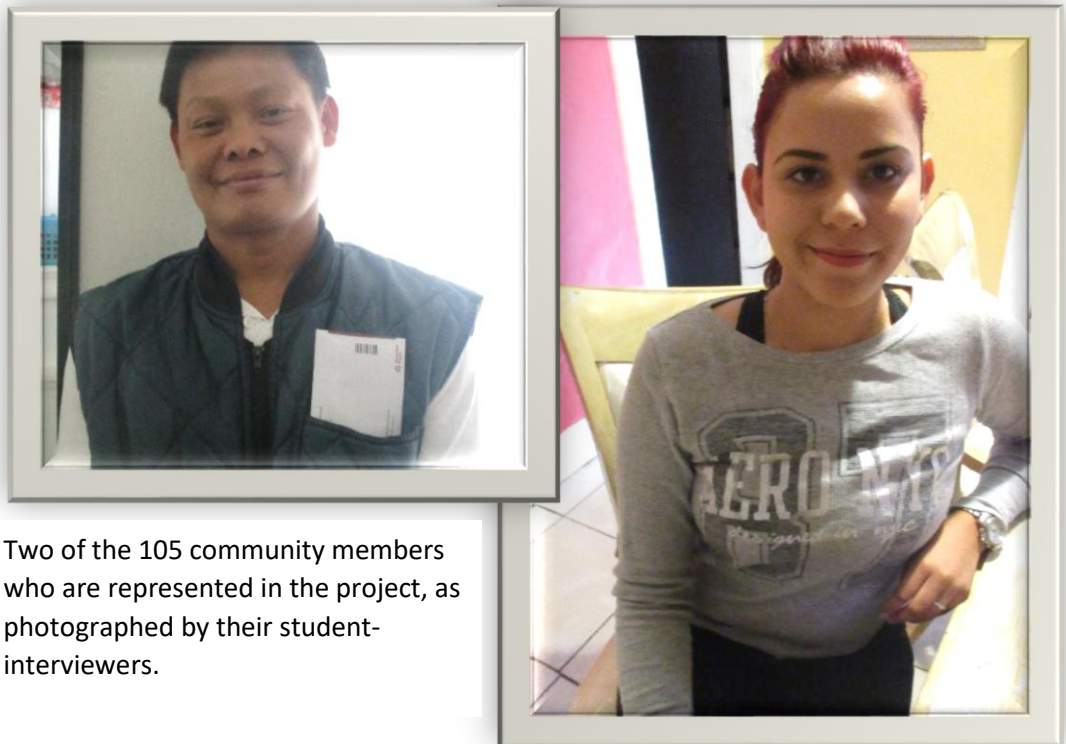
PROJECT TIMELINE

- 1/28/2016: The SDSU research team met with Crawford principal Dr. Lawrence, who expressed enthusiasm for having the project happen at the school and indicated that he would provide his support. Dr. Lawrence connected us with Ken Flaherty, an experienced social studies teacher who had a class of refugee and immigrant students for 11th grade World History and Geography. We agreed to conduct the project in collaboration with the students of that class. The SDSU geographers began to plan for how to best organize their work with the group using weekly meetings during class time.
- 3/18/2016: The SDSU team held the first of 14 weekly sessions, each lasting about two hours, with Mr. Flaherty's class. The initial classroom sessions focused on orienting the group to the goals of the project, getting them thinking about how a geographic perspective on the neighborhood could help illuminate issues of diversity and difference, and building skills that they would need for conducting the actual research.



SDSU graduate student Elliot Pearson teaches about digital mapping and storytelling to Mr. Flaherty's 11th grade World History and Geography class during one of our weekly sessions.

4/15/2016: Using digital audio recorders and digital cameras provided by the SDSU project team, the students begin to conduct research. They select community members to interview, collect consent forms, and document the interviews. During each weekly session thereafter, students spend time reviewing the data that has been collected, sharing ideas about how to increase the quality of their data, and discuss who they need to reach out to so that the project is as representative of the diversity of the community as possible.



Two of the 105 community members who are represented in the project, as photographed by their student-interviewers.

5/26/2016: The SDSU Geography Department hosts the entire class for a campus visit. The students get to tour the whole campus, hear about the research of graduate students and faculty in the department, and participate in some hands-on computer-assisted mapping in the Spatial Analysis Lab.

6/17/2016: The final weekly session at Crawford marks a high point in student interest and ownership of the project. The conversations with the students about diversity and about the issues and challenges raised with regard to how diversity is understood in the school and wider community, as well as how newcomers are welcomed and supported, have become increasingly sophisticated and powerful. Some students report increased involvement in community groups and attendance at meetings at school and in the community where cultural diversity is a central topic.

Students are working hard to increase the number of interviews completed

and are concerned about meeting the target of 100. The students have completed 87 interviews at the end of the school year.

7/19/2016: The project is completed. From June 23 to July 19, a group of six students who have demonstrated substantial leadership met at SDSU to continue to work on the project with the SDSU researchers. The students conduct interviews, taking the total number of people included in the project over our goal to a total of 105. They conduct photo explorations of the neighborhood and learn landscape interpretation techniques, and they work on building a website to share their work.



Crawford students enjoy conducting fieldwork in the neighborhood during the summer.