

Center for California Studies, Sac State

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FACULTY RESEARCH FELLOWS PROGRAM

Food apartheid in California: what are the root causes of food apartheid, its effects on the communities living in them, and policy implications for ending food inaccessibility.

Request for proposals

The Center for California Studies at Sac State has received a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to support policy research on topics related to reducing income and wealth inequality. The following RFP is part of a series intended to inform policy solutions to income and wealth inequality; the series is partially funded through the grant from the Gates Foundation.

Project Title

Food apartheid in California: what are the root causes of food apartheid, its effects on the communities living in them, and policy implications for ending food inaccessibility.

Background

Food deserts are geographic areas in which residents have few to no convenient options for purchasing affordable and healthy foods, particularly fresh fruits and vegetables. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines a food desert as an area that has either a poverty rate greater than or equal to 20% or a median family income not exceeding 80% of the median family income in urban areas, or 80% of the statewide median family income in nonurban areas. In urban areas, at least 500 people, or 33% of the population must live more than 1 mile from the nearest large grocery store. In rural areas, at least 500 people, or 33% of the population must live more than 10 miles from the nearest large grocery store.ⁱ

In 2016, The California Endowment reported that “nearly one million Californians, 45 percent of whom are low-income, live without access to nearby supermarkets or large grocery stores in communities known as food deserts.”ⁱⁱ Food deserts are found in both urban and rural

ⁱ Michele Ver Ploeg, David Nulph, and Ryan Williams: Mapping Food Deserts in the United States. USDA. December 01, 2011 <https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2011/december/data-feature-mapping-food-deserts-in-the-us/>

ⁱⁱ California FreshWorks Food Access Report: an Examination of Three Northgate González Grocery Store Investments. The California Endowment. May 2016 file:///C:/Users/ambar/AppData/Local/Temp/Freshworks-Food-Access-Report_WEB2_FINAL-1.pdf

communities and are found overwhelmingly in low-income communities and communities with majority Latino and Black residents.ⁱⁱⁱ Food deserts often exist concurrently with “food swamps” which are areas in which there is an abundance of fast food, junk food outlets and convenience stores, and liquor stores outnumber healthy food options.

Residents of food deserts and food swamps have limited access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their daily needs for healthy living. Access to healthy food is one of the social determinants of health.^{iv} Food deserts and swamps are part of a larger system of food apartheid in which residents are not only deprived of access to nutritious food but also economic opportunity.^v Food apartheid has been linked to poor health outcomes and high rates of chronic conditions like diabetes and heart disease.

It is well documented that historic policies of redlining have created communities segregated by race. “Redlining was the systematic denial or selective raising of prices on numerous financial services (mortgages, loans, etc.) to target residents in predominantly low- and moderate-income or African American neighborhoods.”^{vi} While the term redlining was originally associated with discriminatory housing policies and a lack of access to financial services and institutions affecting communities of color, supermarket redlining is emerging as one explanation for food deserts.^{vii} “Supermarket redlining” is a term used to describe a phenomenon when major chain supermarkets are disinclined to locate their stores in inner cities or low-income neighborhoods and usually pull their existing stores out and relocate them to suburbs and more affluent communities.^{viii} Redlining has also been associated with present-day air pollution disparities in U.S. cities.^{ix} Neighborhood-level redlining and lending bias are also associated with increased breast cancer mortality in a large and diverse metropolitan area.

While there have been many studies identifying food deserts and swamps and the links between food insecurity and poor health outcomes, there is an opportunity to study the root causes of food deserts and food swamps. Further, the failure to recognize the root causes of racial inequalities allows racial health disparities to persist.^x

In 2011, Governor Brown signed AB 581 (Perez), creating the California Healthy Food Financing Initiative to improve the availability of healthy, affordable, and high-quality food in

ⁱⁱⁱ Kelley Brooks: Research shows food deserts more abundant in minority neighborhoods. The Hub (John Hopkins University).

^{iv} Centers for Disease Healthy People 2020, “The Social Determinants of Health,” available at <<https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/social-determinants-of-health>>

^v Isabel Lu, “Food Apartheid: What Does Food Access Mean In America?” Center for Nutrition Studies, 14 Dec. 2020, nutritionstudies.org/food-apartheid-what-does-food-access-mean-in-america

^{vi} Julia Perrino, [“Redlining and health indicators: Decisions made 80 years ago have health consequences today”](#). *National Community Reinvestment Coalition* July 2, 2020.

^{vii} M. Zhang, & Debarchana, G “Spatial Supermarket Redlining and Neighborhood Vulnerability: A Case Study of Hartford, Connecticut,” *Transactions in GIS* (2016) TG, 20(1), 79–100. <https://doi.org/10.1111/tgis.12142>

^{viii} E. Eisenhauer “In poor health: Supermarket redlining and urban nutrition”. *GeoJournal*. 2001:125–133

^{ix} Haley M. Lane, Rachel Morello-Frosch, Julian D. Marshall, and Joshua S. Apte, *Environmental Science & Technology Letters* Article ASAP DOI: 10.1021/acs.estlett.1c01012

^x R. Yearby, R. (2020). Structural Racism and Health Disparities: Reconfiguring the Social Determinants of Health Framework to Include the Root Cause. *Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics*, 48(3), 518-526. doi:10.1177/1073110520958876

underserved areas. Soon after, the Healthy Food Financing Initiative supported the development of a fact-finding report, published in 2012, which included recommendations for addressing the problem of food deserts. Both the impact of the initiative and the continued need to address food access should be addressed in research.

Purpose of Research

This research is intended to aid state policymakers in making new investments and developing effective policies that address the issue of food apartheid and food inequity that continues to exist in the state. This research is intended to address the following questions:

- What is the current state of food apartheid in California; what are the differences between high- and low-income communities in terms of access to nearby food sources (supermarkets, farmers markets), in California in general and by region?
- What are the root causes of these inequities in food access and the extent to which they stem from redlining and other historic racist and exclusionary policies?
- How do these inequities in food access contribute to income and wealth inequities; how does poor access to healthy food contribute to an individual's or communities' difficulty in exiting poverty?
- What has the impact of the Healthy Food Financing Initiative been and where is there room for continued improvement?
- What are some proven policy solutions to improve access and proximity to quality and affordable food? What policies have other local governments, states, or nations adopted that have reduced food access inequality?

Scope of Research

This project is one of several focused on informing state policymaking as it relates to the policy implications of reducing inequality in California and improving the health and economic circumstances of California's lowest- and middle-income residents, in the long-term. The researcher or research team for this project will review and summarize existing research on food apartheid, and its long-term effects on individuals and communities' health and quality of life. The research should explore the root causes of food apartheid and its relation to racial segregation in communities. The project should explore the relationship between food apartheid and the economic health and viability of a community and the extent to which food insecurity traps individuals and communities in poverty. The research should examine the success and failure of California policies in addressing food apartheid and look to successful policies in other states or nations that could have implications for California.

Deliverables and Timeline

1. Participate in a planning call with legislative requesters and Center for California Studies staff, prior to beginning the project.
2. Provide preliminary drafts of the following to the Center for California Studies by August 15: a report and a two-page summary of findings and recommendations.

3. Respond to any comments or questions about the draft and provide a final report and two-page summary to the Center for California Studies by September 30.
4. Present research in Sacramento by the end of 2022, on a date mutually agreeable to both the researchers and the Faculty Research Fellows Program award recipient. (The Center can cover travel costs for faculty doing the presentation.)

Budget

\$ 20,000 This amount includes any indirect costs charged by the recipient's institution, as well as travel costs and all other costs (except for travel costs related to the presentation, which will be covered by the Center for California Studies).

Who May Apply:

Faculty and staff at any California State University campus may submit proposals. Preference is given to principal investigators who are full-time faculty or staff, but part-time faculty may also apply. Part-time faculty and CSU students may also be included as secondary investigators and assistants.

How to Apply

Proposals are due May 27, 2022. Submit proposal by email (in a single Word document or PDF file) to Leonor Ehling, Executive Director, Center for California Studies, at leonor.ehling@csus.edu. Include "FRPR Gates proposal – Food apartheid" in the subject line. Notification of awards will occur by June 3, 2022.

Proposal should be no longer than five single spaced pages (excluding a list of cited works, curriculum vitae, and evidence of approval from applicant's campus office of research). The proposal should include the following:

1. An introductory statement that demonstrates an understanding of the subject matter.
2. Explanation of the research design including the methods of analysis and source of data, if applicable.
3. A timeline for completing the project in the allotted period.
4. A proposed budget including the portion to be devoted to faculty time and travel to Sacramento for presentation of the research.
5. Description of the researcher's (s') qualifications for performing the study.
6. Telephone numbers and e-mail addresses for the principal researcher (s).
7. A resume or vitae for each person funded under the project.
8. Approval by the principle investigator's campus office of research and sponsored programs, in conformance with Chancellor's Office Executive Order Number 890 [EO 890 - Administration of Grants and Contracts in Support of Sponsored Programs \(csusm.edu\)](https://www.csusm.edu/office-of-grants-and-contracts/)

Questions about this RFP may be directed to:

Leonor Ehling (leonor.ehling@csus.edu)

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