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Author

Rucks-Ahidiana, Zawadi

Publication Date

2018-04-23

Data Availability

The data associated with this publication are not available for this reason: Author analyzed articles using Access World News online portal

ISSI GRADUATE FELLOWS WORKING PAPER SERIES 2016-2017.82

**Race and Class in the News:
How the Media Portrays Gentrification**

by **Zawadi Rucks-Ahidiana**

Department of Sociology
University of California, Berkeley
April 23, 2018



Institute for the
Study of
Societal Issues

Zawadi Rucks-Ahidiana
Department of Sociology
University of California, Berkeley

zawadirucks@gmail.com

Whether it is affordable housing, health insurance, or crime, how a social problem is associated with race and class contributes to how the general public and policymakers respond to it. The media both informs and reinforces readers' perceptions about what happens when social processes like gentrification take place, who is affected, and whether this type of change is positive or negative. Media representations can thus influence public perception, policy framing, and local policies around urban development. This paper uses articles published between 1990 and 2014 in two San Francisco newspapers to document how the process of gentrification is described. Using text analysis and qualitative coding, I find that race and class pervade reporting on gentrification in San Francisco. Gentrification was presented as a process by which the middle-class and whites move into predominantly black and low-income neighborhoods, even though the process of gentrification in San Francisco is significantly more complex. Although the news coverage raised more concerns about gentrification than benefits overall, some neighborhoods (working-class and Latino) receive greater attention and concern than others (poor and black). The result is an oversimplified and skewed portrait of who benefits and who loses as a result of gentrification in San Francisco. This skewed portrait will likely reinforce a common perception of gentrification as a solution to social ills associated with black and poor neighborhoods such as urban disinvestment and crime, rather than a process that reduces affordable housing and displaces low-income, long-term residents.

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Introduction

The mainstream news media plays an important role in how Americans see social processes, particularly ones with which they have less direct experience. News coverage exposes middle-class Americans to poverty, including the experiences of living in highly segregated, low-income neighborhoods. As such, the media has likely played a role in what middle-class Americans think about how those neighborhoods change. Yet, despite its role as a cultural tool that informs and reinforces perceptions about social processes (Logan & Molotch, 1987; Schudson, 2002), urban sociologists have largely overlooked how the media portrays the urban processes we study and how those media portrayals might influence public and political responses to urban change.¹

This paper analyzes the portrayal of gentrification in newspapers in San Francisco, CA, from 1990 to 2014. I find that gentrification is generally presented as a process by which the middle class and whites move into predominately low-income and black neighborhoods, even though the process of gentrification in San Francisco is significantly more complex. Although news coverage raises more concerns about gentrification than benefits overall, some neighborhoods (working-class and Latino) receive greater attention and concern than others (poor and black). The result is an oversimplified and skewed portrait of who benefits and who loses as a result of gentrification in San Francisco.

This dominant depiction of gentrification in local print media, with its minimal coverage of the negative consequences of gentrification for poor and black neighborhoods, is likely to

¹ See Brown-Saracino and Rumpf (2011) and Lavy et al. (2016) for two exceptions.

influence the opinions and perceptions of newspaper readership. While newspaper readership has declined in recent years, the newspapers analyzed here still reach roughly 2 million local readers, which is a predominately middle-class readership as measured by occupation, educational attainment, earnings, and housing tenure (Hearst Corporation, 2017; The San Francisco Examiner, 2015). Given that the middle class is less likely to experience the effects of gentrification than low-income city residents, understanding the predominant narrative of what gentrification “looks like” provides an understanding of how middle-class city residents are likely to see the process and whether or not they view gentrification as a negative or positive development, and for whom. This information can help explain voters’ responses to decreases in the availability of affordable housing, increases in housing costs, and the potential displacement of low-income renters that comes with gentrification.

Why Does Media Matter?

Media is both a cultural product and a form of culture (Schudson, 2002). It is produced by members of society and informs social meaning-making (Schudson, 2002). Media portrayals reinforce and inform the public’s assumptions, particularly about topics that the public does not experience directly. Thus, news media contributes “meanings, symbols, [and] messages” to the general public (Schudson, 2002, p. 265) that can be incorporated into the cultural “toolkit” that individuals use to inform how they understand the world around them and make decisions (Swidler, 1986).

The prior literature suggests that the race and class depictions of an issue matter for how Americans respond to that issue. That is, whether an issue is seen as a problem or not is in

part about how the issue is framed. For example, Gilens (2009) studied the influence of media on public perceptions of welfare. Using public opinion data and media representations of poverty, he demonstrated that Americans are strongly influenced by racial images of welfare recipients. Public opinion data shows that Americans overwhelmingly oppose increased funding for welfare; however, they strongly support increasing funds for addressing poverty (Gilens, 2009). Gilens (2009) finds that this is correlated with the assumption that welfare recipients are overwhelmingly black and the racial stereotypes that Americans hold about blacks, which lead to an assumption that welfare recipients are primarily the undeserving poor. While he does not have data to determine why Americans think welfare recipients are predominately black, Gilens (1996, 2009) is able to establish the racial characteristics of welfare recipients presented in the media. Using national magazines and television news shows, Gilens (1996, 2009) demonstrates that welfare recipients are overwhelmingly depicted by images of black Americans despite the fact that welfare recipients are predominately white. Thus, media images may trigger Americans' negative stereotypes of blacks, which in turn influences their perception that welfare recipients are a part of the undeserving poor and contributes to their decision that welfare should not be receiving additional funding despite viewing poverty as an important policy concern.

As demonstrated in the example above, media depictions can reinforce and inform common assumptions, which in turn influence decision-making. This influence is particularly important in cases where public opinion matters, including those subject to politics and policy decisions. Whether public opinion reflected politics or politics reflected public opinion, public opinion polls show that the American public supported the 1996 welfare reform, which

dramatically reduced funding for welfare and instituted a work requirement (Gilens, 1996, 2009).

The Case of Gentrification

Gentrification is the in-movement of middle-class residents to predominately low-income neighborhoods, which leads to higher rents and housing values, and a middle-class majority (Glass, 1964; Smith, 1996). Some would argue that the process is a win-win (Byrne, 2002). Cities that have lost large proportions of middle-class residents during periods of decline and disinvestment are seeing a return of their tax bases, and low-income city residents are experiencing the benefits of the political and economic resources of the middle class (Byrne, 2002; Cameron, 2003; Hyra, 2008). But it remains a question as to whether low-income neighborhood residents are able to remain in gentrifying areas due to the financial burden of increased property taxes for homeowners and increased rents for renters (Gotham, 2001).² Furthermore, many of the resources that middle-class gentrifiers attract are unaffordable to low-income residents, such as Whole Foods grocery stores.

City governments are in a position to address these negative repercussions by protecting affordable housing and placing limits on development. This response may come in the form of policies introduced by local representatives of areas experiencing gentrification, but could also come from a push from voters themselves through acts of public support such as demonstrations, petitions, or testimonies. Whether locals and politicians support these

² A number of quantitative studies have found no evidence of displacement in gentrifying cities (Ellen & O'Regan, 2011; Freeman & Braconi, 2004).

measures depends on whether they see gentrification as a positive or negative process. Their views are informed in part by whether these local actors are aware of the benefits and concerns of the process of change, but also by who they believe is affected. As suggested by prior research (Gans, 1995; Gilens, 1996, 2009; Katz, 1989), if media consumers think that gentrification is predominately affecting poor, black neighborhoods, they may be inclined to think that gentrification is a positive change that should not be interfered with, as poor, black neighborhoods are assumed to be high in crime (Sampson, 2012; Sampson & Raudenbush, 2004) and blacks are stereotyped as lazy and violent (Gilens, 1996, 2009). Even though gentrification is a process of class change by definition, how race and class are explicitly depicted is likely related to how gentrification is valued as a process.

While we know little to date about what Americans think gentrification “looks like,” prior studies of gentrification mostly focus on low-income, black neighborhoods with white in-movers (Fallon, 2016). In fact, some quantitative studies of gentrification measure gentrification by a decline in the percent of black residents in a neighborhood (Bostic & Martin, 2003). Yet a number of recent, quantitative studies have found that gentrification is actually less likely to occur in majority black neighborhoods (Ellen & O’Regan, 2008; Hwang & Sampson, 2014; Timberlake & Johns-Wolfe, 2016). This difference suggests that even though gentrification is defined as a process of class change, race has been central to assumptions that many academics have made about where gentrification is occurring.

This paper aims to identify the media depictions of gentrification based on the theory that the media informs and reinforces assumptions about who is affected by gentrification. In particular, I analyze which race and class groups and whose race and class are depicted in

newspapers over time, and whether gentrification is presented positively or negatively. Using a combination of descriptive statistics and qualitative data analysis, I document the media portrayals of gentrification.

Data and Methods

This study uses newspaper data from San Francisco, CA. San Francisco represents an extreme case in terms of both racial composition and exposure to gentrification. As shown in Table 1, whites have made up less than half of the city's population since as early as 1990. Today, the city is 42 percent white, which is less than the national average of 63 percent. In fact, the Asian and Latino populations have increased to make up a larger proportion of the population combined than whites. Finally, the black population has declined by 50 percent from 13 percent of the city's population in 1980 to only 6 percent in 2010.

San Francisco has also been the site of heightened gentrification, which has escalated to the point of affecting middle-class renters. Median rents, shown in the second panel of Table 1, have increased by 34 percent between 1990 and 2010 from \$1,147 to \$1,533 per month. Median housing values have increased even more dramatically by 48 percent during the same period. Sometimes called "super-gentrification" (Lees, 2010), this process of change has made the city increasingly upper-middle-class and pushed low-income and middle-class residents to areas of the East Bay including Oakland. The presence of super-gentrification is evident in the figures on class composition in the third panel of Table 1. Between 1990 and 2010, the percentage of city residents in the second and third quintiles of household income declined, while the fourth and fifth quintiles, associated with the upper class, increased. Particularly

Table 1: Demographic and Economic Change Over Time

	1990	2000	2010 ^a
<u>Racial composition</u>			
White, non-Latino	47	44	42
Black, non-Latino	11	7	6
Latino	14	14	15
Asian, non-Latino	28	31	33
<u>Housing prices (2014 dollars)</u>			
Median rent	1,147	1,276	1,533
Median housing value	517,836	581,317	765,700
<u>Class composition</u>			
<u>Household income (2014 dollars)</u>			
Less than \$25,000	20	17	20
\$25,000 to \$49,000	21	16	15
\$50,000 to \$99,999	32	28	24
\$100,000 to \$149,999	15	17	17
\$150,000 or more	13	23	24
<u>Educational attainment</u>			
High school diploma or less	65	55	47
Bachelor's or higher	35	45	53

SOURCES: U.S. Census 1990, 2000, and 2010. American Community Survey 2010-2014 estimates.

NOTE: All dollar amounts are adjusted to 2014 dollars. ^aData for household income was attained from the American Community Survey estimates for 2010-2014.

dramatic has been the increase in households making \$150,000 or more from 13 to 24 percent of the city's population. Additionally, the city has seen a marked increase in the proportion of

college graduates, including a large increase in those with Master's degrees or higher. This change has been due in part to the close proximity of the city to Silicon Valley and the high concentration of tech companies in the local economy. This proximity has meant San Francisco's economic development is closely tied to the larger region, which influences both commercial changes in the location of tech companies including startups and large, established corporations, and residential changes in who is living in the city. The city is thus subject to the booms and busts of the tech industry, which has seen ups and downs over the period of study.

This study focuses on 1990 to 2014 to understand how gentrification in San Francisco neighborhoods is portrayed in local news media. I analyze articles from the San Francisco newspapers with the highest circulations: the *San Francisco Chronicle* and the *San Francisco Examiner*.³ Based on their 2017 Media Kit, the *Chronicle* has a circulation of 1.6 million in the Bay Area through both print and web publications (Hearst Corporation, 2017). The *Examiner* has a smaller circulation, but still reaches 561,004 readers with their Sunday edition (The San Francisco Examiner, 2015). I chose to focus on newspapers with wider circulation to capture the portrait of gentrification in the mainstream news coverage.

I compiled articles from the Access World News database.⁴ Each article is about San Francisco and uses either gentrification, gentrify, or gentrifying.⁵ Articles that discuss a similar process of neighborhood change without labeling it as gentrification were not included. The articles cover a wide range of topics because I identified relevant articles based on the *use* of

³ The *Chronicle* is owned by the Hearst Corporation, while the *Examiner* is owned by Oahu Publications Inc.

⁴ Digitized articles were only available from the *Examiner* for 2008 through 2014.

⁵ Past tense references to gentrification were not included, so as to ensure that the article was discussing gentrification that was current at the time of publication.

the term gentrification, not being *about* gentrification. Thus, some articles mention gentrification as an aside while the content of the article is focused on some other topic. Articles that mention the term but are not about gentrification are relevant because they prime the reader to think about gentrification. Thus, the subject matter of the article can influence what readers think gentrification is and whether they think gentrification is a positive or negative form of neighborhood change.

In total, this paper is based on an analysis of 450 articles from the *Chronicle* published between 1990 and 2014 and 44 articles from the *Examiner* from 2008 to 2014. I coded each article with both text analysis and qualitative coding in MaxQDA, a Qualitative Data Analysis software package. I used a lexical search for the text analysis to identify articles that used race and class related words. The race words included both racial terms and country names for racial categories, while the class words included both class terms and descriptors.⁶

In addition to the text analysis, I also qualitatively coded each article with MaxQDA to explain how and when race was referenced. The coding scheme included coding for the subject matter of the article and stakeholder groups referenced. To develop the codebook, I began with a list of predefined codes (deductive) of what I expected to find in articles to which I added and removed codes based on their presence or absence in the articles (inductive).

For the analysis presented here, I used both quantified data from the text analyses, quantified information about the qualitative coding, and the qualitative coding itself. I present both descriptive statistics and graphs that summarize how race and class were portrayed and qualitative examples of *how* race and class were portrayed over time.

⁶ See Appendix A for more detail.

Study Limitations

I focus on newspapers, which have experienced a decline in readership during the period of study. Despite this, using newspapers provides a consistent media source over a long period of time. The newspapers used in this study were in circulation for the entirety of the period from 1990 to 2014 and have accessible sources through electronic databases and microfilm. This cannot be said for internet-based media sources like blogs, for example. Furthermore, it is possible that the readership for newspapers is broader than these alternative sources of media, which require internet access.

I chose to focus on newspapers with a wide circulation, which inherently excludes neighborhood-based newspapers, foreign language newspapers, and racial or ethnic newspapers such as the *Afro-American*. These newspapers would certainly add additional perspectives on the presentation of gentrification in the media. However, including these newspapers would provide less insight into the *predominate* images to which city residents are exposed. Understanding how gentrification is presented to a more specific audience such as residents of a particular neighborhood or of a particular racial or ethnic group should be the subject of another study.

Finally, because the analysis focuses specifically on articles that mention the word “gentrification” or one of its present tense derivatives, it does not capture other words or phrases that might be used to describe the process of gentrification. While this exclusion limits the generalizability of the results to any depiction of upward class changes in neighborhood composition, the findings specifically shed light on how the term gentrification itself is described by race and class.

The Race and Class Depictions of Gentrification

I conducted a text analysis and qualitative coding to determine whether race and class are depicted, what race and class groups are depicted, when race and class are described, and whether gentrification is valued positively or negatively in articles that describe gentrification by race and class. I find that race and class were frequently mentioned in articles on gentrification in San Francisco, although gentrification was more likely to be explicitly described in class terms than racial terms. When gentrification was described by race and class, the process was depicted as one in which the middle class and whites moved into predominately black and low-income neighborhoods. While the class depictions generally reflect the definition and understood nature of the process of gentrification, the articles with racial descriptions focused disproportionately on a subset of the city's residents – a small black population that declined over the period of study. Regardless of whether an article described race or class, concerns about gentrification were raised more often than benefits. However, when long-term residents were described as black or low-income, there were fewer concerns mentioned than when they were described as Latino or working-class. Interestingly, the presence of concerns in articles was generally similar regardless of how recent in-movers were described with the exception that when recent in-movers were described as upper-class, there were no concerns mentioned.

The Use of Race and Class Terms

Overall, the text analysis revealed that most articles on gentrification in San Francisco mentioned race or class. However, as shown in Table 2, more articles were likely to mention

class than race. Of the 494 articles, almost half mentioned race and about two-thirds mentioned class. Only about one quarter mentioned neither race nor class, whereas one-third of the articles mentioned both race and class.

Table 2: Percent of Articles Mentioning Race and Class

	Not Mentioning Class	Mentioning Class	Total Articles
Not Mentioning Race	26	28	54
Mentioning Race	12	33	46
Total Articles	38	62	100

SOURCE: Author's calculations.

When race was mentioned, it was most often a reference to whites or Asians as shown in Table 3. These references align with whites and Asians making up the majority of city residents during the period of study. However, blacks, the smallest minority group in the city during the period of study, were mentioned almost as often (41.6%) as whites (48.2%) and Asians (46%). Importantly, blacks were referenced more frequently than Latinos (32.7%) despite the fact that Latinos made up a larger proportion of the city's population during the period of study.

Table 3: Articles Mentioning Race or Class

	Percent
Any race or ethnicity	45.7
Any class	61.5
Among articles that mentioned race:	
White	48.2
Black	41.6
Latino	32.7
Asian	46.0
Among articles that mentioned class:	
Poor	64.1
Working-class	24.7
Middle-class	55.6
Upper-class	33.6

SOURCE: Author's calculations.

In the articles that mentioned class, the focus was mostly on poor (64.1%) and middle-class (55.6%) residents, as shown in Table 3, even though they made up less than half of the city's population during the time of study. Poor residents were at most 20 percent of the city's population, and the middle-class was effectively declining between 1990 and 2014 ending at just below a quarter of the total population. The class group that was experiencing the greatest increase in the city, the upper class, was mentioned in a third of the articles. Finally, the working class was covered least frequently during a period in which their population was in decline.

These results demonstrate that mentions of race and class were an integral part of the news coverage that gentrification received, however, the frequency with which certain racial groups and classes were mentioned did not necessarily align with the demographics of the city itself. While we would expect the class discussion to focus primarily on the poor and middle class given the definition of gentrification, we also find that coverage was disproportionately focused on black residents even though they made up a small and declining segment of the city's population. Despite this, blacks received a disproportionate amount of coverage, particularly when compared to whites, Asians and Latinos.

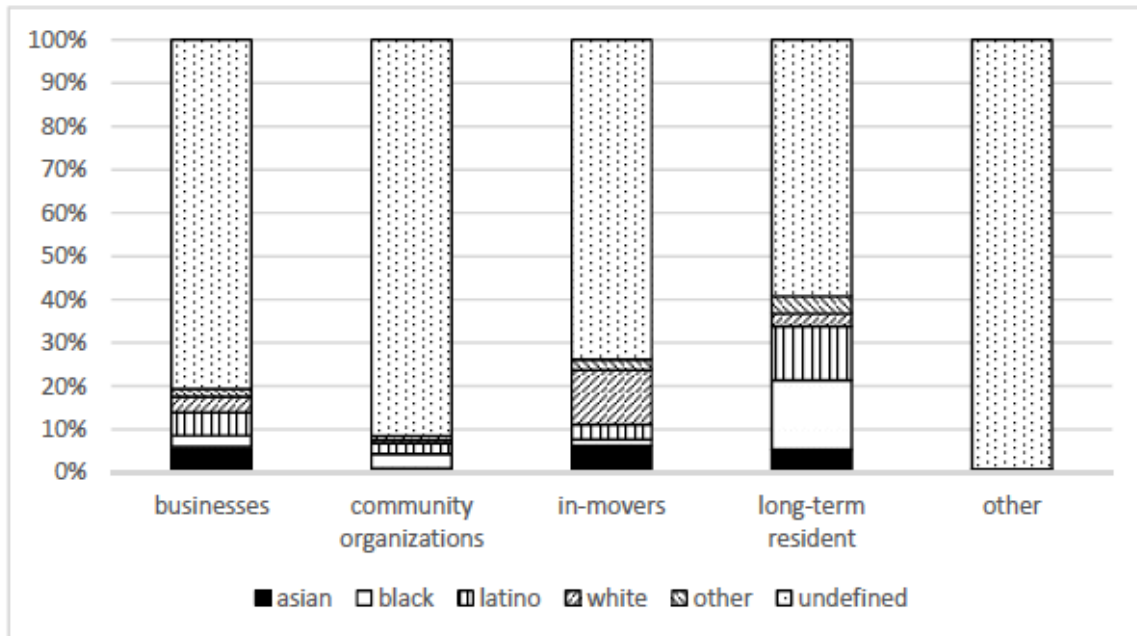
Whose Race and Class is Described?

Almost all of the articles included interviews with stakeholders and references to stakeholder individuals or groups. Stakeholders included businesses, community organizations, recent neighborhood in-movers, long-term neighborhood residents, and other stakeholders. Overall, race and class were most likely to be used to describe the demographics of the neighborhood and its commercial amenities through descriptions of long-term residents, recent in-movers, and businesses. Similar to the text analysis results, stakeholders' class was more frequently mentioned than their race.

When racial descriptions were included, they were most often used to describe long-term residents (40%), as shown in Figure 1. This was especially the case with black long-term residents, followed by Latino. In some cases, racial descriptions included the demographics of the neighborhood: "From 1980 to 1990, the percentage of blacks in the area dropped from 73 percent to 62 percent, while the number of Asians and Latinos has been increasing" (Lang,

1991). In others, these descriptors were used to describe interviewees: “H. J. Stevenson, a black man who has lived in Hayes Valley for 28 years, was skeptical about the plans for new homes and shops. ‘Who's going to be able to afford them?’ he asked” (Walker, 1993a).

Figure 1: Racial Descriptions of Stakeholders



SOURCE: Author's calculations.

In contrast to this, recent in-movers and businesses were predominately depicted as white or Asian. Most recent in-movers were described as white (13%), but Asian in-movers were mentioned at about half the rate. For example, a 1998 article on gentrification in the Mission states, “Among many Mission residents, there is a perception that the newcomers, mostly white young professionals, are oblivious to the Mission's Latino heritage” (Levy, 1998). In contrast, businesses were mostly described as Asian (6%) or Latino (5%), followed by white (4%). These descriptors were most often references to ethnic food, particularly Asian, Latino,

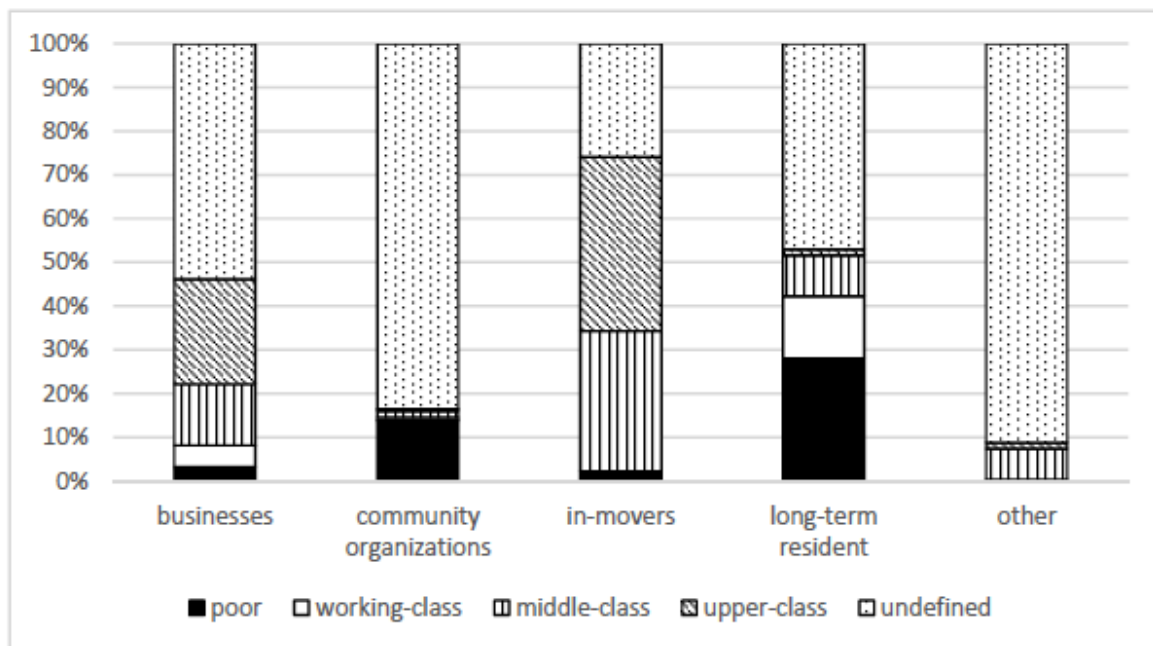
or ethnic white restaurants, or references to minority-owned businesses. For example, when reporting on an exhibition-based protest led by artists in the Mission, the journalist writes: “One person who has noticed the artists' protests is Charles Phan, whose family owns the Slanted Door, a 5-year-old Vietnamese restaurant on Valencia Street that is a favorite hangout for dot-com employees” (Martin, 2000).

This pattern suggests that the stories often depicted black or Latino neighborhoods experiencing white or Asian in-movers, particularly in articles about residential change. Blacks were mentioned more frequently as long-term residents, even though they made up a smaller proportion of San Francisco residents than any other racial group during the period of study. The articles most likely to focus on commercial change or development, which mention businesses, included more racial diversity, but businesses were less likely to be depicted racially than long-term residents and recent in-movers.

Because class was more frequently discussed than race, there were higher rates of class descriptions used when describing stakeholders, as shown in Figure 2. In fact, recent in-movers and long-term residents were described with class terms in over half of the stakeholder references. These class descriptions align with the class dynamics of gentrification. Recent in-movers were predominately described as upper-class or middle-class. Long-term residents were predominately described as poor, followed by working-class. For both recent in-movers and long-term residents, descriptions included neighborhood demographics and demographic changes, along with descriptions of specific interviewees. For example, in an article describing demographic changes happening in Hayes Valley that are leading to gentrification by the middle class the journalist writes: “many Hayes Valley residents, even those who appreciate the

changes, worry that such vast transformation will have a down side: More young professionals will move into the neighborhood, driving up housing prices and forcing them from their homes” (Walker, 1993a). In another article, the reporter includes a quote from a low-income renter, whose low rent (\$190/month) indicates he is likely a long-term resident: “Today, San Francisco has become a place where ‘there is a big Yuppie movement, and people don't mind paying \$2,000 or \$3,000 a month for rent,’ said Hurley, whose monthly rent is \$190” (Sward, 1999).

Figure 2: Stakeholders Class Descriptions



SOURCE: Author's calculations.

Finally, businesses were predominately described as upper-class or middle-class. These descriptions often included explicit class descriptors of the target clientele of a business, but could also generally describe the business in class terms. This example, from an article on gentrification in San Francisco’s Western Addition, does both, referring to “upscale” businesses

and their clientele of “blue bloods and socialites”: “Gentrification already has taken over a part of the Western Addition many now call Lower Pacific Heights, they note, where a string of upscale restaurants and boutiques have opened in recent years along Fillmore Street below where the blue bloods and socialites live” (Massey, 1990).

Overall, the class portrait of gentrification drawn by news coverage presents low-income and working-class long-term residents being pushed out by middle- and upper-class in-movers, resulting in businesses catering to the middle and upper classes. These depictions paint a portrait of gentrification that closely aligns with the definition of gentrification generally used by scholars.

Interpretations of Gentrification

One reason racial and class depictions matter is because these descriptions prime the reader to think positively or negatively about gentrification based on the stereotypes associated with the race or class group mentioned. For example, describing a predominately black neighborhood could elicit stereotypes of an area that is high in poverty and crime (Quillian & Pager, 2001; Sampson & Raudenbush, 2004). An article can also explicitly value gentrification as a positive or negative change. To determine whether gentrification receives a more or less positive frame in news coverage, and under what circumstances, I coded when benefits of and concerns about gentrification were discussed. Overall, gentrification was presented as a detrimental change. However, this varied depending on the racial and class descriptions of stakeholders. The description of gentrification was less negative when long-

term neighborhood residents were described as black, Asian, poor, or middle-class compared with when they were described as Latino or working-class.

Benefits of gentrification most often focused on tamping down the negative effects of poverty for neighborhood residents including isolation from resources, a lack of investment in the area, dilapidated housing, and crime. For example, one article about the Mission District emphasized the positive changes brought about by gentrification in contrast to its reputation as a high crime neighborhood:

Don't think of the Mission District as a neighborhood. Think of it as a morality play, a place where San Francisco's most creative and destructive forces are in combat. The Mission: Everything you've heard about it is true. There is an artistic renaissance. There are gangs. The Flying Saucer on Guerrero may be the most inventive restaurant in the city. The Leonard R. Flynn School on Army Street teaches children gunfire survival skills. It's where San Francisco began. It's where San Francisco is busy being reborn or dying.
(Kahn, 1993)

The gentrifying forces are described as “creative,” “artistic,” and “inventive.” In contrast, the neighborhood’s past is presented as “destructive” and involving gangs and shootings. The previous state of the neighborhood is killing San Francisco, while the gentrifying forces are giving San Francisco a rebirth.

Concerns about gentrification predominately focused on the implications of gentrification for poor and working-class residents, small businesses, Latinos and blacks in

neighborhoods with historically large concentrations, and the availability of affordable housing for the poor, working class, and even middle class. For example, an article about the replacement of public housing at the Hayes Valley Housing Projects, slated to become a mixed-income townhouse development, highlighted the concerns of long-term residents of the housing projects:

Exactly who will return when the new Hayes Valley development is finished remains unknown. According to Price, the majority of one-bedroom tenants will not return because most of the new units will be for larger families needing more bedrooms. For them, and for others who will not return, the city will make other public housing available, she said. Resident Tanzola Alexander is among those who will probably not return, because she lives in a one-bedroom apartment. Although the demolition is more than a year away, she is already anxious. “They said they'd relocate us, but will I have the same amount of space?” she asked one afternoon in her small, dark apartment. “Will I be relocated in a worse area than I am now?” Likewise, Jessie Holmes, who has lived in Hayes Valley South on Haight Street for 11 years, is worried about where she will be relocated if she does not return to the new development. “I want to stay close to my family -- somewhere where I'm known,” said the elderly woman, who suffers from arthritis. “I just don't want to be in a new neighborhood all by myself.” (Walker, 1993b)

The major concern highlighted in this article was who will be able to return to the neighborhood. Long-term residents interviewed for this article worried about being able to

return to the new development and where they would end up if that wasn't an option. Like this example, displacement was a frequently mentioned concern – whether about long-term residents or small, local businesses.

Table 4 presents the prevalence of discussions of benefits and concerns across the articles. Just over half of the articles included neither benefits nor concerns. Within the articles that mentioned benefits or concerns, concerns outnumbered benefits, providing an overall negative frame to changes brought by gentrification. Articles that mentioned benefits but no concerns were few and far between.

Table 4: Percent of Articles by Benefits and Concerns

	No Concerns Mentioned	Concerns Mentioned	Total Articles
No benefits mentioned	54	26	80
Benefits mentioned	5	15	20
Total articles	59	41	100

SOURCE: Author's calculations.

Table 5 shows the percent of passages that mentioned benefits or concerns by the article type. Regardless of whether race or class was mentioned, there were approximately 2 concerns mentioned for every benefit.

Table 5: Percent of Passages Discussing Benefits and Concerns

	Benefits	Concerns
All articles	32	68
Raced articles	18	36
Classed articles	25	51

SOURCE: Author's calculations.

To test the relationship between racial descriptions and the discussion of benefits and concerns, I analyzed the mention of concerns and benefits by which race and class groups were presented as long-term residents and recent in-movers. Table 6 shows the results for long-term residents with racial groups in the top panel and class groups in the bottom panel. Articles that described long-term residents as “people of color” or “minorities” had the highest number of concerns per benefit at 3.4. Next most frequent was descriptions of Latinos with a rate of 2.6 concerns per benefit. The next highest rate was 2 concerns per benefit when long-term residents were mentioned but not depicted racially. Finally, descriptions of black, white, and Asian long-term residents had rates of 1.5, 1.2, and 1.1 concerns per benefit respectively. Importantly, because long-term residents were rarely described as white and only sometimes described as Asian, the number of benefits and concerns are much lower in total and thus the rate of concerns per benefit is unlikely to provide accurate information.

These ratios suggest that gentrification is seen as a larger concern when a neighborhood is Latino or described as diverse, followed by when there is no race used to describe long-term residents. However, when long-term residents are described as black, there are less than half

as many concerns mentioned as when long-term residents are described as diverse. This finding suggests that the gentrification of black neighborhoods is portrayed more favorably than the gentrification of Latino or “diverse” neighborhoods.

In articles that described stakeholders’ class background, there were more concerns when long-term residents were described as working-class and fewer concerns when they were described as poor. Articles with references to working-class long-term residents included 2.9 concerns per benefit. When long-term residents’ class characteristics were not defined, or were described as middle-class or poor, there were about 2 concerns per benefit. These ratios suggest that gentrification is portrayed less negatively in neighborhoods that have negative stereotypes (poor neighborhoods) or neighborhoods whose residents have the means to relocate (middle-class).

Table 6: Count of Benefits and Concerns by Race and Class of Long-Term Residents

	Concerns	Benefits	Concerns per Benefit
Race/ethnicity			
White	13	11	1.2
Black	90	59	1.5
Latino	54	21	2.6
Asian	27	24	1.1
Diverse	37	11	3.4
Undefined	298	150	2.0
Class			
Poor	169	92	1.8
Working-class	101	35	2.9
Middle-class	58	27	2.1
Upper-class	0	0	0.0
Undefined	266	118	2.3

SOURCE: Author's calculations.

Table 7 displays the same analysis by the race and class descriptions of recent in-movers. Overall, there are lower rates of concerns per benefit, which seems to reflect that concerns are more likely to be raised when long-term residents are identified and described. For race, concerns per benefit were highest when in-movers were described as diverse, followed by when they were described as white or not described racially. When in-movers were described as black or Asian, the rate was similar at 1.6 concerns per benefit. However, descriptions as diverse and black were rarely used. Finally, when in-movers were described as Latino, there were slightly more benefits mentioned per concern. These ratios suggest that there were frequent concerns about white in-movers, and fewer concerns about gentrification by Asians and Latinos.

Table 7: Count of Benefits and Concerns by Race and Class of Recent In-Movers

	Concerns	Benefits	Concerns per Benefit
Race/ethnicity			
White	43	22	2.0
Black	8	5	1.6
Latino	13	14	0.9
Asian	28	18	1.6
Other	12	5	2.4
Undefined	202	100	2.0
Class			
Poor	4	6	0.7
Working-class	0	0	0.0
Middle-class	106	68	1.6
Upper-class	0	31	0.0
Undefined	86	42	2.0

SOURCE: Author's calculations.

The class analysis, displayed in the lower panel of Table 7, also shows lower rates of concerns per benefit overall. The ratios were highest when in-movers were not described in terms of class with a rate of 2 concerns per benefit and when in-movers were described as middle-class, which had a ratio of 1.6 concerns per benefit. When in-movers were described as poor, benefits outnumbered concerns slightly, but in-movers were rarely described as poor. Finally, when in-movers were described as upper-class, there were only benefits mentioned. This description is particularly striking given that in-movers were described as upper-class 40 percent of the time. Given that upper-class gentrifiers reduce affordability of housing for both low-income and middle-class neighborhood residents, this result suggests that there are fewer concerns about gentrification in general when it affects the lower and middle classes.

To summarize my findings on benefits and concerns, articles that depicted Latino and “diverse” neighborhoods or working-class neighborhoods portrayed gentrification more negatively than articles about black or poor neighborhoods. These mixed portrayals of gentrification, in combination with predominately negative stereotypes of the poor and blacks (Bobo & Zubrinsky, 1996; Gans, 1962, 1995; Gilens, 1996, 2009; Samson & Bobo, 2014), are likely to reinforce a general lack of concern for changes affecting poor and black neighborhoods.

Conclusion

This paper examines news coverage of gentrification in San Francisco between 1990 and 2014. It looks closely at the ways in which race and class are depicted in descriptions of the process of gentrification and how gentrification is valued. I find that most reporting on

gentrification includes a description of the specific race and class of stakeholders and presents a common frame of low-income and black neighborhoods experiencing an in-movement of middle-class and white residents. Significantly, whether the change brought about by gentrification was presented as positive or negative depended upon the race and class of the stakeholders and neighborhoods being described. Articles presented gentrification as less negative when it occurred in poor or black neighborhoods than when it occurred in working-class or Latino neighborhoods.

These findings are particularly important given the theoretical premise of this paper. Media presentations of processes like gentrification both reflect and inform public opinion about these processes. Because most Americans do not experience gentrification directly (Landis, 2015; Owens, 2012; Sampson, 2012), these portrayals have the potential to influence how city residents view the process and when and how gentrification is addressed. Based on the findings presented here, we can expect that gentrification, like slum clearance (Gans, 1962, 1995), is likely to be seen as a positive form of neighborhood change by consumers of the news media, particularly when occurring in predominately black neighborhoods and poor neighborhoods. This in turn, may contribute to voters' support for redevelopment efforts in low-income neighborhoods and black neighborhoods that do not include measures to protect low-income residents from gentrification and preserve affordable housing. In contrast, gentrification in working-class or Latino neighborhoods is more likely to garner opposition to gentrification and support for affordable housing.

While the implications are clearer when race and class are explicitly described, race and class are both frequently undefined. The prior literature suggests that the absence of race and

class is often used to signal an image of the “average” American (Carbado, 2013). More specifically, it signals the image of a middle-class white individual, which suggests that the high rates of concerns per benefit when race and class are undefined could be interpreted as greater concern for the effects of gentrification when long-term residents are thought of as white or middle-class and when in-movers are thought of as white or middle-class. Although this interpretation might read as contradictory, it highlights that newspaper articles presented more concerns about gentrification when long-term residents were middle-class and when recent in-movers were white. Future research should test how readers respond to information about processes of gentrification that does not include race and class descriptions to determine what readers are assuming about the race and class composition of long-term residents and recent in-movers when they are not specified.

For San Francisco, this study suggests that neighborhood-specific policy responses to gentrification are shaped by who is seen as doing the gentrifying and who is seen as experiencing gentrification. The lack of concern for poor and black neighborhoods undergoing gentrification aligns with policy interventions underway at the time (HOPE VI and HOPE SF) that were designed to encourage gentrification in historically black neighborhoods like Bayview-Hunters Point (Dillon, 2011). The fact that the Mission District, a historically Latino neighborhood, was subject to new community benefits agreements in an effort to protect the neighborhood from the negative effects of gentrification during this period, while the city pushed gentrification through state funds in Bayview-Hunters Point, supports my argument that perceptions matter and help to explain support for policies that vary by the race and class composition depending on where and when gentrification occurs.

The media – and the mainstream news media in particular – is an important and useful source for urban scholars interested in understanding perceptions, assumptions, and responses to processes of urban change. Media representations are not just descriptions of the real world, but depictions of the world that reflect and reinforce assumptions, perceptions, and stereotypes through journalists and their sources. These representations inform, reinforce, and influence public opinion. Thus, understanding the media portrayal of a process of urban change sheds light on the mechanisms that shape the views of the American public, as well as the responses that policymakers craft to processes of urban change.

Appendix Table 1: Subject of Articles

	<u>All Articles</u>			<u>Race Articles</u>			<u>Class Articles</u>		
	Count	Rank	Percent	Count	Rank	Percent	Count	Rank	Percent
Commercial development	286	1	57.9	138	1	61.1	186	1	61.2
Crime or violence	102	9	20.6	55	9	24.3	77	8	25.3
Economic development	63	11	12.8	33	11	14.6	45	11	14.8
Eviction	62	12	12.6	23	12	10.2	44	12	14.5
Food	115	8	23.3	65	8	28.8	67	9	22.0
Politics	219	2	44.3	86	5	38.1	146	2	48.0
Property prices	192	3	38.9	97	3	42.9	142	3	46.7
Residential change	177	6	35.8	108	2	47.8	132	5	43.4
Residential conflict	84	10	17.0	39	10	17.3	59	10	19.4
Residential development	185	5	37.4	79	7	35.0	137	4	45.1
The arts	161	7	32.6	81	6	35.8	102	7	33.6
Other	187	4	37.9	88	4	38.9	129	6	42.4
Total articles	494			226			304		

SOURCE: Author's calculations.

NOTE: Articles can mention both race and class. Articles can also cover more than one subject matter.

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Institute for the
Study of
Societal Issues

2420 Bowditch St. # 5670
Berkeley , CA 94720-5670

tel: 510-642-0813

fax: 510-642-8674

email: issi@berkeley.edu

web: <http://issi.berkeley.edu>