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Gentrified Barrio:
Gentrification and the Latino Community in San Francisco's Mission District

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Master
of Arts

in

Latin American Studies

by

Anne Meredith Nyborg

Committee in charge:

Professor April Linton, Chair
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2008

The Thesis of Anne Meredith Nyborg is approved and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm:

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2008

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DEDICATION

Because I'm not sure when I'll get around to writing that top-selling novel, I'd like to dedicate this thesis to my sister, my mom, and my dad. Without their love, support, and humor, I wouldn't be where I am today.

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Gentrified Barrio: Gentrification and the Latino Community in San Francisco's Mission District

by

Anne Meredith Nyborg

Master of Arts in Latin American Studies

University of California, San Diego, 2008

Professor April Linton, Chair

Scholarly literature has focused predominantly on the role of the gentrifiers and the developers in the gentrification process without formally addressing the perceptions of existing residents. New studies that incorporate local resident sentiment reveal that contrary to popular wisdom, gentrification can actually have certain beneficial and appreciated effects on low-income communities. The

reactions to gentrification of residents from different neighborhoods vary however, depending on the context of the neighborhood. For example, while studies of Harlem suggest that residents appreciate many changes in their neighborhood resulting from gentrification, the area had reached levels of blight unknown by other low-income communities. Although also low-income, other areas like working-class ethnic enclaves may be more hostile towards gentrification because their communities have not reached the same levels of disinvestment and abandonment. This thesis explores the experiences of long-term Latino residents in San Francisco's gentrifying Mission District with the aim of providing a fuller understanding of gentrification's impact on low-income communities.

I conducted field research in the Mission District between September 2007 and January 2008 which included interviews with long-term Latino residents. I also conducted an historical analysis of the neighborhood in order to give my interview and participant observations context.

I found that although Latino residents were concerned about certain changes to their neighborhood resulting from gentrification, their perceptions about the process were complex and incorporated other contextual factors. Instead of blaming all changes in the community on gentrification, they mapped out relationships between family, crime, unemployment, youth, and community culture.

Introduction

After the great migration to the suburbs in the 1940s and 50s, our cities fell into a state of disrepair and neglect. The 1970s heralded a new phenomenon touted as the possible savior of these cities plagued by disinvestment and blight. Initially, many believed that *gentrification* – the process by which high-income households move into low-income areas thus infusing resources and changing the character of an area – could reinvigorate our cities. This short-lived sentiment gave way to a focus on gentrification's detrimental impact on existing low-income residents and its role in displacing these individuals.

While substantial research and literature on the subject of gentrification exists, few studies incorporate the perceptions of the existing low-income residents of a gentrifying area. Instead, scholarly literature predominantly discusses the role of the developers and the gentrifiers, as well as the myriad negative effects of gentrification on communities. Likewise, while community activists have higher visibility, the loudest voices in a neighborhood are not always representative of the entire community. Few studies have formally asked long-term residents about their opinion of the process.

Lance Freeman, a professor at Columbia University, conducted one of the first thorough investigations focusing on the perceptions and experiences of indigenous residents. He looked at the impact of gentrification on long-term residents in Clinton Hill and Harlem, New York and discovered that, contrary to popular wisdom, these residents actually appreciated some of the changes resulting

from the gentrification of their neighborhoods. He argues that indigenous residents do not necessarily react according to the preconceived notions generally attributed to them and that the impact of gentrification is more nuanced than most scholarly literature suggests. In order to obtain a complete understanding of the process, we need to take a more thorough look at the experiences of existing residents.

Freeman notes however, that other types of communities likely perceive gentrification differently than Harlem and Clinton Hill. Harlem had reached extreme levels of blight and thus any form of improvement to the neighborhood would likely be appreciated by existing residents. Freeman explains that other kinds of communities like working-class ethnic enclaves may feel differently about changes to their neighborhood from gentrification. These working-class communities have not reached the same levels of disinvestment and abandonment as Harlem and may therefore be more hostile towards gentrification. For example, while ethnic enclaves may not have gourmet grocery stores, they still have fully stocked local markets and find no need for the “improvements” from gentrification. Harlem residents, on the other hand, suffered from a lack of many services and amenities found in vibrant working-class communities.

My research builds from this observation and explores Latino residents’ experiences with gentrification in San Francisco’s *barrio* – the Mission District. Similar to Harlem and the Black community, the Mission District is an historic epicenter for Latino culture and politics. Freeman argues that the context and history of a neighborhood influences a community’s reaction to gentrification. In

comparing it with Harlem and Clinton Hill, the aim of my research was to better understand how residents of the Mission District, an ethnic enclave, perceive gentrification in their community.

In my research I explore the history and development of the Mission and the perceptions of long-term Latino residents regarding the changes in their neighborhood over the years – my purpose being to test Freeman’s idea that vibrant ethnic enclaves may be more hostile towards gentrification than what he found in Harlem and Clinton Hill. As with Freeman, my goal was not merely to bring to light the perceptions of long-term residents but also how we might incorporate them into policy.

Gentrification produces both negative and beneficial effects. By taking a closer look at low-income residents’ experiences, we may be able to develop ways for promoting gentrification’s benefits while mitigating its negative impact. Communities react differently to gentrification however, so in order to craft effective policies, policymakers need to understand how different kinds of communities experience the process.

San Francisco’s Mission District boasts a rich Latino history and has long been a major destination for Latin American immigrants. A strong sense of Latino community pride and active community organization has also characterized the neighborhood over the decades. Considering the Mission’s history and the fact that the neighborhood had not reached the same level of blight as Harlem, the prediction that long-term Mission residents would be hostile towards gentrification seems

appropriate. This thesis argues, however, that the perceptions the Mission residents are more complex than anticipated and reveal new ways for understanding the impact of gentrification on different communities. Mission residents pieced together intricate relationships between job opportunities, crime, family, community culture, and social capital. They presented facets of the gentrification process previously not formally detailed in the gentrification debate. This thesis provides a more complete understanding of the gentrification process and also helps inform the actions of policy makers, community organizers, and city planners currently working to address the ramification of gentrification.

Chapter 1 gives an overview of gentrification literature over the last three decades as well as introduces Lance Freeman and his recent work in Harlem and Clinton Hill. Chapter 2 covers my research methods. Chapter 3 and 4 provide the historical and current context for the Mission District in which to position my field findings presented in chapter 5. Finally, in chapter 6, I suggest ways to incorporate my findings into a larger gentrification policy discussion.

CHAPTER 1 – Literature Review: Reevaluating Gentrification

The scholarly debate on gentrification over the last two decades has focused largely on defending one of the two prevailing explanations for the process – the supply/production side explanation put forth by Neil Smith or the demand/consumption side explanation suggested by David Ley. The former stresses the production of urban space, the operation of the housing and land market, and the role of capital and collective social actors such as developers and mortgage finance institutions on the production of gentrifiable property. The latter focuses on the creation of gentrifiers and their associated cultural, consumption and reproductive decisions (Freeman, 2006; Hamnett, 1991). While each side certainly plays a role in explaining gentrification, neither is complete and today we are beginning to see a shift in literature emphasizing the complementary, rather than competing nature of the arguments (Hamnett, 1991; Lees, 2000). A more holistic approach to explaining the phenomenon would provide a more comprehensive understanding (Wilson, 1996).

Likewise, the effects of gentrification on inner cities and their residents have consumed substantial space in scholarly literature with a particular emphasis placed on its detrimental consequences such as displacement. While concerns like these certainly exist, recent literature suggests that such consequences may not be as profound as many have claimed and that, in fact, some of the changes produced by gentrification actually benefit existing residents (Freeman, 2006).

While gentrification significantly entered cities worldwide in the 1970s and 80s, the recession slowed, if not stopped, its progress in the early 90s, at which point

many scholars predicted the end of gentrification (DeFilippis and Smith, 1999). We see today that this is clearly not the case, as inner cities continue to experience redevelopment brought by gentrification. Likewise, a more nuanced approach to the subject, like the one taken by Lance Freeman (2006) and his study of Harlem, would better inform our understanding of the actual effects of gentrification on existing areas. The first half of this chapter consists of a brief overview of gentrification in general. The second half of the chapter reviews Freeman's work. This thesis builds on the observations made by Freeman regarding the effect of gentrification on the residents in Harlem and Clinton Hill, New York.

GENERAL DESCRIPTIVE AND HISTORIC OVERVIEW

In his *There Goes the 'Hood: Gentrification from the Ground Up*, Freeman begins by giving us a simple definition of gentrification that he attained from the Encyclopedia of Housing that describes it as, "The process by which central urban neighborhoods that have undergone disinvestments and economic decline experience a reversal, reinvestment, and the immigration of a relatively well-off, middle- and upper middle-class population" (Van Vliet 1998, p198). Chris Hamnett (1984, p. 284) lends an even more detailed account:

Simultaneously a physical, economic, social and cultural phenomenon. Gentrification commonly involves the invasion by middle-class or higher-income groups of previously working-class neighborhoods or multi-occupied 'twilight areas' and the replacement or displacement of many of the original occupants. It involves the physical renovation or rehabilitation of what was frequently a highly deteriorated housing stock and its upgrading to meet the requirements of its new owners. In the process, housing in the areas affected, both

renovated and unrenovated, undergoes a significant price appreciation. Such a process of neighborhood transition commonly involves a degree of tenure transformation from renting to owning.

While a process in its own, gentrification has also been seen as a kind of urban redevelopment, which broadly refers to structural changes and interventions within cities designed to reduce urban blight and improve urban institutions as well as the quality of life for residents (Wilson, 1996).

Gentrification is generally most prominent in central cities located in metropolitan areas experiencing economic, housing market, and socio-demographic change. The process is most salient in areas undergoing a growth in office construction supporting managerial and professional occupations marking a post-industrial transformation in which services and government play a larger role than manufacturing (Wilson, 1996). Likewise, while the influx of middle-class residents to these areas was once thought to be a “back-to-the-city” movement from the suburbs, the majority of gentrifiers actually make the move from other neighborhoods *within* the city (London, 1984).

In their work together, Jason Hackworth and Neil Smith (2001) outline three distinct waves of gentrification. The first wave, which occurred prior to 1973, was characterized by a localized, sporadic and state-led nature. Although significantly funded by the public sector, with the state justifying its involvement through a discourse of ameliorating urban decline, its effect was class specific. This initial wave ended with the 1973-77 global recession.

The second wave of the late 1970s through the end of the 80s, displayed an expansion of gentrification as well as a growing resistance against it. Local state

efforts focused on prodding private market endeavors but did not directly influence the process. This wave was characterized by the integration of gentrification into a broader range of economic and cultural processes at both the national and global levels but ended with the stock market crash of 1987.

The third wave, after the much hyped but incorrect “degentrification” talk of the early 90s, exhibited a recessionary pause and subsequent expansion. According to Hackworth and Smith, this latest wave differs from the previous waves in four ways. First, gentrification is expanding within the inner city but also to more remote neighborhoods. Second, the restructuring and globalization in the real estate industry has increased the involvement of large developers in gentrifying areas. Third, “effective resistance to gentrification has declined as the working class is continually displaced from the inner city, and as the most militant anti-gentrification groups of the 1980s morph into housing service providers” (p. 468). And finally, the state is currently more involved in the process than it was in the second wave (Hackworth and Smith, 2001).

While the initial onset of gentrification in the early 70s was seen in a positive light for its potential to “save” the decrepit and crime-ridden central cities, the term now has negative connotations tied to displacement and the destruction of working-class communities (Smith, 1996). Likewise, today gentrification is often categorized as the postmodern version of the urban renewal programs of the 1950s and 60s, which produced devastating results for many communities across the nation

(Freeman, 2006). All considered however, gentrification has historically been a limited and localized process.

Chris Hamnett (1991) suggests several possibilities why gentrification has received so much scholarly attention when its process has been relatively small-scale compared to the massive movement of people to the suburbs in the 40s and 50s. One possible explanation for the attention is the fact that gentrification poses major challenges to the traditional theories of residential location preferences and urban social structure. It undermines the assumption that a preference for space and low densities is the most important factor in determining residency location.

Another important consideration regards the role of policy. If gentrification does cause considerable displacement, what then are the obligations of urban policy? A better understanding of gentrification would help inform political debates regarding the threat to working-class communities. Further, gentrification is one major leading edge of contemporary metropolitan restructuring similar to earlier suburbanization. It is part of the changing international spatial division of labor and the emergence of global cities. Finally, gentrification “represents one of the key theoretical and ideological battlegrounds in urban geography, and indeed in human geography as a whole, between the liberal humanists who stress the key role of choice, culture, consumption and consumer demand, and the structural Marxists who stress the role of capital, class, production, supply” (Hamnett, 1991, p. 173).

SMITH'S PRODUCTION/SUPPLY SIDE

The supply side explanation of gentrification, developed and popularized by Neil Smith, rests on the cyclical nature of capital and its search for the highest rate of return (Freeman, 2006). Smith constructs his argument around the theory that a

devalorization cycle results in a rent gap, which creates land suitable for gentrification (London, 1984; Smith, 1996). According to Smith (1996, p. 67),

The rent gap is the disparity between the potential ground rent level and the actual ground rent capitalized under the present land use. The rent gap is produced primarily by capital devalorization (which diminishes the proportion of the ground rent able to be capitalized) and also by continued urban development and expansion (which has historically raised the potential ground rent level in the inner city).

Smith's rent gap theory works from the idea that the sustained suburbanization of the 1940s, 50s and 60s resulted in the disinvestment in inner cities, creating areas for subsequent profitable reinvestment (Hamnett, 1991; Smith, 1996). Gentrification occurs when "the rent gap is sufficiently wide that developers can purchase structures cheaply, can pay the builder's costs and profit for rehabilitation, can pay interest on mortgage and construction loans, and can then sell the end product for a sale price that leaves a satisfactory return to the developer" (Smith, 1996, p. 68).

LEY'S CONSUMPTION/DEMAND SIDE

The consumption side argument of gentrification formulated by David Ley (1996) focuses on the changing demographic and consumption patterns of the new middle-class and the shift of cities into post-industrial spaces. His explanation provides three key propositions addressing respectively, economics, politics and culture. First, economically the urban landscape is changing by the declining role of unskilled labor in manufacturing and the growing importance of technology and knowledge-based professions in the office and administration. Secondly and on the political front, post-industrial society differs from the industrial by the more active role of government. Ley argues that, "decision making and allocation of resources is

now referred to the political arena and not only to the market place...The politicization of varied interest groups is challenging the formerly firm hold of the business lobby on political decision making” (Ley, 1980, p. 241). Finally, at the sociocultural level, different cultural tastes and preferences of the new middle-class have made inner city living a more attractive option than previously (Hamnett, 1991).

These three propositions play out in a variety of ways and help explain the motives behind gentrifiers’ actions. The new middle-class places a higher value on things like urban density, diversity, commute time to work, and certain neighborhood and housing types (Allen, 1984). Likewise, the new middleclass is marrying older and experiencing declining fertility rates. The absence of children affects residential choices because certain safety, space and school choices are moot, thus making the inner city a more viable option (Freeman, 2006; Friedenfels, 1992; London, 2000). While these preferences do not necessarily cause intrametropolitan migrations, they mediate and initiate consumer decisions when economic advantage is marginal (Allen, 1984). As London (1984, p. 39) remarks, “A chic new neighborhood at the heart of an interesting city is for many the newest status symbol”.

The incomplete nature of both of these explanations leads some scholars to suggest the development of an integrated theory of gentrification – one that incorporates both approaches (Hamnett, 1991; London, 1984). This does not seem like it would be such a radical proposal, and yet gentrification scholars have been

strangely reluctant to move in the direction of integration – preferring to stake claims in one of the predetermined theories. Hamnett suggests that in “some ways, the conflict has been between two interpretations of production. The one looking at changes in the social and spatial division of labor and the production of gentrifiers, and the other looking at the production of the built environment”(1991, p.187). In this respect, the debate exists as two sides of the same coin.

While these factors help us develop a more integrated model addressing the *cause* of gentrification, we must also better our understanding of the *effects* of gentrification for a more comprehensive knowledge of the process.

THE IMPACT OF GENTRIFICATION

Originally, gentrification was attributed great potential to “save” our inner cities. It had the ability to bring investment and development back to the cities wiping out urban blight and revitalizing neighborhoods in the process. This perspective experienced a particularly rapid death however as the damaging claims of gentrification took center stage. People began to see that while gentrification was revitalizing for some, it was *devitalizing* for others, particularly the existing working-class communities (London, 1984; Freeman, 2006; Smith, 1996). Some gentrification advocates argued that the process brought great benefits to the city in the form of improved housing and tax revenue but these improvements to cities cannot be directly attributed to gentrification as other areas in city that are not experiencing gentrification report similar improvements (DeGiovanni, 1984).

The threat of displacement resulting from gentrification has been the most hotly contested issue in the debate. Smith is particularly vocal and critical of the detrimental effect gentrification has on low-income and working class communities. He argues that the benefits of gentrification accrue to the capitalists instead of the existing residents and that many residents are faced with displacement (Smith, 1996).

While a degree of displacement undoubtedly exists, recent studies and statistical analyses suggest that there is far less displacement involved than originally suspected (London, 1984). In some areas, gentrification results in hardly any displacement at all (Freeman, 2006). This observation solicits close investigation. Even though gentrification may not force residents to leave their homes, it may dissolve the existing community by preventing other working-class individuals who replenish that community to move into the neighborhood. Similarly, while increasing rent may not drive community members completely out of the neighborhood, it may force a greater number of residents to share a single living space causing cramped and difficult living conditions. Although the impact of gentrification appears less severe than initially thought, it remains a concrete concern warranting further study in order to better inform policy decisions regarding redevelopment.

Whether the effect of gentrification on neighborhoods is seen as positive or negative depends on with whom you speak. While proponents of gentrification see the process as an inevitable and natural process, community activists challenge the logic that developers are using the land for its “highest” and “best” use (Blomley,

2004). Neighborhood residents question the neoliberal assumptions that gentrification is a part of a “rational” and “natural” cycle (London, 1984; Smith, 1996). This also raises question of who has the right to decide the future of the neighborhood. Many low-income residents do not own property, but claim a degree of entitlement to these spaces by being a part of the community. They do not have the means to invest in property but demand certain rights of use and access to neighborhood space and a say in the direction of neighborhood development. The question of community rights is difficult, but needs addressing if we are to create just policy decisions that will make the process more equitable for everyone involved. Likewise, while scholars frequently portray the debate in terms of the interests of developers versus the interests of existing low-income residents, in actuality, the line separating the two sides cannot be so neatly drawn. Freeman, in *There Goes in 'Hood*, exposes the nuances of this fact by drawing on the personal experiences and perspectives of a group commonly neglected in gentrification literature: the existing residents.

FREEMAN AND WORKING FROM THE GROUND UP

Freeman's review of gentrification literature points out that the supply side explanation focuses on the developers, landlords and capital, and that the demand side focuses on the gentry and middle-class, but nowhere in the narrative do indigenous residents receive a starring role. Even though sympathetic to the indigenous residents of the Lower East Side, Smith never makes them central to his analysis (Freeman, 2006). Freeman professes that the frameworks constructed by

Smith and Ley are not inaccurate but simply incomplete, telling only part of the story. Freeman looks at gentrification from the perspective of indigenous residents and bases his work in Harlem and Clinton Hill – two predominantly black New York City neighborhoods.

Although Freeman's book does not advocate gentrification, he exposes the intricacies of the process revealing tangible benefits to go along with the negative impacts. In talking with the residents of Harlem he found that many were appreciative of the improvements in amenities and services, which accompanied the redevelopment. An increase in supermarkets and drugstores, better police presence and security, and improved services like waste collection were all cited as appreciated benefits resulting from gentrification.

On top of the commonly cited problems such as displacement, the issue to which most residents took offense was the fact that the above improvements were not achieved without the presence of white middle-class individuals. They believed the neglect by public services and other amenities reflected their inferior status as black and that it took whites to legitimize their concerns about the neighborhood. While the validity of this claim necessitates further studies, it is still a key point to consider for policy makers. The discrepancy in attention paid to one kind of neighborhood over another challenges the equitable distribution of city resources.

Freeman also discusses the need to begin incorporating issues such as race and location into the gentrification debate. Harlem had reached its nadir of disinvestment and abandonment so it is no surprise certain results of gentrification

like improved access to supermarkets would be appreciated. He advises us, however, to not generalize these findings because from the ground, the impact of gentrification can vary substantially depending on the initial state and makeup of a neighborhood. For example, while gentrification hit Harlem at its nadir, many urban ethnic neighborhoods such as the Mission District, have not reached similar depths of disinvestment and are vibrant working-class communities. The response to gentrification by these individuals would likely differ from Harlem residents. This observation is the starting point of my thesis. Freeman opens up another area of research and discovery to re-energize the current gentrification debate – one that incorporates race and ethnicity as well as understanding how the initial status, history, and structure of a neighborhood affect the impact of gentrification.

A building resentment and cynicism among community members towards the neoliberal “common sense” produces a growing number of community activist groups developing sustained and creative methods of opposition (Blomley, 2004; Muniz, 1998). Along with low-income members demanding certain rights to the neighborhood, we also see a greater value placed on urban diversity and a sense that, in particular, ethnic neighborhoods are a resource to be cherished and preserved (Allen, 1984). The difficult question of course regards the role policy should play in supporting low-income residents and preserving what might be simply the symbols of an ethnic community while the actual vital community has since expired or moved to the suburbs (Allen, 1984).

Freeman has taken the first step in developing better policy by incorporating the opinions of those whose lives gentrification affects the most – the indigenous residents. Without their input, policy makers can *assume* what problems to address but not actually *know* what existing residents want. There is little evidence that gentrification is the key to eliminating poverty (Freeman, 2006). It does, however, help minimize the extent to which various aspects of quality of life are dependent on one's class such as the level of public services and other amenities. Policy intervention then is needed to ensure that low-income households continue to have access to gentrifying neighborhoods and the amenities they provide.

While Freeman argues that displacement concerns do not necessarily warrant a policy response, he gives us three reasons why we might consider policy intervention in the case of gentrification even though access to housing and neighborhoods are allocated primarily through the market. The first deals with the notion of security. Do we all want some kind of protection against being forced to move? Second, what role does social justice play? Harlem residents lived in the neighborhood through its nadir. Should these long-term residents be edged out just as the area begins receiving the same amenities and services allocated to other neighborhoods? Finally, the allocation of resources across space needs rethinking as illustrated by the resentment expressed by Harlem and Clinton Hill residents towards gentrification.

In order to develop a proper policy prescription however, we need to first understand exactly how gentrification affects certain communities. As Freeman acknowledges, gentrification's impact on Harlem residents may differ from its impact on the residents of a vibrant working class ethnic enclave.

CHAPTER 2 – Data & Methodology

This qualitative assessment of the perceptions and experiences of long-term Latino residents as they relate to the gentrification of the Mission District is based on interviews and participant observation conducted between September and December 2007.

GEOGRAPHY

All of my research took place in what is considered San Francisco's *barrio*, the Mission District – the area being bordered by the U.S. 101 on the East, Church Street on the West, Cesar Chavez on the South, and Duboce Avenue on the North. Other border distinctions within the neighborhood include the Inner Mission, the Outer Mission and Mission Dolores. These distinctions became more apparent as I spoke with residents about their perceptions regarding the changes occurring in the neighborhood over the last 10-20 years. Their answers differed depending on which area of the neighborhood they resided.

I chose to research the Mission District in response to Freeman's observation that residents of working-class ethnic neighborhoods may experience gentrification differently than residents of a neighborhood which had reached complete disinvestment and abandonment, such as Harlem. Latinos, one of the largest and fastest growing ethnic groups in the United States, have built vibrant working class communities throughout the nation. The Mission District has not only been a traditionally strong working-class Latino neighborhood since the 1940s, it also holds

substantial historical significance for being a national epicenter of Latino culture and politics in the 1960s and 70s.

SECONDARY SOURCES

The secondary sources used for this project include books, research papers/reports, and articles from newspapers. In addition to expanding upon Freeman's conclusions working with Harlem residents, I also wanted to incorporate an in-depth background of the Mission District and how its history, development, and demographics may affect the shape of gentrification. Freeman emphasizes the importance of neighborhood context when analyzing the impact of gentrification. In the next two chapters I take a more in-depth look at the history of the Mission. I used a variety of secondary sources to create a thorough neighborhood context in which to position my interviewees' observations.

Few books have substantial material covering the Mission and the majority of my background information came from theses, dissertations and various research articles on the area. Many of these focused on Latino culture in the Mission District while others looked at urban planning, affordable housing and community development. None took a broad survey of Latino residents and their perceptions of the changes occurring in their neighborhood.

Newspaper articles supplied a local voice for city sentiment on the gentrification of the Mission. Articles written on the topic have understandably slowed since the crash of the dot-com boom but continue to inform readers of new twists in the gentrification story. Most recently, articles have sprung up concerning

the role of Google in the gentrification process of the Mission. In an effort to become more environmentally sound, Google wanted to decrease the amount of employees commuting from the city down to the Mountain View office in cars so it began a shuttle service. There are two San Francisco shuttle pick-up locations – the newest being at Mission St. and 24th St. This has encouraged Google employees to relocate to the Mission District further straining the limited housing supply and forcing up rents (Elliott, 2007).

INTERVIEWS

Interviews ranged from short 5-minute conversations on a Mission street corner with a local resident to formal 45-minute discussions. Most interviews were tape recorded except for very brief conversations that I had with individuals who I had approached on the street and felt uncomfortable with my recording. Finding interview participants was more difficult than I had originally conceived. The difficulty lay in the desire to interview regular working-class Latino residents as opposed to activists or other vocal community leaders. As Freeman points out in his research, the most vocal residents are not necessarily representative of the entire neighborhood and are likely different - their activism stemming from the fact that they are most concerned. Finding activists with which to speak is easy, finding regular residents more difficult.

In order to get a broad spectrum of responses I approached an array of individuals for brief informal interviews. I approached Latino construction workers in the street, retail workers, shop owners and shoppers. I would begin by explaining

that I was a student writing a paper on the Mission and was talking with residents about their experiences. My conversations with these individuals were usually brief, ranging from 5-15 minutes and included basic questions about their perceptions of the neighborhood. These informal interviews were invaluable in giving me insight into the everyday lives of Mission residents as well as giving me a feel of the different neighborhood dynamics. I kept my questions casual and open-ended in order to encourage responses that reflected residents' immediate concerns and priorities when considering their experiences in the neighborhood. (See Appendix A for full list of interview questions)

While I originally had planned to interview people who had been recommended to me by mutual acquaintances, I realized that most (if not all) recommendations were for activists, non-profit leaders and other community leaders. Instead of working from these recommendations I began getting to know my neighbors and local shopkeepers. I set up formal interviews with them and then asked them for names of friends or family that might be interested in sitting down with me.

For these formal interviews, which lasted around 45 minutes, I focused on speaking with residents who had lived in the neighborhood for at least 10 years, preferably longer. With these interviews I sought to explore respondents' perceptions about how the neighborhood was changing and how those changes were affecting them. I avoided disclosing detailed information about my thesis in order to elicit honest unbiased responses. Instead of saying, "I am writing a paper regarding the

impact of gentrification on the Mission Latino community”, I would say, “I am interested about your experience living in this neighborhood and your thoughts on how the neighborhood has or has not changed over the years.” I encouraged participants to discuss whatever they liked regarding the.

One difficulty in interviewing residents regarding gentrification is that some who have been negatively affected by the process have been displaced to other areas. Three of my interviews were with individuals who had lived the majority of their lives in the Mission but had then moved away for varying reasons.

The interviewing process also revealed the importance of diversifying my pool of participants by the part of the neighborhood in which they lived and worked. An interesting outcome to my research was the sense that residents made certain distinctions about what they considered “The Mission” as opposed to looking at the neighborhood as a whole. For those who did speak of the District as a whole, they tended to use examples from the blocks immediately surrounding their home or work. Half-way through my interview process, I became interested in observations of the neighborhood West of Mission Street and East of Mission Street and began incorporating more questions regarding the perceptions of each of these areas.

The segment of the Mission District, which borders Dolores Park and has experienced substantial changes and housing development as a result of gentrification, has also been recently renamed ‘Mission Dolores’ by realtors. This is a similar phenomenon as witnessed by the Lower East Side in New York City. Serious gentrification hit the northern end of the Lower East Side (LES) in the

1980s. Realtors wanted to disassociate the negative connotations of run-down and dangerous LES with this new up-and-coming neighborhood. Realtors decided to rename this area 'East Village' unofficially connecting it to the West Village, the high-class neighborhood bordering north LES. This way people would consider East Village a continuation of West Village complete with higher housing prices. Similarly, realtors in San Francisco have begun carving out a new 'neighborhood' and referring to it as 'Mission Dolores' in order to disassociate it with the less-desirable areas of the District.

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

In June 2007, I moved to an apartment at 18th Street and Guerrero Street – the area now termed Mission Dolores. Life on my corner is very different from the stories of life told by my interviewees who live in the Inner Mission. While I enjoy taking long observational strolls through the different areas of the Mission District during the day for my research, I avoid areas East of Mission Street past dark. Before conducting interviews, I thought the warnings about the Mission being a dangerous place were blown out of proportion. I believed that the perceived threat was coming from well-to-do individuals who had not experienced the breadth of urban life and that their claims were based on sensationalist news stories and not fact. It was not until my interviews with locals living in the Inner Mission that I realized how unsafe the area was and what a substantial difference the length of just a few blocks could make in respect to safety.

The difference between Mission Street and Valencia, although separated by just one block, is extreme. I have spoken to many Mission Dolores residents who avoid walking down Mission Street on their daily commute to the BART station. The threat of displacement from gentrification to low-income residents is real but so is the threat of drugs, gang violence and prostitution that thrives in places like those surrounding the 16th Street BART station. There is a strong and vocal presence of activists fighting gentrification and the encroachment of the upper class, but I was amazed at the lack of similarly formal and organized outrage regarding crime and violence in the neighborhood – especially when that was a top concern for nearly every one of my interviewees.

A NUANCED APPROACH

The purpose of this research is not to praise or berate the impact of gentrification but instead to provide a more nuanced view of how the process affects residents of a working-class ethnic enclave. In understanding how gentrification affects certain communities, proper policy prescriptions can help guide the process in ways that will benefit both existing and newly relocated residents. Freeman argues that taking into consideration the initial makeup of a neighborhood is important when predicting what impact gentrification will have on the community. The next two chapters provide a history and context for the Mission District.

CHAPTER 3 – The Mission District: Historical Development

The Mission District in San Francisco tells the story of an immigrant population claiming an area in the city to call their own. A predominantly Latino neighborhood since the 1940s, the Mission has cultivated a strong Latin American culture and working-class community. Social mobilization has been a defining characteristic of the neighborhood – the defense against urban renewal initiatives in the 1960s, anti-discrimination movements in the 1970s, demonstrations criticizing U.S. intervention in Central American civil wars in the 1980s, and today, the fight against gentrification.

A look at the neighborhood's history illustrates how Latinos created a loyal and intimate community within the Mission District. Latino identification with the neighborhood enabled a high level of organization and the united front necessary to defend against urban renewal initiatives in the 1960s as well as push for neighborhood improvements. Although this particular united front, which took form in the Mission Coalition Organization (MCO), succeeded in defeating urban renewal, its early cohesion gave way to infighting, leading to its ultimate dissolution in the late 1970s. Unfortunately, this loss of cohesion amongst the Mission community also accompanied the dot-com boom and subsequent gentrification two decades later.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The arrival of Latin American groups in San Francisco took various forms that shaped the initial and existing landscape into which future migrants entered. Mexicans made up the majority of Latin Americans within San Francisco until the

1950s, therefore institutionalizing not only certain cultural traditions but also a certain labor market framework (Wallace, 1984). Mexican migrants commonly made their way to the city via land, moving north from one agricultural settlement to another until finally leaving the fields for the promise of a better life in the city. Unskilled and working-class Mexican migrants filled industrial jobs the city had to offer. Prior to World War II, Mexicans settled primarily in two neighborhoods: the industrial South of Market (SOMA) zone and a barrio in North Beach surrounding Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe Church.

Central American migrants' entrance into San Francisco took a different shape than Mexicans. The "pioneer" migrants began to arrive in San Francisco in the early twentieth century. Unlike the Mexicans, who moved northward on land, the majority of early Central American migrants came to San Francisco via shipping lines directly connecting their place of origin to the city. These initial migrants boarded ships in hopes of obtaining port jobs within San Francisco. They likewise settled in the area surrounding Guadalupe Church and SOMA, which was conveniently located just south of the port. By the 1950s, Central and South Americans outnumbered Mexican residents in San Francisco (Godfrey, 1988). The second wave of Central American immigration, post 1950, resulted substantially from severe political strife within the region. Many fled to San Francisco for political reasons, as opposed to economic motivations, knowing that the city hosted a strong Latin American community.

With World-War II came a huge shift in the existing Latino neighborhoods.

The residents of the barrio surrounding Guadalupe Church were already being displaced by the building of the Bay Bridge in the 1930s. War time production needs then pulled Latinos from North Beach and SOMA southward into the Mission District, which provided not only low-cost housing but also a large bulk of employment opportunities (Sandoval, 2002). Previously an Irish neighborhood, the Mission population went from 11% Latino in 1950 to 45% Latino in 1970 (U.S. Census, 1950, 1970). These are likely conservative figures considering the tendency for undocumented immigrants to be undercounted in the census.

CULTURAL CONTEXT AND LATINO IDENTIFICATION

Unlike the Italian and Irish immigrant groups that predated the arrival of the Latino immigrants, the Latino population as a whole did not use the Mission as a temporary settlement. Since their arrival to the neighborhood in the 1940s, Latinos have cultivated the Latin American Mission community, inextricably tying their culture and identity to the District. Latino Mission culture and politics peaked in the 1970s and 1980s. Mission streets during the 1970s boasted one of most vibrant collections of Latino artists, radicals and intellectuals. Latino artists made the Mission District their homestead further investing a sense of identity in the geographic space and creating a culturally dynamic pan-ethnic neighborhood. Alejandro Murguía, a writer and activist of the time recalls,

La Mission wasn't one individual but a community, an unofficial group of artists who interacted, exchanged ideas and helped each other in our projects...we'd meet in a little Nicaraguan bar on Mission Street, "El Tico Nica," to drink rum and talk about back home, and how back home seemed to be La Mission. In 1971, nothing beautiful

had ever happened to Latinos in the United States, so we set out with our art to remake the world a beautiful place for ourselves. And we didn't ask anyone's permission to do it. Not knowing any better, we just went out and did it...And like any pueblito, everyone knew everyone, and you'd bump into friends at receptions, parties, street fairs, or just shopping for pan dulce. Or I'd walk down Twenty-fourth street and hear the Spanish inflections of the entire continent - Nicoya slang, Chicano calo, rapid-fire cubanismos, the elegant phrasing of Chileans. (Murguia 2002, pp. 124- 126)

Murguia's description of the neighborhood illustrates the strong Latino identification with the Mission. The abundance of Latino artistic expression, including the murals that the neighborhood is now famous for, ultimately resulted in the creation of The Mission Cultural Center for Latino Arts and La Galeria de la Raza - two institutions that became significant not only within the Mission but to the broader Latino community as well.

Along with the visual enhancement of the Mission, came literary outgrowth as well. The Pocho-Che Collective, founded in 1968, recruited Mission writers such as Roberto Vargas, Rene Yanes and Alejandro Murguia to produce a forum for social issues confronting the Mission and its people. The Pocho-Che published a variety of works by different Latino writers along with producing *Tin Tan* magazine from 1975-1977 (Brook, 1998). *Tin Tan* was a "magazine with a series of incisive articles, reviews, and literary features of Latin American political reality....[It] merged out of the various Latin American issues affecting the Mission community and the various official roles played by key Pocho-Che members" (Brook 1998, p. 224). Accompanying the publications of Pocho-Che was the local Mission newspaper, *El Tecolote*, which exists to this day.

Through the years, other cultural events have evolved further connecting Latino culture with the neighborhood. Twenty-fourth Street, one of the Mission District's two major Latino commercial corridors, became home to one of the Bay Area's most successful Latino events: the annual 24th Street Cultural Festival (better known as the 24th Street Fair). This fair is the yearly project of the 24th Street Merchants Association, a group organized in 1978 with the goal of "expressing our Latino culture while serving the Latin American community and promoting the economic development of 24th Street" (24th Street Merchants Association 1980-81, p.1). The organizers focused the event around the shared allegiance to the neighborhood. In the words of the Merchants Association editorial, "Without the Mission District there is no San Francisco. Without 24th Street there is no Mission District. This is our motto. And because of this we are strong, we are Latinos, and we are a force " (24th Street Merchants Association 1981-82, p. 4). Within,

the Latino boundary, displays of group-specific music (such as Mexican mariachi, Argentinian tango, and Brazilian samba), dance (ballet folkloricos from various countries and Brazilian capoeira), food (Nicaraguan, Mexican, and Salvadorean), and crafts simultaneously maintained the cultural integrity of individual groups. The shared Latin American fiesta pattern - occurring in the heart of a visually and demographically Latino dominated neighborhood - itself became a "cultural umbrella" of unity in diversity. (Sommers 1991, 104)

The 24th Street Fair developed organically from the Mission community and existed as an event unique to the neighborhood. The Mission played a similarly important role for Latino culture as Harlem did for Black culture.

This backdrop of cultural Mission vitality, however, is tainted with the characteristics of any American ghetto – poverty, drugs, crime, slums, prostitution,

overcrowding, dilapidated housing, and inadequate public services. Historically, the Mission District's educational and occupational status, as well as family income, has remained well below the city's average. But it is despite these deficiencies that Latino culture thrives and contributes to the neighborhood's urban charm. Prior to the 1990s dot-com boom and the hard gentrification hit that accompanied, the Mission existed as a case of a *barrio* as well as a magnet of urban life. In this respect, Harlem differs slightly from the Mission because unlike the Mission which continued to attract city dwellers, Harlem crime began deterring New York City residents from visiting the neighborhood. As Castells explained in 1983,

The Mission presents a unique case of a *Barrio* that remains a center of attraction for urban life, improving the real estate values while still maintaining most of its character as a neighborhood for immigrants and the poor. Some of the trends of this urban achievement seem to be related to the popular mobilization that has taken place in the Mission District since the mid-1960s...the characteristics of neighborhood mobilization account not only for the urban revival but also for the shortcomings of this urban situation, as a consequence of the contradictions and pitfalls of the grassroots movement...The complexity of the Mission's urban reality is in fact the result of the tortuous path undertaken by the neighborhood's mobilization. (1983, pp. 107-109)

The history of the Mission's different mobilization efforts is one filled with successes but also certain failures. While the retention of the Mission's Latino character remains in jeopardy today due to the changes wrought by gentrification, the community's early mobilization against urban renewal succeeded in preserving its Latino culture in the latter half of the 20th century.

The Mission's history and community loyalty created the initial necessary

cohesion for defending against urban renewal and continues to play a substantial role in fighting gentrification. While this loyalty succeeded in halting urban renewal and making general improvements to Mission resident life, inner-neighborhood conflicts and lack of organization within the community permitted devastating consequences by gentrification in certain areas (Solnit, 2000). Before turning to gentrification, however, I will briefly review the successes and failures of early community mobilization against urban renewal initiatives.

URBAN RENEWAL, THE MCO, AND EARLY COMMUNITY ACTIVISM

The late 1960s and 1970s saw a rise in the number of community-based activist groups and mobilizations in response to city-initiated redevelopment plans for the neighborhood and dissatisfaction with living conditions in the Mission. While these organizations and movements succeeded in improving certain neighborhood problems like discrimination and inadequate public services, the “difficulty of bringing some cohesion to demands for improved conditions, class issues, and ethnic identity, led to a highly differentiated social situation where failure and success, co-opted reformism and confused social change, intertwined in a pattern as complex as the Mission’s urban scene”(Castells 1983, p. 109).

The first grassroots mobilization in the Mission was triggered, in 1966, by the threat of the same urban renewal program that produced disastrous results for the Fillmore and Western Addition in the late 1950s (Sandoval, 2002). Residents were concerned that state-sponsored improvements to the neighborhood which would include bulldozing certain areas for new housing sites and the construction of two

BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) subway stations would price out low-income residents by increasing the presences of middle-class and small business owners (Freidenfelds, 2006). The Mission Council on Redevelopment (MCOR), the initial group formed to defend against the urban renewal program proposed by the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency (SFRA), succeeded in organizing a major campaign of grassroots protest and the public opinion support needed to convince the board of supervisors of the city of San Francisco to override the mayor's approval of the renewal proposal (Castells, 1983). In addition,

The efforts of MCOR brought together a diverse base of the Mission District together in a successful campaign. Achieving a victory that revealed their power as a coalition the residents increasingly saw themselves as a community of mutual interests rather than disparate ethnicities. Symbolically, the fight against Urban Renewal helped to engender a growing perception within the community that this discreet space of the Mission District belonged to its residents. More than mere tenants renting from an absentee landlord, or migrants scraping out a living until they could move on, the Mission District was home to the diverse body that fought to include themselves in any vision of the future. (Sandoval 2002, p.151)

The success of MCOR led to the realization among the Mission community that a coalition could be formed in opposition to the predominant downtown interests driving redevelopment plans.

The crucial event that led to the development of this new coalition was the announcement that Mayor Alioto intended to apply for a Federally-funded, multi-million dollar Model Cities Program. This program aimed to improve conditions of life in urban ghettos by funding physical improvements and service programs while maximizing the community's participation in the process. The very broad coalition

formed out of the existing organizations to qualify for a series of programs that would meet the demands of Mission residents and to develop new and relevant grassroots groups that would control and/or administer the funds, jobs, and institutional resources delivered by the Model Cities Program. Castells argues that there were two major decisive factors in formulating the Mission Coalition

Organization:

1. Although grassroots mobilization against urban renewal predated the Model Cities proposal, the organization was formed to represent the residents' interests in the Federally-funded urban programs, administered by city hall. The MCO was, therefore, a carefully thought-out project of citizen participation, even though some of its leadership tried to use it to build a powerful and autonomous grassroots organization. Most participating organizations and agencies intended to preserve their autonomy and saw the MCO as a coalition of existing organized constituencies, without any capacity for initiative beyond the mandate for each participating organization.
2. However the MCO leadership saw in this process a chance to build up a new grassroots movement that could expand to be multi-issue, multi-ethnic community organization representative of the entire neighborhood, and would eventually bypass the indigenous leaders who they considered to be too close to the public bureaucracies and too narrowly defined as Latino notables. (1983, p. 111)

These two conflicting views of the MCO's role created continuous internal fighting within the neighborhood mobilization. From its inception, the movement was therefore "dominated by an organizational schizophrenia: on the one hand, the attempt to create an autonomous grassroots movement took place within the framework of mandated citizen participation in the local bureaucracies; and on the other hand, the political will to become a multi-issue, single-structure organization

was confronted, again and again, with the reality of the MCO's origin as a coalition comprising many organizations, structured around a single issue – the control and management of a Model Cities Program” (Castells 1983, pp. 111).

Aiming to root the coalition to its constituency, the MCO engaged in improving Mission neighborhood life by creating new playgrounds, installing community representatives in the new Mission Mental Health Center, banning pawnshops and aggressively fighting discrimination against minorities (Castells, 1983). On top of continuing the fight against urban renewal absent of community input in programs such as Model Cities, the MCO worked to channel resident participation into this community improvement. Ben Martinez, the president of the organization frequently stressed the importance of looking past ethnic rivalries in order to gain the essential support and cohesion necessary to stand up to the real enemies: poverty, crime and destructive redevelopment. Furthermore,

Within that period, a geographic area of great diversity emerged as a cohesive community where thousands mobilized for political actions and substantive improvements in their daily lives. Ultimately, the MCO became an organization wielding a considerable amount of bureaucratic power within the Model Cities Program. It is an episode of great importance for the entire multi-ethnic Mission District as it shows an economically depressed area halting its descent into blight while its residents unite proactively. Furthermore, in this period the Mission District of San Francisco becomes firmly imagined as a Latino barrio of the city. Due in no small part to the success of the MCO, this replacement of the earlier images of the district necessitated a mass identification of those Latino and Latina community members upon that physical space. (Sandoval 2002, p. 134)

At its height, the MCO successfully involved over twelve thousand Mission District

residents in improving their own neighborhood and planning for its future.

The MCO's inability to delineate cohesive goals by its constituents, as well as continuous infighting, however, led to its ultimate dissolution in the 1970s (Castells, 1983). The Latino concentration in this barrio, while creating what Gerald Suttles (1972) calls a "defended neighborhood" – a community protecting itself from invasion, was not enough to supply a shared vision for the organization (Godfrey, 1988). Another substantial blow to the organization's legitimacy was the accusation and belief among many Mission Latinos that the MCO was "dominated by an Anglo Alinsky-inspired staff, insensitive to the Latino culture: the MCO was using a Latino image, so the argument ran, to win power in city hall for a non-Latino organization" (Castells 1983, p. 116). Although the MCO ultimately collapsed, it laid the foundation for future collective work by Mission residents as well as accompanied other Latino community-based activism during its time.

Mission youth began turning towards identity-based community action, working off and on with other Latino movements sweeping parts of the country, such as the Chicano Movement. Activism on the part of local youth within their Mission community or school fostered a sense of ownership over the District as well as set off certain political currents that exist in the neighborhood to this day. More than being a distinctly Latino space, by the 1970s being a proud member of the District often entailed a commitment to certain cultural and political responsibilities. Youth advocacy gathered community support by rallying around two key issues: stopping police brutality and improving neighborhood education opportunities. The

vehicle for achieving these goals was a group of activists that initially formed around the defense of 7 Latino youths accused of killing a police officer. El Komite Para Defender Los Siete and the cause of Los Siete de la Raza provided a rallying point from which to address larger issues of racism, inequality, and the right to self-determination (Ferreria, 2003).

Initially, the radical rhetoric of the Los Siete movement proved too dense to garner widespread community support. Members of Los Siete realized that it took more than ideology to build a movement and thus began finding ways to put their ideas into practice by serving the people of the Mission. Los Siete, with the support of St. Peter's church, created a breakfast program that fed more than 150 Mission children daily, established a free neighborhood medical clinic, developed a college recruitment center, and organized, with the aid of some progressive lawyers, a community law clinic. When La Raza Legal Defense began operation in 1970, it consisted of about 30 lawyers dedicated to issues ranging from police brutality, to drug busts, to immigration problems (Heins, 1972).

By the late 1980s, over a decade after the Mission Coalition experience, the many community organizations such as the Los Siete and the 24th Street Merchants Association had failed to solve the social problems facing the District or change the political system as a whole (Godfrey, 1988). Various factors contributed to the lack of success by these organizations. Garnering community participation remained a formidable challenge due to the many illegal immigrants within the Mission. Many

of these residents expressed little faith in the ability of politics to alter considerably their living circumstances due to their status.

Additionally, the sheer number of community organizations inhibited the efficacy of any one group. In 1974, the CORO foundation listed 91 community organizations in the Mission – more than double the average for other San Francisco Districts (Castells, 1983). Each group had its own priorities and compromising in order to unify and combine resources proved nearly impossible. Therefore, instead of working together to improve the neighborhood one issue at a time, organizations frequently fought over limited resources and energy. Castells concludes that, “the experience of the Mission offers the paradox of a highly mobilized community that achieved substantial changes at the urban, social and cultural levels, while being totally unable to become politically influential in the local power structure” (1983, p. 136). As noted, however, these organizations did contribute to improving certain aspects of Mission life and in keeping the Latino neighborhood culture alive (Godfrey, 1988). The latter effort, preserving Latino culture in the Mission, today faces its most substantial threat to date –the changes resulting from encroaching gentrification sparked by the dot-com boom of the early 1990s and San Francisco’s “new economy”.

CHAPTER 4 – The Mission District: Current Context

Unlike the urban renewal experience, the initial high level of Mission organization did not meet the recent wave of gentrification ushered in by the dot-com boom of the 1990s. Conflicting interests, as well as its sudden onset, left the Mission community unprepared to handle or benefit from gentrification in the same ways other communities with slower rates of gentrification have. The Mission community's disorganization and inability to agree upon a common goal and plan of action in response to gentrification left it vulnerable to the negative consequences of the process while failing to promote its potential benefits.

MISSION GENTRIFICATION

Beginning in the early 1990s, the Mission saw a new wave of community-based activism reminiscent of the Mission Coalition Organization activism of the 60s and 70s. This time it was to defend the neighborhood against the gentrification brought on predominately by the dot-com boom sweeping the Bay Area. In many areas, particularly the Outer Mission, industrial buildings were being converted into high-priced lofts as new homeowners flocked to the "hip" and "up and coming" neighborhood. The area surrounding Valencia and 18th streets saw an increase in trendy boutiques and high-priced restaurants catering to the newly arrived residents of the District.

More than being an Anglo versus Latino divide, this conflict revolved around the idea of whom truly "belonged" to the Mission and thus who had the right to decide what future was in store for the neighborhood. Belonging to the Mission did

not necessarily entail the length of residency there. Some non-Latinos felt that parts of the neighborhood were permanently off-limits to them, even if they had lived there for years. On the other hand, newly-arrived legal and illegal Latino migrants were encouraged to immediately join their fellow working-class neighbors in defending the right to live and work in the District (Freidenfeld, 2006).

Today, gentrification threatens to permanently alter and dilute the Latino Mission culture and diversity for which the neighborhood is known. Planners, policymakers and academics have documented the indicators pointing to gentrification in the Mission including:

- A rapid increase in housing values and rents relative the city;
- Disproportionate eviction rates;
- Rapid growth in the number and value of commercial sales relative to the city; and
- Greater business growth trends to the city. (Alejandrino, 2000)

The Mission has followed a classic pattern of a run-down and dangerous neighborhood attracting young artists, college students and homosexuals for its social diversity and sub-cultural identification, setting the stage for higher-income households to follow suit. The dot-com boom and rapid job growth in Silicon Valley spurred the influx of high-income individuals into the Mission. As Kennedy and Leonard sum up, “this wave has lifted many boats, soaked some longstanding disadvantaged communities, and inundated other towns completely unprepared for the flood” (Kennedy and Leonard 2001, p. 42).

The Mission District, then and today, illustrates a neighborhood ripe for gentrification. To begin with, the District exists in a city prone to high levels of

gentrification. San Francisco with its greatly constrained housing supply and proximity to the twenty-something workers at Silicon Valley firms looking for a dynamic city instead of quiet suburbs in which to live, makes it particularly apt for redevelopment at the expense of lower income residents (Alejandrino, 2000). In addition, the neighborhood has many amenities attractive to newcomers. The neighborhood gets plenty of sun (unlike most other neighborhoods in San Francisco), offers two BART stations that are one stop from City Hall and two stops from the financial district, and provides easy access to major freeways to get to Silicon Valley. Most of the neighborhood is also walking distance to other popular neighborhoods like Castro and Noe Valley. In addition to its attractive qualities, the Mission's Latino population is especially vulnerable to gentrification pressures: "84 percent are renters, incomes are low, language barriers are high, and American citizenship is not universal" (Kennedy and Leonard 2001, p. 45).

Another element that has helped speed the gentrification of the Mission is the 1988 ordinance allowing the conversion of industrial spaces into live/work lofts originally fought for and won by local artists. Similar to the Manhattan example, this ordinance enabled artists to build or convert spaces in areas zoned for industry thus circumventing building codes, avoiding affordable housing stipulation and a significant portion of school taxes (Solnit, 2000). Artists were adamant about not being defined at City Hall therefore requesting special zoning without providing city officials the ability to properly enforce the ordinance. This created a bonanza for

developers who easily worked around regulations sparking a proliferation of lofts, which led to price increases and the displacement of blue-collar jobs.

One of the newest and increasingly controversial additions to the neighborhood is a shuttle service run by Google that transports employees from San Francisco to company headquarters in Mountain View. One of the shuttle's pick up points is the intersection of Mission Street and 24th. This easy transportation opportunity has encouraged Google employees to find housing specifically in the Mission District, contributing to the housing constraints and increasing rents (Elliot, 2007).

The impact of gentrification on the Mission community has been substantial - the most significant indication of the occurring changes appearing in the astronomical increase in housing prices. As captured in this 1999 *New York Times* account:

The entire Mission District, port of entry for San Francisco's Hispanic immigrants for more than 50 years, is changing by the day. New people, people who have money, are moving in, altering life for everyone. Sagging Victorian houses that landlords had chopped into two or three rental units are sold for a half million dollars, and warehouses are becoming loft condominiums in the \$300,000 to \$400,000 range...In the last three years, rents here have jumped from \$600 a month for a two-bedroom apartment to \$1800; a house that cost \$150,000 is now \$450,000. More tenants have been evicted in the last three years than at any other time by landlords using a city ordinance that allows eviction if the owner or a relative plans to move in for a least a year. Last year, 1400 apartments in the city were emptied for this reason, most of them in the Mission District. Tenant advocates say the real numbers are much higher because scores of families simply moved out when asked by their landlords... "Eviction are all we do these days," says Matt Brown, a lawyer who directs the St. Peter's Housing Committee in the Mission, a tenants' advocacy group. "We'd like to do other things, like community organizing, but the housing situation has made it almost impossible."... So Mission

residents are increasingly moving out of the city. Those who stay often rent space in friends' or relatives' apartments, miserable single-room-occupancy hotels, garages, storage barns or even vans.”
(Nieves, 21 January)

Displacement hits renters hardest, particularly when they lack legal immigration status or do not speak English, which is often the case in the Mission District. These low-income residents are simply unable to afford the rapid and substantial price increases.

Not only are the neighborhood's many non-profit organizations losing their low-income constituency to displacement, they likewise are being evicted and displaced as a result of the massive redevelopment (Kennedy and Leonard, 2001; Hartman, 2002). In one example, 20 small businesses and non-profit organizations operating out of a building on Mission Street were evicted to accommodate a “dot-com” company (Kennedy and Leonard, 2001). The very organizations helping to mollify the negative consequences of gentrification are being displaced, leaving the low-income community at an even higher risk.

While gentrification can bring in a new cohort of consumers potentially increasing commercial activity for local business such as case of Harlem, indigenous Mission District businesses have not benefited from newcomer consumerism (Kennedy and Leonard, 2001). Not only does this hurt local business owners, it also threatens to dilute the neighborhood's cultural character. As Leonard and Kennedy note,

Under great pressure are the same Latino groceries and religious stores that give the neighborhood character and attract twenty-

something newcomers. The owners of El Herradero Restaurant face a 63 percent increase in rent after 12 years in business, while the Los Jarritos Restaurant and Mi Rancho Market were displaced as the buildings' owner put them up for sale. The street's mix of businesses is shifting gradually from those serving the basic needs of the Latino population, to the more eclectic preferences of its new upscale residents. (2001, p. 21)

Because Harlem had reached its nadir of disinvestment, many additions to the neighborhood resulting from gentrification were actually appreciated and needed (Freeman, 2006). This differs from the already vibrant working-class community of the Mission District whose taquerias are being replaced by trendy bistros and whose corner produce and grocery stores are being replaced by high-priced specialty food stores catering to an upper-income clientele.

While the fight against gentrification has been an uphill battle, Latino Mission activists have been successful in garnering community support by tapping into the feeling of rightful belonging and true ownership in the neighborhood. The high attendance and many testimonies at various San Francisco Planning Commission hearings at City Hall illustrate the passionate interest that at least a group of Latino Mission residents have in the future of their neighborhood. At one hearing regarding a redevelopment site, a resident activist stirred the crowd with his speech:

Despite the dot-com boom that hit the Mission hard, hundreds of Latinos, working people were being displaced, evicted, taking an economic beat-down, leaving us black and blue, broken, busted. Despite the loss of PDR jobs, despite the desperation of family housing, despite the growing gulf of income and inequality for a family of four, this struggle continues. Commissioners, we're here to tell [the developers] and company that this ain't Mister Rogers'

neighborhood! No, this is Mrs. Rodriguez's barrio! And she and her grandchildren deserve affordable housing! (Freidenfeld 2006, p. 87)

The activist suggests that on top of maintaining a sense of ownership over the barrio, Latinos also play the key role in making the Mission what it is today. A teenager at the same hearing described her relationship to the Mission in these terms:

People that live in affordable housing aren't uneducated people. We just don't make enough money. If you don't make enough money, wouldn't you like the privilege to live in a affordable housing instead of the street or in some city like Richmond, where you have no roots? Or you can't go to the corner store like Casa Lucas where you can get things from your country and you can be able to have your roots there and know that you belong there. (Freidenfeld 2006, p. 88)

The Latino community in the courtroom that day, whose identity had been built around this geographic space, argued that although they may not be wealthy enough to be property owners, they still deserve certain rights with regard to their barrio.

The mode for mobilizing this sentiment came in the form of the Mission Anti-Displacement Coalition (MAC), a collection of groups such as People Organized to Demand Environmental and Economic Rights (PODER), the Mission Agenda, St. Peter's Housing Committee, the Day Laborers Program, and Mission Housing and Development Corporation, considered the "new guard" of Mission community activism. MAC strove to incorporate the input of the people of the Mission in development plans arguing that many times neighborhood associations will claim to represent the people when, in fact, they speak for only a handful without actively reaching out to the community at large. MAC held meetings and went door-to-door teaching residents about zoning and listening to their concerns as

well as visions for the future of the Mission. With community input, MAC conceived of the Plan Popular, a planning layout, which encouraged the retention of land zoned industrial in order to provide more working-class jobs (Freidenfeld, 2006). Renee Saucedo, executive director of the San Francisco Day Laborers program remarked that,

MAC had an impact because it meant that the Mission District community attempted to take control over its own destiny around critical issues such as housing and community planning. MAC created an optimism that you could fight and win. Also, it was significant that immigrant day laborers, some of the most excluded members of society, participated. (Tracy 2004, p. 171)

Although MAC was one of the most encompassing and organized anti-gentrification mobilizations, other community groups also sprung up to combat the encroaching redevelopment. The Mission Yuppie Eradication Project put up posters calling for class war and encouraging the vandalism of property belonging to higher income residents. The Mission Artists Gentrification Insurrection organized a March of the Evicted (Solnit, 2000; Hartman 2002). Grassroots groups have joined the fight from a variety of different corners.

Although MAC and other anti-gentrification groups have had certain successes, fighting Mission gentrification has posed an extremely difficult task and one with an uncertain outcome. Antonio Dias of PODER summed up the MAC efforts,

When we are talking in the late nineties about the dot.com boom, it became obvious that the single-issue groups had to come together. Fighting gentrification wasn't going to be a short-term campaign. It would mean effective organizing, mass mobilizations, and more.

MAC brought together groups that were already doing work and created a force that could counteract the displacement push. Since the dot.com bust MAC has been trying to dig deep into our constituencies. In the beginning we needed to make a swift impact. Now we're making sure that we pay attention to bringing in new activists and doing popular education. I think that if we had incorporated more of this in the beginning we would have made more of a change. (Tracy 2004, p. 186)

As Dias suggests, timing played an important role in the ability of groups to influence the gentrification process. Unlike many other examples of gentrifying areas where the process has been slow but progressive, the dot-com boom produced gentrification at unstoppable speed. The Mission community had little warning of the redevelopment threat before it hit and was unable to properly mobilize (Hartman, 2002).

Gentrification can have both positive and negative consequences depending on the stakeholder as well as the shape of its progression. Freeman's (2006) and Maurrasse's (2006) novel approaches to investigating the impact of gentrification in Harlem by interviewing the indigenous residents reveal that many residents actually appreciate certain products of gentrification such as improved services and amenities in the neighborhood. However, not only had Harlem reached a point of complete disinvestment and abandonment, the gentrification there has been slower than in the Mission allowing community groups more time and a better opportunity to influence how the process affects low-income residents. In general, rapid gentrification brings many more problems than slow but steady revitalization and the Mission District was unfortunately hit hard and fast as a result of the dot-com boom (Kennedy and

Leonard, 2001).

Gentrification not only progressed rapidly but leaders in the District also believe that community groups were slow and ineffective in responding to gentrification (Hartman, 2002). They feel that their lack of neighborhood-wide organization and unity prevented them from influencing early gentrification pressures, arguing that non-profit leaders were too consumed by their own organizational agendas – housing, business development or family services – therefore missing warning signs. Others outside of the District also report some political conflicts among the leadership in the community once gentrification issues took center stage. Kennedy and Leonard go on to inform that,

A number of non-profit representatives believe in retrospect that a key opportunity was missed to educate neighborhood residents, businesses and city official about the benefits and dangers of rapid gentrification. They acknowledged their inability to craft an effective agenda for public officials to help respond to the threats of displacement that they would face. For these community leaders, the gentrification war was lost before the first battle was even fought. Meanwhile, the Mission's Latino residents are moving out in droves across the city, many to the Excelsior District and to other communities through the Bay Area. (2001, p. 46)

This seems the ultimate tragedy in a neighborhood known for its proud Latino history and historical ability to mobilize for social change. This proclivity for mobilizing, and the resulting myriad non-profit groups has, in fact, led to the many rifts in the organizational landscape making a joint effort in fighting gentrification difficult to achieve (Deschenes, 2002).

As a response to the infighting, in 1998 the Mission Planning Council was

created to reduce the neighborhood's reputation for political fragmentation, territoriality, and disjointed planning. The Council is a coalition of community-based organizations whose members include service providers, affordable housing developers, legal advocates, business owners, economic development organizations, training centers, and community organizing groups. The council works as an umbrella organization to organize Mission development endeavors giving its members the ability to network, share resources and coordinate their efforts (Alejandrino, 2000).

Even if the Council is successful in appeasing infighting and organization community efforts, substantial barriers exist in mitigating gentrification. First, Mission Latinos' low incomes impede the success of homeownership programs – a fundamental part of any anti-gentrification plan. Second, the building density and lack of open land greatly limits the potential for new affordable housing developments. Lastly, the city's affordable housing programs do not come close to meeting the need (Alejandrino, 2000).

Although the future of economic and cultural diversity appears bleak, determined hope for the future of this Latino barrio is heard through people like Latino activist and writer Alejandro Murguia who demands that, "we are here and we are not leaving" (Murguia 2004, p. 59). He also believes in the possibility of Mission Latinos uniting and producing an unstoppable political force:

I believe the disenfranchised Latino electorate of San Francisco has the *cojones* to create a prototype of a political party - similar to La Raza Unida Party of the 1970s and 1980s. If the Democrats fear the

Greens or Ralph Nader, wait until Latinos organize. Then we'll have a real horse race. Because in the last analysis, only someone from the neighborhood will stand up for the neighborhood. The error is in believing that only the rich will vote their interests. (Murguia 2004, p. 59)

While one can debate the feasibility of the Latino party that Murguia envisions, the point remains that the struggle for community control continues. Murguia recounts his memories of the Mission recalling that,

During the 1970s, the Mission District in San Francisco teemed with painters, muralists, poets, and musicians...We called it La Misi3n, or La Mission, and we spoke espa3ol, calo, Spanglish, or just plain unadorned English. We had no problem being understood because La Mission was a microcosm of Latin America, and the whole barrio seemed in perfect sync...Although "renaissance" is too grand a word to describe the scene, the Mission District was a cultural force that pulsed with the unique sensibilities of a community too hip to last. (Murguia 2002, p. 119)

It is ironic that more than thirty years later, the area surrounding Valencia Street is now described as "the hippest in America" by *Vanity Fair* magazine (Sinclair 2004, p. 149). As a result, the Latino community may eventually no longer be able to survive in the neighborhood whose character and charm it defined.

While gentrification may be an utter and unacceptable tragedy according to community activists and champions of cultural and economic diversity, its impact is not as black and white as many insist. The narrative missing above is that of the non-activists, non-academics, non-policymakers, non-community organizers - the indigenous Latino Mission residents. How exactly do they feel about the changes occurring around them? The next chapter explores the perceptions and experiences of long-time Latino Mission residents.

CHAPTER 5 – Ask the Locals: Changes in the Mission

Popular wisdom suggests that gentrification is a cut and dried battle between the haves and the have-nots with little common ground between -- the root of all urban evils destroying the lives of the poor. At the onset of gentrification in the 1970s, it was viewed favorably as the possible savior of our inner cities, which had fallen prey to blight and abandonment. That perception quickly gave way to growing concern over gentrification's role in class conflict and the displacement of the poor. This is now the prevailing and largely unchallenged view of gentrification.

Through his work in Harlem and Clinton Hill, Freeman reveals residents' feelings about gentrification are more nuanced than the popular conception mentioned above. Freeman is one of the first academics to conduct comprehensive and structured research on the opinions of long-term residents regarding gentrification. Freeman notes, however, that his target neighborhoods differ in demographics, history, and levels of abandonment and disinvestment from other neighborhoods throughout the country. He suggests that these elements affect the way in which residents perceive gentrification. Other kinds of neighborhoods like working-class ethnic enclaves may not have the cleanest streets and greatest selection of amenities compared to the rest of the city, but many have also not reached Harlem's level of blight. Thus Freeman warned that where Harlem residents appreciate certain changes from gentrification like more grocery stores and better garbage pick-up, residents in vibrant ethnic enclaves may perceive fewer added advantages to gentrification and therefore have more hostile reactions to it.

In speaking with long-term residents about their feelings on gentrification, I found that Freeman was correct in predicting differences between Harlem and a working-class ethnic enclave like the Mission, but that the differences were not exactly as he expected. Many of the Latino residents with whom I spoke were not as outwardly hostile towards gentrification as Freeman suspected and as much of the anti-gentrification rhetoric suggests. Most noted both pros and cons associated with gentrification – benefits gained and prices paid. Displacement and the deterioration of neighborhood culture upset long-term residents but their experiences and perceptions reflect the complexity of gentrification's impact on communities. Most surprisingly, where gentrification is commonly thought to help decrease crime, crime activity actually increased in the Mission during the gentrification boom. This chapter reviews the feelings and perceptions Mission Latinos have towards the gentrification of their neighborhood.

PROPERTY AND FAMILY

One benefit of gentrification to existing residents that Freeman observed from his conversations in Harlem and Clinton Hill was that those who had purchased houses in earlier years were not necessarily affluent because housing prices in the past were extremely depressed but now stood to gain substantial profits should they decide to sell their homes. Mission residents also raised the subject of property ownership but highlighted a different aspect of it. Instead of seeing the long-term ownership of a home as a benefit, a few residents stressed its negative impact on their families.

In asking how the changes in the Mission have affected her personally, April, who has lived her entire life in the neighborhood, explains:

Well there has been a negative backlash. My grandmother died a couple weeks ago and her house is now worth a lot of money and her kids are already fighting each other over who gets it and whether they are going to keep it or sell it. It's not like we need the money or anything. These high home values have made people greedy and desensitized people to family values. It's sad to see my family fighting about it and they haven't been addressing the things they should be at this time. The same thing happened a couple years ago with another friend of mine. There was lots of fighting over the house because it was worth so much.

While family in-fighting over deceased members' property exists in all kinds of situations, it is noteworthy that this was the first remark that came to mind when I asked April about the impact of gentrification on her personally. Throughout my interviews, the topic of family and its importance frequently surfaced as a key issue. This differs from Freeman's observations of Harlem and Clinton Hill and touches on his suggestion that gentrification may affect historically strong and vibrant working class enclaves differently.

In reflecting on the changes occurring in Mission over the last twenty years, the loss of a strong family presence was consistently cited as most upsetting. April notes: "Growing up there were a lot more Latino families. My grandma's house is on Harrison between 21st and 22nd and it was the central meeting point for my entire family and everyone we knew there were Latino families and you just don't see that anymore."

Another resident who grew up in the Mission but now lives in Oakland compares the two areas:

It's weird. It's weird. Because go to Oakland and I feel that hominess. A lot of people from the Mission have moved to Oakland and Richmond. And I walk outside there and it feels very much like it did when I was little [in the Mission]. It's just more homey. It's weird and I don't even know how to explain it and people ask me like "what's wrong with the Mission?" And I say it's just not the same. It just doesn't feel the same. The one picture in my head is that I walk outside and all the windows are open and music is playing and I know this sounds funny but there were just guys hanging around the block drinking their beers on a hot day and I knew all of them. I knew who they were, they were from the neighborhood. The kids you went to preschool with are the kids you went to middle school with and then in high school and a lot of that has been eliminated because of the fact that a lot of people had to leave. Like you have people who were paying a certain amount a year and then all of a sudden you have the landlord saying you have to get out and so your sense of community and the people you have known your whole life is gone.

This lost sense of community and personally knowing your neighbors was mentioned in nearly every interview and is something I will discuss further when I look at crime in the District.

THE FEAR OF DISPLACEMENT

This brings us to what is commonly considered the most detrimental effect of gentrification: displacement. Freeman argues that the issue of displacement is more complicated and nuanced than anti-gentrification activists suggest. In past research, Freeman presents findings that the level of displacement caused by gentrification is far less than believed (Freeman, 2006). He also found in his interviews with Harlem residents that while residents feared being pushed out of their neighborhood, they had little personal experience with friends and family being displaced. He likened the displacement to a thunderstorm – while the sound of thunder invokes fear in people, few have ever actually been hit by lightning.

The story of displacement in the Mission is also more complicated than Latinos being pushed out by the influx of higher-income individuals. Displacement is certainly a serious concern and higher housing prices is making it more difficult for low-income individuals to live in the Mission, but there are other factors involved in the movement of families away from the District. Also, unlike Freeman's experience, every resident I spoke with had had a friend or family member move away from the Mission.

Angela grew up in the Mission but has since moved because of housing costs. She now commutes from Oakland to the neighborhood everyday to work at a non-profit that aims to keep Mission youth out of gangs by providing them with other social opportunities. Angela explained the role of displacement and its effect on families and the feel of the Mission:

Angela: Maybe like seven years ago, I'm really bad with dates, there was this really really disgusting wave of gentrification. Where people were actually getting pushed out of the neighborhood and it still happens because there is a lot of construction and there's a lot of this city turning into I want to say like a New York downtown. It's not family friendly anymore. The Mission today is not the way it was I mean you have some of the same elements but families have been pushed out.

AN: What kinds of changes have happened here?

Angela: I think definitely visually it's really different. It's not as homey as it used to be. It's just like aesthetics. There a lots of tall buildings and stuff. It just not the same feel to it and just the energy too. And it's like less and less families too. Less immigrant families. You go to the neighborhood and you see a lot of people that aren't from here and it's not bad because there are a lot of us that are not from here but they've established a neighborhood here that is just really different. The different clubs that are here, the different activities and like valet parking and it's just like ridiculous. The city is already overpopulated so it's overcrowded. I think people leave more

because they can't afford it than for safety. Of course there are safety issues. There's a lot of gang violence.

Although she attributes the majority of family departures to being unable to afford the neighborhood, she also mentions the role of safety in these decisions. Many residents were aware that a family's decision to move away consisted of a variety of factors and that while some couldn't afford to live in the neighborhood, for many, moving resulted from some other motivation. For example, many families are technically capable of affording the Mission but realize that they can get much more for the same price in Oakland or Richmond. They are able to buy an entire house with a backyard instead of being confined to an apartment. My conversation with Diana, who grew up in the Mission and continues to live there, added to this observation:

AN: Have you known personally other Latino families that have moved out from the Mission?

Diana: Oh yeah. I mean every house on my grandmother's street, I know exactly where everyone went and we are the last people on that block who have been there for thirty-five years.

AN: Were their motivations for moving rent increases or because they saw other areas as better areas to live?

A: It was more like, "I'm getting this offer for my house and with this I could buy more and bigger in Antioch or Pittsburgh," and this is over the past 15 years so it's where the market value is. The last family moved out about four years ago. And so your question is like were they pushed or pulled and I think they were more pulled.

In addition to the lure of bigger houses and a backyard, the Mission hasn't always been a desirable place to live and many Latino families use the neighborhood as a

temporary stepping stone to better areas and the suburbs. Crime and other factors like the unfavorable stigma of the neighborhood continue to play a role in people's desire to leave the neighborhood:

AN: When you were growing up, did the Latino families want to stay here or did they get forced out?

Diana: I grew up in the Mission but went to a good Catholic school so with kids at another class level so for Latinos going to this school, living the Mission was not a good thing. It was like the suburbs were the place to be and for Latino families being able to move to the suburbs when I was growing up was like a big step up. But for my family it was more important to be around family and because they owned a business in the neighborhood it was more important for them to stay near family and didn't want to go to the suburbs for that reason. But growing up there was sort of a stigma of living in the Mission. The Mission was not moving up in class.

Anti-gentrification rhetoric suggests that all families and low-income individuals want to stay in the neighborhood but that may not always be true. There are undoubtedly families that desired to stay in their neighborhood and unlike Diana's family didn't have the resources to do so, however there are also other families who were working to leave the neighborhood. These reflections are not meant to downplay the harm displacement causes but simply to acknowledge the fact that people's movement involves many factors and different motivations.

CRIME IN THE MISSION

Crime levels in the Mission over the last twenty years produced one of the most surprising observations from my interviews with the local Latino community. Crime also played a large role in motivating families to leave the neighborhood. Angela, who now runs the gang prevention youth program, was once a part of a gang

herself and her mother tried moving her out of the neighborhood specifically to prevent that from happening:

Angela: I was born down the street from here. But my mom took me out of the Mission because of the whole gang.

AN: What year was that?

Angela: I would say like around '89.

AN: You left the Mission because she was scared? For security?

Angela: Yeah, you know like the gang violence was really picking up at that time. I mean there was gang violence but it wasn't as crazy as it is today. But it was starting to pick up so she moved us out to Daly City but we didn't make it very well out there so we moved back to San Francisco. I ended up coming and kicking it in the Mission and ended up getting jumped into a gang. So like the whole reason my mom had taken me out of the Mission. So yeah, I ended up getting jumped in. It was like my outlet. By the age of 16 I was doing really really really bad.

Jason, who grew up and has spent his entire life in the Mission echoes Angela's sentiment. Jason works at a music store in the neighborhood but recently moved to South San Francisco because his house had been broken into and he felt the neighborhood was getting too dangerous and worried about his kids. His mother still lives in the same house he grew up in at 26th Street and Van Ness.

AN: What kinds of changes have you seen over the years here?

Jason: It's gotten a lot more dangerous around here. I mean I can't raise my kids here it's gotten so bad. It's so bad around here. Really really dangerous. The police don't do nothing around here.

Angela and Jason express a concern that every one of my interviewees shared: crime. Crime was by and large the prominent topic of every interview. Contrary to

the common conception held among new Mission residents that crime must have decreased with the influx of wealth and gentrification, every one of the long-term Latino residents I interviewed said that crime in the neighborhood has gotten much worse.

The concern over gentrification and displacement is secondary compared to residents' concern over crime. What is more interesting is that this spike in crime occurred at the same time as the initial wave of dot-com gentrification in the neighborhood. This differs from Freeman's findings in Harlem and Clinton Hill. In New York, Freeman found that the arrival of higher-income households led to greater police presence and city involvement in crime prevention, therefore decreasing crime rates in the two neighborhoods. This is a key difference between an area such as Harlem, which had reached a point of complete abandonment and disinvestment, and a vibrant close-knit ethnic enclave like the Mission District. Residents offer several different reasons for why they believe crime and gang activity increased:

AN: Would you say the neighborhood has gotten more dangerous?

Jason: Oh yeah! Are you kidding me? So much worse. Like, it's crazy around here.

AN: When would you say it started getting worse?

Jason: Like, the 90s. Yeah, the 90s is when it really started going down hill.

AN: What happened? Why did it start getting worse?

Jason: That's when the gangs exploded. I mean, tons more people in gangs. And the police just stopped caring man. The 80s were a lot safer. In the 80s you couldn't even sit around Mission and 24th because the police would come and yell at you and make you move and tell you you couldn't be hanging around but now they don't do anything. We have a police station just a few blocks away right there on 16th and it's so bad there. I mean, if a station is right there? Why? You know? Those cops should be out stopping stuff. If they just you know, bam, like hit 16th, 19th and 24th - you know, where things happen, then it would be a lot better but they never do anything in those places.

AN: Why don't they do anything?

Jason: No clue. I really have no idea. I don't understand. I mean just last night, you probably heard it on the news there were these three shootings. Somebody got killed right there on Treat and then just a little bit later another person got killed on Florida. I mean if there was a shooting you think the police would be there in a second covering the area and making sure something else didn't go down.

Ineffective policing was an issue several residents raised during interviews.

Many felt that even if there were a police presence, that the police felt apathetic towards actually preventing and decreasing crime in the neighborhood. There was little faith in police services among the Mission Latino community. Angela develops this idea and adds additional reasoning of her own:

AN: Has crime gotten worse or better?

Angela: It's gotten worse because as time goes on and people get smarter and with better technology, there is more access to drugs and stuff. It's definitely gotten worse.

AN: How do you feel in terms of police presence? Gotten better?

Angela: Yes and no. I mean for someone in a gang like the police are the worst enemy because their idea of cleaning the street is increasing juvenile hall and incarcerating people instead of making schools bigger and teaching life skills and offering jobs that actually pay

young people. I mean in that perspective I mean you call a police officer and they come but I just don't think that like the police are being used efficiently. If the cops were being led by the community I think things would be a lot different.

Angela feels that policing in the neighborhood is ineffective not only because police are not actively stopping crime but because they are missing the root of the problem and have different ideas about how to help the neighborhood. She also mentions the role of community input in running the neighborhood and alludes to the need for more community involvement.

The Mission is no longer the close-knit Latino family community it used to be. Latino families concerned about safety were already interested in moving to safer suburbs and that, partnered with the rise of housing prices resulting from gentrification, created a pull-push combination leading them out of the neighborhood and into the East Bay or down the Peninsula. But the entry of higher-income households did not have the same effect as it did in places like Harlem where crime decreased as a result. Although crime and sub-standard living conditions existed in the neighborhood prior to gentrification, the sense of community and knowing your neighborhoods kept the Mission safer for locals:

AN: Do you feel the crime has decreased since then?

Ben: I think it has probably gotten worse. I think that because I knew who was who growing up I wouldn't get into any trouble and neither would my family because we all kinda knew each other. We wouldn't have our house broken into or anything. Two years ago I had a cousin who was jumped by a gang on 21st and Bryant and I don't think it would have happened years ago because all the families kind of knew each other and it's kids in the neighborhood now that we just don't know and it's definitely gang members and we don't know who they

are and part of it is that we're just not centralized anymore. So if you ask me I'd have to say that crime has gotten worse and cars getting broken into just isn't a big deal anymore. I think that gentrification has created more antagonism because it is like the world of have and have-nots. That kind of resentment manifests itself and people feeling like "okay if I break into a car that is in front of a loft then I'm ripping off someone who lives there" but it could be somebody else's car.

Instead of hampering crime with an increase in higher-income households and presumably police, gentrification may have had the opposite effect. Not only did it create tension between what Ben terms the "haves" and the "have-nots," it also created another reason for Latino families to move away from the neighborhood. As a result, this loss of family presence and community has taken away a natural built-in policing network.

Residents no longer know who their neighbors are and no longer have the strength in numbers to enforce a safe self-regulated environment. Juan, who has lived in the Mission for 30 years and now runs a Salvadoran grocery store, talks about the loss of the tight-knit community as well as the role of unemployment in neighborhood crime:

AN: What kinds of other changes have you seen in the neighborhood over the last ten years?

Juan: It's really dangerous here. Really bad. We close at 8 p.m. Have to close at 8 p.m. every day because it is too dangerous. People are drunk. There are three bars right near here [points out where the bars are]. Bars don't close until 2 a.m. People get drunk and fight or you know [signals using a gun]. They don't have nothing to do so they get drunk and the bars close so they are in the streets and they drink more and if they don't get what they want they gun...they shoot. I come into work and always hear something new and bad. You know, you read in the paper everyday. You can read it. You see it. And just a little while ago, in one month there were two killings over there [points down the

street], and then two killings on that corner there, and then two more killings there. Eight killings in one month! Not right. So we have to close at 8 p.m. because it is dangerous. Too dangerous to stay open past 8 p.m.

AN: So it didn't used to be this dangerous? I mean, ten years ago? Was it worse or better?

Juan: Oh we stayed open past 8 p.m. yeah. We could stay open late and there was no problem. Now we have to close.

For Juan, the lack of job opportunities is the root of the problems in the Mission District. He explains how the Mission used to house huge industrial warehouses and large manufacturing companies that employed thousands of people. He continues that they have all left because of rising rents and because city taxes for businesses are too high. He talks about his own experience with his grocery store and how he had to fill out form after form and pay heavy taxes and business fees:

AN: Why is it so much more dangerous now than 10 years ago?

Juan: There are no jobs. So people don't have anything to do. They just and get drunk and fight and drink. There are no jobs now. Back then there were jobs. But now there is nothing. People used to hear about there being so many jobs here. "Come here! Lot's of work. Work work work." So they come and there is nothing.

AN: Are people still migrating from Central American and Mexico to the neighborhood thinking there are jobs?

Juan: Yeah. People still think there are jobs here but they are mistaken and they get here and nothing.

AN: What do they do when they get here and find there is no work?

Juan: [drinking motion]

AN: Are there other reasons you think this area is so dangerous?

Juan: The Capp Street is really bad because there are no lights! No street lights! You drive down the Capp and there is no light. Very dangerous place.

AN: Why hasn't the city done anything about no lights?

Juan: No money! They don't care about us here because we have no money. They don't need to put in lights.

AN: What about police?

Juan: Nah, no police.

AN: Do you think up by Dolores Park is safer?

Juan: [nods] It's different there.

AN: Why?

Juan: They have money there.

AN: What do you think the city should do to help this area?

Juan: Create jobs! Create jobs. We need more jobs. All of these buildings here [pointing towards the more industrial area of the Mission] they used to be big companies. Tons of companies with lots of jobs. But the city taxes too much. They tax so much and they companies didn't want to pay so they picked up and left and now there are no jobs. Like this one company, it employed 5,000 people! But it moved. Even here, this store here, we had to pay 8 different licenses to start this business. I want to hire another but I can't afford it because so many taxes.

This short conversation highlights several interesting points. Juan expresses resentment similar to Harlem residents about the fact that the city appears to tend to a predominately whiter and higher-income area of the Mission more than it does to his area. He also links crime with lack of job opportunities and although he has little formal education, astutely identifies the relationship between taxes, business

retention, and the loss of jobs. Residents like Juan provide a ground-level perspective of changes occurring in the Mission and can provide productive insight for ways of creating more equitable development within the community.

WORK AND A MIGRANT COMMUNITY

Ethnic enclaves, and in particular the Mission District which has long been a destination and haven for Latin American migrants, attract immigrants seeking a home and work in the U.S. Friends and family living in a place like the Mission fuel these patterns by sending word back to their town of origin sharing news about the neighborhood as a place to live and work. The Mission District has historically been an immigrant enclave – first as Irish, then Italian, and most recently Latin American. The District has received a steady stream of newcomers looking for work but now new migrants entering the neighborhood are having an exceedingly difficult time finding work. This, according to Juan, leads Latino migrants to drinking and causes fights on the streets.

The low-skill jobs that migrants seek are the same positions that entry-level neighborhood youth want to fill. Angela, who works with Mission kids, says that not having jobs for the kids drives them into gangs. Just as Juan wanted the city to become more concerned with creating jobs for Latino immigrants, Angela feels that a root of the gang problem is a lack of jobs for youth and wants to see more effort put into creating productive roles for them to fill. She also notes that while immigrants can sometimes find lawn-mowing and house-cleaning jobs, there are few ways in which they can better themselves or access education.

Different factors contribute to the life and death of certain work sectors in a city and while Juan never mentioned gentrification specifically, he alludes to its role in this process. Gentrification can reinforce and influence certain neighborhood developments but the Latino residents with whom I spoke did not generally equate gentrification directly with the changes happening in the neighborhood. They don't offer solutions that involve keeping people from moving into the District. Instead, they have a much fuller and more nuanced understanding of how and why cityscapes develop. Unlike the black and white explanations of some anti-gentrification activists, Latino residents understand that maintaining the health of the Mission community consists of more than stopping gentrification.

THE MISSION V. MISSION DOLORES

Living in the Mission and speaking with residents I began to notice a considerable difference between the area east of Mission Street and west of Mission Street. While the area east of Mission has certainly experienced extensive gentrification with warehouses being converted into high-priced lofts, the area west of Mission appears almost entirely gentrified. There are a far greater number of white and higher-income residents living in this area and little crime compared to east of Mission Street (2000 Census). This area likely experienced the most severe changes from gentrification due to its proximity to other popular neighborhoods like Noe Valley and the Castro. As mentioned in earlier chapters, real estate brokers have gone so far as to rename the most western-lying blocks "Mission Dolores," differentiating it from the negative connotations associated with other parts of the District. Most Latinos now live east of Mission Street (2000 Census) so residents

with whom I spoke mostly commented on the area surrounding their homes and work places.

AMENITIES AND PUBLIC SERVICES

Unlike Harlem and Clinton Hill, which saw substantial improvements in local amenities and public services, Mission residents rarely cited improvements to their neighborhood as a result of gentrification. This supports the point that Freeman foresees in his work. He stresses that Harlem and Clinton Hill experienced high levels of urban blight, so gentrification brought much needed amenities like grocery stores and increased public services like garbage pickup and police presence. He suggests that these improvements may be unnecessary in vibrant working-class ethnic communities, which already have established grocery stores and restaurants.

Therefore, he argues, residents in working-class communities may view gentrification more negatively than residents from areas like Harlem. In fact, few Mission residents I interviewed believed that public services and amenities had improved considerably with the gentrification of the neighborhood. As mentioned above, none believed that police presence had improved. Some of the “improvements” produced by gentrification can also only be enjoyed by certain residents and not others. Twenty-seven year old Rafaela, who has lived in the Mission for 15 years and currently works at a pharmacy in the neighborhood, explains certain improvements:

AN: What kinds of changes have you seen here?

Rafaela: New apartments, restaurants.

AN: Do you think these changes are good or bad?

Rafaela: It's good because most of the people that have left are the ones with little kids and the older people are the ones who have stayed.

AN: Do people like the new stores and businesses?

Rafaela: There are some places that are cool that they're open. Because things are closer to people now.

AN: What kinds of stores are opening that are good?

Rafaela: I mean, pharmacies and restaurants – different kinds of food than there used to be. Like sushi and stuff.

AN: Can people afford the restaurants? Are they too expensive or do people benefit from that?

Rafaela: It's kinda hard especially with the rent going higher but now it's kinda a treat. You know. It's like today you eat Japanese but then tomorrow you eat at home.

AN: Do you like the changes happening in the neighborhood?

Rafaela: Well I guess it's good and bad. All the families you know who are, you know, who have two or three kids it's gotten a little bit harder but for a young person like us it's gotten more cool because I don't have to go way up town or far from where I live to have a great night with my friends.

Rafaela suggests that the changes in the neighborhood cater to a younger and more affluent demographic than to Latino families. When asked if any sort of public services had improved, she said she had not noticed any changes over the years. While certain basic services like garbage pick-up and police presence have not changed considerably in the Mission in the last twenty years according to residents, they do feel other services have developed that benefit the community:

AN: In terms the aesthetic differences you were talking about earlier, things like garbage pickup or street cleaning improved?

Angela: I think a little more yes because of politicians and bureaucracy and you know people do whatever they have to do to get into high places of power but yeah you know there are definitely different things here and you see positive changes of course.

AN: What kinds of positive changes?

Angela: I think the implementation of resources to help young people is better. You see a lot of community organization to help kids here. As far as just the city and transportation and stuff things have gotten better throughout the city of course but I tend to focus on this community and the education system and it's not the best. The fact that a lot of young people are falling through the cracks.

The first positive change Angela cites is community organizing in order to help youth in the neighborhood but that is not necessarily a product of gentrification – that is the Latino community coming together themselves to try to fix a chronic problem in the Mission. The other improvements she mentions are city-wide and not a result of wealthy individuals moving into the Mission demanding better public services in the neighborhood.

Diana noticed improvements in services concerning outreach and support for Latino elders but this too is not necessarily correlated with gentrification:

AN: Have public services changed? Has the city tended more to the Mission as it has gentrified?

Diana: My mother used to run the Latino senior program over at Salvation Army at 20th and Valencia and I really think the services for Latino elders, maybe it's my experience with my mother, they have a lot more services than I remember growing up. My father's mother didn't have any social clubs or events that were Latino oriented and you see a lot more of that now. So there is more outreach. So in terms of social aspects like people being able to go to a center and learn

about housing opportunities or find out about free meals I think it's gotten much better but in terms of government services like police presence it's been the same. For the most part I don't see more police than ever.

Latino Mission residents have not witnessed the same level of changes in their public services because the neighborhood never experienced the same level of blight as Harlem. When addressing the fact that different neighborhoods might experience gentrification differently depending on their initial status and history, Freeman suggests that working-class ethnic enclaves may view gentrification with serious hostility unlike Harlem residents who actually appreciated some of the changes. If a community had all the grocery stores and street-cleaning it needed, he reasoned, then they might believe that gentrification would bring nothing but higher rents and useless boutiques to the neighborhood – there wouldn't be any positive improvement to balance out the negatives. From my interviews, this does not appear to be the case. While residents are concerned about displacement and have not seen substantial improvements in personally useful amenities and public services, they are also not strongly hostile towards gentrification of the District. This observation, however, may alternatively be a result of all the families with particularly hostile feelings towards gentrification having already been forced from the neighborhood. A more thorough investigation would necessitate locating a greater number of families to interview who no longer live in the Mission.

Another difference between Harlem and the Mission has to do with this perception of improvements as a result of gentrification. Freeman explains that

while Harlem residents enjoyed certain beneficial changes to the neighborhood, they viewed these changes with serious cynicism. They were frustrated by the idea that the city would not improve services for a poor black community but as soon as rich white residents entered, grocery stores were built and police arrived. Freeman correctly argues the importance of tending to all residents equally urging city policymakers to address the issue of preferential treatment based on income-level. Less observable cynicism in the Mission District as compared to Harlem likely results from the neighborhood's higher levels of economic and racial diversity as well as gentrification's unsubstantial influence on improving public services. Although they expressed a lower level of cynicism than Harlem residents, Mission Latinos were frustrated by inferior services, particularly pertaining to police protection, in the predominantly Latino – and poorer – parts of the neighborhood as compared to the whiter richer areas of the neighborhood.

MISSION CULTURE

Although the Mission District is still home to many Latinos, the strong display of Latino culture that the neighborhood is famous for has waned over the last twenty years. Walking through the Mission, it is still easy to see the strong Latin American influence over the area but slowly different Latino family-owned businesses have been converted into high-priced boutiques and restaurants. Likewise, Latino-led events like Cinco de Mayo and the 24th Street Fair have lost much of their historical roots or have ended altogether. Community institutions like the Mission Community Center and Galeria de la Raza still work to promote Latino

art and culture but as families move out and the neighborhood becomes more diversified, the task becomes more difficult:

AN: Do you feel that Latino culture in the Mission has deteriorated with the arrival of higher-income residents and families moving out or do you feel it has been able to retain the character it's famous for?

Rita: I think it's fading and dissolving little by little and you can see it at different events. Like the Latino Film Festival at Galeria de Raza, if you go there I mean there are barely any Latino families that show up there anymore. It used to be a family thing. Or like Dia de los Muertos, you know it's a lot of white folks. There's culture but it's different - a different population.

Thomas is 36 years old and works at a retail store on Mission Street. He has lived in the neighborhood his entire life and laments the loss of what the Mission used to be:

AN: How do you feel about the neighborhood now as opposed to earlier?

Thomas: This used to be a really great neighborhood. It used to be such a great place and now we're getting such a bad rap for all the killings and stuff. This place used to be really great and it's all gone downhill. There used to be a lot of great culture. Good Latino culture. Lots of murals and stuff like that but that's all going away because nobody cares anymore. Like that great mural of Santana over there, it's gone. They painted over it. Things are just different. It used to be a great place. It really started changing when all the Asians came in and those Asian markets and stuff. Now the street is ugly. It's like a big flea market or something. It used to be like Latino and Italian markets and that's different.

AN: When would you say the Asians started moving in?

Thomas: '91 or '92.

AN: How do you feel about these changes?

Thomas: There is some good but this neighborhood used to be a really really great place. And now it's just different and so dangerous. And the culture part. Like Cinco de Mayo used to be free here and a big event and then they moved it to the Civic Center and started charging \$5! I don't know who decided to move it or whatever and charge money. That's just crazy. And like the 24th Street fair here that they used to do every year and close down the street, they don't do that anymore.

AN: Really? When did that end?

Thomas: A couple years ago.

AN: Why did it stop?

Thomas: I don't know. Who knows.

Thomas makes several interesting observations. He equates the neighborhood “going downhill” with the arrival of Asians to the area. Not once in our conversation does he equate the loss of Latino culture to gentrification and the arrival of predominantly white high-income individuals. This adds another angle in studying the life and death of ethnic enclaves and shifting urban landscapes. Anti-gentrification advocates generally view white high-income professionals as the enemy and cause of Latino community deterioration in the Mission. When speaking with Latino merchants on Mission Street, their concern does not necessarily lie with white professionals but instead with Asian retail competition and the aesthetic change to their neighborhood that results from Asian retailers moving in.

Thomas also notes that this big downturn began around 1991 – the same time the dot-com boom started and gentrification became a reality in the District. He notices deterioration of Mission culture but produces an alternative explanation to

that offered by some activists. This is not to say that either explanation is wrong. It is simply to point out that several underlying reasons exist and that depending on *who* and *where* you are in the neighborhood, you see those changes differently – the impact of gentrification is more complex than most realize.

Thomas' mention of Asians also highlights a key difference between the Mission and Harlem. In Harlem, an historical and predominantly black neighborhood, many residents define gentrification with the arrival of white people. This goes back to the fact that even though many of these residents were appreciative of the amenities and public services that improved because of gentrification, they were upset by the fact that it took the arrival of whites to make the city listen. Although the Mission is largely Latino, it is more diverse than Harlem. More whites are moving into the neighborhood, but residents also mentioned seeing more blacks and Asians arriving as well and in fact, some noted the importance of diversity and viewed these changes as something positive. In the Mission, more gray areas exist regarding who is perceived as the *gentrifier* and the *gentrified*.

This chapter illustrates two points. First, perceptions of the long-term Latino residents do not always match up with the message of activists regarding gentrification. Gentrification is a complex process with both positive and negative impacts on a community. Likewise, residents have different concerns and solutions. While likely two sides of the same coin, many residents are most concerned with stopping crime and creating more jobs – not with stopping high-income individuals

from moving next door and new condo developments from being built across the street. Although gentrification no doubt influences the development of the neighborhood, residents view and feel the impact in a variety of ways.

Second, gentrification affects neighborhoods differently depending on their context and history as we have seen in comparing Harlem and the Mission. For example, an obvious assumption is that as high-income gentrifiers arrive, better police presence would be demanded and crime would decrease – as was the case in Harlem. The Mission District's experience differed, which might be the result of the deterioration of the neighborhood's social capital – a close-knit, family-oriented community. How should policymakers, activists, and concerned citizens utilize this information? In the next chapter I briefly explore the policy implications of these findings and suggest ways in which we might incorporate them.

CHAPTER 6 – Policy Implications

The aim of this research is more than bringing to light the perceptions of residents. These findings are to help facilitate and inform policymakers when working to create more just, livable, and equitable cities. I cannot say that a few months of field research based on a dozen interviews fully and accurately represents the community as a whole. Instead, this work is simply meant to suggest other areas in need of research and other questions in need of answers. It is meant to reinforce the idea that gentrification is not the cut and dried process traditionally portrayed in literature and popular culture. While the small scope of this study dissuades me from making concrete policy recommendations, and a policy discussion warrants a separate thesis of its own, in this chapter I will briefly discuss policy considerations and implications.

Gentrification cannot be easily stopped. We can, however, learn how policy may help guide its process in promoting the benefits while mitigating harmful consequences. Some of the local Mission Latinos were very aware of the impossibility of completely halting gentrification as well as the complexities inherent in the process. Celia, who grew up and continues to live and work in the Mission, understands that residents want the improvements associated with gentrification but sometimes fail to realize the full effect of those changes. She also understands that stopping gentrification is not a realistic solution.

AN: How do you feel personally about these changes?

Celia: I really think it's sad but it's like economic warfare – how do you battle that? It's just a culture shift. I mean I know there has been an effort to increase low-income housing but that comes with another

set of problems and complications. So I really think that there isn't an easy or fast solution. It's an old history that's just not going to come back. You know I remember a time when people in the neighborhood thought, "Oh, it's so great that they're redoing that building because it was an abandoned building," and I don't think people realized that once they do that building, your house is next. So I think the emotion too has shifted. You know it started out with people thinking, "Oh, this is going to clean our neighborhood. We're going to have a lower gang presence," and people didn't realize that you could be part of that reconstructing too. You're going to be pulled out of that neighborhood too with that abandoned building and I don't think people got that.

Celia realizes there are problems associated with gentrification and also problems associated with proposed solutions like low-income housing. While low-income housing can help some, it carries with it another set of concerns and shortcomings.

On top of understanding the underlying economic force making the fight against gentrification a difficult if not impossible one, she also alludes to the importance of timing. The Mission was slow to organize against gentrification for reasons mentioned in earlier chapters. One other possible reason for this slow response is that locals saw the improvements associated with gentrification and were unaware of the future detrimental effects. Jason, the record store retail associate who we met earlier, found himself realizing this as we spoke.

Jason: We need more people to come in and invest in the neighborhood. We need big names here you know. I mean we got Verizon there and Nextel and Sketchers so that's good, but we need more big names to come invest here. And like, there are condos and stuff getting built, which I guess is good, you know, investment. But I guess Latinos can't afford that though so. I know people like this friend of mine who got booted from her house because the owners wanted to turn it into a condo on 22nd and Shotwell. And a bunch of business got booted there on 24th. So I guess it's good and bad.

Jason understands the complexity and fact that gentrification can be both good and bad. The goal in research like this is to understand how gentrification impacts communities so that we can better identify early warning signs and implement policy changes to help ward off the negatives like displacement while promoting the positives like cleaner streets.

The difficulty in creating a policy prescription for areas displaying early signs of gentrification is that – as the comparison of the Mission and Harlem show – neighborhoods experience gentrification differently. While Harlem saw a decrease in crime, the Mission saw an increase. While the Mission may not have had gourmet grocery stores, they did have fully-stocked local markets unlike Harlem. More case studies of neighborhoods with different compositions will help us understand the nuances of the process and how it affects different communities. In analyzing his Harlem findings and their applicability to other neighborhoods, Freeman stresses,

Context is vital to interpreting these findings...Black inner-city neighborhoods have come to occupy a uniquely disadvantaged place in urban America. Ghettos are not just another type of ethnic enclave; rather, taken as a whole they are more isolated and experience greater disinvestment than perhaps any other type of neighborhood. They are much more racially isolated than either the contemporary ethnic enclaves inhabited by Asian and Latino immigrants or the enclaves of yesteryear that were home to European immigrants. (2006, p. 158)

Because of this context, gentrification's impact on Harlem residents differs from its impact on Mission residents. Freeman argues that one of the most detrimental byproducts of gentrification in Harlem is the cynicism and bitterness with which black residents view the improvements in their neighborhoods – that whites receive preferential treatment. In addition to not having experienced the same kind of

disinvestment as Harlem, the Mission has a different historical background and more diverse demographic composition.

For the Mission, crime is predominantly the main concern for residents. Surprisingly, the neighborhood saw a serious spike and subsequent escalation of crime around the same time as the dot-com boom and onset of gentrification. Although more research would be necessary, the argument could be made that gentrification contributed to this escalation by damaging the tight-knit Mission family community. Displacement is still undoubtedly a concern for the working-class Latino community but has been overshadowed by the crime threat. In this, there appears a discrepancy between the energy invested in fighting gentrification and that fighting crime.

As noted in previous chapters, gentrification was met, albeit too late, with vocal protests in the Mission. Activists gathered to represent the community in spreading the anti-gentrification message and succeeded in making their presence known. Even today when walking around the neighborhood, you'll notice signs hanging from apartment buildings protesting new condo developments. This leads to the question: If crime is the primary concern of long-term locals, where is the anti-crime mobilization? This is not to say there is no need in raising awareness about gentrification or that Latino residents aren't seriously concerned and affected by it, it is only to point out the fact that those in the neighborhood with the loudest voices are not always representative of the community as a whole. One could also argue that if gentrification contributed to the increase in crime, than fighting gentrification is also

fighting crime. However, while gentrification may have initially set the rise in crime in motion, it does not necessarily mean that it continues to be responsible for the crime in the neighborhood today. Crime has acquired a momentum of its own so stopping gentrification would not necessarily lead to lower crime rates. Regardless, for residents, crime is a serious issue in need of direct addressing by community activists, policymakers and the city.

In Freeman's discussion of his findings' policy implications, he questions what warrants a policy response. He notes that quantitative evidence from past studies suggests displacement is a relatively rare event. A common definition of displacement by Grier and Grier (1978) is:

When any household is forced to move from its residence by conditions which affect the dwelling or its immediate surrounding, and:

1. Are beyond the household's reasonable ability to control or prevent;
2. 2. Occur despite the household's having met all previously imposed conditions of occupancy; and
3. Make continued occupancy by that household impossible, hazardous or unaffordable.

As is the case of those I interviewed in the Mission, Freeman explains that residents he spoke with in Harlem and Clinton Hill have a broader connotation of being "pushed out" and losing one's community associated with displacement. He uses the example of someone securely housed in their parents' public housing and who is unable to buy a home of their own in the neighborhood because of escalating housing prices. While this person wasn't "displaced" in technical terms, they may still feel "pushed out" by being unable to afford a place of their own in their home

community. Likewise, even if the chance of actually being forced from their home is low, an unhealthy fear of displacement presides in gentrifying neighborhoods.

But does this fear and broader concept of being “pushed out” deserve a policy response? Freeman explains,

If gentrification reflects a shift in tastes for certain neighborhoods, this means that the original residents are being outbid for this space. But virtually all housing is allocated in this way. Although it is unfortunate that some residents may no longer be able to afford to live in neighborhoods they grew up in, this doesn’t necessarily cry out for a policy response. Neighborhoods are constantly changing, sometimes to the chagrin of the original residents. Furthermore, given the ugly history of federal and local government intervening to maintain neighborhood character, typically to keep minorities and the poor out, we might be hesitant before adapting a policy that specifically aims to allow neighborhoods to maintain their existing socioeconomic status. (2006, p. 167)

He goes on to argue that from the perspective of concerns for equity, we may indeed wish to intervene in the case of gentrification for three reasons. The first is the notion of preserving the security that comes with having a secure home. The second reason for collective action regards social justice and helping those who weathered the neighborhood lows to remain once the area experiences the improvements driven by gentrification. This is likewise important if we wish to make socioeconomic diversity something more than a passing phase in gentrifying neighborhoods. The third, specifically pertaining to Freeman’s findings in Harlem and Clinton Hill, involves the cynicism and resentment expressed by residents, which warrants a closer look at the way we plan and allocate resources across space. Although the changes brought by gentrification were not met with the same level of resentment

and cynicism in the Mission, rising crime, the loss of jobs for the Latino community due to the takeover of high-tech firms, and the lack of opportunities for locals to learn the necessary skills to fill what vacancies exist, all contribute to rising anger about the treatment of the community. The city must tend to its citizens equally regardless of income.

Freeman lays out different ways for allaying the negative impact of gentrification. He promotes home ownership schemes as well as additional affordable housing programs including tax increment financing (TIC), inclusionary zoning, and a modified version of the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC). In addressing neighborhood cynicism, he argues proper community participation in development plans is key. These recommendations extend beyond Harlem and Clinton Hill and should be considered for all areas undergoing gentrification.

The story of a working-class ethnic enclave raises other considerations. While Freeman suggests that residents in vibrant working-class enclaves may be more hostile to gentrification, those in the Mission seem to follow a similar line as Harlem residents in terms of being appreciative of some changes and upset about others. Their sentiment also changed depending on the point in the process. For example, many residents were enthusiastic in seeing old abandoned buildings being renovated until they realized that they may be forced from their home or shop.

Likewise, the loss of families in the Mission resulted from a variety of push-pull factors – housing prices increased but many families also actively wanted to move to larger homes and safer streets in the suburbs. The desire for safer streets

leads us to the interesting relationship between crime and gentrification in the Mission and also presents another reason we may want to consider comprehensive action in the case of gentrification. Mission residents did not most frequently link the increase in crime to a decrease in police presence. The deterioration of family community culture and lack of jobs were the two most common explanations. In addition, the residents spoke more of their concerns in terms of crime rather than gentrification but the two are related.

CRIME

Although the extent of the connection cannot be determined from my relatively few interviews, the loss of family community in the Mission District contributed to the escalating crime and gang activity. Old residents no longer know their neighborhoods or who ‘belongs’ and who doesn’t. This resonates with Jane Jacob’s emphasis on why we must protect the “social capital” of the city: “that intricate web of human relationships built up over time and that provides mutual support in time of need, ensures the safety of the streets, and fosters a sense of civic responsibility” (1961). An active resident awareness and knowledge of local street happenings creates safer neighborhoods and Mission residents no longer know the people around them or spend time “hanging out on the streets with kids playing, listening to music, and parents talking with neighbors,” as one of my interviewees explained. This takes away the community’s built-in police force. The community’s ability to help monitor and police itself benefits the city. Promoting policies that assist families to remain in their community and protect this “social capital” is

mutually beneficial for the city. This is not to say that crime was not a problem in the Mission prior to gentrification. It was a big problem and the city could have likely helped stem the exodus of families from the area if it had improved its crime prevention practices prior to gentrification. High prices were not the only reason driving families out of the neighborhood – crime played a large role.

This relationship between crime and gentrification in the Mission gives us something that may be applied to other ethnic enclaves on the brink of gentrification. Gentrification not only pushed residents out because of increasing rent, it also encouraged families who owned houses to move because they began seeing large price-tags for their homes and realized that they could sell their home in the city for a safer home in the suburb with better schools for their children. All of my interviewees agreed that leaving the Mission was difficult for everyone, even those who had decided on a basis of what was best for their family. Most did not want to leave their home community but felt that they must because of the combination of factors described. By tending to crime and education problems before the onset of gentrification in ethnic enclaves, long-term family residents will be more inclined to stay in the neighborhood they know and love thus helping preserve the social capital of the city.

EMPLOYMENT

Another issue that residents associated with rising crime and loss of Latino culture in the Mission District is the loss of low-skill employment opportunities. The Mission District has historically been a migrant receiving community. Immigrants,

though possibly fewer than before, still arrive looking for jobs but most industrial and manufacturing companies have moved out of the city and have been replaced by high-technology firms. While the wax and wane of employment sectors within cities is beyond the scope of this paper, attracting low-skill employers through tax-incentives or other methods could help provide much needed jobs as well as maintain a socioeconomically diverse city accessible by all income brackets.

Mission residents also discussed the need for more education and job training opportunities. Many wish to remain in the neighborhood but if the city is unable to retain enough manufacturing and industrial jobs, they must move to where positions are available or learn the necessary skills to participate in a different employment sector. Workforce development may be another key component in assisting residents in gentrification-prone ethnic enclaves. Addressing workforce development early on in an area, prior to gentrification, could also have a reinforcing affect on crime prevention as many of my interviewees, like Juan in the previous chapter, noted a link between lack of job opportunities and crime activity.

In addition to incoming immigrants looking for work, a serious concern over lack of opportunity for Mission youth pervades the community. Several of the people with whom I spoke, including Angela who grew up in the Mission and was once a part of a gang there, believe that not enough city resources are being directed towards youth outreach and as a result, kids without productive outlets and job opportunities are turning to gangs. Crafting workforce development for gentrification-prone areas could help ease the impact of gentrification by not only

assisting job-seekers in preparing for different kinds of employment opportunities but also by supporting at-risk youth in becoming a part of the workforce instead gangs. On top of leaving the area because of rising housing prices and the loss of suitable jobs, families left the Mission because of crime and lack of educational opportunities for their kids. Workforce development may help address these issues but must be initiated prior to gentrification.

HOME OWNERSHIP

Freeman recommends home ownership programs as well as certain affordable housing programs. While his recommendations are generally applicable to all areas showing signs of gentrification, increasing home ownership may not have the same effect in a place like the Mission as it can in Harlem. Although it is still an important component in battling the negative impact of gentrification, residents in working-class ethnic enclaves who own their homes may still leave for other reasons like the loss of a family-friendly environment and an increase in crime. Just as Freeman foresees vibrant ethnic enclaves *perceiving* gentrification differently than areas like Harlem, residents in these communities also *react* to the changes differently. This observation warrants future research to determine how different communities experience gentrification and what kind of adjustments can be made to assist a neighborhood.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The Mission is famous for being a cultural and political Latino capital in the 1970s and 80s – it was home to large political movements protesting the US

involvement in Central American civil wars, boasted a vibrant Latino art scene, and fostered successful community mobilization in defeating urban renewal initiatives absent of resident participation. Although it would appear the perfect candidate because of its close-knit Latino community for creating a united front with which to address gentrification, we saw in earlier chapters that the Mission was unable to effectively mobilize sufficient community action. Freeman argues, “that effective and sustained community organizing and mobilizing is necessary to dampen the feelings of cynicism and alienation that many residents express toward the process of gentrification” in Harlem and that this “will amplify residents’ voices, contribute to their sense of empowerment, and complement bricks-and-mortar redevelopment strategies” (2006, p. 186).

Although the Mission didn’t experience the same degree of cynicism as Harlem, the importance of effective community mobilization and involvement in development plans exists for both. This is not to say that community organizing did not exist in both cases, it is to show that effective community organizing is a difficult task. The failure of the characteristically mobilized and pro-active Mission community to effectively organize in the face of gentrification illustrates this point. The Mission has a history of community involvement and mobilization and yet it was still unable to garner the needed response. Conflicting ideas of how a problem should be approached, resident skepticism of the motives and connections of community based organizations, and resident apathy about the degree of influence

they have over development plans all contribute to the difficulty of achieving effective community mobilization.

Regardless of these difficulties, community mobilization and participation is still an imperative if we wish to promote equitable and inclusive cities. Proper community mobilization supplies leverage for those without bountiful financial resources. In addition to giving a voice to those who may be overlooked in the development process, long-term residents also have an on-the-ground knowledge of their neighborhoods and can provide insightful recommendations for how to improve the community. In the Mission, residents produced articulate explanations about the relationships between crime, job opportunities, the immigrant population, neighborhood youth, gangs, and family culture. Policymakers and government officials making development decisions from outside the community may not be able to see and understand these relationships.

As mentioned earlier, timing is also a key component in addressing gentrification. The Mission District has faced a particularly difficult challenge because gentrification hit the neighborhood with practically no warning. The dot-com boom not only ignited gentrification with little warning, it also sped the process in the neighborhood to almost unstoppable speeds. This has produced a defeatist sentiment among Latino residents. As one explains, “I mean we’re talking about capitalism. Who can fight that? So I just feel like for me personally it’s a no-win battle, it’s over.” Another adds, “It’s money of course. There is no consideration for how the community is doing. You have all these people from who knows where

come in and buy this property and do as they please.” Being able to properly organize the community so that they have a voice in the development of their neighborhood would help ease these defeatist feelings and bitterness but organization must occur early enough to influence the process. While Harlem, Clinton Hill, and the Mission are already well into the gentrification process, we should apply the lessons of timing and community organization to other gentrification prone areas. Further research on gentrification indicators would allow us to help communities organize before the onset of the process and therefore have a greater say in subsequent development plans.

Conclusion

As evidenced above, gentrification presents a set of challenges and opportunities. What was once considered a linear process leading only to negative outcomes like displacement, a closer look at residents' perceptions reveals certain beneficial products from gentrification as well. As Lance Freeman's work and this thesis show, the ramifications of gentrification are more complex than past scholarly literature suggests.

This study of San Francisco's *barrio* exposed some unexpected observations regarding the impact of gentrification on a working-class ethnic enclave. Residents provided insight on an intricate web of issues including crime, job opportunities, culture, and family. Many were concerned about problems commonly attributed to gentrification like displacement but consistently cited being more concerned with issues like crime and lack of job opportunities.

Neighborhood context - its history, job and education opportunities, family culture, crime levels, and access to certain services and amenities – influences how gentrification affects the community. The interaction between different contextual elements can either complement or counteract various facets of gentrification. For example, while higher rents resulting from gentrification are pushing low-income residents out, so are high crime rates and the pull of larger quieter homes in the suburbs.

Five minutes standing by the 16th Street BART stop highlights the fact that the Mission is far from fully gentrified. Mission Street suffers from drug use, violent crime, and prostitution. In fact, Mission Street itself shows few signs of gentrification. On the other hand, only one block to the west yields a safer and cleaner Valencia Street – noticeably gentrified with up-scale restaurants and boutiques. The key is in capturing gentrification's ability to infuse resources into a neighborhood without pricing out residents and destroying existing social capital within the community.

Prior to the onset of gentrification, city planners and policy makers must focus on preserving the social capital of a community. They must tend to creating healthy neighborhoods by investing time and resources into workforce development, youth development, education, community organization, and crime prevention. Planners and organizers however, need more information on how different kinds of communities grow and react to gentrification in order to craft policies that effectively counter gentrification's negative impact. This requires more research on different kinds of communities experiencing gentrification.

Harlem and the Mission District shared some contextual traits and differed in others. Although the Mission's strong Latino history and its close-knit working-class community sets the perfect stage for hostile reactions towards gentrification, resident perceptions were mixed. Harlem and Clinton Hill residents' reactions were also mixed but in ways different from Mission residents. While Freeman emphasizes the importance of addressing the cynicism expressed by Harlem residents, Mission

residents highlighted the need to address the preservation of social capital. By taking into consideration context and resident perceptions in other gentrifying neighborhoods, we can begin piecing together how gentrification affects different areas and thus which policy prescriptions are best suited in guiding the process under varying circumstances.

We likewise need more information on identifying early gentrification warning signs. In order to help guide the process and mitigate its detrimental consequences, early action is imperative. By investing more in the preservation of its social capital, cities are not only making their communities healthier in general but also giving them a better footing in which to handle gentrification. In addressing gentrification, cities must also acknowledge early indicators and help communities organize in order to give residents the opportunity to participate in neighborhood development plans.

As illustrated by Freeman's interviews with Harlem residents and my interviews with Mission residents, gentrification's effect on a community spans a spectrum of reaction ranging from appreciated to despised. It is a complex process incompletely defined by scholarly literature and warranting more thorough investigations into how it impacts indigenous residents of varying communities. By exploring the process in a Latino enclave in San Francisco, this thesis aims to contribute to a fuller understanding of how gentrification effects long-term residents and how their perceptions may be incorporated into future policy focused on creating more equitable, just, and healthy cities.

Appendix

Appendix A: List of Formal Interview Questions

1. How long have you lived in the Mission? Where?
2. What changes in the neighborhood have you seen over the last 20 years?
 - a. Good changes?
 - b. Bad changes?
3. How have these changes affected your day-to-day life?
4. How have they affected your friends' and family's lives?
5. Are Latinos moving out of the neighborhood? Why?
6. Have you noticed a change in public services? Why?
7. Is the neighborhood safer? Cleaner? Why?
8. Do you think these changes are still happening?
9. Do you think changes are happening at different levels in different part of the neighborhood?
10. How do you feel about these changes?

Appendix B: Demographic Data

Population and Household Demographics

Inner Mission*	1990	1998**
Population	57,016	60,583
Households	19,950	21,104
Average Household Size	2.74	2.78
Household Type		
Families	49%	48%
Non-families	51%	52%
Tenure		
Owner	16%	
Renter	84%	
Median Household Income	\$35,332	\$45,266
City of San Francisco		
Population	723,959	742,613
Households	305,584	311,872
Average Household Size	2.29	2.31
Household Type		
Families	46%	46%
Non-families	54%	54%
Median Household Income	\$46,696	\$50,753

Source: 1990 census; MEDA; Claritas Inc.; Bay Area Economics.

*The Inner Mission District is defined as the nine census tracts surrounding the Mission Street corridor between 15th and 24th Streets. These census tracts are 177.00, 201.98, 207.00, 208.00, 209.00, 210.00, 228.00, and 229.00.

**Estimate.

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