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CAUGHT IN THE WEB OF SCAPEGOATING:

NATIONAL PRESS COVERAGE OF CALIFORNIA'S PROPOSITION 187

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NATIONAL COVERAGE OF CALIFORNIA'S PROPOSITION 187**

by

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Dedication

To Sue, my wife and the love of my life, whose unwavering friendship, love and commitment made this long road incalculably easier to travel.

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The current heated national debate over immigration policy is a reminder of the contentious relationship the United States historically has had with its immigrant population, especially those who enter the country without proper documentation.

For example, a major issue confronting California voters in 1994 was Proposition 187, a plan to deny social services to the state's undocumented immigrants, the vast majority of whom were nonwhite. In this study, I argue that this issue took place during an immigration "panic," one of several that took place in the United States during the 20th century. In these "panics," which also occurred in the 1930s, the 1950s and the 1970s, undocumented immigrants served as convenient scapegoats for larger social ills. A significant and under-researched aspect of these events was the role played by the major U. S. mainstream media in perpetuating this scapegoating process.

The study takes an in-depth look at how the New York Times and the Los Angeles Times covered the 1994 debate over Proposition 187, which occurred during the most recent of these immigration panics. It concludes that these newspapers' coverage of 187 was shaped by the discourse of California's elite politicians (both liberal and conservative) that focused on the predominantly non-white population of undocumented immigrants as "the problem." By framing the undocumented as deviant, this coverage helped perpetuate the elite "blame the victim" discourse that diverted public attention from other issues facing the state, such as the fact that California was enduring its most significant recession since the Great Depression.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Undocumented immigration is a topic of heated debate in the United States today, from the halls of Congress, to the streets of Los Angeles and other major urban centers, and to the city of Farmer's Branch, Texas, whose residents approved an ordinance in May 2007 requiring apartment managers to make sure their renters were U.S. citizens.

These conflicts are a reminder of the contentious relationship the United States historically has had with its immigrant population, and especially with immigrants who enter the country without proper documentation. For example, a major issue confronting California voters in 1994 was Proposition 187, a plan to deny social services to the state's undocumented immigrants, the vast majority of whom were nonwhite. The Democratic and Republican candidates for governor and U.S. senator that year all focused on 187 as their primary campaign issue, and in November, the proposition was approved overwhelmingly by state voters. Analysts tell us that although the candidates disagreed on whether 187 was worthy of support, all agreed that the state had an immigration problem and that undocumented immigrants were the cause of that problem. Thus, the debate on 187 was symptomatic of a larger racial conflict in California between the state's legal residents, the majority of whom were white, and the state's undocumented immigrants, the majority of whom were nonwhite.

California's problems with immigration, in turn, are symptomatic of a national racial problem. It's true that in the United States today, *de facto* and *de jure* discrimination on the basis of race are illegal, and there's a widespread belief in equality of opportunity for all U.S. citizens, regardless of skin color. However, when one reads about anti-affirmative action campaigns, racial profiling by police, the burning of Muslim churches in the wake of 9/11 and the recent violent confrontation between black and white students in Jena, La., one is reminded that racial conflict is still pervasive in U.S. society.

A growing body of research (Entman, 1990, 1992; Reeves and Campbell, 1994; Wilson and Gutierrez, 1995; Campbell, 1995; Parisi, 1998; Peer & Ettema, 1998; Watkins, 1998; Heider, 2000; Entman & Rojecki, 2001) argues that a significant contributor to racial conflict in the United States is coverage of nonwhite populations by the U.S. mainstream media. By ignoring, marginalizing and/or scapegoating people of color, these studies argue, the media create a distorted picture of the nonwhite population that contributes to race-based conflict.

Largely absent from this literature is an in-depth analysis of how U.S. mainstream media misrepresent people of color in the day-to-day coverage of a specific issue.

In this study I examine media coverage of Proposition 187. Although the primary debate took place in California, the issue has national significance. Undocumented immigration isn't just a recent problem for one region of the country. Not only has undocumented immigration been a major source of racial and ethnic conflict in the United States for much of the past century, it's proving to be just as divisive today, with the country unable to achieve consensus on how to handle such immigration. How we as a nation respond to this issue is dependent on how we understand it. And for that understanding, most of us rely on the media. Thus, it seems eminently worthwhile to analyze how the media presented Proposition 187 to their audiences.

How could the U.S. mainstream media, which operates autonomously and does its best to present what it considers balanced, fair articles, consistently misrepresent people of color? To begin to answer that question, Chapter 2, "Ideology and the Media," gives an overview of scholarly studies, largely from the critical-cultural and media sociology perspective, on how the modern mass news media do their jobs. These studies show how it's possible for the media to operate independently and still produces news stories that tend to favor the viewpoints of the nation's elite politicians.

Critical-cultural scholars argue that these viewpoints, or ideologies, include beliefs about race. Chapter 3, "Race and the Media," begins by examining how scholars increasingly understand the concept of race. It continues by discussing the characteristics of the media that make it difficult

for them to cover nonwhite populations accurately, and concludes with an overview of how media coverage of nonwhites has been problematic.

To understand media coverage of Proposition 187, it's important to understand that the proposition wasn't an idiosyncratic event, but rather the reappearance of a recurring theme in California history. Chapter 4, "Race and Immigration in California," looks at how race and immigration have played key roles in California history since the Spanish established their first missions there in 1769.

Chapter 5 discusses the research questions and methodology used in the study. A key research question was how the media "framed" 187, and so this chapter provides an overview of how media scholars define the "framing" concept. I also provide an overview of two of the major scholarly analyses that informed this work, Todd Gitlin's *The Whole World is Watching* and Reeves and Campbell's *Cracked Coverage*, studies on how the media cover populations considered deviant by mainstream society. My own study focuses on how two of the leading U.S. newspapers, the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times*, covered Proposition 187: this chapter concludes with an explanation of how I sampled this coverage for analysis.

Chapters 6 and 7 are my analyses of how the two newspapers covered 187. For comparative purposes, I begin by looking at how the two papers covered undocumented immigration in the six months before 187 emerged as an issue, and follow that with a discussion of the three phases of 187

coverage, which lasted from January to November of 1994. Each chapter concludes with a summary of key findings.

In my conclusion, Chapter 8, I first discuss what I consider to be the most significant findings of the study and offer suggestions for future research. Although the study concludes that media coverage of 187 had major deficiencies, I finish by offering some hopeful signs that news coverage will improve in the future.

The study begins with a discussion of how the media can remain autonomous and still produce news coverage that consistently favors the viewpoints of the powerful.

Chapter 2

Ideology and the Media

In the United States, *ideology* seems to be most commonly understood as rigid, dogmatic (and thus false) thinking. But scholars increasingly understand ideology as a more fundamental characteristic of human beings and human societies.

For example, Sumner (1979: 20-21) defines ideology as a sign, "a composition of signifying unit and signified meaning in relation" (for example, the combination of the word "cup" and the mental images of a cup that the word conjures up). An ideological formation is a cluster or series of signs. For Sumner and other "social-constructionist" scholars, all human social practice is ideological, from the words that form our languages to the complex ideological formations that make up our belief systems. In this view, ideology isn't just a pervasive part of human experience: it *is* human experience:

Ideologies, then, are systems of meaning within which people live in reality or, to put it differently, live their relationship to reality. They define how people experience the world, what they take for granted. Ideologies define what is taken to be common sense; the truth of ideological statements appears obvious and even natural...

When Richard Nixon and even Robert Kennedy went hunting for Communists in the 1950s, they honestly saw such figures everywhere and viewed them as a real menace. There

was no way to argue against this ideology by appealing to some experience outside of another ideology; in other words, an ideology is self-contained and non-falsifiable (Grossberg, Wartella and Whitney, 1998: 191-192).

Sumner goes on to challenge the classical Marxist idea that ideologies develop solely from a society's economic structure. Instead, he argues, ideologies develop from all types of social practice, political and cultural as well as economic. Just as ideologies evolve from social practice, so do social practices, over time, develop from ideologies. Thus, all ideologies are social constructions that change over time as societies change.

For critical cultural theorists, the media play a key role in developing ideological formations in a society. To understand that role, these theorists draw heavily on the work of Antonio Gramsci, who reconceptualized Marx's theories of how a modern capitalist state functions. Rather than a "ruling class" exerting absolute power in society by controlling the means of production, Gramsci hypothesized a much more complex, volatile world in which not only classes, but subgroups within classes, vied with each other for power. He rejects the idea of one class dominating society, hypothesizing instead a "historic bloc" that includes not only elements of the dominant class but also of the subordinate classes as well, who have been won over by the dominant class through concessions and compromises. "Hegemony" is the term Gramsci uses to describe the social control exercised by a historic bloc:

...it is the phase in which previously germinated ideologies...come into confrontation and conflict, until only one of them, or at least a single combination of them, tends to prevail, to gain the upper hand, to propagate itself throughout society -- bringing about not only a unison of economic and political aims, but also intellectual and moral unity, posing all the questions around which the struggle rages not on a corporate but on a "universal" plane, and thus creating the hegemony of a fundamental social group over a series of subordinate groups (1971: 181-182).

Gramsci's "hegemony" concept has several other differences from the classical Marxist notion of ruling-class control of a society (Hall, 1996: 424). First, unlike the classical Marxist formulation of ruling-class social control being ongoing and relatively stable over time, the hegemony of a historic bloc takes place at a historically specific moment in time. Second, hegemonic power is never absolute. As Raymond Williams puts it, the internal structures of hegemony "have continually to be renewed, recreated and defended; and by the same token...they can be continually challenged and in certain respects modified" (1973, p. 8). Third, Gramsci doesn't define hegemony as merely economic control over a society, but also political, cultural, moral and intellectual. Fourth, hegemony isn't simply imposed from above on an unwilling public, it exists because it's won a significant degree of popular consent. Gramsci writes:

In other words, the dominant group is coordinated concretely with the general interests of the subordinate groups, and the life of the State is conceived of as a continuous process of formation and superseding of unstable equilibria (on the juridical plane) between the interests of the fundamental group and those of the subordinate groups -- equilibria in which the

interests of the dominant group prevail, but only up to a certain point...(1971: 182)

Since achieving dominance in a modern industrial state typically requires winning the consent of the citizenry, for Gramsci this struggle is increasingly an ideological one. For ideology to be useful in helping a historic bloc win hegemony, it must be able to "enter into, modify and transform the practical everyday consciousness or popular thought of the masses. The latter is what [Gramsci] calls 'common sense'" (Hall, 1996: 431). This is why the mass media's ideological function is so important. As Gitlin puts it:

The fact that power and culture in a modern social system are to some considerable degree segmented and specialized makes ideology essential: ideology comes to the fore as a potentially cohesive force -- especially in a society segmented in all the realms of life experience, ethnically and geographically as well as politically and occupationally. At the same time, the relative autonomy of the different sectors legitimates the system as a whole (Gitlin, 1980: 255).

And as Hall explains, because of society's belief in the media's autonomy -- a belief shared by media practitioners -- the media have become key institutions in modern capitalist societies for securing the consent of the governed to the dominant ideologies:

"Who produces the consensus?" "In what interests does it function?" "On what conditions does it depend?" Here the media and other signifying institutions come back into the question -- no longer as the institutions which merely reflected

and sustained the consensus, but as the institutions which helped to produce consensus and which manufactured consent...

Such institutions powerfully secure consent because their claim to be independent of the direct play of political or economic interests, or of the state, is not wholly fictitious...

This insight was the basis for all that work which tried to demonstrate how it could be true that media institutions were both, in fact, free of direct compulsion and constraint, and yet freely articulated themselves around definitions of the situation which favoured the hegemony of the powerful (Hall, 1982: 86).

Hallin (1985) argues that the autonomy of the mass media is due primarily to two factors:

The media, first of all, not only are privately owned but are large and profitable commercial institutions. They are therefore economically autonomous -- free from the need for subsidies faced by the party press of the nineteenth century or by most Third World media today. Second, journalism has come to be regarded as a profession. Journalists are socialized to a professional ideology which makes political independence the premier journalistic virtue (64).

But if the media do operate freely (at least to a certain extent), how is it that they operate as conduits for dominant ideologies? To begin with, journalists' roles consist of standard, routinized practices that they must follow to successfully perform their jobs. Walter Lippman argues in *Public Opinion* (1922) that these standardized routines are an essential part of newswork because they enable news organizations to rapidly create a finite

number of news stories from the infinite variety of news events happening in the world at any given time:

All the reporters in the world working all the hours of the day could not witness all the happenings in the world. There are not a great many reporters. And none of them has the power to be in more than one place at a time. Reporters are not clairvoyant, they do not gaze into a crystal ball and see the world at will, they are not assisted by thought-transference. Yet the range of subjects these comparatively few men manage to cover would be a miracle indeed, if it were not for a standardized routine (Lippman: 12).

Tuchman (1978) argues that in the mid-19th century, U.S. newspapers developed standardized routines for gathering news in response to competition with rival newspapers for advertising: "Increased competition for advertising revenues attained by building circulation led the news media to develop centralized sources of information much like umbilical cords connecting the newsroom to its sources of sustenance" (Tuchman: 19)

What are these "centralized sources of information?" Reporters aren't interested in information *per se*, but rather a special type of information: news. Media practitioners define news as information that's timely, unusual, dramatic, and has a significant impact on the audience, to list a few of the primary journalistic conventions. The problem then becomes which timely, unusual and dramatic events to write about. Also, if an editor has two "newsworthy" stories, which one gets better play? One way the media solve these problems is to create an informal hierarchy of news sources -- the

people from whom reporters get the information on which their stories are based. Gans (1979) found that the media overwhelmingly base their stories on information from official sources -- representatives of political, business, social and cultural institutions. Of those, political sources predominate, and of the political sources, national sources predominate.

Scholars have found a number of reasons why reporters rely on official sources. For example, Tuchman (1978) argues that the media, as commercial enterprises, need credible, reliable daily sources of information to stay in business. Official sources have proven themselves over time to be credible and reliable because they represent institutions recognized by the public as legitimate (the police department, city hall, Congress) and because they have information in which the public is interested and which therefore is "newsworthy." Because official sources can be counted on to provide "news," Tuchman continues, the media tend to station reporters in places where official sources are located, like Washington, D.C., which makes reporters even more reliant on those sources. Because of this dependence, scholars say, powerful sources can exert pressure on journalists by rewarding those who provide favorable stories with "scoops" and "leaks," and not cooperating with those whose stories are deemed unsatisfactory (see Gans, 1979: 249-278; Bennett, 1996: 120).

Fishman (1980) argues that the institutions on which journalists rely not only provide vast quantities of information, they make it available in reliable, predictable ways, making it easy for journalists to convert this raw

data into “news” on a daily basis (143). In addition, this information typically is provided at no cost to the news organization; in effect, Fishman writes, these institutions are, at least in part, underwriting the cost of news production (151-152).

The viewpoints of top governmental and corporate sources achieve dominance in the media not just because of their desirability as sources, scholars say, but also because of the vast scope of their efforts to place their viewpoints before the media. According to Stauber and Rampton (1995), the U.S. public relations industry spends roughly \$10 billion a year, most of it on behalf of governmental and business clients, thus giving them a far greater ability than that of the average citizen to communicate with a mass audience:

Ordinary citizens have the right to organize for social change....But ordinary citizens cannot afford the multi-million-dollar campaigns that PR firms undertake on behalf of their special interest clients, usually large corporations, business associations and governments (Stauber and Rampton: 14).

For example, they write, a referendum on the California election ballot in November 1994 along with Proposition 187 was Proposition 188, a proposal promoted by a group called “Californians for Statewide Smoking Restrictions.” Despite the implication of its name, the organization was a pro-tobacco group seeking to blunt the effect of the many local anti-smoking ordinances in the state. The U.S. tobacco industry spent \$25 million to fund the campaign on behalf of Prop. 188 (31).

In addition, writes Altschull (1995), "news managers" for presidents and presidential candidates use the media to present their clients in a favorable light. For example, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1988 that burning the U.S. flag was covered by the First Amendment guarantee of free speech. Responding to the public's anger at this ruling, presidential candidate George Bush showed his patriotism by scheduling a media photo opportunity at a flag-manufacturing plant, where, as Altschull writes, "he literally wrapped himself in the flag" (p. 163).

Also affecting media content, scholars say, is the fact that the mass media are large businesses. According to Bagdikian, "ownership of most of the major media has been consolidated in fewer and fewer corporate hands, from 50 national and multinational corporations at the time of the first edition, published in 1983, to 20 with this fourth edition" (Bagdikian, 1992: ix). By 2000, Bagdikian found the concentration of media ownership to be even more dramatic: "...The country's most widespread news, commentary, and daily entertainment are controlled by six firms that are among the world's largest corporations, two of them foreign" (2000: viii). And, Herman and Chomsky report, the deregulation of corporate America has led to an increased linkage between media companies and mainstream corporate America. Media companies have been bought up by mainstream corporations; they also have non-media corporate executives sitting on their boards of directors. In addition, many media companies are publicly held corporations and increasingly under pressure from stockholders, bankers and directors to increase their profitability.

Not only are media companies increasingly becoming subsidiaries of non-media corporations, report Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001), they often provide a minor portion of the larger institution's income. For example, they write, Time Inc. provides just a fraction of AOL's revenues, ABC provides less than 2 percent of Disney's profits and NBC represents less than 2 percent of profits at General Electric. Kovach and Rosenstiel conclude: "The conglomeration of the news business threatens the survival of the press as an independent institution as journalism becomes a subsidiary inside large corporations more fundamentally grounded in other business purposes" (32). One result of this, writes Overholser (1998), is that bonuses received by top editors are based in large part on the profitability of the media institution they work for. Kovach and Rosenstiel also report that according to a recent survey, half of U.S. newspapers' top editors spend at least a third of their time on business matters rather than journalism (50).

In addition, argues Parenti (1986), because the people who control the media are members of the corporate elite, they exert pressure on their editorial departments to keep news content within parameters they find acceptable. This is seldom done with direct pressure, for that would violate the commonly held belief in a free press. Instead, media executives exert control by hiring top editors who either share their worldview or are willing to limit their news selection in ways the executive finds acceptable. Gans (1979) quotes an editor as saying, "It is not what [the executive] will do or will veto, but what we expect that he will do or will veto; that's his influence" (94).

Gans' ethnographic study of the national news media, *Deciding What's News* (1979), provides additional evidence that the media serve as "agents of power," to borrow Altschull's phrase. Gans argues that the news contains "enduring values," principles that are privileged over time in news stories. One of these is the desirability of social order. As a result, one frequently sees stories about social disturbances, such as demonstrations or riots, with the emphasis not so much on what the demonstrations or riots were about, but rather on the restoration of order by public officials. The frequency of social order stories raises the question, *whose* order is being restored? Since the news is dominated by official sources, Gans continues, their definition of order is what news stories emphasize. "With some oversimplification," he writes, "it would be fair to say that the news supports the social order of public, business and professional, upper-middle-class, middle-aged, and white male sectors of society" (61).

Other values in the news also tend to protect the social order of the powerful, Gans argues. "Ethnocentrism" is reflected in the fact that the news treats the United States and its values and ideals as superior to other nations and their ideals and values. This is especially true of foreign news, particularly during wartime. During the Vietnam War, Gans writes, the North Vietnamese were referred to as "the enemy," as though they were the enemy of the news media (42). The news also judges other countries by the extent to which they live up to American values. Domestically, this value is reflected in the fact that although a political crisis such as Watergate was a major news story, the media concluded that although government reforms

might be needed to prevent the recurrence of such a scandal, fundamentally the system still worked. A related value he found is “altruistic democracy,” the belief that politics should follow a course based on public service and public interest. As a result, political and corporate corruption or incompetence frequently are in the news. Citizen activity is also judged by this standard. “Grassroots” activity by citizens typically is reported positively in the news, especially if it involves confronting politicians or negating the need for government action. Ideally, citizens should be self-reliant; thus, organized lobbying and the formation of pressure groups are regarded as suspect. In addition, although “individualism” is idealized, this value is tempered to some extent by the value of “moderatism.” As Gans puts it, “individualism which violates the law, the dominant mores, and enduring values is suspect” (51).

It follows that if one of the media’s functions is helping preserve social order, they must also help society define socially disruptive, or deviant, behavior. Hall and other social-constructionist scholars argue that just as the media typically give official sources the power to define social order, they also give these sources the power to define deviance. The way this process works in practice is that the further a newsworthy group or individual strays from the values embraced by the social elite (from whose ranks official sources are typically drawn), the more their behavior will be portrayed in the media as deviant. For example, Gitlin (1980) writes that when Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) challenged official policies on the Vietnam War with a major demonstration in Washington, D.C., in

1965, the mainstream media used a number of techniques to define the demonstrators as deviant. These included “*trivialization* (making light of movement language, dress, age, style and goals); *polarization* (emphasizing counterdemonstrations and balancing the antiwar movement against ultra-Right and neo-Nazi groups as equivalent ‘extremists’); *emphasis on internal dissension*; *marginalization* (showing demonstrators to be deviant or unrepresentative); *disparagement by numbers* (undercounting); *disparagement of the movement’s effectiveness* (27-28). However, as social elites increasingly questioned the wisdom of U.S. Vietnam War policies, Gitlin argues, the media became more sympathetic to antiwar demonstrations, rendering them as less deviant (273).

Implicit in Gans’ and Gitlin’s arguments is that understandings of what constitutes “social order” (and therefore, what constitutes “deviance”) are socially constructed. Over time, as societies change and the viewpoints of the powerful change, so do conceptions of social order and deviance. For example, Hall (1982) points out that during the Prohibition era in the United States, alcohol use was viewed as deviant; in subsequent years, alcohol use was restored to respectability and use of other drugs, such as marijuana, became seen as deviant (62).

Some would argue that another set of enduring values, the principles of objectivity, keep media content from being biased against certain groups or individuals. But Tuchman (1972, 1978), Schudson (1978), Fishman (1978), Hallin (1985), Parenti (1986), Herman and Chomsky (1988),

Altschull (1995), Bennett (1996) and others argue that despite these principles, the “official” viewpoint tends to prevail in the news because of the dominance of official sources.

A 1993 journalism textbook describes objectivity as follows:

Today, most journalists strive to be as impartial or “objective” as possible. Editors and other newspaper employees can express their opinions in editorials and columns, but not in news stories. Newspaper reporters are expected to be neutral observers, not advocates or participants. Reporters cannot discriminate against any ideas or tell their readers what to think about these ideas.

...Your job as a reporter is to gather and report facts that your readers need to make wise decisions -- not to make the decisions for them (Fedler: 49).

But, as a more recent text points out, reporters frequently run into difficulty when trying to determine what “the facts” are:

Many sources, named or unnamed, have their own agenda and want to manipulate reporters so the sources can promote their cause. For fairness and balance, it is crucial for reporters to check with other sources to confirm, deny or provide other points of view (Rich, 2000: 95).

In fact, it is precisely the difficulty of determining “the facts” that led journalists to embrace “objectivity” in the first place, argues Schudson (1978). Objectivity was not present in American journalism in the 18th and early 19th centuries, writes Hallin (1985). Newspapers were journals of

opinion that supported certain points of view, politicians or parties. Partisanship continued in U.S. mainstream journalism until the late 19th century. For example, when the *Washington Post* began publication in 1877, it dedicated itself to supporting Democrats in Congress (Hallin: 64-65). By the 1890s, however, journalism had changed. This was the era of the Progressive movement, which sought political reform based on scientifically validated "facts." Because of advances in scientific thought, Schudson argues, it was common for reporters to think that concepts like "truth" and "reality" were not problematic. There might be conflicts over what the truth was in a given situation, but if one looked at such an event in an unbiased, "scientific" manner, the "truth" could be understood (61-88). Such thinking underlay the social exposes produced by the "muckraker" journalists of the era, and seems to remain a powerful force in U.S. journalism to this day. Hallin writes that for muckraking journalist Lincoln Steffens, "reality was transparent to human reason and offered a firm guide to action: one had only to see the 'shame of the cities' to understand the need for political reform" (65).

In the 20th century, however, the idea that the "truth" could be readily identified came under severe attack. Freudian theories of psychology that stressed man's basic irrationality became increasingly popular. If mankind is irrational, it follows that public opinion and the decision-making capacities of democratic institutions must also be called into question. With the crises of the 1930s, such as the Great Depression and the rise of fascism in Europe, people began to question mankind's ability to solve problems. Although all

these factors contributed to journalists' distrust of facts, Schudson (1978) argues, the two main contributors to journalistic skepticism were World War I propaganda and public relations. Not only were journalists victims of military censorship in Europe, they also helped create propaganda in support of the U.S war effort: for example, both Walter Lippman and Charles Merz, future editorial-page editor of the *New York Times*, served in military intelligence (Steel, 1981: 141-149). The success of the U.S. propaganda effort helped spur the growth of the public relations industry, with businesses and governmental agencies using propaganda techniques to promote themselves and their policies. To place their messages before the public, the creators of these promotional materials -- public relations practitioners -- relied to a large extent on the media. In 1930, Schudson writes, an estimated 50 percent of news items originated in public relations work. He offers two primary reasons why PR practitioners had such a significant effect on media content. First, in a world where all information is suspect, the press release has just as much claim on "the truth" as any other information source. The second reason was more practical -- the media had (and have) an endless appetite for information, and the public relations industry was a reliable information source. Publicity agents, Schudson writes, "turned news into a policy rather than an event, a constant stream rather than eddies, rapids, and whirlpools" (140).

Journalism responded to these developments in two major ways: increasing the professionalism of journalism and adopting the principles of objectivity (Schudson, 1978: 144-160; Hallin, 1985: 63-70). The 20th

century helped bring to fruition journalists' goal of making their profession more respectable and thereby making news stories more credible. One example of this was improving journalism education: for example, the Columbia School of Journalism was endowed by publisher Joseph Pulitzer in 1904 and opened its doors in 1913. Journalists also received higher salaries and greater prestige as the new century progressed. As Hallin and Schudson point out, the by-lined story became commonplace in the 1930s. At the same time, journalists increasingly adopted as an ideal the detachment and disinterestedness that the Fedler quote above points to as the principles of objectivity. But, Schudson argues, the reasons these principles were adopted was "precisely because subjectivity had come to be regarded as inevitable" (157). As an example, Schudson refers to the 1937 study in which Leo Rosten found that most journalists in Washington, D.C., were skeptical that true objectivity was humanly possible. As a result, Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001) argue, journalists thought of objectivity as information-gathering methods that would keep personal biases out of their stories (72-74).

However, Schudson goes on to argue that objectivity for journalists was less a belief system than a defense against criticism (157-158). This argument is elaborated by Tuchman (1972), Fishman (1978) and Herman and Chomsky (1988). Most journalists, most of the time, are writing stories to meet tight deadlines. If these deadlines aren't met, newspapers, for example, may literally pay a price in the form of such problems as lost subscribers and overtime payments to printers and truckers. Journalists must

not only write stories rapidly, they must also be accurate. Mistakes can lead, in worst-case scenarios, to multi-million-dollar libel suits that have the potential of seriously crippling a news organization, even putting it out of business.

Tuchman argues that objectivity in the media, rather than guaranteeing “truth,” is better understood as a “strategic ritual” that helps journalists create stories rapidly and accurately, and at the same time fend off criticism. A common method journalists use to create “objective” reporting is the presentation of conflicting truth claims. For example, a Democratic senator, a Republican congressman and the spokesperson for an interest group might present three differing sets of “facts” about an issue. Given their deadline constraints, journalists writing such a story often don't have time to verify which set of facts are the most credible. But if they've presented credible conflicting truth claims and done so accurately, they can claim objectivity (1972: 665-666).

The media's use of official sources is a key element of this strategy. Fishman argues that public acceptance of officials as credible sources of information allows the media to treat them as “authorized knowers” who are being quoted because they're in a position to know “the truth.” Such treatment clearly benefits the source, who, as an “authorized knower,” will have preferred access to the media. But it also serves as a defense mechanism for journalists. A source recognized as an “authorized knower” ought to know what they're talking about; if they don't, it's the source's fault,

not the reporter's (1980: 144-145). The credibility of official sources also saves the media money, argue Herman and Chomsky: "...taking information from sources that may be presumed credible reduces investigative expense, whereas material from sources that are not *prima facie* credible, or that will elicit criticism and threats, requires careful checking and costly research" (1988: 19).

Recognizing the difficulty of achieving genuine objectivity, many journalists now prefer the term "fairness," writes Bennett (1996). But "fairness" seems to be just another term for the same problematic journalism practices. For example, the practice of giving "equal time" to both sides of an issue is usually not as fair as it may sound:

...equal time seldom translates into equal information, particularly in the rare attempt to draw in a side that is seldom heard...New ideas take more time and effort to communicate intelligibly than old, familiar ideas. Given equal time, the information edge goes to the official, stereotypical pronouncement in almost every case (Bennett: 144).

In addition, it's not uncommon for elite sources to disagree on issues in the news, which means that reporters can achieve balance and fairness by presenting both sides of a story and still limit their focus to the viewpoints of the elite. Parenti (1986) writes that although the media code of objectivity demands that both sides of a story be told, *both* sides doesn't necessarily mean *all* sides:

Those who have power, position and wealth are less likely to be slighted in news reports than those who have not. On the infrequent occasions when wealthy and powerful interests are attacked in the media, they are almost certain to be accorded adequate space to respond. But the media are less energetic in their search for a competing viewpoint if it must be elicited from labor leaders, student demonstrators, peace advocates, Black or Latino protesters, Communists, Third World insurgents, the poor, the oppressed, or other politically marginal and dissident interests...(Parenti: 218).

Even when non-elites and non-official sources are quoted in the news, elite viewpoints still set the parameters of the discussion. As Hall (1982) explains:

Opposing arguments are easy to mount. Changing the terms of an argument is exceedingly difficult, since the dominant definition of the problem acquires, by repetition, and by the weight and credibility of those who propose or subscribe to it, the warrant of 'common sense' (81).

For example, Gitlin (1980) and Hallin (1985) argue that, contrary to conventional wisdom, the U.S. media didn't seriously question the government's Vietnam War policies until elites themselves were questioning those policies. As long as the coverage remains within the parameters set by the elite, the media are free to shape the news as they see fit. Because the press actually is "free," in this limited sense, the public -- and the press -- can maintain their belief in media autonomy, while at the same time the power of elites to shape media discourse remains unchallenged (Gitlin: 12).

In fact, Hallin argues, objective journalism is just one of three models that the media follow in news stories. Hallin divides news coverage into three concentric spheres. The middle one, the Sphere of Legitimate Controversy, is where objective journalism occurs. In this region are stories on electoral contests, legislative debates, governmental decisions and other issues recognized as legitimate by U.S. public institutions. The innermost circle Hallin calls the Sphere of Consensus, in which journalists write about subjects not believed to be controversial. In such stories, journalists don't feel compelled to be neutral, but rather act as celebrants of "consensus values." As an example, Hallin writes, when U.S. television networks covered the U.S. "peace offensive" begun in late 1965 for the ostensible purpose of bringing the Vietnam War to an end, journalists presented themselves not as disinterested observers, but as patriotic partisans of "our" peace offensive. The outermost circle is the Sphere of Deviance, which Hallin describes as

the realm of those political actors and views which journalists and the political mainstream of the society reject as unworthy of being heard...Here neutrality once again falls away, and journalism becomes, to borrow a phrase from Talcott Parsons, a 'boundary-maintaining mechanism': it plays the role of exposing, condemning, or excluding from the public agenda those who violate or challenge the political consensus. It marks out and defends the limits of acceptable political conflict (1985: 116-117).

For example, echoing Gitlin, Hallin argues that in the early days of the Vietnam War, media coverage routinely placed antiwar demonstrators in the

Sphere of Deviance as traitors who were sabotaging the efforts of patriotic U.S. citizens (193-194).

As a result of these factors, scholars increasingly believe the media serve as “agents of power” because they help ruling groups elaborate and maintain ideologies that win the consent of the governed. For social-constructionist scholars, these ideologies include beliefs about race. In the next chapter, I explain how scholars have come to understand race as a social construction, how the construction of race has evolved in the United States and how racial constructions are presented in U.S. mass media.

Chapter 3

Race and the Media

Race theories

In the mid-1960s, violent riots erupted in cities across the United States. The rioting was so widespread that in the summer of 1967, President Lyndon Johnson appointed a special commission headed by Gov. Otto Kerner of Illinois to determine what had caused the riots and what the nation could do to prevent their recurrence. In its March 1968 report, the commission painted a bleak picture of black-white relations in America: “This is our basic conclusion: Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white -- separate and unequal.” Part of the problem, the commission concluded, was that the news media had failed to convey the harsh reality of life in black America:

Along with the country as a whole, the press has too long basked in a white world, looking out of it, if at all, with white men’s eyes and a white perspective. That is no longer good enough. The painful process of readjustment that is required of the American news media must begin now. They must make a reality of integration -- in both their product and personnel. They must insist on the highest standards of accuracy -- not only reporting single events with care and skepticism, but placing each event into meaningful perspective. They must report the travail of our cities with compassion and depth (Kerner et al., 1968: 389).

Despite this warning, and despite efforts by the media to improve staffing and coverage of African-Americans, Latinos and other people of color, much important work still needs to be done, scholars say. A growing body of research (Entman, 1990, 1992; Reeves and Campbell, 1994; Wilson and Gutierrez, 1995; Campbell, 1995; Parisi, 1998; Peer & Ettema, 1998; Watkins, 1998; Heider, 2000; Entman & Rojecki, 2001; Poindexter, Smith & Heider, 2003) argues that coverage of nonwhite populations by the U.S. mainstream media is still a significant contributor to racial conflict in the United States, much as it was in 1968. By ignoring, marginalizing and/or scapegoating people of color, these studies argue, the media create a distorted picture of the nonwhite population that contributes to race-based conflict.

Underlying many of these studies are new understandings about the nature of racial conflict. For example, when scholars talk about the “social construction of race,” they’re typically referring to the idea that there are few essential, unchanging racial differences between human beings. Instead, they argue, racial differences are primarily ideological creations of human societies and subgroups within those societies. Given that humans, and the societies they live in, are in constant flux, racial viewpoints evolve and change as human societies change.

Increasingly, scholars believe that the concept of race (in the sense of biologically distinct groups of people) emerged in the wake of social and political conflicts created by the 15th-century arrival of European explorers

in the Americas, which brought them into contact with people far different than any they had encountered before. The Europeans used physical, religious and cultural differences to structure the new societies they created and to justify their exploitation and enslavement of native peoples and Africans (Gossett, 1963; Jordan, 1974; Smedley, 1993). In the 18th century came the Enlightenment, scientific rationality, democratic revolutions and the assertion of "natural rights" of "man." In such an environment, exploitation of other human beings was difficult to justify. The solution was the establishment of scientific "proof" that certain groups of people were biologically inferior.

In 1799, for example, English physician Charles White published *An Account of the Regular Gradation in Man*, in which he argues, based on anatomical studies, that Africans were an inferior form of human being compared to white Europeans, and so different that they constituted a separate species. The book is significant because it was the first to attempt to elevate popular beliefs about African inferiority to the level of scientific "truth" (Smedley, 1993: 233). In the 1830s and 1840s, U.S. physician Samuel Morton published the results of his extensive studies of human skulls. Based on his measurements of human cranial capacity, Morton ranked human races based on brain sizes. Caucasians had the largest brains, Morton argued, while Indians and Africans had the smallest. Thus, Morton concluded, "whites" were more intelligent and thus superior (236-238). However, by the late 19th century, scientists had determined that "craniometry," as it was called, was a completely inadequate method for

classifying races because of the wide variation in skull size even among people of the same race (Gossett, 1963: 77).

Along with the rise in scientific classification of human beings came a new meaning for the term “race,” Smedley argues:

From the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, “race” developed as a classificatory term in English similar to and interchangeable with “people,” “nation,” “kind,” “type,” “variety,” “stock,” and so forth. By the latter half of the eighteenth century, when scholars became more actively engaged in investigations, classifications, and definitions of human populations, the term “race” was elevated as the one major symbol and mode of human group differentiation employed extensively for non-European groups and even for those in Europe who varied in some way from the subjective norm (38-39).

In fact, Smedley writes, “race was, from its inception, a folk classification, a product of popular beliefs about human differences that evolved from the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries” (25). Or as Diamond (1994) puts it, “Racial classification didn’t come from science but from the body’s signals for differentiating attractive from unattractive sex partners, and for differentiating friend from foe” (89).

Since racial classifications invariably used physical differences to explain cultural differences, it makes sense that 19th-century Europeans began to “racialize” ethnic differences between groups. Such theories were often developed to protect the rights of the aristocracy against

encroachments by subordinate classes. One theory divided the French people into three races: Nordics, Alpines and Mediterraneans. Tall, blond “Nordics,” descendants of ancient Germanic tribes, were the founders of civilization and had “a strong urge toward truth and justice, prudence, reserve, steadfastness.” By contrast, “Mediterraneans” were “strongly swayed by sexual life,” and “Alpines” were “petty criminals, small-time swindlers, sneak thieves and sexual perverts.” A famous articulation of such a belief system was *Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races* (1853-1855) by Count Arturo de Gobineau, in which he argued that the aristocratic classes were responsible for all great works of civilization, and that civilizations fall when the upper classes intermarry with the lower classes and dilute their superior blood. Such theories had a deep impact on Adolf Hitler. They also influenced American writers such as Madison Grant and Theodore Lothrop Stoddard, who were concerned about the “racial purity” of U.S. residents with northern European ancestry (Nordics) becoming “watered-down” by intermarriage with those of inferior backgrounds. As a result, Grant, Stoddard and many other American writers and intellectuals opposed the continuing immigration not only of nonwhites, but also of certain southern and Eastern European groups, on racial grounds. The backlash against these groups led to U.S. immigration laws in the 1920s that severely restricted their ability to enter the country (Gossett, 1963: 370-408; Smedley: 255-258, 268-271).

The biological conception of race was challenged early in the 20th century by the writings of such thinkers as Max Weber, W.E.B. Du Bois and

Franz Boas, and by the political struggles of racially defined groups, all of which emphasized the social and political nature of racial difference.

Clearly, there *are* biogenetic differences between human beings, but those differences are minute compared to the similarities. As Hoffman (1994) explains:

On average there's .2 percent difference in genetic material between any two randomly chosen people on Earth. Of that diversity, 85 percent will be found within any local group of people -- say, between you and your neighbor. More than half (9 percent) of the remaining 15 percent will be represented by differences between ethnic and linguistic groups within a given race (for example, between Italians and French). Only 6 percent represents differences between races (for example, between Europeans and Asians). And remember -- that's 6 percent of .2 percent. In other words, race accounts for only a miniscule .012 percent difference in our genetic material (4).

One group of scientists for whom racial classification of human beings remains meaningful is medical researchers, who regularly report on differences between races in susceptibility to disease. For example, a genetic mutation that causes sickle-cell anemia is prevalent among Africans.

Lactose intolerance, the loss of the ability to digest lactose after weaning, is common among all human groups, but because of a genetic mutation, northern Europeans are less prone to suffer from it. Some scientists react to the apparent connection between geographically-dispersed populations, genes and disease by arguing that race and ethnicity are helpful terms to explain these differences; others argue that "race" is an unreliable concept because it's so poorly defined. On the one hand, Dr. Neil Risch, a population

geneticist at Stanford University, argues that race as defined by continent of ancestry is an accurate reflection of human genetic difference, and thus is helpful in understanding human differences in disease and responses to treatment. On the other, Dr. David Goldstein, a population geneticist at University College in London, argues that assigning patients to different genetic groups based on their DNA would create more accurate divisions than race in terms of how people respond to treatment (Wade, 2002).

Other scientists question to what extent racial differences in susceptibility to disease are caused by human genetic variance. For example, one study argues that blacks are more susceptible to hypertension than whites because their veins stay constricted longer in reaction to stress. But Shreeve (1994) cautions, “Even if American blacks have a greater susceptibility to hypertension primarily because of their blood vessels and not the inequities in their socioeconomic status, who’s to say that those inequities -- environmental stresses that American whites never have to face -- aren’t the trigger for the prolonged, potentially lethal constriction?” (63). And Risch argues that one reason race is important to consider when studying human susceptibility to disease is precisely because of the many factors other than genetics that are associated with race. For example, researchers dividing people into groups based on a genetic marking system such as Goldstein’s might overlook non-genetic differences between the groups, such as differences in access to health care (Wade, 2002).

Thus, Omi and Winant write, although belief in biological differences between races continues to this day, scholars increasingly believe that race is best understood as primarily a social construct:

...we have now reached the point of fairly general agreement that race is not a biologically given but rather a socially constructed way of differentiating human beings. While a tremendous achievement, the transcendence of biologicistic conceptions of race does not provide any reprieve from the dilemmas of racial injustice and conflict, nor from controversies over the significance of race in the present. Views of race as socially constructed simply recognize the fact that these conflicts and controversies are now more properly framed on the terrain of politics. By privileging politics in the analysis which follows we do not mean to suggest that race has been displaced as a concern of scientific inquiry....We do argue, however, that race is now a preeminently political phenomenon (Omi and Winant, 1994: 65).

Racial formation in the United States 1790-1945

Omi and Winant (1994) refer to the socio-historical process by which racial categories are “created, inhabited, transformed and destroyed” as *racial formation* (55). These racial categories are formed by historically situated *racial projects*, in which “human bodies and social structures are represented and organized” (56). Looking at U.S. racial history from this perspective, Omi and Winant argue that from the time of the first colony to the end of the Civil War (1607-1865), the United States was a racial dictatorship, with most nonwhites unable to participate in politics. And for most of the following century, legalized segregation and denial of the vote

were the norm in the South and much of the Southwest. However, the way societies structure the relationships between racial and ethnic groups varies over time and from region to region, scholars argue.

In 1790, for example, a ranking of the principal racial and ethnic groups in the United States would place English-Americans at the top, followed by Scottish Americans and Irish Americans. African-Americans, most of whom were slaves in the South, and Native Americans (those who resided within the national borders) occupied the bottom rung (Feagin and Feagin, 1999: 30-32). Also significant is that the three groups at the top of the list are "white," the two at the bottom, "nonwhite." Although in 1790 the term "race" was just beginning to be used to differentiate between human groups, for the previous 100 years --- since about 1680 -- Europeans from different ethnic groups had begun to think of themselves collectively as "whites" to distinguish themselves from the "nonwhite" Africans and native Americans in their midst (Jordan, 1974: 52).

More recently, the development of the southwestern United States has been significantly shaped by the relationships between Anglos and Mexicans in the region. Paredes (2000) argues that Anglos were predisposed for a number of reasons to think negatively about Mexicans when the two groups had their first large-scale encounters in the early 19th century. English colonists brought to the New World strong prejudices against the Spanish. In the 16th century England's growth as an international power led increasingly to conflict with Spain, at the time a dominant colonial empire. The English were thus inclined to regard Spaniards negatively. These beliefs were fueled

by Spain's Catholicism (the English were virulently anti-Catholic), by the horrors of the Spanish Inquisition and by reports of Spanish atrocities against the indigenous population of the New World. At the same time, the English began to encounter Africans and to think of black skin as a mark of inferiority. Because the Spaniards were the offspring of Europeans and Moors from Africa, the English thought of them as impure, tainted by blackness. In addition, numerous accounts of the Spanish conquests of Mexico circulated in the colonies; in these, the indigenous Mexicans (much like the indigenous people of the Colonies) were regarded as uncivilized and "savage." Finally, as race thinking became more prevalent in the 19th century, Mexicans were tarred with the brush of miscegenation: the belief that the progeny of racially different parents (in this case, the Spaniards and the Mexican Indians) inherited the worst qualities of each.

Given this history, it's not surprising that Mexican-Americans have occupied an ambiguous middle ground in the U.S. racial hierarchy since the 19th century, scholars say. A good example has been the classification of Mexican-Americans by the U.S. government. U.S. Mexicans were classified as "white" from the mid-19th century until 1930, when the Census reclassified them as "Mexican." From 1940 to 1990, the Census again classified them as "white," but starting in 1980 they were also placed in a distinct subcategory, as being of "Spanish/Hispanic origin or descent" (Almaguer, 1994: 258).

The federal government's difficulty in classifying Mexicans reflects the difficulty the Anglo settlers had in placing Mexicans in the new social order they created in the Southwest after the Mexican War (1846-1848). The Mexican experience in Texas is particularly instructive in showing how racial formation is shaped by such factors as class, economics, politics and culture (Montejano, 1987). Along the U.S.-Mexico border in the decades after the war, where most of the population was Mexican, upper-class Mexican landowners retained their elite status, sharing economic and political power with Anglo settlers. Intermarriage between the two groups was common. Further from the border, where the Anglo population was larger, accommodation with Mexicans was far less frequent. Violent recriminations against U.S. Mexicans were widespread after the Texas Revolution of 1836 and again after the Mexican War; in both instances, many *Tejanos* were dispossessed of their land (Montejano, 1987: 24-37).

After the Mexican War, the Texas-Mexico border economy was based primarily on cattle ranching, which was dominated by the Mexican elite, and international trade, dominated by the Anglo elite. Struggling to survive in the new capitalist economy, Mexican ranch owners were increasingly displaced by Anglos. However, the Anglo ranchers typically kept the traditional, paternalistic labor arrangements with the ranch workers that the Mexican landowners had in place. In return for a job, a place to live and wages to cover the basic necessities of life, ranch workers provided loyal service to the ranch. These relationships could be quite long-term; at the famed King Ranch, for example, it was not uncommon for three generations of the same family to work alongside one another (Montejano: 75-85).

The arrival of commercial agriculture to the Texas-Mexican border at the beginning of the 20th century was another factor that dramatically shaped racial construction in Texas. In South Texas counties dominated by farming, landowners sought to control access to Mexican migrant workers, who were cheaper and more docile and malleable than white workers. These farming societies became sharply divided by race and class, with Anglo farmers, merchants and other professionals at the top and Mexican workers at the bottom. To keep these divisions in place, formal and *de facto* "Jim Crow" policies, similar to those used against African-Americans, were drawn up to keep the "races" separate. As a result, Mexicans lived in different neighborhoods than whites, attended different schools, and had restricted access to public facilities. As these divisions hardened, so did Anglo beliefs that Mexicans were inherently inferior.

Although commercial agriculture had emerged as a significant economic force in turn-of-the-century South Texas, cattle ranching continued to be the primary occupation in several area counties. In these ranching counties, Montejano argues, issues of economics, class and culture created substantively different relationships between Anglos and Mexicans. The paternalistic relationships between ranchers and workers that had characterized ranch life since the 19th century typically remained in place. In an economy based on long-term personal relationships between workers and bosses, official policies of segregation and discrimination weren't needed. Significantly, a majority of the landowners in these counties typically were Mexican, and Mexicans tended to control county politics. As a result, it was more common for Mexicans and Anglos in ranch counties to

attend the same schools, socialize, and in general, live as equals (Montejano: 157-256).

In his introduction, Montejano argues that the concept of "race" is most meaningful as a political creation:

..."race situations" exist when so defined by public policy. Framing the race problem as a political question helps to clear the ambiguity concerning the sociological classification of Mexicans. The bonds of culture, language and common historical experience make the Mexican people of the Southwest a distinct ethnic population. But Mexicans, following the above definition, were also a "race" whenever they were subjected to policies of discrimination or control (4-5).

Racial formation in the United States since 1945

In the post-World War II United States, racial formation has occurred primarily through a process (which Omi and Winant refer to as a *trajectory*) of conflict and accommodation between the state and racially based social movements (77-91).

Through the 1940s, nonwhites had fought discriminatory barriers through judicial and legislative channels. For example, after World War II, Mexican-American veterans in Texas organized massive efforts to register and mobilize *Tejano* voters. In the 1950s, African-American activists augmented these efforts with massive grass-roots organizing and direct

action against segregated institutions in the South. Following their lead, Mexican-Americans in the 1960s organized confrontational grassroots campaigns against segregation and discrimination in the Southwest (Omi and Winant). As a result of movements such as these, *de facto* and *de jure* discrimination on the basis of race was abolished (at least in principle) by federal law. These changes permitted the entry of millions of nonwhite Americans into the political process and stimulated reforms that “dramatically restructured the racial order” (Omi and Winant: 138).

In the late ‘60s, however, many nonwhite activists were frustrated by the lack of improvement in social conditions faced by people of color. As a result, the Movement splintered into many movements. Some worked for greater nonwhite participation in the political process; others mounted radical challenges to the state; still others participated in nationalist movements that ran the gamut from radical opposition to integration to more moderate calls for greater nonwhite control of nonwhite communities. In response, the newly reorganized racial state was able to absorb the more moderate sectors of the movement into state institutions, while effectively marginalizing the others (Omi and Winant). Examples of how this process affected African-American organizations such as SNCC and the Black Panthers may have received more attention, but the governmental response to Mexican American social movements was quite similar.

For example, in the Winter Garden, an agricultural area of South Texas, activists created a Mexican-American political party, El Partido Raza

Unida (RUP), to challenge the Anglo minority that controlled regional politics. In 1970, the party took political control of Crystal City and Zavala County in South Texas. Subsequently, several other southwestern states formed Raza Unida parties. In 1972, RUP fielded a candidate in the Texas gubernatorial election, Ramsey Muniz, who received 214,118 votes, almost enough to help a Republican candidate defeat conservative Democrat Dolph Briscoe. The state responded harshly to RUP's ideological and political challenges. After his re-election, Briscoe denounced RUP as a communist threat, blocked federal funding for Zavala County and attempted to tighten requirements for political party recognition. In addition, Texas Attorney General John Hill conducted a lengthy investigation of the RUP for misuse of public funds and other corruption charges (all of which were later dropped or found baseless). This state pressure, coupled with internal dissension within RUP, had effectively destroyed the party by the end of the 1970s. However, RUP continued to make its influence felt in the state's mainstream political life. With RUP's breakup, ex-members took over border chapters of the Democratic Party. They also provided the core of such organizations as the Southwest Voter Registration Education Project, the Mexican American Democrats and the Mexican American Legislative Caucus (Montejano, 1987: 285, 289-291; Acuna, 1988: 339-340, 366-368).

In addition, Omi and Winant argue, social activism by people of color has been challenged by a racial backlash that began in the 1960s and was spurred on by the social and economic decline of the 1970s. This has taken the form of such racial projects as the New Right and neoconservatism. Omi

and Winant describe the New Right project as authoritarian populism, characterized by respect for authority, distrust of big government, defense of traditional morality and resistance to minority demands for group rights (123). Beginning with George Wallace's 1968 presidential bid, New Right politicians also used "code words" to avoid politically incorrect "race baiting." For example, federal busing policy was criticized not because it benefited nonwhites, but because it was an assault on "community" and "the family" (127). The neoconservative project argues that opposition to affirmative action is consistent with the goals of the civil rights movement. According to this logic, only individual rights exist, only individual opportunity can be granted by law and only "merit" justifies the granting of privilege (130).

Racial politics in the United States since 1945

For Omi and Winant, the importance of racial formation in the United States today illustrates the continued significance of race in this country's social and political life. This reality runs counter to the expectations of many World War II-era scholars. Political sociologist Chandler Davidson writes in *Race and Class in Texas Politics* (1990) that in postwar America, it was the conventional wisdom of liberal thinkers that racial struggle in the United States would soon come to an end because it clashed with the nation's commitment to equal rights. For example, in his influential 1944 book on U.S. race relations, *An American Dilemma*, Swedish scholar Gunnar Myrdal writes: "Not since Reconstruction has there been more reason to anticipate

fundamental changes in American race relations, changes which will involve a development toward the American ideals” (1996: lxix).

In *Southern Politics in State and Nation*, which came out shortly after *An American Dilemma*, V.O. Key Jr. shares Myrdal’s optimism about the declining influence of race in southern, and thus American, life. Key believed that the race issue, at the time he was writing, was of fundamental importance in determining the politics of the South. However, he predicted that class interests would ultimately prove much more crucial than those of race in shaping the region’s future. Key argues that southern politics in the 1940s were controlled by a small group of wealthy white men Key refers to as the Black Belt whites: agribusiness owners residing in counties with large black populations (40 percent or more of the total). This population characteristic reflected the fact that the economy in these counties was dominated by large agribusinesses that employed large numbers of blacks. This group was successful not only in disenfranchising blacks through such techniques as the poll tax and the white primary, but also in winning support for their policies from the white majority by playing on widespread racial fears (Key, 1949: 5-8).

Also crucial to this elite group’s power was the one-party system. In the 1940s, the Republican Party, the creators of post-Civil War Reconstruction policies deeply resented by the South, had virtually no voice in southern politics. As a result, factions within the Democratic Party struggled for power. Such a system made it much easier for a ruling elite to

maintain power than a two-party system, Key argues:

A loose factional system lacks the power to carry out sustained programs of action, which almost always are thought by the better element to be contrary to its immediate interests. This negative weakness thus rebounds to the benefit of the upper brackets. (308).

However, Key noted economic and demographic changes that he hoped would transform southern politics. The power of the agricultural centers was weakening as industry moved into the region. Cities were growing, and it was in the cities where blacks were more likely to be allowed to participate politically. Also moving in and gaining power were labor unions, which played an important role in advancing working-class viewpoints and in organizing working people across racial lines. In response, Key thought it likely that conservative southern elites would turn for political support to like-minded northern Republicans. Assuming these trends continued -- including black enfranchisement -- southern class struggles for power would increasingly take place in a two-party system, with race increasingly marginalized as an issue (664-675). Eventually, the two-party system, along with the enfranchisement of people of color, did come to the South, as Key thought they would. What he didn't predict was that race, rather than class, would be the major determinant of party realignment.

In 1963, Davidson informs us, a New York economic consultant named Eliot Janeway coined the term *backlash* to refer to the possibility of

whites turning on blacks as the civil rights movement gained momentum. Conservative Republicans agreed that their party might be able to benefit from white racial anger. In the 1960 election, the Republican candidate for president, Richard Nixon, took a moderate position on civil rights that was similar to the position his Democratic opponent, John F. Kennedy, took on the issue. Although Nixon believed he had lost because he hadn't campaigned hard enough for the black vote, the Republican Right thought Nixon's problem was that his position on race was too close to Kennedy's.

In fact, Davidson argues, the Republicans had the quite viable option of taking a progressive position on race. For example, although Republican conservatives argued in the early '60s that blacks wouldn't vote Republican, a strong counter-argument could have been made that that wasn't the case, Davidson writes. Significant percentages of blacks had voted for Eisenhower in '52 and '56, and for Nixon in 1960. But for Arizona Sen. Barry Goldwater, the Republican candidate for president in 1964, the low road beckoned. Davidson writes: "Goldwater, urged along by the southern GOP, was the first major-party presidential candidate since the race issue became prominent after World War II to pursue a southern white-oriented strategy that appealed to racial animosity" (226).

However, campaigning on race in a national election in 1964 was a different matter than campaigning in the South in the 1940s. Republicans realized that they needed to tone down their racial rhetoric. Thus began the use of "code words" for race that emerged as an increasingly popular -- and

powerful -- political southern strategy for the remainder of the century. A model of successful use of this strategy early on was James Martin, a conservative Alabama Republican who had been narrowly defeated by moderate Lister Hill in the 1962 senatorial race. When the Kennedy administration sent in federal troops to stop a riot at the University of Mississippi, Martin tried to mobilize whites by critiquing Hill for not standing up to what Martin believed was an inappropriate intrusion of the national government. Martin made his argument not with racial epithets, but rather by arguing that federal troops violated “states’ rights” and “constitutional government” by coming to Mississippi. Such code words were invaluable to Goldwater when he campaigned against the Civil Rights Act of 1964, designed to dismantle the South’s Jim Crow system. In Goldwater’s rhetoric, the Act became another example of an unconstitutional violation of states’ rights (Davidson: 227).

Goldwater was defeated overwhelmingly by Democrat Lyndon Johnson in 1964, but even so, he managed to carry the five states of the Deep South. His strongest support, reversing a trend dating back to the 19th century, was from the Black Belt counties, where few blacks at the time were allowed to vote. Black Belt counties in the 11 southern states gave him 59.6 percent of their vote; Black Belt counties in the five Deep South states - - Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina -- gave him 72.7 percent of the vote. It was the first time since Reconstruction that the Democratic Party got less support from the South than from any other region in the country. Goldwater’s southern white support transcended class. For

example, in Jackson, Miss., Nixon received 60.9 percent of the upper-class white vote in 1960, but only 35.4 percent of lower-class whites. In 1964, Goldwater not only got 90.7 percent of the upper-class white vote in Jackson, but 81.5 percent of the lower class. These patterns were repeated in cities across the Deep South. In its wake, the Goldwater campaign left behind a number of state and local Republican parties in the Deep South stronger than at any time in history (Davidson: 229-230).

Pressed by George Wallace's American Party, Nixon used a modified version of Goldwater's southern strategy in his 1968 presidential campaign. After his victory, "Nixon repaid his debt to southern whites by nominating two southern conservatives to the Supreme Court..., by attempting to slow down school busing for desegregation purposes, and by diluting amendments to the bill extending the Voting Rights Act of 1965" (Davidson: 231).

In *The Emerging Republican Majority* (1969), Kevin Phillips argues that a major reason for Nixon's success in 1968 was a white backlash against racial minorities that occurred not just in the South but across the country. Nixon's victory was powerful evidence that Republican candidates could be successful in the future without needing to appeal to the U.S. nonwhite population or white liberals (Phillips: 467). Supporters would come from diverse sources: the agricultural regions of the Midwest, South and West; the growing cities of the Sunbelt; suburbia, and assorted northern ethnic groups. What bound them together was their whiteness. In addition,

Phillips cautioned that Republicans should not attack the Voting Rights Act of 1965, as Goldwater had attacked the Civil Rights Act of 1964, because black enfranchisement was driving whites into the Republican Party:

Abandonment of civil rights enforcement would be self-defeating. Maintenance of Negro voting rights in Dixie, far from being contrary to GOP interests, is essential if southern conservatives are to be pressured into switching to the Republican Party -- for Negroes are beginning to seize control of the national Democratic Party in some Black Belt areas (Phillips: 464).

Nixon went on to adopt a more centrist position on race, taking a tough “law and order” stance on urban violence while supporting more moderate minority movement goals such as neighborhood schools and black capitalism (Omi and Winant: 124).

The politics of racial backlash gained momentum in the 1980s. The decade’s principal Republican president, Ronald Reagan, argued that the most important forms of racial discrimination had been eliminated and thus state mechanisms for achieving racial equality were in fact discrimination against whites. As a result, his administration attacked school busing plans and affirmative action policies around the country, dropped desegregation appeals in several cities, and slowed integration efforts in several others (Omi and Winant: 134).

As an example of the pervasive influence of race on party alignment, Davidson offers a snapshot of the party affiliation of nonwhite elected officials in Texas in the mid-1980s:

In the state legislature, for example, none of the 58 Republicans in 1985 was a Mexican American, and 1 was black. Among the 123 Democrats, 22 were Mexican American and 13 were black, for a total of 28 percent of the party's legislative strength. In the Texas delegation to the U.S. House of Representatives elected in 1986, none of the 10 Republicans belonged to a minority group; of the 17 Democrats, 4 were Hispanic and 1 was black, for a total of 29 percent. This was the politics of racial polarization -- with a vengeance (Davidson: 238).

Another example of the ongoing appeal of the Republican Party to whites of all classes is a comparison of how whites and blacks voted for president in 1984. While blacks in Texas gave the Democratic Mondale-Ferraro ticket 95 percent of their vote, whites gave it 26 percent, a 69-point difference. As Key predicted, the South had a two-party system. But race, rather than class, turned out to be the driving force behind party realignment (Davidson: 239).

Republicans, of course, aren't alone in using racial politics to achieve electoral success. For example, Omi and Winant argue that a key to Bill Clinton's successful run for the presidency in 1992 was a new approach to racial politics that Omi and Winant call *neoliberalism*. Under this philosophy, discussions of race are avoided because they're divisive and alienating to white suburban voters. Instead, neoliberalism seeks to address

social problems with universal programs that address a cross-section of the population, such as jobs, education and increased social investment. “In their use of racially coded language,” write Omi and Winant, “the ‘new Democrats’ chose to remain silent on any explicit discussion of race and its overall meaning for politics” (150).

Democrats, along with Republicans, also contributed to the success of Proposition 209, the 1996 California initiative to eliminate affirmative action that was approved by voters in November of that year. A major reason for its victory, reports Chavez (1998), was that it received strong political support from Gov. Pete Wilson and considerable financial support from the state Republican Party and the Republican National Committee. Another important reason for its success was the weak opposition the measure received from the state Democratic Party, the Democratic National Committee and President Clinton’s re-election campaign. Before the Proposition 209 vote, Clinton’s position on affirmative action was that although it wasn’t a perfect system, he still supported it. Despite that, he refused to unequivocally urge voters to reject Proposition 209. Interestingly, Clinton’s Republican opponent for the presidency, Sen. Bob Dole, also waffled on the issue throughout the campaign. As senator, Dole had supported affirmative action for years, but presidential candidate Dole decided it was time to end the policy. However, he refused to come out strongly in support of Proposition 209, waiting until the last days of the campaign to do so (Chavez, 1998: 247-253).

This ongoing racial backlash hasn't been able to reverse the legacy of political inclusion won by nonwhite Americans as a result of the struggles of the civil rights movement. However, political inclusion has come at a price, notes Montejano (1999). For example, he argues, in most southwestern cities Mexican-American political inclusion has been based on an understanding between middle-class Mexican Americans and Anglo business elites: if Mexican Americans are willing to support business, then business will support Mexican American politicians and provide economic opportunity for Mexican Americans. A good example of how this arrangement has worked in practice is the mayoral career of Henry Cisneros. Cisneros became San Antonio's first Mexican-origin mayor since the 1840s not only by mobilizing Mexican-American voters but also by winning the support of the city's business community. Cisneros agreed to support business plans for new development and economic expansion if business would support his plans for community investment. During his eight years as mayor, local voters approved eight bond issues worth more than \$500 million as well as a special sales tax to build a domed stadium. The business community, in turn, supported Cisneros's public works projects, such as flood control, sidewalks and parks, in areas where they didn't have an interest. To his credit, Cisneros also included such citizens' pressure groups as Communities Organized for Public Service (COPS) in the city decision-making process, but it remains unclear to what extent his pro-development policies actually helped impoverished Mexican-American sections of the city (Montejano: 237-239).

In addition, despite the passage of the Voting Rights Acts of the 1960s, "gerrymandering" political districts to limit nonwhite political

participation “seems to be the norm, necessitating, each time, a court challenge and all the time and expenses that accompany it,” argues Cordova (1999). Blacks and Latinos in Chicago won a battle to redraw political districts in 1986, when courts ruled that the mapping of the city’s aldermanic districts discriminated against black and Latino voters. As a result, new black and Latino representatives on the city board of aldermen gave progressive mayor Harold Washington enough votes to implement policy over the challenges of the Daley Machine, still a powerful force in Chicago politics a decade after the death of Mayor Richard M. Daley in 1976. Among Washington’s goals were the breakup of Daley’s patronage system, neighborhood improvement and more jobs for the city’s nonwhite population. However, after Washington’s fatal heart attack in 1987, the progressive black-Latino coalition fell apart, with one prominent progressive Latino alderman, Luis Gutierrez, supporting Daley’s son, Richard M. Daley, for re-election in 1989 (Cordova: 31-54). The examples of San Antonio and Chicago show the difficulties even successful nonwhite politicians have faced in winning support for their constituencies in the face of entrenched political power.

The media and race

Omi and Winant connect their theories on the role of racial formation in the political process to the Gramscian concept of hegemony -- the conditions necessary in a given society for the achievement and consolidation of rule. As discussed earlier, Gramsci argued that to maintain their hegemony, ruling groups must elaborate and maintain ideologies that

win the consent of the governed -- ideologies that in the contemporary United States include racial projects. Writing in 1994, Omi and Winant state that the current hegemonic racial project consisted of “the retreat of social policy from any practical commitment to racial justice, and the relentless reproduction and divulgation of this theme at the level of everyday life -- where whites are now ‘fed up’ with the special treatment given nonwhites, etc.” (75). For a racial project to be hegemonic, Omi and Winant argue, it must resonate with individuals as part of their everyday lives. Such examples as a black banker harassed by police while walking in casual clothes through his own well-off neighborhood, or the belief that nonwhite colleagues are less-qualified persons hired to fulfill affirmative action guidelines, “all testify to the way a racialized social structure shapes racial experience and conditions meaning” (59).

Essed (1991) developed the concept of *everyday racism* as a way to connect racial projects operating at the societal level and the ways in which racism is experienced by individuals:

The concept of everyday racism was introduced to cross the boundaries between structural and interactional approaches to racism and to link details of micro experiences to the structural and ideological context in which they are shaped. The analysis of these experiences has shown that everyday racism does not exist as single events but as a complex of cumulative practices (Essed: 288).

A growing body of research argues that one example of everyday racism is coverage of nonwhite populations by the U.S. mainstream media.

These findings can be divided into two primary areas: the characteristics of the media that help perpetuate racist coverage, and how the media cover nonwhite populations.

Media characteristics

The mainstream media are commercial enterprises, and a number of researchers have argued that an overriding concern for the “bottom line” adversely affects news coverage. For example, Altschull (1995) argues that in order not to displease corporate owners and advertisers, news organizations have a greater tendency to run soft news rather than issue-oriented stories that are critical of the status quo. Postman (1985) writes that TV news is more concerned with entertaining the audience than informing it. And McManus (1994) found that the three stations he studied were more likely to run stories that cost less to produce, indicating economic considerations may be paramount in news coverage. Under such organizational constraints, it seems unlikely that news media would expand coverage to include more meaningful stories about marginalized populations.

Another problem is that U.S. news organizations remain dominated by whites. Weaver and Wilhoit (1992) found that nonwhites were only 8.2 percent of the workforce at daily and weekly newspapers, TV and radio stations, magazines and news services. Although the level of minority employment has increased in some areas of the industry since then, there is still much room for improvement. According to the American Society of

Newspaper Editors, minority employment at U.S. newspapers has increased from 11.02 percent in 1995 to 12.94 percent in 2003. However, their web site reminds us that this figure lags well behind the percentage of minorities in the general population, which is 31.7 percent. The percentage of minority supervisors at U.S. newspapers remains low, but is also increasing, from 8.4 percent in 1995 to 10.5 percent in 2003. According to the Radio Television News Directors Association, minority employment in TV newsrooms has increased from 17.1 percent in 1994 to 18.1 percent in 2003. However, the percentage of minority news directors in TV newsrooms has decreased from 7.9 percent in 1994 to 6.6 percent in 2003. When Heider (2000) studied the daily operations of two TV news stations in Albuquerque, N.M., and Honolulu, both communities with large nonwhite populations, he found that the top news managers at both stations were all white males.

When TV news directors are overwhelmingly white, the danger is that the news stories they choose will tend to reveal a “white” perspective. Essed (1991) argues that whites in the United States not only see the world from a Euro-American perspective, but also assume that everyone else should view the world in the same way (189). This comment of the news director at the Honolulu TV station studied by Heider indicates such an attitude:

...I think that what you’re doing in news is covering the interests of people, and I think that those items of interest are going to be pretty much the same. I think news is pretty much news (27).

Not only is “news” generated from a “white-centric” perspective, but the idea of what constitutes news is deeply ingrained in newswriters and difficult to change, researchers argue. Heider points out that newswriters learn from an early age “what news is” by their exposure to the media. These principles are reinforced by journalism schools and by professional and organizational norms on the job. And since journalists spend very little time examining or reformulating these principles (24), they become naturalized “common sense,” something known instinctively that’s difficult to explain.

As discussed in the previous chapter, one of these norms is reliance for information on “official sources.” As institutional representatives, official sources by definition represent the societal status quo, and thus the information they provide will likely support “the way things are” (Heider: 24). Not surprisingly, these sources are typically white -- another reason the news typically takes a “white-centric” view of the world. “Even in reporting events about nonwhites, the news sources sought by reporters to interpret them were invariably white ones” (Wilson and Gutierrez: 160). In an analysis of all the sources (both official and private citizen) used in local television news stories, Poindexter, Smith and Heider (2003) found that African-Americans were used as news sources much more frequently than other people of color. Even so, an African-American appeared as the first source quoted in a story only 12 percent of the time, compared to 84 percent for whites. Latinos, Asian Americans and Native Americans were “virtually non-existent” as sources.

News is not only created by whites -- it's typically written for a white audience. As profit margin takes on increasing importance for the news media, so does attracting well-heeled advertisers. To do this, it's helpful for the media to demonstrate not only that they have a large audience, but also an audience with an "attractive demographic profile": in other words, people with money. As a result, Heider argues, even at the Albuquerque station he studied, whose audience was arguably majority Latino, the news was written for affluent whites. Also assumed was that people of color didn't have money, despite a considerable Latino middle and upper class (30).

Heider also found that people of color had difficulty getting access to news coverage. Many nonwhites were unfamiliar with news operations and thus lacked such important information as when to hold a news conference or how to write a press release. Lack of finances means nonwhite groups are less able to put together attractive "press kits" that might attract media attention (53-61). Yet simply being media-savvy doesn't guarantee coverage. Heider found that often community activist groups were simply dismissed: "If the consensus in the newsroom is that the status quo is good, that social conditions are generally acceptable, then such activists may have little chance of finding an audience in newsrooms" (55).

Much of the emphasis on improving coverage of nonwhite Americans has been to increase the number of nonwhite journalists in America's newsrooms. Campbell writes that although this is a sensible approach that has "undoubtedly improved" coverage of people of color, simply hiring nonwhites isn't enough to change the "dominant culture understandings"

that determine how most stories are covered (134). In his research, Campbell found that nonwhite reporters and anchors often seemed to accept the majority culture common sense that created racist stereotypes:

That minority journalists might adopt the hegemonic news values of overwhelmingly white, middle-class newsrooms is not surprising. Research has indicated that journalists tend to conform to the values of their news organizations as a means of socialization (90).

However, Campbell continues, the alternative -- *not* hiring journalists of color -- “would be unacceptable and would contribute to the overtly discriminatory attitudes of the traditional racism of the past” (93).

Media coverage of nonwhites

From colonial times through the early days of the republic, Wilson and Gutierrez (1995) tell us, people of color were generally excluded from U.S. news coverage. When they were included, it was because they were perceived as a threat. Media coverage served both to alert the public to the dangers, such as Native American resistance to colonial expansion and African-American emancipation, and to cover society’s response to the various threats, such as Indian wars and the lynchings of blacks (152-155).

Researchers have found that contemporary media coverage also tends to largely ignore nonwhite populations. For example, Campbell (1995) studied how 29 TV news stations around the country covered the news from

Jan. 18-20, 1993, which included their coverage of the national Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, celebrated Jan. 18. He found that of the hundreds of feature stories aired in those newscasts, only one focused solely on a person of color.

When nonwhites are covered in news stories, researchers tell us, they're frequently portrayed in stereotypes that offer a common-sense version of people of color as marginal, as "other." Such portrayals, Campbell argues, could well be delaying a serious discussion of race that might lead to a more understanding and just society (61). For example, the media frequently present images of successful African-American athletes and entertainers. Such "positive" images are hardly positive, Campbell writes, when one considers that they're being offered in place of images that might give a more accurate picture of life in U.S. minority communities. As a result, they "reflect a mythical understanding of nonwhite Americans as different from non-minority Americans" (62). Heider found that coverage of Native Americans in New Mexico and Native Hawaiians in Hawaii frequently included another "positive" stereotype -- the traditional festival. Although such stories may indeed have a positive aspect -- such as showing pride in cultural traditions -- they have a negative side as well. Heider writes:

To see on television only pictures of Native Americans in costumes performing ancient rituals, may lead viewers to only view Native Americans as people who are locked in one historically situated era, that of the past. When such images are not balanced with images and stories about Native Americans

as business people, lawyers, doctors, computer software designers, and so on, this could well reinforce stereotypes already seen in an entire genre of motion pictures based on misconceptions of the historic west (36).

Another stereotypical way in which people of color appear in the news is as criminals. Poindexter, Smith and Heider (2003) found that 69 percent of local television news stories focusing on African-Americans were about crime. Campbell (1995) found that the newscasts he watched for his study were “pervaded with threatening images of minority crime suspects -- many shown in police mug shots, others bound in handcuffs closely guarded by police. Considering the general dearth of minority coverage on the evening news, these might be the most dominant images of nonwhite Americans” (69). Entman and Rojecki (2001) found that white criminal suspects portrayed on television news tended to be named individuals, while black criminal suspects were more likely to be depersonalized, pictured in nameless, generic mug shots. They were also more likely to be shown as physically restrained and in police custody. "The accumulated impression from these images," Entman and Rojecki write, "is that race alone suffices for comprehensive identification of criminals -- that being African-American is almost tantamount to guilt" (8).

When Heider (2000) asked people of color to critique the news coverage of the two TV stations he studied, they told him that nonwhite people were most often seen in stories on festivals -- and on crime. In addition, they noticed that the stations covered crime differently depending on where in town the crime occurred. For example, when a murder was

committed in a Latino area, coverage typically only lasted for a day or two, but when a murder took place in a affluent white section of town, the crime received more extended coverage, with more attention paid to the victim and to catching the perpetrator. Such coverage, Heider writes, reinforces ideas about who commits crime (people of color); where most crimes occur (communities of color), and where crime should not occur (affluent white neighborhoods) (39-43). Wilson and Gutierrez argue that such portrayals reinforce the “us vs. them” syndrome already present in society and lead to the mass media audience seeing people of color as a social burden, a “problem people.”(158).

Another common form of stereotypical coverage is the “success story,” which typically describes a person of color who rose from a poor upbringing to achieve success in mainstream (white) culture. Wilson and Gutierrez argue that such stories reassure their audience that the majority of nonwhite people are still “in their place (i.e., the reservation, barrio, ghetto etc.)” and that the person who has achieved success isn’t a threat because they’ve adopted the values of mainstream culture (157). Jhally and Lewis (1992) write that “the success story” stereotype also fuels what they call *enlightened racism*, the attitude that the success of a limited number of nonwhite Americans is an indication that racial discrimination no longer exists in the United States. Following this logic, the fact that people of color in the United States remain economically and socially disadvantaged must mean that something is wrong with those people rather than with the U.S. social system. The authors argue that the popular 1980s television program

The Cosby Show, which focused on the Huxtables, an upper-middle-class black family, is a good example of such stereotyping:

The Huxtables and other black TV characters like them are exceptions to the class-bound rules of a generally racially-divided society. The rules, which patently disadvantage most African-Americans, suddenly are made to appear equitable and just. We are, as a nation, lulled into a false sense of equality and equal opportunity (86).

Throughout his study, Campbell talks about racial myths in the United States. Borrowing from Levi-Strauss, Barthes, Fiske and Hartley, Campbell defines a *myth* as a meaning-making system that helps explain societal attitudes, behaviors and ideologies (14). Later, he surmises that perhaps the most dangerous myth in American life is that there is no racism in the United States. For example, he writes: "When news organizations -- however well-intentioned -- implicitly accent the values and determination of socially and economically successful minority Americans, they feed the mythological notion that that success is equally accessible to all." Such reporting, he continues, fails to factor in the disheartening social, political, educational and economic conditions faced by many nonwhite Americans (132-133).

Parisi (1998) argues that a good example of coverage that fuels stereotyped views of nonwhites is the *New York Times'* 1994 series "Another America: Life on 129th Street," an effort to capture daily life on a Harlem block by profiling several residents. Most of those profiled, he found, fit

negative stereotypes of African-Americans: drug dealers, drug users and welfare mothers. And the one positive profile, of an 18-year-old college student who yearns to be an airline pilot, fits the "success story" stereotype discussed above. If this young man can achieve success, the series implicitly asks, what's wrong with his neighbors?

...it is possible that social conditions on 129th Street *have* gotten as bad as "Another America" asserts. But it is also possible that the series' rigorously personalized framing narrative fails to capture the community's social cohesiveness. As noted earlier, the block is characterized, not as a social entity, but as a repository of morbid individualities. Although the series pretends to be about a community, it scarcely addresses neighborhood social life (245).

In fact, Parisi discovered, evidence *does* exist that life in this neighborhood is quite different from the way it's portrayed in the *Times* series: an earlier anthropological study of the same Harlem block found many examples of residents working together to improve life in the neighborhood.

Stereotypical portrayals of African-Americans on television contribute to what scholars call *modern* racism. For example, Entman (1992) found that TV news programs depicted black crime suspects as more physically threatening than white suspects and black politicians as more demanding than whites. In addition, the widespread use of African-American anchors and reporters on news shows implied to viewers that racial discrimination was no longer a significant social problem.

In 1968, Campbell reminds us, the Kerner Commission admonished the news media for the poor job it was doing covering communities of color and called on them to provide not just more coverage, but coverage that placed events into meaningful perspective. Such coverage is still needed today, he argues. By overlooking the complexities of life in minority communities, the media project a “common sense” about American life that places people of color in the margins (42). Heider found that when the TV stations he studied covered nonwhite issues, they typically failed to provide enough socio-historical context to accurately convey the complexities of the issue to their white audience. For example, he asks:

If a reporter in Hawaii knows nothing of how the Hawaiians existed on the islands for centuries, if he or she knows nothing of the colonization of Hawaii, first by the British and eventually by the United States (including the military takeover of the sovereign government) and then is assigned to cover a story on the (Hawaiian) sovereignty movement, how could he or she possibly give full and proper consideration to all the events and context that has come before? (79).

Election reporting is a prime example of how the media marginalize nonwhite populations, argue Peer and Ettema (1998). In their study of how the media covered mayoral races in New York, Los Angeles and Chicago, the authors found that the stories' primary focus was campaign strategy rather than issues. A key element of these strategies was building enough support from each city's racial and ethnic blocs to secure victory. The coverage emphasized that candidates needed to understand their city's racial divisions and how to exploit them to be successful. At the same time, the

issues behind those racial divisions were rarely discussed. As a consequence, the authors argue, the media doubly reinforced racial divisions in the cities they covered. First, by describing racial divisions as a "given" in each city, they helped maintain the reality of those divisions; second, by neglecting to discuss issues that helped to create or exacerbate racial divisions, they reinforced the idea that racial divisions are inevitable and unchangeable.

Another form of marginalization is the use of pejorative labels to distance nonwhites from the white mainstream. For example, Wilson and Gutierrez write, "The 1980s and 1990s saw the press indiscriminately use the terms *illegals* and *alien* to depict Latinos, who argue that when used as nouns, the labels are dehumanizing and inaccurate" (184). In discussing these terms, a 1994 report by San Francisco State University's Center for Integration and Improvement of Journalism asks, "Individuals can commit illegal acts...but how can a human being be deemed an 'illegal' person?" (44). The report also notes that the word *alien* conjures up images of invaders from another planet.

Reeves and Campbell's 1994 analysis of TV news stories on the 1980s War on Drugs is especially useful in connecting U.S. mainstream media news coverage to the concepts of everyday racism and racial formation. By analyzing all the major network news stories on cocaine from 1981-1988, Reeves and Campbell were able to link daily news narratives to over-arching themes that emerged over time. For example, they argue, a major theme of the coverage was the New Right discourse that crack cocaine use by largely nonwhite inner-city populations was an individual moral

problem rather than a social problem related to such factors as deindustrialization, job migration and declining wages. Reeves and Campbell's analysis reinforces Omi and Winant's conception of the New Right racial project, in which nonwhite populations are demonized without the politically incorrect mention of racial characteristics. This theme emerged because of the attention given to the viewpoints of medical and law enforcement "experts," and, in particular, the political elite. Reeves and Campbell found that the most-quoted sources in network news stories on inner-city drug use were Ronald and Nancy Reagan, at that time the president and first lady of the United States. The next most frequently quoted source was Robert Stutman, chief of the New York office of the federal Drug Enforcement Agency.

For Reeves and Campbell, poor nonwhite populations targeted by the War on Drugs served as convenient scapegoats for larger social ills. In *The Nature of Prejudice*, psychologist Gordon Allport writes that the term "scapegoat" originated in the Bible in the Book of Leviticus. In a holy ritual, a priest symbolically transferred the sins of the children of Israel onto a goat, which was then taken out into the wilderness and let go. As a result, Allport writes, "the people felt purged, and for the time being, guiltless." Today, he continues, "we are likely to label this mental process *projection*. In other people we see the fear, anger, lust that reside primarily in ourselves. It is not we ourselves who are responsible for our misfortunes, but other people." However, he adds, "Psychological theory alone will not tell us why certain groups are scapegoated more than others ...It is chiefly the historical method that helps us understand why over a course of years scapegoats come and

scapegoats go, and why there is a periodic lessening or intensification of the hostility they receive" (244, 246).

When California voters passed Proposition 187 in 1994, analysts charged that the measure scapegoated undocumented immigrants for the many social and economic ills California was suffering under at the time. If so, such scapegoating was not an idiosyncratic event, but rather the reappearance of a recurring theme in California history. Racial and ethnic minorities have served as convenient scapegoats for social problems in California ever since the late 18th century, when Spanish settlers began large-scale efforts to convert the local Native American population to Christianity. To better understand California's distinctive patterns of race relations, let's take a brief look at California history since the arrival of the Spanish missionaries.

Chapter 4

Race and Immigration in California

News stories on California's Proposition 187 often made it seem as though its proposals for restricting social services to undocumented immigrants were unprecedented in the state's history. The specifics may have been unprecedented, but in fact, California's dominant social groups have placed punitive restrictions on the state's subordinate racial populations ever since the Spanish established their first missions in 1769.

From the time of that first permanent Spanish settlement, the history of "race relations" in California has been intimately connected with issues of labor and power. Beginning with the Franciscan friars who used Indian workers to maintain the missions' extensive farmlands, dominant racial groups in California have relied on subordinate race populations for cheap labor. From the Indians, to the Chinese, to the Japanese, to the Mexicans, these subordinate populations have also served as scapegoats for the economic, political and social problems of the dominant groups. The Spanish priests saw it as their divine calling to physically punish the mission Indians for failure to act in an appropriately Christian, Spanish (and thus, "civilized") manner. Later, Indians who resisted Anglo encroachments on their land were subjected to state-funded attacks on their villages by Anglo volunteer militia. To fulfill the needs of the capitalist economy that emerged in California under U.S. rule, labor contractors brought workers from China,

Japan and Mexico to the United States. Once here, they were kept in a socially subordinate position by the economic needs and racial fears of the American public. Periodically, in times of economic, political and social stress, this animosity would result in major backlashes against these populations. White working-class animosity toward the Chinese led to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. White farmers' concern about increased competition from Japanese farmers led to restrictions on Japanese immigration in the first decades of the 20th century. During the Great Depression, hundreds of thousands of Mexicans were pressured to return to Mexico. Anti-Communist hysteria of the 1950s produced Operation Wetback, in which the Immigration and Naturalization Service claimed to have deported more than a million undocumented immigrants from Mexico. The growth of undocumented immigration during the Vietnam War-era economic boom of the 1960s also led to mass deportations of Mexicans in the early 1970s. Thus, Proposition 187 was simply the predictable appearance of another California backlash against its subordinate racial populations.

California under Spain and Mexico 1769-1848

The missions

Although Spanish explorers had traveled to California as early as 1542, Spain didn't attempt to settle there permanently until 1769. Spain's primary motive was to dissuade Russia and England from expanding their

fur trade to the faraway province. The problem was that given the remoteness of the region, the number of potential settlers from Spain and Mexico (then known as New Spain) wouldn't be nearly enough to secure the vast northern territory. Spain's solution was to attempt to convert California's Indian population to Christianity and make them loyal subjects of New Spain. To accomplish this, Spain began setting up garrisons and missions in Alta California in 1769 with the goal of carrying out both a military and spiritual conquest of the Indian population (Monroy, 1990: 18-28; Rolle, 2000).

The Spaniards used a mixture of enticements and force of arms to convert the Indians. According to Monroy, many, if not most, of the Spanish priests genuinely sought to save souls by turning "heathen" Indians into Christians. Lured by food, clothing, utensils and other goods, many Indians voluntarily came to the missions. Once there, they pledged allegiance to the Christian God and the Spanish king, and from then on owed fealty to both, in the Spanish view. So, when Indians fled the missions, as they often did, the priests sent soldiers to bring them back. As part of this process, the soldiers frequently came back with more Indians than simply those who had run away. The Spanish arrival also put more indirect pressure on Indians. Spanish settlement took over increasing amounts of Indian hunting grounds, and European diseases not only killed Indians, but weakened those who survived. Both these factors drove Indians into the missions (Monroy: 23-39).

The Spanish mission system in California had decidedly mixed results. As part of the process of converting Indians to Christianity and making them Spanish citizens, the Franciscan padres put them to work. Using Indians as cheap labor, the Spaniards turned the missions into successful agribusinesses. The padres used the surplus goods the Indians produced to help feed the military garrisons, or presidios, and to generate income for the missions by trading with American and British ships. However, the Spanish settlement of California ultimately proved devastating to the Indians. About 135,000 Indians lived in areas occupied by the Spanish when they arrived in 1769. Only 98,000 remained by 1832, just before the mission system was abolished. Although many Indians died in violent physical conflict with the Spanish, an indirect result of this clash of cultures was far more deadly -- the Indians' inability to ward off European diseases. The destruction of the California Indians continued under Mexican and U.S. rule (Monroy: 51-85; Almaguer, 1994; Ornelas, 2000).

The ranchos

A decade after the establishment of the first missions, secular, non-military settlement of California began. The establishment of Los Angeles in 1781 and the awarding of large grants of land, or ranchos, to military veterans in 1784 led ultimately to conflict with the missions. The mission lands were being held in trust for the Indians until such time as they were deemed fit to become Spanish -- and, after 1821, Mexican -- citizens. But the failure of the mission system to convert the Indians into Spaniards or

Mexicans, and the new settlers' desire for the vast, fertile mission lands, resulted in the takeover of the missions by non-Indian settlers in the 1830s and 1840s. For the mission Indians, this meant that instead of providing cheap labor for the missions, they would now provide cheap labor for the towns and ranchos (Monroy: 117-127).

The new elite in California, known as *Californios* or *rancheros*, were the settlers who owned the vast ranchos throughout the province. In the eyes of many U.S. visitors at the time, the Californios led lazy, profligate lives on their estates while their Indian servants did all the work. However true, Monroy argues that this viewpoint overlooks the underlying social needs that created this culture. As military veterans or the children of veterans, the Californios were clearly not "to the manor born." Uneasy aristocrats, they sought to create a lifestyle that would emphasize their social status. One way to do this was to contrast themselves from their Indian servants. The Indians worked; the Californios supervised. The Indians were scantily clad; the Californios dressed elaborately and lavishly. Another way to demonstrate social status is to flaunt one's wealth, and the Californios were known for their extravagance and generosity (McWilliams, 1949: 88-94; Monroy: 134-154; Almaguer: 47-54; Gutierrez, 1995: 13-39).

To acquire the goods necessary to maintain this lifestyle, the Californios took over the trade with U.S. and British clipper ships that the missions had begun. Trading California hides and tallow (beef fat) for cloth, silk, lace, tableware, furniture and other goods, the Californios tied their

semi-feudal society into the U.S. capitalist economy. Anglo-American visitors saw California as a land of economic opportunities that the Californios had failed to exploit. As a result, increasing numbers of Anglos settled in the province and established successful businesses, frequently serving as middlemen between the Californios and the Yankee traders. Attitudes of the Californios toward the Anglo settlers were complex. The rancheros were concerned about distinguishing themselves both from the Indians and from lower-class Mexicans who came to California in increasing numbers after Mexican independence in 1821. The Anglos' white skin, European roots and financial success attracted the Californios; at the same time, they were fearful of Anglo business skills. The Anglos, for their part, looked down on the Californios as "lazy" and "backward," but respected -- and sought to acquire for themselves -- the Californios' social and political status. These motives all led to intermarriages between the daughters of the Californios and elite Anglos (McWilliams: 88-94; Monroy, 154-162; Almaguer, 45-62; Gutierrez: 13-39).

Anglo-Americans' desire to exploit California's abundant natural resources and their belief that the Californios were wasting the territory's potential fit neatly into the Manifest Destiny ideology that led to the U.S. conquest of California. Almaguer writes: "European Americans saw it as their providential mission to settle the entire North American continent with a homogeneous white population, bringing with them their superior political institutions, notions of progress and democracy, and economic system" (32).

Brack (2000) argues that U.S. designs on California were the primary reason for the Mexican War in 1846-48. In 1845, after the United States had annexed Texas, U.S. President James K. Polk sent envoy James Slidell to Mexico with instructions to offer up to \$25 million for California if in return Mexico would recognize the Rio Grande River, rather than the Nueces River 150 miles north, as the boundary between Mexico and Texas. The newly installed Mexican government of Jose Joaquin de Herrera, having found out that their impoverished country was ill-equipped to wage war over the loss of Texas, was in a negotiating mood. The Mexican public, however, was not only still angry over Texas, but also well aware of the contemptuous attitude of Anglos toward Mexicans and fearful of further U.S. westward expansion into Mexican territory. Mexican popular opinion, therefore, was adamantly opposed to negotiations with the United States. As a result, Herrera, as well as his successor, Mariano Paredes, refused to meet with Slidell. In response, Polk sent troops to the disputed territory along the Rio Grande, which led to hostilities breaking out between the two countries. In the war that followed, Mexico was no match for the United States. In the case of California, not only was the province minimally defended, but the Californios were busy squabbling with each other and with the central government in Mexico City. As a result, U.S. forces under John C. Fremont and Commodore Robert Stockton quickly established U.S. rule over the province. Californian resistance to the U.S. invaders ended on Jan. 13, 1847, at the Battle of Cahuenga Pass, at which Mexican commander Andres Pico, a member of the Californio elite, surrendered his sword to Fremont. A year later, on Feb. 2, 1848, both countries signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which

officially ended hostilities. Under the terms of the treaty, Mexico formally recognized the U.S. annexation of Texas, and the United States agreed to pay \$15 million for Mexico's northern provinces, which included all or part of what is now California, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, Wyoming, Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma and New Mexico. With the inclusion of Texas, this amounted to more than half of Mexico's territory (Brack: 235-256; Monroy, 1990: 175-180; Gutierrez, 1995: 13).

Racial formation in California 1848-1920

In 1848, Anglo Americans were a minority population in California, outnumbered by both Mexicans and Indians. However, Anglos and the culture they brought with them soon came to dominate social and political life in the state. As a result, new forms of racial formation emerged that profoundly shaped the lives of the state's inhabitants.

The Californios

Under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, California Mexicans were accorded full citizenship rights in the United States. They also had partial European ancestry, the Catholic religion, familiar political and economic institutions, and, last but not least, political power -- the wealthy Californios were the state's economic, political and social elite in 1848. Thus, despite their negative beliefs about the Californios, the new Anglo settlers were compelled to accord them some respect. As a result, the California State

Constitutional Convention of 1849 officially categorized Mexicans as “white” and granted them the same citizenship rights as “free white persons.” This enabled the Californio elite to maintain political influence for a number of years after California became a U.S. state in 1850 (McWilliams: 88-94; Almaguer, 51-65; Monroy: 222-232; Gutierrez: 13-39).

However, the Californios’ inability to adapt to U.S. economic and legal systems led to their rapid demise as a social class. A key instrument of this process was the Federal Land Law of 1851, under which the ranchero elite had to prove to a board of land commissioners whether they had legitimate title to their land. Although most of the Californios were able to prove that the land on which they lived was, indeed, theirs, they typically were able to do so only after lengthy and expensive litigation procedures (the average length of time needed to settle these claims was 17 years). The rancheros were charged exorbitant fees by their Anglo lawyers, which often forced them to go heavily into debt or to transfer portions of their land to the lawyers in lieu of payment. Also devastating to the Californios was the decline in the cattle market. The huge influx of prospectors after the discovery of gold in 1849 dramatically increased the price of beef virtually overnight. Before 1849 meat in California was so plentiful it had no market value. In the seven years after 1849 the price of beef cattle rose as high as \$75 a head. Thus, for the Californios, the Gold Rush created sudden wealth. However, the introduction of new breeds of cattle and competition from newly arrived farmers drove the price down, leaving many of the rancheros heavily in debt. Adding insult to injury, flooding in 1861-62 killed hundreds

of thousands of cattle and horses, and the drought of 1863-64 killed a million additional livestock. These factors, along with other problems such as U.S. property taxes and the relentless pressure of squatters on their land, so devastated the Californio elite that by 1900, they ceased to exist as a social class (Almaguer, 65-68; McWilliams: 88-94; Monroy: 199-205; Gutierrez: 13-39).

The Mexican working class

Class status had a major influence on how Mexicans were treated in the new territory. For example, although all Mexicans had equal citizenship rights under the law, working-class Mexicans, particularly those with dark skin, were frequently classified as “Indians” and thereby denied their rights (Almaguer: 57). Ironically, however, while the Californios were engaged in intense class warfare with the Anglo elite, there was relatively little class strife between the Mexican and Anglo working classes in 19th-century California. One reason, Almaguer argues, is demographic. Although Mexicans were the majority population in 1848, when the state’s population was 15,000, the Gold Rush quickly changed that. By 1850, when the state’s population had risen to 93,000, Mexicans comprised only 11 percent of the population. In addition, working-class Mexicans remained tied to the state’s traditional rancho economy, a sector working-class Anglos had no interest in entering. This situation began to change toward the end of the century as the decline of the traditional economy forced Mexicans into the emerging capitalist labor market (Almaguer: 26, 57, 69-74; Gutierrez: 13-39).

Native Americans

The other primary population group in California after its acquisition by the United States in 1848 was the Indians. Their interactions with the Spanish and Mexican settlers had caused a dramatic population decline. Approximately 300,000 Native Americans lived in California when the Spanish arrived in 1769; about 100,000 remained in 1850. As the Spanish and the Mexicans had done before them, however, the Anglos culturally and racially stigmatized the Indians. Native Americans occupied the lowest social ranking in the new Anglo society because their cultural practices were the most different from European-American norms and they occupied land coveted by white settlers. Not only were they categorized as nonwhite, they were politically disenfranchised and segregated from the European population. And Indian resistance to Anglo encroachments on their land resulted in violent, state-funded reprisals (Almaguer, 1994: 107-130; Monroy: 183-199)

When California became part of the United States in 1848, Indians were still employed by the Californios on their vast ranchos. Taking advantage of the Indians' low status in the new Anglo society, the rancheros used their still-considerable political clout in 1850 to successfully lobby for new statutes that would ensure a continued supply of Indians as cheap labor. Under the vagrancy law, Indians found guilty of vagrancy could be sold into servitude for as long as two to four months to individuals willing to pay their legal fines. Under the Indenture Act of 1850, Indian minors could be legally

bound to white guardians until the age of 18. In a revised version of the act passed in 1860, some Indian women could be legally bound to white guardians until the age of 25, and some men until the age of 30. However, Almaguer writes, Indians never became a major source of labor in the new Anglo economy that emerged to replace the traditional rancho society. For one thing, their population was steadily declining. From 1850 to 1900, the Native American population in California dropped precipitously from about 100,000 to about 17,500. An estimated 10 percent died from physical conflict with European Americans, 30 percent from malnutrition and starvation and the remaining 60 percent from disease -- syphilis, smallpox, measles and tuberculosis. In addition, although the ranchos had relied on permanent Indian workers, the small family farms that initially replaced the ranchos found it easier and more profitable to use seasonal labor. To fill this need, Chinese, Mexican and white workers were more readily available, more adept and more willing to do agricultural work than Indians (Almaguer: 131-143; Monroy: 183-194).

The Chinese

Soon after California became part of the United States, Chinese immigrants became a major source of cheap labor in the state. By 1860, 34,935 Chinese lived in California, making them the state's largest foreign-born ethnic group. Their emigration was spurred by a number of factors, including war and assorted natural catastrophes in China and the lure of the Gold Rush. Also important was the promise of lucrative jobs by overseas

shipping companies. Chinese immigrants typically came as indentured servants. To pay for their passage, these immigrants entered into contract labor agreements in which they were tied to their employers to work until they had repaid their debt. They also came to California with religious and cultural practices that quickly put them at odds with Anglo Americans. They were non-Christians and thus “heathens”; their unfamiliar social practices made them “uncivilized.” Those factors, combined with differences in skin color, led to their being officially characterized as “nonwhite” and thus ineligible for citizenship. As a result, Chinese immigrants typically found themselves in the most menial occupations in California’s rapidly-growing capitalist economy. After the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, the Chinese established themselves in two primary occupations: agriculture, in which they comprised one-third of the labor force in 1880, and urban manufacturing. Owners of large farms as well as urban manufacturing concerns valued Chinese workers because they were cheap, tractable and reliable. However, strong opposition to Chinese labor came from skilled white working-class craftsmen in such businesses as the metal, machinery and sugar industries. Almaguer explains:

The urban anti-Chinese movement of the late 1860s was, from the very beginning, dominated by skilled crafts workers who rallied against both the Chinese and the capitalists who employed them...Rather than viewing the Chinese as a particularly vulnerable and unorganized sector of the working class, craft union leaders used racial antipathy as a tool to further the organization of an exclusively white skilled labor movement. It was precisely this sector of the white working class, which ironically had the least to fear in terms of direct economic competition with the Chinese, that spearheaded the

anti-Chinese movement in California. There is agreement among historians that the leaders of the union movement used the anti-Chinese agitation as a means of unifying and strengthening their political influence in the state. Such agitation also served as a means whereby these leaders diverted the attention of unskilled workers and the unemployed from the privileged positions that unionized skilled occupations were developing at the time (179).

The anti-Chinese movement was powerful enough to win passage of the federal Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which barred the immigration of Chinese laborers into the United States. The act was not repealed until 1943 (Almaguer: 153-183; Gutierrez, 1995: 43).

The Japanese

With the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act, California agribusinesses first turned to the state's Mexican working class to replace the cheap, tractable labor force that the Chinese had provided. Because of the small number of Mexican workers in the state in the late 19th century, agribusinesses supplemented Mexican laborers with Japanese immigrants. After the Japanese government loosened its restrictions on emigration, Japanese immigrants had begun arriving in California in the 1880s, drawn by economic opportunity and the promise of greater social mobility. Faced with the same racial restrictions as the Chinese, the Japanese were forced into the same types of jobs -- unskilled labor in mining, railroads, canning, lumber and construction. Since most of them had owned small farms in Japan, however, the Japanese immigrants gravitated toward agriculture. "By

1909, the Japanese accounted for over 85 percent of the farm labor force in the sugar beet industry and approximately one-half of the labor in California's vineyards, nurseries, and in citrus fruit, deciduous fruit, and vegetable production," writes Almaguer (185). However, the Japanese startled the Anglo agribusiness owners by their willingness to organize and fight for improved working conditions:

Although American corporate farmers initially believed that Japanese labor represented the ideal answer to their labor woes, it soon became clear the Japanese immigrants were not behaving according to plan. American growers became alarmed, in particular, at the Japanese tendency to form cooperatives, pool resources, buy or lease land, and ultimately compete against their former employers. This entrepreneurial talent was clearly not what American employers had in mind when they began to recruit Japanese workers, so by the early years of the twentieth century small farmers and corporate agricultural concerns started to lobby the California legislature to enact measures designed to limit Japanese investments in land and small businesses (Gutierrez, 1995: 43).

These efforts, Almaguer writes, led to the enactment of the Alien Land Laws of 1913 and 1920, which "declared it unlawful for 'aliens ineligible for citizenship' to own private property in the state, and further stipulated that they were not allowed to lease land for terms longer than three years" (186). In addition, the governments of the United States and Japan reached a so-called Gentlemen's Agreement to severely restrict Japanese immigration (Almaguer: 183-187; Gutierrez: 44-45).

Mexican immigration to California 1880-1977

An unprecedented demand for cheap labor spurred the rapid growth of immigration to the U.S. Southwest between 1880 and 1930. This demand resulted primarily from three factors. First, the rapid construction of railroads at the end of the 19th century tied the Southwest both to the national U.S. market and to the Mexican rail system. Second, federal and private financing of vast new irrigation systems transformed millions of acres of Southwestern desert into bountiful farmland. Finally, the introduction of the refrigerated boxcar created national (and international) markets for Southwestern agricultural products. As a result, the value of California's crops increased dramatically. Between 1900 and 1920, for example, orange production quadrupled and lemon production quintupled. In the state's San Joaquin Valley, acreage planted in cotton increased from 5,500 in 1919 to 172,400 in 1931. By 1930 California produced one-third of U.S. fresh fruit, one quarter of its vegetables and nearly the entire U.S. output of almonds, artichokes, figs, nectarines, olives, dates and lemons (McWilliams: 162-188; Gutierrez: 39-42). Also fueling this massive growth was the transformation of California's agriculture industry. As Gutierrez explains:

...California growers expanded the scale of their enterprises and in the process laid the foundations for the development of American corporate agriculture, or agribusiness. Employing economies of scale by expanding the acreage under cultivation, by the turn of the century California growers had already established a pattern of encompassing prime agricultural land into huge corporate farms. By the late 1920s California alone

contained nearly 40 percent of all large-scale farms...Although these large-scale farms...represented only 2.1 percent of all farms in the state, the agribusiness giants accounted for almost 29 percent of the overall value of crops produced in California (42).

After restrictionist policies limited immigration from China and Japan, California businesses in need of cheap, tractable, reliable laborers turned increasingly to Mexico. From the 1880s to the 1930s, declining economic conditions in Mexico and the blandishments of U.S. business agents brought increasing numbers of workers northward, not only to California, but to the rest of the Southwest as well (McWilliams: 162-188; Limerick, 1987: 244; Montejano, 1987: 203-204; Gutierrez, 1995; Foley, 1997: 46-47). As Gutierrez describes it:

This movement was aided and abetted by American labor agents, who traveled into the interior of Mexico seeking agricultural and railroad construction and maintenance workers. Accruing lucrative profits by charging the immigrants for supplies and transportation and the American employers for utilizing their services, these employment agencies did a booming business in the Southwest up through the 1920s (44).

Between 1900 and 1920 the Mexican-born population of the United States grew from 103,000 to 478,000. By 1920, Gutierrez estimates, ethnic Mexican workers in California made up "nearly 17 percent of the unskilled construction labor force and as much as three-quarters of the state's farm labor force" (45).

The growing Mexican population added fuel to the fire of the virulent anti-immigrant sentiment that had been growing in the United States since the 1880s. As mentioned in the last chapter, U.S. anti-immigration activists were convinced that the waves of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe were racially and culturally inferior to white Americans of Anglo Saxon heritage. To stem this tide, they pressured Congress to restrict this immigration. Subsequent congressional restrictions on immigration culminated in the Johnson-Reid Omnibus Act of 1924, which established a national-origins quota system and restricted immigration from southern and eastern Europe, Africa and Asia (Gutierrez: 51-52). Mexicans were not affected by most of these restrictions because of the intense lobbying by Southwestern agribusinesses and their supporters. Ironically, the growers used many of the racist arguments put forth by the anti-immigration activists to justify their need for Mexican labor and to allay the racial fears of the American public. Not only were Mexicans backward, slow, docile, indolent and tractable, the growers argued, they would take on labor that white workers would not because the hours were too long, the pay too low and the working conditions too harsh. However, as the Mexican population of the Southwest increased through the 1920s, so did pressure to restrict Mexican immigration. To the restrictionists, Mexicans were even more racially inferior than southern and eastern Europeans. Restating a commonly-held belief of the era, the restrictionists argued that the racial amalgamation of Spaniards and Indians “had created a race of people that combined the worst characteristics of each group” (Gutierrez: 54). In their view, unrestricted Mexican immigration would not only take away jobs from “white”

Americans, but would also result in racial strife, the dilution of white racial stock, and a precipitous decline in U.S. morals, political and social ideals and “white” civilization in general (Gutierrez: 54-55; see also Limerick, 1987: 246-249; Montejano, 1987: 179-191; Foley, 1997: 51-59).

In general, the needs of U.S. businesses for cheap labor offset anti-immigrant sentiment against Mexicans during the 1920s. By the end of the decade, however, the federal government had significantly slowed Mexican immigration by tightening up enforcement of existing immigration regulations (McWilliams, 1949: 185; Montejano: 209) In the 1930s, Gutierrez writes, the Great Depression sparked a national campaign to repatriate Mexicans.

As nationwide unemployment reached six million by the end of 1930 and eleven million by the end of 1932, Mexican workers were singled out as scapegoats in virtually every locale in which they lived in substantial numbers. In this atmosphere the nativist litany that had been employed against Mexicans in the 1920s --charges that they were disease-ridden, that they committed crimes, that they displaced American workers, and that they were, in short, singularly un-American -- was raised with new vehemence. Moreover, as the number of unemployed Mexican and Mexican American workers seeking relief from local welfare agencies began to rise, American communities across the country took steps to pressure Mexicans to return to Mexico (72).

Nationwide, scholars estimate that between 350,000 and 600,000 people of Mexican descent returned to Mexico during the 1930s. In Los Angeles

alone, targeted by federal, county and city officials, tens of thousands of Mexican nationals and their children returned to Mexico (Gutierrez: 72; see also Foley: 8, 75).

The changed attitude toward Mexican workers from the 1920s to the 1930s was reflected in the media. For example, the *Imperial Valley Farmer*, a newspaper covering a major agricultural region of southern California, estimated in September 1929 that local ranches had more than 10,000 Mexican workers, but would need to hire nearly 10,000 additional Mexicans for “agricultural activity” during the winter season. Five years later, the attitude of local media had changed drastically. On March 15, 1935, the *Brawley News* editorialized: “The sooner the slogan ‘America for Americans’ is adopted, the sooner will Americans be given the preference in all kinds of work -- instead of aliens” (Gutierrez: 71-72). In Los Angeles, media coverage helped local officials scapegoat undocumented immigrants. In an article in the *Los Angeles Times* of Jan. 13, 1931, John R. Quinn, who served on the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, said that not only were undocumented immigrants responsible for “a large part” of the crime in the county, but that the widespread unemployment caused by the Great Depression would disappear if the undocumented were deported. “If we were rid of the aliens who have entered this country illegally,” Quinn claimed, “our present unemployment problem would shrink to the proportions of a relatively unimportant flat spot in business.” Because Quinn was the only source used in the story, the newspaper allowed his inflammatory viewpoints to remain unchallenged.

Nationally, the *Saturday Evening Post*, a prominent magazine with a weekly circulation of close to three million, had published frequent editorials in the 1920s in support of restricting Mexican immigration. With the onslaught of the Great Depression, the *Post* found new ammunition for attacking immigrants. In an editorial on July 21, 1934, the magazine complained about the 45,000 Mexicans on relief in Los Angeles: “They are sitting pretty, for they entered the country lawfully and they may not be deported unless convicted of a felony.”

Although Mexican immigration to the United States slowed to a trickle during the Depression, the number of immigrants coming north steadily increased during World War II. Spurred by the increased labor demands of the massive U.S. war effort, Southwestern employers vigorously lobbied Congress to once again permit recruitment of Mexican workers. In response, the United States and Mexico in August 1942 created the Emergency Farm Labor Program (popularly known as the Bracero Program after a Spanish term for farm laborer). To allay concerns of U.S. restrictionists, the agreement stipulated that braceros could be employed only in areas where it had been verified that labor shortages actually existed and only if their employment wouldn’t adversely affect local wages. In addition, braceros would return to Mexico once their contracts had expired. To protect the rights of the Mexican workers, the agreement also stated that braceros were exempt from military service, that they would not be subject to racial discrimination and that they would be guaranteed food, housing, living expenses and decent wages and working conditions. The program

began in September 1942, with the importation of 500 laborers from the interior of Mexico to Stockton, Calif. (Gutierrez: 133-134). “By 1947,” Gutierrez writes, “nearly 220,000 braceros had worked under contract in the United States, almost 57 percent of them on large-scale corporate farms in California” (134). According to McWilliams, however, although the bracero program did result in improved working conditions for Mexican immigrant laborers, a change in the program’s administration resulted in windfall profits for U.S. agribusinesses:

...on July 1, 1943, the War Food Administration was substituted for the (Farm Security Administration) as the enforcing agency -- a change which was tantamount to turning the whole program over to the farm associations.

Once they were in control of the program, the new arrangement could not have been improved upon from the growers’ point of view. With the government paying all transportation and administration expenses, they were spared even the trouble of recruiting labor. Assured an unlimited market and a high level of prices, the large-scale employers of farm labor made fabulous wartime profits. From 1943 through 1947, the federal government appropriated \$120,000,000 for the labor importation program -- every penny of which should be regarded as a direct subsidy to the large-scale employers of farm labor in a period of unprecedented prosperity (McWilliams, 1948: 266).

Moreover, the booming wartime economy also brought large numbers of undocumented Mexicans to the United States to work. As in earlier periods of large-scale Mexican immigration, the lure of higher wages, the promises of recruiters and the encouragement of friends and relatives induced these

workers to make the trek north. As an indication of how many came, the Immigration and Naturalization Service reported apprehending only 7,023 undocumented migrants a year between 1940 and 1943. However, that figure grew to 69,111 in 1945 and to nearly 200,000 in 1947. Between 1947 to 1954, the INS apprehended an average of more than 500,000 undocumented immigrants a year (Gutierrez: 142).

A backlash against Mexican immigrants occurred again in the 1950s. The anti-Communist fervor sweeping the country prompted the passage of the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952, which gave the government the right to deport any “alien” who had entered the country since 1924, “regardless of his or her character, length of stay in the United States, employment record or familial relationship to bona fide American citizens” (161). One result of this law was 1954’s Operation Wetback, in which the INS claimed to have deported over a million undocumented immigrants, primarily those living in the Southwest. Gutierrez points out that according to the 1950 census, “the combined population of resident Mexican aliens and Mexican-Americans with at least one parent who had been born in Mexico amounted to 55 percent of the total Mexican population of the United States” (162). As a result, these mass deportations were devastating to the ethnic Mexican community, causing the breakup of many Mexican-American families (161-163).

Concern about the increase in undocumented immigration from Mexico in the 1950s was fueled by the national media. In an editorial,

“Wetback Problem,” on Nov. 28, 1952, the *New York Times* argued that the presence of the undocumented Mexican immigrant in the Southwest “constitutes an adverse social and economic factor that is so recognized by all but those who profit from it.” The *Times* also chastised members of Congress for not doing more to “protect” the nation’s southern border:

It is remarkable how some of the same Senators and Representatives who are all for erecting the most rigid barriers against immigration from Southern Europe suffer from a sudden blindness when it comes to protecting the southern border of the United States. This peculiar weakness is most noticeable among members from Texas and the Southwest, where the wetbacks happen to be principally employed.

Six months later, on June 7, 1953, the *Washington Post* published “‘Wetback’ Tide Overflowing Rio Grande Again,” a much more strongly worded article on the problem posed by the increasing numbers of undocumented immigrants from Mexico:

The annual spring tide of wetback labor reached record proportions last month, when 87,416 were picked up at the border. An influx sustained at this rate for a year could conceivably add up to more than two million in 1953, as immigration authorities estimate that for every wetback caught, one to three others escape.

With only 600 patrolmen to guard the 1600-mile international boundary, the United States Immigration Service recently declared, “If the entire Mexican nation wanted to move to the United States, there is little we could do to stop them.”

Undocumented immigration from Mexico declined sharply over the next two decades, but picked up again in the late 1960s, spurred by America's booming Vietnam War economy and by an economic downturn in Mexico. In 1967, the INS reported that apprehensions of undocumented immigrants had once again increased to more than 100,000. Apprehensions had grown to nearly 500,000 by 1970; by 1977, they had reached nearly 1 million. This rise in undocumented immigration was defined as a national problem when a recession in 1970-71 threw many Americans out of work, rekindling concern that immigrants were stealing jobs from U.S. citizens:

This impression undoubtedly was reinforced when prominent news publications, including the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times* and *U.S. News and World Report* began to publish stories describing the illegal alien influx as a human flood or a silent invasion. In a series of particularly inflammatory articles and public statements, INS Commissioner Leonard Chapman described the illegal alien issue in alarming terms, warning of dire long-term consequences to the national interest. In one widely-publicized article Chapman termed the illegal alien issue a "national disaster," claiming that illegal aliens were "milking the U.S. taxpayer of \$13 billion annually by taking away jobs from legal residents and forcing them into unemployment; by acquiring welfare benefits and public services; by avoiding taxes." "Clearly," Chapman asserted, "the nation can no longer afford these enormous, growing costs" (Gutierrez: 188).

In response to the growing public outcry on the issue, in 1972 and 1973 the INS initiated a new effort to control undocumented immigration by picking up "aliens" (primarily in Mexican-American neighborhoods in the

Southwest) and returning them to Mexico (188-189; see also Acuna, 1988: 373-374).

As mentioned above, the INS commissioner's public comments on the dire consequences of rising undocumented immigration were reinforced by the media. For example, on Jan. 17, 1972, *U.S. News and World Report* published a three-page article headlined "Surge of Illegal Immigrants Across American Borders." According to the story, undocumented immigration to the United States had reached unprecedented levels:

Never have so many aliens swarmed illegally into U.S. -- millions, moving across the nation. For Government, they are becoming a costly headache.

What started as a trickle of aliens sneaking into the U.S. illegally has grown into a flood -- and there are no signs the flood is cresting.

Three years later, with the country in the midst of a recession, the magazine ran a four-page story on undocumented immigration ("Rising Flood of Illegal Aliens") that was even more alarmist. The subhead reads:

As recession worsens, concern is mounting over foreigners who slip into U.S. undetected and take jobs from citizens. Here is a nationwide, in-depth look at a big and growing worry.

The story begins as follows:

A swelling tide of illegal aliens coming into the United States is stirring alarm nationwide.

This year, says the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 2 to 2.5 million “illegals” will sneak into the country. More than half will go undetected.

Illegal aliens already are filling at least 1 million well-paying jobs at a time when unemployment is rising among U.S. citizens.

Some jobless aliens are turning to crime. Others are illegally siphoning off welfare money, medical aid and unemployment benefits.

Proposition 187

This recurring national phenomenon of an economic downturn followed by a backlash against undocumented immigrants from Mexico was reproduced in California in the 1990s. During the 1980s, the California economy had grown by 350,000 jobs a year, and the immigrant population grew by 287,000 people each year. From 1990-95, however, the state endured its worst recession since the 1930s. During the recession's first three years, the state lost 135,000 jobs a year, while the immigration flow abated only slightly, down to an average of 270,000 people a year. In addition, California was faced with a fiscal crisis that had its roots in the state's postwar boom years. Following World War II, California had built an extensive public infrastructure, reflected in a higher share of the state's labor force working in the public sector than that in the rest of the country: 5.2 vs. 3.9 percent. However, Californians became increasingly reluctant to finance the continued expansion of these public services. Their approval of Proposition 13 in 1978, followed by several other popular initiatives, not only stopped the growth in public revenues but also limited the state

legislature's ability to allocate them. By 1990, the state's share of its labor force working in the public sector had declined by nearly one percentage point to 4.3 percent; while the public sector labor force in the rest of the nation had increased by a similar amount to 4.7 percent (McCarthy and Vernez, 1997: 235-237). Then came the recession:

What had become a chronic structural imbalance between increasingly curtailed public revenues and growing demand for public services turned into a fiscal crisis in 1990, when the state entered into its deepest and longest recession in several generations. Severely reduced state revenues, and hence the ability of the state to maintain services at previous levels, were the immediate effect of the recession. In turn, cutting the level of services to all became the only option available to close the state budget deficit. The alternative, an increase in taxes, was not a politically feasible option; taxes were already considered to be excessively high in California relative to other states. And whereas the federal government had provided countercyclical aid to state and local governments in previous recessions -- in the form of public works or public service employment programs--growing concerns about the federal deficit itself closed that option as well (McCarthy and Vernez: 236).

In this harsh economic climate, residents grew increasingly apprehensive of the growing number of immigrants, most of whom were nonwhite. By 1990, California had 6.5 million foreign-born residents -- roughly a third of the nation's immigrants. The country these immigrants were most likely to come from was Mexico. The 2.45 million Mexican-born residents of California represented almost 40 percent of the state's immigrant population. They were five times more numerous than the

485,000 Filipino-born residents, the next largest national-origin group. Overall, 46.3 percent of California's immigrants came from Latin America and 31.2 percent came from Asia -- 77.5 percent of the total. In particular, Californians were concerned about undocumented immigrants, the vast majority of whom were also nonwhite. Reliable statistics on this population are hard to come by; however, according to a 1992 study, 57.1 percent of undocumented immigrants were from Mexico, 25.2 percent from Central America, 8.9 percent from Asia, 5.1 percent from Europe and Canada, and 3.7 percent from everywhere else. By 1995, this population had grown to an estimated 1.6 million (McCarthy and Vernez: 11-54).

Concern about undocumented immigration was expressed by politicians across the political spectrum. For example, California's conservative Republican governor, Pete Wilson, joined a liberal Democratic congressman from Los Angeles, Anthony Bielensen, in supporting an amendment to the U.S. Constitution denying automatic birthright citizenship to the U.S.-born children of undocumented immigrants (Gutierrez, 1995: 208). It was in this environment that the state sought to close its budget deficit by having the federal government cover the perceived high costs of providing services to the undocumented. Since enforcement of immigration laws is the sole responsibility of the federal government, state and local costs incurred by a failure of the federal government to prevent illegal immigration are arguably also a responsibility of the federal government. However, faced with federal inaction on this issue, another solution was

proposed: the denial of services to the undocumented (McCarthy and Vernez: 235-237)

In early 1994, a petition began circulating in California to put on the state's November election ballot a proposal to deny social services, primarily education and non-emergency medical care, to undocumented immigrants. Such a measure was needed, proponents argued, because these services were costing the state billions of dollars it could ill afford to spend. Reflecting that belief, the proposal was initially dubbed the SOS (Save Our State) bill. Once on the ballot, it became known as Proposition 187. After a long and heated debate, California voters overwhelmingly approved the measure (59 percent in favor, 41 percent against) in November, 1994 (235-237). On Dec. 14, a federal judge blocked implementation of the proposition because it appeared to conflict with federal law. In 1998, again because of the conflict with federal authority in immigration law, the U.S. District Court in Los Angeles found Proposition 187 unconstitutional. However, the proposition didn't die until July 1999, when Gov. Gray Davis agreed to drop the state's appeal of the federal court's ruling, and 187 opponents agreed to drop their lawsuits against the state (Nieves, 1999).

Although 187 received multiracial support, whites were the only major racial group to give it majority support. Majorities of Latinos, African-Americans and Asians turned it down. As for California's political leadership, the state's leading Democrats, U.S. Sens. Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer, as well as State Treasurer and gubernatorial candidate

Kathleen Brown, all opposed 187. Brown's opponent, Republican Gov. Pete Wilson, was the leading supporter of the issue, and his pro-187 stance seemed to be the major reason for his re-election victory. However, Montejano (1999) points out that when one looked beyond the specifics of the 187 debate to the larger issue of immigration, the state's top Democratic and Republican politicians had adopted quite similar viewpoints. When "conservative" Wilson called for a constitutional amendment that would deny citizenship to U.S.-born children of illegal immigrants, "progressive" Boxer called for the stationing of National Guard troops along the border. Eventually, a growing chorus of Republicans and Democrats adopted anti-immigrant rhetoric in calling for a closing of the border (Montejano: 246).

Proposition 187 was the most prominent manifestation of a backlash against undocumented immigrants that occurred in the 1990s in California (and elsewhere in the country as well). As this history shows, such a backlash was nothing new. Throughout the past century, California has welcomed undocumented immigrants during the good times, and scapegoated them when times are bad. California and national U.S. media have been part of this scapegoating process: the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Saturday Evening Post* in the 1930s, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* in the 1950s and *U.S. News and World Report* in the 1970s, to give a few noteworthy examples. To provide a better understanding of how the media framed Proposition 187 and the backlash against undocumented immigrants in California in the 1990s, this study analyzes how the heated debate over the proposition was covered by two

prominent U.S. newspapers, the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times*. In the following chapter, I explain in more detail the questions I attempted to answer, the parameters of the study and the methods I used to analyze these texts.

Chapter 5

Research Questions and Methodology

Research questions

My analysis of media coverage of Proposition 187 focuses on two major questions:

1. Scholars looking at news from a critical cultural studies perspective argue that media coverage in general tends to concentrate its focus on the viewpoints of the powerful. Journalistic norms allow for elites to disagree, and for opponents to disagree with the viewpoints of the elite (cf. Hallin, 1985, p. 116). Coverage constructed in such a way doesn't allow for media endorsement of a specific elite viewpoint, but it does allow elite viewpoints to set the parameters of the discussion. As Hall (1982) explains:

Opposing arguments are easy to mount. Changing the terms of the problem is exceedingly difficult, since the dominant definition of the problem acquires, by repetition and by the weight and credibility of those who propose or subscribe to it, the warrant of "common sense" (p. 81).

In this study, "elite sources" refers to the leading California politicians in 1994 (specifically those running for governor or U.S. senator), as well as politicians with a national reputation who took sides in the 187 debate (these would include President Clinton, well-known members of his administration such as Attorney General Janet Reno, and nationally known Republicans

such as Jack Kemp and William Bennett). “Elites” also refers to top local or regional politicians (a good example would be John Quinn, the Los Angeles county supervisor who blamed the Great Depression on undocumented immigrants).

So: is it accurate that “elite” official sources dominated the coverage, or, in Hall’s words, “set the parameters of the discussion,” thus focusing on some aspects of the issue while marginalizing or excluding others?

2. Omi and Winant (1994) argue that the backlash against racial minorities in the United States since the 1970s is primarily expressed in three discourses: neoconservative "racial colorblindness," the New Right demonization of poor non-white populations, and the neoliberal discourse of racial universalism that acknowledges social problems but refuses to address the racial aspects of these problems on the grounds that racial discussions are "divisive." Although these racial discourses weren’t created by political elites, Omi and Winant explain, they were embraced by elites as a way of gaining -- and maintaining -- power. As mentioned earlier, the Reagan Administration adopted both the neoconservative and New Right discourses in the 1980s, and the Clinton Administration endorsed neoliberalism in the 1990s. Just as those “backlash” racial discourses grew out of the country’s post-1960s social and economic problems, Proposition 187’s targeting of a predominantly nonwhite undocumented immigrant population grew out of a major social and economic downturn in California. So:

How do the elite “frame” the racial aspect of the issue? How does the elite racial discourse on 187 resemble the racial discourses described by Omi and Winant? How does that differ from the media’s framing of the issue?

Methodology

What do scholars mean when they refer to media “framing” of an issue? In general, writes Reese (2001), “framing” refers to the ways in which the media make sense of events and issues. More specifically, Entman argues, framing includes some combination of the following four attributes:

Frames...*define problems* -- determine what a causal agent is doing with what costs and benefits, usually measured in terms of common cultural values; *diagnose causes* -- identify the forces creating the problem; *make moral judgments* -- evaluate causal agents and their effects; and *suggest remedies* -- offer and justify treatments for the problems and predict their likely effects. A single sentence may perform more than one of these four framing functions, although many sentences in a text may perform none of them. And a frame in any particular text may not necessarily include all four functions (1993: 52).

For example, he argues, using the “cold war” frame that dominated U.S. foreign affairs coverage for decades, the media might define a foreign civil war as a problem, diagnose its cause as Communist rebels, condemn the rebels as atheistic aggressors and recommend support for the other side (52).

In analyzing how the media “framed” 187, I use the scholarly viewpoint that all human social practice is ideological, from the words that

form our languages to the complex ideological formations that make up our belief systems. Since creating media content is a form of social practice, it follows that the way in which the media “frame” a story is an ideological formation. Grossberg, Wartella and Whitney (1998) argue that because the media are “the most important and visible cultural institutions of the society, they have become the most important ideological battlefield. It is in the media that one finds not only the dominant ideology -- from which people learn the common-sense view of reality -- but also subordinate ideologies trying to change the common-sense view” (201).

Also crucial to a meaningful understanding of framing is analyzing where frames come from and the purposes they serve. As Caragee and Roefs (2004) argue, frames are “sponsored” by a variety of sources, including politicians, organizations and social movements, and the media become the site in which frames compete for social acceptance:

...(A)dequate conceptualizations of the framing process highlight how framing involves the social construction of meaning. Because the distribution of economic, political and cultural resources shapes frame sponsorship and framing contests, studying the construction of reality through framing necessarily involves an examination of power (217).

As for analyzing the text itself, a frequently-cited guide is Gitlin (1980), who defines media frames as “persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis and exclusion by which symbol handlers routinely organize discourse” (7). Entman (1993)

argues that information *excluded* from media texts is as important as what is *included*:

Receivers' responses are clearly affected if they perceive and process information about one interpretation and possess little or incommensurable data about alternatives. This is why exclusion of interpretations by frames is as significant to outcomes as inclusion (94).

In addition, Sumner (1979) offers five basic techniques for uncovering ideological formations: 1. repetitions of statements, words or phrases; 2. assumptions contained in certain statements; 3. inconsistencies in arguments; 4. avoidance of certain topics, and 5. the general "drift" of a discourse or series of discourses (191-192; 239-240). Foss (1996: 297) gives a three-point outline for analyzing ideology in cultural artifacts. First, what is the "preferred reading" of the artifact? (For more on preferred reading, see Hall, 1980). To answer that question, the analyst must determine: What does the artifact ask the audience to believe, understand, feel or think about? What arguments are being made in the artifact, and for what? What values or general conceptions of what is and is not good are suggested? Second, whose interests are privileged in the ideology? Whose interests are negated or not represented? Third, what strategies are used to create and support the ideology? What strategies legitimate the interests of some groups over others?

Scholars also argue that it's important to compare the primary text one is analyzing with other accounts of the same issue or event in order to better understand how the frame is constructed. Entman writes:

Comparing media narratives of events...helps to reveal the critical textual choices that framed the story but would otherwise remain submerged in an undifferentiated text. Unless narratives are compared, frames are difficult to detect fully and reliably, because many of the framing devices can appear as "natural," unremarkable choices of words or images. Comparison reveals that such choices are not inevitable or unproblematic but rather are central to the way the news frame helps establish the literally "common sense" (i.e. widespread) interpretation of events (1991: 6).

Three studies were particularly useful guides on how to proceed methodologically: Hertog and McLeod's article "Anarchists Wreak Havoc in Downtown Minneapolis: A Multi-level Study of Media Coverage of Radical Protest" (1995); Todd Gitlin's *The Whole World is Watching* (1980), and Reeves and Campbell's *Cracked Coverage* (1995). My study focuses on media coverage of undocumented immigrants, a population considered deviant by political elites and the general public. Similarly, these studies also focus on media coverage of deviant populations: anarchists, anti-war protestors and cocaine users. All three also used a comparative approach to uncover media frames that went beyond a simple comparison of mainstream media accounts. Hertog and McLeod looked at all the coverage of three anarchist conventions and an anarchist debate in the mainstream, radical and anarchist press. Gitlin studied mainstream and alternative press coverage of a prominent anti-war group in 1965, plus histories, memoirs, interviews, and

his own memories of the events described. Reeves and Campbell compared broadcast and print media accounts of the War on Drugs, plus stories in the alternative press and scholarly analyses of the Reagan era to better understand how “drugs” were framed by elites and by the media. In addition, my study looks at coverage of the political debate over Proposition 187 that lasted for most of 1994. Two of these studies also examine long-term coverage of an issue. Gitlin’s study concerns media coverage of student anti-war protest throughout 1965; Reeves and Campbell’s analysis covers the seven years from 1981-88, the years of President Reagan’s War on Drugs. My study focuses on how elite sources influenced media coverage, and both Gitlin and Reeves and Campbell show how elites helped shape coverage of Vietnam War protest and the War on Drugs. Last but not least, my study looks at an issue in which elites scapegoated a relatively powerless, predominately nonwhite population – undocumented immigrants in California. In their study, Reeves and Campbell show how elites and the media scapegoated another relatively powerless population – poor, nonwhite residents of America’s inner cities.

To begin with, Hertog and McLeod’s comparative textual analysis of media coverage of radical protest shows how the mainstream media represent deviance to their audiences. In their study, they compare how three anarchist demonstrations and an anarchist convention, all of which took place from 1986-88 in Minneapolis, were framed by the mainstream media (four area daily newspapers and two local TV stations) and the alternative media (two radical left and two anarchist publications). All available

accounts of these events (33 print articles and five television news stories) were analyzed. Hertog and McLeod found that the mainstream media used five primary frames in their coverage of the anarchists: “circus,” “riot,” “confrontation,” “protest” and “debate.” In the circus frame (whose name was inspired by a local columnist who wrote that the anarchists reminded him of clowns in a circus act), anarchists are treated as a shocking, confusing or humorous oddity and their political views are downplayed or ignored. In the riot frame, the focus is on public disorder caused by anarchists. The political underpinnings of the anarchists’ actions (i.e. governmental and corporate support of war) are downplayed. What’s emphasized are the actions themselves (i.e. flag burning, clashes with police). The confrontation frame treated anarchists and police clashes “much like a sporting event” and compared the tactics and actions used by each side.

By contrast, the protest frame treated the anarchists as people having a political viewpoint that deserved attention. However, this frame was used relatively rarely and was considered subordinate to the other frames. Similarly, the debate frame granted the anarchists legitimacy by focusing on philosophical conflicts between anarchist and mainstream thought and within the anarchist movement. However, this frame only appeared in the mainstream media in soft news stories and letters to the editor, thus separating it from the hard-news format that journalism typically reserves for stories considered to be the most significant.

Also useful in understanding media framing of deviance is Gitlin's 1980 study of media coverage of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), a 1960s radical student group that received national media attention for its opposition to the Vietnam War. Gitlin shows not only *how* the media frame deviance, but also examines, in much more detail than Hertog and McLeod, *why* particular stories are framed in a certain way. Gitlin studied all the *New York Times* stories, and all CBS News stories available in the network's archive, that were produced on SDS in 1965, the year that the organization became national news. He compared these accounts with SDS publications and other journals on the Left. Gitlin also draws on histories and memoirs of the era to better understand the social context in which the coverage occurred. In addition, as a former member of SDS, he was able to compare both sets of written accounts with the point of view of someone who was a participant-observer at many of the events covered by the media. This perspective allowed Gitlin to see what information was included in mainstream media coverage of the antiwar movement, and what was excluded. By looking at coverage of a specific social movement over an extended period, Gitlin also was able to show how frames shift over time, and analyze why those shifts occurred. Finally, Gitlin's analysis draws on his observations of how news organizations function and his interviews with newswriters who covered the antiwar movement in 1965. His findings are a good illustration of how talented, well-meaning reporters can create news stories that satisfy the demands of journalistic objectivity -- and that still frame certain groups as deviant.

On Feb. 7, 1965, U. S. President Lyndon Johnson began the systematic bombing of North Vietnam, inspiring students around the country to demonstrate against the war. Concerned about the rapid increase of students in the anti-war movement, some of whom were their children, *New York Times* editors approved an in-depth feature on SDS and the student left. The result was a page 1 story on March 15, 1965, “The Student Left Spurring Reform: New Activist Intelligentsia Is Rising On Campuses.” Even though it reported that these students wanted “fundamental changes in society,” the story’s tone was respectful, Gitlin argues: “It cited the movement’s own preferred labels, and not those of opponents; it took at face value the radicals’ own statements of belief; and it spoke from the perspective of the students...” (36).

In the first four months of 1965, the Johnson Administration continued bombing North and South Vietnam, committed 200,000 ground troops to the South and for the first time launched offensive military action. Back home, the anti-war movement had grown to the point that on April 17, 1965, 15,000 demonstrators marched in front of the White House to protest the war. As the movement grew in strength and militancy, the media frame became more critical. For example, Gitlin argues, a page 1 story published in the *New York Times* on April 18, “15,000 White House Pickets Denounce Vietnam War,” contained a number of elements that served to belittle the demonstration. To begin with, the photo used by the *Times* to illustrate the story showed a handful of anti-war protestors standing in front of an equal number of pro-war protestors, even though, by the *Times*’ own account,

antiwar demonstrators outnumbered their pro-war counterparts by 150 to 1. Thus, although the photo was certainly justifiable journalistically, since it showed the conflicting groups of protestors, it also served to minimize the significance of the anti-war protest. In addition, since the pro-war protestors were from right-wing groups, including the American Nazis, the photo marginalized the anti-war movement by equating it with right-wing extremists. One explanation for the use of the photo could be that the *Times* had nothing else suitable. However, Gitlin discovered that the source of the photo, the United Press International wire service, had sent the *Times* five other suitable photos, two of which showed the extent to which the antiwar picketers outnumbered the pro-war group. The *Times* also trivialized the demonstration by failing to mention the document in which SDS explained its opposition to the war (47-54).

Why would the *Times* frame SDS positively in March 1965, then negatively one month later? For one thing, the context had changed. It's one thing when a small group of student radicals are sitting on an apartment floor discussing political philosophy. It's quite another when 15,000 protestors, most of them students, are marching on Washington to denounce the federal government's war policies. Gitlin, echoing Gans and Hallin, argues, "Journalism has traditionally equated insurgency and protest with deviance" (53). Also significant was the fact that in the spring of 1965, the political sources on whom the *Times* relied for information supported the war effort. Thus, for *Times* reporters and editors, the SDS critique of the war was not a legitimate point of view. In Hallin's (1985) terms, it was outside the Sphere

of Legitimate Controversy (see chapter 2), a deviant viewpoint unworthy of being heard. In early 1965, Gitlin argues, “SDS was prematurely antiwar” (54).

As the antiwar movement grew in size and militancy, it came under increasing attack by political elites, and the framing of the movement by the media became increasingly harsh, Gitlin writes (78-123). Techniques that the media began using in the fall of 1965 to disparage SDS included the following:

--Reliance on statements by government officials and other authorities. Increasingly, the media ran stories using official sources to condemn SDS and the antiwar movement without including balancing statements from movement sources. For example, in an AP story printed in the *New York Times* on Oct. 16, U.S. Sen. John Stennis of Mississippi accused SDS of creating an “unlawful conspiracy” to encourage youths to avoid military service in Vietnam, and called on the Johnson Administration to “pull the anti-draft movement up by the roots and grind it to bits.” (Ironically, SDS hadn’t yet approved an anti-draft plan, Gitlin writes.) Hallin (1985) argues that in stories on groups considered deviant, mainstream journalism doesn’t feel compelled to use the techniques of objective journalism. Instead, the media expose, condemn and exclude from the public agenda “those who violate or challenge the political consensus” (116-117).

--Emphasis on the presence of Communists. On Oct. 18, in a *Times* front-page story headlined “U.S. Investigates Anti-Draft Groups: Katzenbach Says Reds Are Involved In Youth Drive,” U.S. Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach announced that the Justice Department was investigating the anti-draft movement and that the movement contained Communists. Although the story on the Katzenbach press conference indicates that the presence of Communists in the movement wasn’t a major issue for Katzenbach, the *Times* still decided to include it in its headline. Gitlin writes: “In the fall of 1965, reporters began their inquiries with the...Cold War premise that Communism was more or less monolithically menacing” (101).

--Emphasis on violence in demonstrations. The *New York Times* frequently emphasized violent clashes between antiwar and pro-war groups, typically arguing that anti-war demonstrations, simply by existing, caused violence, rather than implicating a specific group as the cause. For example, a story on Oct. 28 is headlined “Students Clash On Saigon Policy After Manhattan College Rally.” The headline indicates that both antiwar and pro-war groups were equally responsible for the violence; when one reads the story, however, it’s clear that the fighting was initiated by the pro-war group.

--Delegitimizing use of quotation marks. The *Times* routinely referred to antiwar demonstrations as “peace marches.” However, in an Oct. 30 story, “50,000 Expected To Parade Here Today To Back Vietnam Policy,” the event is referred as a march or as parade – without quotation marks. As Gitlin explains:

...the Oct. 30 story called the pro-war event a march or a parade, without quotation marks to make the type stand out as something in need of explanation. The march, or parade, was the kind of traditional event that could be assimilated to the taken-for-granted category without the special trouble, the cognitive novelty, the faint disreputability connoted by quotation marks (116).

Also instructive was Reeves and Campbell's 1994 study of TV network news coverage of the 1980s War on Drugs, focusing primarily on the anti-cocaine crusade. Like the previous two studies cited, Reeves and Campbell's analysis shows how the media frame deviance. Like Gitlin, by looking at media coverage of a specific issue over an extended period of time, Reeves and Campbell are able to show how frames evolve. Also like Gitlin, by studying the historical context (1980s America under the leadership of President Ronald Reagan), Reeves and Campbell are able to connect these frames to prevailing social ideologies. Especially noteworthy from my perspective was that the two authors also show how media frames scapegoated a relatively powerless population – poor nonwhite residents of America's inner cities.

To analyze television news coverage of cocaine during the Reagan era, Reeves and Campbell viewed the 512 news stories that were listed under the subject heading of "cocaine" in the Vanderbilt Television News Index and that appeared on CBS, NBC and ABC from 1981-88, the years of Reagan's presidency. They winnowed these down to the 228 major stories that focused on cocaine as a domestic social problem. They also studied 42

network stories that appeared during the same time period to see how cocaine coverage compared to coverage of other illegal drugs. Based on this analysis, Reeves and Campbell argue that the coverage can be divided into three distinct phases. In Phase 1 (January 1981 to November 1985), stories focused on cocaine use by celebrities and the subsequent “trickle-down effect” of cocaine use by “average” (white, middle-class) Americans. Typically, these stories showed white drug abusers recovering from their addiction through counseling, therapy and treatment programs. In Phase II (December 1985 to November 1986), the problem had shifted to the inner cities, and white cocaine abusers had been replaced by nonwhite crack addicts and their suppliers. Recovery wasn’t an option for cocaine abusers in Phase II stories; instead, these crack addicts were thought to present such a danger to society that law enforcement was mobilized against them in a violent “War on Drugs.” In Phase III (November 1986-December 1988), the sense of crisis in media coverage was reduced as journalists reacted to criticism that their stories were unduly supportive of the drug war. In addition, as the War on Drugs continued to be unsuccessful, these stories increasingly presented the inner-city drug problem as hopeless.

In Phase I coverage, the typical cocaine abuser was young, male, college-educated, middle-class – and white. In these stories, abusers are portrayed as having been seduced by the excessive cocaine use then popular among celebrities. In early February 1983, CBS anchor Dan Rather compared this process to the spreading of disease: “Cocaine is widely perceived as the drug of choice for celebrities...But dangerous living can be

contagious” (125). Cocaine use causes these “normal” people to embrace deviant behavior: a man forgets to shower (CBS, 5/31/84); a mother snorts coke during her pregnancy (NBC, 8/10/84); a computer saleswoman spends \$20,000 a year on cocaine (NBC, 8/10/84); a white-collar worker ruins his family because of his addiction (CBS, 5/31/84); respectable businessmen confess to trading their wives for coke (ABC, 5/16/83). However, these stories typically show these “deviants” being restored to “normality” either through therapy (CBS, 7/13/81) or through televised confessions (NBC, 3/29/83) in which repentant abusers acknowledge the error of their ways (pp. 123-124).

Phase II stories focus on inner-city crack use. Reeves and Campbell report that although crack had been marketed in America’s inner cities since 1983, it wasn’t until 1986, when expert and official news sources began referring to crack use as an epidemic, that crack became a major story. In this coverage, crack cocaine is portrayed as far worse than the powdered form, so addictive “it will empty the money from your pockets,” so dangerous it will make you “kill your mother” (CBS, 5/27/86). The crack house, the place where the drug is sold, is “a modern-day opium den,” “a filthy place with a steel door and armed guards” (NBC, 5/23/86), where sinister dealers callously market death. Crack addicts are portrayed as alien Others: “Beam me up to the Enterprise,” exclaims a black male user after taking a hit (NBC, 5/23/86). These users are portrayed as beyond rehabilitation, and crack itself is represented as such a danger that only violent intervention by law enforcement can protect the rest of society. A

good example of the difference in Phase I and Phase II coverage is the use of raiding footage, in which a hand-held camera accompanies police during a drug bust. Raiding footage was never used in Phase I stories. However, it was introduced during Phase II stories, and was ultimately used so frequently that during Phase III coverage it arguably became a visual cliché. Reeves and Campbell find this raiding footage particularly troubling, not only because it perpetuated the “Us vs. Them” attitude toward drug transgressors, but also because it increased the power of the police to frame media coverage from their perspective (134-135).

Reeves and Campbell argue that the most significant event in the 1980s cocaine crisis was the death of Len Bias. Bias, an African-American youth from Washington, D.C., had risen from humble beginnings to become a basketball star at the University of Maryland. On June 17, 1986, the Boston Celtics had made Bias their first draft choice and the second choice overall in the National Basketball Association’s annual draft. Two days later, on the brink of financial success, Bias died of heart failure believed to be triggered by cocaine intoxication. In the extensive media coverage that followed, two figures emerged as villains: Brian Trimble, a black friend from the neighborhood where Bias grew up who supplied the cocaine that led to Bias’s death, and Lefty Driesell, Bias’s white college coach, whose lack of discipline on Bias and his teammates was believed to have contributed to Bias’s death. For Reeves and Campbell, the twin themes of this social drama – the threat of undisciplined black youth and the dire consequences of white authority’s failure to provide that discipline – helped,

more than any other event, to authenticate the cocaine “crisis” and justify the Reagan Administration’s punitive response (136-146). Also contributing to the intensive news coverage was the fact that Bias died right next door to Washington, D.C., the nation’s news center (146). (Similarly, Reese and Danielian (1989) argue that the deaths of Bias and Don Rogers, an African-American professional football player who also died of cocaine intoxication a few days after Bias, generated the amount of press coverage they did because they provided a powerful “hook” on which to hang the cocaine story.)

Phase III coverage, from December 1986 to December 1988, began with criticism, within the media itself, of network coverage of the cocaine crisis. Perhaps the most telling critique appeared in *TV Guide* magazine on Feb. 27, 1987. In the article, three scholars at New York University accused the media of hyping the cocaine crisis. For example, the article charged that the CBS special, “48 Hours on Crack Street,” implied that crack was a threat all over America, when in fact it was a serious problem only in a few metropolitan areas. And, when the Drug Enforcement Administration released a report on Sept. 24, 1986, which stated that crack was a “secondary rather than a primary problem in most areas,” it received only a brief mention on NBC, while CBS and ABC ignored it altogether. Given that this was an article published by reputable scholars in a national mass-circulation magazine, this critique was difficult to dismiss, Reeves and Campbell argue (218-228).

In response to these and similar critiques, the media began employing corrective strategies. One was critiquing the therapeutic community that had been profiting from the cocaine crisis. For example, on Nov. 13, 1987, NBC ran an expose of the STRAIGHT treatment program, which charged that the organization's tough-love approach involving "kids disciplining kids with little or no adult supervision," often resulted in harmful physical and mental abuse.

The other corrective strategy was humanizing inner-city drug transgressors. Rather than portraying such people as alien Others, they were shown as tragic victims of circumstance. However, these drug users were still portrayed as beyond redemption, not because of the debilitating social and economic conditions in which they lived, but rather because of toxic inner-city culture (228-235). For example, on April 29, 1988, NBC ran a story about Gerald and Curtis Lee, African-American brothers from East Oakland, Calif., whose lives the network had been following for four years. In the story, we learn that Gerald was a father at 15 and had a jail record by 16. On the plus side, Gerald has a strong role model in his older brother Curtis, an outstanding student and talented athlete who is committed to improving the high school that both boys attend. Tragically, however, Curtis becomes involved in a shooting, a jury finds him guilty of second-degree murder, and he's sentenced to 17 years to life in Folsom Prison. Meanwhile, Gerald becomes a straight-A student and finishes high school, but then is killed while fleeing from police, who had mistaken him for someone else. According to Reeves and Campbell, a key theme of the story is that the main

problem in the neighborhood, the problem that doomed Gerald and likely dooms Curtis as well, is a lack of healthy male role models. The story begins with the lavish funeral of Felix Mitchell, a local drug kingpin, and local black children looking on admiringly. “The drug lord of East Oakland who made \$20,000-\$30,000 a day selling narcotics in a slum,” reporter John Hart tells us in his voice-over. “Some role model.” Although Gerald and Curtis’s single mother, Evelyn Lee, is portrayed sympathetically, clearly she isn’t strong enough to counteract this toxic culture. This is also a neighborhood, Hart states, where “the drug organization is the most visible employer.” The story blames East Oakland residents for the success of the drug lords and the drug economy. What’s left out of the story, Reeves and Campbell argue, is the argument that limited employment opportunities in East Oakland result in the “desperate conditions that encourage the thriving drug trade.” Thus, although the story portrays these two young men sympathetically, any hope that the one survivor might have for redemption is slight at best. The reason for this, the story implies, isn’t social and economic conditions that limit the options of these inner-city residents, but rather the residents themselves and their toxic culture (235-244).

All three of these studies exemplify Entman’s 1991 advice on the importance of comparing media texts to better understand how frames are constructed. For this study, I compared two major U.S. newspapers with a national readership, the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times*. I chose the *New York Times* since it’s widely viewed as the most influential U.S. newspaper. Studies have found that it’s the leading source of information for

government elites and that its stories influence public policy. Also, other media use the *Times* to help them determine which stories are the most significant, how these stories compare to one another in importance and how they can best be covered (Weiss, 1974; Gans, 1979; Reese and Danielian, 1989). The *Los Angeles Times* seemed ideal for this study since it's not only the dominant newspaper in California in terms of circulation, it's also a major national newspaper in its own right.

However, echoing Pauly (1991), as well as Gitlin and Reeves and Campbell, I would argue that it's impossible for a researcher to understand how the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times* framed Proposition 187 without understanding the larger social context in which their stories were created. Therefore, my comparative research was informed not only by the stories published by those two papers, but also by other articles on the issue in the mainstream press, the alternative press and in journals of opinion, as well as by academic studies of California society in the early '90s.

In addition, Reese (2001) recommends that researchers conduct analyses over extended periods of time to examine emerging frames, and also do cross-cultural work to compare the framing process under different social conditions. Since Proposition 187 focuses on undocumented immigration, I felt it was important to study the lengthy and complex history of such immigration to California. By looking at how undocumented immigration -- and immigration in general -- was framed in the past, I could better understand the media framing of Proposition 187 in 1994. For

example, one central theme of this history is race. Throughout the past century, the vast majority of undocumented immigrants were nonwhite. So, I studied how earlier generations of nonwhite undocumented immigrants were framed to better understand how the media framed them in 1994. Finally, given that Proposition 187 made race a central issue in California's 1994 elections for governor and U.S. senator, it was important to study the significant ways in which race has affected U.S. politics in general since World War II.

Based on the work of Hertog and McLeod, Gitlin, and Reeves and Campbell, my study of Proposition 187 will ask the following four questions: 1. How do elites and the media frame this issue? 2. How does the elite framing influence the media framing? 3. Given that Proposition 187 focuses on the predominantly nonwhite population of undocumented immigrants, is there a racial discourse embedded in these frames? 4. How do these frames change over time?

As mentioned earlier, Proposition 187 became a news story in January 1994, when supporters began a petition drive in California to put the initiative on the ballot. It continued to receive press coverage until July, 1999, when proponents and opponents of the issue agreed to end their legal battle over its implementation. This study focuses on the initial debate, from January 1994 until Nov. 8, 1994, Election Day, when Californians overwhelmingly approved it. I chose this time period so I could analyze the

information on the issue made available in the mainstream press to California residents before they went to the polls.

Proposition 187 stories that the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times* ran during this time period can be divided into three phases. Phase One begins on Jan. 12, 1994, when the *Los Angeles Times* published a story on the launch of the petition drive to place the Save Our State initiative on the Election Day ballot. It ends on June 24, when the Associated Press announced that, according to state officials, the initiative's backers had obtained sufficient signatures to qualify the measure for the ballot. The two newspapers ran the fewest stories on the issue during this phase. Phase Two, beginning on June 25, follows the Prop. 187 debate as the measure becomes the leading election issue in California and a significant national issue as well; as the debate picks up steam, it also receives more coverage. Phase Three begins on Oct. 21, the day the *L. A. Times* ran a story announcing that senatorial candidate Mike Huffington had come out in favor of 187. The next day, both papers ran stories that Huffington's opponent, U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein, was now publicly opposing the measure. With her announcement, both candidates for U.S. senator and both candidates for governor had taken positions on opposing sides of 187: incumbent governor Pete Wilson and senatorial challenger Mike Huffington were for it, and gubernatorial challenger Kathleen Brown and Feinstein were against it. During this time period, which concludes on Election Day, 187 became a flashpoint for debate not just among the top state politicians but also for national leaders. Not surprisingly, this is the period in which the newspapers

offered their most intensive coverage of the Prop. 187 campaign.

As one would expect, the *New York Times* had far fewer stories on 187 than the *Los Angeles Times*. From May 22 to Nov. 8, 1994, *Times* reporters wrote eight news articles focusing primarily on 187 (although the topic came up in 46 other news articles, editorials, columns and letters to the editor during that time period). The *Times* ran one story focusing exclusively on 187 in the Phase One time period, an extensive overview of the debate over the proposition just after the announcement by SOS supporters that they believed they had gathered enough signatures to qualify the measure for the November ballot. Although the *Times*' coverage increased significantly in Phase Two, most of the stories it ran were either written by wire services or focused on immigration issues in general, with 187 a secondary issue. However, a *Times* reporter did produce one story focusing entirely on 187 in the Phase Two time period, another lengthy piece explaining why the proposition had become a major national and international issue. Most of the *Times*' pre-election coverage of 187 was written during Phase Three: *Times* reporters wrote six stories focusing exclusively on the issue in that two-week period, along with other stories focusing on the California senatorial and gubernatorial races.

For comparative purposes, I wanted to analyze a similar number of stories from the Los Angeles paper as from the New York paper, but I also wanted to do justice to the fact that the *Los Angeles Times* had much more extensive coverage of 187 than the *New York Times*: the SOS initiative that

became Proposition 187 was mentioned in 797 articles in the *L.A. Times* between Jan. 12 and Nov. 8, 1994. In Phase One, the selection was relatively easy; I chose all three of the *L.A. Times* stories in the home edition (as opposed to the various suburban editions) whose exclusive focus was the Save Our State initiative. For Phase Two, since there were many more stories to choose from, I limited the sample to all 10 of the page one stories in the home edition that focused exclusively on 187. I used the same sampling method for Phase Three. Because of the sheer number of stories the paper published on 187 during this time period, I limited the sample to the 12 page one stories published in the home edition that focused exclusively on Proposition 187.

To recap: for Phase One of the coverage, I compared the one *New York Times* story that focused exclusively on 187 with the three *Los Angeles Times* stories that focused exclusively on the issue. For Phases Two and Three, I compared all the *New York Times* stories that focused exclusively on Proposition 187 with all the *Los Angeles Times* page one stories that focused exclusively on 187.

I begin my study of Proposition 187 with an analysis of the articles in the *Los Angeles Times*, the newspaper that covered 187 more extensively than any other.

Chapter 6

The Los Angeles Times and Proposition 187

Introduction

Gitlin's 1980 study of media coverage of the 1960s anti-war movement and Reeves and Campbell's 1994 analysis of media coverage of the 1980s War on Drugs show that the way the media frame social issues changes over time, and those changes are closely tied to the ways in which elite politicians frame those issues. In this study I wanted to find out how elites and the media framed Proposition 187. This proposition emerged in a period of heightened concern in California over undocumented immigration that pre-dated the emergence of 187 as a public issue in January 1994. Thus, to better understand how elites and the media framed immigration in 1994, my study of the *L.A. Times* coverage begins in June 1993. Starting that month, elite politicians up for re-election the following year began to publicly propose solutions to the undocumented immigration "problem." The first section of this chapter, The Road to 187, covers the period from June to November, 1993, when the elite California and national politicians who would lead the debate on 187 the following year all took sides on how to handle the "problem." The following three sections review the three phases of Proposition 187 coverage discussed previously, ending on Election Day, Nov. 8, 1994. Each of these four sections is divided into three parts. The first part, Elite Discourse, compares how elites talked about

undocumented immigration and 187 during that time period. The second part, Newspaper Discourse, examines to what extent elite discourse “set the parameters of the discussion” in the newspaper. Finally, the fact that Proposition 187 targeted a predominantly non-white population made it a racial issue, whether elite politicians chose to acknowledge it or not. The third part of each section, Racial Discourse, looks at elite racial framing of undocumented immigration and 187 during the time period under discussion and how those elite frames influenced the newspaper’s framing of the issue.

The Road to 187

Elite Discourse

As discussed in the previous chapter, Proposition 187 emerged in a climate of steadily growing animosity toward California’s undocumented immigrant population. In fact, several of the elite political leaders of the Proposition 187 debate – including President Clinton and, at the state level, Gov. Pete Wilson, State Treasurer Kathleen Brown and U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein – had staked out positions on how to address the “illegal immigration problem” by November 1993, well before supporters of the initiative that became 187 began their petition drive in early 1994 to put the measure on the November election ballot.

However, a study of the *L.A. Times* stories on undocumented immigration shows that during the summer and fall of 1993, some elite

California politicians were unsure about how to deal with the undocumented and about how serious the undocumented immigration “problem” was. In August 1993, Wilson, the Republican governor, embraced the position that undocumented immigration was a major problem for California. This position was challenged by Democratic elites, including Brown and state Insurance Commissioner John Garamendi, who was positioning himself to challenge Brown to be the Democratic candidate for governor in 1994.

In June 1993, Feinstein, up for re-election the following year, wrote an op-ed piece published by the *Los Angeles Times* in which she stated that the high costs of providing services to undocumented immigrants “could lead, I fear, to a serious backlash against all immigrants if strong and prudent federal policies to protect our border are not put in place.” Subsequently, Feinstein proposed an expanded Border Patrol, a border crossing fee so the Border Patrol could purchase new equipment and add personnel, and tougher anti-smuggling laws. In August, Wilson endorsed the viewpoint that undocumented immigrants come to the United States for free social services rather than jobs, and argued that the cost of providing these services was harming legal residents. “We do not exaggerate when we say that illegal immigration is eroding the quality of life for legal residents of California, is threatening the quality of education that we can provide our children, the quality of care to our needy and blind, elderly and disabled,” the governor said in a *Times* story Aug. 10. According to the article, Wilson had been trying since 1991 to persuade the federal government to reimburse California for the costs of illegal immigration – with little success. To deal

with the issue, he announced proposals to deny education and health care to undocumented immigrants – ideas that would become the core principles of 187. He also proposed requiring all legal immigrants seeking benefits to carry an identification card and denying citizenship to children born on U.S. soil to unlawful residents. In response, Clinton said that of all the states facing immigration problems, California clearly was “taking the biggest hit,” and that his administration was studying the feasibility of a national tamper-proof I.D. card which, in part, would be aimed at preventing undocumented immigrants from taking advantage of government benefit programs. He also reminded reporters that his proposed budget included additional funds for the Border Patrol and for helping California pay for providing services to undocumented immigrants. However, he said that he opposed the denial of citizenship to children of undocumented immigrants, which would require a change in the Constitution. He also said he opposed denying emergency health care to the undocumented (under the Wilson plan, the state would no longer be required to provide such emergency health care, but doctors could do so voluntarily and bill the federal government). “It is probably in everyone else’s interest” to provide health care to people with communicable diseases, Clinton said. Like Feinstein, the president was also concerned about a backlash against all immigrants. The country, he said, should not allow an aversion to illegal immigration to create an aversion to legal immigration.

Brown, however, preparing to run against Wilson for governor in 1994, was much more ambivalent about undocumented immigration when

she gave her first major address on the issue on Sept. 29, 1993. Although she called for beefed-up security on the border and better-enforced employer sanctions to control undocumented immigration, she seemed unwilling to refer to such immigration as a “problem.” According to the *Times*’ Sept. 30 story, Brown told *Times* reporter Bill Stall after her speech, “What I have tried to do today is to strike a balance, to bring a common-sense approach to an issue that is very troubling to many Californians...” In fact, her larger message seemed to be that many Californians were scapegoating immigrants for the many other social and economic problems the state was facing at the time:

“We live in times when many of our people are scared,” she told about 500 people at a luncheon of Town Hall of California, most of them Downtown business and professional workers. “They’re scared of losing their jobs. They’re scared of losing their health care. They’re scared their children can’t get a decent education and they’re scared about their personal safety. “Illegal immigration is wrongly seen as a cause of these fears,” she said.

Responding in a *Times* story published on Oct. 5, “Wilson Tears Into Brown on Issue of Illegal Immigration,” Wilson said he found it remarkable that Brown believed undocumented immigrants weren’t contributing to the state’s ills. In the same story, Roy Behr, policy director for Brown’s campaign, backpedaled from Brown’s statement that undocumented immigration was “wrongly seen as a cause” of the problems she cited:

“Of course as she recognized throughout the speech, illegal immigration does contribute to these problems,” Behr said.

“But to hear some speak of it, illegal immigration was the sole cause.”

From then on, Brown argued that although she agreed with Wilson that undocumented immigration was a problem, she disagreed with him on what should be done about it. In a November debate with Wilson on undocumented immigration that was nationally televised on “Good Morning America,” Brown argued that the undocumented came to the United States for jobs, not social services, which was why she supported employer sanctions. She also critiqued Wilson’s idea of eliminating educational and health care services for the undocumented, warning that taking children out of school would point them toward criminal activity.

This debate also featured a challenge to the “immigrants are a problem” viewpoint from state Insurance Commissioner John Garamendi, who lost to Brown in 1994 in the primary race to determine the Democratic candidate for governor. According to the *Times*’ Nov. 13, 1993 article on the debate, Garamendi argued that the way to slow undocumented immigration was to more strictly enforce wage, safety and tax laws that, he claimed, Republican administrations had ignored in hopes of creating a pool of cheap labor. Thus, while Brown and Wilson took the viewpoint that the undocumented were causing a problem by taking jobs and social services, Garamendi’s focus was on the exploitation of undocumented workers by U.S. businesses. This was the last time in *L.A. Times* coverage that an elite California or national politician would challenge the “undocumented

immigrants are the problem” concept until after Proposition 187 was approved in November 1994.

Thus, by November 1993 – two months before 187 supporters began the petition drive to put their initiative on the ballot -- President Clinton and the elite California politicians who would lead the debate on 187 agreed that California had an illegal immigration problem and had already taken sides on how to solve it. Both Democrats and Republicans agreed that the federal government should cover more of the cost of serving the undocumented (although Clinton wouldn’t commit to picking up the whole tab). However, Republican Wilson, who would become the leading spokesman for 187, argued that undocumented immigrants came to California for social services that the state couldn’t afford to provide, and that the only way to keep them from coming was to eliminate those services. On the other hand, the Democrats – Clinton, Feinstein and Brown – thought that the best way to stop illegal immigration was improving border security and toughening enforcement of immigration laws. They also warned against solutions that might lead to a backlash against all immigrants. As 1994 progressed, this debate would resume with renewed force as the state of California weighed the pros and cons of Proposition 187.

Newspaper Discourse

In the summer and fall of 1993, the topic of undocumented immigration was hotly debated in the pages of the *L.A. Times* by politicians,

interest groups, academics and concerned citizens. For much of this time period, at least some elites were unclear about what their position on undocumented immigration was going to be, and non-elites were allowed to challenge the “immigrants are the problem” idea to a much more significant extent than they were when the 187 debate began in 1994. From August to November, 1993, the *Times* ran four page-one news stories questioning whether immigrants were harming the economy, suggesting that in fact the undocumented were being used as scapegoats for the state’s economic woes and reminding readers that such scapegoating of a predominantly non-white population had occurred repeatedly throughout the 20th century. In addition, both Republican and Democratic politicians espousing the “undocumented immigrants are a problem” viewpoint were challenged by non-elites to a much more significant extent than they were during the 187 debate the following year.

In an Aug. 13 story, “Studies Challenge View That Immigrants Harm Economy,” *Times* reporter Patrick Lee states in his lead that “a growing body of research challenges the popularly held view that immigrants are damaging California’s much-battered economy.” According to the article, these studies find little evidence to support the arguments that immigrants take jobs from native-born workers in general and that immigrants lower wages for native-born workers. In all, the findings argue that immigration over the long term is a positive force that helps drive the state’s and nation’s growth. A Sept. 6 article, “State Puts New Edge on Immigration Debate,” focuses on the widespread anger undocumented immigration is generating

around the country, and states that according to polls, most Americans believe illegal immigration is out of control. As a result, the article continues, immigrant rights groups “are afraid that the angry, frustrated mood might translate into laws that will codify discrimination and divert attention from more onerous economic problems in favor of an easy target: the illegal immigrant without a vote.” The story goes on to describe a news conference in which these groups pointed out that the scapegoating of immigrants had also occurred in the 1930s, the 1950s and the 1970s. On Nov. 14, the *Times* began a series of articles, “The Great Divide: Immigration in the 1990s.” The first article, “Hospitality Turns Into Hostility,” states in its fourth paragraph: “California has followed a schizophrenic pattern of welcoming immigrants at times of economic need, then turning against them, either when the economy soured or the ranks of newcomers reached critical mass.” Later, the article paints a bleak picture of the current economy:

...two decades of stagnant hourly wages and family incomes; an estimated 2 million workers annually displaced from their jobs; a growing trend toward corporate downsizing and the replacement of full-time with part-time work, and a widespread sense of financial insecurity and economic squeeze in the middle class.

This anxious economic environment, combined with the end of the Cold War, is inspiring a new wave of defensive nationalism...

The article also connects the cycle of scapegoating immigrants to race:

No single factor explains the volatility of California's reaction to immigrants. One key, though, may be that California throughout its history has faced integrating an immigrant population that is primarily non-white. And those racial differences have intermingled explosively with economic anxieties when boom turned to bust...

On Nov. 30, the *Times* ran the last article in its "Great Divide" series, "Polarization Marks Debate on Immigration Policy." It reiterates Garamendi's argument that the government should hire more inspectors to enforce existing wage, hour and safety laws, thus compelling employers to clean up working conditions that make some jobs less attractive to citizens than to the undocumented. It also questions whether California's problem is really immigration: "If I were addressing the problem," says Richard Rothstein, a Los Angeles-based research associate at the Economic Policy Institute, "I would forget about the immigration problem and start to do something about creating jobs."

Also, in articles focusing on elite viewpoints on handling immigration, non-elite challenges to the "immigrants are the problem" discourse were covered more extensively than they would be during the 187 debate in 1994. In a July 18 article, "Feinstein Raises Immigration Profile," immigrant rights activists are given several paragraphs to challenge Feinstein. One of their main concerns is Feinstein's comment in her June op-ed piece in the *Times* that 1.3 million Californians were out of work and 1.3 million undocumented immigrants had settled in California. According to these activists, the clear implication was that immigrants were pushing citizens out of jobs:

“We let it be known that we were very disappointed and concerned with the piece and the implications of where she was heading with the issue,” said Susan Alva, coordinator of the immigration and citizenship project for the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles. “We made it clear to her aides that, while there may be some points that we may not necessarily disagree with, she seems to be slipping into the anti-immigrant, xenophobic kind of mood and seeking to appease that interest group.”

The “immigrants are the problem” discourse was challenged even more vigorously the following month. In the Aug. 10 article in which Wilson calls for denial of citizenship to children of the undocumented and the denial of health and education benefits to those immigrants, authors Bill Stall and Patrick McDonnell tell us that critics likened Wilson’s comments to the nativist movements of the 19th and early 20th centuries. According to Charles Wheeler, directing attorney for the National Immigration Law Center, “The governor is using this as a convenient distraction from the real problems facing California: global recession, rising crime, a shrinking tax base etc.” State Sen. Art Torres added that illegal immigration was a problem because of U.S. employers who hired undocumented immigrants. “The issue of citizenship is a red herring that clouds the real issue, which the governor is trying to hide, and that is he doesn’t want to go after his friends in big business or in agriculture because that’s where the real problem is,” Torres said.

Racial discourse

Given that the vast majority of undocumented immigrants were non-white, the increasing tendency of Californians to blame them for the state's social problems constituted a significant racial discourse in the summer and fall of 1993.

In the *L. A. Times* coverage, however, this debate was framed as “Are undocumented immigrants a problem?” As discussed above, in the summer and fall of 1993 both elites and non-elites questioned to what extent undocumented immigration was a serious problem for the state. During this period, the newspaper ran a page-one story with a headline contesting the “immigrants are a problem” idea: “Studies Challenge View That Immigrants Harm Economy,” which ran on Aug. 13. No such story ran during the Proposition 187 debate in 1994. Even in stories focusing on an elite politician espousing the “immigrants are a problem” viewpoint, non-elites were allowed to challenge that idea to a much greater extent than during Prop. 187 coverage. For example, as discussed above, in the Aug. 10 article, “Wilson Urges Stiff Penalties to Deter Illegal Immigrants,” his non-elite challengers Charles Wheeler and Art Torres are mentioned by name and quoted directly. During 187 coverage, in stories focusing on elite concerns about the “illegal immigration problem,” this position was either not challenged at all or the challenge was attributed to anonymous “critics” who typically weren’t quoted.

However, by November 1993 the elite politicians who would lead the debate on 187 agreed that undocumented immigrants *were* a problem and challenges to that position were increasingly marginalized. For example, in the Nov. 13 article on the Brown-Wilson debate on undocumented immigration, both Brown and Wilson indicate they believe undocumented immigrants are a problem. As mentioned before, this position is challenged by John Garamendi, running against Brown for the Democratic gubernatorial nomination. However, his position, that Republicans want the undocumented here as a pool of cheap labor, is relegated to the final paragraph of the story, and he isn't quoted directly. Significantly, Garamendi lost in the Democratic primary, and during 187 coverage both Democratic and Republican elites adhered to the "immigrants are the problem" position.

Overview of Proposition 187

On Jan. 11, 1994, a group of Californians concerned about undocumented immigration kicked off a petition drive to place on the November election ballot a proposal called the Save Our State (SOS) initiative. Its co-authors were Alan Nelson, Immigration and Naturalization Service commissioner under President Ronald Reagan, and Harold Ezell, INS chief for the western states from 1983-1989. Once placed on the ballot, the initiative became known as Proposition 187. Under its provisions, undocumented immigrants were banned from attending public schools, colleges and universities. School administrators were required to report students and parents suspected of being in the United States illegally. The

measure also denied non-emergency health care to those who couldn't prove legal status, including prenatal and postnatal services. Although federal and state law already barred the undocumented from most major benefits, such as welfare and unemployment insurance, 187 eliminated a number of other state and locally funded programs for troubled youths, the elderly, the blind and others with special needs. State, city and county law enforcement authorities were obligated to question arrestees about their immigration status and report suspected undocumented immigrants to the INS. 187 also created new state felonies and stiffened penalties for the use of fraudulent documents to prove residency.

Phase One (Jan. 12, 1994-June 24, 1994)

Elite Discourse

Although Pete Wilson's stand on immigration was cited in one of the stories, neither Wilson or any of the other elite politicians who led the pre-SOS debate over undocumented immigration into California – President Clinton, Sen. Barbara Boxer, Sen. Dianne Feinstein and State Treasurer Kathleen Brown --- were quoted in the Phase One sample of the *Times*' coverage. However, Wilson and Brown both commented on SOS in other *Times* stories that ran during the Phase One time period. Their statements reflected viewpoints expressed during the pre-SOS debate: Wilson was concerned about the cost of illegal immigration, while Brown warned of a backlash against immigrants.

On May 26, Pete Wilson made a lobbying trip to Washington to persuade the federal government to reimburse California the \$3.1 billion that, according to the governor, the state was spending annually on undocumented immigrants. According to the *Times*' May 27 story, Wilson was counting on the money to "fill a \$3.1 billion hole" in his proposed 1994-1995 budget, an argument that supported his 1993 claim that not only was California unable to afford the costs of providing services for undocumented immigrants, those immigrants were eroding the quality of life in the state. When asked about the SOS initiative, he told a *Times* reporter that he didn't envision the proposal resulting in children being kicked out of school. Instead, he said, the measure would "probably provoke" a lawsuit to test the constitutionality of a 1982 U.S. Supreme Court decision, *Plyler vs. Doe*, which stipulates that U.S.-born children of undocumented parents have the right to public education. "We would be delighted to see a test of that kind," he said. Here, Wilson clearly is questioning the fairness of requiring states to educate the children of the undocumented, just as he had a year earlier. In August 1993 Wilson proposed denying educational benefits to undocumented immigrants, arguing that the cost of providing services to the undocumented was jeopardizing the quality of services for legal residents.

Wilson's Democratic challenger for governor, Kathleen Brown, was the first candidate in California's major electoral contests to take a position on 187. According to the *Times*' May 27 article on Wilson's lobbying trip to Washington, Brown had come out strongly against the initiative, calling it "mean-spirited and dangerous." On June 2, during a bus tour a few days

before her victory in the Democratic primary, Brown told reporters that SOS was harshly divisive. “People are so scared today,” she said in a *Times* article June 3. “People are so easily able to blame other people and find scapegoats in this.” Her concern about divisiveness reflects a comment she made in September 1993 (mentioned earlier), when she warned of a racial backlash against the foreign-born.

Newspaper Discourse

The first article in the Phase One sample was the first article the *Los Angeles Times* ran on Proposition 187: “Drive Begins for Law Curtailing Services to Illegal Immigrants.” Appearing on Jan. 12, 1994, it announces that an immigration reform group is beginning a petition drive to place on the November ballot a proposal called the Save Our State (SOS) initiative, which would deny social services to undocumented immigrants. The short article’s one quote is from initiative co-author Harold Ezell: “California is in big trouble due to illegal immigration. We can do a lot to make it so uncomfortable that people who want to come here illegally know they cannot survive.” The last sentence of the article states, “Immigrant rights groups have argued that it is jobs, not public services, that draw illegal immigrants to the United States.” These were two major arguments of the 187 debate: the pro-187 group saying that denial of services would pressure the undocumented to leave, and those opposed arguing that because the undocumented come for jobs, not social services, the measure would do nothing to force them to leave, or to deter others from coming.

On May 17, the *Times* ran “Immigration Initiative Tops Signature Goal,” an article on the announcement by SOS supporters that they believed they had gathered enough signatures to qualify their initiative for the November ballot. This article has a more lengthy discussion of the pros and cons of the measure. On the pro-187 side, the article cites Wilson’s claim that the state spends \$3 billion annually providing services to the undocumented -- services that SOS would cut. (At this point Wilson hadn’t yet endorsed the initiative, but his campaign manager is quoted in the article saying that it was “highly likely” Wilson would campaign in the fall on behalf of the measure.) After mentioning that SOS had been endorsed by the state Republican party, the article cites the state’s GOP chairman, Cuban immigrant Tirso del Junco, who says that the undocumented “are taking jobs away from legal immigrants.” On the anti-SOS side, the article cites critics who call the measure intolerant and xenophobic. It also quotes Arturo Vargas, vice president of the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, who said the initiative could lead to discrimination not just against immigrants but also U.S. citizens of Latino descent: “If you’re brown, you’re going to be a suspect in this state.”

The third and final article in the Phase One sample, “Immigrant Initiative’s Foes Launch Campaign,” appeared on June 23. The story is about SOS opponents kicking off a campaign to put together a coalition of groups to fight the initiative. At this point, those opposed to the initiative included the California Medical Association, the California Teachers Association and the Roman Catholic Church. As befits the topic, the article

addresses anti-SOS groups' concerns first. Assemblywoman Barbara Lee (D-Oakland), head of the state Legislative Black Caucus, argues that the initiative picks on women and children, referring to the SOS provisions that would prevent the children of undocumented immigrants from attending school and prevent women from receiving prenatal and postnatal care. SOS opponents were also concerned that the initiative would lead to discrimination not only against undocumented immigrants but also against Latinos living here legally – including U.S. citizens. “What this initiative will do is create two classes of people: one who is suspect and the other who is not,” says Dean Tipps, executive secretary of the Service Employees International Union. In general, the article states, SOS critics believed the initiative would create an underclass of uneducated youths and lead to the spread of disease. The single SOS supporter quoted is the initiative's co-author, Harold Ezell. His first quote refers generally to undocumented immigration as an out-of-control “problem.” In his second quote, he says he isn't concerned about the efforts to organize opposition to the initiative; those efforts, he argues, will be overcome by citizens' concerns about the costs of undocumented immigration: “All the liberal open-border folks will get organized, and the middle-of-the-road taxpayers are going to say, ‘We've had it.’” Overall, the article states, SOS supporters believed that the initiative would force the undocumented to return home by cutting off social services.

As mentioned earlier, President Clinton and the California politicians running for the top statewide offices in 1994 – governor and senator –

weren't quoted in my sample of the *Los Angeles Times* coverage of Phase One of the Proposition 187 debate. However, the sample indicates that the *Times*' representation of the debate on the SOS initiative reflected the *Times*' presentation of the elite debate on immigration that pre-dated SOS. The most frequently cited argument in the Phase One sample was the viewpoint of SOS opponents that the measure was discriminatory, particularly against Latinos. Although at this point only Kathleen Brown had come out against SOS, Brown, President Clinton and Dianne Feinstein had warned since 1993 of a backlash against all immigrants, legal as well as illegal. Brown also had specifically warned against a racial backlash. The other major argument made by SOS opponents in the Phase One sample was that undocumented immigrants come to the United States for jobs, not social services, a viewpoint emphasized by Brown when she began speaking out on the immigration issue in the fall of 1993. The most frequently cited argument from SOS supporters was that the initiative would not only drive undocumented immigrants from the state, but also dissuade others from coming in the first place. This was an expansion of the argument presented by Pete Wilson as early as 1993. However, Wilson had said only that undocumented immigrants came for social services, and the state needed to cut off those services to keep them from coming. SOS supporters, on the other hand, promised results: if SOS was approved, undocumented immigrants would leave, and others wouldn't bother to come.

Although this sample indicates that the SOS debate in Phase One didn't add new issues to the elite immigration debate, it did bring greater

emphasis to certain aspects of the debate. For example, in the May 17 article, state GOP chairman Tirso del Junco says undocumented immigrants are taking jobs away from legal immigrants. Elites never make this argument explicitly in the *Times* coverage of their immigration debate pre-SOS. However, in the first paragraph of her op-ed article published in the *Times* on June 16, 1993, Dianne Feinstein states, “Today, there are 1.3 million Californians out of work...Meanwhile, there are an estimated 1.3 million undocumented immigrants in California.” Although it doesn’t specifically say so, the clear implication is that the undocumented are putting legal California residents out of work; as a result, Feinstein was immediately chastised by immigration rights and civil liberties groups. Also, although elites had criticized the initiative for victimizing children, California assemblywoman and SOS opponent Barbara Lee pointed out in the June 23 story that the measure was harmful to women as well. Unfortunately, the story didn’t say *why* women specifically were hurt by SOS; however, the May 17 story did explain that the initiative would eliminate postnatal care for undocumented women.

Racial discourse

According to the *Times*’ coverage, President Clinton and the elite California politicians disagreed on how to handle undocumented immigration, but they shared the viewpoint that California had an undocumented immigration problem. Similarly, according to the *Times*’ Phase One coverage of the SOS initiative, although SOS supporters and

opponents disagreed about whether SOS would be good public policy, they, too, agreed with -- or didn't challenge -- the idea that undocumented immigration was a problem for the state. The sources that so vociferously challenged the "immigrants are the problem" discourse in 1993 were either absent or marginalized. Given the fact that the vast majority of undocumented immigrants were non-white, this "framing" of undocumented immigration by the newspaper constituted a significant racial discourse in Phase One coverage.

This frame emerges in the first story in the Phase One sample, which ran on Jan. 12. While SOS co-author Harold Ezell states that California is in big trouble due to "illegal" immigration and that SOS will help force these immigrants out, SOS opponents argue that SOS won't work because "it is jobs, not social services, that draw illegal immigrants to the United States." Thus, the SOS opponents' position is that SOS won't solve the undocumented immigration problem, thereby leaving unchallenged the idea that such a problem exists. Similarly, in the May 17 article, the comment by state GOP chairman Tirso del Junco that undocumented immigrants are taking jobs away from legal immigrants also is left unchallenged, despite the fact that immigrant advocates a year earlier harshly critiqued Dianne Feinstein for making what they felt was a similar argument. In addition, although SOS opponent and MALDEF vice president Arturo Vargas states in the article that he believes the initiative could lead to "widespread discrimination" against U.S. Latinos, he also is quoted as referring to undocumented immigration as a "problem." In the third and final Phase One

article, which ran on June 23, California Assemblywoman Barbara Lee, the head of the Legislative Black Caucus, states, “This initiative picks on women and children rather than dealing with the economic reasons people come to the U.S. illegally.” Here again, the underlying message is that although there is an immigration problem, SOS won’t solve it.

In its May 17 story on the SOS initiative, the *L.A. Times* cites Pete Wilson’s estimate that undocumented immigration costs California \$3 billion a year. Wilson’s estimate is questioned by anonymous “critics” who argue that it ignores the economic activity and tax revenue generated by undocumented immigrants. This critical challenge is significant, because it’s the only time in the Phase One sample that any of the sources used by the *Times* raise the possibility that perhaps undocumented immigration isn’t as much of a “problem” as everyone else in the *Times* coverage seems to think.

Phase Two (June 25, 1994 – Oct. 20, 1994)

Elite Discourse

With election campaigns heating up after Labor Day, the *Times*’ Phase Two coverage of Proposition 187 (as it was now officially known) contained significantly more comments by elite officials. In fact, two of the 10 stories in the sample focused on elite commentary on 187, and five of the stories included quotes and viewpoints from elites. In the first of those stories, “Wilson Would Expel Illegal Immigrants From Schools,” which ran on Sept. 16, Pete Wilson says he would favor expelling undocumented

immigrants from public schools if the U.S. Supreme Court allows it. “We can’t educate every child from here to Tierra del Fuego,” Wilson tells reporters at a press conference in the state Capitol. His challenger, Kathleen Brown, says in response that removing children from the schools would likely result in “more trouble, more gangs, more guns, more graffiti and more cost to the taxpayers.” A month later, on the same day that 70,000 people march in downtown Los Angeles to protest Proposition 187 and burn the governor’s image in effigy, Wilson says he blames undocumented immigrants for costing the state billions of dollars in services that should be reserved for legal residents. “I say we should end those services to illegal immigrants,” Wilson tells an audience of 400 retirees on Oct. 16. “We are...rewarding people for violating U.S. law.”

Federal officials also began commenting publicly on 187 during Phase Two. In the second of two stories focusing primarily on elites, two prominent Republicans and a ranking Clinton Administration official came out against the proposition. “Kemp, Bennett and INS Chief Decry Prop. 187,” which ran Oct. 19, quotes a joint statement released by former Republican cabinet secretaries Jack Kemp and William Bennett arguing that 187 is unconstitutional, contrary to conservative principles and likely to encourage discrimination against ethnic minorities:

“Charging teachers and nurses with the duty of reporting people they suspect to be illegal immigrants is profoundly anti-conservative; it relies on a highly intrusive Big Brother approach,” Kemp and Bennett wrote.

They added: “It is also a mandate for ethnic discrimination. Does anyone seriously doubt that Latino children named Rodriguez would be more likely to ‘appear’ to be illegal than Anglo children named, say, Jones?”

In the same article, Doris Meissner, commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, says in Los Angeles that 187 is based on a faulty premise: that social welfare benefits act as a magnet for illegal immigrants:

“We do not believe that the proposition is an effective way of enforcing the law against illegal aliens,” she said at a news conference. “The incentives for illegal immigration are to work in the United States, not to sign up for welfare.”

Meissner endorses a two-pronged strategy to reduce undocumented immigration, stressing enhanced border enforcement and stepped-up efforts to ensure that those here illegally do not find work. In response, H.D. Palmer, a spokesman for Pete Wilson, calls Meissner’s comments part of a “blatant pattern” by the Clinton Administration to use immigration issues to rescue the flagging gubernatorial campaign of Kathleen Brown.

Also weighing in on the issue was U.S. Education Secretary Richard W. Riley. According to an overview of the proposition that ran on Aug. 10, Riley had written that Proposition 187 could jeopardize California’s ability to receive federal education money because of conflicts between the measure’s provisions and federal privacy, non-discrimination and procedural requirements. This opinion, new to the debate, became a major argument put forth by 187 opponents in the final weeks of the election campaign.

The elite viewpoint cited most frequently in Phase Two coverage was Wilson's argument that California couldn't afford to educate the children of the undocumented. It made its most prominent appearance in the Sept. 16 article focusing on Wilson. The governor had stated in May that he supported 187 because he thought it would provoke a test of the 1982 Supreme Court decision prohibiting states from denying undocumented immigrants an education. On Sept. 16, the day before he officially endorsed 187 at the Republican state convention in San Diego, he added that if that decision were overturned, he would favor expelling the children of the undocumented from public schools. The reason he gave for this position was the same reason he had given publicly since August 1993 (five months prior to the launching of the SOS petition drive) for his opposition to educating these children: the state couldn't afford to keep them in school. Wilson's other major argument during Phase Two was that illegal immigration was unfairly draining U.S. tax dollars, another theme he had been addressing in *Times* stories since 1993.

The major elite arguments against 187 in Phase Two were made by three newcomers to the debate – Republicans Jack Kemp and William Bennett and a leading Clinton Administration official, INS chief Doris Meissner. All three argued that the best way to stop illegal immigration was to improve border security and to crack down on fraudulent immigration documents to prevent the undocumented from finding work. These positions aligned them with California gubernatorial candidate Kathleen Brown, who had been making these same arguments for the previous year.

Newspaper Discourse

The first article in the Phase Two sample, appearing on Aug. 10, was the most comprehensive the paper had yet done: “Prop. 187 Turns Up Heat in U.S. Immigration Debate.” It was also the first page-one story the *Times* had run on the subject. The first paragraph indicates why the paper felt 187 deserved more prominent coverage. “Proposition 187,” states author Patrick McDonnell, “seems destined to join the pantheon of California initiatives that periodically reshape national debate.” The “heat” mentioned in the headline is reflected in the second paragraph, with a quote from an initiative co-founder addressing a “receptive” gathering in Orange County: “You are the posse and SOS is the rope.” Unfortunately, no context is provided to indicate more precisely what the speaker meant; nonetheless, the quote vividly (and disturbingly) evokes the image of a lynching. The racial aspect of who most likely would be “lynched” under SOS is referred to in the next paragraph. A speaker addressing the 20th anniversary ceremony of the Southwest Voter Registration Education Project warns the crowd: “Remember, there’s only 90 days left to save California’s Latinos!” The violent rhetoric continues on the article’s second page, with Ron Prince, head of the pro-187 campaign, explaining why it’s necessary to drive the undocumented from the state: “Illegal aliens are killing us in California.” The rest of the article describes, in much more detail than the paper had previously provided, the various provisions of the initiative and the debate over whether the proposition was a good idea.

The second article, “Prop. 187 Creators Come Under Closer Scrutiny,” which ran on Sept. 4, focuses on the people who came up with the proposition. According to the article, some of these people, like Tustin accountant Ron Prince, were avenging injustices they believed were committed against them by undocumented immigrants. However, Prince says in the article that the impetus behind his involvement was not his own painful experience with an undocumented immigrant but “the stories of all the people I have talked to” who said they had been harmed by the undocumented. Others, like Barbara Coe, believed that undocumented immigration had unfairly drained U.S. tax dollars. Coe’s involvement began with a trip to an Orange County social services office to smooth out a dispute involving an elderly war veteran’s public health benefits. According to Coe, a welfare agency counselor complained to her that undocumented immigrants were able to obtain the same services that were denied to Coe’s elderly friend. “I went ballistic,” Coe says. A third group, including political consultants Robert and Barbara Kiley, were being paid for their involvement in the campaign. Robert Kiley says in the article that although he and his wife were being paid, his involvement was based on his concern about such matters as tax money being wasted on the undocumented. “As a taxpaying citizen, I’m feeling pinches like everyone else,” he says.

Pete Wilson is the focus of the third article, the previously-cited Sept. 16 story “Wilson Would Expel Illegal Immigrants from Schools.” In this story, all those quoted are either elites (Wilson and Brown) or Wilson staffers.

In the fourth article, “Prop. 187 Is Sore Subject for Illegal Immigrant Students,” which ran Sept. 17, undocumented immigrant students at Belmont High, Los Angeles’ largest high school, say they have no choice but to come to Los Angeles to be with parents or relatives and that it would be difficult for them to get anything but a low-paying job if they couldn’t complete school. Principal Augie Herrera calls 187 shortsighted:

“We have to educate these young people,” he said Friday. “We have to teach them what we want them to learn here or they will learn what they think they need to know in the streets. This has long-range implications for our society.”

Many of the students say that even though they are here illegally, they have a right to a free public education because of the contributions their parents have already made to the economy:

“My mother baby-sits for a white family in Beverly Hills,” Anna said. “She is helping that American family. We buy things, we pay the taxes. And all I need is a chance to make myself better. It’s not like I want this for nothing. I will pay society back with good work.”

Many liberal Democrats supported Proposition 187, and their comments were the focus of “Prop. 187’s Support Shows No Boundaries,” which ran Sept. 25. A major reason for that support was the belief that the undocumented were unfairly benefiting from government assistance. In the article, Fresno resident Vanessa Quintero says that her frustration was fueled by the stream of Spanish speakers seeking directions to the welfare office

half a block from her home, some explaining they recently arrived from Mexico and didn't know the area:

“I have a heart. I am human,” said Quintero, a tax examiner who once worked in the Central Valley's farm fields. “But each time I walk out my door I think: ‘Oh, boy. Something has got to be done about this problem.’”

In Los Angeles, a “very liberal” Democrat supports the measure on ethical grounds:

“Entering the country illegally by definition is breaking the law,” said the Westside woman who, like many pro-187 liberals and Latinos, preferred not to be named. “To reward people for that with health (services) and public education is just ethically wrong...The law has to mean something.”

In a Sept. 26 article, “‘Prop. 187 Foes’ Has a Twist,” 187 opponents discuss their counter-intuitive campaign strategy: if you can't beat 'em, join 'em. Strategists for the leading opposition coalition, Taxpayers Against 187, concede that undocumented immigration is a major problem and that reform is needed. However, they insist, Proposition 187 would only make a bad situation worse. Street crime and disease could increase (from cutting off public education and non-emergency health care), the state could lose up to \$15 billion a year in lost federal revenue, and nothing would be done to improve border security. The consultants face a challenge in keeping all members of the coalition focused on their central theme. This is especially true for immigrant rights groups, considering that the “no” campaign's basic

message essentially demonizes the very people they fight to protect:

“We do have differences,” said Robert Almanzan, MALDEF’s community affairs assistant. “But we all have realized that (the effort to defeat) 187 needs a strong coalition of all Californians.”

Another key source of opposition to 187 came from the religious community, which was the subject of the Oct. 3 article “Clergy Struggles to Address Volatile Issues of Prop. 187.” The leaders of the state’s major religious denominations all came out strongly against the proposition. In the article, the Rev. Chester Talton, the suffragan bishop of the six-county Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles, is especially concerned about 187 provisions that would cut health and education services to children. “Jesus calls on us to care for the child,” Talton says. “As we care for the child, we care for Jesus himself.” Shunning this broad coalition were fundamentalist ministers like the Rev. Lou Sheldon of the Traditional Values Coalition. Sheldon publicly supported the crackdown on undocumented immigrants, remaining unmoved by religious appeals to “welcome the stranger.” “Illegal strangers are different than a passing-through stranger who needs a night’s lodging, food and clothing,” he says in the article. Meanwhile, rank-and-file clergy were faced with the dilemma of how to persuasively present the issue to their deeply-divided congregations. Ed Dunn, a leader of the Interfaith Coalition for Immigrant Rights, has an alternative approach:

“A lot of churches are still wrestling with this, especially ones feeling the economic crisis in terms of lost jobs and lower incomes,” Dunn said. “The temptation for some is to say there’s

not enough to go around. What we try to do is engage people in larger reasons for problems in the state. The largest corporations and wealthiest families have not paid their fair taxes, and therefore the immigrant didn't create this crisis."

In one of the largest mass protests in Los Angeles history, an estimated 70,000 demonstrators marched downtown in boisterous condemnation of Proposition 187 and its best-known advocate, Pete Wilson. The event was described by the Times the next day, Oct. 17, in a front-page article, "L.A. March Against Prop. 187 Draws 70,000." "This proposition is not against the illegal immigrant, it's against children," declares Salvador Alendar, a 32-year-old textile factory worker and Mexican native. It was a sentiment repeated by other outraged marchers and by dozens of speakers. "We've got to send a message to the rest of the nation that California will not stand on a platform of bigotry, racism and scapegoating," says civil rights leader Joe Hicks, executive director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. "Anyone who says the immigrants of California are not working and are on welfare is lying," says Ron Unz, the Silicon Valley entrepreneur who was defeated by Wilson in the Republican primary. As mentioned earlier, Wilson himself gave a speech the same day to a retirement community audience in which he blamed undocumented immigrants for costing the state billions of dollars in services that he thought should be reserved for legal residents. Ron Prince, pro-187 chairman, predicts that the march would bolster his cause by focusing attention on the undocumented immigration problem. "When people look at the issue, they understand the problem and they tend to support Proposition 187," Prince says. Despite the widespread opposition to 187 demonstrated by the march,

polls showed strong support for the proposition among likely voters, including many Latinos. Proponents say its passage would deter new undocumented immigration and force those already here to return home – a premise disputed by opponents, who say the measure would leave hundreds of thousands of youths without education while contributing to the spread of disease by cutting access to non-emergency health care.

On Oct. 17, as mentioned earlier, three federal officials came out against 187: former Republican cabinet members Jack Kemp and William Bennett and INS commissioner Doris Meissner. Their critiques were the focus of the Oct. 18 article “Kemp, Bennett and INS Chief Decry Prop. 187.” According to their joint statement, Kemp and Bennett oppose the proposition because they think it is unconstitutional and discriminates against ethnic minorities. In response, Joel Maliniak, a spokesman for the campaign against 187, says their statement demonstrated that opposition to the measure was broadening. But Harold Ezell, the former INS official who helped write the proposition, says in the article that he didn’t think Kemp and Bennett would change many minds: “Those two guys have been sucked in by the Democratic Party line. Clinton must have written their press release.”

A medical study released Oct. 19 predicted that passage of Proposition 187 would hasten the spread of tuberculosis in California because immigrants would be afraid of contacts with medical authorities.

According to the Oct. 19 article, “Initiative Would Hasten Spread of TB, Study Says,” the study found that under the laws of the time, most undocumented immigrants with tuberculosis believed that they were safe from deportation when they sought medical care. Even so, 6 percent of the undocumented with active tuberculosis told researchers they delayed care because of fear they would be reported to the INS. Researchers predicted that if a measure such as 187 were to pass, that percentage would rise, leading to the spread of the disease. In the article, Dr. Ralph Ocampo, president of the California Medical Association, a statewide organization of physicians opposed to Proposition 187, cites the study in criticizing the measure for attempting to put physicians in a conflict of interest position with their patients by requiring doctors to report people they suspect of being undocumented immigrants to immigration authorities:

“Using health-care facilities at all as a detection site is immoral and flies in the face of what the medical profession should stand for all over the world, which is that we take care of sick and injured people first,” said Ocampo, a San Diego surgeon. “If there is a question about legal status, let that be handled by the appropriate authorities but not by health-care professionals.”

In response, Pete Wilson says through a spokesperson that if the measure passes, he will continue to provide those services that are necessary to protect the public health:

“This is a problem that exists today and will exist in the future whether or not Proposition 187 passes or fails,” said

Leslie Goodman, an assistant chief of staff for Wilson. “We don’t know what the potential consequences might be.”

In the Phase One sample, elites weren’t quoted, and their opinions on illegal immigration were referred to only once. In Phase Two, elites (and their spokespersons) *were* quoted and their opinions were mentioned in five of the 10 stories in the sample. However, as in Phase One, most of the sources used in the sample were non-elites. Also as in Phase One, elite viewpoints dominated Phase Two coverage despite the preponderance of non-elite sources.

The most-cited argument in the Phase Two sample, as it was in Phase One, was that 187 would discriminate against racial and ethnic minorities. As stated previously, elites had been concerned about a backlash against immigrants prior to 187, and Kathleen Brown had specifically warned against a racial backlash. Their fears were proving to be well-founded; the sample shows that as Election Day drew closer, the anti-immigrant rhetoric was mounting. Also mentioned in half the stories in the sample was the concern that throwing the children of the undocumented out of school would increase the likelihood that they would catch contagious diseases or turn to crime. Since 1993 elites had expressed concern both that denying education to children of undocumented immigrants could make them more likely to commit crimes, and that in general, undocumented immigrants denied health care would be more susceptible to disease. By the time of Phase Two coverage, these two arguments had been combined, with critics arguing that 187 would leave children more vulnerable to both crime and disease.

The second-most-frequently cited argument in Phase Two coverage was the viewpoint of 187 supporters was that illegal immigration was unfairly draining U.S. tax dollars. This argument was the underpinning of Pete Wilson's comment in August 1993, "Illegal immigration is eroding the quality of life for legal residents of California, is threatening the quality of education that we can provide our children, the quality of care to our needy and blind, elderly and disabled." In May 1994, Wilson made the same point by claiming that the costs of illegal immigration had created a \$3.1 billion shortfall in the state budget. Another major viewpoint of 187 supporters was that undocumented immigrants caused neighborhoods to deteriorate. Wilson, at this point the only elite politician in California who had announced his support for 187, hadn't specifically made this argument. However, the 187 supporters who believed that the undocumented were causing neighborhoods to deteriorate clearly believed that undocumented immigrants were eroding the quality of life for legal residents of California. As the quote at the beginning of the paragraph shows, this viewpoint was one they shared with Pete Wilson.

The Phase Two sample also would seem to contain a dramatic example of how rising public anger over undocumented immigration influenced public discourse. When Jack Kemp and William Bennett, two nationally known conservative Republicans, come out against 187, proposition co-author Harold Ezell was able to publicly (and absurdly) accuse them of having been "sucked in by the Democratic Party line" without anyone challenging him.

Racial Discourse

The “immigrants are the problem” frame gained strength in Phase Two coverage, with 10 page-one stories in 16 weeks focusing on Proposition 187. Of the 76 sources cited in those 10 articles, only five challenged the “immigrants are the problem” frame, and their viewpoints were marginalized in the coverage.

The Sept. 16 article “Wilson Would Expel Illegal Immigrants From Schools” is a good example of how Phase Two coverage sustained the “immigrants are the problem” frame. As mentioned earlier, Wilson says in the article he would favor expelling the children of the undocumented from school if the Supreme Court allows it. In response the article cites Brown’s argument that throwing children out of school would lead them to crime, as well as groups who say they oppose 187 because it is “too extreme.” Neither of these positions challenge the idea that immigrants are a problem; they simply argue that 187 is the wrong solution. It’s instructive to compare this article to the one that ran in the *Times* on Aug. 10, 1993 (“Wilson Urges Stiff Penalties to Deter Illegal Immigrants”), in which Wilson called for denying educational benefits to undocumented immigrants. In that article the newspaper also cites critics of Wilson who argue that the governor is using undocumented immigration as a “convenient distraction” from the “real problems” facing California.

The strongest challenge to the “immigrants are the problem” frame in Phase Two coverage came in the Aug. 10 story, “Prop. 187 Turns Up Heat

in U.S. Immigration Debate.” Author Patrick McDonnell writes: “Lost in the fiery oratory, immigrant advocates say, are the many ways that illegal immigrants’ low-wage labor and tax contributions have benefited Californians and propped up the regional economy.” Implicit in the sentence is the idea that if undocumented immigrants are propping up the regional economy, they clearly are not responsible for causing the state’s economic problems. On the down side, however, this viewpoint is only allotted one sentence, it’s attributed to anonymous “immigrant advocates” and is buried at the bottom of the story’s 22nd paragraph. Another source who directly challenged the idea that undocumented immigrants were causing the state’s social crisis was Ed Dunn, a leader of the state Interfaith Coalition for Immigrant Rights. In the Oct. 3 story “Clergy Struggles to Address Volatile Issues of Prop. 187,” Dunn is quoted as saying: “The largest corporations and wealthiest families have not paid their fair taxes, and therefore the immigrant didn’t create this crisis.” Dunn is cited by name and directly quoted; however, he’s only allowed one sentence to challenge the frame, and his comment is buried at the bottom of paragraph 35. His comment also doesn’t include many far-reaching problems previously cited by the *L.A. Times* as influencing California’s economic crisis, such as two decades of stagnant hourly wages and family incomes; a growing trend toward corporate downsizing, in particular the state’s huge defense and aerospace industries, and the replacement of full-time with part-time work.

The most frequently cited viewpoint that contradicted the “immigrants are the problem” frame, mentioned three times in two stories,

was that children of undocumented immigrants had a right to public education because of the contributions their parents made to the economy. Although it doesn't challenge the "problem" frame as directly as the viewpoints discussed above, it clearly states the idea that undocumented immigrants are a positive force in the state, and thus implicitly not a "problem." However, the sources providing this viewpoint were all undocumented immigrants. Although it's laudable that the *L.A. Times* sought out the viewpoints of the undocumented during the 187 debate (as discussed in the next chapter, the *New York Times* coverage did not), the fact that no U.S. sources were found to bolster this argument undercuts its credibility. And, as with the other viewpoints, this one was buried deep in the stories in which it appeared. In the Sept. 17 story "Prop. 187 Is Sore Subject for Illegal Immigrant Students," this viewpoint appears in paragraphs 20 and 21; in the Oct. 17 story "L.A. March Against Prop. 187 Draws 70,000," it appears in paragraph 37.

Phase Three (Oct. 21-Nov. 8, 1994)

Elite Discourse

Elite viewpoints were more prevalent in the Phase Three sample than in the first two phases. In the Phase One sample elite viewpoints were cited once; in Phase Two, 15 times, and in the third phase, 22 times. A major reason for this was the fact that several elite politicians publicly took a stand on the issue for the first time during Phase Three, including at the state level senatorial candidates Dianne Feinstein and Mike Huffington, and at the

national level Secretary of Labor Robert Reich and President Clinton. Also, for the first time in the *Times* 187 coverage, elite viewpoints were cited more frequently than those of non-elites. Of the 42 viewpoints cited, 22 came from elite sources.

Another way in which elite viewpoints were given more prominence in Phase Three is that four of the stories in the sample focus primarily on elites, compared to two in the second phase. In fact, the first three stories in the sample all focus on the elite debate over 187. The first two stories in the sample cover the announcements by Huffington and Feinstein in which they declared for the first time whether they supported Proposition 187. In an Oct. 21 article, “Huffington Declares Support for Prop. 187,” the Republican candidate for U.S. senator says, “The people of California are sick and tired of paying for Washington’s federally imposed mandates while Washington ignores their federal responsibility at the border.” A day later, in the article “Clinton, Feinstein Declare Opposition to Prop. 187,” Feinstein says, “I know this could cost me votes, possibly even the election. But I simply do not believe it will work.” The article also includes President Clinton’s announcement at a White House press conference that he too opposes 187. Both Clinton and Feinstein said that the proposition could lead to increased crime by children denied schooling and the spread of disease in immigrants unable to obtain immunizations and other health care.

According to the Oct. 25 story, “Prop. 187 Rises as Key Theme in Top 2 Races,” 187 had emerged as the central theme in California’s

gubernatorial and senatorial races. With all four candidates having taken sides on the issue, the article speculates how the candidates will be affected by their stance. Analysts say that Pete Wilson, long a supporter of 187, was toning down his rhetoric to avoid alienating centrist voters. His opponent, Kathleen Brown, is seen as increasingly emphasizing her opposition to 187 as a way of clearly distinguishing herself from Wilson. And analysts think 187 might have less impact on the Senate race, in part because Feinstein has a “solid record on illegal immigration” and because she and Huffington have waited so long to make their views public.

In the Oct. 29 story “Prop. 187 Key to Getting U.S. Aid, Wilson Argues,” Wilson and a spokesman for his campaign say that a 187 victory would pressure Washington to compensate California for the services it provides to undocumented immigrants. The article also reports that with support for 187 declining in recent weeks, Wilson has been shifting the focus of his public comments from denying services to undocumented immigrants to who should pay for those services. Brown, on the other hand, has made her opposition to 187 the primary focus of her campaign.

Most of the elites who took a stand on 187 were opposed to it; not surprisingly, then, most of the elite viewpoints cited in the Phase Three sample were critical of the proposition. However, a study of the stories in the sample indicates that the differences between elite arguments for and against 187 were narrowing. For example, the most-frequently cited elite viewpoint in the *Times*’ Phase Three coverage was that 187 was

unconstitutional. In the Oct. 22 *Times* story on Clinton and Feinstein announcing their opposition to 187, the president says, “I don’t think as a matter of practice it’s a good thing to condition an election referendum, much less other elections in California, on a measure that even opponents say is unconstitutional.” In fact, 187 supporters *had* acknowledged since Phase One that the proposition was unconstitutional. As mentioned earlier, Pete Wilson had said in May 1994 that he thought 187 would probably provoke a test of the 1982 Supreme Court decision that children of undocumented immigrants have a right to public education. More significantly, when one compares how elite opponents of 187 talked about the issue in each of the three phases of *Times* coverage, one can see a “toning down” of rhetoric. In Phase One, Brown talks about 187 being “mean-spirited and dangerous.” In Phase Two, the most commonly cited elite arguments against 187 were that there were better ways to stop undocumented immigration. In Phase Three, elite opponents simply said the measure was unconstitutional, without going into the specifics of why, thus keeping the debate on a more abstract and less contentious level than it had been in previous phases.

The next most-frequently-cited arguments were the two leading viewpoints espoused by the elite supporters of 187, Wilson and Mike Huffington. One was that undocumented immigration had unfairly drained U.S. tax dollars. Although this argument wasn’t the primary one put forth by elite 187 supporters in Phase Two, it was the by far the most popular viewpoint expressed by 187 supporters overall during the second phase.

Thus, it's no surprise that Wilson and Huffington would emphasize this point in the days leading up to the election. The other leading viewpoint cited by Wilson and Huffington was a new argument for 187 supporters: that Washington had ignored border security. In the Oct. 21 *Times* article in which Huffington announces his support for 187, he discusses border security this way:

“...it is high time we send a message to Washington. The taxpayers of California are sick and tired of paying for Washington's federally imposed mandates while Washington ignores their federal responsibility at the border.”

In Phase Two, the border security issue was used exclusively by elite 187 opponents, who argued that the proposition did nothing to improve border security and that such improvement was necessary to slow undocumented immigration. The Phase Three comments by Wilson and Huffington would seem to be a response to that argument: that 187 was necessary because Washington *wasn't* improving border security. However, by acknowledging the importance of border security, these comments are another indication of the two sides of the 187 debate moving closer.

Newspaper Discourse

The *L.A. Times*' most extensive coverage of Proposition 187 came in this two-week period before the election. The Phase Three sample includes the 12 page-one stories on the issue the *Times* ran during this period. As discussed above, four of the articles in the sample focused on elites.

The first of the remaining articles, “Thousands of Youths Protest Prop. 187,” appeared on Oct. 29. In this story the Times reports that thousands of youths walked off campuses on Friday, prompting a tactical alert by police, tense standoffs with riot-ready officers and scattered reports of fighting. The Los Angeles police and county sheriff’s departments remained on tactical alert throughout the day. According to the article, school-based protests against 187 have been rising in number and fervor in recent weeks as the Nov. 8 election nears, while parents and leaders of the campaign against 187 have been trying to defuse enthusiasm for the demonstrations.

The unusual nature of the pro-187 campaign is the focus of the Oct. 30 article “Prop. 187 Backers Counting on Message, Not Strategy.” According to the article, 187 has gotten runaway support from Californians despite the fact that the 187 campaign is ill-financed, loosely organized and at times seemingly adrift. What 187 proponents are counting on, the article continues, is the widely-held perception that an “invasion” of illegal immigrants is causing economic hardship and eroding the lifestyles of U.S. citizens and legal immigrants.

On Oct. 31, the *Times* ran “Uncertainty, Lawsuits Would Greet Prop. 187.” The story gives an overview of lawsuits planned against the state if 187 were to pass. It also reports that hospitals, clinics, and government entities, confused by the proposition’s broad wording or concerned about its harsh consequences, had not yet prepared contingency plans to deal with the effects of the measure’s passage.

The consequences of voters approving 187 were also the focus of the Nov. 1 article, “Will Defend Prop. 187 in Courts, Lungren Says.” In the story, state Attorney General Dolph Lungren promises to defend the state against expected lawsuits if 187 passes, but also says that the provision gives him no authority to prosecute educators and others who failed to report suspected undocumented immigrants to federal authorities, as the initiative requires. “There is nothing in this (initiative) that suggests there is any criminal action to be taken by my office against someone who sends me inadequate lists,” Lungren tells reporters.

A Nov. 2 story, “State Counsel Questions Parts of Prop. 187,” focuses on the measure’s legality. According to the article, a report issued by the nonpartisan office of the legislative counsel found that denying public education to the children of undocumented immigrants not only violated U.S. law, but the California Constitution as well. In addition, a 187 mandate that police question arrestees about their legal residence status would violate constitutional guarantees of privacy, the report found. On the core issue of benefits, the legislative opinion found that 187 provisions barring undocumented immigrants from receiving taxpayer-funded social services and non-emergency health care didn’t conflict with federal law. However, the report states, some 187 provisions probably did clash with federal reporting and privacy guidelines, such as requirements that the names of suspected undocumented immigrants applying for welfare and Medi-Cal benefits be turned over to the INS. As a result, the report provides a legal underpinning for the assertion that California could lose billions of dollars in federal aid if 187 were implemented.

On Nov. 2, the largest student protest thus far against Proposition 187 was covered in a Nov. 3 story, “10,000 Students Protest 187.” According to the article, the protest was mostly peaceful, with only one report of significant unruliness – in Compton, where 12 arrests were made. There was no indication that the widespread walkouts had been organized by the formal anti-187 campaigns. In response to the walkouts, the Los Angeles Police Department went on a tactical alert. “Anytime you have large groups of people out – I don’t care whether it’s a protest like this or some kind of celebration on the beach – experience tells us the potential for some kind of a disturbance is always there, and we should be prepared for it,” says Lt. John Dunkin, an LAPD spokesperson.

A Nov. 4 article, “Town Rooted in Migrant Labor is Leery of Prop. 187,” focuses on the town of Parlier in the rural San Joaquin Valley. According to the article, little attention has been given to this valley, where legal and illegal migrants are the lifeblood of the economy and where a law requiring neighbor to report on neighbor could shred the social and economic fabric. “We provide a sanctuary for these kids,” says Noemi Flores, a kindergarten teacher whose mother recently became a U.S. citizen after years as an undocumented worker. “In one act, this proposition would take away all that security and trust.”

Finally, the Nov. 5 article “Police Fear Prop. 187 Will Crush Hard-Earned Trust” discusses the portion of 187 that would require police to notify the INS of the identities of all arrestees suspected of being

undocumented immigrants. The article cites “critics” who argue that the mandate would endanger police-immigrant relations by eroding the hard-won trust of immigrants. However, although law enforcement leadership typically say they oppose 187, rank-and-file officers aren’t necessarily against it:

“We check people’s driver’s licenses. Why can’t we check their other papers?” asked one deputy, a Latino, angered by what he said was a proliferation of illegal immigrants receiving welfare and other benefits. “My parents and grandparents came over for work. Now they come over for a free ride.”

For me, the most striking aspect of the discourse in the Phase Three sample was the dramatic decrease in the number of viewpoints expressed in these articles. Even though the Phase Three sample includes 12 stories, more stories than in either of the first two phases, only 42 sources were cited who expressed a viewpoint about 187 beyond simply saying they were for or against it. By contrast, 76 viewpoints were expressed in Phase Two, nearly twice as many. The most striking demonstration of this phenomenon is the fourth story in the sample, “Thousands of Youths Protest 187.” Although there is much discussion of interactions between student protestors and police, none of the sources cited in the article offers any specific reasons why they are for or against the proposition.

Also significant is the point mentioned earlier, that for the first time in the *Times* coverage of 187, elite viewpoints were cited more frequently than

those of non-elites. Of the 42 viewpoints cited, 22 were from elite sources. Given this fact, it's no surprise that elite viewpoints dominated Phase Three coverage, just as they did in Phase One and Phase Two.

The viewpoint mentioned most in the Phase Three sample was the argument by 187 opponents that educators and health care and law enforcement officials shouldn't have to become surrogates for the INS. This concern refers to the 187 provisions that required those officials to quiz people about their immigration status and report to the INS those they suspected of being undocumented immigrants. The issue was first raised in Phase Two coverage by 187 critics, most notably by teachers and professional organizations, but it received its most extensive attention when national Republican leaders Jack Kemp and William Bennett cited it as a major reason they were against the initiative. And in the Oct. 22 article "Clinton, Feinstein Declare Opposition to 187," the second article in the Phase Three sample, the president also expressed concern about these provisions: "If you turn the teacher and other educators into instruments of a sort of state police force, it's like bringing a Big Brother into the schools." Thus, although the sources quoted in the sample who shared this viewpoint were primarily non-elites, concern about this topic had been publicized earlier by national elite politicians.

The second-most-frequently cited viewpoint was the argument by 187 opponents that the measure was unconstitutional. The reason this was one of the major arguments cited by the *Times* in the Phase Three sample was

because of its support by elites. In fact, most of the sources cited who held this viewpoint *were* elites. As mentioned before, elite politicians were a majority of the sources cited in Phase Three coverage. This elite domination of Phase Three coverage is also reflected in the most-frequently-cited viewpoints held by 187 supporters. No. 1 was the idea that undocumented immigration was unfairly draining U.S. tax dollars; No. 2 was the concern that Washington was ignoring border security. As discussed above, these were the two leading issues for the elite 187 supporters, and because of their concern, these were the most frequently cited viewpoints of 187 supporters overall in the *Times* ' Phase Three coverage.

Racial Discourse

With Election Day just around the corner, the “immigrants are the problem” frame remained largely unchallenged in Phase Three coverage. As before, elite politicians, including those against 187, supported this frame either by not challenging it or, in some cases, overtly agreeing with it. For example, in the Oct. 22 article “Clinton, Feinstein Declare Opposition to Prop. 187,” Feinstein expresses empathy for 187 supporters:

“...No way do I question the sincerity of working Californians, for I’m as fed up with the situation as they (are). But I believe Proposition 187 won’t solve the problem, it’ll only make it worse.”

As in most of the other articles in the sample (and in marked contrast to the *Times*' 1993 coverage of the undocumented immigration debate), no one is cited in this story to challenge the "immigrants are the problem" frame.

The one exception is a Nov. 4 article, "Town Rooted in Migrant Labor Is Leery of Prop. 187." The story focuses on California's rural San Joaquin Valley, where, author Mark Arax informs us, "illegal immigrants from Mexico make up as much as 50 percent of the labor force, doing tough farm jobs that few citizens are willing to do." This statement implicitly makes the argument that the regional economy needs the labor that these immigrant workers provide. However, although we're given this information fairly high up in the story (the seventh paragraph) the subject of the article is the 187 provision that would force educators and health care workers to report those suspected of being undocumented immigrants. Arax reports that the result of this provision would be devastating to communities like the town of Parlier:

Scratch the surface and nearly everyone at one time, including the mayor, in this Latino community of 10,000 people is the product of an illegal trek across the border. Residents fear that if the initiative becomes law and school and health officials are required to report illegal immigrants, so much that is cherished in Parlier and towns like it throughout the farm belt would be threatened.

"I was born in Mexico and my parents came over illegally," said Leo Valdez, a third-grade teacher at Cesar Chavez Elementary School. "When I look at these kids, I am looking at me 23 years ago. And they want me to turn them in?"

With its focus on this 187 provision, the article marginalizes its challenge to the “immigrants are the problem” frame. Although it questions the wisdom of 187, the article leaves open the possibility that other “solutions” to the immigration “problem” might be more workable. In fact, the article informs us, even in Parlier, some residents agree that there *is* an immigration problem. According to a video store owner, a Midwestern Dust Bowl transplant, “...the difference between us Okies and these Mexicans is government assistance. We didn’t have it then.”

Summary

As discussed previously, media scholars such as Gitlin (1980), Hall (1982) and Hallin (1985) argue that mainstream media news coverage is dominated by the viewpoints of elite politicians. In coverage of social conflict, journalistic norms don’t allow for the endorsement of a specific elite viewpoint, but they do allow for the media to set the parameters of the discussion. The *Los Angeles Times* coverage of Proposition 187, as well as the debate over undocumented immigration that preceded it, are powerful illustrations of how that theoretical position works in practice.

According to Gitlin (1980) and Hallin (1985), the mainstream media only challenge elite viewpoints when elites themselves are doing the challenging. A good example of this is the *LA Times* coverage of the debate in California over undocumented immigration in the summer and fall of 1993. Despite the increasing concern about undocumented immigration

among the general public, California's elite politicians were ambivalent about the issue. Both Gov. Pete Wilson and U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein agreed the state had an immigration problem, but disagreed on how to deal with it. On the other hand, State Treasurer Kathleen Brown and Insurance Commissioner John Garamendi, positioning themselves to challenge Wilson in the governor's race, publicly questioned the idea that undocumented immigration was a problem. During this time period, non-elites were allowed to challenge the "immigrants are a problem" concept to a much greater extent than they were during 187 coverage. These non-elite critics were given more space in the newspaper and were much more likely to be named and quoted than during the following year. In fact, when the *Times* ran stories on elites offering solutions to the "immigration problem," they would sometimes balance these elite viewpoints with those of non-elites who challenged the "immigrants are the problem" position. During the Vietnam War, Gitlin (1980) and Hallin (1985) write, the media didn't challenge elite Vietnam War policies until elites themselves were challenging those policies. The summer and fall of 1993 would seem to be a similar moment. With elites challenging the "immigrants are the problem" idea, the *L.A. Times* felt free to do so as well.

By contrast, the *Times* coverage of the Proposition 187 debate in 1994 is an excellent example of how media coverage changes when elites are in agreement. By the time 187 coverage began in January 1994, the elite politicians who would lead the debate on 187 – Pete Wilson, Kathleen Brown, Dianne Feinstein and President Clinton – agreed that immigration

was a problem, but disagreed about how to solve it. With elites in agreement about the immigration problem, the “immigrants are the problem” frame was perpetuated by the *Times*’ 187 coverage throughout 1994. The issue was presented as a debate between the pro-187 and anti-187 forces, both of which believed that immigration was a problem. Even though most of the sources cited were non-elites, they typically either accepted, or didn’t challenge, the “immigrants are the problem” idea. In such a context, the viewpoints of those who questioned the “immigrants are the problem” position were increasingly marginalized.

A comparison of the three phases of 187 coverage provides additional examples of how the “immigrants are the problem” frame was developed and maintained. One can see in the three Phase One articles that the frame is already in place. By the end of 1993, President Clinton and California’s leading elite politicians agreed that California had an immigration problem, but disagreed about what should be done about it. Thus, when a solution to the “problem” was proposed – Proposition 187 – the stage was set for newspaper coverage to focus on the debate over the pros and cons of whether the solution to the “problem” would work, without questioning whether the problem really exists, or, if it does, how serious it is. Interestingly, elite politicians are never quoted in Phase One, and cited only once: all the quotes in the sample come from non-elites. This is the most dramatic example in 187 coverage of elites setting the parameters of the media discussion. Another striking aspect of the Phase One sample is the lack of viewpoints challenging the “immigrants are the problem” frame.

Only once is the frame questioned – in one paraphrased sentence attributed to anonymous “critics.” This comes only a few months after several articles in the *Times* provided extensive critiques of the “immigrants are the problem” position. What had changed from the fall of 1993 to the spring of 1994 was where elites stood on the issue.

In Phase Two, the initiative that became 187 had become a national issue and had moved to page one of the *Times*. With the issue drawing increasing attention from the public and the media, more viewpoints emerged, including more that challenged the “immigrants are the problem” frame. However, the challenges to the frame were dwarfed by the viewpoints that supported it. As mentioned above, of the 76 viewpoints cited in Phase Two, only five were critical of the dominant frame, and all were given a subordinate position in the articles in which they appeared.

In Phase Three several factors combined to reinforce the “immigrants are the problem” frame. First, two elite politicians – Dianne Feinstein and Mike Huffington – took sides on Proposition 187. Although one was against it and one was for it, both agreed that the state had an undocumented immigration problem. Second, one reason for the increased media attention on 187 in Phase Three was the fact that with Election Day just a few days away, all the candidates for governor and U.S. senator were using 187 as their lead issue. As a result, a majority of the viewpoints cited in Phase Three came from elite politicians, all of whom supported the “immigrants are the problem” frame. One reason that a majority of the viewpoints cited in Phase Three were those of elites was the fact, mentioned above, that there

were dramatically fewer viewpoints cited in Phase Three than Phase Two. In the second phase, 76 sources gave reasons why they were for or against Proposition 187, compared with 42 in the third phase. With less discussion of the issues in Phase Three, it follows that there would be fewer challenges to the “immigrants are the problem” frame: in fact, the frame was challenged only once in Phase Three coverage.

Why would there be fewer viewpoints on 187 cited in Phase Three than in Phase Two? Scholars have noted that election coverage often focuses more on campaign strategy than substantive issues (for example, see Peer and Ettema, 1998; Ettema and Peer, 1992; Ettema and Pallmeyer, 1992). With the emergence of 187 as the lead issue in the election, much attention was given to how candidates’ positions on the proposition would affect their chances to win. Also addressed extensively in Phase Three was the social disruption aspect of Proposition 187. Two stories in the sample focused on rallies involving thousands of students who walked out of school to protest 187. Another story reported that health care offices and schools weren’t prepared to carry out the provisions of 187. A fourth story focused on law enforcement agencies’ concern that passage of 187 would erode relations between law enforcement agencies and immigrants because police would be required to report anyone they arrested who they suspected of being an undocumented immigrant. Gans (1980) found that maintenance of social order was one of the most significant “enduring values” in mainstream media news coverage. The media frequently write stories about social disturbances, Gans argues, with the emphasis not so much on what the

disturbances are about, but rather on the restoration of order by public officials.

Although its coverage wasn't nearly as extensive as that of the *L.A. Times*, the *New York Times* wrote several in-depth articles on Proposition 187 from May 1994 through Election Day. We now turn to an examination of how the nation's leading newspaper framed 187.

Chapter 7

The New York Times and Proposition 187

Introduction

To better compare the *New York Times* coverage of 187 with that of the *L.A. Times*, this chapter follows the same format as Chapter 6. The first section, The Road to 187, looks at how the New York paper covered the increasing concern among California's top politicians in the summer and fall of 1993 over what to do about increased undocumented immigration into the state. The next three sections address how the *Times* portrayed Proposition 187 during its three phases of coverage. Finally, the conclusion discusses the ways in which differences in how the two newspapers viewed the story affected coverage. For the *New York Times*, Proposition 187 was a national story. For the *Los Angeles Times*, it was also a national story, but a state and local story as well. Although much was similar about how these two papers covered 187, these differences in perception resulted in differences in the articles they produced.

The Road to 187

Elite discourse

The *New York Times* published an editorial and two news stories in the summer and fall of 1993 that focused on the issue of undocumented immigration

into California, one of which gives an overview of how the state's elite politicians stood on the issue. In its Aug. 25 article, "A Welcome for Immigrants Turns to Resentment," Gov. Pete Wilson and the state's U.S. senators, Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein, are portrayed as agreeing that the state had a serious immigration problem that it needed to fix:

Politicians ranging from conservative Republicans...to Democrats like California's two senators, Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein, have been tripping over each other to offer new ideas for controlling immigration. On Aug. 17, the two Senators toured the border near San Diego with Attorney General Janet Reno and saw the capture of would-be illegal immigrants. "We've got to control our borders," said Ms. Boxer in a recent interview.

Some days earlier, Gov. Pete Wilson, a Republican facing a tough battle for re-election next year, made a three-day tour of Southern California, demanding that Washington reverse what he called "the rewards" for illegal immigrants by ending their medical and education benefits and calling for a constitutional amendment to deny citizenship to their American-born children. Because immigration is a Federal responsibility, Governor Wilson says there is little the state can do to stem the tide.

The newspaper portrays President Clinton as also being concerned about undocumented immigration into California. In Its Oct. 4 story, "Clinton Offers Domestic Cures to Californians," the president says he favors tightening controls on undocumented immigration across the U.S. Mexico border. "If we permit our laws to be regularly violated and flagrantly violated, and impose those costs on a state that has the biggest economic problems, I think we run the risk of undermining support for immigration, which I think is a very important American value," he said. Thus, for the *New York Times*, elite politicians in 1993 endorsed

the “immigrants are a problem” discourse, but disagreed on what should be done about the problem. Unlike the *L. A. Times*, the *N. Y. Times* doesn’t cover the challenges to this discourse in the fall of 1993 by two elite Democratic politicians in California, State Treasurer Kathleen Brown and state Insurance Commissioner John Garamendi.

Newspaper Discourse

In the summer of 1993, amidst growing public discontent over undocumented immigration, California’s elite politicians came out publicly with solutions to what they saw as the state’s immigration problem. But, at least in the *New York Times* coverage, elite national politicians didn’t endorse the “immigration problem” idea until President Clinton commented on it in the Oct. 4 story cited above. During the time that national leaders were silent on the issue, the *Times* was more willing to challenge the “immigrants are the problem” idea than it would be during 187 coverage.

The paper’s most direct challenge to the “immigrants are a problem” idea came in an editorial published on Aug. 16:

...the growing enthusiasm of California politicians from both parties for making immigration a scapegoat for their state’s many social and economic ills is alarming and dangerous.

Leading the charge is Republican Gov. Pete Wilson, expected to seek re-election next year amid spiraling defense layoffs, relentless fiscal pressure, acute racial tension and growing anxiety about violent crime.

As the above excerpt shows, the editorial not only directly accuses the state's politicians of using the undocumented as scapegoats, it goes on to indicate what it believes some of the causes of the state's problems *actually* are.

The Aug. 25 article, "A Welcome for Immigrants Turns to Resentment," focuses on the increased concern over undocumented immigration not only among the general public but also for the state's elite politicians. However, the immigration "problem" idea is challenged several times in the article, first by anonymous critics: "...the argument by many experts that illegal immigrants do work Americans are unwilling to do, contribute more than they receive and add to the cultural mosaic is heard less frequently as the economy here continues its slump." Later, several critics quoted by name say that the state is unfairly blaming undocumented immigrants for its economic woes. For example, Harry Pachon, executive director of the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials, uses the state's declining defense industry as an example:

They are not talking about middle-class Asian engineers, but day laborers and gardeners who make life easier for Southern Californians. They are not competing for aerospace jobs. When Hughes and Lockheed move away, those were not undocumented workers. We are looking for scapegoats.

The "immigration problem" idea is challenged even more pointedly in a Sept. 19 article "Revisiting Immigration and the Open-Door Policy." The article's main theme is stated in the story's third and fourth paragraphs:

Once again, as in earlier periods of economic or political insecurity, questions are being raised as to whether immigrants are a source of

strength and vitality or a debilitating force that drives down wages. Once again, immigration's critics are saying that the newcomers are a burden, not a boon, overusing public services for which they do not pay taxes.

But the evidence put forth to support these assertions is questionable at best. Unlike the first decades of the 1900's, when the nation went through a similar influx and debate about immigration, there is now a significant body of research tracking immigrants from the moment they arrive. Most academic and government studies conclude that the presence of immigrants has some overall benefit; few say they harm the economy.

One genuine problem involving immigrants, the article states later, is that most of the taxes they pay end up in the hands of the federal government, with little of it returning to the areas where immigrants live. "The solution to that is to change the distribution policy, not blame the immigrants," says Julian Simon, a professor of business at the University of Maryland.

Racial Discourse

The *New York Times* ran two articles and an editorial in the summer and fall of 1993 focusing primarily on undocumented immigration into California. All three report that Californians are increasingly blaming undocumented immigrants for the state's problems. As discussed previously, given that the state's undocumented immigrants are predominantly nonwhite, this represents a significant racial discourse.

Like the *Los Angeles Times*, the *New York Times*' 1993 coverage challenges this discourse with the frame of "Are undocumented immigrants a problem?"

Overall, this coverage challenges the “immigration problem” discourse to a much greater extent than the newspaper’s 187 coverage a year later. As mentioned above, the most direct challenge to the “immigrants are a problem” idea was the Aug. 25 editorial “California Scapegoats,” which accuses California politicians, Gov. Pete Wilson in particular, of using the undocumented as scapegoats for the real problems facing the state. The central theme of the Sept. 19 article “Revisiting Immigration and the Open-Door Policy” also challenges the “immigration problem” discourse with its assertion that according to most studies, the presence of immigrants has some overall benefit. Finally, a page-one story on Aug. 25, “A Welcome for Immigrants Turns to Resentment,” focuses on the increasing anger Californians feel toward the undocumented. Although that is the central theme of the piece, the article also gives extensive space to several sources who critique the “immigration problem” discourse. In addition to anonymous “experts” who are the first to challenge the discourse, four other sources who are named and quoted also question whether immigrants are as much of a problem as their neighbors are claiming. During its 187 coverage, the *Times* never presented such an extended challenge to the “immigration problem” idea.

Phase One (Jan. 12, 1994-June 24, 1994)

Elite Discourse

The *New York Times*’ first article on Proposition 187, “Move in California to Bar Services to Aliens,” appeared on May 21. The article reported that backers of the SOS initiative had gathered 600,000 signatures in their petition drive, far more

than the 384,974 needed to put the measure on the ballot, but that they had to wait until the following week to determine if they had enough valid signatures to qualify. The main point of the initiative, the article states, is to deny education and non-emergency health care to undocumented immigrants. The state needs to cut back on these services, supporters of the initiative say, because paying for them is driving the state bankrupt and because undocumented immigrants don't have a right to the tax dollars of U.S. citizens. Without those services, says initiative co-author Harold Ezell, the undocumented would "go back where they came from." Opponents say the provision requiring health, school and law enforcement officials to verify the immigration status of those they serve would turn California into a "Big Brother state," and would unfairly target Latinos. They also say SOS wouldn't stop undocumented immigrants from coming to the United States, although the article doesn't report on *why* they think that.

None of the elite politicians who would lead the debate on Proposition 187 commented on the initiative in the story. In fact, at this early stage of the debate, none of the elites had taken a stance on the issue. However, the article does cite the positions on undocumented immigration taken during 1993 by Wilson, Feinstein and California's other U.S. senator, Barbara Boxer. Wilson, the article states, "turned up the heat on this issue last August" with proposals to withhold health care and schooling from the undocumented and to deny citizenship to children of the undocumented born in the United States. The article also reminds readers that Feinstein and Boxer also came out with proposals in 1993 designed to curb undocumented immigration and to offset its costs. Boxer called for the National

Guard to patrol the border with Mexico, while Feinstein recommended a \$1 border crossing fee to pay for improved border security.

Newspaper Discourse

With the SOS initiative on the verge of being approved for the November ballot, the *Times*' May 21 story gives an overview of the debate over the measure. Although elites hadn't yet taken a position on the initiative and their opinions weren't quoted in the article, their viewpoints still dominate the discourse. The first viewpoint stated in the article is Ezell's comment that if the state stopped providing social services to undocumented immigrants, it would force them to return to their home countries. In 1993 Wilson argued that the undocumented come to California for free social services, and that the state couldn't afford to pay for those services and thus should stop providing them. What was implicit in Wilson's argument – if you stop giving the undocumented what they come here for, they'll leave – was made explicit by Ezell and the other SOS supporters. The primary service that Wilson announced in 1993 that he wanted to cut was public education, and denying education to the undocumented was a centerpiece of the SOS initiative. However, to uphold such a law California would have to challenge the 1982 Supreme Court ruling requiring states to educate children regardless of their immigration status, and SOS was a promising vehicle to make that challenge, SOS leader Ron Prince says in the *Times* article. (Less than a week after this article appeared, Wilson told reporters in Washington that he would be "delighted" to see a test of the 1982 Supreme Court ruling.) Later in the story, Ezell complains about the burden the undocumented place on California taxpayers:

“It’s obvious we cannot assimilate all of the illegals in the world,” Mr. Ezell said. “How many can we educate, medicate, incarcerate and compensate? Just because they are here illegally doesn’t mean they have a right to stay here and a right to our tax dollars.”

In August 1993, Wilson argued that the money the state was spending on services for the undocumented was taking money away from needy U.S. citizens – thus unfairly draining U.S. tax dollars.

The most-quoted SOS opponent in the article is Arturo Vargas, a lawyer with the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), who argues that the measure will discriminate against Latinos:

...“I could easily foresee a situation where I myself – I’m very Mexican-looking, yet I’m a second-generation United States citizen – where I myself could be subject to demonstrating that I am a citizen of this country merely because I am brown-skinned, black-haired and have a mustache.”

Since mid-1993, elite Democratic politicians had been warning of a backlash against all immigrants, and Kathleen Brown, Wilson’s gubernatorial challenger, specifically mentioned racial discrimination as a concern. Secondly, although the Democratic Party hadn’t officially come out against 187, SOS opponents say in the article that the party would most likely differ with SOS on how to handle undocumented immigration, stressing instead border security and sanctions on employers. As the article points out, Boxer and Feinstein had been arguing for improved border security since 1993. And since the fall of that year, Brown had talked about cracking down on those who employ the undocumented. Finally, SOS

opponents object in the article to the provision that would require health, education and law enforcement officials to report to the INS those suspected of being undocumented immigrants. Although in its specifics this was a new issue to the immigration debate, a primary concern about it for SOS opponents was its potential for causing discrimination. As stated above, this had also been a concern of elite Democrats since the previous year.

Racial Discourse

As was the case in the *Los Angeles Times*, the emergence of the SOS initiative as a major issue created a significant shift in how the *New York Times* covered undocumented immigration into California. Before SOS, the issue was covered as a debate over whether undocumented immigration was a problem for the state. With the arrival of SOS as a major issue in the spring of 1994, the terms of the debate had changed. As far as the *Times* coverage is concerned, both sides agree that immigration is a problem, and the debate is about whether SOS is a good way to deal with that problem. For example, in the *Times*' May 22 article, SOS supporters say the measure is needed to protect California taxpayers from the service demands of the undocumented and to keep the state from going bankrupt. SOS opponents counter that the initiative is discriminatory and that better options are improved border controls and employer sanctions. The underlying assumption for the opponents is that although they believe undocumented immigration is a problem, they disagree with the specific solutions that SOS offers and support alternative ways of dealing with the "problem," such as border controls and employer sanctions. Thus, with the shift in frame from "are immigrants a

problem?” to “immigrants are a problem,” the voices of those who challenge the “problem” frame are marginalized. The article quotes one critic of the “problem” frame, who ridicules the idea that undocumented immigrants are causing the state’s economic woes:

“I blame the political leadership that has been all too willing to pander on this issue and allow people to believe that if we would just deny education and emergency health care to illegal aliens, all these lost aerospace and manufacturing jobs would return,” said Robert Rubin, a spokesman for the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights, based in San Francisco.

Although the article quotes Rubin by name, his comment is buried in the story (paragraph 18 in a 26-paragraph story), and no other information is offered to expand on what he’s saying. Instead, before and after the quote, the article focuses on the object of Rubin’s scorn, California’s political leadership, and their concern about undocumented immigration. Interestingly, the article also quotes MALDEF lawyer Vargas as saying that SOS won’t drive out undocumented immigrants because the undocumented don’t come for social services. What the article doesn’t talk about is the *real* reason, according to experts, that undocumented immigrants come: jobs. By leaving out the fact that undocumented immigrants come to the United States to work, the article avoids having to address the issue of the contributions undocumented immigrants make to the California economy. Recall that in September 1993 the *Times* ran a lengthy piece arguing that according to most studies, immigrants *benefit* the economy; in this article published eight months later, in May 1994, the whole topic of immigrants’ contributions to the economy is barely mentioned.

Phase Two (June 25, 1994-Oct. 20, 1994)

Elite Discourse

The *Times*' Phase Two story, "A Ballot Proposition Gives Voters the Opportunity to Influence National Policy," ran on Sept. 25, more than four months after the Phase One story appeared. By this time, not only was the proposition on the ballot, it had become a major issue in the governor's race as well as a significant issue nationally. Wilson, who had officially endorsed the proposition just a few days earlier, argues in the article that California can't afford to pay for social services for the undocumented and that 187 will pressure the federal government to do something:

"It's the two-by-four we need to make them take notice in Washington," he said of the initiative. "We will finally force Washington to accept responsibility."

Opponents argue that 187 discriminates against minorities, that it could cost the state billions in federal aid and that a better solution is improving border security and cracking down on employers who hire the undocumented. The spokesman for the leading anti-SOS group, Taxpayers Against 187, gives an overview of the opposition's stance:

"Sure there's an immigration problem," said Joel Maliniak, the organization's spokesman. "But the answer is to strictly patrol the border and strictly enforce laws about hiring illegals, not throw kids

out of school and their parents out of health clinics. If the Federal Government concludes 187 impinges on people's civil rights, the proposition will backfire because Washington will then cut off the \$15 billion in health and school aid that it sends to the state each year."

A major difference between the Phase One and the Phase Two stories is the presence of elite sources in the coverage. In May, none of the elites had taken a stand on 187, and no elite viewpoints on the issue were cited in the May 21 article. Four months later, with 187 emerging as a major issue in the campaign, most of the viewpoints cited in the story were those of elites. Most of the elite viewpoints cited were those of the two gubernatorial candidates, Wilson and Brown. (The candidates in the race for U.S. senator, Feinstein and Huffington, wouldn't take sides on the issue until the beginning of Phase Three coverage.) In the Sept. 25 article, Wilson argues that the financial drain caused by undocumented immigration made 187 a necessity, and that the measure would pressure Washington to take long-overdue action to stem the flow over the southern border. For her part, Brown says that 187 is unconstitutional and discriminatory, and that the state would be better served by improving border security and targeting employers who hired the undocumented. Joining her in expressing concern for border security is U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno, who criticizes SOS backers but falls short of taking a definitive position on 187. Wilson and other 187 supporters are "caught up in politics," Reno says, arguing that there is no immigration emergency.

Newspaper Discourse

With most of the viewpoints cited coming from elite sources, it's no surprise that elite viewpoints dominated the Phase Two story. The most frequently cited viewpoint was the argument by 187 opponents that the state needed to improve border security, a point made by Brown, Reno and Joel Maliniak, the spokesman for the leading opposition group Taxpayers Against 187. Brown and other state Democratic leaders had been making this argument since 1993. On the pro-187 side, the leading viewpoint was Wilson's long-standing argument that the state could no longer afford to fund social services for undocumented immigrants. The only new argument in the discourse is Maliniak's comment that 187 could jeopardize federal aid to the state. However, this reflects an earlier concern by elite Democrats that a solution to the state's immigration "problem" shouldn't violate federal statutes, specifically those involving human rights issues. The reason that opponents argued that California could lose federal aid by passing 187 was because the measure was in conflict with federal privacy and non-discrimination requirements.

Racial Discourse

With elites dominating the discourse, the *Times*' Phase Two story strongly reinforces the "immigrants are the problem" frame. Wilson and his pro-187 supporters warn that California must take drastic action against undocumented immigration to solve its economic problems. Not to be outdone, Wilson's opponent, Kathleen Brown, argues that she opposes 187 because it would make a

bad problem worse. And Joel Maliniak, the spokesman for the leading opposition group, Taxpayers Against 187, emphasizes that although he disagrees with SOS supporters on solutions, there's no question about what needs to be solved: "Sure there's an immigration problem," Maliniak says. Finally, there's no attempt in this story to challenge the "problem" frame. It's true that in the last paragraph of the story, Attorney General Reno says that there is no immigration emergency, but the article offers no explanation as to why she believes that. Instead, it implicitly questions her sincerity when it tells us in the final sentence of the story that "last weekend she made a personal visit to the state to announce the latest increase in border patrols." If there's no problem, why bother?

Phase Three (Oct. 21-Nov. 8, 1994)

Elite Discourse

The Phase Three articles didn't cite elite sources more frequently than non-elites, as was the case in the Phase Two sample. However, two of the six stories in Phase Three coverage had elite politicians as their central focus. The first appeared on Oct. 21: "Feinstein Faults Aliens Proposal." In coming out against 187, Dianne Feinstein acknowledges that a majority of Californians supported the proposition and says that her decision could cost her the election. Her opponent in the senatorial election, Mike Huffington, had come out in favor of 187 a day earlier; his endorsement, Feinstein says, "is the politically expedient thing to do." Feinstein says she opposes 187 because "it raises state and Federal constitutional issues and makes no provision whatsoever to deport illegal aliens and reduce their number." In the same article, President Clinton also says he has "concerns" about the

measure, in part because he thinks it is unconstitutional. (Although this article doesn't specifically say so, Clinton announced the same day that he too was opposed to 187.)

U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno came out publicly against 187 in the Oct. 28 story "Reno Attacks Proposal on Aliens, and Aide Questions Its Legality:"

Addressing this provision at her news conference, the Attorney General said: "It doesn't make sense to turn schoolteachers and nurses into Border Patrol agents. It doesn't make sense to kick kids out of school or not to give them immunizations."

The article also reports that the Office of Legal Counsel in the U.S. Justice Department believed 187 was unconstitutional because of its provision that would deny undocumented immigrants access to public education. According to the Justice Department, that provision was in most respects indistinguishable from a Texas law struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1982.

In Phase Two, the leading elite argument was that improving border security was a better solution to the immigration problem than 187. While border security was a longstanding issue in California that pre-dated 187, the most-cited elite viewpoints in Phase Three coverage focused on elements of the proposition that could be construed as being new threats to the social order. The first was that it was unconstitutional, a fact that even 187 supporters acknowledged. In the first article in the Phase Three sample, both Feinstein and President Clinton are quoted as saying that they are concerned that the measure is unconstitutional. According to

the article, the provision of 187 that has raised the most constitutional questions is the one requiring school and health officials to report to the INS anyone they suspect of being an undocumented immigrant. For their part, 187 supporters said they welcomed the fact that the proposition appeared to violate the Supreme Court's 1982 ruling, because they hoped it could be used to test that ruling. The other most-cited viewpoint in elite discourse was the concern that denying non-emergency health care to undocumented immigrants could lead to serious community health problems. For example, in coming out against 187, Feinstein warned that by cutting off non-emergency health care to illegal aliens, the state would run the risk of epidemics.

The only elite viewpoint cited in favor of 187 in Phase Three coverage was Pete Wilson's argument that California could no longer afford to provide social services for undocumented immigrants, an argument he had been making for more than a year.

Newspaper Discourse

In addition to the two articles cited above, the *New York Times*' Phase Three sample includes four other stories. The first, "Candidates Hedge Their Bets On an Immigration Measure," which appeared on Oct. 24, focuses on how the candidates in the senatorial and gubernatorial races are adjusting their campaign strategies as Proposition 187, although still riding a wave of popular support, declines in the polls. For example, shortly after Mike Huffington accused his opponent, Dianne Feinstein, of being politically "yellow" for supporting 187, his campaign

announces that it was not planning to make a major issue of Feinstein's stance. For its part, Feinstein's campaign says it is "not going to make a big deal of 187 from here on out." In the gubernatorial race, the Wilson campaign comes out with new ads that were much softer in tone than the earlier spots which invoked the specter of an immigrant invasion ("They keep coming!"). And his opponent, Kathleen Brown, although she says she welcomes the fact that national political figures have come out against 187, makes little mention of the proposition while campaigning.

An article appearing on Oct. 30, "In California, the Numbers Add Up to Anxiety," argues that although the principal target of Proposition 187 is undocumented immigrants, it is also a sign of growing discomfort with the large number of recent immigrants to the state, and especially to Los Angeles. What sets this group apart from immigrants past, the article continues, is race:

For more than 200 years, a time when Irish, Germans, Eastern Europeans and Italians arrived by the millions, there have been sporadic instances of nativist backlash, particularly at times of economic distress. But with assimilation, these earlier immigrants became part of a different group: white America. The latest migration is mostly Hispanic and Asian, and it has set in motion a jittery dynamic of cultural misunderstanding and racial tension.

Add to the mix four years of recession, and the result has been a general backlash against immigrants, as exemplified by Proposition 187.

As Election Day drew near, polls indicated that 187 was losing support. In the Nov. 1 article "Minorities Join California Fight," author B. Drummond Ayres Jr. writes that one reason for that is the efforts of the state's non-white

communities. A principal concern in these communities is the widespread belief that 187 is flagrantly discriminatory. Among those who share that belief is Miya Iwataki, a second-generation Japanese American who considers 187 to be a “constitutional insult.”

“During World War II,” she explained, “my father joined up like every good American to fight to save America and democracy. But my grandparents – because they had come to America from Japan, they were among those ‘suspects’ who were snatched from their homes and interned in special camps. I worry that the kind of anti-ethnic hysteria driving 187 is akin to the anti-ethnic hysteria that swept the country after Pearl Harbor.”

Finally, the Mexican government is also concerned about 187’s potential for discrimination, Tim Golden writes in the Nov. 3 article “Government Joins Attack On Ballot Idea.” According to the article, Mexican officials believe that the initiative would increase discrimination against all people of Mexican descent in California. Such discrimination, they argue, would be the “inevitable consequence” of the measure’s provision that teachers, social workers and others report any immigrants whom they suspect are in the country illegally.

The viewpoint cited most frequently in Phase Three coverage, mentioned at least once in four of the six stories, was that 187 was unconstitutional. Feinstein and President Clinton raised this concern in the first story in the sample, and it was invoked several times thereafter by non-elite sources. For example, 187 opponents say their primary constitutional concern is the provision that would require school, health and law enforcement officials to report those they suspect of being undocumented immigrants, and the U.S. Justice Department announces that the

measure's plan to deny public schooling to the children of the undocumented is similar in wording to the 1982 Texas law overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court.

The second-most cited viewpoint in Phase Three coverage was that 187 discriminated against racial and ethnic minorities. As mentioned earlier, elites had warned since 1993 against solutions to the immigration “problem” that scapegoated immigrants, and Kathleen Brown had specifically expressed concern about a racial backlash. Significantly, however, in this sample of the *Times* 187 coverage, which includes all the stories that focused primarily on the proposition, no elite politician either at the state or national level expressed the viewpoint that the measure was discriminatory. However, as it became increasingly likely that 187 was going to be approved, California's nonwhite populations were increasingly vocal about 187's potential for racial scapegoating, and the *Times* coverage reflects that concern.

The most-cited viewpoint of 187 supporters in Phase Three coverage was the same as it was in Phase Two – that California couldn't afford to pay for social services for undocumented immigrants. One of those cited was Pete Wilson, who had been publicly restating this message for more than a year.

Racial Discourse

Elites don't dominate the Phase Three discourse the way they did in Phase Two, but they don't need to: the viewpoints cited in Phase Three overwhelmingly reinforce the “immigrants are the problem” frame. As in Phase One, the frame is challenged only once, and that dissenting viewpoint is marginalized.

The tone is set in the first article in the sample, when Dianne Feinstein, in announcing her opposition to 187, tells reporters that not only will the proposition not solve the problem, it will make it worse. Feinstein explains, “It raises state and Federal constitutional issues and makes no provision whatsoever to deport illegal aliens and reduce their number.” Throughout the coverage, the idea that 187 “will take a bad problem and make it worse” is reinforced by non-elite sources. In the second article in the sample, “Candidates Hedge Their Bets on an Immigration Measure,” reporter B. Drummond Ayres Jr. writes:

Opponents of the proposition have conceded from the start that illegal immigration is a major problem. But they have argued that cutting off aid to undocumented aliens would be the wrong approach; they suggest stepping up border patrols and enforcing existing immigration laws.

Ayres returns to this theme in his Nov. 1 article “Minorities Join California Fight.” In the story, Ruben Rodriguez, who runs a bakery in east Los Angeles, is asked to give his opinion on 187:

“Passing it would be a terrible step backward,” he said. “I know there’s an immigration problem. But 187 is no answer. It’s just lashing out without rhyme or reason, and the people who will be targeted and questioned will be the people whose skin is not white, particularly Latinos and Asians. We can’t let it pass.”

Ayres also interviews Miya Iwataki, a Japanese-American woman who is organizing Asian-Americans in Los Angeles to fight 187. Iwataki is especially

concerned about the provision requiring state officials to turn in those they suspect of being undocumented:

“The word ‘suspect’ just sends chills all through me,” she said. “Am I to be treated different just because I don’t look like the white majority?”

However, like Rodriguez, Iwataki is also concerned about immigration. According to the article, “Ms. Iwataki said the answer to the immigration problem lies not in new measures like Proposition 187 but in effectively policing the country’s borders and punishing those who hire undocumented aliens.”

The “problem” frame is challenged once in Phase Three coverage. In the Nov. 3 story “Government Joins Attack on Ballot Idea,” author Tim Golden writes that the Mexican government has injected itself into the Proposition 187 debate, contacting anti-187 groups to offer support. In addition, Mexican president Carlos Salinas de Gortari has been publicly criticizing the proponents of Proposition 187:

“Local political interests in California tend to blame Mexican workers for that society’s problems,” Mr. Salinas said to loud applause in his annual state of the union address on Tuesday. “Mexico affirms rejection of this xenophobic campaign, and will continue to act in defense of the labor and human rights of our migrant workers.”

In this quote Salinas clearly expresses the idea that Mexican immigrants are being used as scapegoats for California’s problems. However, although this viewpoint is stated high up in the story (paragraph 4), it is never mentioned again. Instead, the

article focuses on the political reasons that Mexico, a foreign government, would want to intervene in a U.S. policy debate.

Summary

The *New York Times*' coverage of Proposition 187 provides a vivid illustration of the scholarly viewpoint (exemplified by Gitlin, 1980; Hall, 1982, and Hallin, 1985) that elite politicians dominate media discourse. However, an analysis of these articles also shows that the way that elites influence coverage is affected by how the newspaper views the story. For the *New York Times*, Proposition 187, and the coverage of undocumented immigration into California that preceded it, was a national story, in that it had the potential to shape national immigration policy. For the *Los Angeles Times*, 187 was not just a national story, but a state and local story as well. Although elites had a powerful influence over coverage in both newspapers, the differences in how these papers viewed Proposition 187 and undocumented immigration created differences in how that elite influence shaped their coverage.

The *New York Times*' coverage of California's debate over undocumented immigration in the summer and fall of 1993 is a good example of how coverage of this issue in the two papers was similar – and how it differed. Covering this debate from a national perspective, the *Times*' coverage focused on the concern over the state's immigration “problem” expressed by its major elected officials, Gov. Pete Wilson and U.S. Sens. Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer. The “problem” viewpoint was challenged by two leading state politicians, State Treasurer

Kathleen Brown and Insurance John Garamendi, who were potential challengers for Wilson in the gubernatorial race the following year. This challenge was significant enough to warrant coverage in California's major paper, the *L. A. Times*. For the *N. Y. Times*, however, writing fewer stories on the issue for a national readership, California's internal debate on immigration was not considered significant enough to include in its coverage. However, from July, when Feinstein first proposed her "solutions" to undocumented immigration, until October, when President Clinton expressed concern about the "problem," national elite politicians were absent from the *Times*' coverage of this issue. This opened a space in the *Times* for non-elite critics from around the country to challenge the "immigrants are the problem" viewpoint in California. Thus, both the *L. A. Times* and the *N. Y. Times* framed California's immigration debate in the summer and fall of 1993 as "Is undocumented immigration a problem?" However, they arrived at this frame for different reasons.

By the time 187 emerged as a national issue in the spring of 1994, the elite state and national politicians who would lead the debate on 187 agreed that California had a serious immigration problem. Thus, for the *N. Y. Times*, as for the *L. A. Times*, the frame for coverage of undocumented immigration into California changed from "Are immigrants a problem?" to "Immigrants are a problem." The key question underlying their 187 coverage was "Would 187 solve the immigration problem?" As a result, the 187 story was presented as a debate between the pro-187 forces, who saw the proposition as a solution to the problem, and 187 opponents, who said that 187 wouldn't work, and so the "problem" should be addressed in other ways. In this context, viewpoints that questioned the "immigrants are the problem" frame were marginalized or left out altogether.

Another way in which both the *L. A. Times* and the *N. Y. Times* supported the “problem” frame in 187 coverage was the decrease in viewpoints cited in Phase Three coverage. The *N. Y. Times* cited 10 viewpoints on the proposition in the Phase One story and 13 in the Phase Two story, but the six Phase Three stories averaged less than five viewpoints per story. Less discussion of the issue helps ensure that fewer challenges are presented to the dominant framing of the issue; in Phase Three, the “problem” frame was challenged only once. As discussed previously, scholars such as Peer and Ettema (1998) have found that in the media’s election coverage, issues are often slighted in favor of campaign strategy. For example, the article “Candidates Hedge Their Bets On an Immigration Measure” focuses on how candidates are handling 187 after polls indicate that the proposition is declining in popularity. Also, the *N. Y. Times*, like the *L. A. Times*, was concerned with how 187 would disrupt the social order, a concern that took attention away from the pros and cons of the proposition. The article “In California, the Numbers Add Up to Anxiety” argues that 187 is a reflection of the rising racial tension in the state. And the story “Government Joins Attack on Ballot Idea” reports that the Mexican government is angry about 187 and is working with the measure’s opponents to help defeat it. Gans (1979) found that one of the major “enduring values” in mainstream media news coverage was the maintenance of social order.

Despite this overall similarity in how the two newspapers covered 187, by looking more closely at the different phases of coverage one can see differences in how the two publications established and maintained the “immigrants are a problem” frame. Overall, a comparison of the two coverages shows that although

both newspapers marginalized challenges to the “immigrants are the problem” frame, the *L. A. Times* was somewhat more willing to challenge the frame than the New York paper. Both papers only cited one viewpoint that challenged the frame in Phase One and Phase Three; however, in Phase Two, the *L. A. Times* presented oppositional viewpoints five times, while the *N. Y. Times* presented none. This difference can be explained by the fact that for the *L. A. Times*, 187 wasn’t just a national story but a state and local story as well. Not only did the L. A. paper have far more extensive coverage, it had more reporters covering more angles and interviewing more sources than the *N. Y. Times*. As a result, alternative viewpoints had a greater opportunity to find their way into print in the *L. A. Times* than in the *New York Times*.

In addition, the way in which the “immigrants are a problem” frame was challenged differed from paper to paper. For the *L. A. Times*, almost all the alternative viewpoints supported the idea that undocumented immigrants benefited the economy. In the *N. Y. Times*, the two alternative viewpoints presented in the coverage supported the idea that undocumented immigrants were being used as scapegoats for the state’s economic problems. Again, this difference can be attributed to the different ways in which the two papers covered the story. For the *L. A. Times*, which viewed 187 as a state and local as well as a national story, important sources were immigrant advocates and undocumented immigrants themselves. In fact, the most-cited oppositional viewpoint in the *L. A. Times* coverage, that the children of the undocumented have a right to public education because of the contributions that their parents make to the economy, came from undocumented immigrants in Los Angeles. By contrast, undocumented immigrants

and immigrant advocates were entirely absent from the *N. Y. Times* coverage. Instead, the *Times*' oppositional viewpoints come from sources looking at the issue from a statewide and international perspective. In its Phase One story, the oppositional viewpoint came from Robert Rubin, a spokesman for the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights, a San Francisco-based civil rights organization. In Phase Three, the source challenging the "immigrants are the problem" frame was Carlos Salinas de Gortari, the president of Mexico. Both attacked California's politicians for using undocumented immigrants as scapegoats for the state's other problems. Covering 187 for a national audience, the *Times* wrote fewer stories and tended to rely more on official sources for "top down" explanations of what was going on. Both papers used local, unofficial sources, but for the *New York Times*, they were a choice; for the *L. A. Times*, they were a necessity. The result was that although both papers presented challenges to the "immigrants are a problem" frame, the challenges they presented were different.

However, in general, the way in which the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times* framed Proposition 187 was largely the same. In the final chapter, I discuss how this coverage connects to Omi and Winant's discourses of racial backlash. I also make suggestions for future research, and offer some reasons for hope that media coverage will improve in the future.

Chapter 8

Conclusions

Elite sources covered by the *Los Angeles Times* and the *New York Times* didn't agree on 187. However, by concentrating their focus on elite definitions of the issue, the two newspapers allowed these elite sources to set the parameters of the discussion. Also, the newspapers' focus on the elite identification of undocumented immigrants as "the problem" seems to resemble the backlash racial politics outlined by Omi and Winant in that it successfully marginalizes a predominantly non-white population without overtly stigmatizing them because of race.

Omi and Winant (1994) argue that one of the enduring legacies of the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s is that the principle of racial equality of opportunity has become so firmly established in mainstream political discourse that to publicly argue against it is to stigmatize oneself politically and socially. However, forms of racial backlash that have emerged in the last two decades allow their proponents to marginalize racial groups without resorting to the overt racisms of the past. For example, as mentioned earlier, Reeves and Campbell (1994) argue that the New Right, through its War on Drugs, blamed drug use and other problems of poor non-whites living in the nation's inner cities on the moral decay of poor populations rather than on the myriad social ills of the time. Thus, rather than describing inner-city residents as being deviant because they had black

or brown skin, they were described as deviant because of various moral failings.

According to Reeves and Campbell, the media's frame of the War on Drugs was largely shaped by this New Right discourse embraced by elite politicians across the political spectrum. Similarly, the coverage of Proposition 187 in the *Los Angeles Times* and *New York Times* was shaped by the discourse of California's elite politicians (both liberal and conservative) that focused on the predominantly nonwhite population of undocumented immigrants as "the problem." By framing the undocumented as deviant, this coverage helped perpetuate the elite "blame the victim" discourse that diverted public attention from other important issues facing the state, such as the fact that California was enduring its most serious recession since the Great Depression. It's also important to remember that Proposition 187 wasn't an idiosyncratic event, but rather the reappearance of a recurring theme in California, and U.S., history – the scapegoating of immigrants during times of social crisis. When one studies the 20th century immigration "panics" in the United States and their coverage by the mainstream media, one finds significant elements they had in common (the concept of "panic" comes from Cohen, 1972). All of them took place in times of intense social stress in the United States: the Great Depression in the 1930s, economic recessions in the 1970s and 1990s, and the anti-Communist "witch hunt" of the 1950s. In response, elite social leaders and major national institutions blamed undocumented immigrants for the social crisis, from local leaders like John R. Quinn, the county supervisor of Los

Angeles, in the 1930s; state leaders like Pete Wilson and Dianne Feinstein in the 1990s; the U.S. Congress, which created the punitive McCarran-Walter Act in the 1950s, and the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service in the 1950s and 1970s. These elites all employed a discourse of emergency in alerting the public to the dangers of undocumented immigration. For John Quinn, the Los Angeles county supervisor, the Great Depression would have been an insignificant downturn in business if not for undocumented immigrants. In the 1950s, INS officials made ominous allusions to a Mexican invasion of the United States: “If the entire Mexican nation wanted to move to the United States, there is little we could do to stop them.” For INS chairman Leonard Chapman in the 1970s, undocumented immigrants were stealing \$13 billion annually from U.S. citizens by taking their jobs, collecting welfare benefits and committing crimes. And for California Gov. Pete Wilson in 1994, the undocumented were driving his state into bankruptcy. Finally, all had plans to solve the problem. In the 1930s, 1950s and 1970s, the solution was forced repatriation and mass deportation. In the 1990s, it was cutting off social services (which, it was argued, would result in the undocumented leaving of their own accord).

For the media, all these factors would seem to have encouraged extensive, uncritical coverage. Each of these panics took place during a social crisis that, by itself, commanded media attention as a threat to the social order. In each case, social elites proposed solutions that, according to them, were vitally important to the national health (or California’s health, in the case of Proposition 187). According to Gans (1979), the restoration of

order is a key element of “social order” stories. Finally, the solution involved punishing a population routinely regarded as deviant by U.S. citizens. Simply by setting foot in the United States, these “illegal immigrants” were breaking the law.

Little research has been done on media coverage of these immigration “panics.” More in-depth analysis of how they were portrayed in the media would help answer some useful questions: Just how widespread was the “anti-undocumented-immigrant” frame? Was there a difference between the local, state and national press? Were there differences in the nature of these panics that prompted differences in the coverage they received? Are there differences in how undocumented immigrants were “framed” by the media? More specifically, how were the undocumented portrayed *before* the panic, when times were good, and how does that compare with coverage *during* the panic? In the case of Proposition 187, by all accounts the backlash against undocumented immigrants in 1994 was greatest in California. It would be instructive to study press coverage of undocumented immigration in other states that year to see how it was portrayed. For example, in Texas, another state with a large population of undocumented immigrants and a conservative Republican governor in 1994, there was no backlash against immigrants. Which raises the question, What was the elite discourse on undocumented immigration in Texas in 1994, and how did that discourse affect media coverage? Another useful study would be a comparison of today’s immigration debate, with elites seemingly divided, and the 1994 debate in which elites agreed on the undocumented immigration “problem.”

Also instructive would be a comparison of the elite debate over immigration with elite debates in other areas of social policy. Although it may be true that elites set the parameters of the discussion for media coverage, the way they do it varies from issue to issue. For example, the debate over immigration policy creates strange elite bedfellows. Recently, Kay Bailey Hutchison, the conservative Republican senator from Texas, voted with liberal Democrats in support of a plan to allow thousands of young undocumented immigrants to attain U.S. citizenship if they completed two years of college or served honorably in the military for at least two years.

Such analyses would hopefully help increase public awareness of the media's power in portraying certain groups as deviant, and the dangers inherent in such labeling. In the case of these immigration "panics," for example, the scapegoating of undocumented immigrants helped keep the public from thinking critically about the social crisis at hand, whether it was the Great Depression, anti-Communist witch hunts, or the economic recessions of the 1970s and 1990s. Study of these panics also supports Gitlin's and Hallin's argument that the media only challenge elites when elites themselves are divided. Between the panics, the media could write balanced articles on the topic of undocumented immigration; during the panics, when elites united to scapegoat these immigrants, such articles tended to disappear.

Finally, what can be done to improve mainstream journalism coverage? One way is to improve journalism education. As discussed in

Chapter 2, media practitioners define “news” as information that possesses certain characteristics, such as timeliness, proximity, novelty and impact. However, it’s important for students to realize that applying such characteristics doesn’t automatically result in the “best” stories receiving coverage. As this study shows, the media focus on elite sources can result in some important issues, events or points of view receiving a lot of attention, while others receive minimal coverage or none at all. In addition, I think it’s important for students to practice covering stories that are being slighted or ignored. A simple, but powerful, exercise is for students to interview a person at their school who is a member of a minority group – whether because of race, ethnicity or sexual orientation or other factors — and write about how that person feels their group is treated by the media. Students should also be encouraged to cover neglected stories in the cities and towns in which their schools are located. For example, I’m now a journalism teacher and doctoral student in Austin, Texas. a city with a large population of undocumented immigrants that doesn’t receive much coverage. Journalism students here have an opportunity to not only learn about journalism, but also educate themselves on a major issue facing our country, by covering the local undocumented immigrant community.

However, it’s one thing to change the way that journalists are educated, it’s quite another to change the profession itself. Yet such change, although difficult, is still theoretically possible.

In her 1988 study of the news operation at KPFA-FM in Berkeley, Calif., at that time one of the few sources of oppositional daily news in the United States, Eliasoph found that reporters at the radio station followed the same news conventions as reporters at mainstream news organizations. However, the stories they came up with tended to present the news from a leftist, “oppositional” perspective. One reason for this difference, she argues, was the ideologies, or belief systems, of the reporters, which led them to seek sources for stories other than the official sources that mainstream news outlets relied on for their articles. “Like other news organs,” Eliasoph writes, “KPFA relies on officials, but KPFA’s officials often come from the Sierra Club, unions, or other oppositional organizations” (319). Another reason for the difference in KPFA news was that the station management and the audience that funded the station had belief systems that were compatible with those of the reporters. Eliasoph’s study suggests that for the media to make fundamental changes in how it gathers and reports the news, there would have to be significant ideological changes both in media practitioners and media audiences. I would argue that we live in a historical moment when such changes are, in fact, feasible.

As discussed previously, the media are more open to disparate points of view in times when elites are divided, and this moment is such a time. Elites are not only divided on how to handle undocumented immigration, but also on social policy in general, from health care to the war in Iraq. In addition, not only are there a multitude of oppositional voices challenging elite viewpoints, with the emergence of the Web those oppositional voices

are more accessible than ever before. Finally, with the growth of news coverage on the Web and on cable, the traditional media are struggling to attract audiences. This is also a moment in which at least some journalists seem to have recognized that the traditional media need to improve the way they cover the news. For example, the Poynter Institute, the Florida organization that trains journalists and journalism educators, is offering a seminar next year called “Telling Untold Stories: Reporting Across Cultures.” On its website, the institute explains that in this seminar, journalists can improve their ability to “cover different cultures, communities and individuals who are often missing or inaccurately portrayed in news stories.”

Given this climate, it seems to me that those of us who work in journalism education today can play an important part in improving the profession of journalism by continuing to incorporate the insights of media criticism into the education of journalism practitioners. This important step has been neglected in the past because scholars have been critical of how journalism is taught. However, I agree with Parisi (1998), who argued that uniting scholarly critique with journalism instruction was essential to improving journalism practice:

...Many of these same ideological critics are simultaneously journalism educators, who hold teaching positions based on a demand for the training of future journalists. Mere ideological critique of contemporary journalistic work wins only a pyrrhic victory, for the critic defeats himself by declaring invidious his work as a journalism educator. Defining journalism education

as a project of uniting overall critique with revised journalistic practice can begin to resolve this schizoid situation (250).

Previously, budding reporters learned the ideologies of journalism on the job; in more recent years, journalism schools have increasingly taken on the role of training future news practitioners. These schools, however, no longer simply teach journalism skills. The teaching of journalism has become part of a larger curriculum that often includes media criticism and analysis. One reason for this is the growth of the media studies field in the last 30 years, reflecting a growing awareness among academics of the profound effect that the mass media have on society and of the importance of studying that influence. Thus, more students are taking media criticism courses alongside their journalism skills classes. The growth in critical analysis of the media also means that more professors are incorporating the insights of media criticism into their professional journalism courses. In addition, as the media studies field grows, students of media criticism and analysis won't just be future journalists, but increasingly, media consumers as well. This suggests that the common-sense understandings of what makes "good" media news coverage not only have a good chance of changing, but changing for the better. Crucially, these changes won't just be happening in journalists, but in their audiences as well. Thus, as media coverage changes, it will find an increasingly receptive audience, which will lead to more changes.

Clearly, this won't be happening overnight – but truly significant change rarely does.

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