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“Immigration Rhetoric and the Use of the Cultural Purity Argument”

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Abstract

The topic of immigration has appeared episodically as a contentious issue in American political history. Historically, race has been a central component within the public discourse and the reasoning behind many political policies regarding immigration. However, it does not seem controversial to say that overtly racist rhetoric appears to have less visibility in the contemporary political landscape. In this paper, I explore what immigration rhetoric looks like today, in particular the reasons “immigration reform” advocacy groups offer for justifying excluding immigrants settling in the United States, in particular by distinguishing them from what they consider true Americans. I contrast website based racial purity arguments used by members of the Aryan Nations to cultural purity arguments used by members of immigration reform groups such as the Federation for Immigration Reform (FAIR), American Immigration Control (AIC) and Balance. I show that both racial purity arguments and cultural purity arguments are similar in form, structure and function. Both types of arguments argue that each type of purity is fundamental, immutable, inherited and necessary for the public good. Both types of arguments are also used to justify limiting immigration.

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The topic of immigration has appeared episodically as a contentious issue in American political history. Historically, race has been a central component within the public discourse and the reasoning behind many political policies regarding immigration. However, it does not seem controversial to say that overtly racist rhetoric appears to have less visibility in the contemporary political landscape. Whether this means race is less important as a factor in influencing policy is not clear. Surprisingly, there has been very little research into racial discourse and immigration policy. While immigrants as a group have received a lot of attention as a research subject within academic literature (Frey, 1995: 1996; Wright & Ellis, 1998: 2000, Hood & Morris, 1998), the actual public discourse and rhetoric surrounding issues of both immigration and national identity have not received proper attention. In this paper, I explore what immigration rhetoric looks like today, in particular the reasons “immigration reform” advocacy groups offer for justifying excluding immigrants settling in the United States, in particular by distinguishing them from what they consider true Americans.

Groups that engage directly in overtly racist rhetoric to defend national identity, such as the Aryan Nation or the National Alliance, have been moved to the fringes of political attention in debates over immigration. Groups such as the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), American Immigration Control (AIC), Balance and the Arizona Minutemen are the ones receiving national attention. However, these latter groups claim, often fervently, that race is not a basis for their protest or calls for reform. Yet, it seems highly improbable that these modern immigration reform groups could debate politically an issue that is highly charged with racial imagery without speaking about race at all. It is my contention that overtly racial rhetoric about “racial

purity” is no longer acceptable in the mainstream immigration debate and is largely absent from it. What can be found are deep concerns over issues of culture coherence and stability of the nation, or what I call “cultural purity.” While I cannot claim a direct connection between issues of race and culture, concerns over cultural purity take on a similar rhetorical form as did the now unacceptable concerns over racial purity. There may be further questions as to whether these are deliberate, conscious or even causal changes. For the purposes of this paper, I identify the similarity in the rhetorical construction between the two discourses, not the motive behind the similarity.

Thus, this is not a paper about racist structures that manifest themselves in rhetorical language, as Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2003) would argue. This paper does not presuppose that similar rhetorical forms simply mean that immigration reformers are closet racists. Rather, this paper focuses upon debate in the public arena and what rhetorical forms are acceptable and not acceptable in contemporary politics. My study is not one which seeks to measure how often arguments of cultural purity are used, but rather, I elucidate their presence and compare their similarities to other more overt forms of racial rhetoric. Further, by categorizing these rhetorical forms I can suggest what immigration reform groups see as our national identity and how they frame their notions of what is best for the public good. This builds on similar projects such as Rhys Williams’ (1995) study of the rhetoric of abortion groups and their visions of public good.

To discuss the manner in which references to race have declined and cultural arguments are present, I will review historical examples of race influencing immigration policy. I will further review Eduardo-Bonilla Silva’s idea of color-blind racism to discuss

how it relates to this theoretical argument. Finally, I will look at both contemporary mainstream immigration arguments as well as contemporary overtly racist arguments used by groups who focus on immigration reform and show how they maintain similar structures when presenting arguments for racial or cultural purity.

Background

I will demonstrate that race has been an important factor in immigration debates of the past later in this paper. Thus it seems reasonable that one would see images of race and immigration intertwined in the contemporary political debate. For the immigration reform groups to not use racial arguments would suggest that they no longer view race as a meaningful dimension of the immigration debate. And yet, it is not uncommon for popular media to equate restrictions on immigration with racism.

Indeed, several immigration reform groups seemingly recognize that race is involved within the immigration debate, whether they wish to debate the topic or not. The FAIR website, for instance, has a page designed to help those who favor immigration reform to defuse the charge of racism. Text from this page reads:

“Opposition to high immigration is rooted in racism.”

There are always people who support the right idea for the wrong reasons--but that doesn't make the idea itself wrong. None of this changes the fact that bringing a million additional people from other countries into this one is disruptive to our economy, our society, and our environment. We condemn racism. But we also condemn the use of terms such as “anti-immigrant,” “racist,” or “xenophobe” as they are used to try to stifle open, honest discussion of how our immigration policy is impacting the country.

-http://www.fairus.org/site/PageServer?pagename=team_team2167

The underlined emphasis is mine. This quote illustrates not that FAIR is racist or even that they are not racist, but that they themselves recognize that other people associate immigration reform with racism. In this way, they too recognize that even if they believe that the charge is unfounded, race is part of the debate and they must defend themselves from accusations of racism. A similar quote can be found on the Minute Man site:

A Minuteman believes that just as ethnicity, race, religion and all such factors are incidental and do not affect our God-given, constitutional equality as American citizens, such factors are also irrelevant in the debate over illegal immigration. There is no tolerance among Minutemen for racism or bigotry - E Pluribus Unum - Out of Many, One.

Part III of the Minute Man Pledge
-<http://www.minutemanhq.com/hq/mmpledge.php>

Again, the underlined emphasis is mine. Here again, we see that another immigration reform group, The Minute Men, is cognizant of racial issues and believes it must address possible accusations of racism.

The historical literature shows that American conceptions of race at any particular historical period have been important motivations for restricting immigration. There is also recent literature which suggests that race is not only an important part of the immigration debate, but that racism may be on the rise. In their article “Biological Categories and Border Controls: The Revival of Eugenics in Anti-Immigration Rhetoric” Dorothy Nelkin and Mark Michaels (1998) note that eugenics arguments are actually on the rise in immigration debate, particularly among fringe racial groups. However, this does not counter my initial premise that overt racial rhetoric appears absent from mainstream immigration rhetoric. Nelkin and Michaels’ analysis takes place in the early to mid 1990s; I suggest that the structure and foundations of the arguments have changed. Further, Nelkins and Michaels note that mainstream immigration reform groups, FAIR in

particular, were actually looking to separate themselves from such fringe rhetoric. However, this shows that race was still an important issue in the recent past of the political debate.

Historical Racial Constructions of Immigrants and Politics

Issues surrounding immigration, while episodic, have arisen since the inception of the country. Benjamin Franklin was noted as having been against German immigration to Pennsylvania and worried that German immigrants might disrupt ethnic homogeneity (Feagin, 1997: 18). However, there was an absence of federal legislation and a general lack of organized opposition to immigrants in the period from 1790 to 1820. This did not mean that there was no opposition to immigrants; this time period saw sporadic mob violence and general prejudice against Roman Catholics and the Irish in particular. The 1850s saw the rise of several organized political movements against immigrants. The Know-Nothing party was a nativist political movement, who would only vote for “native” Americans, fought Roman Catholicism and pushed for a 21-year naturalization period. The Ku Klux Klan formally organized in the 1860s in response to, among other things, what they saw as the growing menace of Catholics and Asian immigrants. The late 1800s also saw the enactment of 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, which specifically targeted Chinese immigrants and the 1908 Gentleman’s Agreement which unofficially halted the influx of Japanese immigrants (Schaefer, 1990: 115-119). While race or ethnicity have not been the only precipitators of anti-immigrant sentiment, racism and anti-immigration rhetoric have always had a close relationship that can be seen in the examples previous and following.

In *Strangers in the Land*, John Higham (1955) reviews the role nativism played in American politics, society, immigration policy and the creation of national identity. Higham defines nativism as “intense opposition to an internal minority on the ground of its foreign (i.e., ‘un-American’) connections” (Higham, 1955: 4). In Higham’s review of major nativist themes, he analyzes what he refers to as racial nativism. It is the confluence of nativist appeals that were mainly concerned with the influx of immigrant stock which might replace or dilute the native Anglo-Saxon stock, the perceived inferior work ethic of immigrants who were not Anglo-Saxon, and the fear that radical races might seek to undermine the stability of the United States. I should note here that Higham is not primarily concerned with racial rhetoric; he is exploring nativist themes of which racial nativism is just one part. As an historian he is concerned with accurately describing the role that nativism played in American society, not the theoretical implications of that nativism.

However, there are two things to note here. First, this is evidence that race has historically played an important part in the construction of national identity, a theme I will further explore later. Secondly, I see that purity lines were drawn relative to their relation to the Anglo-Saxon population of America. What constituted good American stock were the “native” Americans born of Anglo-Saxon descent along with immigrants from those areas. In contrast, foreigners from Southern and Eastern Europe were not welcome and would only dilute the pure native American pool. So purity was defined by the relation to Anglo-Saxon blood and purity was to be defended against foreign influences. There are certainly correlations that can be drawn from these historical arguments to arguments in contemporary America. For instance, this construction of

purity is very similar to arguments that fringe groups such as the Aryan Nation still adhere to and would represent the best contemporary illustration of racial purity rhetoric.

There are contemporary concerns that whites may be outnumbered by minorities in America in the coming years, as well as the realization that whites are minorities in some states. While people who have these concerns may not argue that they are defending the white racial stock of America, their concerns mirror those of historic defenders of the white racial stock. This concern is that whatever attributes non-whites have will come to represent America and replace the attributes and traditions of the white Anglo-Saxons. So, these contemporary concerns remain very much consistent with the historical American concern over preserving native racial stock. But it is important to note that the language in mainstream political debate has changed. Contemporary whites would largely not claim that defending the white race is their concern, but instead argue that they do not wish to be a minority in ‘their own’ country. Further, I would suggest that their concern is not about whites or nonwhites, but rather they worry that the cultural differences between minorities and WASPs would make the country unrecognizable to them. Certainly, one argument that has had some traction in the past is that if Hispanics become a dominant ethnic majority, English may no longer be the language of America. While it would be pure speculation to say that race continues to underlie the concerns of contemporary whites, it may be useful to ask what the change in language means and what accounts for it. One possible response is that whites are attempting to frame the social problem in terms of “culture”, so that counter-arguments of racism lose their effectiveness. This study focuses only on identifying rhetorical similarities between

arguments, not the processes by which they came about nor the reasons for why they may have changed.

Higham's thesis is supported by research done by Mae Ngai. Ngai analyzes the construction of racial and national categories for purposes of creating immigration quotas for the Immigration Act of 1924 (Ngai, 1999). The law was meant to restrict immigration from countries in the same proportion as the American populace could attribute their national origins, so it encouraged more immigration from countries that had already heavily immigrated to the United States, such as Great Britain, and limited immigration from other countries that did not already have highly represented populations in the United States, specifically Southern and Eastern Europe and East Asia. The plan called for a formalization of what was to constitute a country of national origin. This formalization showed a demographic bias towards countries that were considered desirable. While they did not use the term race, "natives" were defined as descendants of Northern and Western Europeans, which were overwhelmingly white, that had settled in the United States by 1890 so racial and ethnic signifiers were important. So once more, we see that racial purity which was also tied to national identity was closely tied to connections that Americans felt they had to white Northern and Western Europeans. Ngai also demonstrates that racial identification played an important part in excluding people from being considered naturalized Americans. Citing two court cases, Ngai notes that non-white immigrants who felt they had a right to be naturalized as US citizens were denied that right with the court citing their non-whiteness as the main factor in that denial (Ngai, 1999: 81-88).

Both Higham and Ngai note the historical importance placed on race and ethnicity in nativist appeals. They both also describe the ways in which Americans historically wished to protect racial purity. Their concept of purity was intrinsically tied with not only Northern and Western European origins, but the whiteness of those origins. In other words, not only was the origin of the immigrants important, but what they looked like. The belief was that these Europeans are harder workers and constitute better citizens for America. These same arguments are what provide the conceptual basis for defining and defending racial purity in much of the immigration rhetoric.

Certainly, it should be noted here, that while whiteness was an important attribute, what it meant to be “white” has not always meant the same thing. Ruth Frankenberg (1993) first explored the social construction of whiteness by analyzing how white women reproduced the racial order in their production of identities. Since Frankenberg’s work, an exploration of what it means to be white has also been applied to immigrant groups over time. In general, American whiteness has never been applied to new groups of immigrants, even if they happen to have white skin color. David Roediger (2005) notes “new immigrants experienced racialization at times as ‘inbetween peoples,’ (12)” and new immigrants were “neither securely white nor nonwhite (12)”. Other scholars have explored similar theses when dealing with the Irish (Ignatiev, 1995) and the Jews (Brodkin, 1998). Historically, this points to an American narrative where whiteness has been a process that all new immigrants strive for and some achieve over time, losing their alien status. However, it is interesting to speculate, though not within the bounds of this paper, if new immigrants, who do not share the physical appearance of whiteness, will ever truly be enveloped in this purity as well, or if the process only truly works when a

new immigrant people have European or Russian ancestry. For the purposes of this paper, it is important to note that whiteness has always been a category of exclusion to protect the public good. It is also important to note that while having white skin has not been a guarantor of American whiteness, it has always been a pre-requisite to achieving that whiteness.

Many of the American immigration policies of the past have been enacted systems of exclusion, much of the time by using definitions of race. For instance, the Gentleman's Agreement of 1908 was a non-formal policy enacted in order to limit Japanese migration into the United States (Higham, 1955). The literacy tests Congress enacted in 1917 were meant to limit the immigration from nations other than those in Western Europe. It can certainly be argued that the literacy tests were not strictly about race, but they were clearly based in an exclusionary logic that was meant to keep out non-WASPS (Schaefer, 1990: 119-120). I would not call the literacy tests a direct device used to defend racial purity; in fact I would say this is an historical illustration of the defense of cultural purity. However, because Americans envisioned English as an attribute of white Americans and Eastern and Southern Europeans were not, in 1917, considered white, these tests revealed the notions Americans had for what made not only a good American citizen, but a good white American citizen.

The best illustration of race influencing American immigration policy can be found in the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Growing need for railroad workers brought laborers to America from many countries in the 1860s. The Central Pacific railroad working force was composed of 90 percent Chinese laborers. Growing xenophobia from white laborers and white legislators directed at the 'alien' Chinese people led to a growing anti-Chinese

movement, although the majority of the American people had no firsthand contact with these laborers. One might argue that xenophobic attitudes are not necessarily the same as “racist attitudes,” but these attitudes clearly show an alignment between certain racial group and national identity status. Whatever economic gains were made by bringing in these immigrant laborers to America were soon forgotten as fears of the “yellow peril” began to spread. Labor concerns also added to the anti-Chinese movement as Chinese laborers were used to break strikes from California to Massachusetts. Such was the anti-Chinese sentiment among organized labor that when the Chinese workers unionized, they were not recognized by the other major labor organizations (Schaefer, 1990: 117). With the support of the anti-Chinese labor movement, Congress was easily able to pass the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 which;

“..outlawed Chinese immigration for ten years. It also explicitly denied naturalization rights to those Chinese in the United States; that is, they were not allowed to become citizens...No allowance was made for spouses and children to be reunited with their husbands and fathers in the United States. Only Chinese government officials, teachers, tourists and merchants were exempted.”

-Schaefer, 1990: 118

This was not a short-lived reaction to Chinese immigrants. The ban was to last for ten years and in 1892, it was extended for another ten years.

Leroy Dorsey and Rachel Harlow (2003) documented Theodore Roosevelt’s public rhetoric on immigration and how his views have influenced the American *mythos*, particularly in regards to race and immigration. Theodore Roosevelt was one of the more outspoken presidents about immigration. His presidential terms coincided with some of the highest rates of immigration in US history. Dorsey and Harlow see his views as conflicting. On the one hand, in the 1890s he was quoted as saying, “I have no sympathy

with mere dislike of immigrants, there are classes and even nationalities of them which stand at least on an equality with the citizens of native birth” (Dorsey & Harlow, 2003: 56). On the other hand, he also warned that unless the “American race stock” was preserved through increased procreation, unregulated immigration would lead to American “race suicide” (Dorsey & Harlow, 2003). What we can see from the case of Theodore Roosevelt is the same balance that American policy has always tried to strike; the obvious economic advantages from immigration countered by the fear of racial diversity. This balance need not be a conscious effort. One can imagine that a balance can be struck as a result of differing political interests attempting to achieve their own goals, but what is important to note is that the balance becomes necessary in the political sphere whether it is intentionally obtained or achieved through the conflict of interests.

There is a second distinct advantage to looking at the rhetoric of Teddy Roosevelt, it can show us a possible distinction between xenophobia and racist sentiment that was involved in the immigration debates. As previously mentioned, the hysteria over the Chinese immigrants was fueled by growing xenophobia in American society. Xenophobic attitudes revolve around fear of ‘others,’ so the primary activity of xenophobia is to keep out all others. Racist sentiments in the immigration debate revolve around keeping America racially and ethnically pure. In the example of Teddy Roosevelt, we see a man who did not care for xenophobic sentiments, but clearly was sympathetic to issues of racism. Some of Roosevelt’s statements admonish those who would stand against immigrants without any specific knowledge of them, a clear critique of xenophobia. However, other statements indicate that Roosevelt was very much concerned with racial and ethnic purity. Even though I may conceptually see a distinction between

xenophobia and racism in the immigration debate, I can also see that both attitudes have strong components which are based in issues of race and ethnicity.

These are not the only examples of race within the history of American politics or policy, but rather the most salient and easily shown examples of it. These examples illustrate the American tradition of attempting to defend the racial purity of White America while attempting to accumulate the economic advantages of the work of the immigrants. While not all arguments against immigration have been about race or ethnicity, race has generally played an important part within the debate.

However, overt racism has become a deviant argument to be used in 21st century mainstream arguments, particularly in terms of politics. Even hints of possible racist attitudes have been enough to end or at least threaten careers in mainstream American politics; overtly racist arguments are no longer valid expressions in the debate about immigration. My own analysis of current arguments used by contemporary immigration reform groups has revealed a distinct lack of overt racist arguments. What are offered by these movements are arguments that share a similar form to racist arguments, but are based in a defense of “American culture.”

Current Literature

In this section I wish to focus on three types of literature. First, I examine literature that helps me shape the conceptualization of this project. This literature looks into groups that are involved in political issues and draws conclusions about notions of the public good or national identity. Second, I review the literature that examines the current immigration reform debate. Third, I look at literature that examines ‘race talk’ in America.

Public Good and National Identity

Rhys Williams (1995) studied the public discourse of the abortion debate. In studying the various publicly argued positions, he found that the arguments also contained implicit ideas regarding what constitutes the “good society” or the “public good.” Rhetorical claims in abortion politics typically described one of three possible versions of the public good. Williams’ paper is not about immigration rhetoric, but it is about how the rhetoric of groups, through their public statements, can be organized into categories that reflect their views of public good. While his paper is not important for immigration rhetoric analysis, it is an important paper to model my own project after because it gives a blueprint for organizing public discourse into visions of national identity. Williams and Park (2005) found that immigration reform groups, such as FAIR, used similar images of the public good and national identity. However, one of Williams and Parks’ major findings is that arguments based on race were not present; this is a very important point and will be discussed in the body of this paper. Edward Ashbee (1998) also studied the immigration debate and linked the public discourse to conservative ideological views about national identity by describing four models of American identity: the Universal Nation, the Melting Pot, the ethno-cultural model and the white-ethnic model. In these models, only the white-ethnic model is concerned with race and Ashbee’s implication seems to be that this is the smallest faction of conservative ideology. Instead, a greater emphasis is placed on cultural assimilation.

Susan Martin (2003) took Lawrence Fuchs’ (1990) historical American models of immigrant acceptance and drew parallels between these historical models and

contemporary attitudes and policy. These modes of acceptance were the Pennsylvania model, which sought immigrants that would be good citizens, the Massachusetts model, which wanted immigrants who maintained religious purity, and the Virginia model, which wanted cheap workers but did not want to give them the same rights as the rest of the citizens in the community. For Martin, the Virginia model is the one that most aptly describes current American immigration sentiment. But what is most notable about this is that the Massachusetts model, which would be most analogous to immigration policy seeking racial purity, was the least applicable to current politics. Certainly, this is not a perfect comparison; religious affiliation is often seen as more voluntary than belonging to a racial or ethnic group. However, it may suggest a political environment that is less likely to promote exclusionary practices on the basis of some attribute such as race or ethnicity. It should be noted that Martin's article is not about rhetoric but about views of groups categorized by their vision of the public good as achieved through immigration policy. However, like the Williams' article, it is a guideline for how to conduct my own categorization. However, Martin focused entirely upon the manner in which elites determine immigration policy through legislation. Such a study would be more likely to focus on fiscal conservatives who have a more vested interest in cheap labor. However, Martin ignored social conservatives who may not be found among the elites and did not ultimately have as much power on policy on immigration at the time that Martin conducted her analysis.

Immigration Reform

Immigration reform came to the forefront of American politics again in the 1990s. With this new rise of immigration reform discourse, eugenics also found a new revival.

As I have described previously, Dorothy Nelkin and Mark Michaels (1998) studied this rise of eugenics. Within their overall study of public discourse, Nelkin and Michaels studied the positions of racist neo-Nazi groups such as the National Alliance, but it is also important to note that they also studied the now racially neutral FAIR in their study. They noted that former FAIR Executive Director Dan Stein wanted to “dissociate the organization from xenophobia (Nelkin and Michaels, 1998: 51).” Among their conclusions, Nelkin and Michaels determined that one justifying argument behind eugenics arguments was a fear similar to Theodore Roosevelt’s; this is a concern with the “mongrelization” of American society and that leaving immigration unchecked will lead to racial suicide.

I will show later that similar fears crop up in terms of culture and ethnic diversity. While Nelkin and Michaels are interested in studying the influence of this rhetoric on future policy, they are mainly documenting themes that they find within the rhetoric surrounding immigration. But what is important to note is that along with these themes is an expressed fear that the growing emphasis on genetic explanations as well as the public’s fascination with genetic explanations will influence political agendas and social policy. While I believe there is some evidence for this, particularly when talking about current studies about genetics, I think that they miss the chance to emphasize the ways in which more mainstream immigration reform groups, such as FAIR and the AIC, are attempting to move away from such explanations in at least superficial ways. I suggest this means that they fail to notice the trend away from overt racial arguments by groups who wish to be taken seriously by the American mainstream.

Race Talk

Others have looked into the discourse of discussing race without appearing to be racist. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2002, 2003) took data from the 1997 Survey of College Students' Social Attitudes and the 1998 Detroit Area Study and analyzed the ways in which white students discussed race. Bonilla-Silva noted that whites employed a myriad of strategies that kept them from directly discussing racial topics, but still allowed them to allude to racial ideas. It is through these strategies that Bonilla-Silva concluded whites attempt to protect themselves from charges of racism by using avoidance strategies of directly speaking about race. Here, we see that Bonilla-Silva is identifying both a current rhetorical technique used by white people who wish to avoid being labeled racist, as well as indirectly pointing out that the current environment in America makes overt racial talk impolite at the very least. It is something to be avoided. This is similar, though not exactly the same, as the findings that I will discuss later in this paper.

Methods

The focus of this study was the open rhetoric of mainstream immigration reform groups. I am interested in how 'race' is articulated in the immigration debate. To do so I contrasted explicitly racist talk from groups such as aryan-nations.org (The Aryan Nation) and natvan.com (The National Alliance) with the arguments one finds in more mainstream groups such as FAIR and the AIC. By collecting data in the form of editorials and message board statements from the website Aryan-nations.org I gained data with which to construct elements of a 'racial purity argument,' in order to compare it against what I call the 'cultural purity arguments' found in mainstream immigration reform sites. I chose groups such as the Aryan Nation because of their extremist racial positions and

groups such as FAIR and AIC for their mainstream status. Mainstream status was loosely measured in terms of their membership and their apparent mention from news sources. FAIR boasts a membership of 250,000 members (http://www.fairus.org/site/PageServer?pagename=about_aboutmain). AIC boasts more than 250,000 members and repeatedly touts their support from members of Congress that speak at their functions (<http://www.immigrationcontrol.com/>). While Balance boasts a much smaller number of 10,000 members, it was the largest of environmental groups that make immigration reform one of their primary points of focus. After determining what groups to use, I used their publicly available websites to collect data. In order to be chosen, the group had to have a free copy of their newsletter or an editorial section that could be analyzed for the purposes of this paper. The racial extremist website chosen was the [aryan-nations.org](http://www.aryan-nations.org) (The Aryan Nation). For the purposes of this study, it was important to look for a website that uses very explicit racial talk that some qualitative researchers warn against (Berg, 2004). But since I was not choosing these websites for the accuracy of their data, but rather how they present their data and rhetoric, this was acceptable.

While it may also be suggested that selecting these particular websites for data will not give a representative sample of all immigrant reform discourse, nor even necessarily all immigrant discourse that occurs within immigration reform groups, it is important to note that the purpose of this study is not to estimate how often these arguments are made. As with much qualitative research, the purpose of this project is to find and analyze characteristics of some immigration arguments that are made. In the words of Jane Ritchie and Jane Lewis (2003) “qualitative research does not set out to

estimate the incidence of phenomena in the wider population. Qualitative sampling therefore requires a different logic to quantitative enquiry, one in which neither statistical representation nor scale are key considerations. The precision and rigour [sic] of a qualitative research sample is defined by its ability to represent salient characteristics and it is these that need priority in sample design (81-82).”

I collected by examining and mining the newsletter and editorial portions of the immigration reform group websites. Newsletters and editorials were collected from the period from September 12, 2001 to February 1, 2005. Beginning just after the World Trade Center attack on September 11, 2001 no doubt created additional appeals to safety of America as well as additional emphasis on the cultural challenges that an increasing Muslim immigration population would present. The point of choosing to begin after September 11th is to normalize the data. By making sure that an historic event such as the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center did not happen in the middle of the data, I could reasonably assume that the data had been normalized to incorporate arguments that arose because of September 11th.

The end date represents a three-and-a-half year period of articles. This time period is long enough to identify trends in the rhetoric that are not due to single events, such as September 11th. These articles were then carefully read and coded in the *N’Vivo* software package and categories of rhetorical arguments were inductively derived. I grouped statements by identifying similar characteristics between them and placing them into nodes. The nodes were carefully considered to determine if there were relations between arguments so that a “tree” was created to describe the types of rhetoric used within the public discourse. Since the nodes were created from inductive analysis, they represent

more categories than those that deal with race and culture in America, but it was these latter categories that this paper concentrates on to develop statements about the change in public rhetoric about immigration, race and culture.

A total of 113 separate pieces of data were collected. Each piece of data represented a complete article or op-ed piece that could be found in a newsletter. From these 113 pieces of data, I coded 246 passages during my exploratory stage. These passages represented sentences or paragraphs that seemed to provide the rationale for restricting immigration through discussing or implying what is good for the public to immigration rhetoric. These 246 passages were then categorized into 18 different nodes which were then used to construct an overall tree that will be described. It should be noted that sometimes passages were dropped into more than one node. Since this study was exploratory and I did not have any previously constructed categories, not all passages seem to fit neatly into categories. I found some passages that appeared to represent two or more nodes simultaneously or partially and then dropped the passage into all appropriate nodes.

Racial Purity Argument Ideal Types

To this point I have contrasted racial and cultural purity arguments. It is important to demonstrate what a contemporary racial purity argument looks like. First, consider the following quotes, taken from a website for the Aryan nations (aryan-nations.org),

21. People who allow others not of their race to live among them will perish, because the inevitable result of a [sic] racial integration is racial inter-breeding which destroys the characteristics and existence of a race. Forced integration is deliberate and malicious genocide, particularly for a People like the White race, who are now a small minority in the world.

David Lane '88 Precepts'

Consider also the following statements made by two members of the Aryan nation online forum community,

Unfortunately these "*small brown beasts*" bring with himself [sic] their wild customs and their language. I am scared of which the survival of the English language is in danger by the diffusion in USA of Spanish language.

-Posted on message board by Basque Supremecist, 6-25-06

America to me is america the more white it is. not [sic] every corner you turn, has niggers, spics, and indians. being white is something to be proud of.

-Posted on message board by Melinda, 10-23-05

Notice in these quotes how race is intrinsically tied to the cultural practices of a group. In the first quote by imprisoned Aryan Nations member David Lane, the coexistence of racial groups is simply a recipe for disaster and clearly the disintegration of not only the racial purity of American whites, but also the destruction of their customs and practices. In the second quote by the online forum board member, the language of Hispanic people is tied to their ethnicity and the assumption being made here is that an increase of the population of Hispanics will only result in a decrease in the use of English within America. Finally, the third quote by the second online forum board member represents the view that part of the inherent character of America is tied directly with its 'whiteness' and an increase of non-whites in America represents a destruction of American character.

It is important to note for the purposes of this paper what these quotes do in terms of attributing characteristics to race. Basque Supremacist directly links customs and language to a group's race and ethnicity. Both David Lane and Basque Supremecist suggest any mixing of races will include a mixing of cultures. The only possible outcome

to this mixing is a death to the American character. Attributes are intrinsically tied to genetics; they are immutable and are naturally derived from the base existence of the races.

From the examples, I draw the central characteristics of racial purity. First, racial purity is fundamental. Race is a primary characteristic of people. It is an all important feature that can be used to describe a people. When Melinda talks about America being America to her the more white it is, she is illustrating the idea that America can be described by its race, its whiteness in this case, and further that this race is a meaningful and all encompassing part of its identity.

Second, racial purity is immutable. We can draw this out of similar sentiments over the monolithic nature of racial purity. A person's race does not change. Further, a group's race does not change. From David Lane saying "racial integration is racial interbreeding which destroys the characteristics and existence of a race" we can see an idea that race can only exist or not exist. It does not change; it either survives or is destroyed.

Thirdly, racial purity is inherited. This seems like it might be common sense from contemporary understandings of race. One is born into a race; they are not adopted into a race. David Lane supports this sentiment throughout his whole quote. The whole problem with different races living together is that members of different races do not change races. Once they are born white or otherwise, they remain white or otherwise. Melinda echoes this concern when she talks about different races being around every corner she turns, somehow making it less American, since one important characteristic of America is its whiteness.

Lastly, racial purity is explicitly necessary for the good of a nation or a people. Melinda believes, for instance, that being white is something to be proud of. David Lane implies that a nation or group will have less friction and suffer from less risk of being exterminated if it is kept racially pure. Racial purity is a necessary component to a peaceful and thriving society.

These four characteristics represent properties of racial purity; racial purity is fundamental, immutable, inherited and explicitly necessary for the good of a nation or people. Racial purity, in these quotes, is used to justify and limit immigrants from coming in and disturbing the racial harmony of America, which is considered a white nation by these people. Racial purity is essential to the survival of American whites and the white race in general.

There is an interesting dichotomy and contradiction in their understanding of how change occurs. On one hand, immigrants can only be assimilated to American values after generations and generations of interaction with other races and this interaction never leads to anything good. On the other hand, when thinking about whites and change, it seems there is an immediate threat. Immigrants may be able to immediately threaten the white American way of life. All that can be expected is a dilution of the purity of the white race. Therefore racial status is immutable, but the nation's racial identity is fragile.

Themes in Data

Categories were inductively produced to sort quotes. There are five major categories: Environmental; Security; Issues of Identity and Culture; Political Issues; Economic. Each of these categories represents a theme in the quotes that indicates a reason to worry about immigration and to limit it. Quotes that dealt with race, racism or

cultural purity issues are within the category of Issues of Identity and Culture. While these types of quotes have become a central focus of this project, they grew out of a subset of Issues of Identity and Culture. This paper focuses mainly upon the issues of Identity and Culture, I will only briefly describe the other categories.

Environmental

Environmental issues represent concerns over how immigration affects the environment, particularly within the United States. The environmental group “Balance” (balance.org) provides the following quote,

U.S. immigration policy should be based on the reality that a stable U.S. population size is essential if we are to prevent further deterioration of the very system that supports us - our environment and natural resource base.

Scott Czerwonka, 2003

There are two very important points in the preceding quote. The first is that this quote presents the role of America and American citizens as primarily concerned with the current environment capacities of the United States. Second is a concern for the future capacities of the US environment. Balance views it as Americans’ duty to prevent overpopulation and the environmental strain that produces. This generation must provide for future generations. Their view of America is as a responsible citizen in the defense of the environment in order to protect resources for future generations.

However efficient we may be in the use of our resources and however much we conserve in our attempt to preserve our environment, more people simply means more stress on the ecosystem. The current energy crisis, urban sprawl, habitat loss, global warming, and a whole litany of environmental problems in the U.S. and elsewhere amply demonstrate that each person uses resources. That use, however modest, adds to the environmental burden.

Scott Czerwonka, 2003

This statement illustrates a second statement made about American citizenship in some environmental quotes. The concern is over the wasteful nature of the United States citizens. Because of this characteristic of wastefulness, the environmental argument believes it proper to deny access to illegal and legal immigrants. So we see a tension between in the environmental argument between the responsibility Americans have and the actual role in Americans play in conserving. Balance holds this view so strongly that they wish to limit immigration to slow environmental degradation.

Security

Security quotes represented concerns about the security of America as a nation. Developing the distinction between those who wish to harm the United States and those who wish to protect it are central in issues of security. Given the time period in which these quotes appeared, it should be little surprise that many are concerned that Muslim immigrants to America are a physical threat. However, there are also many quotes that deal with other groups that represent perceived threats to America. Subcategories of this node include, Appeals to Terror, Muslim Terror Attacks and Balkanization.

Consider the following quote from the Americans for Immigration Control (AIC);

Our El Paso contact is frequently in various city government offices to process forms for his business operations. Waiting in line, he has overheard many conversations in English and in Spanish (his second language) by Hispanics venting their hatred of America. Based on what he has heard, he estimates that eight to ten percent of the Mexicans are reporting any information they can gather about the U.S. government or military to the Mexican Marxist parties. If our contact's estimates of the number of Mexican radicals are even half correct, then legalizing three to five million Mexicans will ultimately provide U.S. citizenship for tens of thousands of potential revolutionaries. The Texas businessman voted for Bush as "the lesser of two evils" and thinks, "Bush is totally naive about the threat from Mexican immigration."

Goldsborough, 2003

This quote is portrays immigrants as radically subversive or a physical threat to Americans. Here, a possible revolution (having the added fearful characteristic of being Marxist) serves as a reason to deny Mexicans naturalized U.S. citizenship.

Quotes that deal with Muslim Terror Attacks are similar to Appeals to Terror, but specifically refer to Muslims as well as the events on 9/11 as a concern for Americans.

The following quote is from the AIC,

In America, Muslims are building Mosques and opening schools at a rapid rate, mostly financed by the government of Saudi Arabia. Week after week, Arab imams proselytize amongst incarcerated criminals and win hundreds of dedicated converts.

Goldsborough, No Date

Here, we see an allusion to terror that is attributable to Muslims specifically. There is no direct mention of a threat, but there is a reference to both criminals and Muslims which are being used in a threatening sense. In many ways, this reflects the same themes as the former subgroup of quotes, but there is an added rhetorical dimension of having not just an invading army of foreigners but a possible in-country invasion force that is sponsored by a foreign state.

Balkanization quotes refer to a phenomenon that is debated among demographers (Frey, 1995: 1996). This phenomenon refers to the outcome of different ethnic groups living in close proximity, resulting in group friction. The main concerns in these quotes are with different cultures living in the same geographic space, arguing that it that leads to danger. The following quote is from a Professor Murphy who said to the AIC,

"The United States would clearly become a Yugoslavia of discordant ethnicities with little memory of the meaning this country has had for past generations."

Goldsborough, 2003

We see here that the main concern is with a ‘clash of cultures’ and this clash is not only a cultural attack of America, but also a physical threat of harm. Immigration activists who use this rhetoric hope that Americans learn the lessons of Yugoslavia and they assume “the lessons” are about ethnic mixing.

Economic

Economic issues are perhaps the most intuitive of all the categories. Economic issues are concerned with the financial impact of illegal immigration on America. They view the responsibility of the American government to be the defense of the economic well being of its citizens. There were two subcategories within the financial node, Exporting Jobs and Fiscal Responsibility. Exporting Job quotes are concerned with work and resources being sent overseas from America and immigrants coming into America to take jobs from American citizens. Fiscal Responsibility quotes deal with how illegal immigrants increase tax costs to American citizens. The following quote from FAIR displays a concern with jobs being taken over by immigrants in the American economy, as well as an additional concern with how this affects American workers attempting to climb in social class,

The loss of many unionized industrial jobs, combined with a resurgence of mass immigration over the past 25 years, has halted that progress. Employment opportunities that have served as a portal to the middle class and by necessity must remain in this country, like construction and service sector jobs, have increasingly been taken over by immigrant workers.

Stein, 2003

Here we see a loss of capital available to American citizens as well as a concern with how this loss of jobs affects the ability of citizens to reach the middle class.

I mention Fiscal Responsibility quotes here just to give a clearer view of the categories that were created from the data. Fiscal Responsibility quotes directly deal with the financial impact of immigrants on governments and communities. They are concerned with the cost of social welfare, including schools, welfare programs and other programs that cost money to support immigrants.

The “cheap” workers often have children who require expensive education -- more than \$5,000 per year, per child. No one blames the kids for needing an education, but it is a reality that whatever meager taxes their parents contribute do not offset the cost of a single child in California's schools, much less multiple kids. With virtually every school district in the state experiencing overcrowding, Census data indicate that all of this increase is a direct result of immigration.

Stein, 2003

The preceding quote demonstrates that the focus of Fiscal Responsibility is on the costs of immigrants on the financial and logistical responsibilities of American citizens and municipalities.

Political

Quotes that deal with political issues deal mainly with the coherent impact of illegal immigrants on the American political landscape. Some of these quotes focus upon voting and control over government, but issues of citizenship tend to be paramount in these quotes. Much like the quotes dealing with financial responsibility, political quotes view the American government as primarily responsible for making sure the American landscape is fair to its native citizens. The following quote demonstrates political concerns with issues of citizenship and national identity. From the AIC,

Ironically, the ethnic lobbies that facilitate and encourage illegal immigration often style themselves as "civil rights" groups. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Genuine civil rights activists in our history claimed their rights as citizens under our law. In contrast,

illegal alien advocates claim for foreigners the right to break our law and reap the benefits of citizenship. With law undermined, citizenship becomes a second-class status for everyone, leaving it little power to inspire unity.

Vinson, 2003

For immigration reform groups, citizenship denotes who does and does not deserve support and protection from the law. Here, citizenship is not only a legal status, but is also a social status. To be a citizen alone has meaning and value in regards who deserves what treatment.

Culture

Many of those concerned with immigration view America primarily as a single, coherent cultural entity. Concern about the loss of cultural traditions and a singular, unified American identity are foremost on the minds of immigration reformists who use a culture discourse. They see America as possessing a singular, shared character and they view immigrants as a genuine threat to its unity and cohesion. Subcategories included in the category of culture and identities are Values and Norms, Language, Diversity and Moral Sense. Each of these categories contains quotes that show concern over how immigrants are ruining the stable composition and hence, unity, of America.

I use culture here to refer to the norms, values and practices that mark a given society, people or ethnic group. Immigration reform groups use culture in a similar manner. The concept of culture itself is generally used to represent a wide variety of concepts and topics. Wendy Griswold (2004) sketches out at least three main ways to describe culture. Simplistically, these three definitions are culture as norms, values, beliefs, expressive symbols and practices; culture as high art; and finally culture as a toolkit of specific skills and knowledge to be used in a society. Similarly, in the context

of this paper, I use culture to represent a variety of phenomena, but here it is most congruent with the first view of culture the norms, values, beliefs, expressive symbols and practices of a society.

The quotes I discuss will show that the use of culture in these statements reveal assumptions about the national identity of America and the inherent characteristics of its citizens. In these statements, advocacy group members make claims about the moral character of America as well as about immigrants and their countries. They refer to the practices of America, for instance, in terms of using English as the primary language. They worry about whether immigrants can assimilate into the common practices of the United States and the consequences if they cannot. In short, statements made under the cultural issues rubric describe how the United States ‘is’ and how immigrants in general do not fit. Either through accident or through purposeful intent, this produces discord in the American way of life.

Quotes within the Cultural Issues subcategory are concerned with how immigrants bring into America different priorities, cultural norms and ethics and how these differences serve to harm America. Consider the following quote from the AIC,

Sadly this harmony is fading, as community after community falls victim to the kind of diversity which destroys common purpose. Even when immigrants are hard-working, this does not mean that they that they share all American values and sentiments.

Vinson, 2004

This quote shows that immigration reformers concerned about Cultural Issues believe that different cultures and ethnicities will undermine the national unity of America.

Diversity quotes are very similar to cultural issues quotes; the slight difference is that Diversity quotes illustrate how diversity undermines America. Writers often view

diversity as forced upon the American public by a ‘liberal’ coalition that is willing to sacrifice the American good for political correctness. Consider the following quotes from the AIC,

The truth is that ethnic diversity causes disunity not strength.

Goldsborough, 2003

Why then do diversity advocates want to inflict cultural pandemonium on their fellow citizens? Aside from monetary and political gain, two other explanations are ignorance and treachery. Many elitists favor diversity because they seldom see it in full-blown form. Almost as ironclad as a law of physics is the principle that support for diversity increases in direct proportion to the distance from it.

Vinson, 2004

The first quote issues a fundamental statement about diversity being harmful to a people’s unity. The second quote elaborates on this point. Thus, the first claim expressed here is that diversity is despised that those who have to live it and fundamentally unable to produce social harmony. Further, notice how the opposition is framed as ‘diversity advocates’ and ‘elitists’. They are portrayed as out of touch and selfishly willing to sacrifice other citizens to the problems that come from diversity. What we see here is a description of foes to immigration reform that wish to push their agenda on diversity on an oppressed and resentful citizenry. The implication seems clear, those who are for diversity are the elites and they are removed from the real problems of diversity and diversity is disliked by those who have to live it.

To economic elites, diversity is the pleasant experience of eating out at some tony [sic] ethnic restaurant. Afterwards, commonly, they return home to up-scale homogenous neighborhoods where no one plays loud foreign music all night long or butchers goats in the back yard. Cultural enrichments like these are left to the American masses, along

with such amenities as schools where their children are shortchanged because of bilingualism and other immigration-induced fads.

Vinson, 2004

Here, the elites are referred to again, as is their distance from the actual problems. But also in this quote is a reference to cultural practices, annoyances to the American masses of 'loud foreign music' and goats being butchered in the backyard. The implication is that those who really encounter diversity do not like it. Notice also that these are cultural practices attributed to some unnamed foreign populace. It is not associated with race or ethnicity, but they are practices that are attributed to foreign people and apparently are not changed by their residency in America.

It is ironic that these types are the first to cry "racism" when challenged. In point of fact, racial antagonism benefits their agenda perfectly, which is why they promote mass immigration and the inevitable misunderstandings it brings.

Vinson, 2004

Not only do we see a reference to the foes of immigration reform, but we also see one of their tactics. These people cry racism. This is an important statement because it serves many purposes. First, it allows immigration reform activists to deny that racism in the discourse is a legitimate claim. Second, it portrays the opponents to immigration reform as opportunists who will use racism to confuse the discourse. Last, it provides an instant rhetorical defense to those who would oppose this statement; they must explain why any charge of racism is legitimate. The onus is then put upon the opponent to immigration reform, not the reformers.

Most ironic too is how the pro-immigration side constantly harps on the issue of "compassion". This, they tell us, is what Americans owe all comers. Yet no such empathy is ever available for the heart-felt anguish of patriotic citizens, native and foreign-born, who mourn the incremental loss of their county and way of life. The anger they feel is not hate, but righteous indignation which they have the right — and

indeed the duty — to express. Backers of mass-immigration may posture all they like about the "American dream." For patriotic citizens, their dream is the American nightmare.

Vinson, 2004

Once again, we have a reference to a pro-immigration party that is out of touch with the rest of the citizens of the United States. But most importantly notice that patriotic citizens “mourn the incremental loss of their county and way of life.” The patriot’s country is tied to their way of life and immigrants are a threat to that. Immigration implicitly means losing “our” culture. Here, assimilation seems unlikely. These quotes suggest that not only having an increase in diverse cultures will serve to undermine America’s values, but also illustrates that the very issue of diversity creates discord among the American people. Consider the following quote from the AIC that demonstrates this,

Though diversity may be enjoyable for a vacation, the work-a-day world works best when common ties keep social friction to a minimum.

Vinson, 2004

We can see here that immigration reformers not only view the possible clash of cultures as harmful to America, but they deny any “need” for diversity and claim it is an unrealistic expectation. Diversity is viewed as a serious threat to societies of all kinds.

Language quotes deal with issues that arise between immigrants and native-born Americans directly when immigrants do not speak English. Writers argue that America is a single coherent cultural entity, and an entity that speaks English. The following quote from the AIC refers to an incident involving an immigrant, who did not speak English and through a series of misunderstandings was shot,

Baltimore Latino activist, Angelo Solers, complained, "training can prevent many of these situations. We have a person who should not be dead. Police officers have a responsibility to minority communities." In truth, the responsibility lies with the activist leaders in those

minority communities who should make sure that new immigrants learn English, the language of our country.

Goldsborough, 2003

So what we see is another dimension important to the cultural cohesion of America and its citizens. Americans speak English and the expectation is that immigrants must also speak English. The implication is that when immigrants are not versed in the language, it is because they are unwilling and this unwillingness will lead to tragedy. Notice here how even language is an immutable characteristic. It is certainly true that language can be learned, but the cultural practices of the immigrant restrict their desire, need and ability to learn it. So while this is an American characteristic that can be learned, if the immigrant's culture prevents or dissuades that learning, they cannot be considered compatible with American culture. Further, the national good requires homogeneity and such homogeneity requires a shared language, thus tragedies such as these can be avoided. The single coherent cultural body of America rests in culture and language is a key component of culture.

As with the subcategories described previously in this section, Moral Sense quotes deal with America as a single, coherent cultural entity. These quotes focus upon the moral character of that entity, the agreed upon values of that entity and how the inclusion of immigrants who do not share these values will only lead to bad times for America. In these quotes, human beings are not capable of sharing or adapting values. The facts, as they present them, are that cultures clash and moral compasses cannot be shared or taught. What occurs in America from immigration is not a melting pot, but the creation of contentious factions. Consider the following AIC quote,

The truth of the matter, proven through human history, is that tolerance among people, even countrymen, requires the most careful

cultivation. Pleas for goodwill and brotherhood simply aren't enough. Human beings of all creeds, colors and nationalities are contentious. When they do get along it's usually when they share common values, and respect and obey equitable laws.

Vinson, 2003

The cohesive American body needs one moral sense in order to both prosper and keep order. But the previous quote noted that it is not enough that people may try and keep a similar moral sense, it seems as if one must be born with it, or develop it over generations. While it is not stated explicitly in the quote, it seems implicit that the author believes that one is either born into a group's values or one is not. The inclusion of others will only serve to weaken the national character. Consider an additional quote from the AIC,

Agreed upon standards and values, derived from Western culture, have been the source of American success and freedom. Communities of Americans, working in harmony, have achieved impressive civic and material goals without needing government as a rule-maker and a referee for their activities.

Vinson, 2004

Notice the attention to tradition when suggesting that it is similarities that have led to American successes and freedoms. It seems understood from the author that encroaching foreign cultures, specifically alternative values, will undermine American success and freedom. It should be noted, however, that the last sentence incorporated the view of a non-interfering government. It seems, perhaps, that for national character to succeed, it must not only be American, but it must be small government conservative as well. There is also the implication that this sort of society happens naturally and without coercion. The state does not produce cohesion and unity but a functioning civil society.

Discussion

An interesting finding that I had not predicted when starting this project was the lack of racial arguments within the rhetoric against the expansion of immigrants into America. Dorothy Nelkins points out that “People associated with the anti-immigration lobbying organizations such as FAIR have used the rhetoric of biology in debates over immigration (Nelkin & Micheals 50, 1998).” Nelkins and Micheals go on to say that FAIR has attempted to separate itself from these types of arguments in recent years. I want to reiterate this claim from the FAIR website presented earlier.

“Opposition to high immigration is rooted in racism.”

There are always people who support the right idea for the wrong reasons- but that doesn’t make the idea itself wrong. None of this changes the fact that bringing a million additional people from other countries into this one is disruptive to our economy, our society, and our environment. We condemn racism. But we also condemn the use of terms such as “anti-immigrant,” “racist,” or “xenophobe” as they are used to try to stifle open, honest discussion of how our immigration policy is impacting the country.

-http://www.fairus.org/site/PageServer?pagename=team_team2167

So we see that FAIR at least claims to be avowedly anti-racist and that attempts to describe them as racist are simply personal attacks. However there was a clear use of racial rhetoric in the past as demonstrated by both political policies as well as early immigration rhetoric that put more faith in eugenics arguments. I am attempting to demonstrate that arguments over racial purity have the same form as these arguments of cultural purity that I find.

In demonstrating this similar structure, I compare quotes of both racial purity and cultural purity. Consider a comparison of the following quotes, all used previously in this paper. The first is from the Aryan nations,

People who allow others not of their race to live among them will perish, because the inevitable result of a racial integration is racial inter-breeding which destroys the characteristics and existence of a race.

David Lane '88 Precepts'

The following quotes are from the AIC,

The truth is that ethnic diversity causes disunity not strength.

Goldsborough, 2003

Sadly this harmony is fading, as community after community falls victim to the kind of diversity which destroys common purpose. Even when immigrants are hard-working, this does not mean that they that they share all American values and sentiments.

Vinson, 2004

Notice how all the quotes are worried about the disintegration of a common character.

The quotes all posit that mixing of groups will only result in problems. I chose these particular quotes only because they best illustrate this similarity, but the trend is evident throughout quotes from the immigration reform groups.

My point here is not to suggest that immigration reform groups are all just closet racists. It is not always possible or useful or sociological to speculate about the underlying motives of people who make rhetorical statements. Rather, I demonstrate that these two types of arguments have the same rhetorical structure and serve the same purpose in defending a unified American identity against immigrants.

Both types of arguments serve to keep immigrants and national identity separate. Racial arguments were able to use fears and rhetoric that dealt with things such as race suicide and what served as 'obvious' biological differences between the races to show that an influx of foreign stock would dilute national identity and create havoc on the American way of life, cultural arguments also serve the same purpose. So there is

something inherently intrinsic about American culture, rather than ‘white racial stock,’ that immigrants cannot hope to assimilate into. Consider the second AIC quote previously used, it is not enough that the immigrants share our values, there is still something missing from their *inherent being* that makes them incompatible with America. Now, it is an influx of different cultures, not stock, that threaten our way of life. After all, the immigration reform activists are quick to point out that they are not racists; they are just worried about how cultural differences play a part in dividing America. So where racial purity is seen as fundamental, immutable, genetic and unchanging, American culture is also seen as fundamental, immutable, genetic and unchanging, even though it remains threatened.

This is not to suggest that cultural arguments are a new phenomenon, but rather that arguments that were concerned with the racial purity of America are now largely concerned with the cultural purity of America. This is consistent with, though not the same as, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva’s (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; 2004) conclusions. However, what I note here is that the concerns over defending America from immigration opponents remain largely the same, but the attributions become different. Rather than being ultimately concerned with the loss of whiteness in the Aryan nation quote, the ultimate concern for the immigration reformers is a loss of culture. Rather than being concerned with a racial purity, in which immigrants (or other Americans who are simply not white), dilute the national character of America by making it less white, the immigration reform activists are concerned with a cultural purity, in which immigrants (which may or may not refer to white or non-white immigrants) dilute the national character of America by making it less culturally “pure”. Rather than being concerned

that the racial lines of America, which in the view of the racist groups are directly responsible for the culture and values of America, the new immigration reform movement is concerned with the cultural practices, morals, values and customs of these new people and how they will affect America. As noted earlier in this paper, this is a significant change, at least rhetorically, from historical immigration reform movements and rhetoric which were very much invested in the purity of white America. So a concern with racial purity has turned, at least in the rhetoric, to a concern with cultural purity. Notice in the quotes of the immigration reform movements how the cultural character of America and the various immigrant cultures are ascribed, more or less immutable, and ultimately a concern that the mixing of the cultures will lead to the dilution of the national character of America. This is much the same as I described a traditional racial argument. Rather than talking about race, the political tool is to talk about culture and cultural practices.

As I stated previously, this is consistent with the findings of Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, though not necessarily the same as those findings. Like Bonilla-Silva, I found that that these immigration reform groups make fewer overt racist arguments, even if these arguments have historically been couched in racial terms. Whites are simply not allowed to make racist arguments in mainstream politics and still appear to be valid debaters. However, Bonilla-Silva describes a new rhetorical structure that allows whites to remain racist without necessarily appearing racist. From this vantage point, the essence of the debate still remains firmly about race and racial prejudices and one can see the threads of racism if one simply deciphers the code being employed by whites. It is not my contention to state that this is a wrong conclusion, but rather that I am not necessarily

willing to state that the underlying psychological processes of a person are so easily discernible. Or stated simply, I do not believe I can state with certainty whether the people in these groups necessarily are or necessarily are not racist.

I theorize that the rhetoric has changed for the very reasons Eduardo Bonilla-Silva states, however, rather than stating that the racism has now been embedded in code within the language of the debate, I state that the ultimate concern of immigration reform groups has had to change. Since race can no longer be used as criteria for excluding immigrants, the inherent culture and character of the United States is what has is being lost and thus justifies limiting immigration.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have discussed a rhetorical change in the immigration debate. I have demonstrated that current cultural arguments have the same characteristics of classic racial arguments. For immigration reform groups, culture is immutable, inherited and explicitly necessary for the good of the nation. These characteristics have been historically applied to race in the immigration debate. I believe that investigating the source of this change and when it occurred would be an interesting research question, but outside the scope of this current project. Future research may investigate this source, as well as how these arguments interact with their intended audience.

Being able to identify changes in the rhetoric of public debates is important. Adopting notions of cultural purity rather racial purity has consequences for both the immigration reform groups as well as their opponents in the immigration debates. By attempting to make a claim on the public good of America, they are attempting to retain the moral high ground against their opponents. They are also attempting to ensure that

they are defended against rhetorical attacks of racism. So changes in a group's rhetoric changes not only how the group claims the public good, but how their opponents are able to make similar claims about the public good.

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