Immigration Advocacy and Racial Formation in New Immigrant Destinations

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New Destination Migration

Fastest Growing Foreign-Born Populations

[Map showing the fastest growing foreign-born populations across the United States.]

Source: Based on IPUMS for 1990, 2011.
Racialization, hierarchies & intergroup relations
- Public policies & institutions (e.g. Jones, Massey)
- Communities & workplaces (e.g. Marrow, Ribas)

Social movements & advocacy organizations?
- How do social movements affect racial formation?
What effects do immigrant rights movements have on perceptions of Black-Latino relations?

Case Study: Mississippi, 2000-present

Findings: Movement has produced interracialism

“An affirmative transformation of race that, discursively and practically, deals with and rearticulates extant racial boundaries” (Jung 2003)
Data and Methods

- Media content analysis (1059 MS news stories)
  - Jackson Clarion-Ledger (2003-2013)
  - Biloxi Sun Herald (2003-2013)
  - Jackson Advocate (2009-2013)

- Analysis of organizational & government documents (on-going)
  - Newsletters
  - Internal files

- In-depth interviews (on-going)

- Comparative data from Alabama, Georgia, and North Carolina
Mississippi’s New Immigrant Arrivals

- 548% Latino population growth since 1990
- Racial inequality high
  - 48% child poverty rate for Latinos, 15% for whites
- Political backlash
  - 283 anti-immigrant bills introduced since 2005
- Vibrant pro-immigrant movement
Framing & Public Discourse

Initial movement & public discourse emphasized:
- Xenophobia
- Legal status, work, taxes
- Comparisons to previous generations of immigrants

Shift to interracialism: movement then mainstream
Framing Immigration: Racism

“Our experiences with hundreds of [Latino] immigrants have revealed the countless ways in which they are marginalized and dehumanized. They have been… discriminated against in the workplace... They are constantly racially profiled by bigoted law enforcement authorities.” (MIRA 2010)
Framing Immigration: Reference Groups & Civil Rights

“[Using the term ‘illegal immigrant’ is] the same thing as using the N-word to destroy the humanity of African-Americans.” (MIRA Leader)

“There appears to be xenophobia in Mississippi, the likes of which we have not seen since the civil rights era of the 1960s... [Immigration] critics argue that undocumented immigrants have "broken the law." They also said that Rosa Parks broke the law when she refused to move to the back of the bus. I say that some laws are unjust.” (Patricia Ice)
Diffusion of Interracialism

“In immigrants are being exploited in the same way black Americans were during the civil rights movement. They have the same problems we had in the 1960s [such as] finding jobs, living wages and places to live…” (Eddie R. Smith)

Any legislation that discriminates against Latinos, discriminates against African-Americans.” (Derrick Johnson)
Interracialism in Media Discourse

- Difference/conflict
  - “Most of those jobs are held by Hispanics… black workers are being squeezed out of the job market in the process.”

- Similarity/linked fate
  - “Hispanics are now being treated the same as African Americans.”
Interracialism in Media Discourse
Immigrant Advocacy & Racial Formation

- Interracialism as effect of Mississippi immigrant rights movement
  - Shifts at cultural and political elite level
  - Suggestive evidence from community-level work

- Movements as central players in racial formation, reception and racialization of new immigrants

- Affirmational element of racialization
  - Potential basis for coalition building

- On-going work
  - Effects of movements dependent upon structural and relational characteristics of activist networks
  - Alabama, Georgia, and North Carolina
Thank You

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