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The "Nature" of American Immigration Restrictionism

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Abstract *How do commitments to nature factor into the American immigration restrictionist movement? This question initially appears odd; in contemporary American politics, environmentalism is generally assumed to be a value of the political left, and restrictionism of the right. Through an in-depth analysis of the American "environmental restrictionist" logic, this article suggests that the reality is more complicated. First, the historical trajectory of the relationship between nature and restrictionism is outlined, demonstrating that commitments to particular conceptions of nature have long intersected with American restrictionism. Second, textual analysis, semi-structured interviews, and content analysis are employed in analyzing how contemporary activists making the environmental argument against immigration conceptualize nature and relate it to foundational ideals of political community, political economy, and governance. Three discourses of environmental restrictionism are identified, and the role that nature plays in each is detailed. The article concludes by reflecting on the resonance of these "natures" with mainstream American greens, and offering several prescriptions for environmentalists concerned with inclusion and social justice.*

In April 2012, viewers tuning into "progressive" American television news station MSNBC were faced with a surprise. In celebration of Earth Day, the immigration-reduction organization, Californians for Population Stabilization (CAPS), had launched a national advertising campaign aimed at persuading American "liberals"[1] that immigration is a driving force behind the contemporary global ecological crisis:

> Concerned about America's ecological footprint? Then you should be concerned about immigration. Sound crazy? Immigrants produce four times more carbon emissions in the US than in their home countries. Left alone, immigration will drive a population increase equal to the entire American West in just thirty years. Reducing immigration won't solve global warming, but it is part of the solution.[2]

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[1] I use the term "liberal" not to refer to the classical political economic ideology, but the mainstream American left.

[2] The advertisement was initially released in California in 2008, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eDFFbiIbm2c&feature = player_embedded>.

The logic being advanced by CAPS is not altogether new: environmental activists are well aware of the hotly contested Sierra Club and Earth First! debates that have waxed and waned from the mid 1970's until today; several of the so-called fathers of the modern American environmental movement—including Garrett Hardin, Edward Abbey, David Brower, Gaylord Nelson, Paul Ehrlich, and Dave Foreman—were or are themselves restrictionists; and the logic has even attracted the attention of several "liberal" members of Congress who have echoed environmental restrictionist talking points in legislative debates.

What is new is the institutional setting within which these debates are occurring. Since the Sierra Club's last major internal debate in 2005, discussions of immigration within environmental organizations themselves have quieted, and the institutional terrain for these debates has shifted. For example, in 2008, a coalition calling itself "America's Leadership Team for Long-Range Population-Immigration-Resource Planning" (ALT) placed a series of advertisements in left-leaning news sources (including *Mother Jones*, *The Nation*, and the *New York Times*) proclaiming that immigration poses a grave threat to the natural environment of the United States (US).[3] In 2009, Roy Beck of immigration-reduction organization NumbersUSA, appeared before the US Senate Judiciary Committee testifying against a bill that would have provided green cards to same-sex partners of US citizens on the grounds that "every new immigrant increases the total U.S. carbon footprint and ecological footprint."[4] And in 2012, an organization calling itself Progressives for Immigration Reform launched the "Immigration Environmental Impact Statement Project," seeking justification for immigration restrictions under the US National Environmental Policy Act.[5] Add to this the recent CAPS advertisement, and a clear trend emerges: the environmental restrictionist logic is now being forcefully advanced by traditional immigration-reduction organizations, and newly emerging alliances between greens and immigration-reduction organizations formed for the specific purpose of promoting restrictionist policies. "Nature," it seems, occupies an increasingly prominent position in the American immigration restriction movement—particularly in materials geared toward public consumption.

But what, exactly, is "nature" for restrictionists? How does it intersect with narratives of political community, political economy, and governance? And how is it strategically deployed to broaden and/or deepen restrictionist alliances? While the American immigration/environment debate has received attention elsewhere,[6] I contend that commentators have yet to fully grasp the variety of

[3] There were seven advertisements in total that appeared in fifteen news sources. See, for instance: <http://www.capsweb.org/content_elements/recent_advertising/Water_Print.pdf>.

[4] Roy Beck, "Hearing on S. 224," Senate Judiciary Committee (J-111–27), June 3, 2009, *U.S. Government Printing Office*, <http://www.judiciary.senate.gov/hearings/testimony.cfm?id=e655f9e2809e5476862f735da14a4359&wit_id = e655f9e2809e5476862f735da14a4359-1-5>.

[5] See <http://immigrationeis.org/>.

[6] David Reimers, *Unwelcome Strangers: American Identity and the Turn Against Immigration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); see also Betsy Hartmann, "Conserving Racism: The Greening of Hate at Home and Abroad," *Different Takes* 27 (2004), pp. 1–4; Roldan Muradian, "Immigration and the Environment: Underlying Values and Scope of Analysis," *Ecological Economics* 59:2 (2006), pp. 208–213; Leslie King, "Ideology, Strategy and Conflict in a Social Movement Organization: The Sierra Club Immigration Wars," *Mobilization* 13:1 (2008), pp. 45–61; Lisa Sun-Hee Park and David Pellow, *The Slums*

ways that commitments to nature are woven into restrictionist thought. This both disables effective responses to environmental restrictionism and opens up space for anti-immigrant logics to subtly influence well-intentioned greens.

My analysis proceeds in two parts. First, I outline the historical trajectory of the relationship between nature and restrictionism, asserting that nature has frequently been constructed through epistemological practices closely bound up in culturally essentialist ideals of nationhood. This has led numerous "eco-centrists"[7] to adopt anti-immigrant positions and has rendered particular environmental discourses easily appropriable by anti-immigrant interests. Second, I employ textual analysis, semi-structured interviews and content analysis in analyzing how contemporary activists making the environmental argument against immigration conceptualize nature and relate it to foundational ideals of political community, political economy, and governance. I identify three discourses of environmental restrictionism, and I detail the role that nature plays in each. I conclude by reflecting on the resonance of these "natures" with mainstream American greens, and offering several prescriptions for environmentalists concerned with inclusion and social justice.

The Historical Trajectory of Nature and Immigration Restrictionism

The historical intersections between nature and social exclusion have been widely detailed: early naturalists—like Linnaeus and Buffon—employed emerging concepts of biology to build systems of racial classification that they deemed objective and natural;[8] Malthusian political economy constructed a nature of scarcity and competition that enabled England to portray poverty in Ireland, India, and elsewhere as a product of over-population (a tendency of "uncivilized" populations) rather than colonial coercion;[9] from this Malthusian nature, Darwin derived his theories of natural selection and survival of the fittest—concepts that were soon employed to explain away inequalities of race and class;[10] and, in the US, the romantic ideal of experiencing "empty wilderness" in order to cultivate national subjectivity formed a vital cog in a racialized "frontier mentality" that

Footnote 6 continued
of Aspen: Immigrants vs. the Environment in America's Eden (New York: NYU Press, 2011); and Ian Angus and Simon Butler, *Too Many People? Population, Immigration and the Environmental Crisis* (Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2011).

[7] "Eco-centrists" believe that nature has intrinsic value above and beyond any use humans can derive from it. I use the scare quotes to indicate my position that even the most radical eco-centric conception of nature is influenced by cultural norms.

[8] Richard Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Western Environmentalism, 1600–1860* (New York and Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 163; see also Lisbet Koerner, *Linnaeus: Nature and Nation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

[9] Eric Ross, *The Malthus Factor: Poverty, Politics and Population in Capitalist Development* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), pp. 31–32; see also Fred Pearce, *The Coming Population Crash and Our Planet's Surprising Future* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2010), p. 58.

[10] Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994); see also Anna Bramwell, *Ecology in the Twentieth Century: A History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989).

legitimated the erasure of claims to nature made by Native Americans, Hispanos, African Americans, and eastern European immigrants.[11]

Less understood, however, are the connections between commitments to nature and commitments to movements for immigration restriction. In the following section I seek to outline the historical trajectory through which commitments to nature have overlapped with efforts to restrict immigration. The aim of this section is not to provide a comprehensive historical overview of environmental restrictionism (something that exceeds the scope of this article), but to establish that there exist historical intersections between certain varieties of environmentalism and immigration restrictionism, and to outline how these intersections have shifted through time. My analysis begins in the early twentieth century—with what I term "first-wave" environmental restrictionism—where efforts to protect nature first explicitly converged with efforts to restrict immigration, largely through the intermediary of eugenics. I then observe that the 1940s marked a shift to "second-wave" environmental restrictionism, where the relationship between nature and restrictionism took on new discursive forms that were not as *overtly* connected to racist and nativist logics.

First-Wave Environmental Restrictionism: Natural/National Purity

The demographic flux of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries changed the racial composition of the US, provoking an anti-immigrant backlash that both seeped into and was reinforced by popular environmental thinking. In the early decades of the twentieth century, romantics expressed fear that immigrants were unable to appreciate wilderness, as well as a revulsion against the closeness to nature exhibited by Southern, Central, and Eastern European immigrants.[12] Specifically, immigrant populations were labeled "pot hunters"—a term referring to those who practiced subsistence hunting—and deemed threats to bird and animal populations.[13] References to *savage* Italian pot hunters abound in the journal *Forest and Stream*, and were echoed by early greens like William Hornaday[14] and Madison Grant.[15] These concerns spurred some states to define

[11] William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," *Environmental History* 1:1 (1996), pp. 7–28; see also Mark Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1999); Karl Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001); and Jake Kosek, *Understories: the Political Life of Forests in Northern New Mexico* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).

[12] Adam Rome, "Nature Wars, Culture Wars: Immigration and Environmental Reform in the Progressive Era," *Environmental History* 13 (2008), pp. 433–435.

[13] Ibid., 434–436.

[14] Hornaday was a member of the Audubon Society and Boone and Crockett Club. He was also director of the New York Zoological Park, where he famously displayed Congolese pygmy, Ota Benga, in a cage. See, Jonathan Spiro, *Defending the Master Race: Conservation, Eugenics and the Legacy of Madison Grant* (Burlington, VT: University of Vermont Press, 2009).

[15] I detail Grant's environmentalist, eugenicist, and nativist credentials below. See, Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*; see also, Garland Allen, "'Culling the Herd': Eugenics and the Conservation Movement in the United States, 1900–1940," *Journal of the History of Biology* (March 2012), pp. 31–72.

hunting as a privilege of citizenship, and others to institute a tiered system of hunting fees designed to make the practice unaffordable for "foreigners."[16]

Romantic efforts to protect a wilderness tinged with race and class were buttressed by the widespread popularity of the social Darwinian "science" of eugenics.[17] Interestingly, proponents of eugenics were not always far-right conservatives; many were opposed to traditionalism and militarism, and aligned with ecological science and the "Progressive" political ideology.[18] For example, eugenics occupied a prominent place in the Progressive[19] agenda of Teddy Roosevelt. Roosevelt's "New Nationalism" speech, written by Gifford Pinchot, the first chief of the Forest Service, articulated the interconnections between nature, race, and nationalism in stark terms:

> Of all the questions which can come before this nation . . . there is none which compares in importance with the great central task of leaving this land even a better land for our descendants than it is for us, and training them into a better race to inhabit the land and pass it on.[20]

Pinchot, along with a prestigious group of scientists and social activists, also submitted a three volume National Conservation Commission report to Roosevelt, entitled *National Vitality, Its Wastes and Conservation*:

> If our nation cares to make any provision for its grandchildren and its grandchildren's grand-children, this provision must include conservation in all its branches—but above all, the conservation of the racial stock itself.[21]

The report included a chapter entitled, "Conservation through Heredity" that detailed and voiced support for the "science of eugenics." According to journalist Charles Wohlforth, "Roosevelt transmitted the report to Congress with the statement that it was 'one of the most fundamentally important documents ever laid before the American people'".[22]

Pinchot was far from the only environmentally active proponent of eugenics in the US. The nation's earliest environmental organization, the Boone and Crockett Club (1887) included eugenicists Henry Fairfield Osborn, Hornaday, Grant, and

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[16] John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860–1925* (New Brunswick, NJ and London: Rutgers University Press, 1983), p. 162; see also Rome, "Nature Wars, Culture Wars," pp. 435–436.

[17] Although ideals of romanticism (where nature is plentiful, intrinsically valuable, and sublime) exist, in many respects, in opposition to Darwinism (where nature is scarce, violent, and rendered intelligible through science), the two came to intersect in the writings of certain greens (like Grant and Goethe) through a shared commitment to *purity*—both national and natural.

[18] Bramwell, *Ecology in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 49–53.

[19] To be clear, I am referring here to the Progressive movement (which, in today's terminology, would not be considered "progressive" in many respects).

[20] Theodore Roosevelt and Ernest Hamlin Abbott, *The New Nationalism* (New York: The Outlook Company, 1910), pp. 21–22, cited by Charles Wohlforth, "Conservation and Eugenics: The Environmental Movement's Dirty Secret," *Orion Magazine*, July/August 2010, p. 28.

[21] Irving Fischer, "Report on National Vitality, its Wastes and Conservation," in *Bulletin 30 of the Committee of One Hundred on National Health* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1909), p. 126, quoted by Wohlforth, "Conservation and Eugenics," pp. 24–25.

[22] Wohlforth, "Conservation and Eugenics," pp. 24–25.

Roosevelt himself. Political geographer Gray Brechin observes that "[m]embers of the Club became key players in the American Museum of Natural History, New York Zoological Park (Bronx Zoo) and San Francisco's Save-the-Redwoods League, as well as eugenics and immigration restriction movements."[23] Examining the political commitments of members of these organizations, it becomes clear that the pull of eugenics was not limited to conservationists espousing progressive ideals of efficiency, scientific rationalism, and economic development; it extended into preservationism as well.[24] In her analysis of the relationship between eugenics and early environmental efforts in California, Historian Alexandra Minna Stern finds that eugenic anxieties of racial pollution and "species endangerment" were highly influential in the early years of the Sierra Club, Sempervirens Club, and Save-the-Redwoods League.[25] Prominent members of these organizations, including Grant, Charles Goethe, John C. Merriam, and David Starr Jordan, viewed the preservation of nature as intimately bound up in the preservation of the national race. Reflecting on the relationship between the race and the redwood, Stern writes:

> [T]he redwood—its stateliness, grandeur, and perseverance—represented the "great race." Like Anglo-Saxon America, which was being engulfed by hordes of defectives and mongrels . . . the redwood was imperiled by "race suicide" from rampant logging, urban encroachment, and human ignorance.[26]

Underscoring this commitment to natural and national purity, Goethe, an avid member of virtually every environmental and eugenics organization in existence in the early 1920s, created the Immigration Study Committee to lobby for immigration restrictions from Mexico (home to a "degenerate race" of "peons" and "savages" that would only "mongrelize" its Nordic superiors).[27]

Even more notoriously, a co-founder of the Save the Redwoods League, Madison Grant (a preservationist who also founded the New York Zoological Park), wrote *The Passing of the Great Race* where he cautioned that white Americans "lack the instinct of self-preservation in a racial sense" and argued that "[u]nless such an instinct develops their race will perish, as do all organisms which disregard this primary law of nature."[28] Hitler referred to this work as his bible,[29] and in his seminal work on American nativism, John Higham called Grant "intellectually the most important nativist in recent American history."[30]

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[23] Gray Brechin, "Conserving the Race: Natural Aristocracies, Eugenics, and the US Conservation Movement," *Antipode* 28:3 (1996), p. 233.

[24] During the famous debate over the damming of Hetch Hetchy, Grant and Hornaday split with Gifford Pinchot. Grant and Pinchot reportedly "never spoke to each other again." Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, p. 61.

[25] Alexandra Minna Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), pp. 119–120; see also Allen, "Culling the Herd."

[26] Stern, *Eugenic Nation*, p. 124.

[27] Allen, "Culling the Herd," pp. 53–56; see also Tony Platt, "Engaging the Past: Charles M. Goethe, American Eugenics, and Sacramento State University," *Social Justice* 32:2 (2005), pp. 17–33.

[28] Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), p. 90.

[29] Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, p. 1.

[30] Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, p. 155.

While I do not wish to draw too close an equivalence between environmentalism, eugenicism, and nativism—each of which has a distinct and heterogeneous history—the three converged in this period in ways that had profound policy implications. Harry Laughlin, president of the Eugenics Record Office was made the "expert eugenics agent" of the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, while Representative Albert Johnson, a close confidant of Grant, deployed eugenic arguments in advocating for the inclusion of racial quotas in the immigration overhaul that he sponsored.[31] In addition, Charles Davenport, the founder of the Eugenics Records Office and member of several early environmental organizations aggressively lobbied Congress to pass eugenics-inspired immigration restrictions.[32] Ultimately, this thinking was reflected in Calvin Coolidge's signing statement accompanying the Immigration Act of 1924 (Johnson-Reed Act):

> There are racial considerations too grave to be brushed aside for sentimental reasons . . . Quality of mind and body suggests that observance of ethnic law is as great a necessity to a nation as immigration law.[33]

Second-Wave Environmental Restrictionism: Neo-Malthusian Emergence

Wohlforth asserts that "World War II's horrors saved our country from going farther down the eugenic path."[34] Eric Ross amends this observation, arguing that the war did not put an end to eugenics, but forced such concerns to be packaged in more subtle, nuanced ways: "As eugenic concerns were muted in the shadow of the Third Reich, environmental catastrophism became the principle vehicle for Malthusian fears."[35] The influence of eugenics, in fact, extends well beyond this restrictionist era to debates over the environmental impacts of population that would, to use Paul Ehrlich's phrase, "explode," in the 1960s. On the one hand, eugenics gave rise to the institutional structures—for example, the Population Reference Bureau, Population Council, Office of Population Research, and Pioneer Fund—through which Darwinian and Malthusian logics would be advanced, and the eugenics-inspired Immigration Act of 1924 solidified numerical restriction as the norm in immigration policy.[36] On the other hand, collective memory of the atrocities of eugenicism, coupled with growing movements for liberal equality, guaranteed that romantic constructions of environmental primitivism and overt social Darwinism would have to be expressed in terms that were less explicitly racist and nativist.

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[31] Ibid., 313–314; see also Reimers, *Unwelcome Strangers*, p. 21.

[32] Davenport, a prominent naturalist, was a member of the American Bison Society and American Society of Mammalogists. Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, pp. 392–393; see also Kosek, *Understories*, pp. 153–154.

[33] Reimers, *Unwelcome Strangers*, p. 22.

[34] Wohlforth, "Conservation and Eugenics," p. 26.

[35] Ross, *The Malthus Factor*, p. 73.

[36] Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*, (Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), pp. 227–228.

This shifting political terrain is reflected in post-World War II immigration policy,[37] where reforms ended racist national origin quotas (that had primarily impacted immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe), but also institutionalized, for the first time, numerical restrictions in the Western hemisphere.[38] In order to justify these numerical restrictions, the racial anxieties that eugenics helped to bolster were recast by opponents of immigration in the terms of Cold War geopolitics. Neo-Malthusianism, popularized by the writings of William Vogt and Henry Fairfield Osborne Jr, played a central role in these efforts, functioning as an epistemological bridge through which the "teeming" populations "out there" could be connected to the ideological threats of communism. In this context, the discursive construction of migrants as potentially impure ideologically served to reinvigorate a racialized nationalism in which "Mexicans"—citizens and immigrants alike—were marked as savage, foreign threats without any overt reference to race or eugenics. In reflecting on the Hart-Cellar Act (the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965), Mae Ngai finds that while previous legislative proposals:

> had exempted Western immigration from numerical quotas . . . a group of moderates in Congress intervened in the final moments of negotiation over the legislation in 1965 . . . [and] held repeal of the national origins quotas hostage to Western Hemisphere quotas, citing "fairness" and "*worldwide population explosion*."[39]

Neo-Malthusianism, in this sense, represented both a way of strategically de-emphasizing a position that was politically and scientifically discredited, and an alternative epistemological lens that—although initially linked with eugenics—gradually gained an autonomy in scientific discourse, coming to be perceived as thoroughly "eco-centric" (even while some of its adherents, like Garrett Hardin, continued to be influenced by eugenics). As the modern American environmental movement arose, growing recognition of nature's intrinsic value thrust matters of environmental degradation onto political agendas; opening the discursive terrain linking nature, political community, political economy, and governance to new epistemological practices, but remaining in important respects wedded to the historical articulations that I have outlined. This political conjuncture set the stages for the debates over the environmental impacts of immigration that have occupied environmentalists—and non-environmentalists deploying green arguments—from the early 1970s until today. However, as I detail below, recent years have witnessed several important shifts in the institutions and discourses within which these debates occur.

Contemporary Environmental Restrictionism

The issue of immigration entered onto the modern environmentalist agenda within the largest environmental organization in the US, the Sierra Club, when longtime executive director David Brower persuaded Stanford ecologist Paul Ehrlich to write what would become a seminal work of American environment-

[37] Specifically, the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 (McCarran-Walter Act, Pub. L 82-414; 66 Stat. 163, sec. 311) and the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (Hart-Cellar Act, Pub. L 89-236; 79 Stat. 911).

[38] Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, p. 257.

[39] Ibid., 257, italics added.

alism—*The Population Bomb*.[40] Though Ehrlich did not, at this point, directly address immigration, his dire warnings over population growth spurred the club to establish a Population Committee. These anxieties over population growth writ large soon led to discussions over population growth from immigration. Out of the subsequent debates, a number of splinter groups—Zero Population Growth, Negative Population Growth, Californians for Population Stabilization, Sierrans for Population Stabilization—have emerged. The issue has also periodically erupted onto the national agenda, attracting the attention of a variety of actors, like the Council of Conservative Citizens and American Immigration Control Foundation, whose actual interest in environmentalism is unclear.[41]

What is clear, however, is that commitments to nature are a driving force behind the desire to decrease immigration among many of the architects of the contemporary American immigration-reduction movement: John Tanton began his activist career an environmentalist (inspired by writings of Population Reference Bureau) involved in the Sierra Club and League of Conservation Voters, but then founded a whole network of restrictionist organizations, including the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), The Social Contract Press, The Immigration Reform Law Institute and US English.[42] Roy Beck, of NumbersUSA, is a self-described liberal and former environmental journalist. Michael Hethmon—former legal counsel for the Immigration Reform Law Center and co-architect of Arizona's draconian immigration bill (SB1070)—was recently described by the *Washington Post* as "a former hippie" who came to the anti-immigrant movement out of fears "that immigrants would overburden the environment."[43] Philip Cafaro, President of Progressives for Immigration Reform, is a professor of environmental ethics and longtime environmental activist. The list could go on. But what, exactly, is "nature" for these restrictionist organizers? How is it articulated alongside conceptions of political community, political economy, and governance? And how do the natures of contemporary restrictionism fit into the historical trajectory that I have outlined?

Methodology

What I seek to understand in this analysis is not the simple "empirical" relationship between immigration and environmental degradation in the US—which has been studied elsewhere[44]—but how socially constructed institutions

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[40] Paul Ehrlich, *The Population Bomb* (Cutchogue, NY: Buccaneer Books, 1968).

[41] The Sierra Club held a national referendum in 1998, and Board of Directors elections from 2002–2005 were centered largely on the "immigration question."

[42] Southern Poverty Law Center, "John Tanton's Network." *Intelligence Report* 106 (2002), <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/2002/summer/the-puppeteer/john-tantons-network>.

[43] David Farhenthold, "Self-Deportation Proponents Kris Kobach, Michael Hethmon Facing Time of Trial," *Washington Post*, April 24, 2012, <http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2012-04-24/politics/35452165_1_immigration-reform-law-institute-illegal-immigrants-michael-hethmon>.

[44] Jay Squalli, "An Empirical Analysis of U.S. State-Level Immigration and Environmental Emissions," *Ecological Economics* 69 (2010), pp. 1170–1175; see also Carmel Price and Ben Feldmeyer, "The Environmental Impact of Immigration: An Analysis of the Effects of Immigrant Concentration on Air Pollution Levels," *Population Research and Policy Review* 31:1 (2012), pp. 119–140.

and ideals (for example, "the nation," "the state," "the border," "culture") influence the ways in which American restrictionists conceptualize nature, and, conversely, how particular constructions of nature (for example, Malthusian, romantic, Darwinian) influence the ways in which American restrictionists conceptualize foundational social institutions and ideals. As this case illustrates, nature is a social construction shot through with ideals of nationhood, gender, race, sexuality, and class.[45] While non-human entities retain an autonomy separate from humanity, our access to nature is irrevocably bound up in *discourse*: the "ensemble of ideas, concepts and categories through which meaning is given to social and physical phenomena and which is produced and reproduced through an identifiable set of practices."[46]

To provide insight into the "natures" of restrictionism, I turn to *discourse analysis*. Discourse analysis seeks to empirically analyze the practices of representation through which various objects (for example, "the immigrant," "the environment," "America") are invested with meaning. Central to discourse analysis is a concern with the ways in which a particular "regime of truth" or "mode of representation" makes it possible for certain individuals or groups to speak as authoritative agents on a particular issue, while relegating others to mere objects to be spoken of or for. The overarching objectives are: to decipher how various discourses are constructed; to analyze how these divergent constructions variably impact our perceptions of reality (and, in turn, serve to reconstruct that reality); to consider the modes of inclusion and exclusion present in each; and to trace how the discourses intersect and clash.

In carrying out my analysis, I relied on two primary forms of data collection: texts and interviews. First, I explored various representations of nature, political community, political economy, and governance in restrictionist websites, publications, and media appearances. Second, I conducted interviews with individuals who have publicly voiced restrictionist positions. I utilized semi-structured interview questions designed to produce data appropriate to my research questions without artificially constraining the scope of the interviewees' responses, thus providing the flexibility for unforeseen themes to arise.[47] The goal of the interviews was to clarify ideas and logics that were unclear in the texts, and, in doing so, to get a richer description of environmental restrictionist discourses.

I supplemented discourse analysis with *content analysis*, examining the websites of ten restrictionist organizations in an attempt to quantify the number of times that environmental themes arose relative to other themes (security, economy, culture, and so on) (see Table 1). While the websites of the organizations varied, I generally analyzed the homepage, the "Issues" page, the organization's

[45] Jane Bennett and William Chaloupka, *In the Nature of Things: Language, Politics and the Environment* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993); see also David Demeritt, "Being Constructive about Nature," in Noel Castree and Bruce Braun (eds), *Social Nature: Theory, Practice and Politics* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001), pp. 22–40; and Bruce Braun, *The Intemperate Rainforest: Nature, Culture, and Power on Canada's West Coast* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

[46] Maarten Hajer, *The Politics of Environmental Discourse: Ecological Modernization and the Policy Process* (Oxford, UK and New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 44.

[47] Bruce Berg, *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (Boston, MA: Pearson Education, 2007), p. 93.

Table 1. Explanation of coding

Category	Explanation	Examples of terms coded in category
Culture	Terms emphasizing national cohesion	unity, division, balkanization, assimilation, language, ethnic conflict
Politics	Terms emphasizing formal political institutions, legislation and politicians	amnesty, the Open Borders lobby, the Dream Act, the Obama Administration, Arpaio, the ICE
Economy	Terms emphasizing the American economy	development, growth, jobs, unemployment, working Americans, poor, middle class
Society	Terms emphasizing societal issues	infrastructure, quality of life, traffic jams, the public school system, housing costs, health care
Security	Terms emphasizing violent conflict (or the potential for violent conflict)	border fence, drug cartels, trafficking, terrorists, criminality
Environment	Terms emphasizing non-human entities	sprawl, open space, wilderness, national parks, biodiversity, invasive species

blog (if applicable), and any "Recommended Reading" or "Publications" pages. Content analysis served as a check on the findings generated through discursive methods, enabling me to systematically confirm (or reject) general trends that I perceived in the texts and interviews. I thus employed a strategy of "triangulation," where multiple forms of data collection allowed me to consider whether or not the data was consistent and increased the validity of my eventual conclusions.[48]

Findings: Discourses of Environmental Restrictionism

Unraveling the contours of contemporary environmental restrictionism is a complex task. To begin, recent environmental restrictionist advertising campaigns include an openly nativist organization, the American Immigration Control Foundation (AICF), that one would not expect in any environmentalist coalition; they pay virtually no attention and dedicate little time or space to environmental affairs. Additionally, far-right groups like the Council of Conservative Citizens and VDARE[49] occasionally invoke environmentalist rhetoric, but only as part of their broader projects of securing the Anglo-European civilization against incursion by non-Western forces. The Carrying Capacity Network, by virtue of its name and certain of its members, appears to be an environmentalist organization, but its substantive concerns are far closer to those expressed by nativists than mainstream environmentalists. By contrast, the Social Contract Press, NumbersUSA, the Federation for American Immigration Reform, and Californians for Population Stabilization all devote the majority of their attention to non-environmental issues (economy, security, culture), but do voice substantive

[48] Bruce Berg, *Qualitative Research Methods*, pp. 5–8.

[49] VDARE is a white nationalist webzine named after Virginia Dare, allegedly the first European child born in the new world.

concerns for environmental degradation. Finally, Progressives for Immigration Reform and Alliance for a Sustainable USA devote much of their time to environmental concerns, and have made an explicit effort to position themselves on the political left.

The institutional and discursive terrain upon which nature and restrictionism are linked is, in short, heterogeneous. For heuristic purposes, however, these variable positions can be thought of as falling into three broad discourses: (a) *social nativism*, (b) *eco-nativism*, and (c) *eco-communitarianism* (see Tables 2 and 3).

Social Nativism

White nationalist and traditional, social nativist organizations have long relied on *anthropocentric* constructions of nature to justify their exclusionary positions. The current movement is no different; nature is deployed primarily as a source of order that works to grant nativist tropes of difference epistemological legitimacy. Nature variably represents: (a) a sacred marker of God's truth, (b) a scientific truth rooted in Darwin, and/or (c) a political truth in line with the minimalist state prescribed by Locke or the "Founding Fathers." Woven throughout each of these epistemological strategies, nature is also deployed symbolically as (d) a metaphor of chaos carefully linked with non-European Others against which the crisis of Western civilization is framed. The sole thread uniting these diverse practices is an instrumental attempt to reconfigure sovereignty so that the *sacred white nation* can be secured.

Somewhat surprisingly, however, there is an ongoing—though not pervasive—dialogue on the extreme right over the role that an *eco-centric* commitment to nature might play in protecting the white nation. Take, for example, the following passage:

> We believe that the natural environment and resources of a nation are among its most precious, valuable, and irreplaceable treasures. We believe in the protection of the environment from reckless greed as well as from irresponsible government. We support the protection of truly endangered species of wildlife and areas of natural beauty.

The passage is part of the mission statement of the Council of Conservative Citizens, a white-supremacist organization that, in the same document, also insists that the US is a "part of the European Civilization and the European People and . . . the American people and government should remain European in their composition and character."[50]

In his introduction to the seminal nativist tract, *Alien Nation*, Peter Brimelow notes that his analysis of immigration has opened his mind to environmentalism, which he had previously thought of as "just another excuse for government regulation."[51] Similarly, dialogues over environmentalism on nativist websites have led to impassioned exchanges and even a form of reflexive thinking on the far-right. For example, a recent article at VDARE.com suggested that conservation

[50] Sam Francis, "Statement of Principles," Council of Conservative Citizens, 2005, <http://cofcc.org/introduction/statement-of-principles/>.

[51] Peter Brimelow, *Alien Nation: Common Sense about America's Immigration Disaster* (New York: Random House, 1995), p. 21.

Table 2. Results of content analysis

Organization	Culture	Politics	Economy	Society	Security	Environment	Total Coded	% Environment	Environment in Mission Statement?
*AIC Foundation	12	0	6	4	6	0	28	0	No
Alliance for a Sustainable USA	6	6	25	31	3	19	90	21	Yes
America's Leadership Team Coalition	5	0	3	21	0	28	57	49	n/a
*Californians for Population Stabilization	1	12	17	25	10	28	93	30	Yes
Carrying Capacity Network	21	10	10	5	4	9	59	15	Yes
Center for Immigration Studies	0	45	17	11	16	1	90	1	Yes
*Federation for American Immigration Reform	0	71	52	37	16	17	193	9	Yes
*NumbersUSA	1	19	9	7	3	8	47	17	Yes
Progressives for Immigration Reform	0	6	7	2	0	15	30	50	Yes
*Social Contract	56	54	47	46	24	65	292	22	Yes

Note: *Members of ALT Coalition

Table 3. Discourses of environmental restrictionism

	Social nativist	Eco-nativist	Eco-communitarian
Organizations	Council of Conservative Citizens, VDARE, American Immigration Control Foundation	Carrying Capacity Network, The Social Contract, restrictionist material geared toward consumption by members of organization	Progressives for Immigration Reform, NumbersUSA, Alliance for a Sustainable USA, Californians for Population Stabilization, restrictionist material geared toward public consumption
Individuals	Peter Brimelow, Virginia Abernethy, Steve Sailer	John Tanton, Garrett Hardin, Edward Abbey	William Rees, William Reyerson, Herman Daly, Roy Beck
Historical referent	First-wave restrictionism	Second-wave restrictionism	Third-wave restrictionism
Crisis	Nation imperiled by non-European cultures	Nation/nature imperiled by population growth	Natural places and communities that protect them imperiled by neoliberalism
Nature	*Source of order* (variably legitimated by God's law, scientific law, and/or political law)	*Signifier of civilization* (that is, overpopulated "third world" cultures do not value wilderness)	*Marker of "progressive" nationalism* (that is, nation's "wild places" exist in opposition to "global spaces" of neoliberalism)
	Symbol of anarchy (for example, "waves" of refugees)	*Socio-biological* truth ("cultural carrying capacity")	*Marker of "progressive" internationalism* (that is, global nature threatened by spread of American consumptive patterns to immigrants)
Political community	Anglo-European nation	Anglo-European nation	Multicultural, intergenerational, interspecies nation
Role within environmental restrictionist alliance	Provides hyper-mobilized nativist base	Provides discursive and institutional bridges linking environmentalists and nativists	Appeals to greens concerned with social implications of immigration reduction

was a traditional value of the Right, and, more importantly, one that could serve to "shore up the demographic base of the Republican Party without alienating minorities."[52] A respondent to the article made the following argument, drawing a distinction between "environmentalism" and "conservationism":

> I believe the Right is quite correct in distancing itself from so-called "environmentalism." After all, as they say in Europe, "the green tree has red roots." The roots of the environmentalist and conservationist movements are indeed radically different. The former is unquestionably statist, anti-sovereignty, egalitarian, interventionist, irrational. The latter is its approximate antithesis . . . Speaking for myself . . . I find environmentalism repulsive and conservation a necessity.[53]

This statement is reflective of nativist attempts to draw eco-centrism into efforts to reconfigure sovereignty toward exclusionary ends: a loosely defined "nature" is being woven into a militarized, nostalgia-laden iteration of sovereignty—one with an idealized vision of a racially and cultural homogeneous "nation," linked to a "state" that is conceptualized in libertarian terms as *the foremost threat to liberty* (while the "wilderness" the state protects is paradoxically ensconced in the national imaginary).

More frequently, however, when social nativists express concern over the non-human realm, it is only out of an instrumental effort to advance unambiguously xenophobic, racist ends that portray non-whites as savage. A recent Council of Conservative Citizens article typifies this approach:

> An animal preserve in Zimbabwe set up by white charities was destroyed by Zimbabweans who slaughtered over a thousand rare animals . . . All of Sub-Saharan Africa's animal preserves were originally established by white governments and charities . . . Efforts to preserve wildlife around the world are led and financed by whites. Not that white people are ever given any credit for it.[54]

Along similar lines, the website, "Majority Rights" recently initiated a dialogue amongst its followers on the relationship between American white nationalism and the environment. While there was significant disagreement, the responses from two commenters on the message board were telling:

> Basically environmentalism can only mean one thing, to stop all 3rd world births and immigration . . . A genuine environmentalist would have zero policy differences with a racist, both true believers should be trying to stop immigration and lower birth rates in the worst polluted areas of earth.
>
> Kind of ironic that White people are the biggest promoters of preserving everything except White people and their environment . . . Whites will gather, raise money and

[52] Steve Sailer, "Conservatives versus Conservation: How the GOP Drives Off White Voters," April 16, 2001, <http://www.vdare.com/articles/conservatives-vs-conservation-how-the-gop-drives-off-white-voters>.

[53] Brian Dunaway, "A Reader Comments on Environmentalism vs. Conservation," April 28, 2001, <http://www.vdare.com/node/18443>.

[54] Council of Conservative Citizens, "Another Animal Preserve Wiped out in Africa," September 28, 2010, <http://cofcc.org/2010/09/another-animal-preserve-wiped-out-in-africa/>.

> move in political activist mode to preserve the natural habitat of the Red Crested-Web Footed Lake Loon, yet raise not an eyebrow as Jolly Old England mutates into Eurabia.[55]

In these responses, it is not population growth or fertility writ large that is the problem, it is the population growth caused by immigrants and the fertility of non-white populations. In fact, reminiscent of eugenics-era "first-wave" restrictionism, the white population, according to many nativists, needs to be augmented. "Our" national emergency requires intervention at the level of the population—differentially managing fertility, arresting movement, and imbuing "blood relations" with the appropriate cultural norms needed to restore the natural order. If "the state" is to work in service of the nation, it needs to recognize this biopolitical necessity and take appropriate action.

In sum, social nativists depend upon a variety of epistemological strategies that deploy "nature" as a marker of order; however, they are quite ambivalent in their dealings with nature as an intrinsically valuable entity. There is no logical reason why social nativists cannot be greens, but given today's American political terrain—where environmentalism is perceived to be so intimately bound up in liberal, democratic politics—a substantive shift amongst white nationalists in the near future toward environmentalism is not terribly likely. As of now, their muted attempts to instrumentally appropriate nature are so clearly bound up in their racist nationalism, that they are not likely to influence many environmentalists (or, for that matter, moderates who do not consider themselves greens, but care about clean water or air). To appeal to these interests, social nativists are being forced to turn to other discourses, and to alliances with groups who are not so obviously nativist.

Eco-Nativism

As several opponents of restrictionism have recognized, certain restrictionists have long histories of environmental activism and appear to be genuine in their concern for nature.[56] "Eco-nativists" express viewpoints that overlap in important ways with the anxieties of social nativists, yet also devote significant attention to environmental concerns, and come from backgrounds of environmental activism.

Appeals to eco-nativism commence by emphasizing the importance of national wilderness as a part of "our" national heritage, an observation closely followed by a bevy of demographic projections that demonstrate how this ideal is threatened by over-crowding. For example, one prominent eco-nativist, Frosty Wooldridge, was recently featured on a documentary series entitled, *Tomorrow's*

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[55] Majority Rights, "Nationalism and the Environment," December 2008, <http://majorityrights.com/weblog/comments/nationalism_and_the_environment/>.

[56] Reimers, *Unwelcome Strangers*; see also Rajani Bhatia, "Green or Brown? White Nativist Environmental Movements," in Abby Ferber (ed.), *Home-Grown Hate: Gender and Organized Racism* (New York and London, UK: Routledge, 2004), pp. 194–214; see also Muradian, "Immigration and the Environment"; King, "Ideology, Strategy and Conflict"; and John Hannigan, "Implacable Foes or Strange Bedfellows? The Promise and Pitfalls of Eco-Nationalism in a Globalized World," in Trevor Harrison and Slobodan Drakulic (eds), *Against Orthodoxy: Studies in Nationalism* (Vancouver and Toronto, Canada: UBC Press, 2011), pp. 314–332.

America, as an environmental activist seeking to raise attention to the looming national population crisis: "Overpopulation," he proclaimed, "will become the single greatest issue in 21st century America and we must stabilize population in order to solve it."[57] In an interview with the author, Wooldridge demonstrated passion for the topic of overpopulation and recited statistics at an impressive clip:

> Each time you add one new person, that's 19.4 acres of ecological footprint . . . we're adding 100 million more by 2035 . . . India will be 1.6 billion within forty years . . . China will be 1.5 billion by 2050 . . . [58]

Contextualizing Wooldridge's numerical barrage is a constant citation of a chaotic "Third World" that is argued to provide a mirror into "our" futures. Wooldridge, who says he has been involved in environmental issues since attending the first Earth Day celebration, recounted to me that it was not until visiting China and Bangladesh that he became truly aware of the connections between population growth, immigration, and environmental degradation:

> It wasn't till '84 when I walked on the wall of China . . . China is wall to wall people . . . India is wall to wall . . . Bangladesh has 157 million in a landmass the size of Colorado.[59]

In describing his encounters in the "Third World," Wooldridge makes it clear that "we" are not immune from the chaos wrought by the cultural practice of overpopulation:

> I have seen the enemy [and] I know what is coming . . . Add 200 million people, and we will be Bangladesh: illiterate, ignorant, especially if you add rituals . . . cockfighting, female genital mutilation, dog fighting . . . It gets really nasty when incompatible cultures are brought up in a First World environment.[60]

And while relying upon passionate appeals to secure romantic wilderness from the fate of the anarchy and savagery lurking outside "our" bounds, eco-nativists frequently deploy ecological concepts, such as carrying capacity, to embed their anxieties within a more scientific register. Taking a cue from Garrett Hardin,[61] the organization Carrying Capacity Network displays the definition of "carrying capacity" prominently on their homepage: "the number of individuals who can be supported in a given area within natural resource limits and without degrading the natural, social, cultural and economic environment for present and future generations."[62] Working from this definition, the apparent incommensurability of commitments to both nativism and nature is resolved through the construction of a grand "problem" that is argued to be responsible for

[57] *Tomorrow's America.* Discussion Series, 2010, "Episode 2: How Much Growth is Too Much?" <http://www.tomorrowsamerica.com/discussion/episode-2/>.

[58] Interview with Frosty Wooldridge, May 19, 2011.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Bethany Kohoutek, "Border Wars Go Green," *Rocky Mountain Bullhorn*, December 16, 2004, quoting Frosty Wooldridge.

[61] Hardin was a former director of the American Eugenics Society who once accepted a $29,000 grant from the racist Pioneer Fund. Adam Miller, "The Pioneer Fun: Bankrolling the Professors of Hate," *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* 6 (1994/5), p. 60.

[62] Carrying Capacity Network, "Homepage," 2010, <http://www.carryingcapacity.org/>.

environmental and societal declines alike: a sweeping pro-growth ethos that fails to entertain the possibility of cultural, political economic, and environmental "limits to growth."

Citations of cultural carrying capacity abound in eco-nativist works, often in ways that stray dramatically from the scientific jargon of Hardin. For instance, despite including "resource conservation" as one of its five missions, the Carrying Capacity Network dedicates the vast majority of its space to detailing instances of *cultural* pollution:

> Practices which impair or destroy fundamental cultural values impair the sustainability of a nation . . . Among cultural values essential to the sustainability of the United States are, for example, Freedom of Speech, Rule of Law, and Respect for a shared Heritage and English Language—all basic to social cohesion, national unity and national preservation.[63]

The employment of cultural carrying capacity enables nature to function as a nodal point, linking together ecologically minded thinkers with traditional, social nativists through the privilege afforded to an essentialized national culture. At the same time, this commitment to carrying capacity continues to work as a progressive signifier that allows the discourse of eco-nativism to disassociate itself from nativist groupings in the public psyche.

The potential appeal of the eco-nativist narrative is further enhanced by the deployment of popular environmental terminology. In a recent public presentation, Stuart Hurlbert, of Californians for Population Stabilization, began by employing a quotation by Rene Dubos, advisor to the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment: "ecological consciousness should begin at home." Or, as it is more often put, "think globally, act locally."[64] While such terminology is common amongst environmentalists, Hurlbert weds this green ideal to a territorially-bound national community by turning to Hardin's insistence that "[w]e will make no progress with population problems . . . until we deglobalize them."[65] In order to reject the counter-argument—that population is a global problem and "we" have an ethical obligation to all living beings (immigrants included) by virtue of our common ecological interconnection—Hurlbert turns to Hardin's "lifeboat ethics." The metaphor, from a 1974 essay, is a simple one: there is only so much room on "our" lifeboat and, in order to sustain any quality of life, "we" simply cannot allow any of those swimming in the waters alongside us onboard. Hardin, thus, abstracts the social Darwinian notion of survival of the fittest upwards to extend to nation states; a move that he justifies through an appeal to orthodox international relations theory:

> All population controls must be applied locally . . . For one nation to attempt to impose its ethical principles on another is to *violate national sovereignty* and endanger international peace.[66]

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[63] Carrying Capacity Network, "Cultural Marxism: A Threat to the USA?" Action Alert, July 2010, <http://www.carryingcapacity.org/alerts/alert0710.html>.

[64] Hurlbert's presentation can be publicly accessed at: <http://www.capsweb.org/content.php?id=56&menu_id = 7&menu_item_id = 60>.

[65] Garrett Hardin, "There is No Global Population Problem," 1989, <http://www.garretthardinsociety.org/articles/art_no_global_pop_problem.html>.

[66] Ibid.

Through this logic, the problem of immigration is transformed into a crisis of sovereignty. The population catastrophes on the horizon necessitate "mutual coercion, mutually agreed upon."[67] The (Anglo-European) nation provides the mutual agreement, and "the state," if it is to be legitimate, must deploy its coercive capacity to enforce this agreement. With this, it becomes clear why followers of Hardin link up with followers of social nativists like Pat Buchanan and Peter Brimelow. There is little paradox here at all; their logics converge in spite of their divergent frames of nature. What these Darwinian, Hobbesian, and conservative discourses have in common is the overriding faith that social and natural order and equilibrium are to be found in the nation state. And in the evolution of the nation state, excluding immigrants is natural. In this regard, the use of popular environmental terminology masks the deployment of social Darwinian ideals that work to distance the national environmental subject from any ethical obligation to immigrant populations. Eco-nativism thus continues along a discursive pathway put into place by "second-wave" environmental restrictionists; beneath the objective veneer of neo-Malthusian population anxieties lay scientifically and ethically dubious commitments to cultural primitivism and lifeboat ethics.

Eco-Communitarianism

Despite the eco-nativist move toward "eco-centrism," the cultural essentializations prevalent in the discourse are unlikely to persuade the "liberals" that environmental restrictionists need to expand their coalition. Environmental restrictionists recognize this, and are turning to alternative strategies. As Figure 1 illustrates, the organizations comprising the aforementioned "America's Leadership Team" advertising campaign have widely varying commitments to environmental protection, and yet the coalition's advertisements systematically downplayed concerns over culture and security in favor of emphasizing environmental health. This campaign reflects the shift to a new environmental restrictionist discourse: eco-communitarianism.

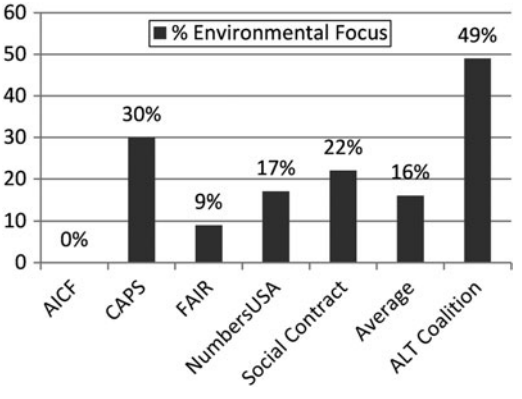

Figure 1. Percentage environmental focus—individual organizations versus "America's Leadership Team" coalition

[67] Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," 1968, <http://www.garretthardinsociety.org/articles/art_tragedy_of_the_commons.html>.

Eco-communitarianism plays ontological, epistemological, and strategic roles within the restrictionist alliance. On the one hand, this is the lens that many Sierra Club restrictionists, in addition to organizations like Alliance for a Sustainable USA and Progressives for Immigration Reform, employ to understand the relationship between immigration and environmental degradation. In this sense, examination of the eco-communitarian discourse provides insight into the ontologies and epistemologies through which environmental restrictionism advances among mainstream environmentalists and organizations that position themselves on the left of the American political spectrum. On the other hand, however, eco-communitarianism is also the logic being advanced by a number of social and eco-nativist organizations in their materials geared toward public consumption. This suggests that eco-communitarianism plays a strategic role in the efforts of nativists to expand their anti-immigrant coalition into the ranks of contemporary "progressivism."

Eco-communitarianism differs from eco-nativism in several crucial respects. To begin, unlike the libertarian political economic perspective of nativist groupings, eco-communitarians embed their anxieties over population growth in a forceful critique of neoliberal economic policies. In his 2001 Congressional testimony, Bill Elder, of Sierrans for Population Stabilization, articulated the damage caused by placing priority on the economy over the environment: "Of course, some economic interests with a short-term outlook welcome population growth . . . [e]nvironmentalists do not, because we understand its true environmental quality-of-life and economic costs."[68] This sharp distinction between "the economic" and "the environmental" animates a zero-sum logic that is a hallmark of eco-communitarianism. In an interview with the author, William Ryerson, former President of Progressives for Immigration Reform and the Population Media Center, spoke at length about the ways in which supporters of the *Wall Street Journal* and *Forbes* lobby for immigration on the grounds that the influx of cheap labor will drive economic growth.[69] Marilyn Chandler DeYoung, Chair of CAPS, concurred in remarking to me that the "business community is very reluctant to give up the cheap labor that they've had access to for so long."[70]

This opposition to neoliberalism is itself not unique, as the dominance of neoliberalism is contested by many on both the left and right. For opponents on both sides of the political spectrum, the question that emerges is: how do "we" articulate "our" systems of governance and political communities in such a way as to allow beneficial flows to pass through territorial boundaries, while blocking flows that hamper "our" ability to organize social life toward the end(s) that "we" deem acceptable? For contemporary American progressives, in particular, an additional question necessitates consideration: how do we do so, without harming those populations that are already marginalized? What is novel about eco-communitarianism is the carefully crafted answer that is provided to this latter question, and the ways in which nature is folded into the response.

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[68] Bill Elder, "U.S. Population and Immigration," Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims, of the Committee on Judiciary, House of Representatives (74–238 PS), August 2, 2001, <http://commdocs.house.gov/committees/judiciary/hju74238.000/hju74238_0f.htm>.

[69] Interview with William Ryerson, October 17, 2011.

[70] Interview with Marilyn Chandler DeYoung, May 23, 2011.

Eco-communitarians begin by distancing themselves from the neo-Malthusian excesses that typify eco-nativism, recognizing that consumption plays a major role in producing environmental degradation. In fact, concerns over increased consumption are frequently linked with America's "global obligation" to ameliorate the crisis of global warming. For example, a CAPS advertisement appeared in *Roll Call* under the headline: "Mass Immigration and Global Warming: Gives the Term Melting Pot a Whole New Meaning." The text continues:

> America leads the world in many different categories and capacities. Unfortunately, when it comes to global warming, we're leading the world in the wrong direction. The US generates more greenhouse gas emissions and pollution than any country. The root cause? Out of control immigration growth fueled by mass immigration.[71]

Moving away from the insular nationalism of nativists, this statement expresses an internationalist ethos that demonstrates concern for the global environment. To decrease destructive *non-human flows*, like carbon dioxide, "we" need to block the incursion of "foreign" *human flows.* This, according to eco-communitarians, will allow "us" to secure the approval of an international community that functions through a morality of state-centricity.

Cementing this emphasis on environmental nationalism as a bulwark against neoliberal globalization, eco-communitarians appeal to romantic attachments to "wild places." Place, in the eco-communitarian narrative, represents "a deep attachment to specific geographies fashioned by repeated interactions that provide both the context and content for the construction of personal and cultural identity."[72] Following this line of thought, Cafaro links protection of "place"—specifically, the *natural place*—with patriotism, or love of "the fatherland":

> Objectively, one place is not more important than the other. But for me, I care about particular places. They're the places I know. They are the places that I can engage to protect within the political framework . . . I'm a patriot, I think. I care about my country. I care about the country that my children are going to live in most likely, and my grandchildren. More than I care about other places. And I think that's a very powerful motivator for people.[73]

Reinforcing this ecological patriotism, and providing a justification for restrictionism, is a constant depiction of impending environmental crisis, and an assertion that the ethical obligation liberals feel toward immigrants needs to be *suspended* in order to save nature. As an "America's Leadership Team" advertisement in the *New York Times* put it:

> Either we opt for preserving the quality of life that has attracted so many millions in the past by limiting some in the future. Or we continue to accept millions, knowing that our children and grandchildren will continue to pay a huge price . . . Nobody

[71] See <http://www.capsweb.org/content_elements/recent_advertising/mass_immigration.jpg>.

[72] Robert Chapman, "Confessions of a Malthusian Restrictionist," *Ecological Economics* 59:2 (2006), p. 216.

[73] Interview with Phil Cafaro, February 8, 2011.

> wants to totally abandon our heritage of immigration and the rich tapestry it has woven. But with more sensible numbers we could actually restore it.[74]

Robert Chapman, for instance, considers the right to a healthy national environment a "subsistence right"; in other words, a "right that is the condition for the possibility of itself and other rights."[75] The contention here is that national ecological destruction, caused by neoliberal globalization and the forces propelling it (immigrants included), is a crisis of such epic proportions that it trumps any and all social concerns, and permitting entrance to immigrants would only precipitate the ecological crisis that awaits.

Conclusion: Resisting "Third-Wave" Restrictionism

Contemporary American anti-immigrant interests are unlikely to be successful in building the broad alliance necessary to successfully enact immigration restrictions if they appeal directly to racist and culturally essentialist logics. The fact that a desire to protect the environment is, today, widely perceived as a commitment of the American left renders nature a pivotal site of discursive struggle in immigration debates—a phenomenon that those concerned with socio-ecological justice have yet to systematically explore.

My analysis proceeded in two parts. First, I observed that specific conceptions of nature have long histories of involvement with the immigration restrictionist movement. During "first-wave" restrictionism, romanticism worked to construct immigrants as environmentally savage and unable to appreciate wilderness, while social Darwinian eugenics naturalized racial hierarchies that fueled nativism. As "second-wave" restrictionism emerged, neo-Malthusianism provided an objective, "eco-centric" register through which to filter these anti-immigrant tropes. Second, I asserted that while nature plays a variety of roles in contemporary immigration discourses, there is a shift occurring. Whereas eco-nativism remains anchored in the cultural essentializations of "second-wave" environmental restrictionism, eco-communitarians de-emphasize their Malthusian bearings: they embed their opposition to growth in a forceful critique of neoliberalism, express concern over American patterns of consumption, and insist on a national obligation to protect "wild places" in a period of environmental crisis.

I thus contend that we are moving toward a "third wave" of environmental restrictionism that differs from previous iterations both institutionally and discursively. First, third-wave restrictionism is advanced not within environmental organizations but by immigration-restrictionist groups and emergent hybrids (like Progressives for Immigration Reform). Second, third-wave restrictionism employs a far more nuanced discourse—that of eco-communitarianism—that resonates with the ontological and epistemological commitments of mainstream greens and "liberals."

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[74] "America's Leadership Team for Long-Range Population-Immigration-Resource Planning," *NY Times*, September 23, 2008, p. A21.

[75] Chapman, "Confessions," p. 215.

In spite of these apparently "liberal" commitments, eco-communitarian[76] restrictionism is profoundly flawed. Within the discourse lies an internal contradiction: on the one hand, eco-communitarians recognize that immigration and environmental degradation are frequently driven by transnational political economic structures characteristic of "neoliberal globalization"; on the other hand, however, eco-communitarians collapse into a facile appeal to a national social contract in their consideration of ethical obligation. For example, while the causal forces behind migration and environmental degradation in the US–Mexico border region are complex, both must be considered in the context of the North American Free Trade Agreement, International Monetary Fund, and World Bank policies, the neoliberalization of the American state, and the militarization of the border (which environmental restrictionists, including many eco-communitarians, support). Eco-communitarians, at times, recognize the problematic nature of these institutions, but do nothing to challenge the structures and logics that enable them, instead displacing blame onto the already marginalized.[77]

In this regard, attempting to protect nature by building border walls to keep migrants out is both ineffective and ethically indefensible. The interconnections forged through transnational chains of production and consumption, international financial institutions, bilateral trade agreements, and transnational ecosystems have left us with ethical realities not easily amenable to adjudication through traditional national imaginaries. For example, there is too little water flowing into Mexico, and too much wheat; too little economic opportunity, too many conditionalities; too many guns coming in and drugs going out; too many conservative ideals centered on sovereignty and nationhood, and too few ethical flows centered on an engagement with and respect for difference. In an era in which the actions, ideas, and institutional decisions that occur in one place, at one point in time, have impacts that echo far and wide, social connection ought to be recognized as ontologically and ethically prior to political institutions.[78] In such a context, formal membership within the nation state should not be the primary criteria through which one determines ethical obligations and responsibilities.

My contention is, thus, although eco-communitarianism might initially appear a kinder, gentler restrictionism, it is, in fact, a more dangerous, insidious restrictionism; one driven by a nationalized nature that subtly disavows any ethical commitment to those populations—human and non-human—living outside the boundaries of the US. In such a context, scholars and activists concerned with social and ecological justice would do well to reflexively examine how commitments to protecting nature become bound up in ideals of political community, conceptions of governance, and narratives of political economy in ways that reinforce socially exclusionary politics. In this respect, American

[76] My criticism of eco-communitarianism here applies to eco-communitarian restrictionists *only*. There is a long and varied history of eco-centric communitarianism within environmentalism and this article cannot address the multiple iterations of bioregionalism, social ecology, and indigenous ecology that are infused with communitarian ideals.

[77] For a more extensive critique of eco-communitarian restrictionism, see: John Hultgren, "Natural Exceptions to Green Sovereignty: American Environmentalism and the 'Immigration Problem,'" *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 37:4 (2012), pp. 300–316.

[78] Iris Marion Young, "Responsibility and Global Justice: A Social Connection Model," *Social Philosophy & Policy* 23 (2005), p. 105.

debates over the environmental impacts of immigration tell us more about American "natures"—that is, how greens and their interlocutors conceptualize nature, relate it to foundational political ideals, and internalize it as part of their identities—than they do about the impacts of immigrants on "America's environment."

Moving beyond a critique of environmental restrictionism, future research ought to engage directly with the lived realities of migrant populations—human and nonhuman—in order to critically interrogate contemporary social interconnection and, in doing so, formulate an alternative, deterritorializing perspective upon which to construct a more just, inclusive environmentalism. In recognizing the socio-ecological necessity of immigration reform that includes a path to citizenship, the Sierra Club appears to be moving in this direction.[79] My prescription would be to go a step further. The migrant ought to be seen as the American environmental subject *par excellence*. By placing migrants at the center of their ontologies, epistemologies, strategies, and ethics, American environmental organizations could imbue their practice with a critical cosmopolitan ethos that severs "nature" from its nationalistic foundations, working to construct an environmentalism that is better equipped to identify the structural sources of environmental and social degradation, more ethical in its inclusion of human and non-human others, and more effective in its alliance-building.

Notes on Contributor

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[79] Michael Brune and Allison Chin, "A Path to the Future," April 25, 2013, <http://sierraclub.typepad.com/michaelbrune/2013/04/immigration.html>.