Research proposal/hypothesis

For Songs of Colonization Project

4/2/2020

Our main interest when exploring **nationalism** is how it is **expressed through colonization**.

* What *actions* do colonial soldiers take that express nationalism?
  + Violence
  + Action
  + Possess
  + NatUnity
  + Sig
* What *thoughts and feelings* do colonizers articulate that express nationalism?
  + Homeland
  + Possess
  + NatUnity
  + Sig

Our schema assumes:

Colonization is about the possession of land, resources, bodies, and labor based upon concepts of racial/ethnic superiority that are driven by love of country, unity and “us vs. them” mentality

These songs will hopefully offer to us an idea of the *expression* of collective identity and colonial fantasy in both Germany and the US.

We want to understand **what these collective ideas are, and how they may translate to the self-justification of violence**. How are the ideas of nationalism and colonialism *inherently* violent, and in what ways was it expressed in these two specific contexts (genocide)?

**Research Question**:

How do these songs reflect collective ideas/imaginations that colonizers have of nationalism in the American and German contexts, and how are these contexts related?

**Hypothesis**:

Through collecting data based on the metrics we have chosen to identify expressions of nationalism in the corpus of songs we have selected, we hope to identify patterns that make it possible to compare types of nationalism American and German colonizers express. We expect there to be similar themes of homeland and belonging between the two, because of the historical evidence we have that Germans idealized the American West and built their own “colonial fantasies” around what they heard about the American West.

**Relevance**:

Songs, and in particular folk songs, are a valuable lens to explore this topic through because they offer a direct view into the thoughts of settlers. Songs do not rely on someone being able to write reflections on what they see, they can be passed on orally and often appeal to the collective by drawing on relatable themes

Drawing a connection between the US and German South-West Africa (Namibia) is relevant because literature on this topic is limited. There are many sources that explain German societies fascination with the American West, but it would be interesting to explore more closely how this translated into physical actions of colonization.

It is important to understand how nationalism was seen at the time, and how it could lead to the self-justification of crimes of genocide

**Historical Context** (brief):

* Americans were colonizing a continuous stretch of land
* Instances of Genocide in North America are inconsistent (not every native group were victims of genocide, and there was not one procedure that all colonizers followed)
* Westward expansion and colonization took place over many centuries in the US
* American songs are folk songs. (look into legends and the origin of these songs)
* The US is founded in 1776, a new nation was formed out of people from “diverse” backgrounds
* Germans were colonizing a country far away, and vastly different from their own
* German nation state was created in 1871, formed by groups of people who had long history of occupying this land. Important to create a new identity that would bring people together and make them take pride in Germany
* Trend to strengthen national unity was to glorify medieval Germany- using stories of nights and Valhalla (think pantheon for norse gods that honors German warriors and nights)
  + Ie The Ring of the Nibelung, an extremely famous four-part opera written by Wagner (15 hours in total) about these Norse myths premiered in 1876
  + Resurgence of ballads, which had been popular in medieval times(ill get a more accurate date, but think like 1200 and 16th century peasant protest songs), expressing nationalism for German
* Germany began colonizing late, because they had not been a state before – formally took over Namibia in 1884 after the European “scramble for Africa”
  + Long before this, they had been idealizing America West
* “nation states” are all about ethnic identity (vs US which is more about white Europeans vs poc)
* Lost all colonial land in 1919 after WW1, after just roughly 40 years as a colonial power
* Both believe it is there right to take land away from native people
* Both want land to demonstrate power, and gain resources
* Both romanticize the landscape of the homeland, and “cowboy motifs” like riding and hunting (this is *not* the focus of our data collection, because it would take to long, but I still think it might be interesting to point these (fairly obvious) themes out in our analysis)

**Our Corpus:**

Our corpus is limited to songs we found in research written by colonizers specifically about the land that they were colonizing. In the case of the German content, this limited our options because it was difficult to find songs specifically about Southwest Africa. We decided to select a small amount of songs that we were able to find through our university’s library resources in order to more closely analyze this complex theme. We chose to manually mark up our corpus because of the ambiguous nature of the content, which given our time constraints was only possible with a smaller corpus.

**Comparison Metrics:**

* Is the description of nationalism similar between American and German songs?
  + Graph with x= kinds on nationalism y= number of instances
* Amount of violence
  + Violence per word or violence as a percentage of total violence
  + Violence perp settlers vs natives
* How many more American songs are there than German percentage wise