

The Future of Immigration Discourse in the U.S.: Young Activists' Interventions in a Charged Political Landscape



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Abstract

Young adult activists are the future of the U.S. as they create a series of changes around issues they are passionate about, for instance, immigration. As they work on setting their demands, they explain their work to different audiences. In this research, I focused on analyzing the framework and language used by young activists regarding immigration. I reached out to organizations from various states to interview those who fit the definition of “young adult activist” being in the range of 18-30 years of age. In the survey, they were asked questions regarding how they frame the issue and the type of language they use to address their demands.

Purpose

The research focuses on the work of younger activists and analyzes how they construct their approach and frame choices around the immigration movement.

Number of Organizations contacted: 44

Interviews: 5
(1 email and 4 zoom)

Two methods were used for the study: 1) semi-structured interviews; and 2) archival research using news articles. The study's primary method was to interview people who work for various organizations involved in the immigration justice movement. In addition, we identified key problems raised by young activists during the interview; and archival research was conducted through Google searches to gather evidence to support their claims. We focused on young activists; therefore, participants were between the ages of 18 to 30. I contacted activists following Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines and questioned participants regarding how they make strategic decisions in light of policy changes. Participants were given the choice of interviewing through Zoom, email, or phone options to feel comfortable sharing their experiences and work. They were asked questions about their engagement in the immigration justice movement during the interview.



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Water Drops left for migrants traveling to the U.S.

Results

- **Framing Language in Different Settings:**
There is no one right way
- **Advocate At All Costs:** Young, Resilient, & Powerful
- **Activism Burnout:** “There is Power in our Joy”: Young Activists, Emotion, and Wellness

“Important to identify and acknowledge that you cannot do everything, and you have to prioritize your mental health. Sometimes you have to say no to things, because if you are not okay, then it affects the community you serve.”
-Young immigration justice activist

Conclusions

In the grand scheme of things, young activists have contributed significantly to the framework and language towards the future of immigration justice. They are engaging in different areas of immigration justice by being supportive and providing resources to immigrants as well as educating those who are not part of the community. One of the tactics is sharing the narratives of immigrants who come to the US. Young activists protesting places them at risk of getting into serious problems but they are determined to help immigrants and refugees. They also strategize on how to make change by framing their language differently when advocating in certain settings. With the heavy load of work, young activists are concerned with burnout. To manage stress, young activists remember the purpose of immigration justice. All of the points mentioned above are what is significantly important to this research. Knowing how the passionate work of young activists is unique and persistent can be impactful in changing the future of immigration justice.