The Twitter Analysis of the Hashtag #Deportations

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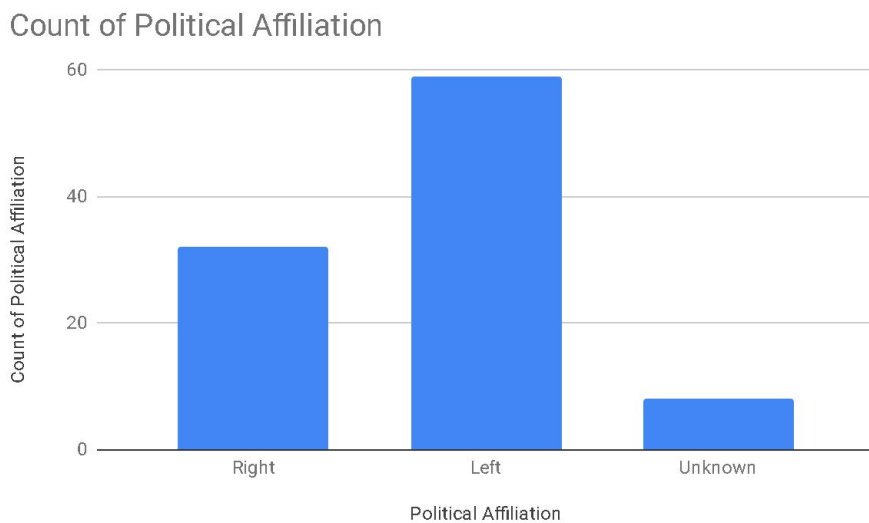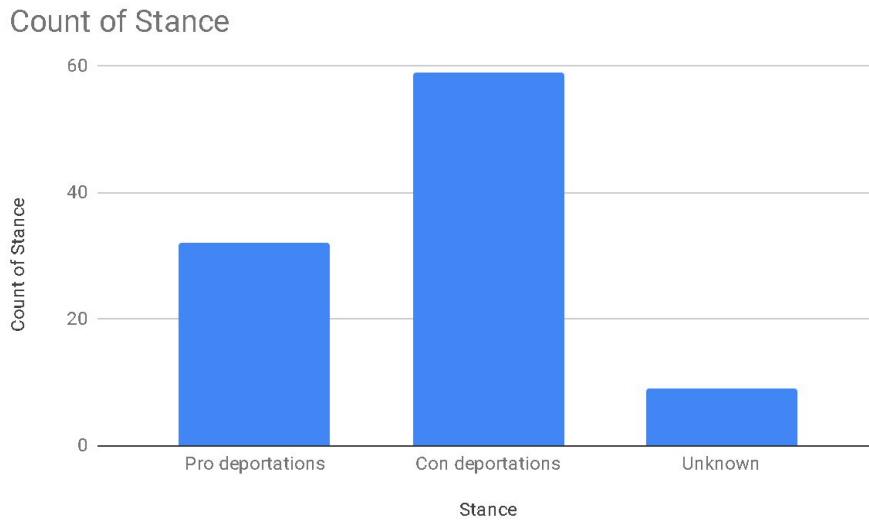University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Introduction:

Deportation is defined as "'the formal removal of an alien from the United States when the alien has been found removable for violating immigration laws.' according to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) of the Department of Homeland Security." (Deportation, 2013, pp.1) In addition, people may be deported for acts such as "committing subversive acts against the government, fraudulently obtaining legal residency, and having a criminal record." (Deportation, 2013, pp.1) Many of these immigrants who have violated any of these acts, or know that they would be charged with any of them, usually do their best in order to not be found by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). So, although deportation can apply to any violation to immigration law, there is a priority for deporting more dangerous criminals. However, as of 1798, the first law for deportation in the United States was enacted. This law became the Alien Act of 1798, which allowed for the president to deport any alien who was seen as dangerous. This range of potential approaches to deportation can be seen on Twitter. Deportation-related Twitter topics include #kidsincages, #immigrationreform, #closethecamps, and #deportations.

Methods:

For this research project, I decided to pursue the hashtag, #deportations. With this hashtag, I began my Twitter analysis of the trending topic. I first started off with using the TAGS v6.1.9.1 software, in order to originally find out how many people are truly talking about this topic. As I searched for the #deportations, I captured a total of 505 tweets. Right from the beginning, I knew that I was not going to be able to go through and read all 505 tweets, then go as far as to analyze and categorize them, so I decided to filter out all of the retweeted tweets in

order to get down to the original #deportation tweets. Filtering out the retweets brought me down to approximately 150 tweets. From there, I went through those tweets, and deleted any duplicates, tweets that were in Spanish, or tweets that simply were completely off topic. By doing last manual filtering, I finished with a total of 101 #deportations tweets. From there, I read through each one and began to categorize. I made a total of five categories: the person's stance on deportation, the main action verb, any rhetorical appeals present in the tweet, the person's political affiliation, and the main focus/topic of the tweet. The last category was more for myself to truly understand the message the person was trying to get across to the public. As I coded all of these tweets, I took a few hours to try and grasp the correct stance on every person's tweet, and how they were trying to get their point across. A few of the tweets were very confusing in that manner, so I did enter "unknown" for a small number of categories. Once all of the coding was done, I created graphs for the top three categories that had a strong representation of the tweet. The three graphs included, the stance on deportation, the rhetorical appeals used within the tweet, as well as the political affiliation the person seemed to best portray. The graphs created helped to show a visual representation of the #deportations Twitter conversation.

As pertaining to the graphs, the main category that captures the overall idea of what each person who posts a tweet is saying is the Count of Stance. The stance of the tweet can determine the persons' political affiliation, as well as possibly which type of rhetorical appeals they may use in order to best prove their point.
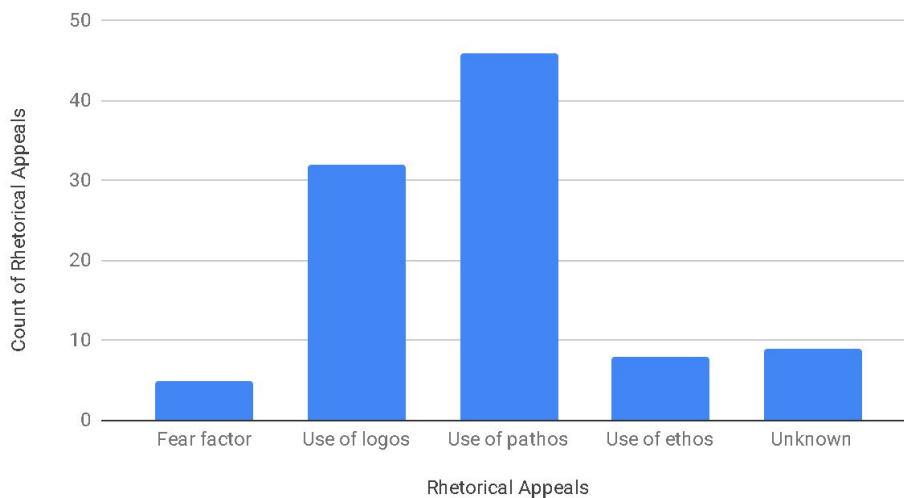
Count of Stance

Count of Political Affiliation

"@realDonaldTrump Build the Wall, Quit letting illegals, which are 100% criminals stay here. Deport them all now. Deport Pelosi too...#MAGA #KAG #TrumpTrain2020 #Deportations #BuildTheWall" This tweet was coded as pro-deportation, containing a right-sided political affiliation, and use of pathos, in order to express their feelings about illegals staying in America when they lack the right to do so.

In regards to the pro deportation group of people, which ended up with a count of 32 tweets, their main argument was that if the immigrants can commit the crime of coming over to America illegally, then they should understand that they need to do the time and/or become deported. That is why the people supporting pro deportation are in allegiance with how "the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 removed the statute of limitations on any and all kinds of deportation." (Deportation, 2018, pp.1) This enforces the idea of not being able to have the necessary time to figure out a way to avoid being deported, and increasing ones opportunities to permanently stay or even slightly extend their time in the United States.

The majority of tweets (59) were coded as anti-deportation.

Count of Rhetorical Appeals

One of the main arguments that the people with anti-deportation sentiments pointed out was the fact that the way these kids and families are being treated is not even remotely respectful. The kids and families should not be trapped in cages or provided with severely inadequate resources

like food and necessary hygiene products. Their supporters believe that it is not right for immigrants to be treated this way, because they are people just like the rest of us. "More than 2,000 children remain spread around the United States, far from their parents--many of whom have no idea where their sons and daughters have been taken. The children have been through hell. They are babies who were carried across rivers and toddlers who rode for hours in trucks and buses and older kids who were told that a better place was just beyond the horizon." (Washington Post, 2018, pp.1) This provides a slight description of what these children immigrants have to go through, or risk going through in order to accomplish their simple dream of living in America. "'An act of utter malice and bigotry, designed solely to inject fear in our communities,' @SpeakerPelosi on @POTUS #deportations Tweet" This tweet is an example of people who recognize the outrageous acts in which are being done in order to break up former happy families. What these kids endure can also have negative impacts that people such as ICE may not even be aware of, let alone care about. There was "a 2010 study of immigration related parental arrests (at home or worksites) found that the majority of children experienced at least four adverse behavioral changes in the six months following a raid or arrest...Children cried or were afraid more often; changing their eating or sleeping habits; and/or were more anxious, withdrawn, clingy, angry, or aggressive" (American Immigration Council, 2018, pp.2). As a result of these horrid deportations, these kids act and behave in negative ways. As if they do not go through enough, they have to find a way to cope with these behavioral changes all on their own, without any support. When these arguments are truly represented in the right way, it allows for the people of the con/anti-deportation to be understood and felt for in the way that they should be, therefore leading to more people to gravitate to their side and point of view.

While researching both sides of the stance on deportation, as well as other counts of information, it is clear as to why each side believes what they believe. However, each time this topic occurs, it is imperative to think about why these immigrants migrated to America in the very first place. When it is honestly thought about, their reasons for migrating are very convincing and understanding. One of the most prevalent reasons as to why immigrants are leaving their countries is because of the fact that they are trying to seek safety for their families as well as themselves. Many of them are actually refugees trying to escape persecution, and increase their chances of survival. There have been studies done in 2015, where 250,199 people out of 3.5 million people have fled their country to have a sense of security (USA Facts, 2016, pp.1). When put into perspective, it makes sense as to why these immigrants risk everything trying to come to America, even if they have to do so illegally. For them, nothing is worse than facing death each and everyday they are in their native country.

Conclusion:

Overall, through coding all of the tweets about deportations posted by people with entirely different opinions upon the topic, I was able to come up with multiple graphics to represent them all. With what the graph looked like in the end, showed that a larger number of people on Twitter (59) were not in support of deportation. By this being true, it allowed me to further understand what the reason for that was, and figure out that it was due to the fact that the people of anti-deportation believe the kids living cages, and being mistreated is the leading factor. In regards to the minority, being the supporters of deportation (32), it was concluded that their main reason for their belief was due to the idea of thinking that if these immigrants can

come to America, fully aware of the fact that the are illegal, then they should be understanding to

the idea that they have to be locked up in cages, in order to then be deported. With the

#deportations being researched, it has all been about perspective when it comes to people's ideas

and beliefs on this trending, controversial topic.

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