**U.S. Immigration & Twitter: How People Care on Social Media**

**Description:**

My PhD dissertation topic has to do with monsters and how we as a society link terror with marginalized groups to justify the compromising of human rights. One of the questions that comes up in my research is how we reached a point, both socially and politically, in which immigrant children are so great a monster they must be kept in cages. For the scope of a class project tracing the why this has come to pass was too great a question to tackle and would require more thought and time. The compromise was to see how the twitter community reacted to these political machinations. I chose to focus on who is speaking out against this and how they are speaking out. The original hopes were to see if there are any preliminary patterns to grassroots organizing on twitter and what they could possible look like. There were no real directed questions to the exploration of the data that was pulled but rather it was an act of choosing to see what the data could tell us.

**Significance:**

In the age of social media and with multiple generations with active voters or soon-to-be active voters that rely heavily on information dissemination on the web, we need to more thoroughly understand how entities engage with politics on the web. The public space has shifted in younger generations to the social media space, with that new limitations and freedoms have been enforced. The real question that can be asked from my dataset is: How is political resistance to immigration enforcement coded? Media outlets and academics alike have comment on the lack of action younger generations have taken with a growing urban numbness that leads social media users to believe that a post or comment in the digital realm is an active contribution of political engagement. My project rather chooses to take one step further and if this is really true find the patterns and customs that impact this kind of political engagement.

**Audience:**

My infographic primarily serves an academically or politically engaged audience that wish to be informed on how the twitter community responds to U.S.-Mexico border issues and the treatment of migrant families. My project can answer three basic questions: what some of the speech patterns of these online discussions are, where they are speaking from, and who is speaking.

**Technical Specifications:**

TAGS (Twitter Archive Google Sheets) was used to pull the data as my computer refused to acknowledge a network path that would allow me to use python and implement code. The data cleaning (OpenRefine), text analysis (Voyant Tools), and visualization (Tableau & Canva) tools were chosen primarily because they are free and additionally because I had previous experience with them which would give me more time to focus on the data.

**Data Selection:**

When I first did the search, I entered words like immigration and children and although I should have seen it coming, I was surprised to see how divers my data was, being that there are worldwide immigration issues related to children. I then looked at news articles that included commentary on tweets and I looked at the most commonly used hashtags for the topic. In the end, the search terms used were hashtags related specifically to the separation of families: #KeepFamiliesTogether, #FamiliesBelongTogether, #WhereAreTheChildren, #ChildrenInCages.

**Description of Work Plan:**

The dataset was compiled using TAGS (Twitter Archive Google Sheets). The data was cleaned using OpenRefine. Duplicates and retweets were excluded as well as tweeters that identified themselves as being geocoded outside of the U.S. to ensure that the population that was being analyzed fell within U.S. society and that the tweets were unique products of the twitter users. Once the dataset was clean, Voyant Tools was used for text analysis and to identify any patterns amongst the tweets. Lastly, Tableau and Canva served as the graphic design platforms that would be used for the development of the infographic.

**Findings & Conclusion:**

The dataset points to some foreseeable and surprising findings that ended up guiding the three different sections of my infographic. Firstly, most of the language in these tweets are dominated by hashtags almost to the complete exclusion of complete sentences. Furthermore, the usage of outside sources, specifically news articles directs these discussions off the Twitter platform. As a hashtag is a means of self-identify trends of collective thought in individualistic commentary, the abundance and sometime sole use of hashtags points to a hyper-awareness on the part of twitter users. Twitter is the platform for engagement in wider dialogues on much grander scales than Facebook and Instagram not only because of the public structure of the site, but also because of the use of self-reflective act of categorizing your public thoughts within themes or topics of interest to twitter society as a whole.

Secondly, when comparing the self-reported locations of people who have engaged in these discussions there is a strong correlation between number of immigrant detention centers and the number of tweets. When looking at the map I provided on my infographic and comparing it to the map generated by the [Torn Apart/Separados](http://xpmethod.plaintext.in/torn-apart/volume/1/) project that maps the detention centers in the U.S. there is a marked increase in California, Texas, Northeast, and Chicago. What this indicates is that interaction with immigration is spatial not just in the traditional sense of political borders or a free-flow of information due to proximity but rather that networks of informed individuals are being created in the same areas of impact. This also debunks the idea that social media and the internet really serves to level the playing field when it comes to political engagement and that as these networks of information exist on the web, they are not bound by geography and spatial reasoning.

Lastly, when looking at the entities that engage in these discussions, it is skewed heavily towards people more so than organizations. Of those people that engage there is a significant number of people engaged in education that are against current immigration policy. This prompts further study and the question: Is immigration being more frequently or thoroughly discussed in educational spaces? And if so, why? A surprising finding is that one of the top tweeters is a rock band. Nothing conclusive has been drawn from this specific tidbit of information. If I was to fathom a guess it is not that farfetched to say that the origins of rock in revolutionary and anti-establishment thought are not dissimilar to discussions on comprehensive immigration reform.

In conclusion, a few dozen hundred tweets have shed quite a bit of light on the patterns of political social media interaction and this topic requires further study and research.