

They're Only Words: Teacher Candidate Perceptions of the Effects of Anti-Immigrant Rhetoric on the Education of Immigrant Students

Debra A. Giambo, Ph.D.

Florida Gulf Coast University

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Public Anti-Immigrant Rhetoric

- ▶ “They’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. And some, I assume, are good people.” (August 2016)
- ▶ “Why do we want all these people from 'shithole countries' coming here?” (CNN, 12 January 2018)
- ▶ “We have people coming into the country or trying to come in. We're stopping a lot of them, but we're taking people out of the country. You wouldn't believe how bad these people are. These aren't people. These are animals.” (USA Today, 17 May 2018)

Abstract

The **purpose** of this study was **to examine teacher candidates' perceptions of the potential effects of public, anti-immigrant rhetoric on the education of immigrant students, documented and undocumented, and all students.** The study involved the administration of a survey to students in diversity in education classes, and the results of the survey indicate that **teacher candidates were concerned** about the effects of certain types of public, anti-immigrant statements on immigrant students in their classrooms. **Concerns include effects on: (1) immigrant students' lack of a sense of belonging, confidence, and stability, (2) prejudice and discrimination against immigrant students by teachers and peers, (3) fear and anxiety, including fear of deportation and separation from family, (4) immigrant students' lack of engagement in and access to effective education, (5) violence against immigrant students, and (6) the damage that a hateful environment can do to the U.S.** Results of this study can inform teacher preparation program curriculum development as to the importance of including content about not only **effective instructional practices** but **the political, economic, and social contexts that frame the education of diverse students.**



Organization of presentation

- **Changing Demographics in USA**
 - **Undocumented Immigrants' Contributions**
 - **Contributions to the Social Security System**
 - **Opposition to Undocumented Immigrants**
 - **Federal Policy Changes – Immigration, Asylum Seekers**
 - **Education Rights**
 - **Individual and Societal Challenges Resulting from Lack of a Formal Education**
 - **Returns on Investment in Education**
 - **Difficulties for Immigrant Students in Schools**
 - **The Study**
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Changing Demographics in USA

Minority-Majority

- ▶ Projections from the U.S. Census (2015, 2016) - the aggregation of all minority groups will form a majority (i.e., a minority-majority) of the overall population by 2044.
- ▶ Predicted increase of 95% in the minority population 2014-2066 → 56% minorities (U.S. Census, 2015, 2016).
- ▶ In 2014, the percentage of white, non-Hispanic students in U.S. public schools dipped below 50% for the first time (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015).

Undocumented Immigrants' Contributions

- Significant anti-immigrant rhetoric (media, political statements & policies)
- Significant myths - immigrants and immigration in the U.S. (George W. Bush Presidential Center, 2019)
- Undocumented immigrants contribute to the U.S. economy - taxes, low-wage work, and the Social Security system.
- Tax payments – contributions of \$11.47 billion per year in sales, excise (at point of manufacture), income, and property taxes - projected to increase to \$2.18 billion per year, if granted legal status (Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, 2017)
- Work in low-wage jobs - inconvenient and difficult hours - complement, rather than compete with American workers (Frazee, 2018) → lower prices for the consumer

Contributions to the Social Security System

- Social Security benefits - composed 5% of the GDP in 2016 and support retirees and families of people unable to work due to disabilities through a pay-as-you-go system (NASI, n.d.).
- Undocumented immigrants - support otherwise unstable Social Security system (Roberts, 2019)
- 8 million undocumented workers (est.) have jobs without a legal right (Roberts, 2019) - work permit required
- 2005 - 7,000,000 (est.) undocumented workers in the U.S. provided the Social Security system with a subsidy of approximately \$7 billion a year - approximately 10% of the SS surplus in 2004 (Porter, 2005).
- Undocumented workers could provide the quickest way to reinforce the Social Security system for the long-term (acc. to M. Suárez-Orozco at NYU; Porter, 2005).

Contributions to the Social Security System

- ▶ Solvency of the SSS depends on population growth (Roberts, 2019)
- ▶ Aging Baby Boomers (i.e., those born 1946-1964) → immigrants are key to the continuation of a solvent SSS
- ▶ False Social Security cards → contributions that undocumented workers will never access; citizens who are eligible will benefit from these contributions (Porter, 2005).
- ▶ SSA's file that contains funds unattributed to workers held \$189 billion in the 1990's, a 250% increase over the amount in the 1980's, and continues to grow by more than \$50 billion a year.
 - ▶ This money generates between \$6 and \$7 billion in revenue for the SSA, and
 - ▶ SSA officials attribute a significant portion of these funds to undocumented workers' earnings (Porter, 2005).
 - ▶ By 2007, between \$120 billion and \$240 billion was attributed to undocumented workers (acc. to S. Goss, Chief Actuary of the SSA, Schumacher-Matos, 2010).

Opposition to Undocumented Immigrants

- Hate Groups - Continued steady rise, which began in 2015 during the presidential campaign season and has continued under Trump's current presidential administration, ↑ 13% between 2015 and 2018 (1,020 groups recorded, 2018).
- White Nationalist Groups - Grew most 2017 – 2018, ↑ 50%, attributed to fears over changing demographics (148 groups; Beirich, 2019).
- Hate Crimes – 2017 - ↑ 17%; 60% of hate crimes were attributed to race and ethnicity, which continues a trend of increasing hate crimes for the 3rd year in a row (Eligon, 2018; FBI, 2018; Lucas, 2018).
 - According to limited data from U.S. FBI, based solely on voluntary (thus incomplete) reporting from victims and law enforcement agencies

Federal Policy Changes

The Trump administration has **made it more difficult for immigrants to live in the U.S.** (Barajas, 2019; Pierce, Bolter, & Selee, 2018; Roth, 2019).

- ▶ Frame - immigration as threat to national security and the economy
- ▶ Goals - decreasing immigration and increasing deportations
- ▶ Examples –
 - ▶ increased immigration enforcement inhumanely,
 - ▶ implemented a ban on the entry into the U.S. of citizens from seven countries,
 - ▶ directly slowed the processing of visa applications - implemented within and across various immigration-related agencies (Pierce, Bolter, & Selee, 2018),
 - ▶ expanded reasons that immigrants can be summoned before immigration judges to begin deportation processes,
 - ▶ made it a crime for students to overstay visas,
 - ▶ created increased scrutiny of visa extension applications and applications for asylum,
 - ▶ expanding unannounced inspections of workplaces by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE),
 - ▶ increased investigations of employers bringing workers to the US (Roth, 2019).



Federal Policy Changes – Asylum Seekers

- ▶ Recently, Trump has aimed his efforts at **changing the way in which the U.S. treats asylum-seekers**, many of whom risk injury or death if forced to return to their home country:
 - ▶ Trump directed Attorney General and Acting Homeland Security Secretary to propose changes to the ways in which cases of immigrants seeking humanitarian refuge in the U.S. are handled:
 - ▶ charging fees for applications for humanitarian refuge (which many asylum-seekers cannot afford to pay)
 - ▶ banning anyone who crossed the border illegally the possibility of obtaining a work permit (Sacchetti, Sonmez, & Miroff, 2019)

Education Rights

- U.S. law - States must legally provide a free, public education to all students, regardless of immigration status (14th Amendment to the Constitution; United States Courts, 1982; American Immigration Council, 2012) -
 - “No State shall ... deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.”



Individual and Societal Challenges Resulting from Lack of a Formal Education

- **Lack of FAPE**, especially literacy skill development → **increases** the likelihood of **poverty** & need for **social services** (Smith, 1999) and **criminal behavior**, while an increase in literacy skills can result in higher wages.
- Incarcerated adults demonstrate lower than average literacy scores, overall (although not for Black and Hispanic subgroups; NAAL, NCES, 2016).
- The Department of Justice - “The link between academic failure and delinquency, violence, and crime is welded to reading failure” (as cited in Begin to Read, n.d.; CRESC, 2011; Literacy Mid-South, 2016).
- Higher literacy scores → higher wages (same for workers with a high school diploma vs bachelor’s degree; National Institutes for Literacy, n.d.).

Returns on Investment in Education

- Data from 40 states indicate that the **cost of educating a student** (elementary/secondary) per year **is less than the cost of imprisoning a person** (CNN Money, 2013).
 - In Florida, the cost of educating a student is approximately \$8,000 per year compared to \$19,000 for a year of imprisonment.
 - Two states reported the widest disparity: In California, it costs about \$9,000 to educate someone for a year and \$47,000 to imprison someone for that same year. In New York, it is estimated that it costs \$16,000 to educate a student and \$56,000 to imprison a person per year (CNN Money, 2013; Fox News, 2015).

Difficulties for Immigrant Students in Schools

- Increasingly stringent immigration policies can negatively effect of immigrant students' feelings of belonging, educational obstacles, and lack of opportunities (Gurrola, Ayón, & Moya Salas, 2016).
- Anti-immigrant ideologies → barriers to education for undocumented students, such as:
 - (1) **affecting teachers' views** of students leading to marginalization, educational labeling and tracking, low expectations, expectations of eventual incarceration;
 - (2) **significant school absence** out of fear of deportation and the potentially painful tearing apart of their families;
 - (3) older children having to **quit school** to work to care for younger siblings **when parents are deported**; and
 - (4) **inability to obtain financial aid** for higher education (Catalano, 2013).
- Many teacher candidates lack a developed understanding about immigration policies (Sánchez, & Ek, 2007/2008) and may not fully understand the repercussions of such policies and public expressions of anti-immigrant sentiments, yet educational experiences that sensitize them to the immigrants' perspective can transform their views (McDermott, Rankie, & Mogge, 2012).

Purpose of Study

- ▶ **To examine perceptions of teacher candidates** regarding the **potential effects of anti-immigrant rhetoric** (especially as such rhetoric becomes more publically acceptable) on the education of immigrant students, documented and undocumented, and on the education of students, in general
- ▶ **To inform curriculum planning** in teacher preparation programs regarding the need for an increase in the inclusion of concepts related to (1) the effects of such rhetoric on immigrant students, documented and undocumented, as well as to (2) the development of teacher candidates' advocacy skills on behalf of their immigrant students.

Methodology - Participants

- ▶ 2 sophomore (2nd year), 40 junior (3rd year), and 30 senior (4th year) undergraduate teacher candidates enrolled in diversity courses in a teacher preparation program at a state university in the southeastern U.S.
- ▶ Geographical area - culturally and linguistically diverse schools
 - ▶ linguistic diversity - primarily Spanish, Haitian Creole, and Portuguese.
- ▶ Teacher preparation program: coursework focused on effective education for culturally and linguistically diverse students. Sophomores and juniors were enrolled in courses on second language acquisition, communication, and culture, and the seniors were enrolled in an methods course for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL).
- ▶ 68 females and 4 males
- ▶ majority white, non-Hispanic, 8 Hispanic, 2 African American/Black, 1 of mixed race, and 1 who did not disclose
- ▶ Some spoken proficiency in languages other than English - 9 Spanish-speakers, 1 with some German, and 1 with proficiency in American Sign Language

Methodology – Measures & Data Analysis

Measures - Survey included both demographic items and questions regarding:

1. participants' level of comfort with public, anti-immigrant statements, such as those which support the deportation of all undocumented immigrants and those which group immigrants together as criminals;
2. whether participants thought these types of statements may or may not affect documented and undocumented immigrant students, and, if so, the types of effects they anticipated; and
3. whether participants had any other concerns about the potential effects that public, anti-immigrant statements may or may not have on education and/or students in schools in the country and the state

Data Analysis

- Demographic and dichotomous (i.e., yes/no) survey items were analyzed descriptively, including frequencies and percentages of responses. Responses to open-ended questions underwent progressive stages of coding to establish and refine emerging themes (Williams & Moser, 2019). When more general themes were established, the sub-themes were maintained to provide more detailed information.

Results

Participants' level of comfort with public, anti-immigrant statements –

- ▶ Statements about the **deportation of all undocumented immigrants** - Among the 72 participants, 20 (**28%**) responded that they were **comfortable** with such statements, while 52 (**72%**) responded that they were **not comfortable**.
- ▶ Statements that support **immigrants being grouped together as criminals** - Majority of participants (69 participants; **96%**) responded that they were **not comfortable**
- ▶ Although **28% of participants were comfortable** with statements about the deportation of **undocumented** immigrants, **90%** (or 18 out of 20 participants) **of those** participants were **not comfortable with the stereotyping of undocumented immigrants as criminals**.

Perceptions about whether public, anti-immigrant **statements would affect immigrant students** (documented or undocumented) in their classrooms – 71 out of 72 (**99%**) participants **responded affirmatively**.

TC Perceptions of the Effects of Public, Anti-Immigrant Statements on Immigrant Students in Their Classrooms

<u>Theme</u>	<u>Sub-themes</u>	<u>Total Responses (%)</u>
Lack of sense of belonging, confidence, and stability	Feeling unsafe, unstable, unwelcome, affective factors, confidence, trust, self-confidence, view of US, sense of acceptance in the US	40 (56%)
Prejudice and discrimination	Being treated differently, stereotyping, discrimination by teachers, discrimination by peers, prejudice, racism	24 (33%)
Fear and anxiety	Fear, mental and emotional stress, distancing from own culture due to fear and discrimination, fear of deportation, fear of separation from family	20 (28%)
Lack of engagement	Success, growth in classroom, focus, attitude toward education, attendance, negative behavior	16 (22%)
Violence	Bullying, hate crimes, racial profiling, violence (general)	9 (13%)
Miscellaneous	May depend on what they hear from their families Communication between the school and the parents Right to attend college Right to come home Shouldn't be punished for parents' decision to come to the US	1 (1%) response for each related expressed concern

Additional Teacher Candidate Perceptions on the Potential Effects of Public, Anti-Immigrant Statements on Education and/or All Students


<u>Theme</u>	<u>Sub-themes</u>	<u>Total Responses (% of TCs; % of respondents)</u>
Fearful and dangerous environment	Fear of family's deportation and fear for safety (6), racism and violence against immigrants (4)	10 (14%; 31%)
Hateful environment	Ethnic- and nation-centric environment, reminiscent of the Holocaust, blaming groups of people and serving self-interests through the blaming, hateful environment that can ruin the US	7 (10%; 22%) (1 response for each of the related concerns)
Decrease in diversity education		3 (4%; 9%)
Lack of access to effective education	Fear and discrimination distracting students from school performance, distraction from the goal of education	2 (3%; 6%)
Miscellaneous	"Too many concerns to list here"	1 (1%; 3%)
	Lasting, negative impression of US society on the student	1 (1%; 3%)
	The media escalates the issues	1 (1%; 3%)
No response		40 (56%)

Discussion

- ▶ **Educational content about the political, economic, and social factors related to immigration should be part of diversity education and is critical to teacher education programs.**
 - ▶ Supported by results - Approximately 3/4 of participants were not comfortable with public, anti-immigrant statements about the deportation of undocumented immigrants; however, more than 1/4 of participants were comfortable with such statements.
 - ▶ The program in which the participants were enrolled includes diversity courses; the majority of participants had completed at least one course in diversity and were nearing the end of their second course.
- ▶ The sensitivity to the fears, violent confrontations, and the lack of stability and educational access and engagement (which teacher candidates expressed) are the harsh reality for many students and families (Dillard, 2018; UNESCO, 2019). UNESCO calls for **protections for students to facilitate access to education, inclusion of immigrant students.**
- ▶ Undocumented students face a real risk of deportation from the U.S., starting in schools. They increasingly face anti-immigrant interactions, feeling threatened as a result, which can cause a reaction of self-defense, as well as facing **magnified disciplinary accusations** (Dillard, 2018; Hlass, 2018). This risk has been called the “**school-to-deportation pipeline**” (Dillard, 2018; Hlass, 2018) as well as “**crimmigration**” (Stumpf, 2006).
- ▶ While educational content can result in sensitivity to the immigrants’ perspective, thus transforming TC views (McDermott, Rankie, & Mogge, 2012), indications are that many TCs have a limited understanding of immigration policies (Sánchez, & Ek, 2007/2008) as well as policy repercussions.

Conclusions

- ▶ The U.S., which, with the exception of indigenous people, is a nation of immigrants. In recent years, however, **public, anti-immigrant rhetoric has become increasingly acceptable** and even **enthusiastically applauded** and cheered publicly.
- ▶ In the context of increasing public disparagement and criminalization of immigrants, **for teacher candidates to be sufficiently prepared to engage in and effect change in the current reality, they need to not only learn about diversity issues as they apply to effective instruction but the political, economic, and social contexts that affect the education of immigrant students.**
- ▶ This can serve to **increase the effectiveness of research-based instructional practices** as well as helping teacher candidates to become **effective advocates** for their students. Effective instruction does not occur in isolation but within the reality of students' lives. The integration of a wider view of current reality of diverse students' lives is essential to effective education for both teacher candidates and their future students.



Comments & Questions

Thank you!

Contact information: Debra Giambo
dgiambo@fgcu.edu



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