



Telebriefing: *Public Discourse on Immigration*

October 7, 2009

- A Scan of Print and Broadcast Media Coverage in 2008–2009
- A Scan of Web 2.0 Coverage in Summer of 2009

The Public Discourse on the Eve of a Renewed Immigration Debate: A Media and Public Opinion Analysis



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The **Opportunity** Agenda

*Building the National Will
to Expand Opportunity in America*



How can immigrants' rights advocates use their access to the media to:

- Set the frame for the upcoming debate?
- Shore up public support?
- Take the initiative away from the opposition?



Presentation Overview

- Review of previous media research
- Review of public opinion research
- Media scan methodology and findings
- Recommendations



PREVIOUS RESEARCH



2004-2006:

Framing Immigrant Integration

2006-2007:

*The Evolution of Public Discourse on
Immigration*



PUBLIC OPINION SCAN

2008-2009



Public Opinion Findings

- Increase in support for a path to citizenship
- Preference for converting undocumented workers into legal taxpayers to help economy
- Problem-solving, solution-oriented frame of mind
- Support for “comprehensive” reform now



New Core Narrative Works With Key Audiences

When it comes to immigration, we need workable solutions that uphold our nation's values, and move us forward together.



MAINSTREAM PRINT MEDIA

November 5, 2008-July 10, 2009



Methodology

- Atlanta Journal-Constitution
- Boston Globe
- Chicago Sun Times
- Philadelphia Inquirer
- Los Angeles Times
- The New York Times
- Newsweek
- San Francisco Chronicle
- Time Magazine
- USA Today
- Wall Street Journal
- Washington Post

Sample = 70 randomly selected
articles



Topics

Topic	Number
➤ Federal Enforcement	35
➤ Immigration and the Economy	7
➤ Anti-Immigrant Rules	6
➤ Policy Reform	6
➤ Immigrants and Crime	5
➤ Immigrant Integration	5
➤ Mixed Family Status	3
➤ Hate Crimes	3



Dominant Media Frame

Formed by two themes:

1. The system is still broken and its enforcement is producing consequences that undermine basic American values of fairness, family, & community.
2. Solutions are elusive.



The System is Broken

- The action has shifted from the border to the workplace and the family.
- The severe negative consequences are more newsworthy.
- The relationship between the economy and immigration has not received much press attention.
- Immigrant voices are more audible.



The Solutions are Elusive

- The terms “overhaul” and “sweeping reform” appear, but without definition.
- Emphasis is on how “thorny” the issue is and how unlikely passage is this year.
- Advocates do not appear as active participants in the policy reform discourse thus far.



CONSERVATIVE NARRATIVE



Mainstream Media

During 2007 debate narrative had two elements:

1. Law & order
2. Overwhelming scarce resources

Today message in mainstream media is more fragmented.



Conservative Talk Shows

- Rush Limbaugh
- Glenn Beck
- Lou Dobbs

Talk show hosts conflate “comprehensive reform” with “amnesty” and blame immigrants for economic problems.



PROGRESSIVE MEDIA



The American Prospect

The Nation

The New Republic

Hardball with Chris Matthews

The Ed Show

Democracy Now!

- Immigration has not been a focus.
- Liberal TV hosts are not yet carrying a reform message.



AFRICAN AMERICAN MEDIA



Ebony

Jet

Black Enterprise

The Tavis Smiley Show

- No articles on immigration
- One segment on Tavis Smiley Show about tangential issue.



FINDINGS



- The conservative narrative is no longer dominant;
- The public discourse is less toxic;
- There is a sense of urgency.



The stage is set for a serious, values-based, solution-oriented national conversation about comprehensive reform in which the core narrative will find a receptive audience in the public at large and among specific key audiences.



RECOMMENDATIONS



Mainstream Media

#1. Exercise message discipline; echo the core narrative:

Workable Solutions that Uphold our Nation's Values, and Move us Forward Together

If a reporter asks for a comment,

- Do not respond: “We think Senator X’s amendment is unnecessary and unconstitutional.”
- Do respond: “When it comes to immigration, we need workable solutions that uphold our nation’s values and move us forward together, and this amendment does not do that because...”



#2. Tap into one of the media’s current narratives about immigration—the system is still broken and its enforcement is producing consequences inimical to American values of fairness, family and community. Keep pitching stories that:

- ✓ Expose unfairness and extreme hardship
- ✓ Educate public about dysfunctional legal framework
- ✓ Put forward concrete, workable solutions
- ✓ Show futility of “attrition through enforcement”
- ✓ Give immigrants a voice.



#3. Demonstrate how comprehensive immigration reform will help the U.S. economy.

- ✓ Pitch stories about towns and cities “saved” by immigrants.
- ✓ Pitch experts who can explain in plain language how the undocumented labor market drives down wages for all.
- ✓ Place commentary by economists who can show that comprehensive reform will mean more tax dollars and increase the consumption of goods and services.



Progressive Media

The *engaged* support of progressive voters is critical.

- #1.** Every effort should be made to identify receptive journalists and editors - help them shape stories that carry the core message and lay out vision of reform.
- #2.** Take advantage of all news hooks - new studies, the release of a new book, anniversaries, developments at the state level that have national implications - to get talk show hosts to give advocates a platform.



African American Media

- #1.** Pitch stories and opinion pieces that show how the current system is designed to provide cheap labor and drive down wages for all working Americans.
- #2.** Identify and pitch well-respected messengers who can raise awareness about how reform will lift all boats—emphasize the “move us forward together” part of the core narrative.



Questions & Answers



Immigration: A Scan of Web 2.0 Coverage in Summer of 2009



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Goals of This Year's Scan

The goal of this scan is to identify the values, images, facts, and arguments that visitors to these sites typically encounter.

What do “persuadables” see on the Internet?



Overview of Major 2009 Findings

During our 10-week scan we found an almost complete turnaround from the results of our last Web 2.0 scan. There were positive developments on Facebook and YouTube, and we found progressive-leaning mainstream blogs to be a friendlier environment for pro-immigration discourse than just two years ago.



Immigration on the “A-List”

2007

- Most A-List blogs don't cover immigration issues with any regularity
- Progressive blogosphere split on immigration
 - *Enforcement Frame*
 - *Occasional pro-immigrant posts, but frequent hostile comments*



facebook



myspace
.com

2007

- Group membership twice as large for anti-immigration groups.
- They stuck to their narratives (law & order and a fear of overwhelming resources).



2007

- Anti-immigration videos outnumber pro-immigrant videos (90 - 55).
- Raw Viewership – Of top ten, only one pro-immigrant video.
- Only one pro-immigrant video with more than 100,000 views.



facebook



- Of 92 immigration related groups on Facebook, 76 had pro-immigrant messaging.
- Pro-immigration groups gained substantially more members during our scan than anti-groups.
- MySpace, meanwhile, has nearly no new immigration related activity. The site seems to be in decline, generally, as a communications and advocacy tool.



- Slight majority for pro-immigration videos (74 to 66 anti-immigrant videos).
- Pro-immigration videos more consistently appear in search results.
- However, anti-immigrant comments remain prevalent.



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- Major progressive-leaning blogs more frequently discuss immigration.
- Climate more receptive than two years ago.
- Comments usually positive.
- Pro-immigration blogosphere growing (103 active at last count).



twitter

- Consistent immigration “tweeters” likely to be pro-immigrant. (2:1)
- Random tweets more likely to be pro-immigrant.
- Twitter important as part of the “real-time web.”



Recommendations

- **Facebook:** Work towards fewer groups and higher membership rolls.
- **YouTube:** “Flood the zone.” Use humor.
- **Blogs:** Focus on reaching persuadables. Place stories on mainstream blogs, comment, and create “diaries.”
- **Twitter:** Be part of the “real-time web.” Use core narrative.



twitter

Immigration Core Narrative:

- Hate fixes nothing but real solutions can lift us all up together. #immigration #CIR
- We're all in this together. When it comes to immigration reform, we can bring about real change that moves us all forward together.
- We only get one life to live. Why should anyone die because of a broken immigration system? <http://www.restorefairness.org> #immigration #CIR



Questions and Answers



Thank You from The Opportunity Agenda

The full report will be e-mailed to call participants next week.

Please direct any questions and comments to partners@opportunityagenda.org