Reactions to Highly Publicized Sexual Assault Cases via Twitter Over Time

Tessa Sulimowicz
tessa.sulimowicz@aol.com

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Abstract
In public spaces, do reactions to sexual assault cases depict more of a victim blaming or offender blaming attitude? How has that changed over time?

Prior to collecting data, I hypothesized that I would find more Tweets portraying a victim blaming attitude rather than offender blaming. This hypothesis was ultimately derived from the research I did and the other studies I looked at.

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Reactions to Highly Publicized Sexual Assault Cases via Twitter Over Time
By Tessa Sulimowicz
St. John Fisher College

Research Question & Hypothesis
In public spaces, do reactions to sexual assault cases depict more of a victim blaming or offender blaming attitude? How has that changed over time?

Prior to collecting data, I hypothesized that I would find more Tweets portraying a victim blaming attitude rather than offender blaming. This hypothesis was ultimately derived from the research I did and the other studies I looked at.

For each case, I used different search terms. I then proceeded to randomly choose Tweets with no real restrictions regarding time periods due to the fact that the cases continue to be discussed well after the occurred.

It can be seen that the more recent cases have more Tweets that were found as well as more interactions overall versus the cases from 2012 which had less Tweets found and less interactions.

Methodology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Number of Tweets</th>
<th>Number of Interactions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brock Turner (2015)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>185,232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larry Nassar (2018)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>54,967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daisy Coleman (2012)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>1,464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audrie Potts (2012)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steubenville (2012)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results

Brock Turner Case
- Many of the Tweets found discussed the length of Turner’s sentence.
- The majority of the victim blaming Tweets and offender support Tweets came from the Brock Turner case.
- Still, the majority of the Tweets surrounding the Turner case were offender blaming.

Larry Nassar Case
- Many of the Tweets surrounding this case were news stories.
- The majority of the Tweets surrounding the Nassar case were victim supporting which has to do with the amount of women Nassar sexually abused.

Daisy Coleman Case
- An overwhelming amount of the Tweets were victim support.
- The Tweets that fell under the victim support attitude were then found to be forms of direct support.

Conclusion
Based on the results, it seems that as a whole, society is progressing in terms of sexual assault and the responses to it. The majority of Tweets found fell under the victim support and offender blame categories. Along with that, there were more males Tweeting about the more recent cases than the older ones. It’s also important to note the evolution of Twitter from opinion based to a source of news.

Citations