

Analyzing the Communication Between Individuals on Twitter Over the Topic of

Planned Parenthood

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**Introduction:**

Twitter has become one of the main social media networks where people discuss politics and issues going on in the world today. The use of hashtags in particular brings topical issues into focus as part of conversations. The purpose of this research was to delve into how interactions on Twitter shed light on social issues. As seen throughout the research conducted, the use of hashtags allows for a broad subject to be reduced into more specific topics of study, which makes it easier to determine similarities in people's arguments. For example, the aim of this study was to examine women's rights and the diminishing support for women's health centers, so the hashtag 'plannedparenthood' was utilized in order to focus on women's reproductive rights that are being reduced by the government. By using a coding and data analysis spreadsheet, the tweets were filtered to display tweets that contain #plannedparenthood which then in turn allowed for the research to examine what Twitter users have to say about women's rights.

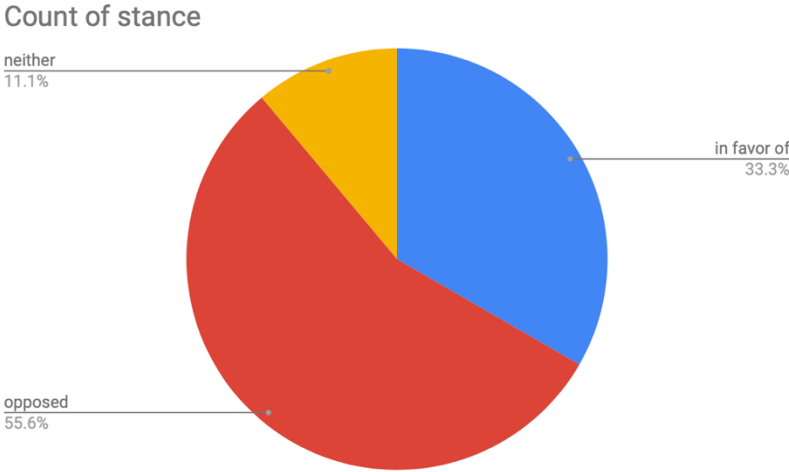
**Methods:**

In order to simplify the number of tweets to analyze, the Twitter Archiving Google Spreadsheet (TAGS) was used to capture tweets. When first searching for #plannedparenthood, there were about 6,400 tweets which contained this hashtag. After these tweets were compiled into one place, they were then analyzed and coded in a spreadsheet which arranged the tweets and wrote out information about each tweet such as when it was tweeted, where it was tweeted from, what language it was tweeted in, etc. From here, the number of tweets was reduced in order to have a smaller sample for analysis. Next, the tweets were filtered to get rid of repetitive tweets which contain the word 'RT' at the front of the tweet. Once the retweets were deleted, the

risk of duplicates was eliminated, which made the results of the research more accurate. After all of the filtering, a set of 100 tweets was used for the analysis.

Once the tweets were reduced, they were analyzed in depth and organized into different categories. To examine similarities between tweets, the following categories were used.

The stance was one of the main categories which helped to show similarities between the tweets. These tweets were organized in stance by opposed, in favor of, or neither in terms of planned parenthood. As seen in the pie chart in *Figure 1*, the majority of these tweets were

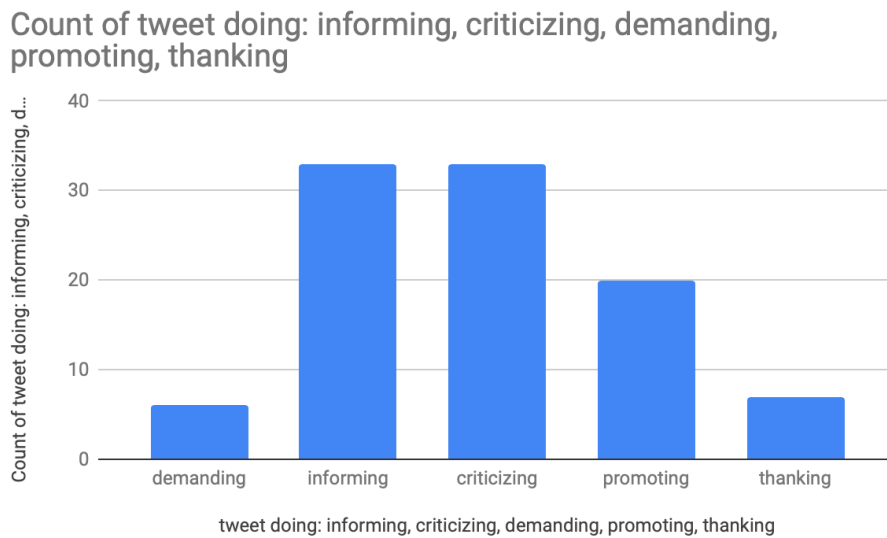


*Figure 1*

opposed to the idea of planned parenthood at 55.6%, while 33.3% were in favor of planned parenthood. The remaining 11.1% were tweets that were neutral or contained information that supported both sides.

Another category was used to determine what the tweet was doing. The tweets were sorted into five actions which were informing, criticizing, demanding, promoting, and thanking. The informing tweets were people who were stating facts about the topic, the demanding ones were looking for a change, the promoting ones were raising awareness and money, and the thanking

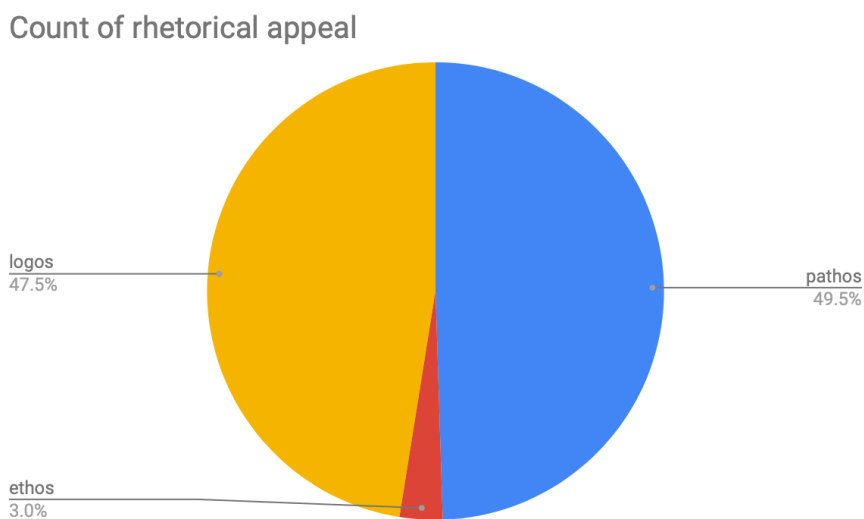
ones were saying thank you to planned parenthood for what they had done for them. The chart in *Figure 2* shows that most of the tweets that were analyzed were either criticizing planned



*Figure 2*

parenthood or informing other people about what was going on.

Next, the rhetorical appeal was considered to analyze if the tweets were appealing to the audience using ethos, pathos, or logos. As shown in *Figure 3*, the tweets were basically split in



*Figure 3*

half with logos and pathos while only a small 3% used ethos in order to convey their message.

In the last category, the tweets were searched for whether they were subjective or objective. The subjective tweets were people who were conveying their own opinions and messages while the objective ones were stating facts and tweeting articles in order to get information out into the world. The majority of the tweets were subjunctive while very few only provided information about the topic at hand.

### **Discussion:**

According to an article published in the New England Journal of Medicine by Sara Rosenbaum, when discussing the topic of planned parenthood and the ongoing fight to defund it, most people do not take into consideration the legal question how it would affect women's rights if they were to lose this program (Rosenbaum, 2017). The research from the tweets reveal that only a small portion of the 100 suggested that planned parenthood should stay in function as it is detrimental to women's health and their rights. One of the tweets in favor of planned parenthood explained exactly what they do to help people, "@pastorlocke @PPFA My sister got excellent care at Planned Parenthood. I thank God every day that she is alive and healthy. #PlannedParenthood" (Schar, 2019). This being said, those who were taking the side of planned parenthood were most likely looking at the effects planned parenthood had already had on society, and what would have happened if planned parenthood was defunded and their loved ones couldn't be cared for. In an article that backs planned parenthood and what it provides, Hal Lawrence states that the defunding of planned parenthood would mean that up to 650,000 women would have to deal with less healthcare in the short span of one year (Lawrence, 2017). While Lawrence notes that defunding planned parenthood would lead to hundreds of thousands of women and men without affordable and preventative health care, the Twitter conversation did not focus on these impacts. Also published by the New England Journal of Medicine, George

Topulos suggests that those who are in favor of defunding planned parenthood are using misinformation in order to back their arguments (Topulos, 2015). One of the toughest things about listening to what others post online is that most times what they are saying is not accurate which leads to others joining in and making miscalculated judgements. Based on the analysis and tweets a large part of the tweeters who were opposed to planned parenthood were basing off facts that could not be entirely accurate. For example, one user tweeted “Let’s face it, #Americans the #AfricanAmerican community is targeted by the #DemocratsAreDestroyingAmerica are 100% for #PlannedParenthood because why? They lie to say it’s a women’s right! They are in control over you! #Blackwomen” (Russell, 2019). Although this man is spreading his opinion, to those who are unsure about what Planned Parenthood does, they will read this and automatically have negative thoughts about the subject. That being said, it is difficult to determine what is real information and what is not when thousands of people are basing off of what only a couple of people have to say. The internet is a hit-or-miss when it comes to finding accurate information, making it very important to look more in depth at research and not at one’s opinions.

**Conclusion:**

All in all, based on the research it is simple to deduce that Twitter has taken a vital role in the political area and the way people express themselves about social issues. Planned Parenthood is a very controversial topic and it is detrimental that everyone is educated about what is occurring before they speak their minds. For this reason, it is important that there are tweets out there by people who are posting articles and websites where others can learn more about the issue. After the conclusion of the research, the majority of the 100 tweets that were analyzed were people who were criticizing planned parenthood and believed that it was a good idea for it to be defunded and out of service. The analysis shows that Twitter exchanges were highly

polarized. While a number of tweets sought to inform the public, that launched the insights of the published research.

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