Community Analysis of #IBelieveEJeanCarroll

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Introduction

Twitter and other social media platforms have created intriguing new methods of connection that allow communities across the world to communicate and respond to news in real time. Studying communities on the internet can lead to a greater understanding of the public's response to an issue. It can also lead to a better understanding of the changing landscape of communication that has evolved through the use of the internet. The Twitter community found under the hashtag IBelieveEJeanCarroll is a community that is standing in support of advice columnist E. Jean Carroll after her accusation that President Donald Trump raped her 23 years ago. Rape victims face an incredible challenge in society after they come forward. In fact, the trauma that results from harassment and abuse after coming forward can heavily contribute to a victim's post traumatic stress disorder (Philips), which often manifests after experiencing sexual assault. Analysis of #EJeanCarroll revealed that this twitter community is composed mostly of women who support E. Jean Carroll and seek to further passionate discourse that is sympathetic to the emotional effect rape has on alleged victims.
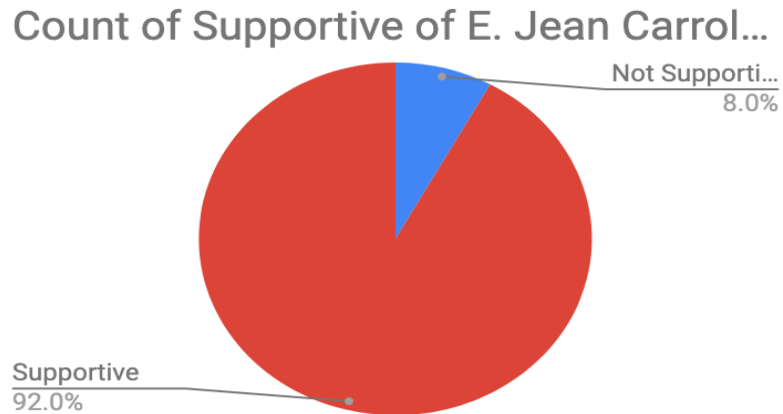
Method

In order to analyze this community, I used a Twitter Analysis Google Spreadsheet in order to create a database of tweets using the #IBelieveEJeanTwitter. I narrowed down the tweets to those posted on Saturday June 22, 2019. I choose this time period because the news of Carrol's accusation broke on June 22. I wanted to observe the initial reactions of the community without allowing them time to be influenced by too many people uninvolved with the initial story. There were over 1,000 tweets that were posted during this time, so I narrowed it down by eliminating the retweets. Then, I deleted tweets randomly until I only had 100 tweets. I was able

to delete tweets randomly by sorting the tweets into random order using Google Sheets and then deleting the first tweets until I only had 100 tweets. After I narrowed it down to 100 tweets, I categorized each tweet based on whether or not it was truly supportive of E. Jean Carroll, whether the poster was a supporter of President Donald Trump, what gender the poster appeared to be, and whether or not the tweet called out Donald Trump directly by twitter handle. In order to determine whether a tweet was supportive, I read the tweet and assigned it to supportive, not supportive, or unsure. Then, I looked at the account of each poster in the unsure category and determined based on the context of their account whether or not the poster was sincere in their use of #IBelieveEJeanCarroll. While I looked at the account, I determined whether or not the poster was a supporter of Donald Trump, and I did my best to determine the poster's gender using pictures, names generally associated with certain genders, and self-identification (such as the use of the word "mom" to describe themselves). I was unable to determine the gender of every poster, but I was able to categorize the majority.
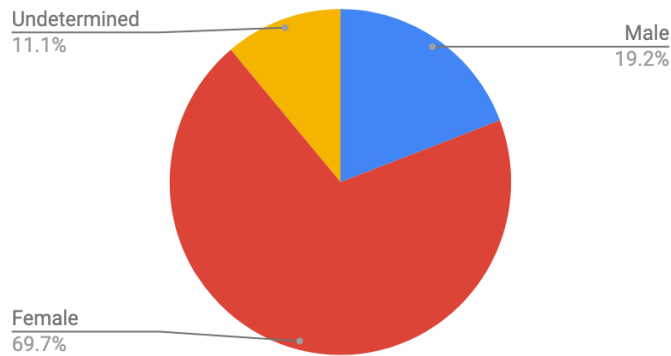
Data and Analysis

The majority of posters who used the hashtag IBelieveEJeanCarroll did support E. Jean Carroll in her accusation against Donald Trump. In fact, the eight tweets that did not support E. Jean Carroll all came from the same account with the handle @KlytusGeneral. This account posts provocative attacks of liberal political figures and an unequivocal support of Donald Trump. @KlytusGeneral was the only example of a poster using sarcasm to change the message of #IBelieveEJeanCarroll in my sample. His most provocative tweet read "@HeathRobin @ActualEPAFacts Or in this case, the "victim's" need to pump those book sales, right? She can tell her "story" when she feels it's the right time, right? Lol, let me go find my pink pussy hat.

#IBelieveEJeanCarroll (General Klytus 2019)." This tweet clearly shows disbelief because the alleged victim is currently promoting a book at the same time this accusation has come to light. He also expresses disdain for the feminist movement in general by referencing the pussy hats worn at the 2017 Women's March.
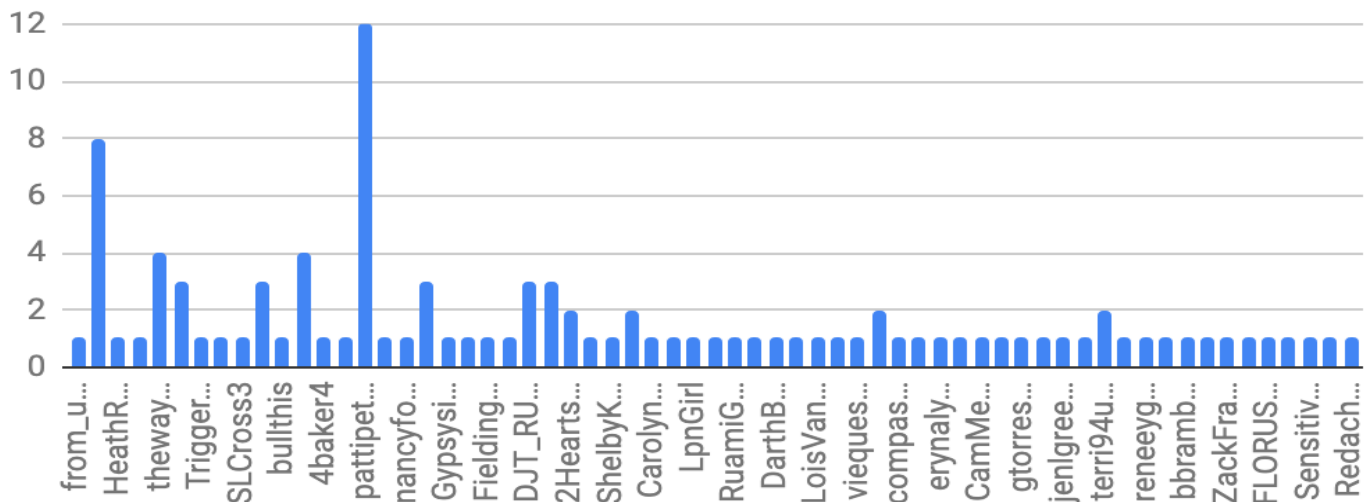

This community is largely made up of females. At least 69.7% of the posters were female, which indicates that females are more inclined to post support for E. Jean Carroll, and likely rape victims in general. The sample becomes more overwhelmingly female when the eight tweets that were not supportive of E. Jean Carroll are removed. Only approximately 12% of the supportive posters could be identified as male. This makes sense because this issue affects women much more than it affects men. In the United States, one in five women will be raped in their lifetime, whereas only one in 71 men will be (Statistics about Sexual Violence).

Count of Best Estimate of Gender

Undetermined
11.1%

Male
19.2%

Female
69.7%

The users that posted the most were @KlytusGeneral and @pattipetersonny, who posted eight and 12 times, respectively. @pattipetersonny tweeted in clear support of E. Jean Carrol. While other users posted multiple times, @KlytusGeneral and @pattipetersonny were the only users in my sample who posted more than four times. In total, 63 distinct twitter accounts were represented in my sample out of 100 tweets.

Conclusion

Overall, I was surprised by the amount of posters who truly believed E. Jean Carroll and used the hashtag to support her and other alleged rape victims. This community was made up of sincere users eager to demonstrate their support for a woman accusing an extremely powerful man of rape. It is incredibly important to support alleged victims of rape who make accusations against powerful individuals because the according to the National Sexual Violence Resource center, "Rape is the most under-reported crime; 63% of sexual assaults are not reported to police (Statistics about Sexual Violence)." Hopefully, the internet can provide networks of support and community for victims of rape and encourage societal change in the general public's attitude towards alleged victims of rape.

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