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Social Justice through Social Media: The Use of Twitter as a Tool for Activism in the #MeToo #BlackLivesMatter Era

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Social Justice Through Social Media: The Use Of Twitter As A Tool For Activism In The #MeToo #BlackLivesMatter Era

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Masters of Mass Communications

in

The Manship School of Mass Communications

by
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ABSTRACT

Coleman, Laura, *Social Justice through Social Media: The Use of Twitter as a Tool for Activism in the #MeToo #BlackLivesMatter Era*. Master of Science (Mass Communication), October, 2019, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA.

This study focuses on social justice and how people on Twitter chose to talk about it. The rise of social media has allowed Twitter users to speak more freely in more spaces than one. The study compared two different sexual assault cases between Judge Brett Kavanaugh and Professor Christine Blasey; and Virginia's Lt. Governor Justin Fairfax and Vanessa Tyson. Applying the social responsibility theory, which allows free press without any censorship, I then can see the tone of which Black Twitter users have when talking about two separate sexual assault cases. This study compares the use of the #BlackTwitter hashtag and #MeToo hashtag while using the social justice-related terms such as gender, race/ethnicity, credibility, sexual assault, privilege, social justice (variable combination of marginalized, equal, and rights) and lgti (variable combination of lying, guilty, truth, and innocent). Furthermore, the study also called for comparison between the Ford's case when Ford first came forward with sexual assault accusations before the case had a hearing (pre) and after the hearing (post); and Tyson's assault accusation surfacing (pre) and after she made her first public appearance (post). In this study, a content analysis survey method was used to assess how blacks express public opinion via twitter to find that blacks use the #BlackTwitter to discuss social justice issues. Individually, the Twitter community as a whole played it safe by only talking about social justice issues moderately on and off Twitter for the Ford case.

For Tyson's case, Black Twitter users talked about social justice more significantly. This study showed how two different movements can work toward a similar goal. Both Ford and Tyson's cases allowed marginalized groups and movements such as the MeToo movement

and Black Lives Matter movement to create an alliance for the greater good of sexual assault victims. Additionally, there are several social media platforms this study could have used to gather results from but using Twitter as the platform has many benefits because Twitter serves as an unofficial platform for an individuals' freedom of speech. Overall, this study looks at the bigger issue, is not just about protection, it is about the change.

KEY WORDS: social justice, social media, sexual assault, social responsibility, gender, race/ethnicity, credibility, sexual assault, privilege, #BlackTwitter, and #MeToo.

INTRODUCTION

Case Background

President Donald Trump nominated Judge Brett Kavanaugh to hold the position as the next U.S. Supreme court justice. Amid this nomination, California professor Christine Blasey Ford, a white woman, wrote a confidential letter to a senior Democratic lawmaker alleging that Brett Kavanaugh sexually assaulted her more than three decades ago, when they were high school students. The Senate Judiciary Committee then launched an investigation of allegations raised against Judge Kavanaugh. Throughout the investigation, committee staff members collected statements, letters, and calls from individuals around the country. These reports ranged from a number of allegations of sexual misconduct, to short messages to senators, passing along internet rumors and theories. However, the reports were not enough and the committee's investigation found that there is no justification of the allegations made against Judge Kavanaugh. Kavanaugh was confirmed to the U.S. Supreme Court Justice seat.

Not even a year later, the state of Virginia's Lt. Governor Justin Fairfax was accused of sexually assaulting two black women. Vanessa Tyson accused Fairfax of forcing her to perform oral sex on him while they were in Boston for the 2004 Democratic National Convention. Shortly after a second woman came forward claiming that Fairfax raped her while they were undergraduates at Duke University in 2000. Fairfax previously admitted to having a consensual sexual encounter with Tyson, but he denied the assault and mentioned the possibility of filing a criminal complaint against her in response to the filing of a false criminal complaint against him. Although he denies both claims, the district attorney for Suffolk County, Mass., has launched an investigation into the sexual assault allegation brought against Justin Fairfax.

For both cases, social media allows citizens to receive a first-hand look at how the justice system treats men vs. women, blacks vs. whites, and the powerful vs. the powerless. To express

feelings and concerns, social media users tend to take their statements to their online platforms. One of the most popular spaces to talk about issues, such as these, is Twitter. But are the conversations the same? I decided to research and compare how blacks and whites talk about these two cases via Twitter from a racial and political standpoint.

Parmelee once said, “Twitter can set the agenda for what journalists are covering just think about the ways Trump’s tweets have, over the course of the past six months, set the agenda,” (Parmelee 2013).

Twitter’s basically used by politicians to influence other influencers. It is a very small universe of people, but its people who can move an agenda. It is like the, “practice of lobbying – people might say, ‘How can that be effective when you’re talking to such a small group of people?’ But they are the group that is making legislation,” (Parmelee 2013).

This statement above is the reason why I decided to research more in depth of how much power Twitter really has over politicians and politics alone. Specifically because for the past 11 years or so, Presidents such as Obama and Trump, used Twitter to help their campaign stay afloat. Women should continue to run for office no matter the backlash we know they will receive. Times are slowly changing, and men are rapidly ruining things here. Minorities, I feel will always have to face the harsh reality of being set to a different standard when running for an elected official office. Although, this may not change, minority and women’s urge to run should continue until the cycle stops and those who should be elected, are elected.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A deep division along racial lines and social justice can describe public opinion in America. Researchers became influenced to study the, “trends in black and white partisanship and political ideology, before focusing on the nature of black political beliefs in black public opinion,” (Harris 2011 p.78). With these findings, we now need a space too freely express those political beliefs. Social media is that space where individuals can express their opinions through their social media platforms such as Twitter. Like many trending topics, social media platforms allow us to take a glimpse of other’s opinion on trending topics such as political participation and the role social media plays in politics discourse.

Black Public Opinion and Political Participation

Why blacks and whites differ so much is due to the difference of class, political principles, social identity, and group interest. This racial divide is most pronounced on policies that intrude conspicuously on the fortunes of blacks and whites (Kinder 2001), but it is also apparent on a wide array of social welfare issues where race is less obviously in play (Kinder 2001). Both must consider a reflection of differences between blacks and whites in social class, the difference over fundamental principles, social identity, and differences between blacks and whites in the attachments they feel toward their own racial group and in the resentments they feel toward each other. Blacks prize equal opportunity. Whites worry about big government. Black’s express solidarity with their racial group, while racial resentments are common among whites. Black Americans support liberal sides of politics. This means they mainly agree on issues that do not specifically mention race but it is understood there are racial implications, such as, food stamps and equal employment opportunities.

White (2014) found that black leaders who have economic or political incentives can shift their political behavior to focus their work less on social justice issues. This gesture is very common during the twentieth century civil and black rights movements. In more contemporary American politics, it easily supplies examples of inducements of personal gains for individual black Americans at the cost of the political power of the black community. Black Americans will shift political behaviors and opinions in response to trusted opinion leaders in the black community (White et. Al 2014). To understand how it is that blacks navigate tradeoffs between their racial group interest and their simple self-interest, researchers notably describe the use of racial group interest in black political decision making as a type of, “low-information rationality, in which the racial group interest stands in as a proxy for self-interest when true self-interest is difficult to gauge” (White et. Al 2014). In the case of Black Americans and public opinion, it is expected that blacks are constrained from following self-interest when social costs are high.

It is generally understood that black voters support black candidates but when it comes time to support for black candidates, group identification drives voting behavior. The intersection of race and sex can be something that divides black public opinion. Race and gender play a role in candidate evaluations (Philpot 2007). While the number of African-American elected officials has increased over the last four decades, blacks remain underrepresented at all levels of government (Philpot 2007). So few black females are elected official’s which hinders the electoral prospects for black female candidates. While there is evidence to suggest that both blacks and women experience structural barriers to running for public office, what happens once black women appear on the ballot? There is a divide between votes and voters’ loyalty.

Race plays a significant role in how others vote for black female candidates, especially looking at how blacks and whites support one another. Black women experience a political reality separate from that of white women and black men. When a black female candidate shows that she has political experience, they receive equal support among whites relative to black voters who may or may not support her. A candidate's political background allows her to transcend between her race and gender with white voters. Although black female candidates garner support from black women at extremely high levels, there is still a divide in how black females come out in the polls. Men and women support female candidates at different levels. Historically, black women have found themselves marginalized by both the black and female struggle. Ever since the Civil Rights Movement, and women's movement, black women's issues came second to other issues. "Black women have created an identity that is greater than the sum of its parts. This guides their political decision making whereby they evaluate candidates based on the potential benefit yielded to black women rather than blacks and/or women.

The importance of race to black political decision making is a form of low-information rationality. "Low-information rationality causes for individual citizens inability to access and process all of the relevant information about their potential political choices, thus citizens take information shortcuts to infer how choices relate to their self-interest," (White 2007, p.3). In order to fully understand how African Americans navigate political circumstances, we have to look at the concepts of group norms and social pressure. "Black participation increases in cities when there is a black mayor, and exceeds those as whites," (White 2007). There is no, "clear explanation on what gives power to social pressure even though some existing research points to the potential political power of reputational sanctions" (White 2007). If the effectiveness of

racialized social pressure hinges so centrally on what is understood to be key to the racial group interest, then these social processes that create that understanding are important.

Social Media in Politics Discourse

Previous research into politicians' digital communication practices explain how politicians uses a number of media tools that ranges from email, websites, blogs and, most recently, social media networking sites/platforms that include Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. To add, research into politicians' digital communication practices also explains to us that a politicians' decision to use different social media platforms rely on two general factors. The first factor is the, "electoral and party system in which a politician operates while the other factor is the culture of digital media use to which the politician is exposed" (Tromble 2018). In the 20th century, the framing of politics led politicians to rely more heavily on broadcast media outlets as their platform for their digital communication practices. Interactive media or social media, promotes avenues for politicians to express personalization when using these many platforms during their political process. By this, politicians can see what audiences are more exposed to their messages, and how it overall contributes to the political process.

Social media may not only enable incidental exposure to political information, but additionally provide a forum through which politically interested people can easily share information among a perhaps less-interested public. (Feezell 2018). Traditional mass media participants are dwindling as the need for social media increases. "Politicians seeking election need to be responsive to the political preferences of their constituencies," (Downs, 1957).

What the consumer wants is first priority. Fulfilling this priority, candidates have to become more personal with their audience and express a balance of reciprocity. During the

political process, politicians use social media to their advantage by reaching mass audiences through agenda setting and building relationships with them. Overall, social media and politics are strategically becoming the forefront of social media as it relates to political communication.

Race and gender play a big role in how we view politics and the political process altogether. Racial cues in political messages help shape the opinions of African American's while White Americans use these cues to their advantage, which leads to racial priming. Whether by inducement or sticking up for the race as a whole, African Americans face disadvantages during the political process. As important as the black vote is, there is still limited research on why the Black vote is so powerful.

Researchers found that participants exposed to specific political issues are, "more likely to consider those issues to be important than participants who were not exposed to specific political issues" (Feezell 2018). When participants get exposed to those specific issues, it causes agenda setting. There are important consequences for representational accountability and policy making when it concerns the public and mass media agenda setting. Mass media agenda is able to reach a larger audience beyond its direct receivers by social filtering information called two-step flow of communication. This two-step flow identifies social network leaders as crucial when distributing mass media messages to inactive audiences. Now the media's public agenda-setting function is extending. Citizens can set the agenda for politicians and may not be aware of that they are setting that agenda. Social media giant, Facebook plays a role in gathering agenda-setting information by appearing on users News Feeds. Furthermore, this effect is strong among those with low levels of political interest who are most likely to avoid political information in favor of more entertaining options, such as social media. As research on traditional effects such

as agenda setting continues to grow, researchers' findings present that this is among the first to demonstrate an effect administered through social media. While this research is important, it differs in the digital media environment (Feezell 2018).

No matter the public sector, the citizens politicians serve are on social media. Social media is an open space where citizens ask questions and voice their opinions, and one of the worst mistakes a politician can make is to completely ignore citizen's engagement. Candidates and political campaigns increasingly use social media as a, "low-cost tool to convey information, persuade voters, and rally supporters; as a result, more than 95 percent of congressional campaigns had a Twitter account in the 2010 election" (Wagner 2014). Information communication systems are important to the political process, because they shape how citizens understand politics and what citizens know. Social media alters the political community in the United States by shifting who controls information, who consumes information, and how that information is distributed. Politicians can minimize the negative perception citizens have about the government by increasing their engagement on social media.

Self interest in the African American community affects how African Americans vote. Black political participation is important to candidates who are running for political positions. As candidates increase their social media use on social sites like Twitter, they can reach out to larger audiences which includes black voters. Usually black voters seem to vote the same way because they, "stick together," but that is not always the case. There is difference not just between blacks and white but also among black males and black females.

Barack Obama took office as the first African American President of the United States a decade ago. Obama's election win served as a proud moment and huge milestone not just for blacks but for Americans as a whole. It appears as if this could turn into a steady progression for

blacks in political positions in the United States. As far as serving as cabinet members for more recent Presidents and becoming elected in the House of Representatives, blacks still lack Senate seats and governorships. “Many blacks view political representation as a potential catalyst for increased racial equality,” according to a 2017 Pew Research Center survey. Overall we know that blacks do not receive much attention when it comes to researching their roles during the political process. Twitter is such a huge social media space where blacks can come together and make connections with others about political issues. Researching how blacks express their political and social justice views while considering white male/females’ candidates and black male/female is a good opportunity for us to see both sides. With my research I plan to address some of those gaps that we still lack in the black political community.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Black Political Engagement Outside the Mainstream

For my theory section, in order to better understand how black citizens use social media as a way to engage in political discussion, I am discussing a particular theory in mass communication. Freedom of speech is important to the American citizen and with the development of social media, there is always a way for them to be able to express that freedom. The social responsibility theory describes how citizens can use their platforms to express their own thoughts at any time.

The social responsibility theory allows free press without using any censorship. The underlying principle of the social responsibility theory of the press is that, “the press should be free to perform the functions which the libertarian theory granted it freedom to perform, but that this freedom should be exercised with responsibility” (Okunna & Omenugha, 2012). The theory gives total media freedom in one hand but the external controls in the other hand. Social responsibility premises that freedom carries certain obligations, while the press is obligated to be responsible to society for carrying out certain important functions of mass communication. For example, big businesses may define social responsibility as that, “which has to be done to keep consumers believing the company is in business for reasons other than just making a profit off consumers” (Wright 1976).

The main functions of this theory include servicing the political system by providing, “information, discussion and debate on public affairs; enlightening the public so as to make it capable of self-government; safeguarding the rights of the individual; servicing the economic system; providing entertainment; and maintaining its own self-sufficiency” (Wright 1976). In

mass communication, the goal is to strive to be fair and honest. Social responsibility theory is considered the right and proper thing to do since it gives total freedom to those who speak out in spaces such as Twitter. The Theory feeds into when communicators mention fairness and honesty. It is the presses responsibility to provide the public with information about important political issues. Yes, traditional press is no longer popular but even in new media, citizens still look to the press to for their political information, no matter if they receive it traditionally or not.

Mainstream journalism operates from a space that heavily and primarily focuses on white issues. This makes it hard for blacks to fully trust this perspective when journalists do not assume that when they refer to people that it also includes nonwhite people? Today's media rely heavily on Twitter and, "it is different subcultures as a source of their news as journalists view Twitter as a useful tool for gathering story ideas and insights" (Parmelee and Bichard, 2013). Using this tool is not always a good thing for the black community. The media shows black people in negative lights, which is why blacks choose to express a negative view of news outlets rather than a positive view. They also criticized and censured news media outlets more often than praising and endorsing them. However, the outlets in which blacks' censure and criticize the most become the most shared. Black people use Twitter to raise awareness and share about important issues to them on their own terms, without waiting for the press or journalists to take interest. Twitter is also used as a curated news source to avoid problematic portrayals of blacks by mainstream news outlets.

Black Twitter users noted that the reproduction of tweets in nationally distributed news reports exposes them to potential online harassment, threats or violence that they otherwise might not have faced had their tweet not been promoted on a larger platform (Freelon, 2018).

Many people have Twitter accounts, but they are still private citizens. They do not mean for a tweet to go viral, especially in a safe space such as Black Twitter, but once it does, the press does not have to think about the implications for that person.

Social justice is the thought of having social equity in our society. It is important to blacks because it can represent gender, racial equality, and class. Social justice is also important because it gives black people security that black people are no longer discriminated against, or that women are no longer expected to stay home and not work. Social justice ensures that all people are treated fairly and without it, society is not. From experience, the media shows more negative reflections of a black person's character and for that, the need for social justice will continue. "Blacks appeared three or more times more often than Whites in crime or sports stories," (Entman, 2000).

In the past, the black community witnessed black men and women be treated unfairly. More recently, the black community aggressively spoke about the Florida and Georgia governors' races involving Stacey Abrams and Andrew Gillum and how whites are setting us up to fail. No matter how hard blacks' campaign for higher political positions, there is always some form of blockage. Another example is how police are killing cooperative blacks and walking free, even going as far as relying on self-defense/ stand your ground laws. For reasons like these, it leads me to my hypothesis.

Hypothesis: Black Twitter users will be more likely to discuss political issues through a social justice frame relative to other Twitter users.

Although the outcomes may vary, the black community tend to stand up for what is right, not just what is right for the black community. Just because There are two different races that go

through similar situations is not going to make the black community choose a side besides the right side. Also, just because Fairfax is black male and Kavanaugh is white male, does not guarantee that he is absent from black Twitter outrage over the treatment of the victims in these cases.

METHODOLOGY

Experimental Design

This study will address my hypothesis by making inferences about Black Twitter users emotions based on the messages in their Twitter posts. In this study, I used a content analysis survey method to assess how blacks express public opinion via Twitter. Content analysis was chosen for its ability to examine and identify users' motivations and emotions behind their Twitter usage behavior (Rodgers & Chen, 2005) regarding two cases and discover a data-context relationship among different variables.

I compared two different yet similar national assault cases between Brett Kavanaugh and Justin Fairfax. I assessed the opinions of blacks via the Black Twitter community and their feelings toward each case such as anger, neutrality, and happiness. Content analysis can allow for both qualitative and quantitative operations while also looking directly at communication via texts, transcripts and gets at the central aspect of social interaction. It can identify a person's intentions, attitudes, emotions, and propaganda etc. Wimmer and Dominick (2011) explain the 10 steps in a content analysis are (1) developing a research question, (2) defining the 'universe,' (3) picking a sampling frame, (4) choosing a unit of analysis, (5) constructing categories, (6) developing a quantification system, (7) training coders and establishing reliability, (8) complete the coding procedure, (9) analyze the data collected and (10) draw conclusions from the results. This method analyses those interactions from distances so that the researcher is provided a sense of objectivity.

The research design involving a content analysis will allow for maximum dependability since there is a large amount of previous scholarly research and theoretical framework applied to this approach. After analyzing and considering several qualitative and quantitative methods, a content analysis is what I have selected to use for this study.

Sampling Frame

I looked at tweets starting the first three days after the news broke concerning each case and three days after the victims came forward to officially speak out. This timeline is a sufficient period of time for this study since the public’s opinion is more intense when a story a new story surface. “In any case, news outlets often become suddenly and strongly riveted to a storyline and we call this phenomenon of sudden, high, and sustained media attention to an event or issue a *media storm*” (Boydston, Amber & Hardy, Anne & Walgrave, Stefaan, 2014). When the news broke and when the victims showed their faces and came forward, serves as a hot off the press focal point for the cases, which is a long enough time to see a variance in Twitter posts. A hot topic equals more tweets. I selected a random sample of Tweets about both cases, but I am looking specifically for the Black Twitter hashtag in order to determine tweets on Black Twitter. I have agreed on five specific hashtags popular to each case. In regards to the Kavanaugh case, the hashtags I looked for are #black Twitter, #Kavanaugh, #trump, #America and #metoo. For the Justin Fairfax case, the hashtags I looked for are #blackTwitter, #JustinFairfax, #govjustinairfax, #virginia, and #metoo.

Table 1. Hashtags for Identifying Tweets

Kavanaugh	Fairfax
#Kavanaugh	#Justin Fairfax

(table. cont’d.)

Kavanaugh	Fairfax
#Trump	#govjustinairfax
#America	#virginia
#metoo	#metoo
#Black Twitter	#Black Twitter

Using a random sample of Tweets generated from Crimson Hexagon analytics tool, I was able to fully conduct this study. Christine Ford’s sexual assault allegations against Brett Kavanaugh surfaced on September 14, 2018 and the U.S. Senate confirmed Kavanaugh as supreme court justice on October 6, 2018. Vanessa Tyson’s private Facebook message accusing Justin Fairfax of sexual assault was published February 3, 2019, and she officially spoke out/at a #metoo movement event on February 12, 2019. Therefore, the first 100 Black Twitter posts regarding the cases and when the news first surfaced on both dates, September 14, 2018 and February 3, 2019, were coded, followed by the first 100 Black Twitter posts regarding the supreme courts’ decision to confirm Kavanaugh to supreme court justice and Tyson’s first public appearance on both dates, October 6, 2018 and February 12, 2019, were used in this study. 200 posts from each case is a good number that would produce a large enough sample to gather data from. This sampling procedure resulted in a total of 1,239 Twitter posts for this analysis – 601 total posts for Ford’s allegation breaking date and first public appearance and 638 total posts for Tyson’s allegation breaking date and first public appearance.

This study divided Twitter tweet content into four categories: in support of the alleged assaulters Brett Kavanaugh, and Justin Fairfax, or support for the victims Christine Blasey Ford and Vanessa Tyson. Their traits were operationally defined as:

Table 2. Kavanaugh vs Ford Code Guidelines

Pro-Kavanaugh	If the tweet mentions being in support of Brett Kavanaugh
Pro-Ford	If the tweet mentions being in support of Christine Blasey Ford

Table 3. Fairfax vs Tyson Code Guidelines

Pro-Fairfax	If the tweet mentions being in support of Justin Fairfax
Pro-Tyson	If the tweet mentions being in support of Vanessa Tyson

Every mention of a trait in association with one of the assaulters and victims were tracked to produce a total amount of coded trait mentions for that person.

I coded for specific terms used in tweets, at least once. These terms include: the hashtag BlackTwitter, the hashtag #MeToo, credibility, courage marginalized, sexual assault, profanity, fairness, equal, rights, community, resources, teaching, liberal, gay, anti-trump, celebrity, rationale, candidates, mission, youth, warrior, privilege, advocacy, issues, allegations, lying, truth, attention, brave, race/ethnicity, gender, innocent, guilty, professor, accused, and Trump.

The terms are operationally defined as:

Table 4. Twitter Code Guidelines

#BlackTwitter	Any mention of the hashtag or using the word BlackTwitter
Credibility	Any mention of credibility, reliability, or a reference/source is deemed credible
Courage	Any mention of courage or bravery, braveness, or fearlessness
Marginalized	Any mention of marginalized groups including all socioeconomic, racial, religious, lifestyle, and cultural groups etc.
Sexual Assault	Any mention of sexual assault, rape, or sexual abuse
Profanity	Any mention of profanity/curse words including those involving symbols or emojis. For example: Bulls**t, and 🍆
Fairness	Any mention of fairness, being fair, or just treatment
Equal	Any mention equality, or having the same value
Rights	Any mention of equal rights, moral rights, being morally correct or just
Community	Any mention of community, group, coming together as one, body, or group of individuals living in the same place
Resources	Any mention of stock, money, supplying materials, assets, or funds
Teaching	Any mention of teaching, creating a well-educated workforce, higher education, early childhood development, education funding and school's performance.

(table. cont'd.)

Liberal	Any mention of being liberal or having liberal views
Gay	Any mention of gay, gayness, homosexuality, or the LGBTQ+ community
Anti-Trump	Any mention of being against President Donald Trump
Celebrity	Any mention of celebrity, celebrity status, A-lister or famous
Rationale	Any mention of reasons with logical basis, or rationale
Candidates	Any mention of the word candidate(s), or running mates
Mission	Any mention of assignments, important assignments being carried out, a journey or commission
Youth	Any mention of millennials, generation z, adolescence, teens, teenagers, teenage years, juvenile or any person described as between their childhood and adult age
Warrior	Any mention of a warrior, fighter, soldier, servicewomen, or servicemembers
Privilege	Any mention of a special right, advantage, immunity granted or availability to a particular person
Advocacy	Any mention of advocacy, public support, or recommendations of any particular cause
Issues	Any mention of issues, an important topic or problem up for debate
Allegations	Any mention of claims/assertions that someone has done something wrong without proof
Lying	Any mention of lying, being a liar, lie, lies, dishonesty, dishonest and untruth
Truth	Any mention of truth, truth telling, something being true, factual or fact
Attention	Any mention of paying close attention to, seeking attention, or validation
Brave	Any mention of being brave, having brave qualities, or bravery
Race/Ethnicity	Any reference to a person being White, Caucasian, Black, African American, minority, non-White etc.
Gender	If the tweet referred to the victim or assaulter as woman, female, daughter, mother, grandmother, wife, spouse and/or married to or If the tweet referred to the victim or assaulter as man, male, son, father, grandfather, husband, spouse and/or married to.
Innocent	Any mention of innocence, not guilty of a crime, or faultless
Guilty	Any mention of guilty, responsible for a crime, or liable
Professor	Any mention of the word professor
Accused	Any mention of accused, being accused, or a person or group of people who are charged with a hearing for a crime
Trump	Any mention of President Donald Trump

Every mention of a term in association with one of the above terms were tracked to produce a total amount of coded tweet mentions for that person. A content analysis was conducted where Twitter post serves as the unit of analysis. Coding categories are based on a previous study involving social media (Park, Rodgers, & Stemmler, 2013), and all categories

show the property of, “exhaustivity,” since each Twitter post will fit into the categories in the codebook (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). If 10 percent or less of the Twitter posts analyzed fall into the ‘neutral’ category, the research remains acceptable (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). The coding I conducted in this study met these criteria making all categories mutually exclusive.

Coding Procedure

According to Wimmer and Dominick (2011), a unit of analysis in a content analysis can be defined as the smallest item that the researcher counts as he or she comes across it. For this study, the unit of analysis are Twitter posts, specifically 1,239 posts for this analysis – 601 total posts for Ford’s allegation breaking date and first public appearance and 638 total posts for Tyson’s allegation breaking date and first public appearance.

I coded for a total of 1,239 posts – 300 posts under analysis for Ford’s allegation breaking date and 301 posts after Kavanaugh’s supreme court confirmation, followed by 319 posts of Tyson’s allegation breaking date and 319 posts after Tyson’s first public appearance.

I identified how a tweet is about social justice or not, first by searching the hashtag #socialjustice on Crimson Hexagon and seeing which words users used most. By this, I started looking for tweets that have the following words in them: equal, rights, community, resources, teaching, liberal, gay, anti-Trump, black, celebrity, rationale, candidates, mission, youth, warrior, privilege, advocacy, issue(s), allegations, lying, truth, attention, brave, race/ethnicity, gender, innocent, guilty, professor, accused and Trump using interpretation from the text in the Twitter posts. By this, I determined what pushes users’ attitudes used in the post after reading the post’s text a few times. I used Crimson Hexagon analytics to separate each date and choose which

tweets to code tweets using these words and hashtags. By using Crimson Hexagon I also saw the gender, and age of tweeters.

Other units of analysis that could be used in this study is the number of ‘at mentions’ on a Black Twitter users’ post and number the amount of ‘likes,’ and retweets on the individual Twitter posts. To determine these units of analysis, I would gather quantitative data provided by Crimson Hexagon analytics. For example, a tweet can be against the victims and another user may retweet it and add an additional comment but it may or may not be as popular as the original tweet depending on the number of ‘likes’ and retweets it receives. Two tweets with the same attitude but they each have a different number of individual posts ‘likes’ and retweets could also potentially provide a different attitude in the post alone.

As far as categorization variables, each Twitter post in this sample was coded for basic information including the following nominal variables: (1) mention of Black Twitter, (2) mention metoo, (3) mention of top 5 hashtags, (4) date of post, and (5) mention of specific terms. Then, each Twitter post was further coded according to the following variables: (6) attitude of post is angry, (7) attitude of post is pleased, (8) attitude of post is neutral.

For this project I coded for three different variables. The first variable I coded is if a tweet is negative or not. I determined if a tweet is negative toward the topic by looking for angry faced emojis, aggressive slurs using words like failure, anger, attacked, neglected, unprotected etc. I also determined what is negative by looking for profanity. The analytics tool I used breaks down emotion analysis so I specifically saw negative tweets to code.

The next variable I coded is rather a tweet is positive or not. Similar to the negative variable, I coded if a tweet is positive or not by looking for happier emojis and tweets that use

more positive words such as awesome, beautiful, inspired, rooting for, passionate etc. By looking for positive affirming words, it was not hard to determine which side the tweeter stood closer on. Similar to the negative variable, the data analytics tool I used also breaks down emotion analysis for specifically positive tweets so that I saw them specifically and coded them accordingly.

The last variable I coded is for tweets that are categorized as neutral. When looking for neutral content I looked for those who are simply stating their points of view while not promoting either side. Tweets that may specifically describe a dispute but they do not engage in the actual dispute. I am aware that it was difficult to determine if someone's Twitter content is neutral or not but the data analytics tool also sections off all neutral tweets surrounding each subject.

Intercoder Reliability

Intercoder reliability is an important part of the way I coded tweets for this study. The intercoder reliability allows me to argue for the consistency, and validity of my findings. Demonstrating intercoder reliability has long been a threshold of meaningful content analysis (Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 2005). In this study, I used an independent coder for intercoder reliability and ran a small statistics test of 10% of my data to assess reliability. The coder hand-coded a 10% random sample of the Twitter posts used for the Kavanaugh vs Ford case and Fairfax vs Tyson case.

To test the intercoder reliability, I used Cohen's Kappa. Whenever the Cohen's Kappa was less than 0.60 that indicated a low level of intercoder reliability. For this reason, I decided to not use those words less than 0.60, in my analysis due to the inconsistencies. The values greater than 0.60 had a high level of inter-rater reliability. I decided to keep only those words with a high

level of inter-rater reliability in my analysis. The intercoder reliability shows similar patterns when terms like gender, race/ethnicity, and when marginalized groups are mentioned. Other terms such as community, teaching, gay, and liberal were used but not a significant enough amount to continue to use these words throughout the study.

This first set of words represent the words that were used a significant amount as users talked about the Kavanaugh and Ford case. When looking at their values, I used Cohen's Kappa. After running several independent sample t-test, whenever the Cohen's Kappa was less than 0.60 that indicated a low level of intercoder reliability. Their values are high because myself and the intercoder tracked the tweets very closely. I am assuming these words fell under the most reliable category because they are closely related to social justice and what users think is most important to talk about during this case.

The second set of words are those words that were coded but may not have been significantly related to one another. Looking at the values, it shows how the values are lower than those of the first set of words. For this reason, I have decided to move further with the study using only the words that were used significantly and displayed higher values. From the Table, the second set of words are not in vain however, they are not as useful to this case.

RESULTS

Descriptive Patterns

For this next section, I ran some descriptive statistics to gather basic patterns and features throughout the study. My hypothesis states that Twitter users use a social justice frame to discuss these two sexual assault cases and I needed a way to further support this statement. By running some descriptive statistics, I am able to show a short summary about the sample I coded for.

According to Table 5, you can visually see that Twitter users did not mention social justice words as much unless the tweet involved the topic of gender. Twitter users had this reaction because of both the assaulter and victim's race. Had the assaulter and the victim been a different race, I do think gender would be talked about just not as much because most would see that it would not matter. Gender should play a dominant role since their race is the same and or is not between a minority and a majority race. When looking at the top two hashtags I coded for in this study, I saw that #BlackTwitter and #MeToo were coded a significant amount as well. When a hashtag is popular during a certain event, more Twitter users are more likely to use those hashtags when they tweet. During the coding process, sometimes Tweets would state no real content, but just hashtags. These are the tweets that were still coded, but I noticed that maybe those users were only using the hashtags since they are popular and for promotional purposes only. For Ford's case many patterns showed close values but the top three terms with the highest values is marginalized, celebrity and race/ethnicity. This does not mean users talked about Ford in an only when mentioning marginalized groups, celebrities, or race. What this just shows is what users talked about more during her case.

For Tyson’s case, the social justice words are used more than Ford’s case. Based on Fairfax and Tyson’s race, I think this is why Twitter user’s tweeted about the case from a social justice frame. During this era, all Twitter users especially black Twitter users are going to look at a case involving black people in a more racial light. Making a preconceived assumption, before I coded the tweets for the Fairfax and Tyson case, I predicted that their race would be talked about a good bit before I saw how it actually turned out. Looking at the top two hashtags again for the Tyson case, both were used a good amount not just because of the era we are in but because of the popularity of those hashtags during the events. With no current verdict from the Fairfax and Tyson case, I see the numbers spiking much higher after an actual hearing similar to the Kavanaugh and Ford case. Until the case is finished or at least taken hearing, if it does, the racial trend will not change.

Table 5. Descriptive Data on Tweet Content

Tweet	FORD		TYSON	
	Total (601)	Percentage	Total (638)	Percentage
MeToo	302	50%	305	48%
BlackTwitter	244	40%	334	52%
#BlackTwitter	581	96%	635	100%
Credibility	3	1%	177	28%
Marginalized	140	23%	261	40%
Sexual Assault	66	11%	240	38%
Equal	12	2%	186	29%
Rights	34	6%	189	30%
Privilege	10	2%	161	25%
Lying	23	4%	160	25%
Truth	49	9%	184	29%
Race/Ethnicity	231	38%	283	44%
Gender	127	21%	341	54%
Innocent	17	3%	161	25%
Guilty	29	5%	161	25%

As stated before, after gathering the intercoder reliability, I saw several inconsistencies. Those words less than 0.60, represented those inconsistencies, and the values greater than 0.60

had a high level of inter-rater reliability. I decided to keep those words while also combining related words. Among those related variables, I combined the variables, “marginalized, equal, and rights,” to come up with the overall variable I call the, “social justice,” variable. I also combined the variables lying, guilty, truth, and innocent to come up with the overall variable I call the, “*Lgti*,” variable. All of these variables best represent the social justice frames I am looking for within tweets about the two sexual assault cases.

Differences in Social Justice on Twitter

In my hypothesis, I stated that Black Twitter users would discuss both cases from a social justice point of view. My hypothesis is significantly supported in some ways after running independent sample t-test to see what patterns I could find after comparing those who used the #BlackTwitter hashtags versus those who did not and comparing tweets before (pre) and after (post) for each case.

Table 6. Ford #BlackTwitter Usage

Tweet	Used #BlackTwitter (Sd)	Used #MeToo (Sd)	P-Value
Gender	.19(0.39)	.24(0.43)	p =.158
Race/Ethnicity	.51(0.50)	.26(0.44)	p≤ 0.001
Credibility	.00	.01	p =.085
Sexual Assault	.02(0.13)	.20(0.40)	p≤0.001
Privilege	.02(0.13)	.02(0.13)	p=.983
Social Justice	.33(0.47)	.22(0.42)	p≤0.001
LGTI	.21(0.41)	.16(0.37)	p=.123

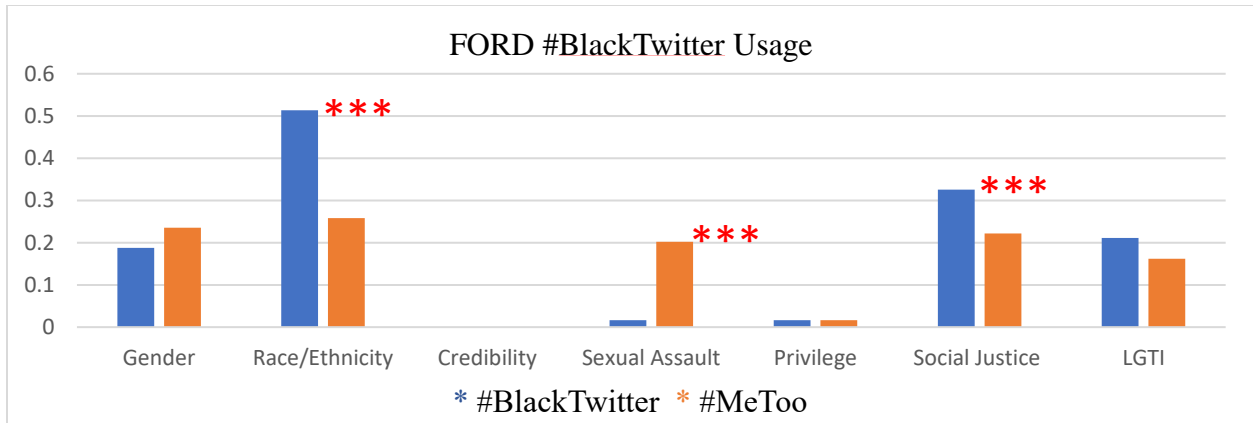


Figure 1. Ford Black Twitter Usage significant levels: *** $p \leq 0.001$, ** $p \leq 0.05$, * $p \leq 0.10$

For Table 6, I wanted to see what patterns would show between users who used the #BlackTwitter hashtag and those who used the #MeToo hashtag. The chart shows a significant difference only three variables which is race/ethnicity, sexual assault, and social justice. There is no significant difference between how users mentioned the hashtag #BlackTwitter when using the variables gender, credibility, privilege, social justice, and lgti. What this represents to me is that users talked about those variables more in general than the significantly different variables. During the Kavanaugh and Ford case Twitter users discussed the social justice frame on and off #BlackTwitter. The tables show no significant differences between #BlackTwitter and #MeToo hashtags which is important as it relates to social responsibility. Social responsibility promotes honesty and fairness even though mainstream journalism primarily focuses on white issues. Not seeing the difference shows that there is a balance (fairness) in the conversation between Black Twitter users and MeToo movement supporters.

When it came to the Ford case, users on Black Twitter talked about sexual assault in 2% of their tweets versus those who used the #MeToo hashtag the Black Twitter hashtag who talked about sexual assault on 20% of their tweets and these values are significantly different from one another $p \leq 0.001$. For the variable gender, users on Black Twitter talked about gender in 19% of their tweets versus those who used the #MeToo hashtag the Black Twitter hashtag who talked

about gender in 24% of their tweets and these values show little significant change from one another. Sexual assault and gender are closely related in this case because the variables normally go hand in hand when talking about sexual assault cases such as Ford is but the results show that neither variables were mentioned in high percentages on Twitter. The findings about sexual assault fits with my predictions about Black Twitters users discussing the Ford case from a social justice frame but the gender findings did not support my prediction. In fact, since this case is between two nonblack persons, I predicted gender to be talked about a lot more than just sexual assault. As for social justice, users on Black Twitter talked about social justice in 33% of their tweets versus those who used the #MeToo hashtag the Black Twitter hashtag who talked about social justice on 22% of their tweets and although there is a 10% decrease, these values show a significant difference from one another.

When it came to the race/ethnicity variable, users on Black Twitter talked about race/ethnicity in 51% of their tweets versus those who used the #MeToo hashtag the Black Twitter hashtag who talked about race/ethnicity on 26% of their tweets and these values are significantly different from one another $p \leq 0.001$. This result is a 25% difference meaning Black Twitter users talk about race more than those who do not use Black Twitter. Blacks talk about race because their race is always a factor in all things that they do. Whites will not be able to say the same. Since race is ties in to their everyday lives, the mention of race being talked about more via #BlackTwitter is not a surprise, it is a norm. Users on Black Twitter talked about privilege in 2% of their tweets versus those who used the #MeToo hashtag the Black Twitter hashtag who talked about privilege in 2% of their tweets and these values show no significant difference from one another meaning privilege was not mentioned nearly at all during the case. These findings fit into my prediction a lot because I predicted that Black Twitter users would tie

race into almost anything but specifically with sexual assault. My prediction came from the many stereotypes and misrepresentation that black women receive when she accuses someone of sexual assault versus when a nonblack woman does.

Users on Black Twitter talked about lgti (lying, guilty, truth, and innocent) in 21% of their tweets versus those who used the #MeToo hashtag the Black Twitter hashtag who talked about lgti on 16% of their tweets and these values are significantly different from one another. The lgti variable is not mentioned as much on #BlackTwitter because Black Twitter users focus more on racial aspects rather than the actual case matter at hand, For the Ford case, these overall results still fit with my predictions about how Black Twitter users would talk about social justice related issues on Twitter, not even the social justice variable alone. Just because the variables showed three significant differences, the remaining social justice related variables were still discussed which supported my predictions for this case.

Table 7. Tyson #BlackTwitter Usage

Tweet	Used #BlackTwitter (Sd)	Used #MeToo (Sd)	P-Value
Gender	.25(0.43)	.45(0.50)	p≤ 0.001
Race/Ethnicity	.55(0.50)	.10(0.29)	p≤ 0.001
Credibility	.00	.00	p=.00
Sexual Assault	.04(0.19)	.19(0.39)	p≤0.001
Privilege	.03(0.16)	.00(0.06)	p= .016
Social Justice	.36(0.48)	.18(0.38)	p≤ 0.001
LGTI	.14(0.34)	.09(0.29)	p= .089

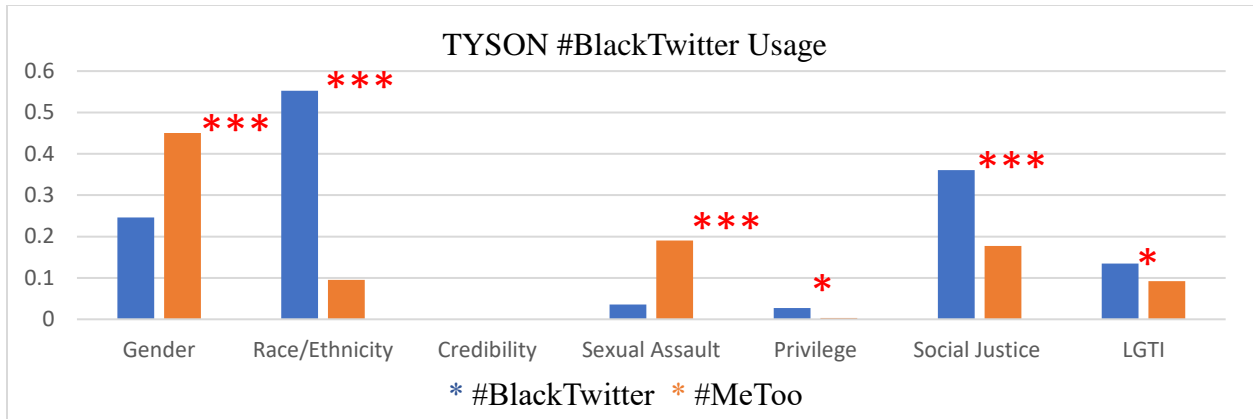


Figure 2. Tyson Black Twitter Usage significant levels: *** $p \leq 0.001$, ** $p \leq 0.05$, * $p \leq 0.10$

Ford’s case showed very few significant differences when using the #BlackTwitter hashtag, but Tyson’s results show much different results. The variables gender, race/ethnicity, sexual assault, and social justice all show significant differences between users who used the #BlackTwitter hashtag and those who used the #MeToo hashtag.

When it came to the Tyson case, users on Black Twitter talked about sexual assault in 4% of their tweets versus those who used the #MeToo hashtag the Black Twitter hashtag who talked about sexual assault in 19% of their tweets and these values are significantly different from one another $p \leq 0.001$. There is a 16% increase in those who used the #BlackTwitter hashtag to those used the #MeToo hashtag. For the variable gender, users on Black Twitter talked about gender in 25% of their tweets versus those who used the #MeToo hashtag the Black Twitter hashtag who talked about gender in 45% of their tweets and these values are significantly different from one another $p \leq 0.001$. I expected to see significant differences within these two variables because they closely relate to sexual assault cases. However, both variables were talked about more off of Black Twitter which was surprising considering both the victim and the assaulter are both black. This difference helps the case that Blacks who are on #BlackTwitter focus on race more than other factors because race is looked at so heavily within Black communities.

As far as playing the race card for the Tyson case, that is exactly what Black Twitter users did. Users on Black Twitter talked about race/ethnicity in 55% of their tweets versus those who used the #MeToo hashtag the Black Twitter hashtag who talked about race/ethnicity in 10% of their tweets and these values represent a significant difference from one another $p \leq 0.001$. These results fit with my predictions about how social justice frames would be discussed in regards to sexual assault cases especially between blacks since race is the most important topic concerning blacks. For privilege, users on Black Twitter talked about privilege in 3% of their tweets versus those who used the #MeToo hashtag the Black Twitter hashtag who talked about privilege in none of their tweets and these values are not significantly different from one another.

When it came to the Tyson case, users on Black Twitter talked about social justice in 36% of their tweets versus those who used the #MeToo hashtag the Black Twitter hashtag who talked about social justice in 18% of their tweets and these values are significantly different from one another $p \leq 0.001$. The nearly 20% difference in how social justice is discussed on and off Black Twitter results did fit with my predictions about social justice frames. Users on Black Twitter talked about lgti in 14% of their tweets versus those who used the #MeToo hashtag the Black Twitter hashtag who talked about lgti in 9% of their tweets and these values are significantly different from one another. For the Tyson case, these overall results fit with my predictions about how Black Twitter users would talk about social justice related issues on Twitter.

After looking at both the Ford case and the Tyson case, I noticed some similarities in how variables were discussed and some differences on how the variables were discussed on and off of Black Twitter. The biggest similarity between the two is that race and sexual assault showed the most significant difference in this study. Black Twitter users talked about race significantly

greater on Black Twitter than those who did not and sexual assault was talked about significantly but not for the Ford case where it was talked about more off of Black Twitter. Individually, The Twitter community as a whole played it safe by only talking about social justice issues moderately on and off Twitter for the Ford case. For Tyson’s case, Black Twitter users talked about social justice more significantly. I predicted this simply because this case is about black people and the Black Twitter community are black people. When looking at the significant variables for both cases, those variables are important as it relates to social responsibility, social justice, and the impact of social justice movements because we see how the conversation is not only talked about on #BlackTwitter but also how the topics are being discussed in other spaces. Since Twitter gives total freedom to its users to speak and say what they personally want to, it is important that these results showed users freely choosing to talk about the cases in social justice ways.

Differences in Tweets Pre & Post Key Events

Table 8. Ford Pre/Post Comparisons

Tweet	Pre (Sd)	Post (Sd)	p-value
#BlackTwitter	.47(0.50)	.52(0.50)	p= .1890
Gender	.09(0.28)	.32(0.47)	p≤ 0.001
Race/Ethnicity	.47(0.50)	.31(0.46)	p≤ 0.001
Credibility	*	_*	*
Sexual Assault	.09(0.34)	.13(0.29)	p= .1483
Privilege	.01(0.10)	.02(0.15)	p= .2601
#MeToo	.53(0.50)	.48(0.50)	p= .1617
Social Justice	.36(0.38)	.18(0.48)	p≤ 0.001
LGTI	.19(0.39)	.18(0.39)	p= .8978

*= no tweets mentioned in the Ford

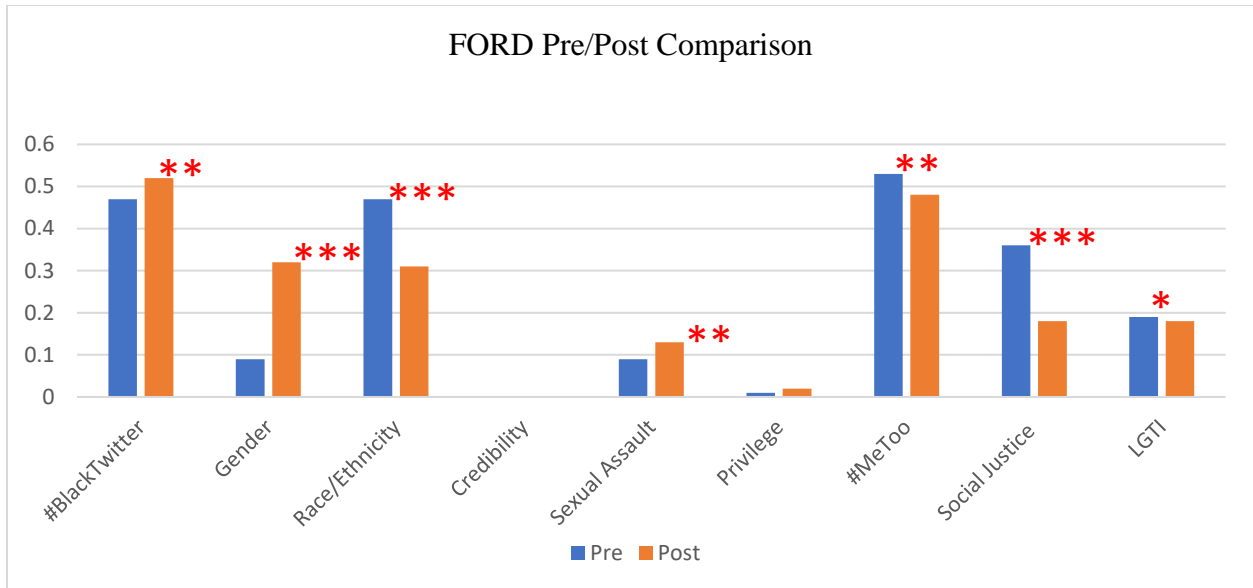


Figure 3. Ford Pre/Post Comparisons significant levels: *** $p \leq 0.001$, ** $p \leq 0.05$, * $p \leq 0.10$

I not only discussed users coming from a social justice frame but also because I knew once the victim’s faces became visible to the world, people would begin to talk about certain terms more than others. This is why coding before (pre) seeing anyone’s race or gender and after (post) showing race and gender is so important. I wanted to be able to see the shift in conversation, if there was any. From the t-test I conducted, I saw a pattern of social justice related words being used but I also saw how some terms’ usage increased over time.

I ran an independent sample t-test to gather my results for Table 7, label the actual Table. Based off of proportions alone, the statistical comparisons show that words such as gender, race/ethnicity, and social justice have significant changes from pre-hearing and post-hearing for the Kavanaugh and Ford case. In a sense, these words were talked about in this manner based off of the hearing alone. Two key portions include seeing how angry Kavanaugh got during the hearing and the look on Ford’s face the first day of the hearing. These portions alone could shape how users could shift their conversation before and after. The mention of the words increased significantly, which leads me to assume that because Ford, “lost,” her case, we should now

change the scope of how she lost to rectify a reason of why she should have won and to possible reopen their hearing. On the other hand, words like the hashtag #BlackTwitter, race, sexual assault, the hashtag #MeToo, lying, guilty, truth, and innocent did not show a significant change in how they were mentioned before and after the case ended. Not to say that these words are neutral but they serve as words that were a given when talking about anything related to sexual assault in today's era.

When it came to the Ford case, users on Twitter used the hashtag #BlackTwitter in 47% of their tweets before (pre) the hearing versus those who used the #BlackTwitter hashtag in 52% of their tweets after (post) the hearing and these values show no significant difference from one another. When it came to the #MeToo hashtag, users on Twitter used the hashtag #MeToo in 53% of their tweets before (pre) the hearing versus those who used the #MeToo hashtag in 48% of their tweets after (post) the hearing and these values show no significant difference from one another. Neither hashtag showed a significant difference and for this, these values did not fit my prediction.

For the variable sexual assault, users on Twitter talked about sexual assault in 9% of their tweets before (pre) the hearing versus those who talked about sexual assault in 13% of their tweets after (post) the hearing and these values show no significant difference from one another. As for gender, users on Twitter talked about gender in 9% of their tweets before (pre) the hearing versus those who talked about gender in 39% of their tweets after (post) the hearing and these values are significantly different from one another $p \leq 0.001$. The ending result of the Kavanaugh vs. Ford hearing could have played a big role in this result for gender. After a white female testified against a white male and he remained in power (insinuating she was not believable) the gender conversation grew because a woman was not believed over a male. With gender and

sexual assault being closely related, I expected to see a significant difference in the way people talked about sexual assault. The results showed no significant difference in how sexual assault is talked about and for Ford's case, I predicted it would spike. Although the results show the least amount of significant difference, because the percentages are high, these values support my prediction of social just frames being talked about during this case. These results are important because it represents how users still talked about the case after the hearing and Ford's support was not an afterthought after Kavanaugh's approval.

When it came to the Ford case, users on Twitter talked about credibility in none of their tweets before (pre) the hearing versus those who talked about credibility in none of their tweets after (post) the hearing as well users talking about privilege in only 1% of their tweets before (pre) the hearing versus those who talked about privilege in 2% of their tweets after (post) the hearing. I predicted the Ford case values would show no significant differences between credibility and privilege due to the case being about two nonblack people and black people talk about whites having privilege over them.

For race, users on Twitter talked about race/ethnicity in 47% of their tweets before (pre) the hearing versus those who talked about race/ethnicity in 31% of their tweets after (post) the hearing and these values are significantly different from one another $p \leq 0.001$. For the variable social justice, users on Twitter talked about social justice in 36% of their tweets before (pre) the hearing versus those who talked about social justice in 18% of their tweets after (post) the hearing and these values are significantly different from one another $p \leq 0.001$. Although the percentage of how much race was talked about was a surprise, the decline after the hearing showed how much the white race did not matter in favor of Ford. The race and social justice variables fit my prediction that users would talk from a social justice frame on Twitter about

sexual assault cases. An interesting find is after (post) the hearing, users talked about social justice more as if justice was not served to Ford. Users have the free will to be as honest as they choose on their personal pages, so with that being said, users chose to stand behind the social justice frame for the greater good of the victim no matter their race.

Table 9. Tyson Pre/Post Comparisons

Tweet	Pre (Sd)	Post (Sd)	p-value
#BlackTwitter	.54(0.50)	.50(0.50)	p= .3103
Gender	.33(0.47)	.36(0.48)	p= .5232
Race/Ethnicity	.33(0.47)	.34(0.47)	p= .9088
Credibility	*	*	*
Sexual Assault	.10(0.30)	.13(0.33)	p= .2335
Privilege	.02(0.14)	.01(0.10)	p= .2629
#MeToo	.46(0.50)	.50(0.50)	p= .3103
Social Justice	.26(0.44)	.28(0.45)	p= .5655
LGTI	.11(0.31)	.12(0.33)	p= .5715

*= no tweets mentioned in the Tyson case

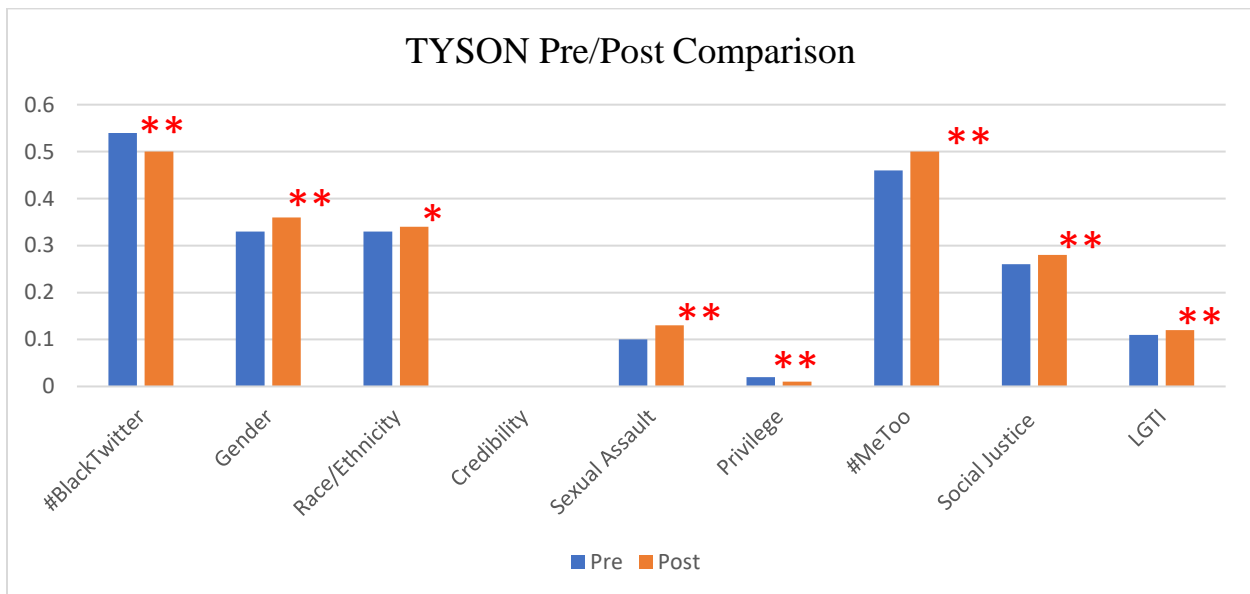


Figure 4. Tyson Pre/Post Comparison significant levels: ***p<0.001, **p<0.05, *p<0.10

When it came to the Tyson case, users on Twitter used the hashtag #BlackTwitter in 54% of their tweets before (pre) her first public appearance versus those who used the #BlackTwitter hashtag in 50% of their tweets after (post) her first public appearance and these values show no significant difference from one another. When it came to the #MeToo hashtag, users on Twitter

used the hashtag #MeToo in 46% of their tweets before (pre) her first public appearance versus those who used the #MeToo hashtag in 50% of their tweets after (post) her first public appearance and these values show no significant difference from one another. For social responsibility, these results show how important the case is for Blacks and MeToo movement supporters. There is a small percentage in difference between before and after, it further shows how users are talking about this case in their own personal spaces, using their freedom of speech.

For the Tyson case, none of the comparisons were significant. Unlike Ford's case, Tyson's case has not gone to a public setting let alone having a hearing on the national stage. Besides speaking out at a MeToo movement event, Tyson's case has not been brought up since. For this reason, Tyson not having a complete case, this led to these null results. Had this case actually gone to trial, the results may have shown an increase or decrease when talking about social justice. Being able to see facial expressions, reactions, etc. like the Kavanaugh vs. Ford case, could have influenced more significant conversations on Twitter. Besides those who completely stand with sexual assault victims, with the Tyson's case's current timeline, users are also unable to officially choose a side. Knowing details, and knowing who you want to support could also influence Twitter user's conversation and which of these terms is most relevant to them. Since users have the freedom to speak on any situations they chose, many speak on situations they know about. Social responsibility allows that freedom and with no further investigations, users are stuck with the same conversation resulting in insignificant results. For the sake of significant results, Tyson's case should move forward and not be an afterthought. The variable that surprised me most is the race variable, not because the victim and the assaulter are the same race but because black tie race into a lot of social justice cases. What these findings still show is that at least half the people are talking about social justice frames on Twitter.

As far as the Fairfax and Tyson case goes the social justice terms were used more significantly than I thought since this case has not yet went to hearing. When looking at the Table, we see that the terms credibility, and privilege had a spike in being mentioned when concerning this case. I want to talk about credibility because that word spiked after this black woman came forth with an allegation and as a black woman, I know that users may have discredited her because of her race. Almost as though she could not be telling the truth because of her race. I feel this way because there is no spike about race concerning this case, before and after. If race mattered, I think I would see a spike in the conversation afterwards. Adding to race, terms such as the hashtag #BlackTwitter, gender, sexual assault, #MeToo, social justice, lying, guilty, truth, and innocent were used on a more significant level throughout the study. Referring back to my comment earlier, this is because users may have just viewed this as another black woman assault case, especially how new this case is. The tone of voice is basically normal. The Ford case has gone to hearing but the Tyson is still fairly new and has not gone to hearing. I say this because the patterns shown in Tyson's Table 9 allow me know that those numbers with no significant changes will change the further this case goes similar to the significant changes shown in Ford's Table 8.

Seeing significant differences between variables for before (pre) and after (post) are very important to this study. The differences shown in the Ford case versus the Tyson case sparks a conversation in how Twitter users talked about each case. or fords case, the significant differences allowed me to know that many users mentioned a lot of social justice themes after the case had gone to hearing. This also leads me to infer that quite a few users may not have cared much about two people of that same race regarding a sexual assault case because users assumed that justice would be served. Seeing that justice was not served in this case, it sparked the

conversation in a different direction. Tyson's case on the other hand, showed many more significant differences before and after Tyson's race and identity was revealed. The differences in this case allows me to know that users mention social justice frames more when blacks are attacking blacks in such ways like sexual assault. We automatically think that justice will not be served so we chose other avenues like these social justice frames to prove our point in why we need justice. There should be differences in how Twitter users used mentioned the variables because not everyone will talk about high profile political cases just via the Black Twitter hashtag.

Similarities and Differences between Ford and Tyson

Throughout this study, I compared two cases between Christine Blasey Ford, and Vanessa Tyson. Both of these women came forth and accused two high profiled political men of sexual assault. After reviewing the cases, I noticed some similarities and differences between the two cases.

Ford and Tyson received a lot of backlash when they came forth with sexual assault allegations and with backlash, soon comes scrutiny and judgment. Both victims received harsh judgment because of how long it took for them to come forth with these allegations. Most people believe that once an incident happens, women are obligated to speak out right at that moment. I would argue that this is not that easy for most women including Ford and Tyson. Unfortunately, a significant amount of judgment came from women themselves.

Women not understanding why other women would wait years to claim sexual assault and claim it during such pivotal times for their two assaulters. With women alone having this type of mindset, challenges how we discuss sexual assault altogether. Reasons like this influence other victims to never speak out if time has passed or if it is not convenient for the assaulter. If

two women miss the support of other women respecting their decision to wait, the way in which we talk about sexual assault may be come nonexistent and no one will feel comfortable speaking their truth.

Besides being criticized for their timeline to come forth with sexual assault allegations, Ford and Tyson still received support for their bravery to come forward. I coded tweets that would say things like,

“So Judge Brett Kavanaugh too has a #MeToo. Like Cosby & Moonves & Weinstein & Ailes and all of them. It is time to stop his nomination process to Supreme Court. We need to know more. We already suspect his disdain for women’s rights and now we hear this?

#NoKavanaughConfirmation.”

Looking at tweets like this allowed me to understand that everyone did not completely take up for men. Tweets like the above also showed me that people payed attention to details within cases in order for them to form their opinions on why Kavanaugh should not be voted as supreme court justice. In addition, users continued to show their support of both victims throughout this study saying,

“I believe you Professor Christine Blasey Ford. #MeToo.”

“@drwesbellamy VA councilman on CNN talking kkk blackface Ralph Northam, didn’t even mention @lgjustinfairfax blaming victim on tv on not reporting it back then Virginia LT Governor Fairfax sexual assault, wow!!!! #believe all women, #metoo, #ibelievevanessa”

Ford and Tyson received public scrutiny about the times they decided to come forth, but they also received public support. Those individuals who felt so strongly about supporting these women are probably the driving force that pushed Ford to publicly testify in the United States

Supreme Court in front of the nation. This same support also pushed Tyson to publicly speak at a #MeToo event to tell her story and if we did not support these victims, or never heard these women, I would not be writing this thesis today.

One of the biggest differences that I found within this study is the context in which race is talked about for Ford and Tyson's case. For the Ford case, race is talked about more on Black Twitter than it was not on Black Twitter. This finding came as a surprise seeing that Ford's case is between two non-black people. This shift in conversation is because people talked about her being a white woman and being the forefront of a high-profile sexual assault case against another white person, not because just from her race alone. This theory comes from the white male entitlement and how no one should call them out for any wrong doings. For Tyson's case, race was talked about more on Black Twitter also, however this talk of race is because she is black. Race plays a vital role when any Black person is seeking justice because black people have that fear that our race is what stops us from receiving justice. For Ford, race is talked about more before she testified in the United States Supreme Court and the mention of race lowered after she testified publicly whereas for Tyson's case race is talked more consistently before she made her first public appearance and after because Tyson's story sits on the shoulders of race alone.

In Ford case, we are able to see that the case concluded. Judge Brett Kavanaugh is voted to become the United States newest Supreme Court Justice. Although, concluded, recently new sexual assault allegations have surfaced for Kavanaugh. Debra Ramirez, a former classmate, has come forth with allegations and Max Stier, a former classmate, has since stated, "I've seen Kavanaugh with his pants down, at a party." Even with these new allegations, the Kavanaugh versus Ford case concluded. In Tyson's case, this is not the case so much. Not only has Tyson case not gone to a hearing, the case is not as high profile as Ford's. Ford's case became the

forefront sexual assault case in the United States, where she was able to be heard to millions but Tyson is was only able to be heard in front of a MeToo crowd. Compared to Ford, Tyson is not able to defend herself to as many people whereas her assaulter, Justin Fairfax is able to use his LT Governor status to publicly defend himself on national television. If Tyson was able to speak on a bigger platform, the case may actually go to a hearing, but until then, this looks like a story they may or may not stay in the background.

LIMITATIONS

I hypothesized that Black Twitter users would talk about two separate sexual assault cases from a social justice point of view, and although my prediction is supported in ways, there are still some limitations to this study. One of the limitations this study faces is that there is some discussion of other MeToo cases outside of politics such as allegations against Harvey Weinstein, Bill Cosby, Matt Lauer etc. and this study did not code for those cases, so there is no way of knowing how sexual assault is discussed concerning them. To add, a good group of words related to social justice, but there could be and are other social justice related words this study is missing, that I did not code for. Another limitation is the social media platform I used. Twitter is a very popular social media platform for entertainment and politics but it is still not the only social media platform for the two. For this study, I only looked at Twitter as a source and not any other social media platforms. Lastly, when I coded for tweets, I did not look at users' characteristics so I am not aware of who is tweeting what. I only coded for content.

CONCLUSION

This study helped bring separate groups with separate missions together. Both Ford and Tyson's cases allowed groups and movements like the MeToo movement and Black Lives Matter movement to create an alliance for the greater good of sexual assault victims. These cases, also in a way, brought together the civil rights movement and the women's movement. Although civil rights movements are targeted around the black community, Ford, a white woman, was still talked about on Black Twitter which allowed me to know that she still had support and her truth traveled throughout different communities. With groups coming together for a common purpose via Twitter shows the importance of having other avenues to protest and connect with anyone from anywhere.

There are several social media platforms this study could have used to gather results from but using Twitter as the platform has many benefits. Twitter serves as an unofficial outlet for an individuals' freedom of speech. Users are able to speak freely from their personal accounts, and are more likely to be bluntly honest because they can. This platform also gives users more freedom to talk online rather than talking in person. Even if you are not in someone's presence, you still are able to connect with them as close as possible. With that being said, Twitter or social media platforms altogether, gives people more avenues to protest by participating on Twitter. News is constantly happening and everyone is not able to be at the same places at the same time. By using Twitter, the world can now be connected and other are able to join to conversation, state opinions, and connect no matter how far they are.

After reviewing my findings, the results steered me back to the original purpose of this study. In 1991 Anita Hill accused Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas of sexual assault and also testified in the Supreme Court. After the controversial testimony, Thomas was still granted

the Supreme Court seat. Media coverage has quadrupled since 1991, and we know that Kavanaugh versus Ford case was nationally televised. For this reason, one could assume that Ford's case was talked about more in our everyday dinner Table conversations rather than Hill's case. Although Thomas was granted the Supreme Court seat, this observation shows how differently men in power were protected back then relative to how they are protected now.

The bigger issue, is not just about protection, it is about the change. Throughout this study I have talked about how popular and important Twitter is in politics, but does Twitter really change anything? We have seen similar cases concerning sexual assault with over a 2-decade time span, and men in power stayed in power. So the question I ask is if how we use Twitter is forming change. All the hashtags, retweets, likes, and shares, are they actually getting through to the people in power who make decisions, or are these women's stories just for social media entertainment purposes only? Should we use social media to talk about high profile cases since they seem to not work? Can political outcomes be changed? The answer to those questions is yes! Every day and every year, we are becoming more and more advanced with technology, apps, recording etc. and if we stick with sexual assault victims and encourage them to speak up now, there is much possibility that we will eventually win back our power and win back our rights.

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APPENDIX

Table 5. Descriptive Table (Original)				
Tweet	FORD		TYSON	
	Total (601)	Percentage	Total (638)	Percentage
Pre	281	46%	336	53%
Post	315	52%	304	48%
Ford	592	98%	0	0
Tyson	0	0	638	100%
MeToo	302	50%	305	48%
BlackTwitter	244	40%	334	52%
Pro Kavanaugh	51	9%	181	28%
Pro Ford	56	9%	182	29%
#BlackTwitter	581	96%	635	100%
Credibility	3	1%	177	28%
Courage	6	1%	181	28%
Marginalized	140	23%	261	40%
Sexual Assault	66	11%	240	38%
Profanity	49	8%	207	32%
Fairness	1	0	178	28%
Equal	12	2%	186	29%
Rights	34	6%	189	30%
Community	38	6%	188	30%
Resources	5	1%	158	25%
Teaching	2	1%	153	24%
Liberal	54	9%	182	29%
Gay	16	3%	165	26%
Anti-Trump	26	4%	160	25%
Celebrity	150	25%	277	43%
Rationale	1	0	153	24%
Candidates	5	1%	156	24%
Mission	5	1%	153	24%
Youth	24	4%	161	25%
Warrior	2	1%	154	24%
Privilege	10	2%	161	25%
Advocacy	0	0	158	25%
Issues	14	2%	179	28%
Allegations	22	4%	185	29%
Lying	23	4%	160	25%
Truth	49	9%	184	29%
Attention	14	2%	157	25%

(fig. cont'd.)

Brave	4	1%	157	25%
Race/Ethnicity	231	38%	283	44%
Gender	127	21%	341	54%
Innocent	17	3%	161	25%
Guilty	29	5%	161	25%
Professor	10	2%	155	24%
Accused	36	6%	177	28%
Trump	157	26%	228	36%

VITA

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