#BBUM: Analysis of the Being Black at Michigan Tweets

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Tweets: 1,695
Following: 496
Followers: 319

Abstract:
Students at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor have a long history of student activism and protesting for higher minority enrollment and better support. The percentage of students who are black has always been below 10%, and since the passage of Proposal 2 in 2006 the number has declined even further. In 2013 black students made up 4.8% of the incoming class, less than half the number of incoming black students in 2002. Many current UM-Ann Arbor students are upset with the declining numbers and have been advocating for increased minority enrollment. In addition, black students on campus recently started a dialogue about race and what being black is all about while university means to them. As part of the dialogue, the Black Student Union launched a Twitter campaign called ‘Being Black at the University of Michigan’ where they invited students to tweet using the hashtag #BBUM. Naturally occurring movements like this provide a unique opportunity to collect ethnographic data—information deriving from naturally occurring events that can then be examined to better understand the phenomenon. The Office for Health Equity and Inclusion approached the Black Student Union and asked if they were interested in coding the data and performing a content analysis. A coding scheme was developed iteratively and two work days were held with students to code 3,765 Tweets. While students were encouraged to tweet both their positive and negative experiences, the majority of tweets have been negative. This trend helps to formulate a hypothesis why black students are feeling isolated. Our research project aims to analyze #BBUM tweets to gauge the racial climate on campus. The tweets were coded for the user’s connection to UM, voice of text, affect, and what the tweet was about. We used the data to compare the affect and content of current students tweets and tweets by former students. The Office for Health Equity and Inclusion plans to use the findings to determine what actions they will take in response to the campaign.

Objectives and Hypothesis:
Following the Black Student Union’s #BBUM Twitter campaign, the Office for Health Equity and Inclusion partnered with the Black Student Union to analyze tweets containing the hashtag #BBUM. The objective for the analysis was to use the tweets to gauge the racial climate on campus. The Office for Health Equity and Inclusion plans to use the findings to determine what actions they will take in response to the campaign.

Methods:
The tweets we collected for our study were posted from November 15 to December 4, 2013. This time frame includes the five days leading up to the launch of the campaign and the first fourteen days of it. During those 19 days, 17,219 tweets contained the hashtag #BBUM. Of those tweets, 7,365 were original posts and 9,854 were “retweets” (sharing of previously posted content). For our analysis, we used 5,576 original posts dating from November 15 to November 21. The tweets were coded for tweeter’s connection to UM, whether the tweet included a link, voice, affect, and content. To code the content, we created five possible categories that the tweet could fall under. The categories were informational, experience, feelings, directive (anything in the form of instructions), and response. Within each of these categories were subcategories that more specifically describe the content. Each tweet was coded for at least one category, and was able to be coded for two categories if the content was about more than one thing. The tweets were also coded ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to mentioning the following themes: feeling heard/having gotten no response, no safe/home place, unity/pride in black community, mention of Detroit, affirmative action or mentions of racism.

Results:
We chose to compare how the tweets by current UM students differed in affect and content from the tweets by former UM students. 2164 tweets were coded as being written by current UM students and 116 tweets were coded as being written by former UM students. The relationships between current and former UM students and affect was found to be statistically significant, as was their relationship to the informational, experience, feelings, and response categories. The included tables show the number of total tweets that were coded for each content category, the number of total tweets that mention the BSU’s themes, affect of current and former UM students, the number of tweets by current and former UM students that were coded for each content category, and the number of tweets by current and former UM students that mention the BSU’s themes.

Conclusion:
The results from our analysis of the #BBUM tweets show that current UM students are unhappy with the racial climate on campus. During the coding process, the three categories that seemed to come up the most were Experience-negative affect, Feelings- alienation/isolation, and Response- encouragement. After analyzing our data, we found that the majority of current UM student’s tweets had a negative affect (51.2%). While the majority of former UM student’s tweets had a positive affect (48%), we believe that most of those positive-affict tweets were offering their support through twitter and not describing the former student’s experiences at UM.

When the Black Student Union created the hashtag #BBUM and invited students to tweet using the hashtag, they were mainly targeting the black students on campus because they wanted to know how those students were feeling. Our coding scheme did not include whether the tweeter was black or not. Further analysis should include coding for whether the tweeter was black, not black, or can’t tell. This coding would allow us to specifically analyze how the black students on campus are feeling and what they are experiencing.

#BBUM being the spokesperson for black people during any race discussion in class because you’re the only one there.

14.1 AM - 14 Nov 2013


http://www.equity.umich.edu/related aktuellenes.html

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