

“USE #YOUKNOWME AND SHARE YOUR TRUTH”: RHETORIC OF DIGITAL ABORTION STORYTELLING

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Feminist movements have utilized consciousness-raising by empowering women to share their personal experiences to support the efforts of the larger movement further. The #YouKnowMe movement brings consciousness-raising into the digital sphere. This paper looks at how the #YouKnowMe movement encouraged Twitter users to share their personal stories, experiences, and emotions associated with their abortion. I analyzed 39 of the most popular tweets that contain #YouKnowMe and were tweeted on May 15-16, 2019. These tweets were either personal stories or feminist critiques. The personal stories included the situations surrounding the decision to get an abortion as well as any emotions or thoughts that went into making the decision. The feminist critiques came from Twitter users using the hashtag to talk about the larger societal structures while simultaneously supporting the users that chose to share their personal stories. The #YouKnowMe movement is a perfect example of how the rhetoric of digital storytelling can help support the modern-day feminist movement as well as normalize talking about one’s abortion.

#YouKnowMe is a Twitter-based social movement within the larger reproductive rights social movement. The reproductive rights movement as a whole utilizes many facets of activism to achieve its goals, such as storytelling, lobbying, field work, or protests. The #YouKnowMe movement specifically focuses on digital storytelling to combat the stigma associated with talking about abortion. The movement was started by Busy Philipps, an actress, on May 15, 2019, as a direct response to the passage of Alabama’s abortion ban (Gore). Philipps tweeted out, “1 in 4 women have had an abortion. Many people think they don’t know someone who has, but #YouKnowMe. So let’s do this: if you are also the 1 in 4, let’s share it and start to end the shame. Use #YouKnowMe

and share your truth” (@BusyPhilipps). The top tweets from #YouKnowMe indicate that this movement was focused primarily on creating a community of people who have gotten an abortion, had personal experiences with abortion, or support reproductive justice. This article will explore the ways that the #YouKnowMe movement creates a space for personal abortion discussions by analyzing popular tweets to further support the importance of personal storytelling in the reproductive rights movement. The personal is political has been a saying used by the feminist movement to explain that the personal experiences of women are often intertwined with larger political and societal structures. Philipps’s invitation for people to share

their abortion stories on Twitter brings the #YouKnowMe into the modern-day feminist movement.

FEMINIST RHETORIC, DIGITAL ACTIVISM, AND CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING: A LITERATURE REVIEW

A key aspect of feminism is consciousness raising by uplifting the lived experiences of women with the intent to shed light on larger societal issues (Mulinari and Sandell). Not only can storytelling show large societal issues, but it can also help create solidarity and understanding among people with vastly different experiences (Weatherall). According to bell hooks, acknowledging diverse experiences in conjunction with diverse privileges is the only way to create a true community. bell hooks emphasized that women do not all have the same experiences, nor do they face the same boundaries; therefore, the only way to create a collectiveness is for people to acknowledge their privileges and prejudices. The theoretical idea talked about by hooks was later coined as the term intersectionality by Kimberlé Crenshaw. According to Crenshaw, intersectionality is “a lens...for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other.” Intersectionality is especially salient in the reproductive rights movement because getting an abortion is a highly-individualized experience. Along with the experience of physically getting an abortion, the various boundaries or struggles people experience are different based on a number of factors, such as location, socioeconomic status, transportation,

etc. To adequately fight for reproductive rights, there must be a recognition of the intersectionality of identity in people’s lives and how it can play a huge role in their access to abortion.

With the emerging popularity of social media, many pro-choice activists have turned to the digital sphere to share stories and raise awareness about different abortion experiences. Online feminism is the usage of “the internet to share stories and analyses, raise awareness, organize collective actions, and discuss difficult issues” (Martin and Valenti 6). This form of feminist activism is especially attractive to younger feminists because social media is “low cost, easy to use, flexible, accessible, and able to reach a wider audience” (Shiva and Kharazmi 134). The ability to use social media to connect with other feminists can create spaces for individual storytelling and relationship building. One way that younger feminists use social media is by using hashtags. Hashtag activism is “the act of fighting for or supporting a cause with the use of hashtags as the primary channel to raise awareness of an issue and encourage debate via social media” (qtd. in Xiong et al. 10-11), which can take place on a multitude of social media sites, such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, etc. In addition to using hashtags to raise awareness of issues, hashtags can be used for digital storytelling. Sonja Vivienne explains that digital storytelling is “a medium in which ordinary people, with varying degrees of technical expertise and creative innovation, can represent themselves” (46). This allows individual users to share personal experiences within a created community by the hashtag. In addition, the hashtag allows people

to freely express their ideas without showing who they are. This allows for ideas to be shared without the interference of biases or preconceived notions about who is sharing their story (Shiva and Kharazmi).

These online communities created are indicative of the concept of social circulation. Social circulation is “a metaphor to indicate the social networks in which women connect and interact with others and use language with intention...these social circles connect women not just across sociopolitical and cultural contexts, settings, and communities—locally and globally—but also across generations, across time, and across space” (Royster and Kirsch 101). Hashtags create a community where people can connect with each other and share similar stories. For the reproductive rights movement, this can help connect pro-choice activists with other like-minded individuals, other resources, or other forms of activism.

Amy Koerber et al. discuss the rhetoric of abortion and pro-choice in “The Concept of Choice as Phallus: A Few Reasons Why We Could Not Agree More.” They argue that pro-life politicians often explain that they are pro-life because they want to support the life of unborn children; however, this claim disregards the life of the pregnant person. Koerber et al. claim that there needs to be spaces that acknowledge the diverse emotions and experiences that women experience rather than focusing only on the opinions of pro-life politicians. Spaces like #YouKnowMe allow people to “narrate their abortion experiences” (Koerber et al. 4), which helps create a discourse based on diverse emotions and perspectives.

Feminist movements have been using hashtags to bring awareness to topics such as sexual assault and harassment, police brutality, and racism. The act of using hashtags on social media to bring awareness to injustice is considered hashtag feminism because it “creates a virtual space where victims of inequality can coexist together in a space that acknowledges their pain, narrative, and isolation” (Dixon 34). Using hashtags as a way to have conversations about sexual violence has been extensively studied. For example, #BeenRapedNeverReported is a Twitter-based hashtag movement with the purpose of giving people the space to share their own reasons for not reporting their assault (Mendes et al.). Although this hashtag was specifically focused on sexual assault, there are several trends within it that are similar to pro-choice hashtags. Kaitlynn Mendes et al. explain that #BeenRapedNeverReported works as a narrative device by “allowing users to remain within the character limit while linking their tweets to others addressing the same topic,...providing a way for victims to speak about their experiences without having to directly say they were raped or assaulted,... and the repetition of the hashtag creates new forms of dialogue, connectivity, and awareness” (1302-1302). The role that the hashtag played in this movement is indicative of the role that hashtags can play in the larger digital feminist sphere. In the case of #BeenRapedNeverReported, several users used the hashtag itself as a placeholder for revealing that they were assaulted (Mendes et al.). When hashtags are used as a placeholder, “readers are led to read into the meaning of these experiences

based on the use of the hashtag itself” (Mendes et al. 1302).

In addition to #BeenRapedNeverReported, the #NotOkay and #MeToo movements are other feminist hashtags that have been studied. Shari Stenberg’s “‘Tweet Me Your First Assaults’: Writing Shame and the Rhetorical Work of #NotOkay” sets up a framework for analyzing digital stories within a hashtag. Stenberg uses the #NotOkay movement to analyze how the practice of re-writing shame can empower survivors of sexual assault to re-write their own narratives. Heather Lang’s “#MeToo: A Case Study in Re-Embodying Information” exemplifies how invitational rhetoric is used within digital movements and how powerful digital storytelling can be. Lang finds that people who choose to disclose their sexual assaults works as a mechanism to fight misinformation about sexual assaults and rape culture. Alyssa Milano’s invitation for others to share their sexual assault experiences not only created a community where survivors could share their stories but also challenged the narratives about sexual assault (Lang 15). According to Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L. Griffin, invitational rhetoric is “an invitation to understanding as a means to create a relationship rooted in equality, immanent value, and self determination” (5). Within the #MeToo movement, invitational rhetoric was used by Milano’s invitation for other people to share that they had experienced sexual assault or harassment by tweeting “me too.” Similar to #MeToo, #YouKnowMe utilizes invitational rhetoric to encourage individuals to share their own experiences with the intention of changing the

narratives around abortion and empowering people to tell their stories.

THE KAIROTIC MOMENT

There has been a recent trend of restrictive abortion laws at the state level. Some recent restrictive laws include 20-week bans, ultrasound laws, criminalization of abortions, heartbeat laws/6-week bans, and surgical standards laws (“History of Abortion” [*Britannica ProCon*]). This can be exemplified by the Alabama State Legislature’s passage of The Human Life Protection Act in 2019. This Act “bans abortions at any stage of a pregnancy... provides exceptions for lethal fetal anomalies or serious health risks to the women...allows abortions for women diagnosed with a serious mental illness...does not include exceptions for rape or incest...and classifies the performance of illegal abortion as a Class A felony” (Gore). The signing of this bill into law was the kairotic moment of the #YouKnowMe movement because Philipps stated that she tweeted the hashtag after reading about the Alabama law (Safronova). In addition to being one of the most restrictive laws to date, the bill was signed into law by Governor Kay Ivey, a female governor. This law also didn’t include exceptions for rape or incest, which further restricted women’s right to make decisions over their own bodies. Rape and incest don’t impact one political party; by failing to include exceptions for those situations, Gov. Ivey potentially isolates women from all political parties who have been impacted by rape or incest.

It’s also important to note the large-scale implications laws like this one can have at the

federal level. On October 6th, 2018, Brett Kavanaugh was confirmed to the Supreme Court, which changed the ideological makeup of the Supreme Court towards a more conservative Court (Stolberg). The successful passage of laws that contradict *Roe v. Wade* at the state level carries the potential for Supreme Court hearings on the constitutionality of *Roe* and these restrictive laws at the state level. This is why Kavanaugh's confirmation to the Court can significantly impact abortion access at the federal level.

AN INVITATION TO SHARE

On May 15, 2019, Busy Philipps' tweeted: "1 in 4 women have had an abortion. Many people think they don't know someone who has, but #YouKnowMe. So let's do this: if you are also the 1 in 4, let's share it and start to end the shame. Use #YouKnowMe and share your truth" (@BusyPhillips). Philipps uses invitational rhetoric in her tweet by calling out to the Twitter-verse for abortion stories. Philipps exemplifies invitational rhetoric because she creates a relationship by using "you," "your," and "let's" where she addresses whoever is reading the tweet and creates an understanding that they are not alone.

Philipps contextualizes how common abortions are in the United States by including the "1 in 4" statistic. This statistic helps validate people who have had an abortion because Philipps lets everyone know that 1 in 4 women have had an abortion. Inviting others to share their personal stories and experiences through a hashtag is indicative of hashtag feminism. The inclusion of the statistic does not allow

outsiders to claim that they do not know anyone who has had an abortion. In addition, by simply reading Philipps's tweet, readers realize that everyone likely knows at least one person who has had an abortion.

Philipps also encourages people to share their personal perspectives and experiences. She does this by creating space for people to share as much or as little as they want while still feeling validated and by not giving any information other than the fact that she has had an abortion. Therefore, other people are free to share that they have had an abortion without providing detailed information. By specifically asking others to "share [their] truths," she sets up a space built upon respect for the lived experiences of others. Without this acknowledgment of the fact that people have different experiences, people could potentially challenge the plausibility or validity of others' personal stories. Philipps combats this by acknowledging that one person's truth may be different than someone else's, and they are both valid. By sharing their abortion stories, these Twitter users are working towards combatting the stigma associated with getting an abortion and the stigma associated with talking openly about one's abortion.

"USE #YOUKNOWME AND SHARE YOUR TRUTH": METHODOLOGY AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

To analyze the rhetoric of the #YouKnowMe movement, I analyzed 39 of the most popular tweets that used the hashtag. These 39 tweets were deemed the most popular because they fit into specific parameters: tweeted May

15-16, 2019 (when the hashtag began), included #YouKnowMe, minimum likes of 1,000, and minimum retweets of 100. By using Twitter's advanced search tool, it was possible to analyze only tweets that were seen by or interacted with by a significant number of people that occurred when the initial tweet was sent (May 15) and the following day (May 16).

I used Stenberg's two-cycle coding mechanism to categorize the tweets within the sample. I started by reading and rereading the most popular tweets within the hashtag to look for commonalities. I also wanted to make sure that I had a good understanding of the tweets to analyze them effectively. After this first cycle, I concluded that there were two overarching themes within the tweets. These two themes are personal stories and feminist critiques.

The second cycle of coding tweets involved looking for more specific recurring themes within these two broad, exclusive categories. The personal story category includes tweets specifically about getting an abortion or other abortion-related experiences. I found various themes within this category, which led to the creation of six subcategories. The subcategories are overlapping, so several of the tweets are included in multiple subcategories. The six subcategories describe the content of the stories, including birth defect, sexual assault/abuse, not plausible to have a child, hard decision, not a hard decision, and other.

The birth defect subcategory includes stories of people getting an abortion because there was a birth defect of the fetus. The sexual assault/abuse subcategory includes stories of people getting an abortion because they

were sexually assaulted or they became pregnant because of an abusive partner. The not plausible subcategory includes stories that talk about getting pregnant at the wrong time in their lives, not wanting children, lacking support, having other children/responsibilities, or being affected by other personal health concerns. The hard decision and not hard decision subcategory includes tweets that mention that the decision to get an abortion was either a hard one or not a hard one. Finally, the other subcategory includes tweets that were personal in nature but either couldn't fit into one of the other subcategories or lacked significant detail to categorize it accurately.

The feminist critique broad category included tweets that didn't criticize the stories but rather the larger societal context of sharing personal stories on the internet. These tweets questioned why society requires people to justify their personal medical decisions. They also make larger points about our patriarchal society and the role it plays in the reproductive rights movement.

Similar to Stenberg, I made several ethical choices in how I represent the stories. The first choice I made was not to include the actual username of the tweets within the personal story category. I made this decision because these stories were incredibly personal narratives, and I was not able to contact the authors to ask for their permission. Although they posted their story on a public platform, which is why I believe it is ethical to analyze their stories, I made the conscious decision to preserve their privacy because of the sensitive nature of the stories. Instead of including the actual

usernames, I created pseudonyms for the users in this category.

to include stories like this one in the discussion about abortion access because it shows the

Table 1: Breakdown of Tweets

Category	Personal Story			Feminist Critique		
Number of Tweets	29			10		
Subcategory	Birth Defect	Sexual Assault / Abuse	Not plausible to have a child	Hard Decision	Not a hard decision	Other
Number of Tweets	4	6	16	4	2	6

DIGITAL ABORTION STORYTELLING

It was unsurprising that the personal story category had the most tweets because Philipps’ stated purpose of starting the hashtag was to “encourage women to speak up and shift the narrative, especially because abortion has been a taboo subject” (Safronova). I chose to analyze representative examples within each subcategory.

BIRTH DEFECT

These tweets were from people who shared that they got an abortion because their fetus had a birth defect. For example, @tessmupp writes, “The baby was desperately wanted, but had chromosomal and physical defects. It was the hardest decision of our lives, but it was the right one. I think of him every day, especially when I look at my rainbow baby. #YouKnowMe.” The author of this tweet explains that they “desperately wanted” a baby but made a medical decision to terminate the pregnancy. Often this category of stories is left out of conversations about abortion access. It’s incredibly important

wide array of stories associated with getting an abortion. In “Motherhood, Time, and Wendy Davis’s Ethos,” Timothy Ballingall talks about how stories, like the one above, diversify abortion narratives, which help dispel myths and misconceptions about abortion. Ballingall specifically says that “the wanted-pregnancy abortion narrative . . . is especially rhetorically significant because it collapses the dichotomy of moral mother vs. selfish, oversexed, abortion-seeking woman,” which is why it’s important to include stories like the one above (111). This subcategory also shows that the decision to get an abortion is a complicated one and everyone’s situation is unique.

SEXUAL ASSAULT/ABUSE

The tweets in this subcategory are from users who explain that they got an abortion because they were violated or because they were in an abusive situation. The user @fortheseasons writes, “fucking hard for me to put this out but, the condom was removed without my consent—I was drunk and asked far too late—and the morning after pill didn’t

work. #YouKnowMe and it's time I didn't feel so ashamed of this." The story that this user shares could resonate with other people because the author acknowledges that talking about their situation is hard for them but they want to try and work on openly talking about it. @fortheseasons's tweet shows how healing from a sexual assault can be a long and complicated process because it's still hard for this user to talk about their assault. Philipps's intent to encourage others to end their shame is clearly exemplified by @fortheseasons's story because they explicitly state that they don't want to feel shame anymore.

The other half of this subcategory includes stories of people getting an abortion because they didn't want to have a child with an abusive partner. The user @chelseymae shares, "#YouKnowMe and you know I have no shame. Refusing to have a child with an abuser was the best and safest decision I could have made, which was also my first step toward getting OUT." In contrast to @fortheseasons' tweet, @chelseymae is not ashamed of their decision because it helped them leave their abusive partner. This user's confidence could give people in similar situations some hope that they can also reclaim their life. This tweet can evoke pride in those who read it because this user put their safety and health first, which is incredibly important.

NOT PLAUSIBLE TO HAVE A CHILD

Not plausible to have a child includes a wide variety of reasons for getting their abortion, but the overarching theme was that having a child was not plausible. @ironicenoach provides

one example of why having a child wasn't reasonable by writing, "I had just turned 24. I was trying to stay sober, living on \$200 a week, and was so incapable of taking care of myself that I hadn't seen a dentist in 6 years. It was a deeply sad experience AND a decision I never once regretted. 1 in 4. #YouKnowMe." @ironicenoach's story is similar to @chelseymae's story because they were both in situations in which they felt they were not well-positioned to care for a child. These stories can be reassuring to readers in similar situations because these individuals chose to care for themselves at that time. @ironicenoach specifically adds that their experience was a sad one but not a regretful one, a reaction that supports the idea that people have a wide variety of emotions surrounding their abortion. @ironicenoach's unique perspective is indicative of hashtag feminism because the virtual space was created so that diverse perspectives could coexist. Philipps's invitation sets up a space that highlights the diversity of experiences and feelings associated with getting an abortion. This idea is incredibly important because intersectional feminism is built upon the notion that people and their various identities shape how they experience the world. To fight for reproductive rights, feminists need to listen to lived experiences and understand barriers faced by individuals to effectively fight for reproductive access for all.

Another example within this subcategory is someone getting an abortion because they did not want to be a teen mother. @sassy_maron shares, "16, had zero support system with family or partner. I came from a young mother, who came from a young mother. I refused to

continue the cycle #YouKnowMe.” @sassy_maron has first-hand experience of the difficulties of being a teen mother, which clearly played a role in their decision to get an abortion. Young users could potentially read this tweet and feel solidarity with this user because they understand the difficulties of being young. It could also be helpful for young people who are pregnant and are looking for a community to talk openly about abortion or other choices for their pregnancy. There can be a lot of pressure for young people to carry a baby to term, and this user could act as a model of one choice that they could possibly make.

This subcategory of tweets helps create a diverse community of storytellers, which solidifies how it’s impossible to generalize an abortion story. All of these users came from different backgrounds and experiences yet are unified by their experience of getting an abortion.

HARD DECISION

The four tweets in this subcategory explicitly state that the decision to get an abortion was hard for them to make. @melclamp writes, “In 2012 I had an abortion, I wasn’t ready in any means to have a child I am 1 in 4 and #YouKnowMe. Post procedure I immediately cried, it was one of the hardest decisions to make but I would not have been able to grow the way I did the last 7 years if I didn’t make that decision.” @melclamp details the multitude of emotions they experienced. Even though the abortion procedure caused them to cry, they look back on that decision as the right one.

@melanatedfriend shares their own emotional experience to their abortion when they wrote, “my daughter was 1 year old and I knew financially I couldn’t afford another baby. It was the hardest, most painful and deeply personal decision I’ve made in my life. The government involving itself in such intensely private matters is ridiculous #YouKnowMe.” Although both @melclamp and @melanatedfriend talk about how their decision was hard, their emotions about their abortion are different. @melclamp’s immediate abortion procedure made them cry and sad, whereas @melanatedfriend’s whole experience was painful. Looking back at their experiences brings up different emotions for each user. @melclamp explains that her decision was sad but allowed them to grow, but @melanatedfriend still experiences pain when retelling this experience.

These two examples show how a hard decision can be associated with different emotions. Making the decision to get an abortion is a deeply personal one, like @melanatedfriend says, which means that each person experiences different emotions. Some people may be sad, hurt, or even glad that the experience happened. Regardless of the emotion experienced, each person’s experience is valid. This relates to the idea that the personal is political because the incredibly private experience of getting an abortion is something that is routinely brought into the public sphere whether the person wants it to or not. By using invitational rhetoric, Philipps encourages people to bring their own private experiences into a public forum to show the wide range of emotions, experiences,

and thoughts that went into the choice to get an abortion.

NOT A HARD DECISION

In contrast, two tweets mentioned how the decision to get an abortion was not hard. @michelleroberts writes, “I had an abortion. It was the right decision for me, and it wasn’t a hard one. My husband and I were working more than full time and had three kids already. I was fortunate that, at the time, accessing abortion in TX was not the nightmare it is now. #YouKnowMe.” Unlike @melclamp and @melanatedfriend, @michelleroberts quickly knew what decision they were going to make. @michelleroberts had other children to care for and a job to do, which is why their decision wasn’t hard.

Similar to @michelleroberts, @mandi_cade’s decision was made easily. @mandi_cade writes, “#YouKnowMe I was 16 and the condom broke. There was never any question about what I was going to do and I have never regretted it. And I know at least 5 other women who also had one and went on to have kids later once they were ready, and are amazing moms.” For @mandi_cade, they look back on their experience and do not feel regret or shame. Both @michelleroberts and @mandi_cade challenge the stereotype that abortion is always a sad and difficult experience.

The subcategories pertaining to the decision to get an abortion further support the idea that people have diverse thought processes and this decision isn’t the same for everyone. In addition, the wide range of emotions (sadness, pain, gratitude) further supports the fact that

abortion is a personal decision. Yet, it is one that is brought into the public sphere time after time by politicians and anti-choice activists in an effort to control women’s bodies.

OTHER

In this subcategory, #YouKnowMe refers to the tweets that included little to no information about their abortion experience. @jamiejohns simply tweets: “#YouKnowMe.” @jamiejohns gives no information about their abortion experience, yet the reader still knows that they got an abortion at some point in their life. Similarly, @thegoddess wrote, “alive today because I had an abortion. #YouKnowMe.” @thegoddess doesn’t give any information about their decision to get an abortion or the situations surrounding that decision. Instead, they let everyone know that they are alive because of the abortion they got at some point in their life.

@jamiejohns and @thegoddess were included in the #YouKnowMe movement because of the space created by Philipps that allowed users to share as much or as little as they felt comfortable with. Even though some people chose not to share intimate details of their abortion experience, it can still be liberating to publicly declare that they had an abortion.

FEMINIST CRITIQUES

Ten tweets within my dataset were not personal stories but rather broader feminist critiques about society or the government. None of the tweets in this category criticized the users who shared their personal stories. One of the

common critiques made was about how people shouldn't have to explain themselves or even state a reason to get an abortion. @hamster-talk writes, "I feel proud and honored to hear people sharing their #YouKnowMe abortion stories, but let's be clear, you don't need to have a 'reason' to have an abortion. You shouldn't have to prove to anyone why you want control over your own body and your own life." This is a valid critique of society as a whole; however, the #YouKnowMe movement set up a space where people could share whatever they want because it would be their "truth." Philipps never asked people to share the reasons behind their abortion nor for people to explain themselves.

Another common critique made was about men's role in abortion access. @ggfioravante writes, "#YouKnowMe we shouldn't have to share the private medical decisions we make with our doctors but here we are. Let's end this stigma and stop letting men make decisions about our bodies." In addition, @PJ_Weber adds, "#YouKnowMe I'm a male, a father of two daughters, a brother to three sisters and my mother's son. My opinion doesn't matter, nor should it! But the #AlabamaAbortionBan is hideous and abhorrent." @ggfioravante and @PJ_Weber critique how patriarchy plays a significant role in abortion access. It's often incredibly frustrating when men make decisions that largely impact women and the choices they can make about their bodies.

However, the specific Alabama bill was not signed into law by a male governor but rather a female governor. Even though many of the lawmakers were men, the bill was signed into law by a woman. @maureenshaw writes, "'There

is a special place in hell for women who don't help other women.'- Madeleine Albright #AlabamaAbortionBan #YouKnowMe." @maureenshaw uses a quote from Madeleine Albright, former Secretary of State, to talk about how Governor Ivey signed into law the Alabama bill. Albright has used this quote throughout her life to emphasize her opinion that women should help other women rather than contribute to the obstacles women already face. There are contradictions in a female Governor signing a law that places significant restrictions on women's ability to make decisions about their own bodies. Governor Ivey exemplifies how women can not only be complicit in but also participate in patriarchy. By actively signing the bill into law, Governor Ivey perpetuated the patriarchal control within the government.

Feminist critiques add another dimension to the #YouKnowMe movement by including both personal stories and also criticisms of our society as a whole. The combination of these two elements can help to normalize talking about one's abortion experience and change the misconceptions associated with getting an abortion.

CONCLUSION

It's important to note that my sample size is small, so the findings may not be true for the rest of the tweets using the hashtag or for broader rhetorical practices of storytelling in the pro-choice movement. Similar to hashtags revolving around sexual assault, such as #BeenRapedNeverReported, #YouKnowMe doesn't have to lead to a significant policy change for it to be an impactful movement.

The opportunity for people to share their personal stories and create a community is equally as important as tangible change (Mendes et al.). #YouKnowMe created a space where people were free to share their “truths” and read similar stories. This hashtag in and of itself does not end the shame surrounding getting an abortion, nor does it make it easy to talk about with strangers. However, it works towards these goals. The more that people talk about getting abortions, the less taboo it will be. I gained valuable insight into the importance of storytelling and listening to the lived experiences of people who are different from me because many of the stories I read were from people facing financial challenges or abusive situations. The only way to understand those experiences without living them is to listen to those who have lived them. This movement can be helpful for more traditional political activism because it appeals to human emotion by centering the personal thoughts, feelings, and emotions of those who got an abortion. It’s much harder to ignore someone when they are revealing deeply personal experiences.

The #YouKnowMe movement exemplifies how Twitter can be a vehicle for creating a virtual space for people to share their personal stories about abortion. The invitation of Busy Philipps for individuals to join her in sharing their personal stories is an essential component of the movement. Without her invitation, many more people would still lack knowledge about the statistics behind abortion. Also, they would not recognize that people have unique experiences, feelings, and identities. This invitation also allows for people to critique why

society needs people to explain the decisions they make in getting an abortion. In addition to the invitation to share, #YouKnowMe also shows that many people may get an abortion for similar reasons yet have incredibly different feelings about their experience.

Not only was storytelling important for this movement, but it’s important for the larger reproductive rights movement. Without personal stories, it’s hard to appeal to lawmakers, supporters, and the general public’s emotions. In addition, these stories make it hard for someone to argue because everyone has their own lived experiences. However, storytelling is not the only form of activism that this movement needs. The #YouKnowMe movement was able to create a space for people to share their stories and to engage with other people; however, that was really the extent of this movement. By combining storytelling (both digitally and in-person), protesting, lobbying, fieldwork, and other forms of activism, the larger reproductive rights movement can work towards ending the stigma of sharing one’s story, fighting against anti-choice laws, electing pro-choice politicians, gaining supporters, and supporting local abortion providers.

Future research could focus on current digital pro-choice movements and how they relate to or diverge from #YouKnowMe. Since there is a significant amount of research on digital movements relating to sexual assault, future research could compare sexual assault movements and pro-choice movements. My research was limited to 39 of the top tweets from May 15 -16, 2019, which may not make my results indicative of the movement as a whole. Future

research could focus on creating a large database of all tweets using #YouKnowMe to better generalize findings of the social movement. It may be beneficial to interview the people who participated in the movement by sharing a personal story or making a feminist critique. These interviews could also include experiences of people who wanted to participate but didn't or of people who remember seeing the tweets associated with #YouKnowMe. Movements like #YouKnowMe are vital to furthering the goals of the feminist movement because they use Twitter as a way to connect people from across the globe. This connection is why feminist rhetoricians should utilize Twitter for future research.

#YouKnowMe exemplifies the power personal storytelling has within a digital social movement. The stories were powerful examples of people using Twitter to end the shame associated with talking about abortions. The diversity among the stories shows how people are diverse and complex beings, which is why it's nearly impossible to generalize abortion stories and the people who tell them. The #YouKnowMe movement demonstrates how modern feminist movements, digital or in person, continue to uplift personal testimonies as a way to analyze societal structures.

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