"Stories for Reproductive Freedom": A Rhetorical Analysis of Storytelling on NARAL Pro-Choice America's Website

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In the debate on abortion access in the United States of America, the pro-life movement tends to dominate strong appeals to emotion while the pro-choice movement relies more heavily on facts and appeals to logic. This division of the rhetorical landscape ignores key present-day pro-choice advocacy efforts involving appeals to *pathos*. I consider how storytelling is used in the pro-choice movement to share the perspectives of people who have been impacted by abortion access, dispel myths surrounding abortion, and give concrete examples of the who, why, and how of abortion. In my article, I examine thirty-three stories from the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL) Pro-Choice America's "Stories for Reproductive Freedom" webpage. I argue that the various strategies for women to share their personal experiences present in the stories I analyze demonstrate how the pro-choice movement claims a voice in the rhetorics of emotion surrounding abortion that has been dominated by the pro-life movement for decades. As the legal battle for abortion access still rages today, it is vital for pro-choice advocates to understand how and why storytelling is an important tool in the continuous fight for access to abortion.

Introduction

The topic of abortion is polarizing in the United States of America, with many people taking a stance on one of the extremes, either for access to abortion (pro-choice) or against access to abortion (pro-life). When there are such strong opinions tied to both sides of a debate, more than just logic and facts are involved in the decision-making process. It is important to consider how Americans discuss and form their beliefs about abortion because this affects how they vote for laws that dictate the rights of women to make decisions about their bodies and futures. The pro-choice movement has been politically active over the last decade due to the passing of extreme abortion restrictions (Pickert 1). To explore how storytelling has been used to combat the resurgence of anti-abortion laws in this recent time period, I analyze 33 personal accounts about abortion access from National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL) Pro-Choice America's "Stories for Reproductive Freedom" webpage, a potentially valuable dataset that has not yet undergone close analysis by rhetoricians. Before I begin my analysis, I explore pro-life versus pro-choice rhetoric as well as the

historical and present importance of NARAL in pro-choice activism in the United States. I also address how feminist digital activism and digital storytelling underlie the personal narratives I analyze in this article.

The pro-life and pro-choice movements are opposing sides to the same issue. Accordingly, the movements take contrasting approaches in their rhetoric. While the pro-life movement includes *logos* in its rhetoric, there is often a strong appeal to *pathos* aimed at eliciting an emotional response against abortion through inflammatory language. This type of rhetoric is demonstrated in the 2004 Unborn Victims of Violence Act, which was lobbied for by the National Right to Life Committee, one of the largest American pro-life organizations. The law aims "to protect unborn children from assault and murder" (United States, Congress). Although the law makes an exception for women who consent to an abortion, this act was notable as it grants legal representation to unborn children at any stage of development. This is an antithetical concept to the pro-choice rhetoric that usually uses technical terminology according to the stage of pregnancy (such as embryo for the first eight weeks) to avoid problematic associations of unborn babies as living humans deserving of legal protection. Contrary to pro-life arguments, the pro-choice movement tends more towards reason and fact-based discourse as the movement's goals are focused on lobbying for abortion access laws rather than changing people's opinions. However, I believe there is the potential for the pro-choice movement to likewise include appeals to *pathos* and shift the rhetorics of emotion around abortion.

In response to severely limited access to abortion pre-*Roe v. Wade*, nonprofit organizations such as NARAL formed to consolidate the voices of pro-choice activists into a driving force for lobbying efforts and political change (Pickert 5; Staggenborg 16). NARAL engages in political action and advocacy efforts to oppose restrictions on abortion and expand access to abortion. Today, NARAL must contend with keeping abortion legal as many states have limited access by cutting funding and shutting down abortion clinics. In particular, Alabama enacted the Human Life Protection Act in May 2019 to impose a near-total ban on abortion in the state. Although a legal challenge has delayed the bill's implementation, it is clear that the pro-choice/pro-life debate is still raging today and advocacy efforts from organizations such as NARAL are vital for continued access to abortion in the United States.

Feminist Activity and Digital Storytelling in the Pro-Choice Movement

Feminist activism lies at the root of the pro-choice movement, which is intrinsically tied to women's rights about their bodies and health. The pro-choice and feminist movements were close allies pre-*Roe v. Wade*. The National Organization for Women (NOW) lent support to NARAL's "Children by Choice" demonstration on Mother's Day in 1969, their first national action (Staggenborg 51). In recent years, feminist efforts have utilized digital platforms for their movements. An example of this is hashtag activism, which uses hashtags on Twitter to connect activists online and has

catalyzed movements such as #YouKnowMe and #ShoutYourAbortion that allow women to share their abortion stories (Guerra; Ortega).

In a study of feminist hashtag movements in which people share their sexual assault experiences via Twitter, Heather Lang explores how, "though each of these hashtags developed in its own rhetorical ecology, they are united by an overarching exigence: #YesAllWomen, #WhyIStayed, #SayHerName, #BeenRapedNeverReported, #MeToo, and others respond to public misunderstanding, disbelief, or complacency surrounding violence against women" (10).

Lang argues there is an inherent danger in using digital platforms that separate physical bodies from issues that pertain closely to the body such as sexual assault and, I would add, abortion. In particular, Lang recognizes that as information about sexual assault rapidly disseminates, people may fail to recognize it as "a lived reality, or as a preventable social problem," making it vital for people to share their experiences to ground these facts in reality (10). I argue that there is a similar concern with abortion. While presenting factual, biological arguments about abortion appeals to *logos*, this strategy risks creating a single, sterile narrative that removes the subjective experience of individuals impacted by abortion access. As Shari Stenberg explores in her analysis of shame in relation to sexual assault in the #NotOkay movement, social media provides a platform for women to engage in conversations on a public forum and discuss the complex social nuances of these issues (Stenberg). In these movements, storytelling reorients the

conversations about women's issues such as sexual assault and abortion around the varied, actual impact on real people (Guerra; Ortega).

Other forms of digital storytelling in addition to hashtag activism are used in the pro-choice movement. In *Digital Storytelling: Capturing Lives, Creating Community*, Joe Lambert defines stories as "what we do as humans to make sense of the world. We are perpetual storytellers, reviewing events in the form of re-lived scenes, nuggets of context and character, actions that lead to realizations" (5). Stories are a medium for people to connect with one another on a personal level, and these connections facilitate understanding and empathy towards the unknown. Storytelling is especially important in the case of advocacy for abortion, a topic in which misinformation and inflammatory rhetoric are widespread. For many, abortion is a theoretical concept, and information on abortion is typically only available to those who seek it. Stories from people who have been personally impacted by abortion can help humanize the topic and share perspectives that would otherwise not enter the conversation about abortion access. For example, in an analysis on *ethos* in the pro-choice movement, rhetorician Timothy Ballingall discusses Wendy Davis's 2014 memoir *Forgetting to Be Afraid* as a precedent of "maternal abortion narratives," stories in which women depict their abortion experience through the lens of a grieving mother who chose to have an abortion (106). Such stories provide insight to those who have never needed to consider the topic themselves and may help to challenge established stigmas surrounding women who

get abortions, such as being "selfish" or "bad mothers" for choosing to abort their unborn baby. Personal accounts and stories can serve broader activism goals by dispelling myths surrounding abortion and giving concrete examples of the who, why, and how of abortion: who is getting an abortion, why they make this choice, and what steps they need to take to get an abortion.

The stories in my dataset are a form of digital abortion advocacy storytelling. However, it is also important to consider that they are a curation of stories selected by NARAL's leadership from their followers to post to their website. These 33 stories all serve a purpose towards NARAL's ultimate goal of opposing restrictions on abortion through lobbying and political action. Current technology also enables less organized, more organic grassroots movements to share stories, such as through hashtag activism (Guerra; Lang; Morgan et al.; Ortega; Stenberg). This format of digital activism has immediate relevancy as tweets are pushed in front of many eyes in a condensed time period. However, this is not the case in my dataset. These 33 stories were purposefully selected and are stored in an archive under the "media" tab rather than being instantly accessible on the website's front page. I also take into account that some of the stories' content and strategies may have been filtered or censored to better represent NARAL's broader goals. I pay attention not only to how these stories are portrayed, but also to what intended messages they convey. Specifically, I ask: which audiences are the stories targeting? Are they contributing to abortion access lobbying efforts? Is there a call to action?

MY METHODOLOGY: CATEGORIZING STORIES FOR REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM

The 33 stories in my dataset are from NARAL members and are about how their access or lack of access to abortion has impacted their lives. They are approximately one to eight paragraphs each. Identifying information is largely limited to first name, last initial, and state, creating a form of storytelling that I call "semi-anonymous testimonials." Only four stories include the full name of the author, and three of those also include a picture. I chose this dataset because stories about women being forced to make a decision at a vulnerable time in their lives touch on an emotional appeal that seems underemphasized in the present-day pro-choice movement. These personal stories have the potential to generate empathy by humanizing the decision of abortion in a *logos*-dominated movement. In the pro-choice movement, success tends to be defined in terms of substantive political reforms. However, I argue there should also be importance placed on influencing social norms and beliefs surrounding abortion. There is a precedent in the pro-choice movement of more performative activism in the pre-*Roe v. Wade* era. For example, a Mother's Day press conference was hosted in 1970 at a Chicago morgue to visually "dramatize the dangers of illegal abortion" and argue that abortion should be legal and safe (Staggenborg 48). During this time, NARAL attracted media attention through confrontational and theatrical demonstrations held by their feminist allies and public engagement with the opposition (Staggenborg 48).

Through an exploration of the abortion access stories on NARAL's website, I focus on how the pro-choice movement continues to appeal to *pathos* today.

To determine how these stories function as emotional appeals, I use a method of categorical generative criticism to create an explanatory schema to connect commonalities across the stories (Foss). First, I read the stories to become familiar with my dataset. I consider myself a proponent of female reproductive rights, and I approached each story with this mindset. As I am an in vitro fertilization (IVF) triplet, I owe my existence to the development of fertility treatments and cannot dissociate from this attitude, so I kept my potential bias for the pro-choice movement in mind during my review of the stories. After reading through my dataset, I identified four recurring themes: women seeking abortions due to necessity, stories that address abortion stigmas or policies, evaluations of the safety associated with legal abortion and the danger when it is illegal, and women expressing a lack of regret for their choice to have an abortion. I then coded each story for the four categories inclusively, meaning one member's story can have evidence of multiple categories.

The first category I coded for is necessity. Either the health of the mother and/or baby was in danger or the woman's circumstances did not allow for a child at that time. In these cases, an abortion did not necessarily occur due to personal choice so much as out of necessity in a specific situation. I found a common thread of women identifying as pro-choice but never thinking they would get an abortion themselves. Most of these women did not want to have an abortion, but they needed one in their circumstances and are thankful for safe, legal access. The second category is subversion. This includes stories that undermine negative associations attached to women who get abortions, specifically stereotypes of them being selfish and bad mothers. Also included in this category are direct or indirect addresses of the opposing pro-life movement and comments on abortion policies. These personal accounts may take a meta step out of storytelling to clearly state their point to the reader.

The third category is safety. Stories in this category argue that legal access to abortion allows the procedure to be safe for those who require it. This includes accounts from women who experienced a safe, legal abortion in addition to those who went through the danger of an abortion pre-*Roe v. Wade.* Safety encompasses both medical and physical safety as well as mental safety from protestors and judgment. The final category is no regret. The consensus in these stories is that getting an abortion was a hard decision, but not one they regretted in retrospect. The women in these stories may express sadness or devastation, but they explicitly state that they do not regret their decision to have an abortion. If presented with the same choice in the same situation, they would make the same decision.

In my dataset, 32 of the stories I analyze are written by authors who identify as women, and one story is written by a cisgender man who was raised by a working single mother. I acknowledge this narrow selection of narratives as a limitation of my dataset because

it does not share perspectives of nonbinary people and trans men who've had abortions. Other people that have been affected by lack of abortion access, such as young fathers and young grandparents who helped take on the added responsibility of a new dependent, are also not represented. I only consider the stories from NARAL's website, and, accordingly, the conclusions I draw are specific to this group. Yet, given the organization's prominence and wide membership of 2.5 million, according to its website, I believe my findings are broadly applicable to the pro-choice movement in the United States.

Overview of Findings

I coded the 33 abortion access stories for evidence of each category and found the following results (see table 1).

Table 1: Frequency of Categories in Abortion Access Stories

Category	Frequency (out of 33)	Percentage
Necessity	19	57.58%
Subversion	14	42.42%
Safety	11	33.33%
No regret	11	33.33%

The most frequent category coded was necessity in over half of the stories. This finding likely relates to the reality that abortion is a medical procedure that is often necessary either medically or situationally. The second most frequent finding was subversion of stereotypes

associated with women who get abortions and of narrative storytelling conventions. A few authors make intentional moves to directly state how their experiences should be interpreted as support for abortion access. Since necessity and subversion are the two most common categories, they will be where my analysis is focused.

The personal accounts from NARAL's website utilize the medium of storytelling and its techniques as an emotional appeal to persuade readers of the importance of abortion access. However, some categories used certain literary and rhetorical devices more often than others. In the subversion and, to a lesser extent, the safety categories, changes in the point of view immerse the reader in the stories and encourage empathy towards the authors' situations. The necessity and no regret categories were coded jointly in several stories, illustrating how some women do not feel regret be-

cause it was a medical necessity and did not feel like it was a choice. In these stories, there was a use of characters and other storytelling elements to depict how the women discovered they needed an abortion and how they came to terms with their choice. The concrete details

in these true, personal stories clarify aspects of the process of deciding to have an abortion and the realities faced by the women who get them to facilitate understanding.

Storytelling in NARAL Abortion Access Stories

Subversion Through Shifting Perspectives

A technique of storytelling I found most frequently in the subversion stories was shifts in point of view. Most of the stories begin in the first-person singular as they are first-person accounts, but some shift the pronouns to pull in different groups or to directly address the audience. There is evidence of shifts to the first-person plural and the second-person perspectives. The third-person point of view, however, is infrequently used. This is likely due to its inherently larger narrative distance as these personal stories are meant to be intimate and bridge the gap between the authors' experiences and the readers.

A shift from the first-person singular to the first-person plural brings in other voices to back up the writer's claims and perspective. For example, in Jessica G.'s six-sentence story, she shifts from her own perspective to the *we* personal pronoun, stating, "We don't need anything more complicated than an individual woman's wish about her body and her life. No one should be able to tell us how to use those—they are ours" ("Jessica G."). It is left ambiguous who the *we* includes; it could refer to women in the pro-choice movement, all

women, or all people. This ambiguity leads to everyone reading this story being drawn into the narrative, united in purpose for choice. The first-person plural perspective also appears in Felicia B.'s story about how she was unable to get an abortion in 1970 when it was illegal and unsanitary. She claims, "for those of us who remember before *Roe v. Wade*, we know how important protecting a woman's right to control her body is. It truly is a matter of life and death" ("Felicia B."). Here, *we* is defined as those who experienced abortion access prior to its legalization, pulling in an older audience to the conversation. This story explores what happens when abortion is not legal and therefore not safe, causing potential physical and mental harm to women who either "risk death or a loveless marriage" ("Felicia B."). Felicia B. also makes a political statement by addressing *Roe v. Wade* and explaining how the lack of abortion access negatively impacted her life. These stories not only speak on the benefits of abortion access but also reveal how the lack of access in the not-so-distant past still has ramifications today as the United States heads towards restricting abortion access at a state level. These political tones serve NARAL's overall purpose as an advocacy organization for abortion access.

Other subversion stories shift from first-person to second-person to close the narrative distance and bring readers into the story, forcing them to consider what they would do in situations commonly faced by women who get abortions. This purpose of the second-person pronoun is clear in Robin U.'s story about how she decided to terminate when her IVF

pregnancy resulted in a fatal diagnosis for the baby:

> If *you* believe *you* wouldn't make the same choice we did [to get an abortion], be grateful that *you* will probably never have to. But no one should force such a decision on anyone. This should be between *you*, *your* partner, *your* medical professionals and *your* higher power, if *you* believe in one. Imagine for a moment that the political situation was reversed. Imagine how *you* would feel if churches and people in government thought the most humane route for a fatal diagnosis was to immediately terminate the fetus against *your* wishes. Imagine that multiple doctors advised *you* to continue with the pregnancy, but that *you* couldn't take their advice or follow *your* own instincts because a law prohibited *you* from doing so. ("Robin U.," emphasis mine)

The second-person pronoun is repeated 14 times throughout this section of the story, repeatedly and insistently pulling the reader into this hypothetical situation that subverts the usual dynamic of abortion access, reversing roles so that a woman against abortion is fighting for her right to not terminate her pregnancy. Robin U.'s story recognizes the hypocrisy of people having opinions against abortion access when they have never been put in a situation where they would need to make such a choice that would profoundly impact their lives. She attempts to dispel such ignorance about the unknown by constructing a specific scenario for readers to consider. Robin U. personally went through an abortion experience and can thus speak on it, and she pulls in readers with the constant use of *you* to place them in a similar decision-making role. People who believe it wouldn't be right for religious and political figures to force women to terminate their pregnancies in this hypothetical situation may now consider the other side in which women are forced to *not* terminate their pregnancies due to laws limiting access to abortion—the current reality for some. Her story offers a new perspective for readers to consider in their views on abortion access. Robin U. also directly states what impact she wants her story to have, claiming, "I'm sharing this so you know who is affected if we further defund Planned Parenthood, totally outlaw abortions or prohibit late-term procedures. Indeed, Missouri is considering a 20-week abortion ban with no exceptions for cases of fetal anomalies" ("Robin U."). Similar to Felicia B.'s, Robin U.'s story holds clear political motivation in advocating against abortion access restrictions, a move in service of NARAL'S goals.

In one of the longer stories, Maureen C. recounts her visit to the prenatal specialist with her husband when they learned their daughter had Vacterl Syndrome and would likely not live to be a year old. Maureen C. uses a shift to second-person to directly subvert the bad mother label attached to women who get abortions. This rhetoric arises from the stereotypically traditional family unit composed of a working father and a caretaking mother (Williams 1580). In this ideology of conventional femininity adopted by the pro-life movement, women who pursue choices in self-interest over

their children's needs (such as choosing to have an abortion) are condemned as selfish and bad mothers (Williams 1561). In her story, Maureen C. rejects this association of abortions as an inherently selfish choice, stating:

> Being a woman means making tough decisions about your body, your child, and your motherhood. It means making a choice that you selfishly don't want to, but which you know you have to, because your love for your unborn child is greater than the pain you will endure in going on without them. ("Maureen C.")

She speaks directly to other pregnant women and mothers in her use of *you,* appealing to a motherly care for her unborn child that supersedes her own desires. Maureen C. claims that getting an abortion was not a choice she wanted, but one she made for the sake of her unborn baby, and reframes the vocabulary of selfish in relation to abortion. Rhetoricians studying these maternal abortion narratives such as Ballingall have cited other examples of "framing abortion in this context as an act of compassion" to combat stigmas surrounding abortion (Ballingall 114). In Maureen C.'s story, the decision to birth a child who would not live longer than a year would have been the selfish act while her decision to get an abortion was a selfless sacrifice made for the baby rather than the parents. Stories give women the power to tell their personal experiences and use their lived truths to counteract the aggressive rhetoric of the opposition. Labels such as *bad mother* attack the morality of women who get abortions. In this story, Maureen C. subverts these accusations and reverses the narrative to demonstrate how the choice to have an abortion can be made to benefit the unborn baby. Those who believe in the right of life for every child may be swayed by an argument that serves the child over the parents. In all three of these stories, shifting perspectives allows the authors to address and sometimes identify their intended audience and present their specific situation as an argument in favor of abortion access.

Introducing the Character of the Baby

A powerful convention of storytelling I found was the inclusion of characters. Specifically, some women mention the name they would have given to their baby had they not needed an abortion. Although the babies were never actually born, these women insert fictional characters representing their babies into their stories to express feelings of loss and conflict over their decision to have an abortion. This notably occurs in two out of the eight stories in which both the necessity and the no regret categories are present.

Diana H. from California tells her story about how she had to have an abortion because her daughter's spinal cord was growing outside of her body and both may not have survived the delivery. "This is not a political issue at all," she writes. "This is a medical issue and needs to be handled in the most delicate way possible. It is a medical decision. It is what happened to me. To my family. To her. Her name would have been Bella. Her birthday would have been July 9th, 2003" ("Diana H."). Diana H. shares the

name and birthday her daughter would've had. These details emphasize the nature of abortion as medical and personal over political and impersonal. These sentences in her story follow a paired parallel structure to group related ideas together. The first two sentences start with "this is" to first reject abortion as political and then to reorient it as a medical issue. The next two start with "it is" to reemphasize that this medical decision does happen, and, in fact, did happen to Diana H. The third pair of sentences both start with "to" because this abortion also happened to her family and her daughter in specific, reiterating the reach of impact. The last pair of sentences start with "her," providing details about Diana H.'s unborn daughter that personalize the story and again focus on the fact that Diana H. did not feel she made a choice, but that the abortion was something that had to be done due to a medical issue.

The other abortion access story in the necessity and no regret categories that names an unborn baby is by Cheryl Axelrod. An obstetrician herself, she discusses how her "loved and wanted and waited for child… had cloacal exstrophy" and would not survive delivery, another case of abortion due to necessity ("Cheryl Axelrod"). At the end of her story, Axelrod states:

> We named him Thomas, and I will forever mourn him. We remember and honor his life by saying Kaddish every year on his yartzheit and on Yom Kippur. The decision to have an abortion challenged my beliefs around life and my faith, but I have never for a second doubted that this was the right thing to do for myself, my family, and especially Thomas. ("Cheryl Axelrod")

Rather than addressing the political aspect of abortion access, Axelrod explores her abortion in relation to her own career and religion. She mentions that she had refused to perform terminations prior to her own abortion, but now understands and empathizes with people in these "oftentimes impossible situations" ("Cheryl Axelrod"). In her story, Axelrod navigates her abortion experience with "moral and emotional nuance;" her narrative is especially personal because she deals with her religious and moral beliefs and how they changed through her abortion experience (Ballingall 114). The story's personal nature is magnified by the inclusion of her full name, reducing the author's anonymity and emphasizing that Axelrod is a real person. Her story will likely resonate with people who have similar backgrounds that seem incompatible with the concept of abortion as Axelrod admits her own struggles with her decision to terminate her pregnancy but ultimately resolves that it was right for her situation. Axelrod regrets not having her son but does not regret getting an abortion because of the circumstances. However, religious beliefs, in particular, are different for every individual, so this one story probably cannot persuade every person who comes across it. Although these stories can offer new perspectives to those who have never knowingly been impacted by abortion access restrictions, they may not persuade people who hold deep religious roots in the pro-life movement.

While the character of the baby is often overlooked in the pro-choice movement, it is

usually over-emphasized in the pro-life movement. In the stories I've analyzed in this section, women insert their unborn babies into their abortion stories, subverting a strategy dominant in the pro-life movement to reorient abortion narratives from a compassionate mother's perspective. I found this to be a relatively frequent trend in my dataset; Maureen C. and Robin U. also name their unborn daughters in their stories: Zoey and Grace, respectively. These stories are examples of maternal abortion narratives that illustrate how "reserving the right to have an abortion and acting as a loving mother are not mutually exclusive actions" (Ballingall 101). The use of their unborn children's names functions not only to subvert the *bad mother* label on women who get an abortion but also to reinforce the fact that sometimes an abortion is necessary and it is not always the parents' choice. Abortion is a medical decision, as Diana H. states, and therefore should not be treated as a statement on the mother's morality, religion, or politics. This strategy may enable pro-life readers to realize that even they might face a situation in which they would agree abortion was necessary.

Although emphasizing stories about medically necessary abortions is a persuasive tactic, this strategy potentially risks invalidating the experiences of women who had an abortion simply because they did not want a child at that time. Rebecca F. addresses this concern in her story about her pregnancy at age 17, claiming she "hesitate[s] at feeling as though I need to 'justify' my decision" to have an abortion ("Rebecca F."). She is aware that her choice will be judged by the public, and she does not want to give in to social pressure and justify her choice. Rebecca F. believes it should be her choice only. Stories of women who have had an abortion not out of necessity but because it was their choice are valuable to share to combat the stigma of shame for voluntary abortions. As Rebecca F. states, "the anti-choice movement has been effective in making some women feel as if it shouldn't be talked about, that its our own dirty little secret to bear in silence, that we should feel ashamed" ("Rebecca F."). The connection between shame and abortion in the United States has resulted in a gap in the conversation as women who have had abortions are shamed into not sharing their experiences or risk social punishment. While this perspective of abortion motivated by personal preference may not be as persuasive to a broad audience, it is nonetheless important to include in the holistic portrayal of women who have experienced abortion.

Conclusion

In my analysis of the abortion access stories from NARAL's website, I have found that storytelling provides many different strategies for women to share their personal experiences. Some of the categories I coded for touch on the reasoning behind the choice to have an abortion that is often ignored in conversations that typically focus on abstract concepts such as morality. These real, concrete examples of women who have decided to terminate their pregnancies and live with their choice provide perspectives that most people do not and will never have, allowing readers to be more informed in their stance on abortion access.

Appeals to *pathos* in these stories help show how the pro-choice movement can claim a voice in the rhetorics of emotion surrounding abortion that has been dominated by the pro-life movement for decades.

Rhetoricians who aim to further analyze personal stories about abortion could also focus on the potentially problematic naming of the pro-choice movement. A common theme I found in my dataset was women claiming that due to medical, financial, or situational necessity, their abortion did not feel like a choice. While the name relates to a powerful American ethos of choice, it does not seem to reflect the lived experiences and opinions of everyone in the pro-choice movement, as demonstrated in many of these stories. Furthermore, I believe it is important to acknowledge the stigma attached to abortion in the United States. The shame associated with abortion likely restricts a widespread sharing of personal stories and halts vital conversations around abortion access. In the stories I analyzed, a majority of them are what I call semi-anonymous testimonials because they have limited identifying information. While it can be liberating for people to tell their stories without worrying about facing real-world consequences from those who disagree with their decision, it is an issue that there are such concerns that perpetuate fear to speak openly on the topic of abortion. Furthermore, this shame disproportionately affects women rather than the men who are, at times, also involved in the decision-making process. Out of all the abortion access stories on NARAL's website, the single entry from a man was one of three that included the full name and a photo of the author, demonstrating the lesser worry men face of receiving negative responses when they out themselves as having an experience with abortion. I believe a study of shame similar to Stenberg's analysis of the #NotOkay movement would yield informative results in the context of abortion in the United States. Such an analysis could perhaps be reframed through the emerging movement of reproductive justice. Reproductive justice is a term that has been circulating as "a broader, more diffuse agenda [than pro-choice] that addresses abortion access but also contraception, child care, gay rights, health insurance and economic opportunity," encapsulating many of the challenges women face in our current society (Pickert 6). These considerations of the naming of the movement and shame in relation to abortion impact the rhetoric of personal storytelling in the pro-choice movement and present interesting avenues for future research in this area.

Acknowledgments

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