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Making the #Personal #Political: Twitter as a Rhetorical Tool for Activist Campaigning

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MAKING THE #PERSONAL #POLITICAL:

TWITTER AS A RHETORICAL TOOL

FOR ACTIVIST CAMPAIGNING

BY

ANNABELLE EVERETT

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE

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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes a compilation of tweets from a specific digital social movement, #YesAllWomen. This campaign was an instance of hashtag activism and digital feminism that appeared on Twitter following the misogyny-fueled Isla Vista shootings as a means of illuminating the persistent issues of harassment and violence against women. The campaign focused largely on personal experience, and a cluster analysis of a published collection of tweets reveals how the use of the #YesAllWomen hashtag and the communication of personal narrative transformed participants into political rhetors. Thus, I ultimately argue the significance of Twitter as a rhetorical tool for activist communication.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	vi
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
CHAPTER 1	1
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 2	10
REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	10
CHAPTER 3	26
METHODOLOGY.....	26
CHAPTER 4	32
FINDINGS.....	32
CHAPTER 5	49
DISCUSSION.....	49
CHAPTER 6	53
CONCLUSION.....	53
BIBLIOGRAPHY	56

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
Table 1. Societal Perceptions and Treatment of Women	34
Table 1a.	35
Table 2. Juxtaposition of Male and Female Experiences	36
Table 2a.	37
Table 3. Women's Fear of Assault.....	40
Table 3a.	41
Table 4. Specific Experience	43
Table 4a.	43
Table 5. Message of the Movement	44
Table 5a.	44

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	PAGE
Figure 1. A #YesAllWomen Tweet by Jamie Veron.....	16

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Twitter as a Social Platform

Social media platforms are a means for online socialization, as well as the ease of communication, particularly between individuals who are physically apart. In bridging potential physical gaps, these digital spaces allow individuals to come together virtually to share information and discuss ideas. The primary requirement for participation in these spaces is Internet access via a computer or smartphone. The specific function and content of a conversation may vary - from a discussion of common interests or the expression of random thoughts to engagement in debate and, even, individual attempts to spark social change that, together, can resemble a social movement.

This thesis focuses attention on a specific instance of activist campaigning that took place on social media in order to present an understanding of how individual communicators, known thus forth as rhetors, can use the rhetoric of personal experience to politicize a conversation. These platforms generally have a broad reach, and thus allow individuals from various backgrounds to meet in a common virtual space. Without the exclusion of physical rhetoric that occurs in face-to-face conversations, like facial expressions and gestures that can allow a person to better understand another's message, discussions on social media platforms must rely largely

on the written word and often involve users contributing personal narrative to clarify and justify a position within a larger conversation.

Twitter is a micro-blogging social media platform that allows users to express small blurbs of information to their followers; it is a broad social media platform that allows participants to share messages within an online community. At the time of my research, the site saw nearly 330 million active accounts publishing an average of 500 million tweets a day (Aslam, 2017). This form of social media is accessible to users through its website, www.Twitter.com, or smartphone app; its primary function is to allow users to express thoughts and ideas within an online community through a limited statement, known as a 'tweet.' Anyone may participate in this community of digital sharing as long as they open an account with Twitter using a legitimate email address and establish a selected username and password of the individual's choice. Tweets may be accompanied by photos or video, and they were initially limited to 140 characters in length. Twitter raised the limit to 280 characters in November of 2017, however this thesis focuses solely on tweets published in 2014 when the limit was restricted to 140 (Tsukayama, 2017). The use of limited characters per tweet often caused Twitter users to practice concision when delivering messages; they were forced to craft messages in the clearest and most efficient phrasing in order to get their meaning across.

Tweets are also often characterized by what is known as a 'hashtag.' This is a key word or phrase that allows a particular tweet to be part of a larger conversation on the platform and easily accessed by users, while also influencing its content. In order to use a hashtag, a user must tweet a certain word or phrase un-spaced and precede this

with a number symbol ("#"). Individuals may use hashtags to join a conversation or to simply emphasize a message. Hashtags are helpful in categorizing large amounts of information on Twitter, so it is important to recognize that "public tweets from individual users containing a hashtagged phrase can be easily aggregated and retweeted, circulating messages to people outside of the original tweeter's personal network and allowing for virality" (Boyd, et al., 2010). In other words, tweets within a hashtag will now be linked to one-another, regardless of the user who originally tweeted them, so tweeting within a hashtag allows users to easily access related information expressed by other people. Additionally, the use of a hashtag allows participation from theoretically all members of a social media community within a single, larger conversation. Hashtag use thus creates the potential for users to develop an online community of likeminded individuals.

Communication practices on Twitter involve different conventions than other types of interactions. For instance, users have limited use of characters, forcing them to be succinct with their messages. Additionally, due to its micro-blogging nature, Twitter users typically share all sorts of information - ranging from daily observations to news items to random thoughts to political commentary. Thus, it is common for interactions to occur between individuals who do not know each other in the physical world. Such instances often involve one user responding to a specific tweet communicated by another, often entering a conversation with a reply that solely relates to the content of the conversation instead of giving any type of introduction prior to inserting oneself into an interaction. As Twitter is a broad platform, users are able to

seamlessly join a conversation, particularly when tweets are being classified with a hashtag.

Users typically engage in communication that stands apart from normal everyday conversation and does not follow the conventions for standard interactions. Although users have the opportunity to participate in conversations with other users on the platform, and they often do so, the features of such interactions differ from communication that takes place through other channels. More standard interactions, such as face-to-face discussions or telephone conversations, typically follow various conversational rules. For instance, when encountering an old friend on the street, a person will usually communicate some sort of greeting, such as "hi" or "hello," often followed by some iteration of "how are you?" Although such an exchange is common in the physical world, interactions on Twitter rarely occur in a similar manner with users often inserting commentary into a stranger's conversation with little or no introduction.

Hashtag activism, or the use of a hashtag for some form of activism, has become increasingly common on social media platforms. The use of a hashtag to raise awareness of and combat various social issues has been particularly prevalent on Twitter. The following list includes some notable examples of hashtag activism in recent years:

- #Kony2012 - a controversial 2012 social media campaign led by the group Invisible Children in an attempt to 'make Ugandan war criminal Joseph Kony famous.' The campaign aimed to shed light on Kony's war crimes and the

forced use of children in his army. This campaign was wildly popular at first, with a surge in users tweeting within the hashtag on Twitter and the accompanying YouTube video viewed at least 21 million times in the first three days. However, the use of the hashtag on Twitter faded after the movement lost credibility due to the public nervous breakdown of its originator, Jason Russell (Williams, 2012, Dewey, 2014).

- #BringBackOurGirls - a 2014 effort to raise awareness of nearly 300 kidnapped Nigerian schoolgirls. This hashtag saw participation from a number of notable figures, including First Lady Michelle Obama. It ultimately did not lead to the girls' return to their homes, but it did raise public awareness of the issue (Dewey, 2014).
- #BlackLivesMatter - a widespread and continuing civil rights movement initiated in 2012 in response to the shooting of Trayvon Martin, a young black man, by an armed civilian. This movement aims to shed light on the many injustices faced by the black community, often focused on the issue of police brutality. The online movement has been accompanied by physical activism in the form of protests and marches (Bates, 2012).

Such digital campaigns are typically centered on a specific hashtag that is indicative of a particular social issue and communicates the campaign's primary message. Users who may have experience with the issue are able to easily join the conversation simply by characterizing their own tweets with the hashtag.

It is difficult to quantify the impact of these digital campaigns, especially those targeting an international issue, like #Kony2012 and #BringBackOurGirls, as it is nearly impossible to ensure real action will accompany the simple use of a hashtag. However, the analysis of homegrown movements targeting social issues within American society is not quite as complex. The lack of distance means individuals are often more likely to have personal experience with the issue at hand. This creates space for the use of personal narrative, which functions to personalize a movement and therefore make it 'real' for an audience. Both #BlackLivesMatter and the campaign at the focus of my research, #YesAllWomen, were early and important examples of how the use of personal narrative could raise awareness and potentially lead to meaningful, societal change. When a user is able to communicate a blurb about a personal experience in the context of a social campaign, the issue at hand is further clarified and made personal for the audience.

There have been many instances of activism taking place on social media, but for the purposes of this thesis, I will focus my attention to a published collection of tweets classified within a digital activism campaign on Twitter, #YesAllWomen, in order to establish how the platform can transform users into become political rhetors when engaging in a larger conversation about a social issue.

Introducing #YesAllWomen

The #YesAllWomen campaign is an online feminist movement that arose following the Isla Vista Killings, a mass shooting that took place on May 23, 2014 near the University of California, Santa Barbara (UC Santa Barbara) campus. The

shooter, 22-year-old Elliot Rodger, killed six people and injured thirteen before accidentally killing himself in a car accident as he fled from police. Rodger was fueled by a self-professed hatred of women. He frequently and categorically blamed them for his apparent inability to acquire a girlfriend and subsequent sexual rejection. However, his rage was not solely directed on women. He reportedly aimed his violence not just at women he claimed had failed to provide him an appropriate level of attention, but also at various men he argued had received their attentions instead (Valenti, 2014). His motivations are made clear in a self-recorded video he released prior to his crimes, as well as in a nearly 140-page manifesto that he penned and e-mailed to multiple individuals beforehand. Within both media, he expressed deep anti-women sentiments, as well as a disdain for other men who purportedly received female attention (Duke, 2014).

Rodger's online communications display anti-women sentiments that were further reinforced by his subsequent violent actions. Rodger's continuous expressions of misogyny, in his statements online and written manifesto and, inevitably, evidenced by his crimes, gave rise to the #YesAllWomen movement. The hashtag first arose as a counter-testimony to Rodger's rantings and actions, while also serving as a rhetorical response to an alternate hashtag campaign on Twitter, #NotAllMen. This alternate campaign was an attempt by (seemingly male) Twitter users to combat the idea that men perpetuate societal misogyny. Men who used this hashtag argued against being characterized as abusers and harassers of women to distance themselves from Rodger's behavior. In opposition, #YesAllWomen essentially asserts that "while not all men commit violent sexist crimes, [yes] all women have experienced some form of

violence or harassment from men" (Konnolly, 2015, p 3). The hashtag was first begun by Twitter user @gildedspine and saw 1.6 million tweets and retweets (i.e. reposts) within the first three months (Barker-Plummer, 2017).

My thesis focuses on a specific selection of tweets categorized within the #YesAllWomen movement. I analyze this collection as a literary artifact to develop a greater understanding of how Twitter can be used as a rhetorical tool to inform and potentially influence an audience. Twitter allowed the female rhetors of these tweets a space to express their everyday experiences with misogyny in various forms. This lets them reclaim the conversation from men who often dominate, while simultaneously raising awareness of sexual harassment and violence as issues that women face on a daily basis in varying degrees. The hashtag functions in these tweets to signify the prevalence of these issues. It allowed many women, from activists to journalists to celebrities to politicians, to express personal experiences with male behaviors having a negative, often traumatizing, effect on their lives.

Although I will be focusing specifically on one collection of tweets, it is important to first develop an understanding of the overall movement. Tweets categorized within the broader campaign included:

stories about being touched sexually on the subway, about avoiding rape drugs at parties, about recovering from sexual assault, about being cat-called on the street, and enduring sexual harassment at work - as well as messages of anger, frustration, solidarity, and feminist resistance to these experiences. (Barker-Plummer, 2017, p. 94)

These women addressed various male attitudes and behaviors toward women that are often, be it consciously or not, fueled by a disdain towards women or a general feeling of male superiority. The women within the movement used the hashtag to argue not only the validity of their experiences and the existence of misogyny, but to prove the omnipresent existence of a resulting rape culture. This term refers to an environment that normalizes and/or excuses rape and sexual assault; it is "perpetuated through the use of misogynistic language, the objectification of women's bodies, and the glamorization of sexual violence, thereby creating a society that disregards women's rights and safety" (Marshall University). Rodger's attitudes and actions, although an isolated and extreme case, were largely influenced by the omnipresence of rape culture. This toxic atmosphere fostered in Rodger a sense of entitlement towards and superiority to women. When his actual, lived experiences with women around him did not reflect what he believed himself entitled to, he reacted irrationally and violently.

The simple inclusion of the #YesAllWomen hashtag within these tweets turned the overall discussion political. The conversation, although limited to certain Twitter users who had personal experience with the issues at hand, was wide-reaching. The hashtag saw participation from over a million Twitter users during its height in May of 2014, indicating the prevalence and significance of the issue for women throughout the country and thus the potential implications for this study (Barker-Plummer, 2017). Through a cluster analysis of certain tweets categorized within the movement and later published within a collection, I aim to argue Twitter's potential to provide users with rhetorical power, particularly in political conversations.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

At the time of my research, there were not many articles in publication that referenced the #YesAllWomen movement, indicating a significant gap in current rhetorical scholarship. In the literature review that follows, I aim to define hashtag activism and digital feminism in order to provide the reader with a foundation for understanding my research. I argue the larger #YesAllWomen movement to be an example of both hashtag activism and digital feminism. The campaign involved the use of an Internet hashtag for some form of activism, while also represented a facet of the feminist movement that took place primarily in digital spaces. Thus, in order to properly understand an analysis of a collection of #YesAllWomen tweets, it is imperative to develop an initial understanding of hashtag activism and digital feminism.

This chapter is divided into sections, beginning with an analysis of Rodger's written manifesto and online presence. The manifesto was written by Rodger himself and sent to various sources prior to his crimes, indicating that he viewed this piece of writing as significant and that it may provide clarification on his motives. I analyze it to better characterize his crimes as an extreme case of misogyny-fueled violence by looking at the specific language he uses in his role as rhetor to describe not only himself but also those around him. Next, I turn to published literature on hashtag activism, using this section to define and contextualize this term. The last section is

reserved for a discussion on the larger #YesAllWomen movement. Here, I reference scholarship that specifically analyzes the campaign in order to better understand the movement as whole.

Elliot Rodger's Manifesto

Prior to the Isla Vista Killings, Elliot Rodger wrote a 137-page 'manifesto' titled "My Twisted World: The Story of Elliot Rodger." The text details a plan to kill members of a specific sorority house, as well as the events of his life that he believed led him to the decision to commit murder. Before setting out to commit his crimes, he published the manifesto online (Withnall, 2014). The writings are primarily autobiographical in content. He begins by painstakingly relaying specific details of his life in which he characterizes himself as the victim of other's actions (Rodger, 2014).

Rodger relies largely on misogynistic rhetoric when describing those he views to have wronged him. He is particularly vengeful towards women. He consistently uses negative and hateful language to describe them, lamenting for failing to give him appropriate attention. He often refers to himself as an "incel," or involuntary celibate, indicating his membership in a specific online community of men lamenting their inability to gain female attention (Rodger, 2014).

The term "incel" was originated in the mid-1990s by a female college student but has since seen greater usage on the popular social discussion site Reddit, often appearing on a forum on the site known as "ForeverAlone" (Baker, 2016). Forums dedicated to specific topics on Reddit are referred to as "subreddits"

(OxfordDictionaries.com). The members of the incel subreddit engage in misogynistic rhetoric, much like Rodger in his manifesto. These "Redditors" are hateful towards women and often glorify violence against them, even going so far as to be advocates of rape. Even years after his death, Rodger played a significant role in conversations between self-described incels. He was hailed as a hero on the subreddit for his violent actions, with users often referencing him as "Saint Elliot," until November of 2017 when the incel subreddit was formally banned from Reddit for inciting violence against women (Hauser, 2017). By constantly self-identifying as an incel in his manifesto, Rodger subtly, but consistently references women as the prime reason for his virginal status (Dewey, 2014). He places the blame for this self-identification solely on women, categorically naming them as the perpetrators of his victimization for failing to rid him of this status. Rodger cites his identity as a virgin as his primary motivation for his horrific plan to viciously attack female members of a UC Santa Barbara sorority near his home in Isla Vista, CA.

Rodger's women-hating writings and rantings, along with his subsequent violent actions, suggest that he was largely influenced by a deep-seated hatred of women, or misogyny. This is further evidenced by his participation in online chatrooms and forums prior to the killings, like Reddit along with the site PUAHate, "an online forum where participants ranted against "pickup artists" who had more success with women" (Nagourney, et al., 2014). In these digital spaces, Rodger engaged in conversations with likeminded individuals using misogynistic rhetoric.

Rodger's manifesto is rife with evidence of his women-hating ways. For instance, at one point he describes his life to be filled with "darkness and misery

because of girls;" he also describes the "horror and misery" exacted upon him by the female gender (Rodger, 2014, p. 5). Rodger's manifesto is rife with negative and derogatory language, particularly when discussing women. He later describes his life after puberty as entirely miserable due to his lack of female attention:

life [became] a bitter and unfair struggle for self-worth - all because girls will choose some boys over others. The boys who girls find attractive will lead pleasure-filled lives while they dominate the boys who girls deem unworthy. (Rodger, 2014, p. 11)

Rodger's writings make it evident that he judged his self-worth primarily on how much attention he received from women. When he did not receive female attention, he reacted irrationally.

Through his online communications and manifesto, Rodger displayed a clear obsession with gaining female attention and often expressed anger over his lack of it. He became so enraged that he urged others in the online community PUAHate to fight back. He wrote here that "one day incels will realize their strength in numbers, and will overthrow this oppressive feminist system." Rodger ultimately rallied users to "start envisioning a world where WOMEN FEAR [THEM]" (Nagourney, et al., 2014). Throughout his writings, Rodger consistently directed his rage towards women for ignoring him in favor of other men, effectively condemning them for their failure to engage with him both socially and sexually.

Rodger's writings and actions, albeit in a very extreme way, reveal underlying societal attitudes towards women. As #YesAllWomen attempts to argue, not all men will hold such extreme and violence opinions as he did, nor will they hold any evident anti-women sentiments at all. However, many men will be impacted by the same influences as Rodger, and all women will at some point in their lives experience the consequences. The #YesAllWomen movement seemingly began as a means for raising awareness of this harmful underlying, yet influential, problem. In sharing their stories, women attempt to make their personal experiences a political issue.

Hashtag Activism

In recent years, Twitter has seen increased use for political activism. One of the first and most notable instances of what is referred to as "hashtag activism," or the use of hashtags for Internet activism, is #BlackLivesMatter. The campaign began as a response to the 2012 shooting death of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin and his shooter's subsequent acquittal. However, it later highlighted the 2014 deaths of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri and Eric Garner in Staten Island, MO, two black men who died at the hands of police, among other instances of police brutality. #BlackLivesMatter aims to draw attention to the mistreatment of black bodies in America and continues to see significant usage today, both in digital and physical spaces (Bates, 2012). Much like #YesAllWomen it often involved participants contributing personal stories.

Konnelly (2015) attempts to categorize hashtags by identifying a means of classification that she terms the "Cause Hashtag." This particular kind of hashtag is "used or created with a specific goal in mind - to advance a cause, raise awareness, or

rally support for a particular social issue (p. 2). I argue that #YesAllWomen is an example of a Cause Hashtag for it exists primarily to raise awareness of a social issue - the omnipresence of misogyny and gender-based discrimination and violence. The Cause Hashtag needs only to include individuals who discuss a particular issue and needs not necessarily be accompanied by any action beyond that.

Contextualizing #YesAllWomen

For the purposes of this research, I will be relying on Andrea Waling's definition of feminism: "a concept, ideology, and social movement... that encompasses a range of disciplines (history, politics, philosophy, social sciences, among others) focusing on the dismantling of gender inequality (Waling, 2016, p. 34). The tweets contained within my artifact of study, a selection from the larger #YesAllWomen movement, aim to highlight various commonplace male attitudes and behaviors that have a harmful effect on the everyday female experience and indicate a societal imbalance of power between genders. I argue these tweets fall under the larger umbrella of feminism and more specifically the category of digital feminism, which I define as feminist activism taking place in online spaces.

These tweets rely heavily on the use of personal narrative. Users often reference personal experiences to support the idea that the effects of misogyny are widespread. However, "while the act of sharing one's story may indeed [have been] therapeutic, the goal of the hashtags [was] not to find personal solutions, but rather to raise collective awareness about systems of oppression" (Vickery, 2016, p. 3). These tweets vary in their specific content as they are generally expressions of personal

experience. However, each tweet serves to support the same underlying message: that misogyny is ingrained into our society and gender-based discrimination and violence are persistent dangers that every woman is faced with on a daily basis.



Figure 1: An example of a tweet classified within #YesAllWomen

(Ceron, 2014)

The preceding image is an example of a tweet classified within the #YesAllWomen movement hashtag and published within #YesAllWomen: A Collection. The tweet shows user @jamieveron providing a simple, yet impactful message that mirrors that of the overall movement: all women have experienced violence or harassment due to their gender identity. This statement is brief, yet significant.

The tweets involved in #YesAllWomen appear to be expressed primarily by women, but the collection also indicates support from male voices as well. As the overall movement largely involves women, a male perspective has the opportunity to provide new insights. "Are Gender Roles Really to Blame for Our Nation's Violence?" is an essay written by Patrick Ryan initially published on the self-described digital youth culture magazine Thought Catalog and later included in #YesAllWomen: A Collection (2014). Ryan discusses how the movement reveals

some harsh truths about society: the presence and influence of misogyny, as well as how misogyny is reinforced by both genders from birth through the perpetuation of gender stereotypes.

Unlike Rodger and likeminded individuals, Ryan expresses support for women by recognizing the dangers that all women face daily as a result of misogyny. He writes, "we tell women to avoid walking alone at night instead of figuring out why thousands of men are rapists. Many men have this idea that if a woman is dressed provocatively, whatever happens to her is her own fault" (p. 164). Ryan parallels the #YesAllWomen hashtag here; he is recognizing that all men are certainly not the perpetrators of violence or harassment towards women, but that all women face such threats daily from men. Elliot Rodger may have been an extreme example of the influence misogyny can have on the male population and his actions are a worst-case scenario, but the Isla Vista Shooting indicates a real societal problem. Even if men like Rodger are a small portion of the larger population, Ryan and the overall #YesAllWomen movement argue their attitudes and actions are indicative of a wider societal issue.

Men and women are pushed into their respective gender roles from an early age and are reinforced by outside influences, even as subtly as giving children specific toys - for example, the action figures and toy guns we give to boys and the Barbie Dolls and Easy-Bake Ovens we market to girls. Ryan looks to football, a traditional American pastime, as an allegory for these gender stereotypes in American society:

Purposefully beefed-up men recklessly throw their bodies at each other on the field, while dainty, scantily-clad, females stand to the side and cheer them on. We are raising our males to say, "Look at me I'm tough," and our females to say, "Look at me I'm pretty." And God forbid they don't live up to those ideals." (p. 171)

Upon birth, an individual's gender is often prescribed to him or her by others people, and with that given identity comes certain expectations for that person's behavior and attitude. These roles are reinforced throughout an individual's life both by other people and by society as a whole. This can be as seemingly innocuous as dressing a boy in blue and a girl in pink or as harmful as telling a man that crying shows weakness or a woman that if she dresses in a revealing outfit then she is "asking" to be assaulted. It is these same societal expectations that drive the notion that men are entitled to female attention.

Ryan argues against following these "arbitrary identities" that society prescribes us (p. 182). Not only do traditional gender roles leave little room for variety and difference, they can have some lasting, harmful effects on society, as well as the individual. If we blindly teach men that they automatically deserve the attention of women simply due to their gender identity and subsequent prescribed gender role, they may grow up to believe that they are entitled to get whatever they want from a woman at any cost, regardless of what the woman herself wants. In Rodger's case, the discrepancy between his expectations of female behavior and attention and what actually transpired only served to enrage him. This perceived incongruity caused him

to develop a severe hatred of women and ultimately to commit the horrifying Isla Vista Shooting. Rodger is a severe example of the harmful effects of traditionally prescribed masculinity, but nonetheless his attitudes and actions indicate a persistent issue present in society: there exists a generally negative societal perception of women, including how they should behave and interact with their male counterparts; there is an underlying sense of misogyny present in society that indicates the existence of a gender imbalance. If left unchecked, these perceptions can lead men to develop certain ideas about women and behave in various ways towards them that can have potentially devastating consequences. The #YesAllWomen tweets aim to expose the existence and prevalence of these issues.

Sarah J. Jackson and Sonia Banaszczyk (2016) analyze the #YesAllWomen movement through the lenses of counterpublic sphere theory and feminist standpoint theory. Public spheres have historically neglected women, denying them the right to vote into the 20th century and consistently politicizing women's bodies and bodily autonomy (National Women's History Project). Jackson and Banaszczyk contend that, as a result of such persistent discrimination and isolation, women are inherently citizens of the counterpublic (Jackson & Banaszczyk, 2016). Such an outside positioning gives women a unique perspective on the center, or those citizens who dominate society (i.e. men); it allows them a view that does not occupy traditional patriarchal spheres. In other words, women are traditionally marginalized within society, allowing them an "outsider" perspective that is less likely to be influenced by inherent biases. Within the context of #YesAllWomen, Jackson and Banaszczyk (2016) analyze the use of new media to confront existing social norms:

feminist counterpublic actors interact with and leverage new media to build common narratives from shared identities and experiences, challenge the reproduction of hierarchies within social movement spaces, and transform and influence broader public narratives on issues central to women's lives. (p. 393)

Regardless of a user's personal intent, the inclusion of a hashtag means the tweet automatically functions to dismantle societal structures. When tweeting within #YesAllWomen, users are ostensibly protesting the systems that have traditionally influenced and perpetuated their harassment, assault, or discrimination. Furthermore, these scholars analyze frames apparent within the discourse of #YesAllWomen:

- (1) an attempt to reprioritize the public's focus from narratives that downplay the prevalence of men committing violence to narratives acknowledging the frequency of women's experiences with violence
- (2) a discussion of the connection between violence and everyday sexism
- (3) a legitimation of the concept of rape culture. (Jackson and Banaszczyk, 2016, p. 397)

The #YesAllWomen tweets place focus primarily on women's personal narratives to raise awareness of the persistence of misogyny, along with its influence on gender-

based discrimination and violence. These stories illuminate a clear connection between the violence women often face and the influence of common expressions of sexism, while also proving the existence of rape culture.

In "Feminist Online Identity: Analyzing the Presence of Hashtag Feminism," Dixon (2014) approaches the tweets as a means for women to redefine the broader, historical feminist movement. She also references the significance of personal experience within feminist activism, noting that feminism has traditionally been characterized by the incorporation of personal narrative and that this phenomenon is not lost when feminists occupy digital spaces (Dixon, 2014). Within #YesAllWomen, participants are seemingly encouraged to discuss their own personal experiences of discrimination and sexism in order to shed light on the prevalence of these issues and the influence of misogyny.

Rodino-Colocino (2014) articulates the larger #YesAllWomen movement as a call to action for both feminists and scholars in her article "#YesAllWomen: Intersectional Mobilization Against Sexual Assault is Radical (Again)." She argues that the hashtag and its resulting tweets spotlight an underlying societal problem, sexual harassment and gender-based discrimination, that was made apparent by Rodger's actions. Alternatively, Rodino-Colocino pinpoints the simultaneous lack of diversity and need for inclusivity within the movement, characterizing its participation as "feminist solidarity in white, middle-class, US-centric, heteronormative privilege" (p. 1113). Her examination of the movement reveals its focus on the experience of the white woman and serves as a call for greater diversity and a focus on intersectional feminism.

Jacqueline Vickery (2016) draws parallels between the #YesAllWomen movement and the broader women's movement. She pinpoints how both movements emphasize women's personal experiences. She writes how "as part of the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) of the 1960s, women would come together to share personal stories of oppression, often related to the body and/or sex; in other words, stories that were related to their private experiences and intimate lives" (p. 1). Likewise, the #YesAllWomen movement involved women coming together in a virtual space to share stories of when they had experienced instances of misogyny and sexual harassment. In communicating similar experiences, women of both movements no longer internalize blame for the oppression they have experienced; instead they attribute it to a broader societal structure. Although the individual stories shared are inherently and unavoidably personal, they collectively tell a larger story that reveals an underlying cycle of misogyny and the oppression of women.

Vickery also focuses on the use of networked publics in this collective storytelling. Networked publics are "publics that are restructured by networked technologies. As such, they are simultaneously (1) the space constructed through networked technologies and (2) the imagined collective that emerges as a result of the intersection of people, technology, and practice" (Boyd, 2010, p. 39, as cited in Vickery, 2016, p. 1). Twitter is itself a networked public, as it is both a space made possible by networked technologies but also created and maintained by the individuals utilizing that technology. These spaces allow women to begin conversations with greater ease than they are typically afforded in the physical world. On spaces like Twitter, the use of a hashtag allows women to individually participate in a collective

story, allowing them to seamlessly join a conversation with likeminded individuals. As the limits of physical barriers are thus eliminated, there is greater opportunity for participation in general, as well as for the diversity of participants. These are both factors that are important to consider within any expressions of activism to ensure the inclusion and consideration of multiple perspectives and a wide variety of experiences.

A hashtag provides the context necessary for women to share personal experiences, yet simultaneously allows these instances to become part of a collective story. Women tweeting within #YesAllWomen, regardless of their initial intent, are automatically drawing connections between the private and public - the stories they share are inherently personal, yet these experiences reveal issues within the broader society. Vickery draws this connection through the focus on the female body, the regulation of which is a topic that is "always political, yet simultaneously inherently personal. Likewise, women's rejection and negotiation of these regulations is also always personal, yet collectively also political" (p. 2).

Campaigns that target women's issues, like #YesAllWomen, do not aim to merely present women as victims of persecution or larger social structures, nor do they simply pinpoint individual experiences related to a target issue. They allow women to use their individual stories to highlight, and potentially confront, societal systems in place that neglect and harm women. Feminist hashtags, like #YesAllWomen give women a clear space to collectively "speak out and speak back to the public discourses and institutions that shape and regulate their bodies and their intimate subjectivities" (p. 2). The inclusion of personal experience displayed within my artifact of study

reveal the underlying and harmful nature of misogyny as it is expressed through male attitudes and behaviors.

Bernadette Barker-Plummer and David Barker-Plummer (2017) investigate the #YesAllWomen campaign's connection to the larger feminist movement by analyzing how both are examples of discursive activism, or "the politics of knowledge building, critique, reflection, reframing, "consciousness raising" and general "meaning making" (p. 92). These scholars draw a parallel between the movements, articulating how both focus on building collective consciousness through different ways: the traditional feminist movement does so through "communication strategies such as pamphlets, consciousness-raising groups, publishing collectives, bookstore networks, [and] media strategies," while #YesAllWomen relies on a wide-reaching hashtag on a specific social media platform (p. 92). This article focuses on 500,284 tweets that took place between May 24th and June 24th of 2014, relying on methods of content and discourse analysis. Additionally, the authors analyze the media reception of the hashtag.

These authors echo claims presented in previous literature: that Twitter provides a sense of collectivity in allowing individuals from all over the platform to communicate in a larger conversation. Additionally, they argue that the resulting media coverage of #YesAllWomen allowed the hashtag to function much like an in-person protest. They present a two-part argument: that the hashtag served as a place for "collective identity/collective consciousness" and "functioned, through its links to and recirculation by other platforms and media, as a public protest or agenda-building event that impacted public discourse beyond Twitter" (p. 92-93). #YesAllWomen was a digital-only occurrence as it was not accompanied by any physical protest events and

took place solely online. However, #YesAllWomen emerged as an important part of the resurgence of feminism, particularly the advent of a new facet of this movement: digital feminism. In consideration with other feminist hashtag events (such as the previously mentioned #BringBackOurGirls), this indicates the movement as a "source of significant feminist discursive activism" (p. 114).

The literature discussed in this section refer to the broader movement as a whole, while this thesis focuses on a specific selection of tweets. This section is meant to provide a foundation for understanding the specific tweets that serve as my artifact of study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

I analyzed my artifact of study using cluster criticism, a rhetorical theory that examines structural relations and associative meanings within a text. This theory was developed by Kenneth Burke, a noted American scholar and literary critic. Cluster criticism, or cluster analysis, requires the critic to discover an underlying system of connections within a text. This form of textual analysis functions on the idea that a rhetor both intentionally and unintentionally chooses language. Associations between words appear in clusters throughout a text. Together, these form a sort of system which provides clues for the critic as to the underlying ideology presented in a text.

The theory assumes that a rhetor chooses certain, specific language to communicate ideas and guide an audience through a text. He or she must be clear in selecting language that is appropriate for the given audience. However, according to cluster criticism, there are always unseen influences found within a text. Regardless of intention, a rhetor may have unconsciously affected a text. Cluster criticism allows a critic to determine connections within a text regardless of the rhetor's intent or influence. Analyzing the associations of various key terms and the language found clustered them reveals the primary argument or main idea presented by a given text and offers insight into a rhetor's motivations.

Various scholars have published articles breaking down the theory. Carol A. Berthold (1976) provides a foundation in "Kenneth Burke's Cluster-Agon Method: Its Development and An Application" by explaining the process step-by-step. Cluster criticism offers the reader a way to objectively analyze a text to determine the author's motivations. Burke has provided critics "an objective way of determining relationships between a [rhetor's] main concerns, as well as a new perspective to rhetorical critics who desire to discover more about the motives... of [rhetors]" (p. 302). This method lets a critic gain insight into a text beyond the writer's intentions because it reveals structures hidden within it.

The first step in completing a cluster analysis is the selection of key terms. These are words that either appear frequently or significantly throughout a text. Next, the critic must determine which of these key terms are the text's 'god' and 'devil' terms. A god term is a key word that most clearly represents the main ideas of the text, while a devil term is simply the counterpart to a determined god term. In other words, the devil term expresses opposition to the god term. Following the selection of key terms and the determination of god and devil terms, a critic may begin the actual analysis. He or she must provide the given context for each key term - in regard to my own analysis this means the content of each individual tweet from which my terms have been selected. The critic then examines the context to determine associative words, while also acknowledging the 'weight' of each term to determine their significance. A cluster word is that which displays a clear link to a key term - such as through the use of a conjunction or evidence of a cause and effect relationship. These clusters can then provide a critic with objective insight into the rhetor's motivations. Berthold also

notes that this form of analysis can also "be employed as a precise method of discovering key term relationships in the rhetoric of a social movement," (p. 309). In the context of a digital movement, I argue that this method may be used to determine the ways in which a platform can influence a campaign. Following the selection of key terms and the determination of god and devil terms, a critic may begin the actual analysis. He or she must provide the appropriate context for each key term - in regard to my own analysis this means the content of each individual tweet from which my terms have been selected. The critic then examines the context to determine associative words, while also acknowledging the 'weight' of each term to determine their significance. A cluster word is that which is somehow linked to a key term - such as through the use of a conjunction or evidence of a cause and effect relationship. These clusters can then provide a critic with objective insight into the rhetor's motivations. Berthold also notes that this form of analysis can also "be employed as a precise method of discovering key term relationships in the rhetoric of a social movement," (p. 309). In the context of a digital movement, I argue that this method may be used to determine the ways in which a platform can influence a campaign.

Burke emphasizes how texts inherently reveal a symbolic structure that is identified by mapping out clusters. He writes "By charting clusters, we get our cues as to the important ingredients subsumed in 'symbolic mergers.' We reveal, beneath an author's 'official front,' the level at which a lie is possible" (Burke, 1987, p. 233). Applying cluster criticism to a text thus allows the critic to determine what is significant about a text but may not be initially apparent to a reader. In other words, a rhetor may express ideas that are only revealed when the critic goes beyond a simple

reading of the text. Cluster criticism focuses directly on language choices; it is a method that allows the reader to gain further insight into a text, and therefore the author's views, because it lets the reader interpret beyond what the author has intended (Burke, 1987).

Although Burke did not provide step-by-step instructions, he did explicate cluster criticism for his reader by putting it into practice in his own essays. In "The Rhetoric of Hitler's 'Battle' (1974) Burke displays his theory for the reader. He analyzes Hitler's rise to power by focusing on Hitler's own writings, *Mein Kampf*:

[Hitler] ends his diatribes against contemporary economic ills by a shift into an insistence that we must get to the "true" cause, which is centered in "race." The "Aryan" is "constructive"; the Jew is "destructive"; and the "Aryan to continue his *construction* must *destroy* the Jewish *destruction*. The Aryan, as the vessel of *love*, must *hate* the Jewish *hate*. (p. 175)

Here, Burke unearths clusters from Hitler's rhetoric to reveal Hitler's underlying motivations. Burke clearly interprets the connections made by Hitler: that the Aryan is associated with positivity, while any negativity is connected to the Jewish population. The opposing concepts of "constructive" and "destructive" further reinforce Hitler's underlying ideology. These assertions are further clarified, Burke says, by Hitler's insistence that other factors that may be affecting Germany, such as economic influences, are "'only of second or even third importance,' but 'political,

ethical-moral, as well as factors of blood and race, are of first importance" (p. 175). Hitler's rhetorical choices are clearly and consistently revealing an underlying message that can be further understood by analyzing the connections he consistently makes throughout this text. Burke goes on to describe how, although Hitler's rhetoric and actions were undoubtedly evil, he was able to rise to power by equating his hateful views with positivity.

Further clarification on 'god' and 'devil' terms can also be found in "The Rhetoric of Hitler's 'Battle.'" For example, Burke writes how Hitler describes the "international Jew" as the "international devil" (p. 194) In accordance to his anti-Semitic ideals, Hitler has equated the Jewish population with an undeniably negative entity, the devil. Hitler's actions and rhetoric reinforced his overall ideology, as evidenced by the clusters Burke discovered. Burke has completed a rhetorical analysis of Hitler's rise to power, displaying for the reader how cluster criticism may be used to analyze historical events and seemingly, by a logical extension, social movements like #YesAllWomen.

My artifact of study is YesAllWomen: A Collection (2014), a published collection of 43 tweets classified within the #YesAllWomen movement. For my analysis, I looked to the tweets collectively as a single piece of text. I completed a close reading of this text to determine key terms. I then looked to the context for each to find language that was clearly linked to these key terms. I argue that when applying Burke's theory of cluster criticism, the tweets systematically present a single ideology: that all women experience the effects of misogyny on a daily basis, expressed through various male behaviors and attitudes in the form of harassment or violence and

indicating the existence of a gender imbalance in society. In utilizing the digital platform Twitter, these women were able to shape the movement through personal experience.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

YesAllWomen: A Collection (2014) was compiled by Ella Cerón, a former writer for Thought Catalog and the current Digital West Coast Editor for Teen Vogue. This publication includes a limited selection of tweets that were posted during the height of the #YesAllWomen movement in May of 2014. These tweets are accompanied by numerous essays written by various online figures that discuss the movement and its overall message, while challenging misogyny and arguing it as a societal problem that must be addressed.

As Ella Cerón was the editor of the collection and therefore selected the tweets that were included in the publication, it is important to acknowledge her role as a rhetor and examine her rhetorical strategy for selecting specific tweets. Since there is no introduction for the collection, I turn to her own published writings for clarification and to provide context. She is an editor for Teen Vogue and therefore has contributed a number of articles to their website. Many of Cerón's articles address political and social issues. She educates her readers about activism ("Prep Your Protest Tool Kit Before You March"). She acknowledges the horror of gun violence and the polarizing issue of gun control ("Students Demonstrate How to Survive a School Shooting," "Following Trump's Remarks on Arming Educators, Georgia Teacher Arrested for Firing Gun in Empty Classroom," and "Watch Gun Control Activists Read Texts from

Mass Shooting Victims"). She addresses police shootings ("Saheed Vassell Wasn't Carrying a Gun When New York Police Shot and Killed Him in Brooklyn"). She calls out gender inequality ("Golden Globes 2018 Points to Hollywood's Lack of Inclusion for Women Behind the Scenes"). She argues in support of sexual assault survivors ("Why Kesha Should Have Won the 'Best Pop Vocal Performance' Grammy"), discusses the prevalence of sexual harassment and assault in Hollywood ("Powerful People in Entertainment Who Have Been Accused of Sexual Harassment or Assault"), and acknowledges her own role as a survivor of sexual assault ("The Golden Globes Black-Dress Protest Won't Make a Difference Where It Matters"). (Teen Vogue).

These articles are dispersed among others that take on more lighthearted topics, but together they indicate a clear topical trend and seem to reveal a desire to use her platform to give others a voice, much like she does as the editor of #YesAllWomen: A Collection. Her role as rhetor of this collection allowed her to publicize the movement through this focused collection of tweets. Her writings also reveal a tendency towards political rhetoric. She seemingly uses her position as editor of the collection to empower women through political discourse. It is important to acknowledge Cerón's motives before analyzing the tweets themselves to better understand how the tweets are functioning together within the collection.

For my research, I acknowledge the tweets collectively as a text. However, I chose to separate them thematically for my analysis and to treat each category as a component of a larger text. My focus for this thesis is to analyze how Twitter can function in activist and feminist communication. I organized tweets by grouping them based on their specific content, resulting in the following five categories: societal

perceptions and treatment of women, juxtaposition of male and female experiences, women's fear of assault, specific experience, and message of the movement.

Following this categorization process, I completed a cluster analysis of the tweets. I treated each category as part of a text to determine key words and resulting clusters within each individual tweet. My resulting analysis revealed the collective argument presented by the collection: that all of these female rhetors have experienced harassment and discrimination by men at some point during their lives. Furthermore, the tweets indicate how Twitter can be used as a rhetorical tool in activist communication.

The section that follows displays the categorized tweets (Tables 1, 2, 3, 4, 5), listing the Twitter user that initially communicated the tweet, along with its contents. Key terms are bolded within the tweets, while clusters are italicized. The remaining tables (Table 1a, 2a, 3a, 4a, 5a) lists the key terms and each individual cluster from each category.

Table 1. Societal Perceptions and Treatment of Women

Twitter User	Tweet
@briannalin	#YesAll Women because asking to be treated like a human being is far too much
@radicayla	Because while millions of girls are getting <i>raped</i> , the media still <i>blames</i> her for what she was wearing. #YesAllWomen
@dresdencodak	<i>Dehumanization</i> of women isn't an occasional event, it's a constant, and we can't fight it if we don't talk about it. #YesAllWomen
@jenny_goldberg	#YesAll Women because every time I become <i>emotional</i> or <i>passionate</i> about something, I'm 'on my period.'
@cmferrara	#YesAll Women because when women get <i>assaulted</i> the first thing you should be asking is for a description of the attacker, not her outfit.

@MsElizaDivine	#yesallwomen because having to explain why we deserve to be treated like <i>human beings</i> every time we get on the internet is getting old
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Table 1a.

Key Term	Clusters
Women	Emotional Passionate Dehumanization Assaulted
Girls	Raped
Media	Blames
We	Human [being/beings]

Analysis

Table 1 displays tweets that provide information about the societal perceptions and treatment of women. In other words, these tweets indicate certain views of women and how these views are expressed by male behaviors towards women. I determined four key terms: **women**, **girls**, **media**, and **we**. As the primary goal of the movement is to address the general treatment of women in society, **women** is maintained as a key term throughout the tweets. I determined **girls** to be equated with "women" and thus equally as significant, while **media** is a prominent force in society and therefore important to consider within the movement. Lastly, I argue **we** is a key word because in the context of the tweet it is collectively referencing women and their experiences.

Women was associated with *emotional* and *passionate*, indicating a stereotype about women that is present within society. The implication of this cluster is that women are far too consumed by emotion and thus lack reason. This particular cluster is indicating that generally women are not viewed to have sound judgment. This key term

was also connected to *dehumanization*. The pairing of these two words reveals an alarming claim: that societal views towards women do not just stereotype them a certain way as the previous cluster revealed, but they also serve to debase women as well. Women are not viewed as equally human as men but are dehumanized instead. They are, simply put, viewed as beings that are less than men. Lastly, **women** was clustered with *assaulted*. This reflects the prevalence of assault against women. Similarly, **girls** was clustered with *raped*, further reinforcing the claim that all women must be constantly wary of the danger of assault and broadening this claim to include younger women as well. Additionally, **media** is associated with *blames*, arguing that media sets the tone for how society interprets situations. If the media places the blame on a woman for a situation in which she has experienced some expression of misogyny, then society as a whole will likely blame her too. This cluster confronts a larger issue: that people often fail to look at situations specifically or to view those involved as individuals, and instead jump to broad conclusions. The associations within this tweet are referencing a societal tendency towards victim blaming in instances of sexual assault. Lastly, **we** is paired with *human [beings]*. The association made here is not subtle; the user is arguing against the dehumanization of women and in favor of treating women as equal to men instead of as lesser beings.

Table 2. Juxtaposition of Male and Female Experiences

User	Tweet
@feliciday	when a woman makes a video, most comments are about tearing apart her looks. Or if they'd "do" her. With a man, almost none. #YesAllWomen
@WhileNatSleeps	Because <i>women</i> are <i>scared</i> of walking <i>alone</i> at night more than <i>men</i> are scared of the consequences of <i>rape</i>

	#YesAllWomen
@heathersomervil	#YesAll Women Because when I defend myself, I'm <i>temperamental</i> . But when a man defends me, it's an act of <i>chivalry</i> .
@Manda_like_wine	Because the man that got my grandmother pregnant and left her was considered a <i>catch</i> , but she was considered a <i>whore</i> . #YesAll Women
@KrisKing	Why do I have to alter the way I <i>dress</i> , when you can alter the way you <i>behave</i> ? #YesAllWomen
@yesallwomen	a "cool story babe, now make me a sandwich" shirt doesn't break the school dress code. A girl's bra strap does. #yesallwomen
@maseko_sian	#YesAll Women because I still get ' <i>managed</i> ' when I get too <i>passionate</i> about violations [to] women's rights. If it was a man he'd be <i>charismatic</i> !
@wheresaddie	Because men don't text eachother that they got home <i>safe</i> . #YesAllWomen
@ElsBells_85	Because society tells girls to cover up, instead of telling men to control themselves. #YesAllWomen
@yesallwomen	because "I have a boyfriend" is more likely to get a guy to back off than "no," because they respect other <i>men</i> more than <i>women</i> .

Table 2a.

Key Term	Clusters
Women/woman	Alone Scared Pregnant Whore Managed Passionate
I	Dress
You	You
Men/man	Catch Behave Safe
Society	Girls Cover up Men Control
Respect	Men Women

Analysis

Table 2 lists tweets that discuss a general contrast between the lived experiences of men and women. These tweets typically explain how men and women are expected or allowed to act differently in a given situation. I identified the key terms **women** or **woman**, **I** and **you**, **men** and **man**, **society**, and **respect** based on their thematic significance within the text. Through a cluster analysis, I determined various key terms from this category to serve as the "god" and "devil" terms, respectively, for the overall movement. I equated women and woman as a single key term, since both are functioning the same way within the tweets. All of the tweets classified within the hashtag discuss male attitudes and behaviors and the resulting negative consequence for women. Women are consistently characterized as the victims, with men as the perpetrators.

Women was linked to *scared* and *alone*, referencing the fear many women feel when walking by themselves at night due to the possibility of an attack and their potential inability to defend themselves. Additionally, the words *pregnant* and *whore* were associated with **women**. These clusters reveal a historical mischaracterization of women and a discrepancy in the interpretation of female behavior in comparison to male behavior. Attributing this specific combination of words to **women** reveals a societal view that women who behave promiscuously are seen in a negative light. This stands in stark contrast to ways in which men are viewed for behaving this same way, as later evidenced by the clusters associated with **man** and **men**.

The words *managed* and *passionate* were also associated with the key word **woman**. Women have traditionally been stereotyped as more emotional than men. Thus,

the supposedly more grounded and reasonable men must often "manage" women when they become overly passionate and irrational.

I functions as a key word that refers to the female experience, since the rhetor of this specific tweet is positioning herself to identify as a woman; this was associated with *dress*. This cluster references the way women's appearances are policed in society. A common societal view is that when woman dresses in a manner deemed provocative or revealing, she leaves herself vulnerable and open to attack. Following an assault, a woman's manner of dress is often the first aspect of the crime to be scrutinized. A woman who dresses in revealing clothing and is then assaulted is often perceived to be "asking for it" due to her form of dress. Alternatively, the key word **you** refers directly to men and is associated with *behave*. Despite the fact that the perpetrator of sexual assault against a woman can likely be directly attributed to male behavior and actions, more often than not, it is the woman who takes the majority of the blame.

Man and **men** were treated as a single key word as the tweets that included either word reference the general male experience regardless of tense. The clusters that appear here are *catch*, *behave*, and *safe*. Each of these clustered words imply that men experience the world much differently than the typical woman. Referring to a previously examined cluster that appeared within the same tweet, the key term **woman** along with **pregnant** and **whore**, there is a clear contrast between the male and female experiences. Society often interprets male and female behavior much differently within a given situation. A woman who engages in what is deemed by others as promiscuous behavior is more likely to be viewed negatively than a man who acts in a similar manner. Additionally, the clustered word *behave* further reinforces the idea that it is male

behavior that must change in order to break the cycle of misogyny and harassment against women. The association of *safe* with **man** references a fundamental truth about male identity: as members of the typically stronger sex, men are less likely to face attacks and have a greater ability to protect themselves. Thus, the female experience inherently contains a greater opportunity for danger and a greater likelihood of being harassed or attacked.

This group of tweets also revealed the key word **society** along with *girls*, *cover up*, *men*, and *control*. These clusters reveal a societal expectation of women that is not aligned with that of men. In order to prevent an assault from occurring, *girls* are urged to "cover up" their bodies. This association implies that it is a woman's sole responsibility for avoiding an attack against them. The additional cluster acknowledges that society rarely holds men accountable for controlling their behavior.

The last key word, **respect**, is clustered with *men* and *women*. This association implies that there is a discrepancy in the ways in which men and women are treated. Men typically receive greater respect from those around them than women, which affects not only how they are viewed but how they are treated by those around them.

Table 3. Women’s Fear of Assault

User	Tweet
@nanglish	Because a lot of you are reading these and thinking “ugh yeah, we get it. Calm down. #YesAllWomen
@SophiaBush	I shouldn’t have to hold my car keys in hand like a <i>weapon</i> & check over my shoulder every few seconds when I walk at night #YesAllWomen
@KikiRazzle	#YesAllWomen For all the nights I’ve walked home with my keys poking out of my knuckles

@RepSpeier	Because women serving in the military shouldn't <i>fear</i> getting <i>raped</i> by their colleagues more than they fear the enemy #YesAllWomen
@_niallsgravity	Because girls shouldn't be <i>scared</i> to walk alone at night without their heart beating fast when they walk past a man #YesAllWomen
@Greytdog	#YesAllWomen because women shouldn't have to take self-defense courses just to walk safely to their car at night
@LauraLikesWine	Because I now wear shorts under dresses in crowded bars after being groped and even penetrated by unseen hands. #YesAllWomen
@ljbAMAFan	#YesAllWomen because we're taught to <i>fear</i> if we don't do everything "right" we asked for it if we got <i>raped</i> ."
@nitabelegu	#yesallwomen because apparently the <i>clothes</i> I wear is a more valid form of consent than the <i>words</i> I say."
@GrandesFirework	#YesAllWomen because we can't wear shorts in 90 degree weather at school because we'll "distract the boys and male teachers
@anissegross	#YesAllWomen because of nights where friends <i>confess</i> to having been <i>raped</i> as if it's just a part of life they expected.
@smegolego	#YesAllWomen because I was taught to scream 'fire' instead of 'rape' because it increases the chances of someone helping me.

Table 3a.

Key Term	Clusters
Keys	Weapon
Consent	Clothes Words
Alone	Women I
Girls	Scared
Friends	Confess Raped
Women	Fear Raped

Analysis

The tweets within Table 3 refer to the broader female experience, particular regarding the threat of a male attack. Key words, including **keys**, **consent**, **alone**, **girls**, **friends**, and **women**, reference an underlying fear that many women live with. The equation of **keys** with *weapon* refers to the tendency for a woman to carry her keys in a manner that allows them to be a potential weapon; additionally, associating **alone** with *women* and *I*, two cluster words that seemingly function the same since the collective rhetors are primarily women, further reinforces the point that women must often fear for their safety, particularly when by themselves at night. **Consent** was paired with *clothes* and *words*. The juxtaposition of the cluster words references the issue of consent in sexual situations. The argument presented here is that regardless of the way a woman is dressed, she must give verbal consent before a sexual encounter. An individual who fails to receive sufficient consent preceding a sexual encounter is guilty of sexual assault. **Girls** was paired with the key word *scared*, indicating a level of fear that members of the female sex live with. This notion is further reinforced by an additional cluster, that of **women** along with *feared* and *raped*. The underlying message expressed by the hashtag here is that yes, all women live in constant fear of being attacked. Lastly, **friends** was associated with *confess* and *raped*. The pairing of *raped* with this key word hints at the prevalence of sexual assault against women, while *confess* signifies a level of shame on the part of assault survivors. To confess means to reveal something previously hidden; the inclusion of this cluster word references the pervasiveness of a tendency towards victim-blaming that women must often deal with following an assault.

Table 4. Specific Experience

User	Tweet
@weepingwillow	because the fact that my body <i>matured</i> faster than the boys around me isn't an excuse to be sexually <i>assaulted</i> in 6 th grade
@jessismiles_	#YesAllWomen because even a taped confession <i>admitting to raping</i> me wasn't enough to put him in jail.

Table 4a.

Key Term	Clusters
Body	Matured Assaulted
Him	Admitting Raping

Analysis

The tweets classified within Table 4 involve the user communicating a specific situation where they were exposed to societal misogyny. **Body** appeared alongside the cluster words *matured* and *assaulted*. Associating *matured* with this particular key word implies that the rhetor had physically developed earlier than her peers. The inclusion of *assaulted* as an associative cluster word signifies that this woman has experienced sexual assault, with others attributing the attack to her physical appearance, as opposed to blaming her attacker. However, as the movement consistently argues, an individual's appearance is not a sufficient form of consent as proper consent must be verbally given, regardless of the fact that the reason for this woman's assault was seemingly out of her control.

The remaining cluster, pairing the key word **him** with the *admitting* and *raping* further reinforce the movement's message: that all women experience the effects of societal misogyny, while also arguing that this contributes to the persistence of rape culture in society.

Table 5. Message of the Movement

User	Tweet
@AdelaideKane	Not ALL men <i>harass</i> women. But ALL women have, at some point, been <i>harassed</i> by men. Food for thought. #YesAllWomen
@CofS_Foundation	Feminism isn't about making women stronger. Women are already strong. It's about changing the way the world sees that <i>strength</i> . #YesAllWomen
@BeingUncosmo	#YesAllWomen because opposing misogyny & patriarchal oppression is not "anti-male," it is <i>anti-hate, anti-violence, anti-rape</i> of all people.
@ohkarolle	Ask what you might be doing to contribute to <i>misogyny & everyday sexism</i> . Then ask how you might contribute to the inverse. #YesAllWomen
@annadeacetis	Unfortunately we have a lot of these stories. If you're tired of <i>hearing</i> them, imagine how tired we are of <i>living</i> them. #yesallwomen

Table 5a.

Key Term	Clusters
Men	Harass
Women	Harassed
Feminism	Strength
#YesAllWomen	Anti-hate Anti-violence Anti-rape
Everyday	Misogyny Sexism
You're	hearing
We	living

Analysis

Table 5 displays tweets that communicate the overall message of the #YesAllWomen movement, revealing the key terms: **men**, **women**, **feminism**, **#YesAllWomen**, **everyday**, **you're**, and **we**. Looking at the key terms **men** and **women** reveals a portrayal of males as the aggressors and perpetrators of misogyny and harassment directed towards women. The clusters that accompany these terms directly refer to male behavior towards women. Here, the key term **men** is associated with the word *harass*, while **women** is associated with *harassed*. These connotations indicate that the harassment is an act that is experienced by women and perpetrated by men. The association is made clear by the main idea expressed in this tweet: that all women have experienced harassment. The rhetor is making an implication that (some) men perform the action of harassment towards (all) women. These ideas express the rhetors' worldview through the verb forms associated with both key terms. The artifact claims that women are *harassed*, indicating an experience, whereas men *harass*, signifying an action. Thus, these women experience an action that is conducted by the men, an assertion that reinforces the overall message of the movement.

The key word **feminism** was linked with the word *strength*. The feminist movement is committed to gender equality on the basis that women are not currently treated as equal to men on many levels by society. This particular cluster further contextualizes the #YesAllWomen movement through this lens by presenting the argument that feminism is about illuminating female strength in order to achieve a balance between the genders. The implication here is that the goal is not to take any

power away from men, but instead to ensure all individuals hold an equal share of it. Within the #YesAllWomen movement, women are making the argument that has consistently been argued by feminists throughout history, but they are using new tools do so.

The underlying message of #YesAllWomen is further reinforced by the keywords **#YesAllWomen, everyday, you're** and **we**. **#YesAllWomen** was revealed as a key word due to its positioning as the subject in this particular tweet. The associative words included *anti-hate*, *anti-violence*, and *anti-rape*. It is clear that the movement is targeting men who display anti-women sentiments and behaviors. Yet, this cluster presents the notion that the movement is against hate or violence or rape of anyone, indicating that the overall campaign may not have focused solely on benefitting women, but on the wellbeing of all. **Everyday** further reinforces the movement's argument that all women experience the effects of *misogyny* and *sexism*. These are harmful attitudes and behaviors that all women must face the consequences of on a daily basis. Lastly, key words **you're** and **we** appeared in a tweet together, positioning women as the victims of behaviors performed by men. The rhetor uses **we** to collectively reference women, while **you're** refers to men. **You're** was linked to the word *hearing*, while **we** was connected to *living*. These clusters position women's lived experiences in the center as the rhetor is insisting that she and other women actually experience these issues, while men only have to hear about them. This positioning of women and men further presents support for the movement's message of an underlying hegemonic misogyny.

Evaluation

A cluster analysis of this particular collection of tweets from the #YesAllWomen movement indicates a societal view of women that is dehumanizing and ultimately reveals the rhetors' worldview of a misogynistic and gender-imbalanced society. Upon analyzing the tweets, I discovered a number of key terms and resulting clusters that reveal this societal discrepancy, as well as indicate the rhetors' collective motivation to educate the audience on this issue.

In my analysis, I ultimately identified the key words woman and man as the 'god' and 'devil' terms based on their prevalence within the tweets and significance towards the overall message of the collection. I argue they may be characterized this way due to the consistent positioning of all women as the individuals who experience misogyny, harassment, and violence and that of various men as the individuals who commit these acts. Throughout the text, the rhetors use language that communicates an imbalance of power between the genders, further reinforcing the rhetors' worldview of a misogynistic and gender-imbalanced society. These tweets argue that men traditionally hold greater power than women within society, often with devastating consequences for women. Within many situations, women are under the control of and at the mercy of the men. The rhetoric of these #YesAllWomen tweets express the notion that women have little to no power to control misogyny and resulting harmful behaviors that they experience from men. This lack of control for women over their own experiences is an extension of misogyny, as men are given the authority over women's experiences time and time again, often resulting in harassment or violence against them.

Although they vary in specific content, together these tweets deliver the same message to the audience: the issue of misogyny is ingrained and persistent in society and

has devastating effects on women's lived experiences. #YesAllWomen hashtag use provided a space for these women to share their stories, both as acknowledgements of one another's experiences and as support for the larger movement. The tweets analyzed here collectively argue that all women are familiar with sexual harassment, sexual assault, and/or gender discrimination, and they provide support for this argument by sharing personal experiences.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The rhetoric of #YesAllWomen began as a rhetorical response to a specific situation: the 2014 Isla Vista Shootings. The shooter, Elliot Rodger, had extreme views towards women. He categorically blamed them for his inability to gain female attention, acquire a girlfriend, and lose his virginity. His views on women's roles in society led him to commit his crimes. As he was directly fueled by his deep-seated misogyny, the #YesAllWomen movement became a means for open discussion of the various injustices women experience daily as a direct result of this misogyny, be it in the form of discrimination, harassment, or violence. The campaign began as a counter-testimony to Rodger's expressions of hate and violence.

I focused my study on a selection of tweets to help determine how Twitter was used within this campaign. Within this chosen artifact of study, the hashtag communicates to the audience the specific issue addressed by the rhetors: misogyny is faced by women everyday as a result of everyday male attitudes and behaviors.

These tweets are an example of "hashtag activism," or using a social platform to target a specific issue. The use of an open platform with a broad reach, such as Twitter, and the inclusion of a simple, yet attention-grabbing, hashtag allowed these women to collectively target a specific issue:

Although sparked by the misogyny-fueled killings at Isla Vista, #YesAllWomen quickly came to reference more than its originary event. The hashtag gained significance in its own right as a memetic disruption of dominant discourses denying the prevalence of misogynist violence in their assertions that shootings like Isla Vista and the so-called "Montreal Massacre" of 1989 are the rare and aberrant acts of mentally ill individuals. The hashtag #YesAllWomen asserts a counter-narrative to exceptionalist discourses by insisting that these spectacular tragedies are logical manifestations of a system of gender oppression which condones and facilitates male domination by normalizing gender violence and sexual entitlement. (Thrift, 2014, p. 1091)

Analyzing the collection of tweets reveals how participation in the movement allowed them to demystify the female experience by calling attention to real and harmful effects of commonplace male behaviors. Through their participation in the hashtag, these women were given an opportunity to "make everyday acts of misogyny and sexism eventful" (p. 1091). The movement's overall message is reinforced by the personal nature of these tweets, allowing them to collectively raise awareness of a real issue present in society.

#YesAllWomen was perhaps the most notable example of digital feminism, heralding a new era of using social media for activism and political communication. Much like past waves of feminism have, the tweets analyzed here illuminate the widespread issues of misogyny and the resulting societal mistreatment of women, but they do so using a new platform for discussion: Twitter. Digital feminism has seen

expansion in recent years, most well-known being the recent resurgence of #MeToo. Originally founded in 2006 by activists Tarana Burke, the initial 'me too movement' is similarly a call to action. This campaign asks society to support survivors of sexual assault and help put an end to sexual violence once and for all (Me Too Movement). Following the outing of notable Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein for sexual misconduct, harassment, and rape, the movement experienced a digital resurgence (Farrow, 2017). This not only indicates that the conversation on misogyny and sexual violence is ongoing, but further reinforces the rhetorical power of Twitter.

The 'me too movement' reemerged on Twitter in late 2017 as #MeToo. This campaign was not only an extension of the original movement, but also a notable example of digital feminism and hashtag activism. The trajectory of #MeToo has paralleled the #YesAllWomen movement as it addresses similar issues of misogyny and the sexual harassment, discrimination, and assault of women. #MeToo also uses Twitter as a rhetorical tool for furthering a conversation. Twitter users participating in the movement become rhetors reframing the conversation around personal experience. Within both campaigns, the tweets collectively function as a response by women using personal experiences with sexual harassment or assault as evidence for the claims being made by the larger movement.

Through the hashtag #MeToo, women are able to articulate that they, too, have experienced some form of sexual assault and that this was influenced by various attitudes and behaviors towards women that are traditionally deemed commonplace. Both of these movements use Twitter as a platform for educating audiences on a specific issue. Simply by sharing their stories, these individual users are able to transform into political rhetors.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

A cluster analysis of the tweets published within #YesAllWomen: A Collection revealed that the collective rhetors were using Twitter to argue the existence of hegemonic misogyny and a resulting gender imbalance of power that often has devastating effects for women. Although the #YesAllWomen movement began as a response to a specific event, the Isla Vista shootings, the tweets analyzed here ultimately exposed various everyday male behaviors as expressions of misogyny. Women across the country used a platform that was available to them, Twitter, as a means of raising awareness of an issue they consistently face.

Though this particular form of activism has not yet led to widespread societal change, it has successfully raised awareness of a very real issue and revealed the potential for Twitter to be used as a vehicle for social change. At the very least, these tweets have exposed how personal experience was integral to the campaign. The incorporation of personal narrative was eased by the conventions of Twitter. This indicates how the platform can be a means for meaningful political discourse aimed at real change. Twitter is a forum that is widely accessible to others, as well as a media that can be viewed by people who are not necessarily Twitter users. There is the potential to reach a wide audience, particularly when engaging in political rhetoric through the use of a specific hashtag. Thus, participation in an activist hashtag,

like #YesAllWomen, allows participants to use Twitter as a rhetorical tool to reach an audience. It transforms an individual from simply a Twitter user to a political rhetor.

The #YesAllWomen movement was successful in inspiring women to share their stories, giving them a chance to respond to, and even fight back against, everyday misogyny by allowing them a platform for open discussion of personal experience. Despite this accomplishment, and the revelation that Twitter can be used as a rhetorical tool in activist communication, it is also important to acknowledge the movement's shortcomings, notably the absence of queer voices in the campaign. The text revealed much about the cisgendered female experience but left little room for trans and queer women to in turn share their experiences with harassment and violence, despite the fact that these are issues these women are also forced to deal with. The movement may have been instrumental in illuminating a very real social issue, but it will remain inadequate in sparking any sort of social change until it addresses the experiences of all kinds of women.

Furthermore, as the researcher, I must acknowledge my own role as a rhetor. I have personally reviewed the literature and completed the analysis presented here. Therefore, it is imperative that I also recognize for the reader my own potential for influence. Much like Ella Cerón in her selection of tweets, I carry with me my own intentions that may consciously, or unconsciously, affect my analysis. As a cisgendered, liberal-leaning, Twitter-using, feminist woman, I have admittedly influenced my writings based on my own views. However, as much as I think it important to acknowledge my background for its potential to influence, I simultaneously recognize it as reinforcement for the relevance of my research and my

own role as an authority. I have a unique perspective in analyzing #YesAllWomen because I, too, have experienced the effects of misogyny in the form of sexual harassment and assault. This campaign is important to me, because it reflects my lived experiences too.

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