Personal Narratives: A Tactic for Micromobilization of Social Movement Supporters

"Everybody says 'take my word with a grain of salt'...at some point, if you throw enough salt into a soup, it will become salty"

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Abstract

Social movements serve as catalysts to significant turning points in history. In this study, I explore nuances in micromobilization in social movements through storytelling to extend the prior rich literature on persuasive factors. Micromobilization refers to tactics in social movements to influence people or groups of people towards the goal of the movement (D. A. Snow et al., 1986). I conduct research in the context of social media within United States social movements that center on an affected group of people with a collectively defined and distinguishable identity with the intent to sustain supporters as opposed to change opinion.

Through 21 semi-structured exploratory interviews with supporters of the Black Lives Matter, Stop Asian Hate, Me Too, and Love Wins/Love is Love movements, I found that some personal narratives can help to facilitate micromobilization towards a social movement when they reaffirm the reader's support in the movement or change a reader's perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors towards a movement.

I find that storytelling can be an effective tactic for micromobilization of supporters. However, not all personal narratives do so. To effectively sustain support, stories must provide a new perspective of the movement to the reader. Additionally, I find other factors that, though not required for sustaining support, enhance a personal narrative's ability to micromobilize supporters. Finally, I find that there are factors that can render the narrative ineffective or even reductive towards the movement. Overall, I contribute suggestions on how activists and advocates who share stories on social media with the purpose of contributing towards the movement can craft their story to effectively sustain supporters.

This work may be particularly relevant during the stage of a social movement life cycle where the movement is not visible to public consciousness and is in a state of suspension called abeyance (Taylor, 1989). When movements are in the abeyance state, they need to sustain support while gathering resources (Sawyers & Meyer, 1999). As activists and advocates continue to turn towards social media as a platform for social movement discourse and mobilization of new participants, this research indicates that personal narratives in social media can be effective in sustaining support in these movements.

Introduction

As catalysts for many of the greatest turning points in history, social movements are a central aspect of collective action. Social movements refer to the non-institutionalized, organized, collective efforts that work towards a common goal of bringing social, political, cultural, technological, environmental, or economic change (*Social Movements*, 2016). A movement's success, indicated by the resource mobilization theory, is constituted by its ability to collect resources and support through mobilization of individuals (McCarthy & Zald 1977). Micromobilization is referred to as the range of tactics at an interactional level used by individuals or small groups to mobilize individuals of small groups towards a collective goal of the movement (D. A. Snow et al., 1986).

Many scholars and activists witness social movements as waves of protest that rise to visibility, and eventually die back down as advocacy slows (Klandermans, 1986 as cited in Taylor, 1989). The movement was thought to become a blip in history. However, more recently, researchers like Taylor theorize that these social movements do not die down. Despite social movements' invisibility to the general public, they do continue to exist. During this period, movements go into a state of "abeyance" or temporary suspension where they will remain until they get enough resources to rise back into public consciousness (Taylor, 1989). Movements in states of abeyance, need to continue to sustain supporters and their values towards the social movement (Holland & Cable, 2002). These same movements continue to cycle and evolve over time. As society is continuing to become conscious of the affordances of the digital realm, people are turning towards social media as a platform for advocacy due to its ability to mass disseminate information and connect others from around the world (Kidd & McIntosh, 2016; Mundt et al., 2018).

Personal narratives are stories that depict the storyteller's own life and personal experiences (Laslett, 1999). In social movements, storytelling can be an effective way of connection. Knowing that storytelling and personal narratives can increase empathy (Manney, 2008), they have become a widely used as advocacy tactic by activists, advocates, and supporters to drive collective change in social movements. Stories are effective in driving collective change because they tap into cultural resonances and change the way people understand issues both in the physical realm and the digital realm (Gamson, 2004). Though personal narratives are used as advocacy tactics for opinion change during the mobilization stage and rise of the

movement's cycle, my study contributes to an understanding of personal narratives as an advocacy tactic for sustaining supporters (rather than opinion change).

From persuasion psychology, we understand that persuasive elements are found in the source of the information being credible and confident; and in the quality of the message being high (Gilovich et al., 2016 p.277-278). Persuasion literature in storytelling within social movements extends to contain additional persuasive qualities including immersion in the plot, ambiguity for active interpretation, and familiarity so that readers can understand stories with contexts they are familiar with(Polletta & Chen, 2012).

Drawing upon the connection between storytelling, social movements, and their transition to the digital realm, this research aims to investigate the role personal narratives can play in digital social movements within the United States. Specifically, this research aims to better understand how personal narratives can be used to sustain support, indicating that storytelling could be an effective tactic particularly during social movement's periods of abeyance.This exploratory study focuses on people who have encountered personal narratives about social movements and how they interact and respond to the stories that they read on their social media feeds. Throughout this thesis, I will use the terms 'story' and 'personal narrative' interchangeably. My definitions of them in this study can be found in the Methodology section.

My research seeks to address:
- How are personal narratives an effective tactic in sustaining supporters during social movements?
- How can personal narratives be leveraged to sustain supporters during states of abeyance for social movements?
    - What factors in personal narratives are effective in facilitating micromobilization by sustaining a reader's involvement in a social movement?
    - What factors in personal narratives are ineffective in facilitating micromobilization by sustaining a reader's involvement in a social movement?

This thesis focuses on the following social media movements: Black Lives Matter, Me Too, Love Wins or Love is Love, and Stop Asian Hate due to their recency in the United States and involvement with an affected group of people that have a collectively defined and distinguishable identity.

Through semi structured interviews with 21 participants from the US, I found that personal narratives can be used as a tactic to facilitate micromobilization of supporters in digital social movements. I found that some personal narratives can help to facilitate micromobilization towards a social movement because they 1) reaffirm the reader's support for the movement, 2) can shift a reader's perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors towards a movement. However, not all narratives can facilitate micromobilization of supporters. I find that for a narrative to contribute to the micromobilization process, it must provide new perspectives to the reader. This can be accomplished by sharing new information, emphasizing the ubiquity of experiences that are part of the movement, or showcasing a new context to reframe the movement.

I also find other factors, though not required, that would be additive in allowing the personal narrative to be used as a tactic for micromobilization. These factors include 1) readers developing a personal connection to the narrative, 2) readers becoming immersed in the narrative, 3) salient aspects in the plot, 4) perceived credibility of the storyteller, 5) and fact-based forms of storytelling. Finally, I find factors that make a narrative ineffective or reductive in facilitating micromobilization. These include 1) the narrative being mentally straining to read, 2) the tone of the narrative perceived as inflammatory or victimizing, 3) the tone of the narrative perceived as "whiny" or victimizing, 4) the plot not aligning with the reader's perception of the movement, 5) a perceived performative intention for sharing the narrative, 6) a discouraging narrative, and 7) a repetitive narrative.

This study extends prior research on persuasive factors from work in storytelling in social movements and persuasion psychology (Polletta & Chen, 2012; Gilovich et al., 2016 p.277-278; Cacioppo, Petty, & Sidera, 1982; Fiske, et al., 2002) by examining nuances in these persuasive factors within the context of 1) sustaining support (as opposed to opinion change), 2) social media, 3) specific social movements centering an affected group of people with a collectively defined and distinguishable identity (Black Lives Matter, Stop Asian Hate, Me Too, Love Wins/Love is Love). Additionally, this study expands upon these factors by contributing aspects found in personal narratives that can reduce the narrative's effectiveness as a tactic to micromobilize supporters. Overall, this research is particularly applicable to those who disclose personal narratives with the intention of advocating and contributing toward sustaining supporters in a social movement. It provides suggestions from which storytellers can shape their stories so that they effectively contribute to this process. My research is not meant to analyze or

define what a storyteller should or shouldn't say when disclosing content about their own experiences; nor does this study look at the perspective of the storyteller and the benefits or consequences they receive from disclosure. Rather, it is meant to understand how participants interact and respond to the stories that they read.

The digital sphere expands the opportunities for people to engage and partake in social movements. It provides a voice for underrepresented communities, and a way to amplify their narrative. My research creates opportunities for activists and advocates to better understand how their amplified narrative is perceived and heard.

Content warning: this study revolves around personal narratives disclosed in the Black Lives Matter, Stop Asian Hate, Me Too, and Love Wins/Love is Love movements and therefore has some intimate, graphic, and potentially triggering quotes.

Literature Review

In this section, I will discuss prior literature involving social movements, social media, and the role of personal narratives. I will elaborate on how they informed this study through understanding 1) definitions of social movements 2) recent social movements that focused on identity, 3) social movement cycles, 4) social movements turning to social media for mobilization, and 5) personal narratives as micromobilization tactics.

1. Social Movements

Social movements are the cornerstone of collective action and contribute to turning points in history. They are a non-institutionalized, organized, collective effort to bring about social, political, technological, environmental, economic, or cultural change (*Social Movements*, 2016). The change that social movements partake in involves categories of social conflict where there is a clear 'us' versus 'them' (Touraine, 1985). Snow, Soule, and Kriesi (2004, Chapter 1) state that social movements are defined as containing three or more of the following axes: 1) collective action, 2) a common goal of social change, 3) they are not institutionalization, 4) they contain collective self-organization, and 5) continuity of existence to some extent (Snow et al., 2004). Social movements function when they have enough resources. Based on the resource mobilization theory, a common determinant of a movement's success is through their ability to

collect resources and support through mobilization of individuals (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). Micromobilization refers to the various tactics that are used by people or small groups of people to influence people or small groups of people to the common goal of social change (D. A. Snow et al., 1986; Gamson et al, 1982:1-12 as cited in D. A. Snow et al., 1986; E. J. Walsh, 1981:3 as cited in D. A. Snow et al., 1986). Though social change can revolve around any social factors including the environment and technology, many social movements focus on identity and equal rights. This research builds upon social movement literature.

2. Recent Social Movements

There are several social movements in the United States that have occurred within the past few years focused on equal rights for marginalized groups. I choose to focus my study on these movements not only because they occurred recently, but also because they involve an affected group of people that can be collectively defined based on a distinguishable identity. In this study, I focus on the movements and interactions with these movements in the United States. The larger of these identity-based movements have centered around Black rights, Women's rights, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and/or questioning (LGBTQ+) rights, and more recently again related to Asian American rights due to harassment from the Covid-19 pandemic.

2.1 Black Lives Matter

The Black Lives Matter movement has roots in 2013 in the United States, in response to the murder of Trayvon Martin in 2012 by a White police officer (*A Brief History of Civil Rights in the United States: The Black Lives Matter Movement*, 2018) . Since then, the movement has centered around police brutality, but encompasses justice and equal rights to all Black people (Black Lives Matter, 2022). The movement began with a hashtag #BlackLivesMatter and continues to grow with spikes in 2014 with the murder of Michael Brown and Eric Garner, both killed by White police officers; and a more recent spike in 2020 with the murder of George Floyd (*A Brief History of Civil Rights in the United States: The Black Lives Matter Movement*, 2018). Founded by three Black women, their mission is to "eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes" (Black Lives Matter, 2022).

2.2 Me Too

The Me Too movement was started by Tarana Burke in 2006 with the intent to support and provide resources to those affected by sexual violence. The movement peaked in 2017 with the hashtag #MeToo (Burke, 2020) during the Weinstein cases when film producer, Harvey Weinstein, was accused of sexual harassment and assault (C. Walsh, 2020) . Actress Alyssa Milano instigated this peak when she tweeted "If you've been sexually harassed or assaulted write 'me too' as a reply to this thread" (Milano, 2017). The #MeToo went viral and the movement expanded, continuing to focus on justice and healing for sexual assault survivors. The movement is also affiliated with hashtags such as #survivorprivilege #theemptychair #whyIstayed and #yesallwoman, advocating for the similar cause of bringing justice to violence against women (Jackson et al., 2020).

2.3 Love Wins or Love is Love

LGBTQ+ movements have had several hashtags circulate including #lovewins and #loveislove. Social movements advocating for gay rights have continued since the Stonewall riots in 1969 after New York police harassed a gay club (History.com Editors, 2021). However, there has been no unified hashtag for the movement. There are also many movements that fall under the umbrella movement of gay rights including movements supporting transgender rights, pronoun usage, and marriage equality. Their overarching goal is justice and equal rights for individuals in the LGBTQ+ community. The #LoveWins hashtag is one of the more prominent hashtags as it was created by the Human Rights Campaign in 2015 around marriage equality (*VIDEO: Love WINS at the Supreme Court*, 2015). The Supreme Court's verdict on same sex marriage was a catalyst for #lovewins, making it go viral. Since then, the Human Rights Campaign has focused on continued justice and equality (*Equality for ALL Not for Some*, n.d.). More recently, transgender rights are coming to the forefront of media with hashtags like #girlslikeus and #transrightsarehumanrights

2.4 Stop Asian Hate

A more recent movement began in 2020 in the United States in reaction to Asians being harassed after the Covid-19 pandemic. Stop AAPI Hate is a group aimed at documenting anti-Asian hate incidents, and challenging anti-Asian racism and xenophobia (*Stop AAPI Hate: Documenting the Rise of Anti-Asian Hate*, 2022). The hashtag followed the rise of Covid-19 in

2020 and 2021 where social media users shared instances of assault on Asians with the hashtag #stopasianhate (Cheong, 2021).

Overall, these movements center around advocacy for human rights. The social movements have had several peak points where the hashtags were used. The movements stem from beliefs in identity-based equality and evolve in their campaign to tailor towards recent events. These recent social movements helped inform the scope of my study.

3. Social Movement Cycles

In her research about the American women's rights movements, Taylor develops a framework for understanding social movements broadly and their processes of continuity (Taylor, 1989). The traditional view of social movements states that they have a life cycle where they appear to rise to visibility and then die as advocacy slows (Klandermans, 1986 as cited in Taylor, 1989). However, recent social movement literature states that movements go through cyclical patterns defined by visibility of collective action to the public, and then go dormant such that they continue to exist, but are less visible (Sawyers & Meyer, 1999). This dormancy stage is a state of "abeyance" or temporary suspension when advocacy slows and movements lack resources to sustain themselves in public consciousness (Sawyer & Meyer, 1999; Taylor, 1989). This abeyance theory states that "social movements persist over long periods in various stages of mobilization, decline, or abeyance. During abeyance, movements sustain themselves but are less visible in interaction with authorities" (Sawyers & Meyer, 1999). Taylor used the Abeyance theory to explain that the American women's movement for example had two visible periods of the women's rights movements in 1945 and in the 1960s (Taylor, 1989), rather than these being two separate movements. These women's rights movements laid the foundation for subsequent connected movements such as #MeToo alluded by studies on recent feminist movements (Moeggenberg et al., 2018) .

When in states of abeyance, these movements must continue to sustain supporters and their values towards the movement (Holland & Cable, 2002). These movements continue to evolve in goals, advocacy tactics, and mediums for the movement. As we turn towards a more digital sphere, social media has become a medium that movements use for the ongoing mobilization of resources. When studying social movements, research tends to focus on aspects of mobilization and decline, rather than the stages of abeyance which are crucial to the prolonged

continuity of the movement (Holland & Cable, 2002). In this study, I focus on sustaining support as opposed to mobilization, indicating that my Findings can be applicable to movements in states of abeyance.

I did not choose the movements in scope based on their state of abeyance. In fact, the Stop Asian Hate and Black Lives Matter movement are arguably still in public visibility. However, when movements are in public visibility, those in the affected identity are more likely to share stories. In order to have enough participants with samples of personal narratives that they could recall and describe, I chose to select recent movements and learn the context of how personal narratives may be beneficial in stages of abeyance.

4. Social Movements Turning to Social Media for Mobilization

As discussed in Literature Review section 1, Resource mobilization theory allows us to attribute the success of a social movement by its resources (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). These resources can include knowledge, money, and support (Libretexts, 2021).

In the past, social media was used as a platform for organizing collective action for social movements when discourse was in the physical realm (Barisione, et al., 2017). Now, social media is rising as a platform not only for the collective organization but also for the discourse itself (Barisione et al., 2017). Recent studies have shown that political participation and collective action are amplified by social media platforms (Mundt et al., 2018; Kidd & McIntosh, 2016). Hwang & Kim (2015) state that people are more likely to participate in social movements due to their desire to maintain social capital. Barisione et al. (2017) shows that the increase in willingness to participate is met with convenience in participation through ease, cost, flexibility, and personalization towards the user. Using social media as a platform for a movement allows for the creation of a digital force through collective voice. They categorize this digital force as a 'digital movement of opinion' (DMO) which can be used to afford new forms of digital political participation (Barisione et al., 2017). Ease of participation also allows for scalability of the movement. Simply sharing a post can create connection and political action, and therefore strengthen the movement to broaden its impact (Mundt et al., 2018). Uniquely, social media allows advocates and activists to shape the story of the movement. The ability to have many posts with stories, statistics, solidarity, information, etc. and a collective hashtag creates an aggregated narrative and timeline to the movement (Yang, 2016). By taking discourse from a

physical arena to a digital arena, marginalized groups can use social media to reduce the power dynamic and even the playing field (Gamson, 2004 Chapter 11).

All of these traits of convenience, scalability, and narrative agency allow social media platforms to become areas of information dissemination and discourse (Barisione, 2017), thus allowing for potential mobilization of new activists. This research builds upon digital social movement literature and indicates a growing future in social movements on social media.

4.1 Social Media Affordances for Social Movements

As we switch from a physical to virtual environment for social movements, new obstacles play a role in an audience's perception of a social movement. Schrock (2015) defines affordances as the intersection of the presented qualities of the technology, and the qualities' perceived use. Social media provides a new affordance in multi-mediality where users can share information through photos, videos, text, audio, or a combination (Schrock 2015). Multi-mediality presents users an enriched absorption of information. Other affordances that social media provides include visibility, editability, persistence, association, portability, availability, and locatability (Schrock 2015), all which play a role on how users interact with content differently than they would in the physical realm.

Similarly, social media presents affordances for collective behaviors involving space for forums, tools for decision making, technologies for amplifying information, various forms of communication, and more as discussed in Sæbø, Federici, and Braccini (2020). Additionally, social media provides a way of organizing posts in a manner that is personally relevant to the reader due to social media algorithms. The purpose is to provide relevant and personalized content to a user in order to increase engagement on the platform (Van Dijck & Poell, 2013 as cited in Etter & Albu, 2021). The more users interact with content, the more they see related content (Etter & Albu, 2021). Therefore algorithms can play a role in how content is shown on media, and may change the context, framing, and potential impact of posts. These affordances and features will help to inform my study design by highlighting areas that differentiate social media and the physical realm.

5. Personal Narratives as Tactics for Micromobilization

Personal narratives are stories that depict the storyteller's own life and personal experiences as defined by Laslett (1999). Polletta et al. (2011) equate narratives as sequences of events with causal links, characters, and a meaning to be interpreted by the audience. Typically, stories play a role in linking sequences of events to make a point (Labov and Waletsky 1967 as cited in Polletta & Chen, 2012). They contain context, a plot, and provide an evaluation to explain the meaning or purpose of the story (Labov and Waletsky 1967 as cited in Polletta & Chen, 2012).

Personal narratives are a fundamental part of society and culture. They play a large role in the way that we communicate information and values from one person to another. Stories are effective in transmitting information because they allow readers to connect deeply and emotionally to the information (Zak, 2013). The emotional stimulation that stories present allows for a stronger impact because the listener is captivated, the information is better remembered, and neurochemicals are released in the brain eliciting deeper empathy (Manney, 2008; Zak, 2013). When actively engaged in and listening to a story, the listener's brainwaves become synchronized with the storyteller (Stephens et al., 2010). In cognitive science literature, this phenomenon is called "brain coupling" (Hasson, et al. 2012). The more aligned the brain waves, the stronger the connection, and the better the understanding. For brains to "couple" they need to experience "vicarious activations" through "seeing or hearing the actions, sensations or emotions of an agent trigger cortical representations in the perceiver" (Hasson, et al. 2012). This deep empathetic connection is used as the catalyst for collective change, tapping into cultural resonance and changing the way people understand issues (Gamson, 2004, Chapter 11).

In social movements, storytelling can be an effective way of connecting the storyteller and the audience. The dominant narrative is that of a White, cis-gendered, able-bodied, heterosexual man. Therefore, stories that fit outside this norm present a new perspective, causing a small disruption to the standard (Collins, 2015). This subtle, non-confrontational disruption succeeds because it does not raise defense. As Collins (2015) states "While other forms of activism may put people on the defensive, narratives do not. In this way narrative subtly sneaks in and overthrows our idea of the mythic norm". This research solidifies that personal narratives are an effective tactic for mobilization in social movements, though much of the research in storytelling and social movements is conducted in the physical realm.

5.1 Persuasive Factors in Messaging

Persuasive psychology utilizes the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) to understand how an audience processes information (Cacioppo & Petty, 1984). This model states that there are two systems by which our brain processes content. System 1 processes information through a peripheral or heuristic route (Gilovich, et al., 2016, p. 269). This typically involves our brain's more primal form of thinking focused on our automatic, intuitive, and emotional response (Kahneman, 2011). System 2 processes information through a central or systematic route. (Gilovich et al., 2016 p. 270). This typically involves a more deliberate and logic-based approach where the audience analyzes the content of the message (Kahneman, 2011). Most opinion change occurs when readers process information through the central or systematic route rather than a peripheral route in the ELM (Cacioppo & Petty, 1984).

Elements of a persuasive message focus on the source and quality of the message. Sources that are perceived as credible tend to be stronger at persuasion. Credibility plays an important role when the audience is processing the information deliberately and paying attention to the expertise and trustworthiness of the source. Certainty also plays a role in credibility. When the source of the message displays confidence, the audience is more likely to be persuaded (Gilovich et al., 2016 p. 276-277). Additionally, there is research to support that the identity of the source may play a role in persuasion. As understood by Hasson et al.'s (2012) work in brain coupling, the storyteller and audience form a relationship. Previous research shows people better identify with those of similar experiences (Suitor et al., 1995).

When analyzing the source of the content, a second model can also come into play: the Stereotype Content Model (SCM). This model states that when groups or individuals encounter others for the first time, they judge two characteristics: warmth and competence. This is evolutionarily used to anticipate threats from those in-group and out-group. Within a matrix, those who are low in competence and warmth tend to induce competition, whereas those with high competence and high warmth induce admiration (Fiske, et al., 2002).

Turning towards the persuasive aspects of messages, Gilovich et al., (2016 p.277-278) note that messages that are of high quality and contain saliency tend to be more impactful to a viewer. High quality messages appeal to the System 2 process of thinking by the central or systematic route and resonate with values of their audience (Cacioppo, Petty, & Sidera, 1982 as cited in

Gilovich et al., 2016). Importantly, this involves providing an explicit conclusion to the reader and a clear takeaway (Hovland, Lumsdaine, & Sheffield, 1949 as cited in Gilovich et al., 2016).

Additionally, researchers have found other persuasive factors more specifically within the context of storytelling and social movements. According to Polletta & Chen (2012), audiences understand stories in the context of stories they are familiar with. Therefore stories need to be similar to content that the audience comprehends, while still providing new information. In contrast to persuasive psychology, messages in stories that are explicit lose their effect (Saler & Rouner 2002 as cited in Polletta & Chen, 2012; Slater, Rouner, and Long 2006 as cited in Polletta & Chen, 2012). Elements of ambiguity in stories allows readers to "actively interpret" the meanings of the story and become more immersed in the narrative (Polletta 2009, Chapter 2 as cited in Polletta & Chen, 2012). Additionally, Green & Brock (2000) extend the ELM Model and suggest that stories are processed through a third system. In this system, readers process information by immersing themselves into the content (Green & Brock (2000).

Finally, (Polletta & Chen, 2012) explains the roles of struggle versus resilience in the persuasion of a story. Though people in the affected identity may prefer stories of resilience, "culture shapes strategy in the sense that abiding by the rules of cultural expression yields more calculable consequences than challenging them". She provides examples in her work that showcase when taking a "victim" approach may be beneficial for opinion change. In the example of domestic violence, the storyteller should consider aligning with the audience's cultural perception of her as a victim for audiences to absorb the story (Polletta & Chen, 2012). This indicates that a story may be more effective if the reader's perception of the character aligns with their pre-existing notion of the character. These persuasive factors focused on opinion change may be applicable to the micromobilization of supporters to movements in my study. This literature helped to shape my open coding and analysis.

Through prior literature at this intersection between social media, social movements, and storytelling, we know that personal narratives are used as tactics for micromobilization and opinion change by activists and advocates. I use persuasive psychology and storytelling factors in the context of social media within movements involving an affected group of people that can be collectively defined based on a distinguishable identity. I aim to answer:
- How are personal narratives on social media an effective tactic in sustaining supporters during social movements?

- How can personal narratives on social media be leveraged to sustain supporters during states of abeyance for social movements?
    - What factors in personal narratives on social media are effective in facilitating micromobilization by sustaining a reader's involvement in a social movement?
    - What factors in personal narratives on social media are ineffective or reductive in facilitating micromobilization by sustaining a reader's involvement in a social movement?

Methods

I conducted a semi-structured qualitative interview study with 21 participants. In this section, I discuss the screening survey and criteria to participate in the interview, the way that I recruited users to participate in the screening survey, my process for selecting participants, and my interview protocol. The IRB determined the study as exempt from ongoing review.

1. Screening Survey Qualifying Criteria

This study involved a semi-structured exploratory interview of participants that meet the following criteria: 1) they needed to be over the age of 18; 2) they needed to live in the United States; 3) they needed to speak English sufficient to participate in an interview in English; 4) they needed to be active on social media (this includes liking, commenting, or resharing content at least once a week for the past year); 5) and they needed to be able to recall and describe a personal narrative about any of social movements from their social media feeds in scope. (If possible, participants were asked to screenshot without identifiable information or to send a link to the personal narrative.) In the fifth requirement participants were asked to provide a brief summary of a personal narrative that they have seen.

Participants were selected after completing a screener survey. The screener survey provided to potential participants can be found in Figure 2: Screener Survey in the Appendix.

2. Recruitment

To recruit a diverse range of participants that accurately met the screening criteria, the study primarily utilized UserInterviews, a service providing a database of research participants for

interviews and surveys. In addition, social media channels (Twitter, Facebook, and Linkedin), emails, and flyers with QR codes were used as a secondary recruitment strategy. The goal of these recruiting methods was to get a diverse distribution of participants in ages, races/ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, education levels, and income levels of participants who fit the screening criteria.

The screener survey originally was hosted on Qualtrics and shared organically through social media platforms, email, and flyers. However, though there were 61 responses, only 2 participants met the criteria. Many people who filled out the screener survey brought news articles or stories that did not match the definition provided in the survey, could not confidently describe or recall the narrative required for in-depth discussion in the interview, trolled the screener survey, or did not meet the demographic qualifying criteria. For the remaining participants, I used UserInterviews to recruit. A total of 150 people filled out the survey, from which I selected 19 to interview if they 1) met the qualifying criteria, 2) could recall and describe a personal narrative to discuss during the interview, and 3) if their narrative allowed for a consistent number of movements to be covered in the study. I wanted at least 5 stories per movement. All participants who were invited to the interview participated in the interview, apart from four people who canceled the interview and three people who scheduled the interview but did not show up. Participants who completed the interview were compensated for their time with a $20 gift card.

2.1 Definition of Personal Narratives

Personal narratives are stories that depict the storyteller's own life and personal experiences (Laslett, 1999). In my screening survey and interview protocol, I defined personal narratives to participants as:

> First-person stories or personal experiences (e.g "this is what I went through…").
> Humans of NY or other storytelling pages on social media include examples of such
> personal narratives. This includes a narrative that someone has shared regarding their
> experiences affiliated with the movement.

These are not stories that the participants themselves have written, these are stories that they have consumed. Stories in all forms were acceptable. Additionally, they could take the form of a video, text, text with a photo, etc. as long as they met the criteria of a personal narrative. The

narrative did not have to explicitly include the hashtag or the name of the movement but must have been related to the movement. These stories were salient to the participant for them to recall and discuss, and were specifically chosen by the participant, out of all that they may have read, to bring to the interview. Additionally, all participants selected 'yes' in the screener survey to the question: *"Did this personal story(s) leave any sort of impression or perception on you? Such impressions can include a change in your participation, perception, knowledge, or attitude towards the movement or any other impact you associate with encountering these stories."* Therefore, these stories made an impression or impact on the viewer. They served as a touchpoint, reconnecting the participant and sustaining their support towards the movement. I use the terms 'story' and 'personal narrative' interchangeably throughout the paper.

2.2 Definition of Social Media Platforms

In the screener survey, there was a requirement that the participant must be active on social media. This meant they engage (liking, re-sharing, posting, commenting, etc) with content on their social media platforms at least once per week for the past year. The definition of social media platforms was left to the participant. However, the screener survey provided options including: Youtube, Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, Twitter, Twitch, Snapchat, Reddit, Discord, Other. These options provided fall in line with Carr and Haye's definition, "social media are Internet-based, disentrained, and persistent channels of masspersonal communication facilitating perceptions of interactions among users, deriving value primarily from user generated content". (Carr & Hayes, 2015).

2.3 Definition of Movements in Scope

The research focused on personal narratives from the following movements: Black Lives Matter, Stop Asian Hate, Me Too, and Love Wins/Love is Love. These movements were chosen because they occurred recently, and importantly, they involved an affected group of people that could be collectively defined based on a distinguishable identity. This allowed for consistency in type of social movement, and collective action towards equal rights (unlike other movements like #wearamask that focused on a social protocol as opposed to a distinguishable identity's demand for equal rights).

3. Participant Selection

Participants were selected for the interview if they matched all the criteria, including their ability to explain their selected personal narrative to the extent appropriate where they could discuss and reflect during the interview.

Participants selected from the screener survey were contacted for an audio recorded virtual interview. Only 4 of the chosen participants shared the link to the post with the narrative. All the storytellers' profiles were public, but neither the storyteller nor the full story is disclosed in this research. One participant copied and pasted the story anonymously in the screener survey. The rest of the participants did not share the original story. Once the data was collected, the audio recordings were transcribed using Rev, a transcription service. From the interview, participants' quotes and responses were anonymized and aggregated during analysis. The only personally identifiable information collected was participants' email address, which was only used to contact them to set up the interview and send their incentive.

3.1 Interview Participants

I interviewed 21 participants for the study of whom 13 identified as a woman and six as a man; and two as nonbinary or gender queer. This makeup also contained 13 people of color and eight people who identified as White. There were nine people who identified as part of the LGBTQ+ community. One participant brought more than one story to discuss, and there were several participants whose stories were part of more than one movement. There were five participants who brought personal narratives related to the Love Wins or Love is Love movement, nine participants who brought personal narratives related to the Black Lives Matter movement, five participants who brought personal narratives related to the Stop Asian Hate movement, and five participants who brought personal narratives related to the Me Too movement. A summary of the participant demographics is listed in Table 1. A complete table of the participants and the personal narratives they brought to the interview can be found in the Participants Summary table in the Appendix.

Though this study originally was intended to include any person who had read a personal narrative related to a digital social movement, all participants at least passively supported the movement.

Table 1: Demographics of Participants

ID	Gender	Race	Sexuality	Movement of Narrative
P1	Woman	Black	Straight	Love Wins/Love is Love
P2	Woman	Asian	Straight	Stop Asian Hate
P3	Woman	Mixed	N/A	Me Too
P4	Man	Black	Straight	Stop Asian Hate and Black Lives Matter
P5	Woman	Hispanic	Straight	Stop Asian Hate
P6	Woman	White	Straight	Black Lives Matter
P7	Non Binary	Hispanic	LGBTQ+	Love is Love/Love Wins
P8	Woman	Black	LGBTQ+	Black Lives Matter
P9	Woman	White	LGBTQ+	Black Lives Matter and Stop Asian Hate
P10	Woman	White	Straight	Love Wins/Love is Love
P11	Man	White	Straight	Love Wins/Love is Love and Black Lives Matter
P12	Woman	Black	LGBTQ+	Stop Asian Hate
P13	Woman	White	N/A	Me Too
P14	Man	Asian	LGBTQ+	Me Too
P15	Man	Black	Straight	Black Lives Matter
P16	Gender queer	White	LGBTQ+	Black Lives Matter
P17	Woman	White	LGBTQ+	Me Too

P18	Woman	Hispanic	LGBTQ+	Love Wins/Love is Love
P19	Woman	Middle Eastern	Straight	Black Lives Matter
P20	Man	White	LGBTQ+	Black Lives Matter
P21	Man	Asian	Straight	Me Too

3.2 Interview Protocol

The interview itself contained four main components: 1) learning about the participant's social media usage; 2) understanding digital social movements in their feed, as well as their general attitude, perceptions, and participation towards these movements; 3) discussing the personal narrative that they recalled and its impact on them, why it impacted them, and how it impacted them (any change in perception, attitude, and behavior); 4) showing them two vignettes from the movement related to the narrative they brought, in order to better understand how other such narratives might impact the participant. The Interview Protocol can be found in Figure 3 Interview Protocol in the Appendix.

4. Vignettes

Vignettes were used during the interview process to gain a more insightful understanding of factors in narratives that can stand out to a reader and make it more impactful. These vignettes were based on many true stories related to the movement. Through previous projects, I had reviewed and documented many such stories, and therefore was knowledgeable on narratives shared. Being aware I was not in several identities that were affected by the movements in my scope, I worked to be conscious of syntax and tone to reflect those identities and experiences accurately and genuinely. In the Vignette Fabrication section, I will further discuss how I crafted the vignettes with this inspiration.

When deciding to use vignettes, I considered alternative options including using stories that those within the community posted (with their consent). However, this may have posed concerns towards the storyteller's protection and anyone referenced or alluded to in the story. It also had the ability to have unintended and unforeseeable consequences as these narratives come from social movements with vulnerable groups. Such consequences could include

unintentionally outing people or broadcasting intimate details. Additionally, with the specificity of factors that I wanted to pose in the vignettes, it was challenging to find controls that had factors based on concepts from literature.

4.1 Vignette Fabrication

To create my vignettes, I used the ethical fabrication process of creating "composite accounts", defined as "a straightforward activity of selecting representative elements from the data set and composing a new original that is not traceable to the originals" (Markham, 2012). The data set that these representative elements came from included observations from stories that I collected through @studentsofumich, #herengineering, and other journalism-related projects where I was listening, documenting, and collecting the stories, as well as from other storytelling accounts that I interact with such as @humansofny, @Blackatmichigan and @thekoreanvegan. Two-thirds of the focus during the interview was on the stories that the participants brought from social media. The remainder time was used on the vignettes, allowing for a hybrid of real narratives presented in the movement as well as vignettes that were ethically fabricated. Participants were shown both vignettes related to the same social movement of the narrative that they brought to the interview. If they brought more than one narrative, or the narrative covered more than one movement, they were shown all the vignettes of the social movements that were covered.

Throughout the interviews, I was conscious that the vignettes had potential to serve as triggers to some participants. At the beginning of the interview, they were told that they had the ability to stop or pause the interview at any time. Additionally, if the participant appeared emotionally affected by the social movement, I reminded the participant that we could stop at any time. However, no participants needed to stop.

I created 8 vignettes, with two per movement. I was cautious to not make these vignettes an A/B test, but rather a chance to explore what aspects made some stories more impactful than others, and learn how participants made sense of stories. These vignettes highlight narratives with:
- Differing levels of emotion and detail in order to elicit varying levels of reader immersion. Research by (Green & Brock, 2000; Polletta & Chen, 2012) indicates that stories are more effective when readers can immerse themselves in the plot (discussed in more detail in the Literature Review section 5.1)

- Differing levels of ambiguity since literature suggests that readers want to form their own meaning or conclusions from the narrative (Saler and Rouner 2002 as cited in Polletta & Chen, 2012; Slater, Rouner, and Long 2006 as cited in Polletta & Chen, 2012) (discussed more in detail in the Literature Review section 5.1).

- Differing focuses on the aspects of struggle versus resilience since storytellers are expected to provide familiar images of victims to align with cultural understandings of the aggressions that those in the affected identity face (Polletta & Chen, 2012) (discussed in greater detail in the Literature Review section 5.1).

Intentionally, these vignettes were ethically fabricated from pre-existing stories following Polletta & Chen's (2012) statement that audiences understand stories by placing them in context with stories they have heard before. These vignettes were reviewed by my advisor, as well as peer reviewed by three people who were active on social media during the movements. This ensured that I was not inaccurately or inauthentically representing experiences that one may face regarding these movements, and that the vignettes fit into stories they are familiar with through the movement. The vignettes used for each movement are listed in the Appendix Figure 4.

5. Analysis

I took a grounded theory approach and conducted thematic analysis in order to understand and delineate themes of how participants perceived and interacted with the narratives that they brought to the interview. After conducting interviews that varied from 30-90 minutes in length, I transcribed the audio recordings to code and categorize the themes I detected. I coded primarily based on my aggregated observations from the interviews. Additionally, I used literature to support some codes. This literature included Polletta & Chen's (2012) "Narrative and Social Movements" to develop codes on a participant's immersion in the narrative, familiar narratives to the participant, participants wanting to come to their own conclusions, tones of strength, and tones of victimization. Additionally, I utilized Mackie and Queller's (2000) work to create codes related to trait similarity and group membership. Finally, Hasson et al.'s (2012) research on storytelling and empathy informed my codes related to empathy, humanization, and emotion in the story. Thus, I created most codes through inductive reasoning informed by patterns in the interviews and some codes informed by literature.

In order to visualize my data, I created an affinity diagram with my codes. I grouped and connected the codes into buckets to formulate themes; and then categorized my themes into broader overview categories. My affinity diagram went as follows: codes> grouped codes> themes> broad categories. The broader categories included aspects about social movements in social media, how participants come across the stories in their social media feeds, why the narrative left an impact, what impact did the narrative lead, what the outcome of that impact was, and how this story's impact affected the movement as a whole. With this organization of my data, I was able to interpret and find patterns in my data.

6. Limitations

Limited by Choice of Movements

My selection of the movements was not based on the movement's state of abeyance. In fact, the Stop Asian Hate and Black Lives Matter movement are arguably still publicly visible. However, when movements are in public visibility, those in the affected identity are more likely to share stories. I selected recent movements so that my participants had samples of personal narratives that they could recall and describe for the study. I am assuming that the narratives were impactful to the participants without the context of the movement; and that these findings may translate to states of abeyance when the movement is not publicly visible but readers have these narratives in their feed. People sharing their experiences during the movement typically still have similar experiences and can share their narratives regardless of the movement being in public consciousness.

6.1 Limited by the Size of the Interview Sample

This was an interview study with 21 participants. Therefore, it was limited by the reflections and observations of a small sample size. Within this small sample, I tried to recruit from diverse backgrounds and obtained participants who were of a various range of sexual orientation, gender, and race. However, my findings are expectedly limited by my study sample.

6.2 Limited by Participant's Conscious

This was a qualitative interview study, meaning that the data collected was the observations and reflections of the participants. Though this is a typical aspect of qualitative research, it is likely that stories had further unconscious impacts (attitude, perception, or behavioral change) that

participants may not have articulated or even been aware of. I made every effort to ensure the questions posed in the interview were intentional, allowing the participant to reflect and recall their experiences. I was deliberate in my choice of words when asking questions, made every effort to establish rapport, and intentionally gave enough time for participants to reflect and recall their experiences. Additionally, the interview protocol was pilot tested with 5 colleagues of different ages, races, and genders to solidify my verbiage before conducting the interviews.

6.3 Vignette Opportunities for Future Research

Vignettes allowed participants to consider alternative aspects of a narrative that may be impactful to them. However, the vignettes created did not encompass all aspects of storytelling. They simply posed an extended sample beyond the narrative that the participant brought. Therefore, future research might consider other various facets of narratives that may contribute towards their micromobilization in the movement.

6.4 Researcher Positionality

These interviews were done over a video or phone call. Therefore, the participants could see my appearance and presentation. My visible identities of presenting as a woman of color played a role in how participants responded to some of the questions. There were several participants who were very conscious of my identity and made comments such as "I'm not trying to piss you off", or came across as overcompensating for the (lack of) diversity in their lives. Participants may have altered their responses after acknowledging my identity or had a level of censorship when discussing these movements. They may have chosen to take a more supportive stance, or censored their less supportive ideologies of the movement. Social desirability bias likely occurred throughout the interviews and was particularly evident in one of the interviews when the participant went out of their way to showcase the diversity of people in their lives. Additionally, there was a participant who asked me where I was from in efforts to understand my background. There were several participants where I had to remind them that the interview was a judgment-free zone and that they could share what they thought when they were hesitant. My awareness of participants' perception of my identities may have also affected how I engaged with participants in the interviews even as I actively strived to maintain a neutral unemotional stance. I was sensitive to how I reacted to their statements and conscious, especially with the participants who outwardly acknowledged my identity in some form.

Findings

The study's findings suggest that personal narratives can be used as a tactic to facilitate micromobilization to sustain social movements over time. As stated in the Literature Review, micromobilization refers to the various tactics that are used by people or groups of people to influence people or groups of people toward the common goal of social change in a movement (D. A. Snow et al., 1986). In this case, personal narratives facilitate opportunities to connect people to movements in order to sustain support. This qualitative study contributes an in-depth analysis of personal narrative traits that can aid in micromobilization in contrast to traits that may cause these narratives to be ineffective tactics. In this section I will cover how personal narratives can facilitate micromobilization of social movement supporters. Next, I will discuss factors that are needed for a narrative to positively aid micromobilization, factors that can strengthen a narrative's ability to facilitate micromobilization but are not required, and factors that will negatively impact a narrative's ability to aid micromobilization of supporters. To follow along with supporting examples from the interviews, please refer to the Participants Summary table found in the Appendix for a summary of my participants, their disclosed identities, and an outline of the narrative they read.

1. Personal narratives can be used as a micromobilization tactic during a social movement

My qualitative interviews with supporters of social movements showed that personal narratives and storytelling can be used as a tactic to micromobilize supporters towards the goals of a movement. In this section, I will discuss how these narratives sustain viewer's support, and therefore micromobilize participants by 1) reaffirming the reader's support in the movement and 2) changing a reader's perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors towards a movement. I will conclude this section by discussing the mounting impact of viewing narratives. Each individual narrative did not drastically change a viewer's opinion in convincing them to support or not support a movement. However, my study confirmed that impact from narratives accumulate, contributing to a change in perception, attitude, or behavior towards the movement.

1.1 Personal narratives re-affirm the reader's support towards a movement

Most participants in the study stated that the narratives they brought to the interviews re-affirmed their beliefs in the movement and allowed them to continue supporting the movement. For example, P15, who identified as a Black man, read a Black Lives Matter narrative about a student being racially profiled and denied a laptop from the school library. The worker didn't believe he was a student, even after showing ID. P15 commented, "*I was thinking of the movement as I saw that post, so it just really had a feedback effect where it just related all the concepts that you learned from the movement. This event, you could pull out those connections and just relate it back to it* [the movement].*".* This statement is significant because it shows that he was able to relate the narrative to the broader movement, reaffirming his understanding and beliefs towards the movement.

Another example of this is P10, a straight White woman, who read a Love is Love or Love Wins vignette about someone having to choose between their sexuality and being accepted by their family. When asked about how it affected her behavior towards the movement, she said " [it would] *just reinforce it* [her behavior] *and thinking about these types of stories just makes me think one day, if I am a mom, to be a safe space and let my children be who they are. Because I just think it's sad that so many can't do that."* The narrative served as a connection between her and the movement because it reinforced the movement's importance and pushed her to reflect on her allyship.

Finally, P19, a straight woman of color, made a comment about seeing posts related to social movements in general:

> *"I mean, they made me sad, and angry, and heartbroken to be honest. Kind of just anger, just all around anger that these things are happening in the past, because we didn't have social media, everyone was kind of turning a blind eye to it, and not realizing that these things are happening, and they're happening every day, and they're happening all around us, and it's real. Especially with myself, I would tell people like, 'Oh, these things are happening to me, people are being racist to me. I experience this happening at the supermarket, at school.' And they're like, 'Oh, no, that doesn't happen. Racism isn't real. Racism is over.' But then you see posts like that, and it's validating, like, 'See, I told you. It actually does happen,' you know? And now more people are aware of it."*

As P19 is highlighting, hearing personal narratives related to social movements is a reminder that inequities exist, even if they are invisible to others. Stories that she reads validate her experiences and re-affirm her beliefs in the movement.

These narratives serve as touchpoints, nudges, and reminders that validate and affirm the reader's beliefs about the movement. Consistent re-affirmation from reading personal narratives on social media connects the participant back to the social movement and serves to sustain the participant's support to the movement.

1.2 Personal narratives can change a reader's perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors towards a movement

Apart from personal narratives providing reaffirmation to readers, they can also cause the reader to shift in their perspective, attitude, or behavior towards a movement. In this section I will discuss how narratives can 1) allow participants to introspect and reflect on their contribution towards the movement, 2) push a reader to learn more about the movement and educate themselves, 3) create conversations for readers to have with others, and 4) showcase a need for active behavioral changes. This shift in the reader's perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors towards a movement keeps them engaged and connected to the movement, thus micromobilizing them and sustaining their support.

1.2.1 Personal narratives can allow readers to introspect and reflect on their contribution to the movement

Some of the personal narratives reminded participants of their own experiences. For P11, a straight White man, while reading a narrative from his bisexual Black friend who shared his experiences as a marginalized individual and coming to terms with his sexuality, P11 remembered instances where he remained a silent bystander when he could have reacted or intervened:

> "*It folded into my own personal experience seeing those things in the locker rooms in the Air Force, experiencing what good old boy rooms are like, and things like that, so it related and it jived with my own personal experience. And seeing the other side of that where he's been on the receiving end of it was just sort of humbling, harrowing,*

disappointing in myself partially but also for all of the back patting that we do as a society saying, oh, everything is all better now."

He continued:

"*And I didn't say anything at the time [in the Air Force locker rooms], I was just kind of in my own little nook dealing with my own stuff and just like, okay, I'm going to put my uniform on and get the hell out of here. And I should have spoken up and I was regretful of that*"

The stories that P11 read about his friend's perspective reminded him of the times where he was on the other side of the situation, and forced him to reflect on his regrets in being a bystander. It made him conscious of his impact in the movement and sustained his support. In Findings section 3.1.3, I will discuss how P11 and other participants' personal relationship to the storyteller may also play a role in the story's impact to the participant.

Furthermore, after reading a vignette about the Love Wins or Love is Love movement where someone was discussing their struggles to come out, P11 continued to reflect on his allyship in the movement:

 "*I would do two things [after reading this narrative], I would start looking up that sort of allyship, how to be, all of these words are so washed now because they've been mocked and derided and overused, they've become cliches, how to become a safe space or a safe person for people to talk to and share with, wanting to be a sound board or a sound check, is what I use a lot, for people that are going through this so that they have somebody to talk to. Because in my vantage point, from my perspective, I see a narrative like this- what I want to do is, I can donate money to loved ones, I can put material effort, I can go to protests and Pride parade and what have you. But being able to be somebody that's emotionally, intellectually available to talk about these sorts of things to provide mutual aid in the leftist language for it, that's what this person seems to be calling for.*"

Another example of a narrative allowing a participant to reflect was P19, a Middle Eastern woman. P19 watched a video of a young Black girl wanting to grow up to look like a White

Disney princess. This little girl thought she would be blonde like her friends, and the video showed her mother telling her that she would grow up and still be Black, but Black and beautiful. This video made P19 reflect towards the future and how she wants to raise her own children:

> "*It made me think of the way that I want to raise my children in the future. That I'm immediately, from day one, going to just remind them that they're beautiful the way that they are, and maybe just expose them to media that shows characters and actresses that look like them, and toys that look like them and things like that, just so that they don't get that idea from when they're a child that they're supposed to look a certain way, instead of looking just the way they are, because that's the way that God made them, and that's perfect, you know?"*

This story pushed her to reflect on her potential allyship to her future children, and reminded her of the importance of the movement.

These narratives forced the participants to think beyond the events in the plot, and connect the stories to their life. Furthermore, they allowed the reader to formulate how they could or should contribute to the movement. This active reflection connected participants to the movement, and worked to micromobilize them as resources.

1.2.2. Personal narratives can push readers to learn more about the movement

After reading narratives, some participants actively searched for other content related to the stories and movements. After watching a narrative regarding the violent happenings caused by the police at Black Lives Matter protests from the perspective of a makeshift post medical worker, P20, a White man, stated:

> "...*after seeing how bad it was for protestors, I started looking into it more and seeing a lot of posts about how protestors can protect themselves, whether it be from the tear gas or protecting their identities, and then* [he started] *sharing those kind of things to anyone who might be going to the protests."*.

He actively sought out more information to better educate himself and understand the protesting environments. Because participants were searching for this content, their social media accounts would algorithmically show more posts related to the movement.

Similarly, after coming across a Me Too narrative on Tiktok about a young girl who was sexually assaulted by her father, P17 said *" I did start interacting more* [with content related to the movement]*, yes. Because I was Googling it, so I think it was showing up on my feeds more, different stories and such. I don't know. I think computers are all connected, and I Googled a lot about sexual abuse and stuff after that. I Googled her name. I was trying to find her dad. I was invested."*. By learning more about the movement, participants' feeds both intentionally and unintentionally (though social media algorithms) allowed them to be more immersed and up-to-date on the happenings of the movement. Participants learning more about the movement were actively engaged in information, context, and in how they could contribute. Thus, though they were already supporters, the narratives pushed them to get further involved in the movement.

1.2.3. Personal narratives can create conversations for readers to have with others

The personal narratives that the participants read about the movements provoked conversations. For example, P13, a White woman who read a narrative about a paralegal being harassed in the workplace, persuaded her to consider talking to her children about the Me Too movement, "*I think I've thought more about possibly talking about things like that. I know I've talked about it to my daughter probably ad nauseam. My son, he's pretty young. But being able to open up more… it's healthy to talk about things, so probably I've been exploring that as well.*" These conversations contribute to the movement and help to sustain and strengthen support by allowing readers to converse and hear others' perspectives, ruminate, and reflect.

In a similar fashion, after seeing many Black Lives Matter protest related stories, P20, a White man, would share the stories he heard with his co-workers since, "*none of them had really actually looked into the movement itself or anything so any time it was brought up, a lot of times they'd be talking about the property damage, and I'd tell them about the stories that I'd heard…".* He was able to use these narratives as a source of information and contribute to workplace discussions. Though we cannot be sure this changed any of his colleague's opinions, it is evident that he became more willing to have these conversations after seeing the narrative that he brought to the interview.

P6 even has an activity where she shares and discusses stories in the evening with her husband, "*This is what I do in the evening is I look at that* [Twitter stories]*, my husband watches*

TV and I'm watching TV too and I'm doing that. I'll stop the TV and I'll tell him what's going on, 'Here, watch this video or let me read this tweet to you,' and I'll read it and he'll be like, 'What the hell is all that about?' And he'll have a reaction. We'll discuss it for a few minutes.". Discussing these narratives provides active reminders of these movements' existence and facilitates further education through discussion. This gives readers more touch points and immersion into the movement itself.

1.2.4. Personal narratives can showcase a need for active behavioral changes

Some of these stories nudged users to actively change their behavior in protest. For instance, P15, a Black man, stopped checking out laptops from his university store after reading the narrative he brought. HIs narrative involved a student being racially profiled and denied a laptop from the school library because the worker didn't believe he was a student, even after showing ID: *"I probably won't check out a laptop from that place anymore. I'll probably go to one of the other computer locations… If I were to go there, I would think about that event and I would feel uncomfortable, so I probably just wouldn't go there."* This story actively changed a behavior that he would have normally done for the purpose of his own comfort as a Black man, but also as a minor form of protest and solidarity with the movement.

After reading many stories about sexual assault, P21 actively stopped consuming content that portrayed survivors as "attention seekers", " *What I was watching at the time, I didn't watch that anymore. It was news, which was inherent* [filled] *with biases that were like being the most ridiculous stuff that they were saying. And I was like I would just be watching it. They'd always be blaming the victims and saying like, 'This person is just trying to ruin a person's life.' And it would be by a woman and it would be them saying that this woman is not trustworthy and a lot of other stuff. So I don't want consume that kind of media or media with biases in general. So it's definitely changed my behavior."* Though at the point of viewing the narrative that he brought to the interview, he was already a supporter of the movement, he became more critical of the content he was consuming and changed his sources of information.

These minor behavioral changes reflect active participation in the social movements and are clear examples of how personal narratives can serve as tactics to micromobilize supporters.

1.3 Stories adding up

More than anything, these stories serve as micro nudges and micromobilization tactics that accumulate to bigger impacts. Though most participants did not drastically change views after reading these stories, P16, a White gender queer lecturer at a university, commented:

 "...*after seeing a hundred posts like this, because I have seen a hundred posts like this, that probably has changed my behavior. It probably has made my efforts to teach in a more social justice theory way stronger, because I've seen a hundred posts that are like this.*"

They continued, specifically about the Black Lives Matter movement:

 "...*from seeing a hundred posts like this* [their narrative about the Black Lives Matter movement]*, it's made me more open I think to Black people and BIPOC people that choose to look more casual in professional, safe spaces, for example, because... More often than about their clothes, they talk about their hair or wearing a do-rag or something like that. But I think that because I've read so many things like this. Before I think I was trained to think that looking like that is less professional than looking very dressed up or something. But now I think because I've seen this so many times, if a Black person, a BIPOC person wants to reclaim their right to look not dressed up, I totally respect that. And I will stand up for them if anyone has a problem with that in a professional setting, I know that that's a reclamation that's happening.*"

This quote goes to show how the weight of accumulated stories allowed them to find better ways to support their students and those around them. Though they were already a supporter, these stories collectively educated them on the movement.

P6, a White woman, read a narrative about Black woman who was asked to leave a train for no reason. She said that her narrative about the Black Lives Matter movement *"would've added to the weight of all of the stories I've heard about the microaggressions and the macroaggressions and the violence and the economic disparity. All of these stories have an impact. All of the stories matter. All of these people matter."* Though this research did not present any cases where narratives drastically changed viewer's perceptions of the movement, the participants did feel as though these stories had an impact towards them.

Finally, when asked if narratives contribute to the (Love Wins/ Love is Love) movement in any way, P7 eloquently summed up, *"Everybody says, 'take my word with a grain of salt,' or whatever. At some point, if you throw enough salt into a soup, it will become a salt soup."* . They say this to emphasize that stories, though they may appear to be a low impact, similar to a grain of salt, add up. Just as mass amounts of salt grains gradually make soup saltier, listening to many stories, creates a bigger impact.

Overall, personal narratives were effective tactics for micromobilization of participants in this study. They reconnected the participants back to the movement and sustained their support. However, not all personal narratives were effective in this regard. There are certain factors required for personal narratives to aid the process of sustaining readers' support.

2.   Factors needed for personal narratives to facilitated in micromobilization of current supporters on social media

Personal narratives can be effective tactics for facilitating micromobilization, but not all of them are useful. There are certain criteria needed to facilitate this process. In the narratives that the participants brought to the interview this was accomplished when 1) the story provided new information, 2) the story allowed the reader to better understand the ubiquity of experiences apart of the movement, or 3) the story provided a new context to reframe the movement. These factors appear necessary because all of the stories that participants brought to the interviews that contributed to their sustained support in the movement fell into these categories. In addition, in the cases of vignettes, if these factors were not met, the participants felt that the story did not add to the movement (which will be better addressed in the Findings section 4.7).

2.1 Personal narratives can provide a new perspective if they provide new information to the reader

If the story provides new information to the reader, it can allow for change in perspective. P9, a White woman, read a story about a Black woman trying to sell her home. The woman received a low estimate at first, but received a higher estimate after having a White friend give the tour of her home. This plot stood out to P9 -because:

> "*It was just an illustration of racism that isn't outwardly apparent. It wouldn't be something a White person would know about unless a Black person experienced it, and said it. It's not something you can just see, but it's hidden racism…It just made it more clear that it's necessary because there're those types of people out there, but I mean, I did not believe that they existed. I hadn't never seen it before.*"

These aggressions would not have been apparent to P9 without reading this narrative. This notion of "an untold story", as P16 coined in a later quote in this section, came up throughout my interviews. These are narratives of common aggressions that exist within a community or identity that those outside that group remain unaware. For example, P8 read a vignette about a Black person recounting the microaggressions that they faced in school. As a Black woman, P8 could relate to this story, and commented that they thought it would be powerful since not many people outside of the identity would know about this:

> "*I think just because it has a lot of good points that maybe people don't-- maybe the general public outside of Black individuals-- don't think about that happens to us… So I think just sharing those experiences will help some people get a better understanding and be more respectful... And it helps me know that I'm not the only one that feels some of those things.*"

The storyteller is less in control of this factor since it depends on the knowledge of the viewer. However, a story that provides uncommon insight to those outside the community allows for new awareness from the reader.

In addition, P16, a White gender queer person, read a vignette about a Black person recounting their mother telling them to always be conscious of their appearance to not be misunderstood at the wrong time. This was a story that P16 had not heard before, and they commented, "*I guess I just think about this as an untold story by a lot of people in my life. I know a lot of Black people and BIPOC people that are really dressed up and are really conscious about appearance, but it's not something that I hear them talk about as often.*" This new information that they learned gave them a new perspective both on how they perceived their friends' experiences, but also towards the facets of the movement.

Similarly, P10, a straight White woman read a narrative about a transgender man who was blocked from his social media business page because his name, photo, and gender on social media did not match his government ID. From this narrative, P10 gained awareness on transgender peoples' experiences that she had not thought about, "*It definitely opened my eyes to more logistical things that trans people have to go through. I know some trans people and I know that it's hard socially and biologically and mentally, but I never thought about the actual IDs and government documents and name changing and how difficult that is and that kind of stuff. That definitely opened my eyes to that, made me think about that a little deeper.*" Her narrative stood out to her because, though she was an ally beforehand, and a supporter of the Love Wins or Love is Love movements, she never considered the logistical hardships that transgender people may face.

All these narratives provided new information to the participant. Though they were all supporters of the movement before, these "untold narratives" allowed them to gain more insight and better understand the movement, reinstilling their support.

2.2 Personal narratives can provide a new perspective if they emphasize the ubiquity of experiences apart of the movement

Some readers gain a different perspective simply by better understanding the ubiquity of experiences entailed in the movement. P8, whose vignette focused on a Black person recounting the microaggressions they faced in school, found the narrative impactful *"especially just because of how the Black Lives Matter movement was portrayed. I feel like a lot of people just thought it was just protests or riots really. And so for someone to share their story of daily maybe microaggressions and discrimination, I think could change someone's perspective of it.*" Sharing the everyday recollections that those in the identity may face exemplified the ubiquitous nature of aggressions.

In P11's vignette, he associated the Love Wins or Love is Love movement with legislation and laws, whereas a vignette about someone's journey in coming to terms with their sexuality moved his attention to other experiences that those in the LGBTQ+ community might commonly face. P11 said, "*I'm going to change my perception* [of the movement]. *I haven't seen a whole lot of conversations about rectifying* [sorting and understanding sexuality] *and maybe this is because I'm heterosexual and I haven't had it served part of Love Wins exploring come out. I don't*

personally know if that's part of the conversation that's being had but that's kind of the crux, it's the pain point, it's the friction in this narrative." Though he was an ally beforehand, and knew of these experiences, most of his understanding of the movement focused on legalizing marriage rather than other common aspects of the LGBTQ identity including coming out.

These stories did not provide any new information to the participants since they knew of these occurrences, but it did provide them a better understanding of how widespread these experiences were. Participants sustained their interest and support in the movements after learning more about the extent of the aggressions.

2.3 Personal narratives can provide a new perspective if they provide a new context to reframe the movement

Providing a new context to reframe a commonly understood narrative can cause the reader to think about both the narrative and the movement differently. For P4, a Black man, seeing a narrative that had both Stop Asian Hate and Black Lives Matter from the perspective of a parent with biracial (Black and Asian) kids added a new layer and perspective for him to view the movements. In his narrative, the storyteller shared the experiences that her children faced in school: *"it definitely added another layer because it definitely showed the synergy and the kinship between the Asian and Black community, especially when in New York, there was a good number of crimes against Asian that unfortunately was done by Black folks. So it was just like, man, we got to come together."* This new context allowed him to look at both movements from the same lens of this singular narrative.

For P21, an Asian man, reading a Me Too vignette that occurred outside a late party night setting allowed him to understand that sexual assault can occur in any setting:

> *"Because a party like the other story* [referring to another narrative he read] *is something I feel like a lot of people who already have their biases towards it. If I show that to my parents, for example. They'd be like, 'It's a party. This is why you shouldn't go to parties'. They would turn it into a lesson. Or like, 'This is what happens when girls go to parties. They're not safe.' So that one, people feel, I guess, people feel it's more accepting that these things happen at parties. I think it happens at parties, clubs. But this one is a*

workplace. It's a public restaurant…Then they would feel this is a major movement that deserves consideration."

When P21 was first introduced to the movement, he thought the MeToo movement was "an attention seeking thing". Therefore, providing a sexual assault story with different context allowed for a new lens of the movement.

Similarly, P2, who identified as an Asian woman, read about a bi-racial (half Asian) storyteller's experience with the Stop Asian Hate movement and coming to terms with her identity during the movement. The narrative reminded P2 that the aggressions in the movement do not just affect people like her own identity, but can extend further:

> "*... it was a different perspective that I hadn't considered before. With all the other articles and personal stories about Asians and how they were feeling with all this racism, I thought I could relate to that…it* [this narrative] *was different enough that it just stood out and made me reconsider what my half Asian friends might be going through… there's so many different nuances to having this racial identity and being affected by it.*"

This new context of a different identity's reaction to the Stop Asian Hate movement made P2 reconsider her understanding of the movement. These participants changed their perceptions of the movement due to the unique context of the story that forced them to think about the movement differently.

Overall, a change in perspective is crucial for a personal narrative to aid in the micromobilization process. If the story does not provide a new perspective, it does not enhance, and can potentially detract from the narrative's ability to micromobilize supporters. Reading repetitive stories that do not change a reader's perspective will not sustain supporters and will be further discussed later section 4.7.

3.   Factors that can aid personal narratives in micromobilization of current supporters on social media

In the previous section, I discussed factors that are required for a narrative to contribute towards micromobilization of supporters. I additionally found other factors that can help in sustaining

supporters. These factors are noted by the participants to enhance the impact of a story related to a movement. However, they were not required in order for a story to facilitate micromobilization since participants found stories without these factors impactful as well. In this section, I will detail the factors that can add to a narrative's contribution in the micromobilization of participants: 1) readers developing a personal connection to the narrative, 2) readers becoming immersed in the narrative, 3) salient aspects in the plot, 4) increased perceived credibility of the storyteller, and 5) fact-based forms of storytelling.

3.1 Personal Connection to the Narrative

Readers find that narratives can be more impactful when they feel connected to the narrative. This occurs when 1) when the reader shares similar traits to a character in the narration, 2) when the reader is in the affected identity of the movement, 3) if the reader personally knows the storyteller. If a reader feels that the story is relevant to them, the story becomes more personal.

3.1.1 Personal narratives can allow for personal connection to the reader if they have similar traits to the storyteller

Some participants found that the narrative they brought to the interview better resonated with them because they shared similar traits to the storyteller. These similar traits can be an identity such as race, gender, or sexuality, but can also be a similar job role, upbringing, experience, or location. When the reader shares a similar trait, they feel a personal connection, and the plot of the personal narrative becomes more tangible.

For example, P2, an Asian woman, brought a story about a bi-racial (half Asian) storyteller's experience with the Stop Asian Hate movement and coming to terms with her identity during the movement. P2 was able to relate to the storyteller's experience due to her own similar experiences:

> "*So, I was raised as an Asian American who was in a predominantly White School District. And then, we would go back to Taiwan every other summer to visit our family and friends that are still there. So, the author was talking about being among her white friends, she was the half Asian friend. And then in her Asian circle, she was the half white friend. And I related to that because I felt that when I was in America, like I was*

> *Asian person that when I was in, when I went back to Taiwan, I was known as the*
> *American. So, I think I did definitely relate to that…"*

P2's narrative stood out because she could relate to the storyteller and could empathize. Similarly, P15, a Black man, read a Black Lives Matter narrative about a student being racially profiled and denied a laptop from the school library. The librarian didn't believe he was a student, even after showing ID. The character who instigated the aggression was in a similar job role to P15 "*Well, the first thing I thought was that, so the student job that I work at is tangentially related to what the employee was doing. We both work in the information technology department and I've got a kind of an understanding of what their job description was. That's the first thing I noticed."* P15 also shared a similar identity with the storyteller, "*it was another Somali student and being a Somali student myself, that was the thing that really resonated. Usually in general we get Black Lives Matter. We combined into that, but this was specifically Somali and that has a unique perspective versus African-American who had grown up here. So things like an immigrant family."* P15 felt a connection to the story through the various shared identities, and noticed this right away.

P19 had a similar experience to the story that she watched of a young Black girl wanting to grow up to look like a White Disney princess. This little girl thought she would be blonde like her friends, and the video showed her mother telling her that she would grow up and still be Black, but Black and beautiful. This story reminded P19 of her own childhood memory being Middle Eastern:

> "*I immediately related it to myself, because I grew up in the south and all my friends*
> *were blonde hair and blue eyed. And I thought, 'Oh, one day, I'll have my blonde straight*
> *hair and I'll get blue eyes.' I also had that childish thought, I would watch videos like, 'Oh,*
> *if you put two drops of soap in your eye, your eyes will turn blue.' Or like, if you brush*
> *your hair enough, your hair will turn straight. And so, I used to think like, 'Oh, maybe if I*
> *tried harder, I could look like them.' And it's silly to think that because I should have just*
> *been accepting myself, and my beauty as the way that I was as a child, but I was so*
> *focused on just gaining that ethnocentric beauty standard, that I definitely related to the*
> *video that I seen, and could see myself as a child being in that child's position."*

P19 instantly related to that story and felt a personal connection due to a shared experience. Finally, other participants had similar traits to the storyteller in the form of physical proximal relevance. For example the narrative that P18, a woman of color in the LBGTQ+ community, brought to the interview was about a man who was passionately yelling anti-LGBTQ+ comments at her church. P18 stated, *" I just couldn't believe that in my own neighborhood that this is actually happening. You hear stories about it, but actually seeing it and being so close within it, it just made me feel like 'what's actually going on in this world that I can't even see', if this is happening in my own neighborhood'".* The proximity of homophobic aggressions made the reader realize that homophobia is everywhere, even in her community. Additionally, people she knows personally, including herself, could face this hatred. To further emphasize her point, she added " *It mainly stuck out to me because it was in my neighborhood. It was just so close to home."*

Personal connection stemmed from personal relevance due to a similar shared trait allowed readers to better connect to the story, and to the broader movement. Narratives that created this personal connection were an effective tactic for the participant's mobilization by making the movements more tangible to them.

3.1.2 Personal narratives can allow for personal connection to the reader if the reader's identity is affected by the movement

Stories are impactful to readers who empathize with the situation due to being in the identity that is affected by the social movement. For example, P4 who identified as a Black man, read a vignette about a Black student recounting the microaggressions they faced in school. He felt a personal connection to the story because he faced similar experiences, being in the same identity:

> "*Because you know what, the reason why I can relate to this story is because I'm African American and Jamaican, and I dealt with a lot of crap when I was growing up, especially when I moved out to the burbs and I was the only kid with dreads and all of that. So I've dealt with it. So it was impactful and had an impression on me because of the first person account. And then I could put myself in that as like-- Man, I know what it is for a school teacher to say some racial shit to me, or to tell me, 'Don't worry about it. It's no big deal.' So because I was able to have that level of empathy and put myself in their*

shoes and based upon my own experience, that's what led to it having an impact on me."

P4 felt that the vignette was impactful to him, having experienced this incident before. P15 had a similar experience after reading the Black Lives Matter vignette about a Black person recounting their mother telling them to always be conscious of their appearance to not be misunderstood at the wrong time. P15 said, "*I definitely know this feeling. I definitely have to worry about, 'Can I put my hood up at this time?' Or I can't walk behind people in the middle of the night. I'll just switch sidewalks because I'm afraid of scaring the other person or whatever. My parents, my mom literally said these exact things. Don't sag my pants. Don't wear a hat backwards…So I do understand that feeling right there.*" Again, P15, having had the same exposure, allowed him to understand the sentiment of the storyteller.

Finally, in reading a Love Wins or Love is Love vignette about someone's journey in coming to terms with their sexuality, both P18 and P7 who are in the LBGTQ+ community could relate. P18 said, "*I understand how it is to be closeted as well*" and P7 also stated "*The whole part of, it's hard to focus because I'm suppressing* [stood out to them] *because I felt that at some point as well where I felt like I need to hide the fact that I'm non binary and I am pansexual. So I understand that.*" They found that they could empathize with the vignette.

These participants felt a personal connection to the narrative, having lived similar experiences. The narratives that they read played a role in sustaining their support in the movements, reminding them of their own experiences and struggles.

3.1.3 Personal narratives can allow for personal connection if the reader personally knew the storyteller

A story becomes more personal to the reader if they know the storyteller. P14, who identified as an Asian man, found Me Too narratives particularly impactful when he knew the storyteller or the perpetrator, "*Some of the stories, it was about people I knew. Some of the accusers I knew. So, it made it even more interesting to read what they did, what happened. Some girls put a lot of effort into the stories. So, it was actually very interesting to read and just gave a new perspective on people. That's more impactful in my life than any of the other movements, really.*". These stories gave him new information on the people in his life and was relevant to him since he would regularly encounter the characters in the narrative.

P16 who identifies as a White gender queer person read a Black Lives Matter personal narrative written by an old friend of theirs about the many microaggressions he faced from the police as a Black police officer: " *If it had just been a stranger, that would've been powerful, but it's even more powerful that I know him, I spent a lot of time with him over the years, I knew him as a campus cop. I can just hear his voice in it."*. Knowing the storyteller allowed them to be able to visualize the story, and even hear it being told in his voice, creating a stronger impact.

Finally, P5, a Hispanic woman, saw a Stop Asian Hate story where owners of an Asian store that she frequented were being harassed*, "And it really bothered me because I knew the people…I knew them. That's what's so hard for me to see things in Southern California, people I know, I know well, places I frequent. I went there all the time. I can tell you exactly where every item, my favorite snacks are located."* This story was particularly personal for P5 to witness because could associate her memories with the story.

Knowing the storyteller allowed the readers to better visualize the story and create a personal connection. It caused them to feel increased emotions in associating the stories with people they knew. This increased emotion and relevance allowed them to connect to the movement with a personal stake and sustain their support.

3.2 The Reader's Immersion into the Narrative

My study found that participants felt the narratives to be impactful when they could immerse into the plot and better empathize. This is different from personal connection as section 3.1 focuses on the audience's relation to the story whereas this section focuses on the details within the story that create the connection or relationship. In this section, I will detail factors that increase a reader's immersion into the narrative: 1) the storyteller's vulnerability and emotion, 2) humanization, 3) continuity in posting the story, and 4) a collective framing.

3.2.1 Personal narratives can increase a reader's immersion through the storyteller's emotion and vulnerability

Vulnerability shows strength, which will be covered in more detail in Findings section 3.3.3, but it also brings out emotion in the reader and allows for better immersion into the narrative. P18, a Hispanic woman, pointed out that she likes to read stories portraying vulnerability, "*I want to see more of them. I like reading into it. I like seeing people's personal stories. They're just so*

vulnerable.". The vulnerability is what makes stories more enticing to read as opposed to other forms of advocacy.

These emotions don't always have to be serious. P4's variety of emotions allowed him to follow along in the journey. His narrative came from a mother of bi-racial (Black and Asian) kids, who shared the experiences their children faced in school. P4 said, "*Oh, man, there was times that I laughed. There was times that I just shook my head in disgust, times that I felt sad for her kids. So it was quite a few emotions."* His ability to follow along with the variety of emotions kept him immersed in the plot.

P10's story was about a transgender man who was blocked from his social media business page because his name, photo, and gender on social media did not match his government ID. P10 went further in depth to explain that she connected with the storyteller more due to the vulnerability, "*I mean, he definitely showed emotion. There was a lot of frustration on his part, which is understandable. But I think that when people are passionate about something and they're struggling from it, I guess since I'm empathetic, it makes me more interested or relates to it. Because if there's emotion behind something, I feel it's easier to get invested in or follow along the story than if it's just statistics or not a lot of emotion involved.".* She found that she was able to better understand the situation and relate to it.

All of these participants followed along in the story due to the syntax, tone, and vocabulary that created an emotional and vulnerable tone, letting them to read the stories with emotion. With emotional connection, the narratives aided in the micromobilization of the participants.

3.2.2 Personal narratives can increase a reader's immersion through their humanization

Stories that remind participants that those who are affected by the movement are similar to them were impactful. This humanizing aspect reminds the reader that the plot or experience shared in the narrative could be faced by anyone, including themselves. In section Findings 3.3.2, I will discuss how this humanization can also add credibility to the storyteller. Humanization is usually due to details and context provided in the narrative that build a mental persona of the storyteller. In P8's narrative, there was a photo attached that allowed her to better grasp the reality of the situation where a White protester lost his eye during the Black Lives Matter movement from getting shot with a rubber bullet:

> " *The photo definitely helped with that, because I feel like on Twitter especially there's a lot of posts that are just a pic or that are just words or they show pictures that aren't the actual person, like a meme or something. But I think the photo really helps put the story to a face and really humanize it. Because, I mentioned it earlier, I like to share statistics and stuff to build a case as to why these movements are so important. But I feel like the personal narratives are what really let people know it's real, you know?...And I think this one just really slowed me down. I was always retweeting facts and looking at things. And I think I was trying to detach myself from all of the traumatic experiences that people were going through. But then seeing just one person's individual experience, it just really opened my eyes and was like, this is something that's really happening to people who are innocent and just trying to things. So I think for me, I don't know it just really changed my perception and really brought me down to earth a little bit more".*

This quote really helps explain why personal narratives can aid movements through humanization of the storyteller and humanization of others participating in the movement.

The most prominent aspect of P18's narrative about a man who was passionately yelling anti-LGBTQ+ comments at her church was "*That he was like an actual real person. When I saw his posts being public, and just seeing his family and seeing all that, it just made it even more real.*" For her, seeing who he was and the video associated with the narrative allowed her to ground herself in the reality of the situation.

This humanization allowed participants to better empathize and immerse themselves into the narrative. It was grounding to the reader and connected the narrative to real life as opposed to a distant one-off media story. The tangibility helped in their micromobilization to the movement.

3.2.3 Personal narratives can increase a reader's immersion through their continuity in viewing the plot

Readers find that they can immerse themselves into the story when they feel a part of the journey. This occurs when the reader has several touchpoints to the narrative. Storytellers can induce this immersion by sharing pieces of the story over time or following up repeatedly. P4 brought a narrative from a mother of bi-racial (Black and Asian) kids, who shared the experiences their children faced in school through a tweet threat where she would keep adding content. P4 said that the story was impactful to him because:

> *"I think the fact that just with Twitter, how she just kept adding it as comments. So it was just continuous…Well, she kept updating the conversation, and I just always followed it. Pretty much she was just starting that like, 'Hey, let me tell you something about my family.' And she's like, 'Parents born in the Philippines, I'm 100% Filipino American. I'm married to a Black man. We have two children.' And then it was a continuous, almost episodic story… So it was just almost like she was painting a complete picture."*

The way that she disclosed the narrative in this "episodic story" provided him multiple touchpoints back into the narrative as she continued her thread over time.

Similarly, P17 read a Me Too narrative about a young girl who was sexually assaulted by her father. The continuous posting of the story left her in suspense and wanting to come back for more, "*It kept me engaged with the story, especially knowing that what had happened afterwards, was anything dealt with? Was the situation resolved? Things like that...That's what the most important part was for reading those stories to see what are the updates.*". She would find herself checking to see if there were any updates and was wrapped into the plot.

Finally, P10 gave insight into why this may occur:

> *"I think a lot of times, if someone post something once, it's easy to fall through the cracks. Where you post about it consistently, it gets the viewer into the story… sometimes one post here and there falls through the cracks and I feel our attention span's a lot of times you see something and it resonates with you and then you just keep scrolling and you just forget about it and everything's based about it. But him consistently posting about it throughout the week and giving updates, definitely that part of it probably caught my interest more because I might just have a short attention span, but consistency, they always say consistency brings results. I guess it does in social media, too, because he was consistent about posting and saw results."*

She explained that the consistency in the updates allowed her to be more mentally involved in the story itself. Continuity in touch points was discussed in several participants. In fact, it can also happen when readers are frequently reconnected back to the narrative in other forms such as seeing a news article about the story later, or continuously hearing rumors about the

narrative. The continuity of the reader's touchpoints to the narrative increased the participant's immersion. It pulled them back into the narrative, and thus back into the movement and its purpose.

3.2.4 Personal narratives can increase a reader's immersion through a collective framing

Participants found that narratives were empowering when they used a collective framing, and were less powerful through the individual lens. The collective "we" was empowering for the reader by bringing them into the narrative.

For example, P11, who identified as a straight White man, read a vignette about someone's journey in coming to terms with their sexuality. He commented that this story showcased the storyteller's internal individual struggles rather than a societal issue that would empower him to react, "*Not so much the legislation but this narrative is capturing an internal problem so it's just like coming out to myself and accepting who I am and it's relatable in that everyone, not everyone, but most people have a sort of, I need to accept who I am for innumerable things that we haven't accepted about ourselves. But that's not a societal problem, that's not a societal crisis, that's not a societal issue that's being explored here, that's a personal one.*" This narrative to him did not seem as though it contributed to the movement since it appeared to be internal.

In contrast, P15 who identified as a Black man, read a vignette about a Black student recounting the microaggressions they faced in school and wanting to be a role model for other Black students in a university setting. P15 said:

> "*It kind of makes me happy at the end because it becomes less about them and it cares more about community collective. 'I want to show younger Black people that they belong here.'* (a quote from the story). *It removes a personal goal for them, I guess. It's like, I want to show that I belong here, but they say, I want to show the younger that they belong here. It brings the whole community in as a collective. And I like that and saying 'I want the next class behind me'* (a quote from the story). *So bringing a larger group of people beyond themselves.*"

P15 felt engaged in this story due to the collective goal. This collective framing allowed participants to feel empowered towards the movement, and thus sustained their support. In

section 4.3, I will discuss the contrast to this and how not empowering the reader may hinder a story's ability to mobilize readers.

3.3. Readers' Perception of the Credibility of the Storyteller

Readers find that stories are more impactful if they deem the storyteller credible. Perceived credibility allows the readers to have more trust in the story and feel that they can build thoughts and opinions from the content that they read. This can aid in the micro mobilization of supporters since it allows them to contribute the story towards their understanding of the movement. In this section, I will discuss factors that induce perceived credibility: 1) the storyteller being personally impacted by the movement through their identity, 2) the storyteller being perceived as ordinary, and 3) the perceived emotional strength and journey that the storyteller went through. This third factor means that participants not only feel immersed in the story due to the storyteller's emotion and vulnerability as discussed in section 3.2.1, but they additionally gain credibility due to their emotional strength.

3.3.1 Personal narratives can allow for perceived credibility of the storyteller if the storyteller is in the identity impacted by the social movement

If the storyteller is within the identity impacted by the social movement, a reader is more likely to trust and listen to the storyteller's words. To illustrate, P20, a White man saw a story regarding the violent happenings caused by the police at Black Lives Matter protests from the perspective of a makeshift post medical worker. He stated that the story impacted him because it was told by those who were vulnerable in the movement:

> *"They, like what I was saying before, were part of the more vulnerable group at the protests; people who I guess would be first targeted by the police. If it had been a White person telling the story, it would still be impactful because of what they were saying, but I guess the fact that they also wouldn't fully know or understand the impact of the movement and being targeted by the police for their skin color. It was more powerful coming from someone who really understands what that's like."*

This identity allows the storyteller to fully understand the scenario and provide an authentic lens. P9, who identified as a White woman, said that the Black Lives Matter story that she read was more authentic since the storyteller was Black. Her story was about a Black woman trying to sell her home. The woman received a low estimate at first, but received a higher estimate after

having a White friend give the tour of her home. P9 said, "*She was telling a first-person perspective of the story, so it's just from her perspective, what was happening. So I think that's more authentic.*" With the storyteller's identity being that impacted by the social movement, viewers perceive their words to be an accurate reflection of their experiences. This story then becomes a piece of factual information that viewers can associate with the movement, and aids their mobilization.

3.3.2. Personal narratives can allow for perceived credibility of the storyteller if the storyteller is an ordinary person

When the storyteller is perceived to be an average person, the reader not only better relate and immerse themselves in the narrative (as discussed in section 3.2.2), but also the reader perceives them to be more credible because they lead every-day lives and are impacted by seemingly common experiences.

For example, P8, a Black woman, read a narrative about a White protester who lost his eye during the Black Lives Matter movement from getting shot with a rubber bullet. What stood out to her was that he was an average person fighting for a cause he believed in. She said, *"Just because in a normal person you can see yourself and it's just really, you feel a lot of empathy for them because you're you relate more. I think it's a little bit more shocking because you're like, 'Okay, this is a normal person. He was just trying to support the movement with everyone else'. And that could have easily been anyone else, at the protest, to a friend or family member." You know?"* This perception of the storyteller being ordinary allowed her to humanize him, and showed her the reality of the movement. There was a sense of tangibility to know that this could happen to anyone-- not just a celebrity or bigger activist.

To contrast this, P3 commented that she thought the movement starting with the Weinstein cases was not effective for her since it highlighted celebrities. However, having a vignette about a manager trying to kiss his subordinate over a work dinner with an ordinary storyteller was more impactful :

> "*I would say that was not a good starting off point* [the Weinstein cases] *because those women are kind of hard to sympathize with because if this* [in relation to a story she read about a workplace related assault on an ordinary person] *is a working class woman who's now, her livelihood is possibly endangered by this boss who's decided to be a*

>   *creep ... Because this is the type of thing where if now she doesn't reciprocate the boss'*
>   *vibe, he can start treating her poorly, or even fire her, or there's many ways you can be*
>   *punished in the workplace until you're just pushed out or you just quit, or whatever."*

To P3, she could sympathize with the vignette about workplace assault because it seemed more tangible. The storyteller being perceived as ordinary reminds viewers of the ubiquitous nature of aggressions and elicits their support.

3.3.3 Personal narratives can allow for perceived credibility of the storyteller if the reader perceives strength in the storyteller

Readers tend to be impacted by a story when they perceive strength in the storyteller. Some participants found that stories which were more vulnerable and emotional caused them to sense the storyteller's strength and resilience. I will later discuss how this sense of credibility can also allow readers to feel as though they can draw their own conclusions from the narrative in section 3.5.1.

To give an example, P8, a Black woman, who saw a story about a White protester who lost his eye during the Black Lives Matter movement from getting shot with a rubber bullet stated, "*I think like to me, it* [the bluntness of his tone] *showed strength and resilience because he went through something that I think is so traumatic and really life altering. But he's still willing to share it and put it out there even though it's a really vulnerable thing."* This storyteller's tone was impactful to her because he showed strength and resilience, something she admires.

Similarly, P17, a White woman, in watching a Tiktok about a girl sharing her Me Too story in surviving assault from her father stated, "*She seemed strong because it was such a sickening story. Her strength was so apparent. It kind of felt like she had been, like a shaken up bottle of Coke that was just waiting to explode. She kept it all to herself, all to herself, and then she just seemed so strong, really."*. This perceived strength gave the participant respect for the storyteller.

P10, a White woman, elaborated on why the perceived strength was admirable, " *I'm not vulnerable on social media. I just post like, 'Here's my painting.' I don't give a lot of information about myself so maybe that's why people who are more vulnerable interest me because I admire people who can be like that."*. This perceived strength, resilience, and braveness adds to

the credibility of the story due to the admiration participants gained. The participants looked up to the storyteller and held them in regard, thus sustaining their interest in the content of the narrative, and in the movement.

3.4 Salience in the Plot

Narratives that the participants brought to the interview stood out to them due to plot salience. In this section, I will go through factors that made narratives stand out to participants including that: 1) the plot was ironic, 2) an event in the plot went against their morals and values, 3) or that the characters in the plot were unprovoked. The saliency in the plot fueled strong emotions towards the narrative and allowed for a memorable story. The story was appealing to their more primal and emotional thought-process. Participants were mobilized due to their heightened emotions of disgust, anger, and horror.

3.4.1. Personal narratives can be more salient if they are ironic

Irony in stories can allow the readers to stop and think about the occurrences in the plot. P16, who identified as a White gender queer person, found the narrative ironic about the BlackLivesMatter movement of a Black police officer sharing the unfair treatment that he was receiving from other cops. "*I think it was like, for me it was extra powerful because he had been a campus police officer when I knew him, and he volunteered for the police, he always wanted to be a police officer, and he is in the military, and to hear him share that those thoughts about all the racist experiences he's had is super powerful.*" When asked about what could have made the narrative more impactful for her, they replied, "*I think maybe a picture of him as a cop, because he's definitely worn cop clothes before and stuff like that. That would've made it more powerful I guess, but it was really just so powerful the way it was*". Having a visual aid of the storyteller in his uniform would have added to the irony of the story of police officers giving another police officer a hard time.

Similarly, P20, who identified as a White man, watched a narrative regarding the violent happenings caused by the police at Black Lives Matter protests from the perspective of a makeshift post medical worker. He found his narrative powerful due to the irony of the police causing harm during the Black Lives Matter protests, "*I think it was partially, or maybe a big part because of the actions of the police. This was a group of people who were trying to help others who had been injured, and the police came in to completely disrupt. It is absurd that they would try to hinder people giving other people medical attention. It's insane.*". This irony of the police,

who are typically there to protect, being the people to cause harm amplified had both participants shocked.

Finally, P14 who identified as an Asian man, found irony in his Me Too story about a girl from his religious community who was raped in an alley, as well. He said, "*and one girl got fisted in an alleyway by a very religious kid. I think he was hafiz. That means ... Not a priest. It pretty much means you're a scholar in Islam, and you've memorized the Quran, which is like the Holy Bible for Islam. It was crazy that someone like that ...*" In his narrative, he was surprised not just by the plot, but the irony in having someone of high status assaulting a young girl. He went on to say "*Yeah, it was just crazy. I didn't know some people this crazy existed in our generation. I know there's psychopaths and stuff. But the fact that this guy is still walking on the street after doing all this …*". During the interview, he kept reiterating "*it was a crazy story*". He was shocked by the irony and gore.

These stories stuck in the minds of the participants due to their irony. It allowed them to reflect upon the plot and the characters, similar to a double-take. The shock pushed participants to further consider the narrative, invoking an emotional response to associate with the movement.

3.4.2 Personal narratives can be more salient if they go against a reader's morals

If something in the plot of the narrative goes against the values or morals of the reader, the story becomes more salient as it produces an emotion similar to contempt or disgust. P17, a White woman, used the word 'heinous' to describe a MeToo story that she read about a young girl who was sexually assaulted by her father, "*I don't know what it was. Her personal story was so-- I'll never forget it, ever, for ever, because it was just so heinous and I don't know.*". This story brought out emotions strong for her, as she teared up during the interview. The personal narrative itself was not very graphic, but was so atrocious to the reader that it hit a personal chord.

Similarly, the horrible treatment at protests made the narrative for P20 emotional. He watched a narrative regarding the violent happenings caused by the police at Black Lives Matter protests from the perspective of a makeshift post medical worker: "*I got emotional for the people who were there because it's heartbreaking what people have gone through for things to get to that point, and then what people were going through at the protests and the horrible treatment that people got for simply trying to stand up for themselves and other people.*" P20 was also tearing

up while sharing the narrative during the interview. The mistreatment shown in his story brought out strong emotions.

Finally, P16 was surprised during the parts of the narrative that went against their morals. They read a narrative written by an old friend of theirs about the many microaggressions he faced from the police as a Black police officer: "*They have pulled him over and then laughed and said that they pulled him over, because he was driving while Black. It's just like he's directly experienced so many racist interactions with police, it's just unbelievable.*" They were mortified by the interactions that the storyteller had faced being Black.

All of these examples portray acts that went against the participants' values and morals, and thus brought out strong emotions. These emotions associated with the information from the stories allowed stories to better resonate with the participants. Fueled by emotions similar to contempt, anger, or disgust, participants were micromobilized in the social movements by the narratives. Additionally, they found alignment between their values and the goals of the movement.

3.4.3 Personal narratives can be more salient if they demonstrate that the event was unprovoked

In a plot conveying an aggression of some sort, when there is a clear, innocent victim, readers can understand the magnitude of the experience. Providing context and details to show that the character in the narrative did not provoke the aggression can create salience in the plot. With the contrast between the victim and aggressor, the reader can isolate the character's identity or existence as the reason for the aggression. P5, a Hispanic woman saw a Stop Asian Hate video where owners of an Asian store that she frequented were being harassed. When asked why the narrative stood, she replied, "*Because they weren't doing anything, I guess.*" She later elaborated:

> "*Some stories you see, like I saw on my feed, not from friends, just from Snapchat and actual news out. Like in Oakland where Asian people are just walking down the street and being attacked and it's caught on a camera, street cam, being attacked and beaten for no reason. And having all their stuff stolen just for the fact they're Asian. So that made me think that, wow, it's just really random right now*".

The fact the characters in the story were walking down the street, or doing nothing, makes the reader question why they were attacked. P9 shared a similar narrative where an Asian person was being harassed for shopping in a store, *"And it was just this whole big rant that the White woman did for no reason, calling a bunch of names to the Asian person, and just being insanely mean for no reason, telling her to get out of the store just because she was Asian."* P9 quickly isolated that the reason she was being harassed was due to her being Asian rather than an action that the character had taken.

Similarly, in P6's narrative, a Black woman was asked to leave a train for no reason:

> *"It seemed probably bigger than a microaggression, but it was just so banal. This woman is merely sitting on a train that she is on very often going home and she can't even do that without being harassed…There's something about that that I think struck me. She was- I mean because what is that person doing at that moment? That person is not walking on a sidewalk, that person's not in a park, they're not grilling anything, they're not selling a water. What is she doing? Was she reading something maybe on her device? She's sitting in a train. I just don't know what could be more bland and non confrontational than that. Please do not misunderstand me. Not that there's any reason to harass people who are grilling or selling water or what have you, there's no reason. But it just seems so bonkers. Truly."*

P6 was baffled by this story. She even ran through what the character *could* have been doing. The fact that this encounter was unprovoked in the narrative was salient to the participants. These stories made the participants look for factors that may have caused the encounters, but find that the aggressions were caused by the character's identity. This highlights the disparities that people within an identity face, and beckons the participant's support of the movement to continue due to unprovoked hatred.

3.5. Fact-based form of storytelling allows readers to draw their own conclusions

Participants in the study tended to like fact-based forms of storytelling, enabling them to draw their own conclusions from the story. In other words, they do not want the storyteller explaining or interpreting the plot; they want the facts so that they can interpret themselves. This finding

may be related to section 3.2 where I discuss that readers like to be immersed in the narrative. Readers may become more immersed in a plot when they are actively formulating their interpretation. The caveat with this factor is that the story must provide just enough information so that the reader can draw their own conclusion, while not providing too little information where the reader understands the problem, but feels helpless. I will discuss how stories that do not provide sufficient information can be discouraging for readers further in section 4.6.

For example, P21, an Asian man, read an anonymous narrative, assumed to be a girl in his school, who shared about how she was sexually assault by a teacher. She left out the name of the person who assaulted her, but provided enough details to where everyone could figure out who the perpetrator was, "*But keeping the identity of the person out, it leads you to think.*". While P21 was reading the story, he was thinking about who the perpetrator might be, and was able to come to his own conclusion with the information provided.

Additionally, P9, a White woman who also liked seeing just the facts of what happened, elaborated *" seeing it* [the narrative] *actually occur in a video is like, you can make your own conclusions and see reality, how it happens.".* P5, a White woman, also stated that she likes videos that are unedited in order to be able to formulate her own opinion. She wants things that are neutral because "*I don't like things that lead you to an opinion".* She believed that if a story has a call to action, or conclusion that the storyteller wants to inform the reader about, it should be at the end once the viewer has already felt like they have come to their own conclusion.

Participants felt a stronger connection to the story, and to the movement when they were not told what to think, but rather came to the conclusion themselves. This study found two ways that perceived fact-based storytelling can take form: 1) in the tone of the storyteller being perceived as matter of fact and 2) the plot of the story being factual.

3.5.1 Personal narratives were perceived to be more fact-based if they had a matter-of-fact tone

Participants noticed when the tone of the storyteller was measured. Though this may appear to contradict the statement that readers like to be immersed in the story through emotion and vulnerability in section 3.2.1, these two aspects appear to not be mutually exclusive. This suggests a potential intersection or overlap of factors. Further research could allow us to understand if stories that fit both criteria amplify their contributions to the movement.

This matter-of-fact tone can indicate that the storyteller has healed from the aggression and reflected, which shows their strength and credibility, connecting back to section 3.3.3. An impactful aspect to P16's story (by an old friend of theirs about the many microaggressions he faced from the police as a Black police officer) was the tone. P16, a White person, indicated:

> "*And this was just a very calm, thoughtful, methodic story that charted his experience over many years whereas the angry ones that I was posting and also that other people were posting is just, they're so filled with anger that they're like... I don't even know if I could see clearly. I look back at these, I'm like, 'Wow, I can't believe I posted this.' I was just so mad, but this was just so convincing. It should have been in the newspaper or something. It was so calm and thoughtful, empathetic, and facts taken over time, and just non-refutable and non-arguable.*"

This matter-of-fact tone can also show that the storyteller is not being inflammatory or biased. It provides a seemingly neutral stance on the plot. P8, a Black woman, read about a White protester who lost his eye during the Black Lives Matter movement from getting shot with a rubber bullet. What stood out to her was the contrast between the extremity of the event, and the tone of the storyteller:

> "*It was very blunt. And I think that really caught my eye because it's such a major thing from my perspective, I think it's really major. And he was just very simple in explaining what happened... I would imagine someone to be really emotional and rambling when they're saying something that was really stressful that happened to them like that. But he was just simply saying, 'I went to a Black Lives Matter protest and the cops there used rubber bullets and they shot us. And now I have no eye'.*"

Participants showed respect and admiration for the calmness of the tone, especially in narratives that dealt with trauma as it showed a sign of healing and reflection, providing the storyteller with credibility. Building from Findings section 3.3.3., where I found that perceived strength in the storyteller adds to the credibility of the narrative; this credibility enabled participants to feel as though they authentically came to their own conclusions without the storyteller pushing their viewpoint onto the participant.

3.5.2. Personal narratives were perceived to be more fact-based if they shared just facts of what happened

The prior section focused on the tone of the plot, whereas this section focuses on the fact-based content of the story. Nowadays, social media users are becoming more aware of algorithms, biases, and journalistic slants. Some go out of their way to view stories related to movements that are neutral and have just facts of the occurrence. P5's story was a video about owners of an Asian store that she frequented who were being harassed. When asked about how the video of the event made an impact on her, she said:

"..the media always puts a slant. It doesn't matter if the slant is your slant or not your slant, it's a slant. Because the media is telling you something, they're interpreting it. They're using journalistic techniques to tell you something. Whereas people that are just filming an event, a Stop Asian Hate, or filming things that have happened, they're just filming."

Even if it's not a video of the event itself, participants appreciated when the storyteller laid out the facts of what occurred very clearly as P20, a White man described, *"I guess it's kind of like someone just laying out these are... It's kind of factual, 'This is how it is for me.'... I guess laying out this is what it's like, and these are examples of how things are different for them and the kinds of things that they would want to change for the next people to come in after them."* The framing increased the participants' trust in the narrative. They felt like they were witnessing exactly what happened, and had sufficient evidence to draw their own conclusion.

The fact-based tone of the story, and a plot depicting just the facts of the plot allowed the participants to actively interpret and react to the story. They feel self-driven rather than motivated by the storyteller, and are reconnected and re-involved with the movement. Therefore, stories with this fact-based format were effective in micromobilizing participants.

Overall, there are many factors that can enhance a narrative's ability to effectively micromobilize participants in order to sustain their support in a social movement.

4.   Factors that can interfere with personal narratives in the micromobilization of current supporters on social media

There are aspects to narratives that cause them to be less effective and possibly even reductive in micromobilizing participants. Participants reported that when these factors were present in the narratives, participants were not impacted by the narrative. These factors occasionally even went so far as to reduce the participants' support in the movement. In this section, I will discuss such factors: 1) the narrative being mentally straining to read, 2) the tone being being perceived as inflammatory, 3) the tone being perceived as "whiny" or victimizing, 4) the plot not aligning appropriately with the movement, 5) a perceived performative intention for sharing the narrative, 6) stories that are discouraging, 7) and the narrative repeats a retold story with no new added perspective or information.

4.1 The narrative is less effective if it is mentally straining to read

When a narrative is mentally straining to read or triggering to people, the reader will be more apprehensive or avoid other narratives related to the movement to protect their wellbeing.

For instance, P8, a Black woman, actively avoided using Twitter for a while after viewing her narrative about a White protester who lost his eye during the Black Lives Matter movement from getting shot with a rubber bullet, "*So I think that story definitely contributed to me making the decision to step away from Twitter for a while. Because it was just too many images, too much discrimination. It just was really disheartening.*" This narrative made her cautious to intake further information, and actually pushed her away from wanting to learn more about the movement for her own wellbeing.

P13, a woman of color, tended to avoid certain narratives because "*I just think it's too provocative of my own emotions.*" The participants still understood the collective value of narratives that are emotional, honest, and straining, as it contributes to the reality of those who are affected by the movement, as P7 stated, *" I'm not saying I want it to be gone. It's just for me, it's like... I do want more people to be heard and bring up this movement more. It's hard for me to take in."* These stories overall pushed participants away from viewing further information about the movement over social media, and created a level of dissonance to the remaining stories that they did read. This research does not address how these narratives may positively

impact those who choose to disclose, nor does it address the potential need for people to read mentally straining stories related to social movements; however, it can have repercussions for those who read the story.

4.2 The narrative is less effective if the tone of the narrative is perceived as inflammatory

Participants do not like to read or contribute to posts that are inflammatory. For some participants like P4, who identified as a Black man, this is due to wanting to read posts that meaningfully contribute towards the movement:

> "*One thing that I'm not that crazy about that I really hate to see, when you have two folks that disagree with each other, and they stop engaging in a conversation and it's just about insults. And it's just like, all right, that just gets played out. No one wants to see that. I'd rather you guys meet up and just fight it out. But that part gets annoying, when it gets personal.*".

P4 will make sure that the narrative is adding a meaningful conversation before commenting or sharing. For other participants like P13, a White woman, it's about reputation. She knows that if she interacts with a post, others can see it, "*If it seems like it can be misinterpreted or if it's fanning a flame, I just want to stay away from it. I don't want to put that out there.*" As a teacher, as with other professionals, she needed to make sure that she was not viewed as "fanning flames" on social media in case parents or other stakeholders saw her content. If participants interact with social movement-related content on social media, they want to feel as though they are progressing the movement rather than adding to the aggression. Therefore, participants avoided narratives that were inflammatory.

4.3. The narrative is less effective if the tone comes across as "whiny" or a victimization of the narrator

Just as many participants liked the matter-of-fact tone and sense of strength as previously discussed in section 3.5, they frequently contrasted that of a "whiny" tone that implies a sense of victimization of the narrator. As P21, an Asian man, discussed the Me Too vignette about a girl's healing journey after sexual assault. He alluded that he did not want a victimizing tone because he sees credibility in those who appear to have gained strength from the healing process, "*And*

the fact that she is blaming herself, that stands out because most stories you read, the person's not blaming themselves. They're just asking for support. But the fact that she's blaming herself, it just shows she's not fully on the journey yet." He found that the story did not add to the movement and was potentially reductive since the main character blamed herself rather than the perpetrator.

P5, a Hispanic woman, highlighted that she appreciated stories that served as a "notification of what occurred" rather than a "cry for help": "*... it'd be different if they said these things are all things that have happened to us, it would be impactful. But to say, 'Oh my gosh, we need more police.'...I think if they would've just put it out there and not said, hey, I was harassed and just said, these are problems that are now occurring in our area and left it neutral, it would've had a bigger impact."* As discussed in earlier sections, P5 sees credibility in the strength of the storyteller (section 3.3.3), and likes to formulate her own opinions with the facts of what happened in order to draw her own conclusions (section 3.5). She felt that she could not do this when the tone was "whiny". The narratives that were perceived as victimizing did not energize the participants, but rather invoked a sense of pity and dissociation from the participant to the storyteller. Though participants still empathized, they did not feel compelled towards collective action.

Again, this research is not meant to define how a storyteller should or should not disclose their story, nor is it meant to invalidate their experiences. This study does not analyze benefits or consequences of those who choose to disclose their stories, nor does it affirm that the participant's perceptions are conscious towards the greater goals of the movement. This is an analysis on how readers in my study interpreted and interacted with stories related to movements.

4.4. The narrative is less effective if the plot does not align appropriately with the reader's perception of the movement

Participants found that if the story does not align with their perception of the movement, it can be reductive. This especially occurred during the MeToo movement when participants would read stories that they deemed as immoral, but not related to sexual assault. P3, a woman of mixed race stated:

> *"Another thing that I find really interesting is how language changes really everything. Blanket terms like sexual assault, where that can be used as a way to explain a crazy homeless guy on the bus grabbing a boob, or full-blown stranger danger rape, or child molestation. All these things are so different in experience, but sexual assault now is used as this blanket term, so Me Too is this partially power dynamic element…It's like that also is the mystery behind it is, what exactly does assaulted mean? For that reason, and I know it's a really harsh word with a major stigma, but if something is rape, it should be addressed as rape."*

This variety of stories that were affiliated with the MeToo movement angered P3. The Me Too narrative that she brought to the interview was about her friend who was nonconsensually recorded while having consensual sex. P3 felt that though it was a horrible story, associating it to the MeToo movement was reductive towards the movement. P4 also commented, *"I think Harvey Weinstein, he needs to be at the bottom of the jail. There's been some other ones, like stuff that I have shared online, where I'm not trying to piss you off, where I've said online where it's like, hey, raping someone and saying that, 'Hey, you have a nice ass,' it's not the same thing. It's not even close. Both of them cannot fall under #metoo."* The MeToo movement in particular carried ambiguity for the participants throughout the interview process. Participants wanted narratives in the movement to highlight instances of sexual assault and felt that by grouping experiences of cat calling, non consentual recording, and other, though immoral aspects, was invalidating to those who experienced assault and reductive.

On the other hand, reading narratives that strayed away from police brutality in the Black Lives Matter movement, and strayed away from marriage equality during the Love Wins or Love is Love movements by showcasing microaggressions or daily occurrences that these identities faced enhanced the movements. Participants felt that these stories provided new information and allowed readers to understand the extent of these movements. In P8's vignette of the Black Lives Matter movement where a Black person discussed the microaggressions they faced in school, P8, a Black woman commented, *"I think, especially just because of how the Black Lives Matter movement was portrayed. I feel like a lot of people just thought it was just protests or riots really. And so for someone to share their story of daily maybe microaggressions and discrimination, I think could change someone's perspective of it."* These stories, though different from the immediate ideas of police brutality, still aligned with reader's perceptions of the Black Lives Matter movement, and were therefore still additive towards the movement.

However, those stories that did not align with the movement were irritating towards participants and did not contribute to their micromobilization.

4.5. The narrative is less effective when readers perceive a performative intention for sharing the narrative

Participants became put-off if they suspected that the storyteller did not have the right intention for sharing their story. This primarily entails feeling that the storyteller was sharing the story to follow a trend or through a performative motive. P11, a straight White man, read a vignette about someone's journey in coming to terms with their sexuality and felt that the vignette did not contribute to the movement:

> "*But I just see this as sort of like, don't forget about me guys, like when a celebrity dies and then somebody posts about the time that they met them and they were a really nice person, it's sort of that like, oh, me, not to point to that movement, but like, me too, yeah, yeah, yeah, I'm part of this as well, and that's fine. I'm not going to tone police anybody on social media but that's not adding to anything to improve the collective.*"

P11 felt that the intention of the vignette was to follow the trend and share their story as opposed to sharing their story for the benefit of the movement. This intention can be shown through the plot's alignment with the movement, but also through the tone. P15, elaborated on this further, "*I think more emotional will allow me to connect with it more, but I think there's a certain level where there's too much emotion and then I start being skeptical. I start wondering, this feels a little weird. It doesn't feel right. It's not the right level of emotion for whatever I'm thinking of. It seems contrived, maybe. Like it's being fabricated or whatever.*" This quote allows us to better understand a factor that participants may use to perceive intention. There is opportunity for further exploration in how participants understand intention. Regardless, if the readers perceive the intention to be performative, they will likely not take the personal narrative seriously and it will not facilitate micromobilization.

4.6. The narrative is less effective when the narrative is discouraging

Sometimes the narratives that people share can be discouraging when the reader feels that there is nothing they can do to help. This may appear as a function of the reader's circumstances since it can depend on the reader's ability to contribute to the movement.

However, the storyteller can also play a role in empowering readers to find ways to contribute. P5 watched a story where owners of an Asian store that she frequented were being harassed. She debated throughout the interview whether the video contributed to the movement. She felt helpless rather than empowered. Her narrative entailed someone harassing Asian store owners in her prior neighborhood: "*It bothers me because I can't do anything. By watching it I'm seeing how things have changed in my area and it's really sad, but it's hard for me to watch that because I definitely would not do anything. I feel trapped by just watching something happen to people that I know.*" The narrative only made her upset that she was not able to be there. Though her narrative had aspects that made it effective as discussed in section 3.1.3, this factor reduced the narrative's contribution to the movement. The narrative angered her but did not amount to any change or action. Though the intention may have been awareness, her takeaway was not about the movement, but rather about the situation and how she could not be there.

Similarly, P10 felt that there was nothing she could do after reading a narrative about a transgender man who was blocked from his social media business page because his name, photo, and gender on social media did not match his government ID, "*But there's also not much I can do. He had a GoFundMe and stuff. I didn't personally donate just because right now, I don't have a ton of extra income so I feel bad that I couldn't.*" P10 was not sure how she could contribute to the movement, and therefore the story seemed like a dead end.

This discouragement may seem benign at first, with just lack of empowerment, but it can also be reductive towards the movement when these stories are repeated without empowerment for the audience to act. There seems to be a thin line between providing enough information to empower the reader to act while allowing them to come to their own conclusion.

4.7. The narrative is less effective when it's repetitive

This is seemingly the most reductive aspect that narratives can have towards movements. When users see the same narrative repeated, providing no new perspective or information, the narrative becomes normalized. Upon reading a vignette about the Love Wins or Love is Love movement about someone having to choose between their sexuality and being accepted by their family, P7 said:

> "*That's honestly a very, I wouldn't say normal, but very-- It's a very similar narrative to a lot of different ones. It's very often the same with the parents are strict or religious. They*

> *want these things for the kid, and at some point, the kid feels the need that they're going to have to choose themselves or their parents.".*

Though this vignette was about someone sharing about their hardships, as P7 pointed out, it was "common".

Similarly, P21 read a Me Too vignette about a girl's journey in healing after being assaulted at a party. He said, "*Now, reading it doesn't* [impact him] *because I read so many stories about it but I've become desensitized to it. In the beginning, maybe…"* If this was the first time P21 had read this story, it would have impacted him, but now he has become desensitized. The vignettes were summed up by P14 as "baby food" after reading many other stories. Being desensitized to aggressions, hardships, or experiences (both positive and negative) normalizes them and can be reductive towards the movement.

Overall, it is important to note that not all personal narratives can aid in micromobilizing supporters. There are some factors in the personal narratives that can make them ineffective, and perhaps even reductive in this process.

Discussion

In this section, I will contextualize my findings within the framework of the current multidisciplinary literature on the role of storytelling in mobilizing social movements. I will examine how my research extends the literature on persuasion and opinion change to sustain support, as well as how the literature on factors of storytelling in social movements extends to social media. Finally, I will contribute suggestions on how activists and advocates can share their stories on social media in a way that can effectively micromobilize and sustain supporters in a movement.

1. Micromobilization in Social Movements

From recent social movement literature, we understand that social movements are not single movements that rise and die. Rather, they are cycles of movements that have stemmed from systemic issues that evolve as newer events occur (Taylor, 1989). For example, movements such as Black Lives Matter and Me Too have spurred similar conversations as those from the

likes of the abolitionist movement and the women's suffrage movement in early American history. These cycles of movements go through processes of mobilization, decline, and abeyance over time (Sawyers & Meyer, 1999). When movements are in states of abeyance or dormanyc, they need to sustain supporters and their values toward the social movement, even when not visible in the public consciousness (Holland & Cable, 2002). This stage is a crucial part of the movement cycle since it ensures the continuity of the movement (Sawyers & Meyer, 1999).

My research confirmed that personal narratives can be effective in sustaining supporters to a movement, particularly when they reaffirm the reader's support in the movement or change a reader's perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors towards the movement. Furthermore, not all personal narratives succeed in micromobilizing current supporters. There are several factors that appear to be necessary for supporter sustainability. Narratives appear to only contribute to this process if they provide new perspectives. This can be done using three ways. First, by sharing new information, second, by providing a better understanding of the ubiquity of the experiences that are part of the movement, third, by showcasing a new context to reframe the movement in a way that deviates from the norm held by the reader.

There are other factors, though not required, that could further facilitate the personal narrative to influence micromobilization. These factors include 1) readers developing a personal connection to the narrative, 2) readers becoming immersed in the narrative, 3) saliency in the plot, 4) increased credibility of the storyteller, and 5) fact-based forms of storytelling that allow the readers to draw their own conclusions. On the other hand, there are factors that make a narrative ineffective or reductive in facilitating micromobilization. These impediments include 1) the narrative being mentally straining to read, 2) the tone perceived as being inflammatory, 3) the tone perceived as "whiny" or victimizing, 4) the plot not aligning appropriately with the movement, 5) a perceived performative intention for sharing the narrative, 6) stories that are discouraging, and 7) the narrative repeating a retold story with no new added perspective or information.

2. Extending Persuasion Literature from Opinion Change to Sustaining Support with Storytelling in Social Movements

The literature reviewed on persuasion focuses on the role of personal narratives as an effective tactic to change opinions in social movements. This opinion change is accomplished by

creating social empathy (Manney, 2008). Narratives are known to persuade without confrontation (Collins, 2015). They more easily shift opinions by evoking empathy rather than eliciting defensiveness from the reader to new information(Collins, 2015). However, sustaining support is distinct from opinion change, and factors of sustaining support in social movements through storytelling are left less addressed by this literature.

My research extends this literature from opinion change to elaboration on how it can facilitate sustained support in the context of Black Lives Matter, Stop Asian Hate, Me Too, and Love is Love/Love Wins movements. I found the following 5 factors that helped sustain support: 1) personal connection to the narrative, 2) reader's immersion into the narrative, 3) readers' perception of credibility, 4) saliency in the plot, and 5) fact based forms of storytelling.

This discussion is on persuasive arguments for sustaining support for a social movement, which can be differentiated (in some cases) and are more nuanced. In the following sections, I outline the nuanced differences in the way these five factors work to sustain support versus creating change in opinion. Of these five factors, I found, three factors operated similarly to that suggested by opinion change literature, and two that were nuanced.

2.1 Supporters of the movement process personally relevant stories logically and deliberately

For the first factor involving personal connection, my research found that personal connection and relevance of the narrative is markedly important for sustaining supporters. I found that narratives were more impactful in sustaining support when participants could connect with the story. This was particularly so 1) if the reader had similar traits to the storyteller, 2) if the readers' identity was affected by the movement, or 3) if the reader personally knew the storyteller. This affirms the findings of the opinion change literature where personal relevance was a core component of the central systematic route through which most opinion change occurs. This route involves deliberate and logical processing rather than a peripheral route that is more instinctual and automatic (as elaborated in the Elaboration Likelihood Model Cacioppo, & Petty, 1984). My study with supporters affirmed that people better identify with those they share similar experiences. Shared traits of job role, experience, or location made the story relevant to the participant (Suitor, 1995) and played a role in sustaining their support by reconnecting them to the movement.

2.2 Supporters are more impacted when they are immersed in the narrative

For the second factor, my research with supporters concurred with literature on opinion change. I found that supporters also increase their empathy towards the movement when they immerse themselves in the narrative. My participants were impacted by stories that showcased 1) vulnerability and emotion of the storyteller, 2) humanization of the storyteller, 3) continuity in follow-up information provided by the storyteller, and 4) a collective framing. All these contributed to their ability to immerse themselves in the narrative. This is in line with Polletta's (2012) explanation that readers like to develop connections by immersing themselves into the narrative, consequently magnifying the impact of the story on them.

2.3 Supporters perceive credibility and warmth of the narrative based on identity and perceived intent

For the third factor, I found that perceived competence and warmth of the storyteller is important for sustaining supporters, as noted in literature on opinion change as explained by the Stereotype Content Model (SCM; Fiske et al. 2002). However, for sustained support, credibility is derived from the identity of the storyteller, and warmth from the perceived intentions for the story by the storyteller. My participants found stories more impactful if they deemed the storyteller credible. Perceived credibility was higher 1) when the storyteller was personally impacted by the movement, 2) the storyteller was perceived as ordinary, 3) the storyteller was perceived as emotionally strong as they went through their journey. Being supporters of the movement, they are already familiar or knowledgeable on topics, and as noted before, are processing narratives deliberately via central processing as opposed to those who are apathetic or have opposing stances.This explains why participants in my study valued the credibility of the storyteller.

The other component of the SCM often used for opinion change is warmth, which includes components of sincerity, trustworthiness, and others (Fiske et al., 2002). My research participants indicated that they found a narrative to be less effective when they perceived a performative intention for sharing the narrative. They were quick to judge intention in sharing the story, and noted a lack of engagement when they perceived the intention to be merely performative or insincere. Thus, they paid more attention to the intention of the storyteller to determine trustworthiness.

2.4 Supporters are impacted by salience to the extent that it is not mentally straining

For the fourth factor, I found that though supporters were influenced by the salience of the plot, unlike the literature on opinion change, the impact was limited. Gory or graphic plots can be ineffective in sustaining their support in the movement because they were mentally straining. Narratives were salient or stood out to the participants if they were 1) ironic, 2) went against their morals and values, 3) or when unprovoked characters in the plot were harassed. Gilovich, et al., (2016, p. 277-278) who studied persuasive messages emphasized message quality, vividness, emotion, and culture that could lead to opinion change. The salient quality of vividness entails memorable details that grab the reader's attention. However in sustaining supporters, there is one important caveat-- the salience in the plot must not be mentally straining to them. Stories that are gory, graphic, or too vivid lower the narrative's ability to sustain support possibly because supporters are closer to the movement and have some relation to it versus who are apathetic or have opposing views.

2.5 Supporters preferred fact-based narratives to draw their own conclusions

For the fifth factor, participants in my study preferred fact-based storytelling, which enabled them to draw their own conclusions based on the tone of the storyteller being matter-of-fact and a factual plot of the story. This finding contradicts prior persuasion literature that emphasized the importance of explicit messages for opinion change (Gilovich et al., 2016 p.277-278). My participants disliked being told what to believe. Instead, they wanted to draw their own conclusions. Thus, my research aligns more with Polletta & Chen's (2012) research with narratives, that ambiguity is important for supporters to actively interpret meaning.

3. Extending Personal Narratives in Social Movements to a Social Media Context

Personal narratives are increasingly being used for advocacy in social media. However, the research on persuasive factors of storytelling in social movements is largely based in the physical realm. My research aimed to extend prior work into how these factors of personal

narratives translate to social media contexts to impact social movements such as Black Lives Matter, Stop Asian Hate, Me Too, and Love is Love/Love Wins movements.

As noted in the literature I reviewed, social media presents different affordances and ways that users can interact with information than the physical realm. In this section, I discuss social media's affordances and implications for 1) enhancing the users' immersion in the story, 2) provision of personally relevant information to the user, and 3) providing control to the user on the amount of content they see on their feed.

3.1 Social media allows readers to better immerse themselves in narratives

My research contributes new ways for readers to immerse themselves in the narrative within the context of social media. Within social media, the multimediality of the story (picture, text, audio, video, etc) can be enhanced. Prior work supports that visuals can induce emotion and therefore better immerse readers into a plot (Joffe, 2008) through the multimediality affordance of social media(Schrock 2015). Participants in my study noted that they could continuously follow up stories through Twitter threads, Instagram highlights or stories, or additions to the posted story which, in turn, made them feel a part of the journey leading to greater immersion into the story.

3.2 Social media provides readers with more relevant personal narratives

In the context of social media, algorithms suggest content based on relevance and user interaction (Golino, 2021). As expected, my participants found the narratives more impactful when they felt connected to the narrative. Algorithms that show users stories from acquainted people, in particular, may be more effective in sustaining the reader's support in the movement through the increased emotion and relevance of the narrative.

When social media algorithms provide relevant posts to users, they must still provide new information and content so as to not be repetitive. I found that repetitive posts were not appreciated by participants. When readers view repetitive stories of aggressions, hardships, or other difficult experiences, the stories normalize these behaviors and desensitize the reader. This erodes their interest and support, and potentially detracts from the social movement.

Another aspect that can potentially detract supporters from social movements in social media is the trend towards using social media platforms to profit as opposed to being purely socially

oriented, as evidenced by the new "shop" tab feature introduced by Instagram (Mosseri, 2020). By combining competing personally relevant information, algorithms can contribute to changing the ways users participate in social movements within social media.

3.3 Social media provides users indirect control over the content on their feed

My participants reported that after actively searching to educate themselves on a movement, they would find that their social media platforms would algorithmically show more posts related to the movement. This is due to the algorithm prioritizing content based on user engagement (Etter & Albu, 2020).This can be helpful for participants who want to better educate themselves and get more involved as long as the user does not become oversaturated with posts related to the movement. As discussed in the Findings section 4.7, oversaturation can reduce the micromobilization of supporters. The impact of this informal input can be a double-edged sword. On the one hand, users can better educate themselves by interacting with the content. On the other hand, if personal narratives related to social movements are only shown to supporters of the movement, the movement will not garner new supporters. This was evident, as discussed in the Methodology section, that all my participants supported the movements because I had recruited individuals who had seen a personal narrative pertinent to these movements. This was so even though my study was open to participants of wide ranging positions and political views, regardless of their position on these movements.

4. Suggestions for Storytellers

This research is applicable to those who create and disclose narratives for the purpose of contributing towards a social movement. This research provides factors and suggestions into how storytellers may consider shaping their stories to aid the collective goal of sustaining support. The suggestions are not meant to analyze or define what a storyteller should or shouldn't say when disclosing content about their own experiences; nor does this study look at the perspective of the storyteller and the benefits or consequences they receive from disclosure. It is solely meant to understand how participants interact and respond to the stories that they read.

Table 5 summarizes factors that were found in my study to influence the micromobilization of current supporters in the Black Lives Matter, Stop Asian Hate, Me Too, and Love is Love movements. These factors can serve as considerations for advocates and activists when crafting a story with the intent to micromobilize supporters. I also provide suggestions for how storytellers can avoid factors that interfere with mobilization.

Table 5: Summary of factors analyzed in this study

Influence of Narrative	Influential factor	
Required to facilitate micro-mobilization	Provide new information to the reader	
	Emphasize the ubiquity of experiences apart of the movement	
	New context to reframe the movement	
Aid personal narratives in micro-mobilization	Personal Connection to Narrative	Have similar traits to the storyteller
		Reader is in the identity affected by the movement
		Reader personally knew the storyteller
	Immersion into the narrative	Through the storyteller's emotion and vulnerability
		Through narrator's humanization
		Through narratives continuity in viewing the plot
		Through a collective framing
	Perception of the Credibility of Storyteller	Narrator share's identity impacted by movement
		Storyteller is an ordinary person
		Reader perceives strength in the storyteller
	Saliency in plot	Narratives are ironic
		Narratives go against a reader's morals
		Narrator demonstrates event was unprovoked
	Ability to draw their own conclusions	Narrative had a matter-of-fact tone
		Narrative shared just facts of what happened
Reductive to micro-mobilization	Narrative is mentally straining to read	
	Tone of narrative is perceived as inflammatory	
	Tone of narrative is perceived as "whiny" or a victimizing	
	Plot not aligned appropriately with reader's perception of movement	
	Readers perceive a performative intention for sharing the narrative	
	Narrative is discouraging	
	Narrative is repetitive	

In order to prevent stories from becoming mentally straining, storytellers can consider putting trigger warnings so readers are well informed and fully consent to reading the narrative. Being conscious of how tone may contribute or impact the movement as a whole, storytellers should be conscious of their tone being perceived as inflammatory or "whiny". Similarly, the narrator

can be conscious of their reasoning for sharing the story can prevent repetitive narratives and a perceived performative intent. Finally, thinking through what the reader should take away from the disclosed narrative may prevent narratives that do not align with the movement and narratives that are discouraging to readers.

The storyteller, by disclosing their personal narrative in a public digital sphere, becomes a representative of the movement. When sharing the story, they should consider how their voice authentically and effectively represents the community they are advocating for.

Overall, this research aims to understand how personal narratives can play a role in digital social movements. It extends prior research on persuasive factors from work in storytelling in social movements and persuasion psychology by examining these persuasive factors in the context of 1) social media, 2) the Black Lives Matter, Stop Asian Hate, Me Too, and Love Wins/Love is Love movements, and 3) sustaining support. Additionally, it provides suggestions from which storytellers can shape their stories so that they effectively contribute to the micromobilization of supporters to the movement. From the perspective of a researcher, the findings help us better understand how we interact with information, and how this may be extended beyond social movements to other marketing tactics or areas where we look to sustain support. From the perspective of activists and advocates, this study helps to better understand and moderate how we can use storytelling to sustain a social movement.

5. Further Research

There are several aspects of this study that can be examined by future research.

1. A primary contribution of this study is that it extended prior work on opinion change to sustaining supporters, indicating that this research is generalizable to movements on social media in abeyance stages focused on an affected group of people with a collectively defined and distinguishable identity. Further research conducted during the abeyance stage of movements can affirm storytelling factors that are additive and reductive to social movement sustenance.

2. Finally, this research highlighted two seemingly contradictory, but not mutually exclusive factors that can aid a personal narrative in contributing to the micromobilization of supporters: stories with an emotional tone and stories with fact-based tones. This can be

due to different types of people understanding stories differently, but also opens further research in an area of communication that is both fact-based and emotional.

3. As social media platforms continue to evolve, further research is needed to better understand how persuasive factors both in this study, and prior to this study continue to interact in newer contexts.

Conclusion

In this study, I extended prior research on persuasive literature by analyzing nuances of persuasive factors in storytelling by conducting research in the context of social media within United States social movements that center on an affected group of people with a collectively defined and distinguishable identity with the intent to sustain supporters as opposed to change opinion. Overall, this research provides suggestions from which advocates and activists with the intention of contributing to the movement by sustaining supporters can craft their stories, potentially during the movement's of abeyance.

In order to contribute to the micromobilization of supporters, the personal narrative must provide a new perspective to the reader. Additionally, factors such as readers developing a personal connection to the narrative, readers becoming immersed in the narrative, salient aspects in the plot, increased perceived credibility of the storyteller, and fact-based forms of storytelling can positively contribute to a personal narrative, facilitating micromobilization. However, factors such as the narrative being mentally straining to read, the tone being perceived as inflammatory, the tone being perceived as "whiny" or victimizing, the plot not aligning appropriately with the movement, a perceived performative intention for sharing the narrative, a discouraging story, or the narrative tells a repeated a retold story with no new added perspective or information can be reductive in facilitating micromobilization.

As we continue to turn towards social media as a platform for social movements, activists and advocates can utilize these findings when disclosing or sharing personal narratives as a tactic for sustaining support. In this study, I provide suggestions they can take to avoid factors hindering a narrative's ability to sustain support, as well as factors that are essential for a narrative to be an effective tactic for micromobilization.

Social media platforms allow for an amplification of a voice, a story, and a movement. Personal narratives on digital media will aid social movements by their affordance to mass share not only the information but the emotion tied to movement. This study supports findings that personal narratives, if disclosed properly, can be an effective tactic used for micromobilization of resources and sustained support. This can enable movements to retain strength and support to fulfill their goal of creating change.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix

Table 1: Participants Summary

ID	Movement of narrative	Narrative (from Participant in their screener survey or their interview if they discussed a different narrative than they wrote on the screener survey)
P1	Love Wins/Love is Love	About #Lovewins, I saw this cute 20years old girl on twitter. She got married to a 70year old guy. As at October. It could have been a bad sight at first but well, #LoveWins... It has truly shown me that it is not just about age. How a man treats you is very important. Videos of them together are so cute... You could already tell they are deeply in love... I wish them success
P2	Stop Asian Hate	Someone shared an article they wrote about coming to terms with their half-Asian identity amidst the attacks on the Asian community. She wrote about the otherness of her bi-racial identity and where she saw herself in the StopAsianHate movement.

P3	Me Too	During MeToo, a close friend posted about being recorded without her consent and named the guy involved.
P4	Stop Asian Hate/ Black Lives Matter	It was about a biracial couple. One was Black, the other partner was Asian. And it was pretty much how their kid was getting damn near tortured at school.
P5	Stop Asian Hate	A friend of a friend posted a story on Snapchat that showed a neighborhood that I used to frequent when I lived in Southern California. The scene it showed was attacked on older Asians for basically no reason other than the fact that they were Asian. It was really frustrating to see that people were taking their issues with covid out on people that had absolutely nothing to do with covid instead of enjoying the Asian culture and food that the area was known for. The narrative was shop owners closing up and one of them leaving a little bit earlier than the other one to head out for the evening and being attacked by teenagers they were spit on and shoved down and kicked.
P6	Black Lives Matter	She was merely going home on an Amtrak train when she was asked to vacate her seat for no reason at all. The interaction was unpleasant and inexplicable. The train car was empty.
P7	Love is Love/ Love Wins	A person was talking about their experience with coming out
P8	Black Lives Matter	I've seen many during the resurgences of these movements but it was the story paired with the pictures of the results of a man who got his eye removed as a result of police violence during a blm peaceful protest. And I recall seeing the same thing happening to many other protestors.
P9	Black Lives Matter/Stop Asian Hate	Saw a story about how a white woman had one estimate for the value of their home that they thought was too low and got a second opinion that also seemed to be too low, but when they had their white friend pose as their brother, the realtor gave the home an estimate that was almost

		twice as high. Saw a video an Asian person posted that was in a convenience type store in which there was a hysterical white woman calling them a bunch of racial slurs.
P10	Love Wins/Love is Love	A queer trans man FTM who was posting about their stuggles on social media, particularly FB + IG (META) I guess is what it is now - and he was struggling with his business account, as there was a discrepancy and his page had to be shut down or shadow banned because his pronouns and legal name has to match his government ID. it was frustrating to him, as a trans man that his identity that he worked so hard to overcome and re-create was in question. This caused his business a huge hit - as he sells on there.
P11	Love Wins/Love is Love/Black Lives Matter	The narrative was basically his growing up in the United States and being in a majority White community and being ostracized and kind of treated as an other even though he was from an affluent family. And so the identity crisis that he had with that as an African American male and being stereotyped by teachers, ostracized by students. And then, not knowing exactly when but around high school, yeah, around his high school time I would suppose, starting to realize that and coping with the sexuality he was adjusting to that and having to rectify that and not coming out of the closet as bisexual until he was in university.
P12	Stop Asian Hate	There was a video on twitter explain their experience at Lululemon and how the founder is racist. The person explains that the founder named his company Lululemon because he found it funny how Asian people pronounced it.
P13	Me Too	It was regarding the MeToo movement where a paralegal was being continually harassed and propositioned by one of the partners of her law firm in order to get ahead at the office.
P14	Me Too	The one I remembered was a girl I knew from highschool who was raped and no one believed her. She dug up evidence and even

		recorded the abuser admitting to it but still got no justice. The story became viral overnight and we all backed her up. Now the guy is in jail thankfully.
P15	Black Lives Matter	There was a student at my university that went to the library to check out a laptop, but the staff person didn't believe they were a student and refused to give them one. Even after showing him his student ID, he still didn't give it. it escalated and the employee told him to leave or he would call the police.
P16	Black Lives Matter	I saw a Facebook post from a Black man at my school who posted about all the times he had had negative encounters with police because he was a Black man. He had been profiled and harrassed by cops since he was 16 years old. He has been followed by police, asked if he lived in his own house, been told walking around at night makes him look suspicious, and even arrested for taking care of an uncoucious person (he is an emt). He told this story to give a story to BLM and to ask people in his friend groups to realize how fucked up cops can be to Black people.
P17	Me Too	She was sexually abused for years by her father and didn't tell anybody. There were friends of hers that, I guess thought that, they always asked if her dad molested her because they got the vibe, I guess from him. Years and years of sexual abuse, and she finally ran away from home. That night, he had abused her, raped her. She ran away, and went to the police, and all of that. Then she ended up telling her mom and her mom did not believe her. This girl said that her mother threw all of her belongings out of the home. She was 16 years old when this all happened, and her father remained in the house with the mother and their two other daughters. She was banished from the family. She kept her story a secret because she was so ashamed. She became a runaway. Her life went downhill after that. It wasn't until she was in her 20s, she sought mental help, and she shared her story. It was awful. He ended up sexually abusing her two younger sisters, as well.

P18	Love Wins/Love is Love	My hometown had a church where they were spewing hatred about the LGBTQ+ community.
P19	Black Lives Matter	I remember reading a story about a young Black girl who cried everyday about not being white and "beautiful" like her classmates at school. The girl's mother shared how she uplifted her daughter and taught her that she is beautiful regardless of her skin color, and that her ethnic attributes made her lovely and unique.
P20	Black Lives Matter	The BLM video I saw was somebody who had been involved in a makeshift medical post for those hurt in the protests. They talked about the people who came in who had been tear gassed, a woman who had been hit in the eye from a beanbag shot, and others who had been physically assaulted. People had been trying to help and tend to wounds when police came in and destroyed all the food and water that was being handed out to the injured.
P21	Me Too	The person described their experience dealing with Sexual Assault and how it impacted them as a child. It was really saddening to learn about.

Figure 2: Screener Survey

Screening Survey- hosted on Qualtrics and UserInterviews

Thank you for participating in this screening survey. The survey's goal is to help us identify eligible participants for an interview study. The goal of the interview study is to understand the role of online storytelling about personal experiences related to social movements.

What are personal stories? They are stories with first-person narratives (e.g., "This is what I went through…").

What are social movements? They are collective organizing efforts supporting a social goal.

We are looking for personal stories regarding one's experiences affiliated with a social movement like BlackLivesMatter, MeToo, StopAsianHate, and LoveWins/LoveisLove.

This survey will take approximately 5 minutes to complete. If you are invited to participate in the interview study, we would like to have a conversation with you about a personal story regarding a movement that you saw on social media and its impact on your perception, participation, or attitude towards the movement. This interview will take approximately 60 minutes. We will offer a $20 Amazon gift card for your participation in the interview.

You are eligible to participate in the survey if you are over 18, live in the US, and are active on social media by engaging (liking, sharing, posting, commenting, etc) with content at least once per week for the past year.

Part 1: Demographics
- Age _____ [Stop Survey if under 18]
- Do you speak English fluently?
    - Yes
    - No [stop survey if no]
- Do you live in the United States?[Stop if no]
    - Yes
    - No
- How often do you engage (liking, re-sharing, posting, commenting, etc) with content on your social media platforms? (radio button)
    - Several times a day

- Several times a week
- Several times a month [stop survey if this option is clicked]
- Have you ever come across a personal narrative on social media about the BlackLivesMatter, MeToo, StopAsianHate, or LoveWins/LoveisLove movements that you can recall, summarize, and describe your experience in viewing it? A personal narrative is a first-person narrative or story that someone has shared of their experiences or someone close to them's experiences affiliated with the movement. This could be a tweet, a TikTok, a post, etc. [Stop survey if no or not sure]. Once again, these stories do not have to explicitly state the movement, but need to be about the movement in some form.
  - Yes
  - No
  - Not sure
- Gender _____
- Do you identify as someone in the LGBTQ+ community?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Prefer not to respond
- Race/ethnicity _____
- Total household Income in the past year
  - Less than $25,000
  - $25,000 to $34,999
  - $35,000 to $49,999
  - $50,000 to $74,999
  - $75,000 to $99,999
  - $100,000 to $149,999
  - $150,000 to $199,999
  - $200,000 or more
- What is the highest level of school that you have completed?
  - Less than high school degree
  - High school degree or equivalent (ex GED)
  - Some college but no degree
  - Associate degree
  - Bachelor degree

- Graduate degree
- PhD/JD/MD/Other doctoral equivalents

Part 2: Social Media Usage
- What social media platforms do you use most often? (checkbox)
    - Youtube
    - Instagram
    - Facebook
    - TikTok
    - Twitter
    - Twitch
    - Snapchat
    - Reddit
    - Discord
    - Other _____

Part 3: Personal narrative
- On what social media platforms have you ever come across a personal narrative about the BlackLivesMatter, MeToo, StopAsianHate, or LoveWins? Once again, a personal narrative is a first-person narrative or story that someone has shared of their experiences affiliated with the movement. This could be a tweet, a TikTok, a post, etc.
- If you have seen more than one personal narrative that you can recall, please check all platforms that apply.
    - Youtube
    - Instagram
    - Facebook
    - TikTok
    - Twitter
    - Twitch
    - Snapchat
    - Reddit
    - Discord
    - Other _____
- Which social movements was the story(s) about?
    - BlackLivesMatter

- StopAsianHate
- MeToo
- LoveWins/LoveisLove

- Did this personal narrative(s) leave any sort of impression or perception on you? Such impressions can include a change in your participation, perception, knowledge, or attitude towards the movement or any other perception you associate with encountering these stories.
    - Yes
    - No
    - Not sure

- Can you please briefly describe the narrative(s)? If there is more than one that you can recall and describe from memory, please describe as well.

- If you have a link to the post, please upload it. If you have a screenshot, please upload it. If you would like, you may remove or blur the name of the storyteller. If not, the PI will remove the name of the storyteller and the story will remain anonymous through the research process.

Part 4: Contact
- Would you be interested in participating in an interview about social movements and social media?
    - Yes
    - no
- Please provide an email address that we may use to contact you if you are selected to participate _____

All responses to this survey are confidential. We will only use your email address to invite you for an interview. If you are not selected to participate in the interview, we will remove your email address, but may use your confidential and dissociated responses for analysis.

For any further questions, please email Somya Bhagwagar at bhagwsom@umich.edu. Thank you so much for your time.

Figure 3: Interview Protocol

Introduction Script:

Hi, my name is Somya. I am a Master's student at the University of Michigan School of Information. I would like to better understand the role that stories play in digital social movements. We are focusing on stories with personal narratives. This includes a narrative that someone has shared regarding their experiences affiliated with the movement. The narrative does not have to explicitly have the hashtag or name of the movement in it, but must be related to the movement. This interview will be conversational. I will ask you questions around your social media use, your engagement with digital social movements, and learn about your interaction with a personal narrative during these movements. This interview will take about 30 min to an hour.

I just want to confirm, as you mentioned in the screener survey, you have seen a personal story related to a social movement that you can recall and discuss?

A couple of things before we start. To the extent possible, I will take your comments to be confidential. Anything you say will be dissociated and not able to be traced to you. This interview is entirely voluntary on your part. So, if for any reason you feel uncomfortable answering specific questions, please let me know. We can pause or end the interview at any point with no repercussions for you.

Do I have your permission to record this interview? [Wait for consent]
Do you have any questions for me? [Answer any questions]
Great, let's proceed.

Social Media Usage
1. To get started, can you tell me a little bit about your social media usage?
   a. Which platforms do you typically use?
      i. Why do you use these platforms as opposed to others?
      ii. How do you use each of these platforms?
   b. How frequently do you use social media?
   c. How are the people you follow related to you on each of these platforms?

      d. Can you please describe the general types of people that you're connected with on social media? This could be political leaning, gender, sexuality, race, academic background, etc [Go through each of these categories].

      e. What type of content do you see most frequently on your feed [better understand specific platforms]?

            i. Memes, life updates, stories, political posts, quotes, influencers

      f. Out of the people you're connected to who's content do you see most frequently on your feed [probe per platform]?

2. On your social media platforms, who do you usually interact with- whose posts do you comment on? Whose posts do you share or like?

      a. What factors may contribute to you interacting with a post as opposed to scrolling past?

Understanding Digital Social Movements in their feed: attitudes, perceptions, participation

Great, thank you! I would like to learn a little bit more about your experience with digital social movements now.

3. Can you tell me a little bit about posts that you've seen related to social movements?

      a. BlackLivesMatter? [Ask if they can describe what they think the movement is] So just so we are on the same page, this involves advocacy against incidents of police brutality and any other racially motivated violence or discrimination against Black people.

      b. MeToo? [Ask if they can describe what they think the movement is]This is a movement empowering sexually assaulted individuals through solidarity.

      c. StopAsianHate? [Ask if they can describe what they think the movement is]This is a movement in response to the racism against Asian Americans in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

      d. LoveWins/LoveisLove? [Ask if they can describe what they think the movement is]An LGBTQ+ related movement that commemorates marriage equality and equal rights.

      e. Why do you think you have/haven't? [Per movement]

            i. Have you seen a certain movement more than others?

      f. Would you want to see more or less of these posts? Why?

4. What types of posts were they? (if needed) were these statistics, stories, calls to action, solidarity, etc? [Ask per movement]

    a. Who were these posts from in your network?

    b. What goes on in your mind, what are your thoughts when you see posts related to such movements on your feed?

        i. If at all, how do you engage or interact with these posts?

           1. How did others engage with these posts?

        ii. Can you tell me about your interactions with these digital social movements in your social media?

        iii. What were your thoughts on seeing these posts? Did they mean anything to you?

    c. Have you participated in these movements?

        i. Do you participate in these movements in any form? (if nudge needed) This can include a spectrum of actively learning and reading about the movements, to having conversations about them offline, to explicit advocacy.

        ii. How do you participate?

        iii. When you participate, do you turn towards social media to express your thoughts?

        iv. If you feel comfortable sharing, what is your stance on these movements?

The narrative: what was the narrative?

5. In your screener survey, you responded yes to having encountered a personal narrative or story related to the following movements: BlackLivesMatter, StopAsianHate, MeToo, and LoveWins/LoveisLove. If there's more than one, I would like you to focus on the one that you remember best.

Can you please describe the story? You're welcome to search for the story or pull it up on your phone. (If they are able to find a copy, ask them to share the url/screenshot. [If they are able to find the narrative, ask them to re-read it another time. If not, ask them to re-read their summary from the screener survey].

Thank you for sharing this narrative.

    a. Which social movement did the story address?

    Affordances and their role in storytelling to understand immersion

    I want to learn more about how you saw the story.

        i. What social media platform did you see this on?

        ii. How did it appear? What did it look like? (Was there an image, video, audio, text, etc)?

Similarity support (who's sharing, in-group vs out-group, shared identity, etc)

I want to learn more about WHO shared the story.

    iii.   Who shared this story? What was their relation to you? [Goal is to understand the relationship between the storyteller and story viewer]

        1. How do you think you and the storyteller are similar? Different?

    iv.   How is the storyteller's narrative related to the movement? [Trying to figure out if the storyteller's identity is related to the movement, what credibility the storyteller has]

Types of personal narratives (structure, perspective)

I want to learn about the structure of this story.

    v.   Can you please describe your perception of the writing style and structure of the story? No need to use specific literary terms, I just want to hear about what comes to your mind when thinking about this.

        1. Did the story cover an event? A series of events? Or a broad overview of thoughts from personal experience?

        2. How did you interpret the tone of the storyteller?

        3. Is there anything about the story structure that stood out to you in the way it was told?

  b. Do you have another personal narrative that you can recall? [If yes, repeat section]

The narrative: how was the narrative perceived?

So we have talked about the story itself, but now I would like to dive into your perception of the story.

6. Can you please describe to me your thoughts while reading it? What went through your head? What stood out to you? Do you remember how you felt?

7. What sort of impression or impact did the narrative leave on you?

[nudge if needed: Such impressions can include a change in your participation, perception, knowledge, or attitude towards the movement or any other change you associate with encountering these stories.]

  a. If not, can you please tell me a little bit about your attitude and thoughts towards this story?

    i.   Why do you think this story didn't leave you with any sort of impression or perception? (Then move to 7c)

b. [If not answered the first time] If so, what impression did this story have on you?

c. What emotions did you feel while reading it?

d. What was your takeaway from the post?

The narrative: why/how was the narrative impactful?

Now that we have talked about your perception of the narrative, I want to learn more about WHY this perception occurred.

8. Why do you think this story made an impression on you? As opposed to other stories that you have seen, why did this one stand out?

a. If you feel comfortable sharing, could you relate to this story at all?

b. Was there something about how it appeared, who the storyteller was, or the structure of the story that you think might have contributed to this perception?

c. As opposed to other stories that you may have scrolled past or don't remember, why did this one stand out enough for you to recall it?

Finally, I would like to learn HOW this story had an impact.

9. After reading the story, did you alter the way you participated in the movement?

a. How did your perception or attitude of the movement change after viewing this narrative if at all?

b. From your perspective, did the storyteller's relationship to you or the movement play a role in how you perceived the story?

c. From your perspective, did the storyteller's identity (or who the storyteller was) play a role in how you perceived the story?

d. Did this story change your behavior in any way?

  i. In what ways did this story change your behavior? (if needed) This could be minor behavioral changes like educating yourself, or reflecting internally to more major changes like becoming an active advocate.

  ii. Did the story change the way you interacted with other content about the movement? How?

  iii. Did this narrative change the way you interacted with people or conversations in the physical world? How?

  iv. Did this narrative change the way you interacted with yourself? Your mindset? How?

e. Earlier we discussed the aspects of the story, but after reflecting on it's impact, do you have any further insight into what about the story changed your behavior or thoughts about the movement?

      f. If at all, were there any negative repercussions for you having viewed the story?

      g. If at all, were there any positive repercussions for you having viewed the story?

      h. What about this narrative would've allowed for greater change in your understanding, attitude, and perception towards this digital movement?

How future narratives could have impact

10. For this last part of the interview, I have a short narrative that I want you to read about the same movement. I want you to pretend you are scrolling through social media, and see this<insert vignette depending on the movement discussed during the interview>

11. What were your thoughts on this narrative while reading it?

      a. What are your immediate reactions to this narrative? What aspects of this narrative stood out to you?

      b. Did you identify with the storyteller in any way?

      c. Can you please describe your perception of the writing style and structure of the story? No need to use specific literary terms, I just want to hear about what comes to your mind when thinking about this.

          i. Did the story cover an event? A series of events? Or a broad overview of thoughts from personal experience?

          ii. How did you interpret the tone of the storyteller?

      d. Is there anything about the story structure that stood out to you in the way it was told?

      e. Did your perception of the movement change at all? How so?

      f. Do you think that this narrative would cause a change in your or others' behavior? (Push if needed) Once again, this can be something small like having a reflective moment, to something more tangible such as directly advocating in some way towards the movement.

      g. What could have allowed this narrative to have a stronger impression on you?

      h. How did this narrative impact the movement as a whole? Was it additive to the movement? Reductive to the movement? Or just neutral in relation to the movement?

      i. [Repeat with second vignette related to the movement discussed during the interview]

12. At the end, out of two narratives that you just saw, did either of them create a strong impression on you? [if needed] which vignette created a stronger impression? Why? [Do not compare directly but probe for aspects that stood out in the vignettes]

Thank you so much for your time. These were all of the questions I had. Your responses and answers have been extremely helpful in understanding the role that narratives play in social movements. Is there anything else that you would like to add or discuss that we have not talked about so far related to this?

Great! Thank you so much. Can we follow up with you for any additional questions we may have? [Record response]

Great. We will be in touch with your compensation in the next few weeks. Thank you so much for your time once again.

Figure 4: Vignettes

#Blacklivesmatter Vignettes

There aren't a lot of Black people like myself around me. When I was in college, I was the only one in my classes. I had to sit through history lessons where racial disparities were ignored, sat through topics of slavery and police brutality where I could feel my classmates staring at me, and felt people upset to be lab partners with me. My thoughts and opinions were often overlooked and dismissed. I want to show younger Black people that they belong here, and can be successful. I want the next class behind me to not have the same experiences that I did. I want to show them that people who look like them can become whatever they want to be- a lawyer, an engineer, a doctor.

My mom always told me when I was growing up that I had to look nice and dressed up at all times. She told me never to sag my pants, never to wear my hat backwards, and to give a pleasant smile as I walked past others. I am tall, and can easily look like a threat. I don't get to relax. My school friends can wear sweatpants and a hoodie and walk around at night, but I have to be careful. I don't get to make mistakes. I don't get to look tired or mad or irritated or upset or agitated or angry after a long day. One wrong move, one wrong impression, one wrong look. That's all it could take.

#StopAsianHate Vignettes

I took my daughter to the playground to meet with her friends. She usually finds little kids around her age and runs around with them. I bring extra sand toys for them to join her in the sandbox. Today I heard one of the other mom's hold her son back and say 'don't play with the Chinese girl'. I was hurt.

When I was a kid, for years my classmates would make fun of my lunches. They would tell me I'm eating worms, or make me sit at a separate lunch table because my food smelled too bad. I would come to class and throw away my mom's home cooked meals, and buy food from the cafeteria. I felt guilty every time, watching my mom wake up early in the morning to cook me my food. But I felt ashamed to eat it. I spent my young life trying to Americanize myself and leave my culture behind. However, now that I'm older, I have started to embrace the flavors, and re-claimed my palette. I see traditional foods on menus in restaurants and am filled with pride.

#MeToo Vignettes

My sophomore year of college, I was assaulted. I didn't tell anyone. I kept it to myself. I blamed myself. I went to a party, I was drunk. I wish I could go back and change the past. I wish I wasn't stripped away of my innocence. I threw myself into my work, yet lost sight of myself. I found myself going to the gym to learn how to lift the weight off my shoulders on my own. I got really into it and would stay there till 4am. It's been my form of meditation, my form of self-improvement. I'm starting to feel stronger now.

My manager invited me to dinner to discuss my professional goals and career aspirations. However, when we were at the dinner, the tone changed completely. He took me to this fancy place. It felt like a date, but I kept reminding myself that this was a work event, and it just happened to be fancier than I was expecting. He was explaining to me how I should be really thankful because he would write a good review and put me up for a promotion, but then he leaned in to kiss me. Now, every day when I wake up to go to work, I feel sick. I have high anxiety and dread making eye contact with him. I have begun fixing up my resume and started recruiting at other companies, but until I get hired, I feel like I can't breathe.

#LoveWins Vignettes

My parents were strict and religious. As a kid, I always felt that I had to act a certain way or be a certain way for their approval. They wanted me to get good grades, study hard, and become a lawyer or a doctor. But it was hard to focus, knowing that I was suppressing a part of me. There's a lot of pressure. I know they worked hard to get me to where I am, and I don't want them to be disappointed. But the man who they want me to be isn't the man who I am. I'm gay. But if I tell them, and embrace my true self, I risk the chance of them leaving my life. I'm not ready for that yet. I'm not ready yet, but I realize that at some point, I will have to choose myself or my family.

Coming out to society was hard; but coming out to my parents was harder; and coming out to myself was hardest. I remember the day vividly when I finally accepted it. I was flashing back to sitting in my room googling the 'am I gay?' quizzes. I would get so frustrated and try to choose all the answers that would lead to the quiz telling me I was straight, but it was no use. I remember judging and overthinking all my outfits, trying to find a balance between what I liked, but not looking gay. I even tricked myself into liking men, and dating them through college. Finally, one day I just breathed and looked at myself in the mirror. I knew. But now that I've accepted it, I finally get the chance to be happy and be my true self.