

Social media activism reflection



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

We need to call anti-abortion protesters what they are: anti-women's rights protesters. (Schwarz, 2018). For the last 5 weeks I have been participating in social media activism on twitter. I followed two activists, AB pro-choice and The Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada (ARCC-CDAC). Both of these groups are pro-choice activists focused on reproductive rights in Canada. During my five weeks on twitter I learned many new things about reproductive rights, and I also learned how to engage meaningfully on social media.

I did not go into this assignment wanting to learn anything specific, the topic of reproductive rights just interested me. Reproductive rights were one of the few topics I had previous knowledge of and that is the main reason I chose it. I knew I would feel more comfortable following a subject I has some previous knowledge of rather than one that was completely new to me. The World Health Organization states that "...reproductive rights rest on the recognition of the basic right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so, and the right to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health..." (World Health Organization, as cited by Dyck, 2014). I also felt a connection to this topic because it was connected to our healthcare system, and as a nursing student I wanted to learn more. Although I did not have anything specific I wanted to learn I went in with a goal to learn a few new things about reproductive rights in Canada, and I definitely achieved that goal.

The activists I followed were AB pro-choice and The Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada (ARCC-CDAC). Originally, I followed Action Canada for sexual health and rights and AB pro-choice. After handing in my approved activist

worksheet and spending some time on twitter I decided to make the switch from action Canada for sexual health and rights to ARCC-CDAC. ARCC-CDAC was recommended to me after handing in the approved activist worksheet and I noticed them connecting with AB pro-choice very often on twitter. I wanted to follow these activists because they looked at more local issues, and I knew they were reliable because they were all recommended.

I grew up going to a catholic school, so reproductive rights were never brought up in our sexual education classes. After seeing a few tweets about sex education and reading a few articles I realized that it was not only the Catholic school system that does not talk about it, it is a problem among other school systems. Berkha Gupta, coordinator of teen programming at Planned Parenthood Toronto, says, “ The fear-based model has become the cornerstone of sex ed in schools. The focus is on negative outcomes, on avoiding pregnancy and STIs, on avoiding sexual assault. In some ways, it’s just an extension of the abstinence approach.” (Gupta, as cited in Geise, 2018). Thankfully I grew up in a home where I was comfortable discussing reproductive rights with my mom, but that is not the case for many students. This was one of the more surprising things I learned during my time on twitter, and it made me realize that we need to make changes in sexual education across all schoolboards. I believe it is important for teenagers to know their options and feel comfortable talking about reproductive rights and better sexual education could help with that. The most significant learning outcome I gained is that abortion is healthcare and should be included in the sexual education curriculum for all schoolboards.

The course material helped me feel more comfortable engaging on social media. Although the week on reproductive rights happened after I had done my project, I felt like being more up to date on other issues helped me feel more comfortable engaging. Many of the topics we have discussed in class are interconnected in some way, so each week leads into a better understanding of the others. Going into this course I had little knowledge of many of the topics, so it would have been very hard to understand the articles and many of the posts without going to class and doing the course readings. I believe that this assignment would have been much more difficult without the background knowledge I learned in class.

From doing this project I realized that the best ways for me to engage with people on social media were just to comment my opinion or to simply like or retweet a post. Going into the assignment I tried to not just retweet or like things, thinking that it was a meaningless thing to do. During week two someone liked one of my comments, and my views on that changed. It's nice to see that what you are saying actually means something and does not just get lost with the rest of the comments. Personally, I felt uncomfortable commenting or connecting on posts made by pro-life people or people of opposing viewpoints. I noticed a few times the pro-life and pro-choice activists would aggressively argue in the comment sections on posts. Seeing that, I felt uncomfortable engaging with people with opposing viewpoints and did not want someone to be rude to me online, and that was the pattern I often noticed happening when people expressed their opinions to someone who opposed. Social media activism was a new concept to me so personally I

felt that the best ways to engage online were to comment on posts that shared my viewpoint or to like or retweet posts.

Going into this assignment I was very nervous. I had never thought of social media as a platform to look at women's rights issues or issues of any kind. Social media have a role in helping develop and maintain a sense of community in large activist organizations and can be a motivator for participating in these platforms (Brzozowski, 2009 as cited in Murthy, 2018). Seeing other posts on the topic and seeing how receptive the activists were to members of the pro-choice community made me more comfortable starting the project. The only social media I used before this assignment was Instagram and Facebook and I used them as a means to see what my friends and family were up to or look at funny posts. The thought of commenting on strangers' posts on reproductive rights issues took me out of my comfort zone, and starting the assignment was very difficult for me. Completing this project showed me that social media is a great way to stay up to date on current issues, as long as your making sure you're getting your information from reliable activists and sources. Twitter helps users amplify their consciousness raising in the digital sphere through the network ties people form as they follow and interact with other users (Brown, Ray, Summers & Fraistat, 2017). This project made me realize that I have not been using social media in a very meaningful way, and it can be easy to do so. It made me realize that I can still use my social media accounts as I did before, but also use them as ways to stay up to date with current issues. During this assignment I learned that my social media accounts were not being used in a very meaningful way prior to starting my activism in reproductive rights.

I followed AB pro-choice and The Abortion Rights Coalition of Canada (ARCC-CDAC) in hopes of learning something new about reproductive rights and social media activism. I can definitely say that during the 5 weeks I spent on twitter I learned many new things about reproductive rights and social media engagement. Social media activism has become very relevant for many student activist groups. (Velasquez and LaRose, 2014). Although my activism assignment has come to an end, I would like to follow more topics I care about and continue my social media engagement.

References

- Schwarz, R. (2018, January 27). Andrew Scheer and the anti-abortion movement in Canada | Ricochet. Retrieved from <https://ricochet.media/en/2104/andrew-scheer-and-the-anti-abortion-movement-in-canada>
- Dyck, E. (2014, April 29). Reproductive rights. Retrieved from <http://eugenicsarchive.ca/discover/tree/535eedec7095aa0000000253>
- Giese, R. (2018, September 17). The Talk. Retrieved from <https://thewalrus.ca/the-talk/>
- Brown, M., Ray, R., Summers, E., & Fraistat, N. (2017, September 2). #SayHerName: a case study of intersectional social media activism. *Ethnic And Racial Studies*, 40 (11), 1831-1846. Retrieved from <https://www-tandfonline.com.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/doi/abs/10.1080/01419870.2017.1334934>
- Murthy, D. (2018, February 1). Introduction to Social Media, Activism, and Organizations. *Social Media + Society*, 4 (1), 205630511775071. <https://assignbuster.com/social-media-activism-reflection/>

Retrieved from <https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/doi/abs/10.1177/2056305117750716>

- Larose, R., & Velasquez, A. (2015, July 3). Authorization | University of Calgary. Retrieved from <http://web.b.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/ehost/detail/detail?vid=0&sid=16386416-ed9b-4127-87ee-885bf56373fe%40pdc-v-sessmgr05&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWwhvc3QtbGl2ZQ%3d%3d#AN=108866865&db=a9h>