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**University
of Glasgow**

School of Social and Political Sciences

**Assessing the Impact of Feminist Social Media
Campaigns on Women Aged Between Twenty and
Thirty Based in the United Kingdom**

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Assessing the impact of feminist social media campaigns on women aged between twenty and thirty based in the United Kingdom.

Abstract:

In recent years feminist social media campaigns like #MeToo, #EverydaySexism and #FreeTheNipple have made headline news. Praised for their use of the internet as a means by which to spread their message, these campaigns have been said to bring individuals together and allow those who have been affected by the issues tackled to see that they are not alone. Said to belong to a newly emerging 'fourth wave' of feminism, these feminist social media campaigns have received wide spread support from notable figures. It can be suggested that it is in part due to this support, that these campaigns have achieved such high rates of engagement. Furthermore, it is perhaps due to feminist social media campaigns being a relatively new phenomenon that it is difficult to assess how effective they may be when it comes to promoting long term change. However, it may be suggested that one way by which to assess the potential these campaigns have for promoting change, would be to ask if the individuals who have encountered them feel that these campaigns have had an impact on the way in which they act, think or live.

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Introduction

The word feminism can be said have originated from the word *féminisme*, a French word meaning woman's emancipation, which was *'initially used in political debates in late-nineteenth-century France'* (Hannam, 2013, p. 4). Prior to the introduction of the word feminist, the individuals who fought for women's rights were referred to as belonging to the women's movement (Hannam, 2013, p. 4). Furthermore, after the introduction of the term feminist, those who can be said to have fallen under the modern definition of the word feminist would not always identify themselves as a feminist, and instead were said to prefer to be described as a suffragist (Hannam, 2013, p. 4). Since this time, the feminist movement has developed, and the term feminism has become more widely known as term used to refer to *'a person who believes in the social, political, and economic equality of the sexes'* (Adichie, 2012, p. 17). This definition of feminism is one which promotes the idea that feminism is a movement which not only serves to fight for and protect the rights of women, but also serves to protect the rights of men in some ways. In other words, this definition was one which can be said to call for the development of a society which is neither matriarchal nor patriarchal in nature. It is possible suggest that if we are to accept this definition of feminism – one which suggests that those belonging to the movement only seek to reach social, political, and economic equality of the sexes – then it is difficult to see why anyone who believed in true equality would not identify as a feminist themselves. However, in recent times those who identify as feminists have fallen victim to negative stereotyping. This negative stereotype can be said to have emerged during the 1980s, which saw politics shift to a right wing way of thinking and women were once again encouraged to take on a traditionally female role (Hannam, 2013, p. 161). Something which in turn led to those who identified as feminists being stereotyped as women *'who wore dungarees, used little make up and were anti-male'* (Hannam, 2013, p. 161).

In recent years, however, there had been a *'resurgence of feminist activism in the UK, with young women becoming increasingly interested in feminist ideas as a means of making sense of their lives'* (Charles and Wadia, 2017, p. 166). In other words, in recent years feminism has become increasingly popular for young women based in the United Kingdom. It is possible to suggest that this increase in popularity may be attributed to social networking platforms being increasingly used as a base

for feminist campaigns. The way in which these campaigns utilise the internet as place for activism has been praised as it has meant that individuals who engage with these campaigns can do so from a safe place, and that it allows for these individuals to *'meet like-minded people, to discuss feminist issues and to find out campaigns'* (Charles and Wadia, 2017, p. 171). Despite this, however, there has been little research done when it comes to looking at whether these campaigns have had an impact on the personal lives of the individuals who encounter them. Furthermore, through furthering our understanding of the way in which feminist social media campaigns impact the individuals who encounter them, it may be possible to reach a conclusion as to the potential these campaigns have for promoting and enacting change. It is due to this that this project sets out to further our understanding of the ways in which feminist social media campaigns may or may not impact the lives of women aged between twenty and thirty who reside in the United Kingdom. In order to do this, one key research question has been identified and is as follows.

- How and why do women feel that feminist social media campaigns have or have not impacted them?

In order to answer this question efficiently and reach an accurate conclusion about the impact had by feminist social media campaigns, this project is split in to three parts. The first part of this project focuses on evaluating the relevant literature. In the case of this project, this meant looking at feminism and how it has developed in the period between the mid nineteenth century and current day. This was done through utilising the argument put forward that suggests that feminism can be split in to four different waves. The second part of this project looks at the research methods utilised in order to collect data. This data is presented in the final part of this project, with specific attention paid to themes that arose through analysis of the data.

Literature Review:

Whilst it is perhaps impossible to define feminism in one simple sentence, it is possible to use the term feminism simply as a way by which to *'describe a set of ideas that recognise in an explicit way that women are subordinate to men and seek to address imbalances of power between the sexes'* (Hannam, 2013, p.3-4).

However, it is important to note that whilst it is possible to suggest that those who identify as a feminist in general seek to further our understanding of the patriarchal society in which we live and to move towards a society in which there is equality between the sexes, this does not mean that all those who identify as a feminist are likely to have the same understanding of the patriarchal system or have similar beliefs when it comes to how to address and work towards a society in which there is equality between the sexes. In order to better understand these differences, it is perhaps best to look at feminism through the common argument put forward that suggests that throughout the history of feminism several waves of feminism have existed, with each existing during a period of time where different forms of activism were performed and different goals were worked towards. In other words, the wave narrative is often used to illuminate the different forms of feminism that have existed throughout history (Banks, 1986, p. 1). However, it must be noted that utilising waves as a metaphor by which to understand feminism is often seen as problematic as it allows for the assumption to be made that in the times between these waves very little feminist activity took place, something which may mean that we may *'miss the variety of ways in which feminists continued to press for change in a hostile political climate'* (Hannam, 2013, p. 8). Despite this, due to the topic of this dissertation being one which relates to feminist social media campaigns, a form of activism which is said to belong to a newly emerging fourth wave of feminism, it seems relevant to rely upon the wave narrative in this specific context.

Furthermore, through utilising the wave metaphor by which to present a brief history of the development of the feminist movement and further our understanding of how feminist perspectives have differed during different points in history, it is possible to suggest that it may help to situate the phenomenon of feminist social media campaigns within the context of a newly emerging wave of feminism and that this may be useful when it comes to answering the research question had by this project.

First Wave Feminism

The first wave of feminism can be said to have been most prominent between the years 1850 and 1930 (Banks, 1986, p. 46). However, this is not to say that prior to the mid 1800's feminism did not exist, rather that it was in 1850 that feminism could be said to have become a well-organised movement (Hannam, 2013, p. 8). In an essay entitled *The Subjection of Women* written by John Stuart Mill and published in 1869, Mill suggested that *'the principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes - the legal subordination of one sex to the other – is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and that it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other'* (Mill, 1970, p. 3). When we consider this in conjunction with the suggestion that the suffrage movement, a movement in which John Stuart Mill played an important part in due to himself being the first MP to suggest that women ought to be given the vote in the British House of Commons, is a movement which is perhaps one of the best documented and most well-known aspects of the first wave of feminism, it is possible to reach a conclusion as to the overall belief and goals held by those belonging to the first wave of feminism (Banks, 1986, p. 46; Gamble, 2001, p. 26). In other words, it is possible to suggest that the main ideology held by the first wave of feminism was one which can be defined as *'equal-rights feminism'* (Banks, 1986, p. 7). This can be illustrated further through paying greater attention to the suffragette movement, one which, as previously mentioned, can be said to have played a pivotal role in the creation of the first wave of feminism.

The issue of women's suffrage is said to have been one which was raised prior to the period in which the first wave of feminism is said to have existed, with some suggesting it was raised as early as the 1820's (Banks, 1986, p. 46). It has been argued, however, that it did not become an organised campaign until the 1860s, and, as previously mentioned, it was in 1867 that John Stuart Mill became *'the first MP to propose giving women the vote, but his proposal in the House of Commons was defeated by 196 votes to 73'* (Gamble, 2001, p. 26). It was not until 1918 that the vote was first won, with women over 30 being allowed to vote at this point, and not until 1928 that women were granted the same voting rights as men (Gamble, 2001, p. 27). This qualifies the women's suffrage campaign as one which was long

standing and due to the militant nature of the suffrage campaign, one that was hard fought. It has been argued that it was the militant tactics of the suffrage campaign, which included, but was not limited to, the destruction of expensive paintings in art galleries across London, that added to the appeal of the campaign and allowed for first wave feminism for the first and only time to take on the '*characteristics of a mass movement*' (Winsor, 1914, p. 140; Banks, 1986, p. 47). However, whilst the British suffragette movement is perhaps one of the most famous campaign relating to women's rights throughout history, prior to its launch, Victorian women had proven how '*effectively they could mobilise to campaign for specific reforms in the areas of matrimonial law, property ownership, child custody rights, work and educational opportunities, and government regulation of sexual morality*' (Gamble, 2001, p. 26). In other words, whilst the suffragette movement is perhaps best known, it was not the first campaign relating to important women's rights that was launched in Victorian Britain.

It can be argued that the notoriety the suffrage movement received was due to the right to vote becoming something which Banks (1986) argues was seen as a necessity when it came to achieving all the other reforms women viewed as important for themselves and others (Banks, 1986, p. 46). It is perhaps due to the importance placed on the women's suffrage campaign and the pivotal role it began to play in the first wave of feminism, that once the campaigning had resulted in victory and women were granted the same rights as men when it came to voting in political elections, the interest in the women's movement associated with the first wave of feminism began to decline (Banks, 1986, p. 47). In other words, due to the importance feminists placed upon the suffrage campaign during the first wave of feminism, it is possible to suggest that other issues fell by the way side so when the campaign achieved all that it set out to do, the importance placed on the women's movement associated with the first wave of feminism began to rapidly decline – they'd gotten what they wanted, why did they need to carry on campaigning?

Second Wave Feminism

When it comes to considering the period in which feminism had resurgence and the second wave of feminism can be said to have begun, it is difficult to specify an exact year, with some suggesting that it began in the 1960s and others suggesting that second wave feminism did not truly emerge until the 1970s (Evans, 1995, p. 13; Gamble, 2001, p. 27). Despite this contention, however, it is possible to suggest that when the second wave of feminism did emerge, the difference between its ideology and the ideology had by the first wave of feminism was made immediately clear. Whilst the ideology held by second wave feminists can be said to be related to that held by first wave feminists, its focus has been argued to have been relating more to women's liberation than the equal rights ideology that had been previously all consuming (Gamble, 2001, p. 29). In other words, where first wave feminism can be said to have had the women's rights movement at its core, second wave feminism placed greater importance on the women's liberation movement.

Furthermore, second wave feminism can be seen as a form of feminism which has often placed itself in opposition to the liberal feminism most commonly associated with first wave feminism. This can be illustrated through considering the argument had by those belonging to the first wave that relied upon the idea that women and men were essentially the same, with sexual differences being seen as something that was superficial, and thus women should be entitled to the same rights and opportunities as men, whereas second wave feminists were said place more emphasis on the differences between men and women, something which resulted in distinct and separate sexual identities being declared (Hekman, 1999, p. 6). This can be illustrated through considering the women's liberation movement's focus on reproductive rights, something which made up one of the four demands formulated at the first national Women's liberation conference which was held in February 1970 at Ruskin College in Oxford (Gamble, 2001, p. 31). In other words, through calling for reproductive rights, second wave feminists can be said to have recognised that in order for equality between the sexes to be reached, the sexual differences between men and women could not be viewed as something which was simply superficial as in some cases, the sexual differences between men and women caused the needs of women and men to be different. Thus, it was not enough to simply give women the

same rights as men because in some cases women needed different rights, and without these rights women would remain at a disadvantage in society.

Through further considering the demands made by second wave feminists at the national Women's Liberation conference in February of 1970, which also included calls for equal opportunities and education, equal rates of pay and twenty-four hour nurseries, it is possible to advance our understanding of the beliefs and focuses held by second wave feminists – beliefs which saw *'women as an oppressed social group and on the female body which its need for sexual autonomy as a primary site of that oppression'* (Gamble, 2001, p. 31). It is therefore perhaps possible to suggest that where first wave feminists saw the sexual differences between men and women as superficial and inconsequential when it came to the root cause of inequality between the sexes, second wave feminists perhaps saw the sexual differences between men and women as one of the main causes of inequality between the sexes in the first place. However, despite the many differences between first and second wave feminism, there are some commonalities.

One of these commonalities refers to the argument which suggests that both first wave and second wave feminists seemed to be mostly made up of white middle class women and that some of the campaigns fought and issues brought to light by these two different feminist ideologies were often only related to the needs and wants of middle class white women (Gamble, 2001, p. 27, 31). In the case of second wave feminism, this can be illustrated through considering a piece of Betty Friedan's work entitled the *Feminine Mystique* which was published in 1963, and has often been linked with the emergence of second wave feminism in the 60's and 70's (Grady, 2018). Within this piece of work, Friedan refers to a problem which she says has no name – one which refers to the lack of satisfaction felt by American housewives despite their devotion to the feminine role, a role which suburban housewives were said to epitomise, something which they had been taught was the dream for women across the world (Friedan, 1963, p. 20). In other words, women in America had grown up believing that when they reached a certain point in life and achieved certain things, they would find happiness and satisfaction, but upon growing up and achieving these specific things, they felt unsatisfied and unhappy and struggled to understand the cause of this ill feeling.

Whilst Friedan's work was no doubt insightful, it can be said to only be truly illuminating when it came to furthering our understanding of a certain type of woman's life and the limitations placed upon that woman's life by societal pressure. In this case, it is possible to suggest that the type of woman in question was married, had a husband who was likely earning enough to support a family on his income alone, had some form of education and in most cases, was likely white. This can partly be illustrated through considering Friedan's assertion that the American housewife was a woman who had found true feminine fulfilment and that she would be *'healthy, beautiful, educated and concerned only about her husband, her children, her home'* (Friedan, 1963, p. 7). In the case of first wave feminism, however, the suggestion was made as many of the women who were considered to be active campaigners during the first wave *'seemed concerned mainly with the plight of intelligent middle-class single women'* (Gamble, 2001, p. 27). However, when it comes to looking at the important work first wave feminists did, such as campaigning successfully for women's right to vote in Britain, it is possible to suggest that the work that they did was, in the end, beneficial to all women living within Britain at the time and not just intelligent middle class single women.

Third Wave Feminism

When it comes to determining when the second wave of feminism came to an end and the third wave began, similar to how it is difficult to pin down a specific point in time in which the second wave emerged, it is difficult again to pinpoint its ending. However, many suggest that it was most prominent during the 60s and 70s and that it was during the 1980s that feminism again fell out of favour, with the suggestion made that if you were a feminist you were simply a bitter, unhappy woman (Freedman, 2001, p. 5; Grady, 2018).

This led to a third wave of feminism being said to have begun developing during the early 1990s within the United States, and later emerging in Britain around the early 2000s (Budgeon, 2011, p. 1; Evans, 2015, p. 2). Said to be eager to make room for change and diversity, third wave feminists are known to be *'particularly eager to understand the ways in which gender oppression and other kinds of human oppression co-create and co-maintain each other'* (Tong, 2009, p. 271). Sometimes referred to as postmodern feminism, third wave feminists suggest that third wave feminism is a movement which *'contains elements of second wave critique of beauty culture, sexual abuse, and power structures while it also acknowledges and makes use of the pleasure, danger, and defining power of those structures'* (Heywood and Drake, 1997, p. 3). It is perhaps due to this that third wave feminism is not often seen as being a form of feminism which is placed in opposition to second wave feminism, but rather a form of feminism which is similar to that of second wave feminism but has one key difference – the ability by which to recognise the importance of noticing how the levels of oppression may differ according to different factors (Gamble, 2001, p. 52).

In other words, whilst second wave feminists believed that it was the female body that was the root cause of oppression, third wave feminists were said to be able to recognise that different causes of oppression needed to be recognised in order to fight for gender equality. This can be illustrated through considering Heywood and Drake's (1997) statement that they knew *'what oppresses me may not oppress you, that what oppresses you may be something I participate in, and that what oppresses me may be something you participate in'* (Heywood and Drake, 1997, p. 3). For example, a black woman will be more oppressed than a white woman, and a white

woman will benefit from a system which relies upon the systematic oppression of black people.

Fourth Wave Feminism

A further difference between third wave feminism and second wave relates to the lack of success third wave feminism had at cementing itself as movement outside of the United States, with some suggesting that instead of third wave feminism, within a Britain a fourth wave of British feminism has already begun to take hold (Evans, 2015, p. 3). This supposed fourth wave of feminism bares strong similarities with the third wave of feminism that emerged within the United States, with some suggesting that it is a form of feminism which *'works with the understanding that intersectionality is the common thread between the different communities and groups that link under the term 'feminism'* (Looft, 2017, p. 894). Characterised for its use of technology and social media as a means by which to share messages and connect with individuals with similar ideals who live across the world, this new wave of feminism has become increasingly popular within the United Kingdom (Looft, 2017, p. 894; Chamberlain, 2017, p. 1). It is important to note, however, that whilst this fourth wave of feminism may be said to have originated in the United Kingdom, it cannot be said to exist only within the United Kingdom and due to its reliance on social media platforms, the messages had by fourth wave feminist campaigns are not often limited to their country of origin and can be interacted with on a global scale.

It is possible to suggest that it is due to this heavy reliance upon social media that feminism has experienced a rapid growth in popularity, something which can be illustrated through considering the rising numbers of prominent celebrities identifying themselves as feminists – something which can be said to have allowed for feminism, or a specific type of feminism at the very least, to shed the stigma that once came with identifying as a feminist (Maclaren, 2015, p. 1732). In other words, when a celebrity with a certain degree of popularity comes forward on social media in support of a feminist social media campaign, or produces content which is spread across social media in which they identify themselves as a feminist, it becomes desirable for those who idolise the celebrity in question to identify as a feminist themselves.

Still, it is important to note that this increase in popularity is something which cannot solely be seen as positive. Furthermore, the way in which certain celebrities have promoted feminism has been subject to criticism due to the hyper sexualised way in

which they promote the subject. In August of 2013, American singer Miley Cyrus released a music video for her song entitled Wrecking Ball in which she sat astride a wrecking ball whilst naked and licked a sledgehammer (Butterly, 2013). Having declared herself to be a feminist, Cyrus was criticised for supposedly confusing feminism with '*sexual exploitation of the self or wilful adherence to a traditional beauty standard*' (Juergen, 2013). This criticism can be said to fall under an argument presented by April levy in her 2005 book entitled Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture, one which questions how acting on stereotypes of female sexuality can be empowering and a feminist action when it was these stereotypes which feminism had previously aimed to eliminate? (Ariel Levy, 2006, p. 4). In other words, when men objectify women it is seen as something which is misogynistic and as a by-product of a patriarchal society so how can it be seen as empowering when a woman objectifies herself when the end result is the same: women remain objectified. With consideration paid to this argument, it is perhaps worth looking at the #FreeTheNipple campaign.

#FreeTheNipple

Backed by celebrities, this campaign is often thought to have been created in order to question the seemingly double standard Instagram and Facebook have when it comes to the exposing of male and female nipples (Aubrey, 2015). For example, if a picture is posted of a woman and her nipples are exposed it is likely to be taken down, but if an image of a man's nipples is posted it will remain on the site. The campaign has been criticised for its message, with women like Alyssa Milano questioning why this issue is being addressed when issues relating to equality which are arguably more important – including those relating to the wage gap and the lack of paid maternity leave in certain countries – are still present (Milano, 2015).

Furthermore, Milano suggests that campaigns such as #FreeTheNipple only serve to encourage women to objectify themselves, something which Lina Esco, the woman responsible for the creation of the #FreeTheNipple campaign, disputed, suggesting that the point of the campaign was not to encourage women to be topless in public spaces, but rather to allow women the choice to be topless in public spaces without having to worry about being fined or jailed as a consequence (Milano, 2015; Esco, 2015). In addition to this, Esco went on to defend the campaign stating that *'you can pay to see women topless in porn videos and strip clubs, but the moment a woman owns her body, it's shameful'* (Esco, 2015). In other words, it is considered normal to pay in order to see a woman expose her breasts within certain facets of an industry which aims to provide sexual pleasure to those who interact with it, but when a woman chooses to expose her breasts without the specific aim of providing onlookers with any kind of sexual gratification, she will likely be shamed for it and, in some cases, may even suffer legal consequences. This argument paints a clear picture: a woman's body is not her own and exists for the pleasure of others, and if she dares to object she will be shamed for doing so. It is this which allows us to see the value in campaigns like #FreeTheNipple due to their ability to encourage conversations about gender equality within the western world.

#MeToo

Returning to the criticism had of #FreeTheNipple, it is perhaps important to make note of Alyssa Milano's role in popularising another feminist social media campaign that is likely to be seen as belonging to fourth wave feminism and is characterised by the hashtag #MeToo. The #MeToo movement has been said to have been started in 2006 by New York activist Tarana Burke, with Burke stating that she has been *'inspired by a 13-year-old girl who confided in her to share her sexual assault experience, to which she replied "me too"'* (Sayej, 2017). Said to have been a grassroots campaign aimed at helping women of colour who had experienced sexual abuse, the me too campaign of 2006 found it's belonging on Myspace, a now defunct social media platform (Sayej, 2017). However, it wasn't until October of 2017 that the #MeToo campaign would make headlines, with Alyssa Milano, an American actor and activist, posted a tweet of a text image reading *'Me too. Suggested by a friend "if all the women who have been sexually harassed or assaulted wrote 'me too.' As a status, we might give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem."'* (Milano, 2017). In the tweet's caption, Milano suggested that all those who has been sexually assaulted or harassed reply to the tweet with the words 'me too' (Milano, 2017).

It can be said that Milano tweeted this in reaction to a large number of women coming forward and speaking out about the sexual harassment and or assault they had faced at the hands of Harvey Weinstein, a famous Hollywood producer (Sayej, 2017). These stories of sexual assault and or harassment at the hands of Harvey Weinstein soon resulted in far more men in positions of power – examples of which included producers, directors, politicians, sports doctors, journalists, well known TV anchors and actors – being publicly accused of rape, sexual assault and harassment by a growing number of women (Zarkov and Davis, 2018, p. 3). Similar to the #MeToo movement of 2006, the #MeToo movement started in 2017 claims to create solidarity amongst victims of sexual harassment and assault and lets them know that they are alone (Zarkov and Davis, 2018, p. 3). However, it is possible to suggest that the #MeToo movement of 2017 has accomplished more than simply uniting victims of sexual assault, with the far reaching responses to the #MeToo campaigns resulting in *'some of the perpetrators admitting their guilt, providing public apologies, and – in some cases – being forced to resign their jobs or step down from public*

office' (Zarkov and Davis, 2018, p. 4). In order to illustrate this, it might be best to return to the case of Harvey Weinstein.

The first public allegations of sexual harassment made against Harvey Weinstein were published in a New York Times story on the 5th of October 2017, with Weinstein issuing an apology on the same day alongside stating that he would be taking a 'leave of absence' from The Weinstein Company and was currently working with a therapist (BBC, 2018). On the 9th of October the directors of The Weinstein Company announced that Weinstein's employment had been terminated, with more allegations being published in the following week, several companies coming forward and announcing that they had cut ties with Weinstein and police in the United States and the United Kingdom announcing that they were investigating a number of sexual assault allegations that involved Weinstein (BBC, 2017; BBC, 2018). Over the next few months, this pattern continued and on the 25th of May 2018, Weinstein was charged with rape and several other counts of sexual assault after turning himself in (BBC, 2018). However, this is one example of the consequences perpetrators who have been linked to the #MeToo campaign have faced, and it is perhaps due to the sheer number of allegations made against Weinstein alongside the fact that it was the allegations made against Weinstein that arguably caused the #MeToo movement to re-emerge, that the necessary consequences in this case were so severe. This hasn't always been the case and this can be illustrated through considering the case of Louis C.K.

On the 9th of November 2017, the New York Times published an online article in which five women accused Louis C.K., a comedian from the United States, of sexual misconduct (Ryzik, Buckley and Kantor, 2017). Upon admitting that the allegations made against him were true on the 10th of November 2017, Louis C.K.'s film entitled 'I Love You, Daddy' which was due to be released on the 17th of the same month was cancelled and Netflix announced that the second stand-up special they had planned with the comedian had also been cancelled (BBC News, 2017). However, unlike Weinstein, Louis C.K. did not face any criminal charges and has since made a return to the world of stand-up comedy (Ryzik, 2018). It is this example which allows for the suggestion to be made that the effect the #MeToo movement has had on punishing those who have been a perpetrator of sexual misconduct or assault is one which is quite often only temporary. Furthermore, it is important to make note of the

fact that in the case of Weinstein, many of his accusers were famous celebrities – an example of which might be Rose McGowan who was among the first group of women to publicly come forward – something which Zarkov and Davis (2018) argue *‘makes all the difference in allowing their accusations to be heard and believed’* (BBC, 2018; Zarkov and Davis, 2018, p. 5). It is this argument which may cause us to question just how helpful and impactful the #MeToo movement may be for women who do not live their life in the public eye. Furthermore, it allows for us to question whether #MeToo would have been so far reaching if it had not been a movement which has been spearheaded by women with a degree of celebrity. This question may, in part, be answered through looking at the Everyday Sexism project.

The Everyday Sexism Project (#EverydaySexism)

The Everyday Sexism project was started in 2012 by a woman named Laura Bates (Chamberlain, 2017, p. 119). Said to have begun as an experiment, Bates *'attempted to document incidents of everyday misogyny, accepting submissions from women via Twitter'* (Chamberlain, 2017, p. 119). Made up of a twitter account and a website, the Everyday Sexism project states its aim as being one which looks *'to take a step towards gender equality, by proving wrong those who tell women that they can't complain because we are equal'* and says that it provides *'a place to record stories of sexism faced on a daily basis, by ordinary women, in ordinary places'* (Everydaysexism.com, n.d.). Despite this specification, the Everyday Sexism project, characterised by the #EverydaySexism hashtag on social media, has been said to be a campaign which Bates did not wish to have a specific direction (Chamberlain, 2017, p. 121). In other words, unlike that of the #FreeTheNipple and #MeToo movements, the #EverydaySexism project was a campaign not meant to target a specific sexist action, behaviour or policy. Instead, while #MeToo aims to unite those who have been victims of sexual assault, and #FreeTheNipple aims to allow women the choice to be topless in public spaces without fear of legal consequences, #EverydaySexism is said to aim to acknowledge the regular incidents of sexism that we have become accustomed to and thus, ignore, as by ignoring them we only create and encourage *'a culture in which sexist or misogynistic behaviours can thrive'* (Chamberlain, 2017, p. 121).

It is perhaps due to this lack of specificity, that the nature of the submissions gathered by the Everyday Sexism project are incredibly varied with some relating to small incidents, examples of which include women being told that certain jobs are only meant for men, such as those involving physical labour, and other including stories of rape and sexual assault (Everydaysexism.com, n.d.). It is due to this variation in submissions alongside the suggestion made that the #EverydaySexism campaign is one which has encouraged a sense of solidarity to be formed between those who participate, that allows for us to put forward the argument that the #EverydaySexism campaign is one which is likely to have the potential to have an impact on a wider variety of people. In other words, due to the message of the Everyday Sexism project being one which is broader in nature than those held by the #MeToo and #FreeTheNipple movements, it is possible to suggest that most women

who come in to contact with it are likely to find it to be something which they can relate to and participate in and therefore it may have a wider impact than #MeToo and #FreeTheNipple on the everyday woman. However, in comparison to the #MeToo and #FreeTheNipple movements, the Everyday Sexism project has received significantly less media attention – something which may be attributed to the lack of celebrity endorsement of the campaign. Due to this, it is possible to suggest that while the Everyday Sexism project may have the potential to have a larger impact than the other two feminist social media campaigns discussed, this potential perhaps has less chance of being realised.

Methodology

As previously stated, this research project aims to answer the following questions. The first of which asks if women aged between twenty and thirty who reside in the United Kingdom who have come in to contact with feminist social media campaigns feel they have or have not been impacted by them, and the second asks how and or why they feel these campaigns have or have not impacted them.

Whilst there has been a substantial amount of literature available relating to the topic of fourth wave feminism, of which feminist social media campaigns are said to belong, the topic is still relatively new and fourth wave feminism can be said to be a movement which is still developing. This has meant that there has been a lack of research done relating to the impact these feminist social media campaigns have or have not had on the lives of those who encounter them.

Due to this research project being one which looks to increase our understanding of the feelings individuals have relating to feminist social media campaigns, it was decided that a qualitative research design was best employed. This was done through considering the suggestion made that qualitative research is a form of research which places '*emphasis on the ways in which individuals interpret their social world*' (Bryman, 2012, p. 36). This emphasis allows for qualitative research to be a form of research which can be characterised as occupying the epistemological position referred to as interpretivist (Bryman, 2012, p. 380). In the case of this research, it was decided that this was the most suitable position to take due to the importance it places upon understanding society through looking at the way in which those who live within it interpret it (Bryman, 2012, p. 380). In other words, through looking at the way in which individuals interpret feminist social media campaigns, it may increase our understanding about the extent to which feminist social media campaigns can be used in order to promote and enact change.

In order to conduct this research several decisions were made, the first of which relates to selecting the sample and choosing the best method by which to recruit the sample.

Sample:

When it came to choosing how to select the sample, purposive sampling was chosen as the best method. Purposive sampling is a form of sampling in which the researcher samples strategically in order to make sure that the participants making up the sample *'are relevant to the research questions that are being posed'* (Bryman, 2012, p. 418). In the case of this research project, this meant several different factors had to be considered.

Due to this research project being one which looks at the impact feminist social media campaigns have on women, it seemed logical to only recruit participants who identified as female. This is owing to the suggestion made that if you are interviewing people about their experiences relating to a specific topic, you should be looking to interview a number of people who have experiences relating to the topic (Flick, 2011, p. 6). However, it's important to note that whilst recruiting those who identify as female is likely to garner more useful information when it comes to assessing the impact something has on women, it does not give the guarantee that the women sampled will have encountered any feminist social media campaigns and can therefore speak about the impact these campaigns have or have not had on them.

In order to partly counter this, it was decided that the best means by which to recruit participants was through the use of the researcher's personal social media and limit the sample further by recruiting only women who were aged between 20 and 30 who were based in the United Kingdom. This decision was made for three reasons. The first of which relates to the fact that those who utilise social media are more likely to have come in to contact with feminist social media campaigns, due to these campaigns being mainly based on social media. Flick (2011) argues that if you have an interest in a specific topic, you should look to recruit in settings in which a specific topic is based (Flick, 2011, p. 7). Furthermore, by utilising the researcher's personal social media as the base from which to recruit, it was possible to assess that those who the researcher had seen interact with these campaigns were mostly within the 20-30 age range and were based in the United Kingdom. In addition to this, by selecting participants who fit certain specifications, such as age, gender, the use of social media and geographical location, it may allow for a more accurate conclusion to be reached when it comes to identifying the different factors which may affect the

way in which feminist social media campaigns impact women. For example, if we were to recruit a sample through face to face interactions and had no limits when it came to the age, gender or geographical location, we would run the risk of recruiting a sample who had never encountered or even heard of any feminist social media campaigns and thus would be of little help when it came to answering the questions had by the researcher.

When it came to determining what the size of the sample should be, several factors were considered. Some of these factors relate to the relatively narrow scope of this qualitative research project and the reliance upon a sample made up of participants who fit certain specifications (Bryman, 2012, p. 425). In other words, had this research project relied upon the comparison between different groups within the sample – an example of which might be if the aim had been to investigate whether gender plays a role in determining how feminist social media campaigns impact individuals – a larger sample would likely have been required (Bryman, 2012, p. 425). Furthermore, it has been argued that samples of a small size can be helpful due to their ability to *'increase the qualitative researcher's chances of getting close involvement with their participants in interview based studies and generating fine grained data'* (Bryman, 2012, p. 426). It was due to this alongside the lack of requirement for comparative groups within the sample that it was decided that a sample made up of twenty participants was deemed sufficient.

As previously mentioned, recruitment was done through utilising the researcher's own personal social media. This was done through sharing a text post on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook that said *'Looking for women aged between 20-30 to take part in an interview over email about feminist social media campaigns. If interested, please send me your email address'*. Once twenty emails had been collected, an initial email was sent out with the participant information sheet and consent form attached, and information about the researcher and the research project was given. (See Appendix 1 and 2).

Asynchronous Semi Structured Interviews:

Once the sample had been formed and informed consent had been given, the interview process began. It was decided that utilising email as a way by which to conduct semi structured interviews would be suitable for this project. The decision to rely upon asynchronous interviews – a term which refers to interviews which do not take place in real time - was made for several different reasons (Bryman, 2012, p. 663). One of these relates the fact that by conducting interviews online and over email, recruiting a sample was easier as it meant that a wider pool of participants can be recruited rather than relying upon the recruitment of participants who live within the bounds of Glasgow (Bryman, 2012, p. 666). This has also meant that it has been cheaper, as no travel expenses have been incurred. Furthermore, whilst conducting these interviews asynchronously caused the interview process to be longer than it would have been had a face to face interview process been used, the process can be said to have allowed participant to fit the interview in around their own schedule and may have allowed for the participants to give more thorough and thought out answers for the questions asked (Bryman, 2012, p. 666-668). Additionally, the use of online asynchronous interviews meant that there was no need for the interviews to be transcribed, something which allowed for a great deal of time to be saved (Bryman, 2012, p. 666). However, when it comes to conducting semi-structured interviews over email, some issues do arise.

The first of which relates to dilemma which arose when it came to determining how many questions to ask in the initial email. Bampton and Cowell (2002) suggest that if too many questions are asked within one email it may intimidate the interviewee and discourage them from replying (Bampton and Cowell, 2002, p. 5). On the other hand, if only one question is asked per email and the interview comprises of a substantial number of questions, the interviewer runs the risk that the interviewee will grow tired and stop responding (Bampton and Cowell, 2002, p. 5). In the case of this research project this was countered through sending each interviewee three initial questions and then, based on the responses given by the participants, any follow up questions deemed necessary would be sent in further emails. Through doing this, it is possible to see that a semi structured interview was the form of interview that took place.

Semi structured interviews were chosen over interviews with little to no structure for one reason: their ability to allow the researcher to ask a number of questions that have been prepared in advance, something which is sometimes referred to as an interview guide, whilst still giving the researcher the chance to ask questions not included in the guide in response to the answers given by participants (Bryman, 2012, p. 471). (See Appendix 3). It is due to this, that it was possible to see that the semi structured interview was best suited to this research project as the nature of the initial questions asked in the interviews were ones which aimed to elicit answers relating to the participants' feelings, and thus the responses given could not be predicted. In other words, the inclusion of open ended questions in the initial email meant that the ability to deviate from the interview guide was required as the responses given to these questions often required further questions to be asked. Furthermore, due to this research project having a clear focus – looking at how UK based women aged between 20 and 30 feel they have or have not been impacted by feminist social media campaigns – semi structured interviews felt like the more suitable choice in comparison to an almost completely unstructured interview as there was a need for specific issues to be discussed (Bryman, 2012, p. 472).

Out of the twenty individuals who made up the sample, only eight completed the interview process. It is possible to suggest that this small turn out rate would not have occurred had the interviews taken place in a face to face setting. This is due to one of the downsides of conducting interviews online in an asynchronous manner being that participants are required to be greatly committed and motivated in order to complete the interview (Bryman, 2012, p. 666). It is argued, however, that due to an online asynchronous interview being one which requires participants to be motivated and committed throughout the process, the responses given are likely to be more considered and detailed than those given in face to face interviews (Bryman, 2012, p. 666). In the case of this research project this can be said to be true, as whilst only eight participants made it through the process, the majority of the responses given by the eight participants were detailed and relevant.

Analysis:

When it came to determining the best way by which to analyse the data collected through the interviews, it was thought that a thematic approach was best. This is due to thematic analysis being a method which provides the researcher with a process by which to identify and analyse themes within the data collected and these themes can be provide us with '*a framework for organizing and reporting the researcher's analytic observations*' (Clarke and Braun, 2017, p. 297). Bryman (2012) argues that the themes identified by thematic analysis can be something which relates to the researchers focus and or '*provides the researcher with the basis for a theoretical understanding of his or her data that can make a theoretical contribution to the literature relating to the research focus*' (Bryman, 2012, p. 580). In the case of this research project, it was hoped that through utilising the thematic method as a means by which to analyse the data it would be possible to theorise as to whether the message had by certain feminist social media campaigns - examples of which might be the #MeToo, #FreeTheNipple and #EverydaySexism campaigns – influenced the way people felt about them or if other factors came in to play. Furthermore, it was hoped that a common theme could be identified when it came to identifying how feminist social media campaigns had impacted participants.

Ethical Concerns:

It is important to note that while going through the process, a few ethical concerns were raised. The first of these ethical concerns is in relation to the use of the researcher's own personal social media accounts as a means by which to recruit participants. Through utilising personal social media accounts as a way by which to recruit participants, the risk was run that those recruited may be in a dependent relationship with the researcher and this may have impacted the participant's ability to give informed consent. However, this ethical concern can be easily countered as during the period in which this research was conducted, the researcher did not have any dependent relationships with women aged between 20 and 30 who were based in the United Kingdom. A further ethical risk relates to the fact that certain feminist social media campaigns relate to serious issues – examples of which might be the #MeToo campaign which covered the issue of sexual assault – and there was the chance that some participants may find the topics covered by the questions upsetting. In order to counter this, prior to the start of the interview, participants were made aware of the topics that were going to be covered throughout the interview and told that if they ever felt uncomfortable during the interview process, and did not want or answer a specific question or wanted to stop the interview altogether, they were welcome to do so. Furthermore, within the participant information sheet, participants were offered links and information regarding support agencies in case they felt they needed them. (See Appendix 1). Additionally, participants were given pseudonyms in order to protect their anonymity when the data collected through the interviews was presented.

Findings & Analysis

Encountering Feminist Campaigns:

When participants were asked about whether they had encountered feminist campaigns, and if yes, how they had encountered them, seven out of the eight participants who completed the interview said they had encountered feminist social media campaigns through use of their own social media accounts. However, the one participant who did not feel they had encountered any feminist social media campaigns noted that she was aware of their existence as she had come across news articles relating to the topic:

Louise: As far as I'm aware, I have not encountered any. I have come across news articles about them, but that is it.

Furthermore, five of the participants who had encountered feminist social media campaigns through social media also noted that they had seen news articles relating to the topic. One participant, Lisa, stated that whilst she had only really seen the #FreeTheNipple campaign on Instagram, she felt that #EverydaySexism and #MeToo had received more widespread attention:

Lisa: #FreeTheNipple I have mainly seen on Instagram, but the other two I have seen more widely, on different social media channels, blogs, the news and I know every day sexism is now a book although I haven't read it.

The idea that #FreeTheNipple is a campaign that was mostly seen on Instagram was repeated by another participant, with Alice referring to it as '*the #FreeTheNipple campaign on Instagram*'. In general, Instagram was a social media platform which many of the participants identified as a platform in which they had encountered feminist social media campaigns, with six out of eight participants making note of it. However, a general consensus as to how popular feminist social media campaigns are on Instagram in comparison to other social media platforms cannot be said to have been reached, as whilst one participant suggested that they felt they had encountered feminist social media campaigns mainly on Instagram:

Elizabeth: I've encountered the #MeToo campaign through mainly Instagram and news articles on the movement.

Anna, on the other hand, stated that she had *'encountered a few feminist social media campaigns through mostly Twitter and Instagram'*. A further two participants identified Twitter as the platform which they had encountered feminist social media campaigns on most often:

Alice: Yes I've encountered many through social media. More so on twitter than any other social media platform.

Julie: Yeah, I've encountered the #MeToo and #FreeTheNipple, I mostly encountered them through twitter.

Alongside this, two other participants suggested that Facebook was the social media platform which they identified as being the place in which they had the most encounters with feminist social media campaigns:

Holly: Yes – mainly through Facebook and through online petitions as well as Instagram.

Natalie: I've encountered the #MeToo campaign on my personal Facebook account, and heard lots about it in the news when public figures have used the #MeToo.

Due to this, it is possible to suggest that whilst it is difficult to reach a conclusion as to which social media platform is most utilised when it comes to participating in feminist social media campaigns, owing to these feminist social media campaigns being talked about outside of these social networks – an example of which would be the coverage these campaigns have received in the news - it can be suggested that these campaigns are, in some cases, far reaching. Furthermore, it is important to take in to account that the amount of time each participant spends on different social media platforms will likely play a part in determining which social media platform they felt they had the most encounters with feminist social media campaigns on. For example, if the social media platform an individual spends the most time on is Facebook, or Facebook is the only social media platform they use, the chances are that if they are going to encounter feminist social media campaigns through social media they will encounter them on Facebook.

When asked about the campaigns they had encountered, three examples were proffered in order to provide participants with examples of what was meant by the

term feminist social media campaigns. These three examples were the #MeToo, #FreeTheNipple and #EverydaySexism campaigns. #MeToo was the campaign most referenced by participants with all eight participants stating that they had heard of the #MeToo campaign, though only seven felt they had encountered it on their social media. Four participants stated that they had encountered #FreeTheNipple and only one participant mentioned having encountered the #EverydaySexism campaign.

It can be suggested that #MeToo was perhaps the most heard of campaign due to it being one which was popularised in 2017, whilst the #FreeTheNipple and #EverydaySexism campaigns were both started in 2012 (Milano, 2017; Zeilinger, 2017; Bates, 2016, p. 7). In other words, due to #MeToo being a campaign that has both emerged in the last twelve months and received considerable coverage in the news, it is possible to see why this was the campaign most widely encountered by participants. Despite the #FreeTheNipple campaign and #EverydaySexism campaign both emerging in 2012, it is possible to suggest that the #FreeTheNipple campaign was encountered by more participants than the #EverydaySexism project due to it being a campaign which received support from various celebrities, something which meant it received more widespread attention than that of the #EverydaySexism project.

Feelings Relating to Feminist Campaigns:

When asked about their personal feelings relating to feminist social media campaigns, the overall response was mainly positive, although some participants did voice concerns about potential issues that may be had with these campaigns.

Furthermore, it was possible to identify some similarities between the answers given by participants. One of these similarities refers to the fact that several participants made note of being 'shocked' or 'saddened' when they heard about the #MeToo campaign and the large number of individuals who came forward with stories relating to the campaign.

Holly, in reference to the #MeToo campaign noted that she was *'sometimes shocked by the statistics involved, upset to hear what people have been through or disheartened by other people's responses'*. Natalie, on the other hand, stated that she *'was shocked by how widespread a problem the #MeToo campaign highlighted'*. Alice said that for her *'it was shocking to see the numbers'*. Elizabeth, on the other hand, noted that *'it did open my eyes to sexism in the work place and just generally in life and how women get used to being treated in a certain way which perhaps isn't correct'*. It is perhaps due to participants themselves becoming more aware of the issues covered by feminist social media campaigns that several of the participants said that they believed these campaigns were a good way by which to raise awareness:

Holly: *...as far as reaching people, I think it's an effective way of getting the message to people who might not otherwise be aware.*

Lisa: *I think they are a good way to raise awareness and start a conversation around a topic.*

Louise: *I think they are great to raise awareness and are needed*

The suggestion that feminist social media campaigns can help raise awareness has been argued by some to be one of the greatest strengths of feminist social media campaigns, with Jennifer L. Airey stating that *'the greatest success of the #MeToo movement has been, in my opinion, the defamiliarization of such stories, the act of forcing us to confront and name as Not Okay experiences that we previously shrugged off as an inevitable part of being a woman'* (Airey, 2018, p. 7).

A further theme identified within the answers given by participants when asked about their personal feelings relating to feminist social media campaigns refers to the idea that these campaigns could help show women who had been affected by the issues covered that they were not alone. Four out of eight participants mentioned this idea, with Elizabeth stating that these campaigns '*...allow you to connect with others and see that we all experience similar things and can help form some sort of solidarity*'. Whilst Natalie said that she could '*...see how it was a powerful way for women to speak up about their experiences and feel that they were not alone in this*'. Holly also had similar feelings stating '*it gives people a chance to see that they're not alone, when social media can sometimes feel so isolating*'. Julie meanwhile said that she '*...found the #metoo campaign important as it showed the vast amount of women had had the same experiences regarding sexual assault*'.

As previously mentioned, however, whilst the feelings had by participants when it came to feminist social media campaigns were mostly positive, several participants also spoke about the concerns they had with feminist social media campaigns. One of the concerns raised refers to the idea that the message had by these campaigns can be easily twisted. In Elizabeth's case, whilst she noted that there were good sides to feminist social media campaigns such as helping form a sense of solidarity amongst those affected by the issues raised, she also said '*I think some people can abuse this and change the narrative for their own agenda. I think with social media it's not something you can control so although the message may start off good it can become twisted and convoluted*'. When asked a follow up question, in which she was asked about the way in which she felt the messages had by these feminist social media campaigns become twisted and convoluted, Elizabeth utilised the #MeToo campaign as an example:

Elizabeth: I think the me too campaign started off great but once it became a big thing lots of people joined in who perhaps hadn't experienced it but wanted to be part of the movement. Sadly people do lie and do twist things. Sometimes people care more about talking and being seen to be part of something than of what they are saying. Some people take something good and use it for their own initiative and I find sometimes people use feminism to bash the male gender when in fact feminism is about equality between the two genders not one upping the other gender.

Louise also stated a similar concern, stating *'I think there is a risk of going too far that could end up hurting the campaign in the long run'*. Again, when asked a follow up question, one which asked about how she felt these campaigns ran the risk of going too far and what too far meant in the case of these campaigns, Louise utilised the #MeToo movement as an example:

Louise: *At the very strong risk of sounding controversial, I am worried that going too far can trivialise key issues. For instance, in the Me Too movement (or likewise campaigns) people can end up raising hell about getting a single hug. NOW, I am not saying unsolicited hugs are ok and if someone oversteps your boundaries you should bring it up with them – especially if they keep doing it. However, to put a single hug on the same level as, for instance, sexual harassment (e.g. groping) leads those who are sceptical about the campaign to not take it seriously.*

In comparison to this argument presented by Louise, Julie stated that when it came to the #MeToo campaign she *'felt as though it needed more of a platform than just social media as it was subject to ridicule and ridiculous responses claiming that women were just causing more problems and calling things that weren't sexual assault assault'*. The idea that these feminist campaigns could perhaps have benefitted from having a platform that extended beyond social media platforms was had by two other participants.

When asked whether she thought there were any downsides to using social media as a platform for these feminist campaigns, Holly said *'I think there are definitely downsides, as people so often get harassed/bullied online, and I know that with the Me Too campaign there was a lot of backlash. That maybe wouldn't be experienced if these conversations were being had face to face'*. Furthermore, in a similar vein to the criticisms had by Louise and Elizabeth, Holly also stated that using social media as a platform for these campaigns *'gives people the chance to twist things'* and that *'part of the problem with social media is that we take everything we see on it less seriously than if we experience something in real life – in a way social media can sometimes trivialise serious topics'*. Alice also suggested that these campaigns would benefit from having a platform which extended beyond the boundaries of social networking sites when asked whether there was any particular reason as to

why she thought some feminist social media campaigns had been successful and if their reliance upon social media had had an impact on their success:

Alice: I think campaigns are more successful when they unite people and when the media (news etc) report about it. Social media is a great way to reach a large audience, it's free and you are able to make your campaign worldwide. Reliance upon social media isn't necessarily a bad thing as many campaigns are successful purely by this means, but the most successful campaigns are usually because the news have picked up on it or had been a result of stories being reported in the news.

The idea that campaigns like #MeToo, #FreeTheNipple and #EverydaySexism may need to extend their reach beyond social networking sites in order to be successful is not a new one, with some arguing that campaigns which are based solely on social media platforms are a relatively weak form of activism and infamous for being fairly ineffectual (Murthy, 2018, p. 2). However, it has also been suggested that utilising social media platforms as a base for campaigns can play a role in helping a sense of community in large activist communities be developed and maintained (Murthy, 2018, p. 2). Anna made note of another positive that came with the campaigns reliance upon social media stating: *'I think feminist social media campaigns really give women the confidence to speak out about sexism, specifically sexual harassment, as social media is very accessible for a lot woman from the comfort of their own homes'*.

The idea that these feminist campaigns reliance upon social media has both good and bad sides can be said to be reflected in the responses given by participants when asked about their personal feelings relating to feminist social media campaigns. This can be illustrated through considering the general consensus had by participants being one which suggested that feminist social media campaigns overall were felt to be a good thing due to their ability to raise awareness and or bring people together, but that there were downsides which were often related to the campaign's reliance upon social media and that these campaigns would likely have more success if they had a reach which extended beyond social networking sights. In other words, whilst feminist social media campaigns are a step in the right direction, they perhaps need to be doing more in order to be truly successful.

Impact of Feminist Campaigns:

When participants were asked about whether they felt feminist social media campaigns had any impact on their own lives, five of the participants indicated that the campaigns had impacted them in some way while the remaining three felt that the campaigns had not impacted them personally. Two of the participants who felt that these campaigns had not impacted them suggested that this was due to them not being personally affected by the issues tackled by these campaigns. However, both participants did recognise that feminist social media campaigns – the #MeToo campaign specifically - could be impactful for others and that they may have felt differently had circumstances been different, alongside indicating a desire for the campaigns to be successful.

Louise: I guess in this case it is more personal in that I haven't personally experienced these issues (yet... hopefully not). I am hoping that they have had such an impact in that I would still maintain this attitude – if that makes sense (i.e. my experiences, or lack thereof, haven't changed).

Natalie: I feel it's a very important, positive campaign that gives women a voice. I think I would feel more strongly about it if I or my close friends had been personally affected by the issues the #MeToo campaign targeted.

In Louise's case it is possible to infer that whilst she herself did not feel these campaigns had personally impacted her, she felt that they may have had more of an impact if she had been affected by the issues covered by the #MeToo campaign. Furthermore, it may be suggested that Louise felt that if the #MeToo campaign was successful and had a large impact in the wider sense, she would have less chance of being affected by the issues (in the case of the #MeToo campaign, sexual harassment and assault) tackled by the campaign. Natalie on the other hand, felt that the main reason she hadn't been impacted by the #MeToo campaign was due to the fact that she nor any of her close friends had been affected by the issues covered by it. When asked about whether she felt the #MeToo campaign would have a wider impact, however, she said that she thought the campaign '*will have a lasting impact as I hope that workplaces will look at improving sexual harassment policies and even at the gender pay gap issue*'.

The third participant who felt that the campaigns had little impact on her personal life suggested that this was due to her having never participated in them:

Lisa: I don't feel they have had a huge impact on my personal life – I have been interested in the content but never posted anything related to the campaigns.

Having said this, however, Lisa did say that when it came to the #MeToo campaign '*I think I was quite surprised by the extent to which it happened and was covered up in Hollywood but I wasn't surprised that it took place in all honesty*'. Furthermore, Lisa noted that if it came to measuring which campaign had left her most surprised, it was the #EverydaySexism campaign stating that '*In a way I might have been more surprised by some of the things that I saw in the everyday sexism campaign because I came across it first and also because a lot of the things I read about were very public acts of sexism*'.

When it comes to looking at answers given by the six participants who felt they had been impacted personally by feminist social media campaigns, some common themes can be identified not only amongst those who had been impacted, but also amongst the reasons given by those who felt they had not been impacted and those who had. The first of which relates to the idea that an individual is likely feel that a campaign has impacted them if they have been personally affected by the issues tackled by the campaign. This can be seen in the response given by Alice:

Alice: With anything, I feel more strongly to a campaign if I can relate to it or have had similar experiences

Alice then went on to talk about her own experiences, suggesting that the campaigns can encourage people to speak up and spoke about how the campaigns had made her feel less alone in her experience: '*campaigns like this make you feel like you're not alone and have a support network*'. The suggestion that these campaigns encourage women to speak up about their own experiences and realise they're not alone presented itself as a common theme amongst the answers given by participants.

Anna spoke about how she felt that feminist social media campaigns had greatly increased her awareness of sexism and said '*If I was ever to encounter any type of*

discrimination based on my gender I believe I would definitely have the confidence to fight back and speak out about it as I have witnessed so many other women do so themselves through these social media campaigns'. In a similar vein, Julie also noted that these campaigns had increased her awareness of sexism, stating 'the #MeToo campaign helped me to realise that some of things I have experienced throughout life as a woman are things that I have the ability to speak up about' and that 'before I wouldn't of had the confidence or even known that some of the stuff I had experienced was worth mentioning, it helped to show that a lot of other women have had the same problems and we should all speak out about them'. Elizabeth voiced similar feelings, declaring that 'the #MeToo campaign did help me realise that things I usually take no notice of or say nothing about aren't actually appropriate and it's okay to feel objectified by these behaviours'. Before going on to note that feminist social media campaigns 'allowed me to realise I don't have to accept unwanted advances or being cat called and it's okay that these make me feel uncomfortable'. Additionally, Elizabeth inferred that prior to encountering these campaigns she had thought she was being silly and over sensitive, but 'now I realise it's how a lot of women feel'.

Holly was another participant who thought that feminist social media campaigns had given her the courage to speak up: *'I think they've made me more comfortable discussing the issues face to face with people and not backing down on what I stand for'. Furthermore, Holly stated that 'campaigns of people sharing the everyday harassment/sexism they experience helped me notice when this was happening in my own life, and begin to challenge it'. Holly also noted that the campaigns had encouraged her to be more active: 'It's given me a sense of needing to be active rather than passive and inspired me to have difficult conversations and keep working for change'.*

These last four accounts allow for us to present an argument which suggests that in some cases an individual does not necessarily need to have been directly affected by the issues tackled by a campaign in order to feel that they have been impacted by the campaign. What can be surmised, however, is that in the case of this research project, all participants felt that these campaigns were impactful or had the potential to be impactful, even if they did not impact them personally. However, some of the answers given by participants when asked about their feelings relating to specific

campaigns suggests that the nature of the message had by a campaign may affect the extent to which it is seen as important and or impactful. This can be illustrated through considering the answers given by three participants when they were asked about their feelings relating to the #FreeTheNipple campaign.

Having mentioned that she felt less strongly about the #FreeTheNipple campaign, in a follow up question Lisa was asked why she felt this way: *'I think the biggest reason is probably that I don't think it is as big of an issue as the other two, but also could be partly that I definitely don't see as much of it on social media so I haven't been exposed to the message as much'*. The suggestion that the message of the #FreeTheNipple campaign was one which had had less exposure than that of the #MeToo campaign was repeated by Alice, who said *'although I feel the #FreeTheNipple campaign could have been good it never seemed to detail its main aim, at least from what I saw on Instagram'*. It is perhaps due to the message of the #FreeTheNipple campaign being one which Alice saw as ambiguous that she saw it as a campaign that did not promote gender equality:

Alice: It never came across as a way of highlighting gender equality to me. I also think that the male and female anatomy is obviously different therefore going topless can't really be equal. I personally wouldn't be comfortable exposing my breasts online and I feel like the campaign was too sexualised to be serious. If the campaign focused more on things like breastfeeding, it could have been used to really help society be more accepting, without judgement.

Through considering how Alice included the fact that she personally would not feel comfortable exposing her breasts online, it is possible to suggest that part of the reason as to why she did not find the campaign to have impacted personally was due to her being unable to relate to what she saw to be the message of the #FreeTheNipple campaign. Something which falls in to line with the aforementioned idea that being able to relate to the message held by these campaigns can greatly increase the amount by which individuals are impacted by them. When Julie was asked about whether she felt the #FreeTheNipple campaign had had any impact on her, she said something similar:

Julie: I just think I'm completely not comfortable with my body enough to allow the #FreeTheNipple campaign to have much of a further impact on myself.

However, whilst Alice viewed the campaign to be one which was too sexualised to be taken seriously and one which did not seem to be fighting for gender equality due to the genetic differences between men and women, Julie said *'I support it fully like people should never be told what they can and cannot be comfortable with in their own body'* and that *'I do think it's extremely important in letting women know that it's okay and it should never be stigmatised'*. It is possible to see that Alice's view of the #FreeTheNipple campaign falls in to line with Alyssa Milano's criticism of the campaign– a criticism which asked why #FreeTheNipple had chosen to focus on allowing women to be topless in public without fear of being fined or jailed as a consequence when there were more important issues relating to gender equality that needed to be talked about (Milano, 2015). Julie's thoughts, meanwhile, can be said to fall more in line with the response given by the campaign's founder, Lina Esco who suggested that the #FreeTheNipple campaign was simple about women having the choice to be topless in public spaces without fear of being shamed or face legal consequences (Esco, 2015).

It is through looking at the response given by these three participants when asked about the #FreeTheNipple campaign in comparison to those given by participants when talking about the #MeToo campaign, that it is possible to suggest that the message had by the campaign plays a large role in determining how it may impact individuals. For example, the #MeToo campaign focuses on uniting victims of sexual assault or harassment, but it can be impactful for those who have not experienced sexual assault or harassment as it can increase their awareness of the issue and give them the confidence to speak up about the issue if they ever were to experience it. On the other hand, the #FreeTheNipple campaign is one which aims to allow women to be topless in public without facing legal consequences and whilst it can be said that there is a deeper message in this – one which tells women that it's their body and they can do what they want with it - it is possible to suggest that when it comes to impacting women, the only women who are likely to find that this campaign impacts them personally are those who wish to be topless in public. In other words, the issue tackled by the #MeToo campaign is one which is more widespread and the stories shared through the #MeToo movement are likely to be relatable to a larger audience than the issues covered and stories relating to the #FreeTheNipple

campaign. Due to this, it is possible to see why the #MeToo campaign is likely to have a wider way in which it may impact individuals.

Conclusion.

In conclusion, through looking at the messages had by the feminist social media campaigns that are said to belong a newly emerging fourth wave of feminism, it is possible to see that not only the form of feminist activism has changed – with these new campaigns being based online, rather than in the physical world – but the issues these new campaigns tackle are greatly different to those that belonged to the earlier waves.

For example, whilst the suffrage movement associated with the first wave of feminism sought to give women the right to vote, the #EverydaySexism project seeks to prove those who say that sexism cannot still exist, as equality has already been reached, wrong, and it does this through sharing stories of sexism submitted by individuals. Meanwhile, the #MeToo campaign is dedicated to letting victims of sexual assault or harassment know that they are not alone and give them the courage to speak up about their experiences. Something which can be said to be in contrast to the activism that took place during the second wave of feminism, during which the women's liberation movement called for more rights – an example of which might be the call they made for women's reproductive rights. The #FreeTheNipple campaign perhaps has more in common with the campaigns associated with the earlier waves, due to part of its aim being to allow women the right to be topless in public without fear of legal consequences, but the campaign also, similar to that of the #MeToo and #EverydaySexism campaigns, seeks to change attitudes relating to women's bodies and show women that their bodies do not exist for the pleasure of others. In other words, it is possible to suggest that feminist social media campaigns differ from the campaigns that belonged to the earlier waves of feminism due to their focus on shifting attitudes and raising awareness, whilst the campaigns belonging to the earlier waves focused more on women's rights. It is important to note, however, that this may be due to the first and second waves of feminism existing during a period of time in which women had significantly less rights than they do now.

The idea that the feminist social media campaigns belonging to the fourth wave of feminism focus more on shifting attitudes and raising awareness can be said to be illustrated in the responses given by the participants when asked about their feelings relating to these campaigns and the impact they felt they'd had on them. Many of the

participants indicated that they felt that through encountering these campaigns, they had become more aware of sexism and that if they were ever to encounter it, they would feel more confident about speaking out about it. In the case of this project, this is important due to its ability to answer the question of how women feel feminist social media campaigns have impacted them, and what this may mean when it comes to assessing these campaigns' ability to promote and enact change. It is possible to suggest that if feminist social media campaigns cause women to become more aware of sexism, and encourage them to talk out about it, this will likely improve the campaigns' chances of promoting and enacting change.

This does not mean, however, that it is possible to simply conclude that all feminist social media campaigns have the chance to promote and enact change simply due to their ability to raise awareness about specific issues. This is due to there being a number of factors which may influence a campaign's potential to impact those who encounter it. Identified through the analysis of the responses given by participants when asked about why they felt feminist social media campaigns had or had not impacted them, one of these factors can be said to refer to the message had by a specific campaign. For example, if a campaign tackles an issue which is very widespread and affects a large number of women, it is likely to have a higher rate of engagement – something which, in turn, will allow for it to have better results when it comes to promoting and enacting change. But if a campaign tackles an issue which, on the surface, can only be said to affect a small percentage of people, it is less likely to promote change because less people are likely to engage with it. In other words, it is possible to suggest that the message had by a feminist social media campaign greatly influences the number of individuals who engage with it, something which, in turn, will affect the campaign's chance of being successful. Another factor relates to the argument made by several participants which suggests that in order for a campaign to be truly successful, it ought to exist not only within the bounds of social media platforms. In other words, a campaign's chance of promoting and enacting change will likely be greatly increased if its reach extends beyond social media platforms.

In other words, it is possible to conclude that feminist social media campaigns have the potential ability to impact the individuals who encounter them by raising their awareness, showing them that they are not alone in their experiences and giving

them the confidence to speak out about their experiences. However, in order for a campaign to impact a large number of individuals, the message had by it has to be one which a large number of people can relate to, like the #MeToo campaign, for example, and in order for it to promote or enact any long term change, the campaign would also likely have to reach beyond the bounds of social networking sites.

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Appendix 1 – Participant Information Sheet



College of Social
Sciences

Participant Information Sheet

Study Title: Assessing the impact of feminist social media campaigns.

Researcher Details:

Name: Freda Saville

Email:

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to consider how feminist social media campaigns may impact the lives of women aged between 20 and 30 years' old who reside within the United Kingdom.

Do I have to take part?

The decision of whether you take part or not is up to you.

What will happen to me if I take part?

An interview will take place over email exchange. During this interview you will be asked about your thoughts, feelings and opinions relating to feminist social media campaigns and how you feel they have or have not impacted you in your private and public life. If at any time during the interview process you wish to stop or withdraw consent and any data previously supplied, you are welcome to do so.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Yes. When the data is presented each participant will be given a pseudonym.

Please note that assurances on confidentiality will be strictly adhered to unless evidence of wrongdoing or potential harm is uncovered. In such cases the University may be obliged to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

All personal and research data collected during the course of this research project will be destroyed when it comes to a close.

Who has reviewed the study?

This research project has been reviewed by the School of Education Ethics Forum.

Contact for Further Information

If you feel you need any kind of support during or after the interview has taken place, two support organisations are listed below.

- <https://www.headstogether.org.uk/mental-health-support/>
- <https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help-you/contact-us>
 - [Phone number: 116123](https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help-you/contact-us)
- <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/helplines/>
 - Phone number:
Call: 0300 123 3393
Text: 86463

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of this research project, you can contact the School of Social and Political Sciences Ethics Officer: Jakki Walsh email: socpol-pgt-ethics@glasgow.ac.uk.

Appendix 2 – Consent Form



University
of Glasgow
College of Social
Sciences

Consent Form

Title of Project:

Name of Researcher:

I confirm that I have read and understood the Plain Language Statement/Participant Information Sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

I consent / do not consent (delete as applicable) to interviews being audio-recorded.
(I acknowledge that copies of transcripts will be returned to participants for verification.)

I acknowledge that participants will be referred to by pseudonym.

I agree to take part in this research study

I do not agree to take part in this research study

Name of Participant Signature

Date

Name of Parent/carer (if participant is under the age of 16)

Signature Date

Name of Researcher Signature

Date

Appendix 3 – Interview Guide

Interview Questions

Have you encountered any feminist social media campaigns?

What feminist social media campaigns have you encountered?

Where did you encounter these feminist social media campaigns?

Did you have any strong opinions relating to these feminist social media campaigns when you first encountered them?

What are your personal feelings relating to feminist social media campaigns in general?

Do you feel like feminist social media campaigns have had any impact on your public and/or private life?

In what way do you feel like these feminist social media campaigns have had an impact on your public and/or private life?

Why do you feel these feminist social media campaigns have/have not had an impact on your public and/or private life?