



**Utrecht University**

**"#TeenVote2020 for all women"**

Redefining feminism through hashtag activism on Twitter

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Bachelor's Thesis  
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Period 4 of 2019-2020  
June 11<sup>th</sup> 2020

## 1 Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to expose the prominent focus on white women in feminism, and look into how hashtag feminism can be used to include a greater variety of women. Current literature (e.g. Susana Loza) acknowledges that this focus is present and that some resistance has occurred in the form of hashtag activism. #TeenVote2020 is an example of how women from different ethnicities, gender and creed, are included into this social media-based activism. For the analysis of the following research question: "How does #TeenVote2020 on the @TeenVogue Twitter contradict the focus on white women that, according to Loza, is usually associated with hashtag feminism?" I will conduct a critical discourse analysis in order to look into the inequality that is currently present in feminism. Tweets and articles that are posted by *TeenVOGUE* on Twitter are used to underpin my claims that #TeenVote2020 is a great example of how all women should be included in feminism, and that this could be achieved through hashtag feminism. I show here how the designated Voter Committee consists of demographically, ethnically, and politically diverse young people, that take part in issues that are important to them. Also, #TeenVote2020 enables women who are normally left out of the mainstream media and feminism to speak up and engage in discussions that concern the upcoming election. The significance of this study is that it moves away from the focus on white women, and implicitly offers resistance to this, by addressing issues that are focused on women of color and other minority groups.

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## 2 Introduction

After the 2016 U.S. election, the *Australian Broadcast Corporation* posted an article online that stated that over a million people between 18 and 29 years old, did not vote in the presidential elections. According to James Purtill, one of the reasons for this was that many millennials, especially minorities, did not connect with either Hillary or Trump and decided not to vote.<sup>1</sup> With the next election coming at the end of this year, teen magazine *TeenVOGUE* came up with an initiative to encourage its readers to vote. Instead of hosting a real-life protest or campaign, they chose to create the hashtag #TeenVote2020, which they post on their website and social media accounts.

The #TeenVote2020 campaign started at the end of January this year and will continue up until the presidential elections that will take place at the beginning of November 2020. *TeenVOGUE* selected 12 of their readers to become part of their first Voter Committee, which they described as a “group of demographically, ethnically, and politically diverse young people.”<sup>2</sup> This campaign can be seen as a form of online activism, which is commonly used by feminists to address issues that women may be concerned with, as Kaitlynn Mendes explains in her book *Slutwalk*.<sup>3</sup>

The media are of great importance when considering the representation of women and feminism. Angela McRobbie claims in her book *Back to Reality* that the representations in women magazines reflect the feminist discourse of society at that time.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, with the emergence of the digital era, magazines had to be adjusted and online presences were created next to the print version.<sup>5</sup> In the past decade, digital magazines are not a new phenomenon, but recently they have evolved and appear in various shapes on multiple platforms. One of these

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<sup>1</sup> James Purtill, “How One Million Young People Staying Home Elected Donald Trump,” *ABC (Australian Broadcast Corporation)*, November 11, 2016, <https://www.abc.net.au/triplej/programs/hack/one-million-young-people-staying-home-elected-donald-trump/8014712>

<sup>2</sup> Teen VOGUE staff, “Introducing the *Teen Vogue* 2020 Committee: As Part of Our #TeenVote2020 Project, 12 Young People Will Be Our Sounding Board for All Things Related to the Presidential Campaign,” *TeenVOGUE*, February 27, 2020, <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/teen-vote-2020-project>

<sup>3</sup> Kaitlynn Mendes, *Slutwalk: Feminism, Activism and Media* (Springer, 2015), 42.

<sup>4</sup> Angela McRobbie, “More! New Sexualities in Girls' and Women's Magazines.” In *Back to Reality*, by Angela McRobbie (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 191.

<sup>5</sup> Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

magazines is *TeenVOGUE*, which is mainly focused on fashion and politics, next to other subjects that are normally covered in teenage glossy magazines, such as culture and lifestyle. This connects to McRobbie's theory, as Tisha Dejmanee states that feminism, as seen in magazine culture, is shifting its focus of consumption to political action and discussion on feminist issues.<sup>6</sup>

In *Slutwalk*, Mendes refers to Jessica Taft who describes that a pressing issue among feminists is that women want expanded forms of activism, so that they can take contributions of women from different ethnicities, classes, and identities into consideration instead of just those from the white Western culture.<sup>7</sup> This raises the question, as Susana Loza puts it:

Is mainstream feminism destined to remain the terrain of white women? Or can the digital media praxis of women of color, their hashtag feminism and tumblr activism, their blogging and livejournaling, broaden and radically redefine the very field of feminism?<sup>8</sup>

I will look into the concept of hashtag feminism and particularly how #TeenVote2020 goes beyond the focus on white women as it includes 12 different people with their conceptions of feminism. Moreover, as this campaign takes place in the online sphere, I will focus on the platforms of Twitter and the articles that are included in the tweets that contain #TeenVote2020, and I will position myself in the debate around online activism that is divided between theorists that support either slacktivism or activism. I will underpin my claims that #TeenVote2020 can be seen as actual activism, which I will support by theories from Kaitlynn Mendes, Gina Masullo Chen, Paromita Pain, Briana Barner, and more. Moreover, my main focus will be the aspect of the inclusion of a variety of women in feminism, as I view this as one of the main reasons why #TeenVote2020 should not be considered as slacktivism. I therefore want to look into the following research question:

How does #TeenVote2020 on the @TeenVogue Twitter contradict the focus on white women that, according to Loza, is usually associated with hashtag feminism?

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<sup>6</sup> Tisha Dejmanee, "Popular Feminism and Teen Girl Fashion Blogs." *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 32, no. 3 (2018): 347.

<sup>7</sup> Mendes, "Slutwalk," 43.

<sup>8</sup> Susana Loza, "Hashtag Feminism, #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen, and the Other #FemFuture." *A Journal of Gender, New Media, and Technology*, no. 5 (2014): 2.

I will look into this research question employing the following sub-questions:

How are women of minorities represented in the #TeenVote2020 articles that are posted on the @TeenVOGUE Twitter?

Can #TeenVote2020, as one example of hashtag feminism, be defined as either slacktivism or activism?

In order to answer these questions as complete and accurate as possible I will first expose the current debate on feminism, more specifically the presence of feminism in the digital sphere and its affinities with activism. I will point out how theorists such as Loza have already exposed the lack of diversity in women that could be seen in mainstream feminism, and I will further look into this problem as I explain how #TeenVote2020 contradicts this focus on white Western women. Here, the first sub-question is aimed at how #TeenVote2020 includes a great variety of women and how this relates to the aspect of hashtag feminism. Second, I will underpin my claims that this campaign of hashtag feminism should be seen as a form of activism instead of slacktivism. I will discuss and answer these questions in the analysis, after which I will be able to answer my research question and thus point out the change in the field of feminism that could be seen according to #TeenVote2020.

To logically come to the answer to my research question, it is important to have a clear outline of how I will conduct my research. I will apply a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) for this research, because it is used to analyze, among other things, inequality in talk or text.<sup>9</sup> In the analysis I can thus point out the inequality that is present in the representation of women in feminism. This thesis will demonstrate how #TeenVote2020 is an example of how hashtag feminism is used by women of minority groups in order to redefine feminism by including all sorts of women.

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<sup>9</sup> Teun A. van Dijk, "Critical Discourse Analysis," in *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, ed. Deborah Tannen, Heide E. Hamilton and Deborah Schiffrin (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2015), 466.

### 3 Theoretical Framework

In order to answer the research question, it is necessary to look into the ongoing debate on the focus of white women in feminism and the lack of women of color and other minorities. To start with, it is important to gain a deeper perspective of the past and current debate on popular feminism, and how this relates to the digital forms of activism and women that have been left out. Chen, Pain and Barner already explained how online activism is becoming more common in contemporary popular feminism, but Loza and Fischer note the problem that often occurs, which is that colored women are often left out of the conversation. It is thus important to look into the debate of how women from minority groups in society are gaining ground through hashtag feminism, such as with #TeenVote2020. Moreover, I will also position myself within the debate on whether online activism should be seen as either activism or slacktivism. Here, I will look into the possibilities of hashtag feminism as form of activism, and explain further in the analysis how #TeenVote2020 also aims to make progress offline. I will therefore argue that the use of hashtags in feminism should be seen as a tool for women, especially those from minority groups, to be part of contemporary feminism.

In previous waves of feminism, Loza explains that racism “was never successfully integrated into feminist theory and practice” despite many attempts in forms of writing or demonstrations by colored women: Loza admits this is a problem that lays within the foundations of American feminism.<sup>10</sup> Inequality is thus a problem here, as white women are prominent in American feminism. However, the Internet has created the opportunity for a new and more comprehensive wave of feminism. Angela McRobbie describes how magazine content is closely related to the feminist evolution and how the content portrays issues of women in the time of publishing. According to McRobbie, magazines can therefore be used to look into the current situation.<sup>11</sup> Even though McRobbie has written this before the digital era, this could still apply now as feminism and magazine culture are moving to online spheres as well.

Popular feminism, as theorists such as Sarah Banet-Weiser<sup>12</sup> have acknowledged, is embedded within consumer culture, offline and online, and is closely tied to neoliberalism, with its main focus on the personal choice of the

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<sup>10</sup> Loza, “Hashtag Feminism,” 3.

<sup>11</sup> McRobbie, “New Sexualities,” 191.

<sup>12</sup> Sarah Banet-Weiser, *Empowered: Popular Feminism and Popular Misogyny* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2018), 13.

consumer. Thus, because popular feminism is moving into the spheres of the Internet, Banet-Weiser, Gill and Rottenberg argue that popular feminism is often linked to (feminist) practices that are easily accessible to a wide audience, such as online activism.<sup>13</sup> As women of color may be overlooked by the mainstream media or in the messages of white feminists, they are drawing to social media to connect and inform one another.<sup>14</sup>

Even though popular feminism is not a new phenomenon, it could be stated that the emergence of the digital environment led to an extension of the earlier phases of popular feminism. Thus, Hester Baer states: "The rise of digital platforms," such as Twitter and Tumblr, facilitated the widespread discussions around the many different subjects of contemporary feminism.<sup>15</sup> Gill understands this as the fourth wave of feminism that is identified by social media activism. Thus, referring back to McRobbie<sup>16</sup> and the interpretation of Gill, the hashtag #TeenVote2020 in *TeenVOGUE* does portray one of the current states of feminism: the fourth wave as social media-based feminist activism.

Loza states that, as feminist activism is present on social media platforms, it enables colored women to interact with each other from anywhere in the world.<sup>17</sup> One of the many platforms where the fourth wave of feminism could be seen in practice is Twitter. Even though Mendes states in *Slutwalk* that Penney and Dadas, and Lim have acknowledged Twitter as unsuitable for in-depth discussions among activists, it is often used alongside with other online platforms. However, Mendes refers to what Hester Baer addresses, namely that this creates the opportunity to gain additional information elsewhere or start elaborative conversations in other spheres.<sup>18</sup> *TeenVOGUE* on Twitter also takes this multi-platform approach as many of the tweets on #TeenVOTE2020 contain a link to the *TeenVOGUE* website with more thorough information in the form of an article or video.

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<sup>13</sup> Sarah Banet-Weiser, Rosalind Gill, and Catherine Rottenberg. "Postfeminism, Popular Feminism and Neoliberal Feminism? Sarah Banet-Weiser, Rosalind Gill and Catherine Rottenberg in Conversation." *Feminist Theory* 21, no. 1 (January 2020): 10.

<sup>14</sup> Sherri Williams, "Digital Defense: Black Feminists Resist Violence with Hashtag Activism." *Feminist Media Studies* 15, no. 2 (2015): 342.

<sup>15</sup> Hester Baer, "Redoing Feminism: Digital Activism, Body Politics, and Neoliberalism." *Feminist media studies* 16, no. 1 (2016): 22.

<sup>16</sup> McRobbie, "New Sexualities," 191.

<sup>17</sup> Loza, "Hashtag Feminism," 2.

<sup>18</sup> Mendes, "Slutwalk," 37.

Mendes explains that "hashtag activism" is a form of online activism, which is becoming much more common as individuals and (activist) groups are moving into the online spheres.<sup>19</sup> Baer further elaborates that digital platforms such as social media can make problems visible on a global scale as the Internet allows for a great level of dissemination and the creation of new discourses.<sup>20</sup> Not only does the online sphere (e.g. Twitter) function as a platform for organization of protests, Mendes also acknowledges it as the actual location of many protests. The #MeToo movement for example, demonstrates that the online sphere can thus function as both the space of organization and the place where the protest takes place. This could be linked to her observations that women, e.g. women of color, are often excluded from the public sphere, and were therefore forced to look for other places where they could express their voices.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, Chen, Pain and Barner write that, as hashtags are a great way of drawing attention to certain issues, many feminist activists have used hashtags as a way of "drawing women together online".<sup>22</sup> Some feminists are using hashtag activism increasingly as a way of coming together in online spaces to share their thoughts, while creating a collective experience on social media. Moreover, Chen, Pain and Barner found that using hashtags that are linked to a feminist problem would create a higher chance of offline participation.<sup>23</sup> This connects to Mia Fischer and how she states that the use of hashtags by colored women also challenges the tenacious focus on white women in feminist organizations of activism.<sup>24</sup>

Even though Tisha Dejmanee acknowledges that the word "feminism" is becoming more present in popular culture and the media, she emphasizes that this does not necessarily "guarantee progress on the ground."<sup>25</sup> This is why online activism, such as hashtag activism, is often linked to the term "slacktivism". Chen, Pain and Barner define slacktivism as "small acts on social

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<sup>19</sup> Mendes, "Slutwalk," 42.

<sup>20</sup> Baer, "Redoing Feminism," 18.

<sup>21</sup> Mendes, "Slutwalk," 43.

<sup>22</sup> Gina Masullo Chen, Paromita Pain, and Briana Barner. "Hashtag Feminism": Activism or Slacktivism?" In *Feminist Approaches to Media Theory and Research*, by Dustin Harp, Jaime Loke and Ingrid Bachmann (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 200

<sup>23</sup> Chen, Pain and Barner, "Hashtag Feminism," 201.

<sup>24</sup> Mia Fischer, "#Free\_CeCe: The Material Convergence of Social Media Activism." *Feminist Media Studies* 16, no.5 (2016): 768.

<sup>25</sup> Dejmanee, "Popular Feminism," 346.

media,<sup>26</sup> such as using a hashtag in a tweet. Mendes explains that these actions are often referred as forms of activism that may clear someone's conscience, but have no real impact.<sup>27</sup>

Despite the fact that online activism, especially through the use of hashtags, is often referred to as 'slacktivism', multiple theorists, amongst who Mendes, Chen, Pain, and Barner, disagree as they claim that action can sometimes be of greater impact online than offline. One of the reasons for this is that people are sometimes not able to participate in real-life protests, because of geographic location, money et cetera. Also, hashtags can reach anyone that has access to the Internet and people online can share thoughts that are often not covered by the mainstream media.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, even though the use of a hashtag may seem to be a small gesture, Chen, Pain and Barner have indicated that people who used hashtags were often more likely to participate in offline activism.<sup>29</sup> They support their argument using cognitive dissonance theory as proposed by Leon Festinger: he claims that "the individual strives within consistency within himself,"<sup>30</sup> so if people aim to participate in activism online, it makes sense that they act consistently and also focus on offline protests to achieve their goal.

As mentioned before, Twitter can be used as the forum for a protest, and is a great platform for women to let their voice be heard, especially when they are not able to take part in real life protests. According to Jessica Taft, theorists need to bring more attention to the forms of activism that include a variety of women instead of focusing only on Western, straight, and white women.<sup>31</sup> Chen, Pain and Barner discussed this aspect of activism:

We argue that the hashtag offers discursive power to galvanize the voiceless into intimate publics that produce a coherently robust form of activism online, particularly among those left out of the traditional mainstream media discourse, such as women of color.<sup>32</sup>

Hashtags can serve as a tool for minority groups to attract attention that could otherwise not easily be received. Visibility is thus a crucial feature here that plays

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<sup>26</sup> Chen, Pain and Barner, "Hashtag Feminism," 201.

<sup>27</sup> Mendes, "Slutwalk," 40.

<sup>28</sup> Mendes, "Slutwalk," 40.

<sup>29</sup> Chen, Pain and Barner, "Hashtag Feminism," 201.

<sup>30</sup> Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1957), 1.

<sup>31</sup> Mendes, "Slutwalk," 43.

<sup>32</sup> Chen, Pain and Barner, "Hashtag Feminism," 198.

an important role when using hashtags for an online form of activism. The usage of hashtags on Twitter can create a public that can feel connected to each other through the use of a specific hashtag. Here, the hashtag functions as a “voice for a variety of feminisms.”<sup>33</sup> This means, that a hashtag can serve as an embodiment for different purposes, women or problems.

Concerning the research question, “How does #TeenVote2020 on the @TeenVogue Twitter contradict the focus on white women that is usually associated with hashtag feminism?” there are many studies that have examined online or hashtag activism.<sup>34</sup> Hashtag activism happens almost always via activist groups or user generated content platforms, such as blogs. The fact that this is not the case with #TeenVote2020, as it is a hashtag that is proposed by a teen fashion magazine, makes this an interesting case study. However, it does connect with previous research, as theorists such as Loza, Fischer, and, Chen, Pain and Barner have pointed out that hashtags can be used by women of color to let their voice be heard, connect with each other online and try to make progress in real life.

Chen, Pain and Barner already describe how hashtags such as #YesAllWhiteWomen and #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen, criticized the feminist focus on white women and aimed at exposing other feminist issues as well.<sup>35</sup> Even though the hashtag #TeenVote2020 does not address this specifically, it does move away from the focus on white women only, by having assembled a committee that consists of many different women. Referring back to the question of Loza as seen in the introduction, #TeenVote2020 supports the concept of broadening and perhaps redefining the field of feminism, through the use of hashtag feminism by women of minority groups.

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<sup>33</sup> Chen, Pain and Barner, “Hashtag Feminism,” 200.

<sup>34</sup> e.g. Baer, “Redoing Feminism,” 18; Chen, Pain and Barner, “Hashtag Feminism,” 201; Mendes, “Slutwalk,” 42.

<sup>35</sup> Chen, Pain and Barner, “Hashtag Feminism,” 204.

## 4 Method

As Kaitlynn Mendes explains, one of the most common methods used in feminist media studies is the discourse analysis as it reflects the different “discourses of feminism over time and space.”<sup>36</sup> It is interesting here to look into the discourse of social media based feminism, and more specifically the representations of diverse women of minority groups. In order to look into how this is visible in the hashtag feminism of #TeenVote2020 on the platform of Twitter, a critical discourse analysis (CDA) has to be applied. By using this type of analysis, I will be able to answer the questions that are stated in the introduction.

Teun van Dijk defines CDA as an analytical tool to study dominance and inequality that is presented by text and/or talk. CDA can thus be used “to understand, expose and ultimately to resist social inequality.”<sup>37</sup> This fits my research, because I discuss how there is an inequality amongst representation of women in feminism. Norman Fairclough describes how in a discourse analysis, it is crucial to take social issues as a starting point when analyzing texts.<sup>38</sup> A CDA here is thus fitting, because of the critical context that is the need for activism that includes women from all classes, ethnicities and identities, as posed by Jessica Taft.<sup>39</sup> What I aim to find out with this thesis is how #TeenVote2020 serves as a form of activism that includes all sorts of women. This can be measured through close analysis of the tweets and articles that are posted by *TeenVOGUE*.

In order to find out how #TeenVote2020 represents hashtag feminism on Twitter, several tweets and the discourse around these tweets will be examined to gain better context. The main focus here will be on a sample of tweets that have been posted by the Twitter account of *TeenVOGUE* magazine that is @TeenVogue. Here, I will present examples of the ways that women from minorities practice hashtag feminism through the use of hashtags. The selected timeframe for the selected tweets range between January 21<sup>st</sup> and April 14<sup>th</sup>. The reason behind the choice for this specific timeframe is that the first tweet with #TeenVote2020 was posted on the 21<sup>st</sup> of January, and the latest tweet up until the time of writing was posted on the 14<sup>th</sup> of April. This timeframe also implies

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<sup>36</sup> Kaitlynn Mendes, “Feminism Rules! Now, Where’s My Swimsuit? ‘Re-evaluating Feminist Discourse In Print Media 1968–2008.” *Media, Culture & Society* 34, no. 5 (2012): 558.

<sup>37</sup> van Dijk, “Critical Discourse Analysis,” 466.

<sup>38</sup> Norman Fairclough, “Discourse of New Labour: Critical Discourse Analysis,” in *Discourse as data: A guide for analysis*, edited by Wetherell et al., Sage, 2001, 229.

<sup>39</sup> Mendes, “Slutwalk,” 43.

the limitations of this thesis as #TeenVote2020 will be an active topic of discussion until at least the elections that will take place in November of this year, it is not feasible for this thesis to analyze all of the tweets that include #TeenVote2020. I am also aware that this results in a relatively small amount of tweets that could be examined, which is why I will look into the articles that are included in most of the tweets as well.

The tweets from the selected timeframe will be retrieved from Twitter using the search engine. Here, I will look for all tweets from the account of @TeenVogue that include the hashtag #TeenVote2020.<sup>40</sup> The number of tweets within this timeframe comes down to that of thirty-one tweets; all of these tweets include either a link to the official *TeenVOGUE* website, a poll, or a video or picture in the attachment.<sup>41</sup> Some of the tweets are exact duplicates, so these will be left out, as they do not add any extra information. For the analysis I will also look into some of the articles, as the number of tweets is relatively small. What I will look for in the results are the members of the Voter Committee and tweets that indicate the inclusion of minority groups, such as colored women. Because race and other minority categories are of particular concern in the theoretical framework and research question, particular attention will be paid to the discussion of race in the discourse of the hashtag. This thesis will not look at the outcome of the use of the #TeenVote2020 hashtag, but more so to illustrate how this specific hashtag is an example of how contemporary online activism among young feminists may contradict some of the ideas around hashtag activism, such as the interpretation of this as slacktivism and the focus on white women.

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<sup>40</sup> [https://twitter.com/search?q=%23Teenvote2020&src=typed\\_query&f=live](https://twitter.com/search?q=%23Teenvote2020&src=typed_query&f=live)

<sup>41</sup> A list of all of the tweets, minus the duplicates, will be included in the appendix.

## 5 Analysis

In order to answer the sub-questions that were posed in the introduction, it is necessary to look at the key findings from the retrieved data from Twitter and demonstrate how these relate to what I discussed in the theoretical framework. First, I will look into the question "How are women of minorities represented in the #TeenVote2020 tweets and/or articles that are posted on the @TeenVogue Twitter?" I will link this question to the theory that concerns women of color and other minorities in the digital sphere, as discussed in the first part of the theoretical framework. Second, I will look at the question "Can #TeenVote2020, as one example of hashtag feminism, be defined as slacktivism or activism?" and connect this to the second part of the theoretical framework that concerns online activism and how women are using this.

First, I am going to look into how women of minorities are represented in the tweets and articles from *TeenVOGUE*. This will underpin the argument that I am trying to make about the shifting focus from white women, to an inclusion of women from minority groups as well. As there already are examples of hashtag activism that show resistance for this issue (e.g. #YesAllWhiteWomen), #TeenVote2020 does so more implicitly by not stating this resistance in the campaign itself. On January 21<sup>st</sup>, the first tweet was posted that included a link to an article on the *TeenVOGUE* website, introducing the twelve members of the #TeenVote2020 Voter Committee. As politics is an important topic in *TeenVOGUE*, the campaign aims to include many different views on politics by creating a Committee that includes a great variety of women. The members not only differ in their political views or preferences, but also in ethnicity, gender, and religion.<sup>42</sup> The Voter Committee will be used as a sounding board for the campaign, thus the members will be used for spreading ideas and opinions around that concern the election. They will do this by, among other things, writing articles on topics that are important to them or their community, by engaging in debates such as the impact of COVID-19 and discussing the candidates for the upcoming election.

Already in the first week of the campaign, member Ava Johnson who is an Iranian-American immigrant, opened up the topic of the tensions between the U.S. and Iran in an article that she wrote from which this tweet is an excerpt:

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<sup>42</sup> A detailed overview of the members could be found in the appendix of this thesis.

The United States claims to be fighting a global war on terrorism, but is has terrorized the people of Iran and other countries throughout the Middle East." - @AvaTJohnson #TeenVote2020<sup>43</sup>

In the article Ava elaborates on the current situation of the problems between the people of Iran and the Americans, giving voice to the Iranian-Americans that fear for their family in Iran. This tweet serves as an example of the inclusion of different ethnicities and the corresponding issues. The #TeenVote2020 campaign made room for Johnson to not just let her voice be heard on Twitter, but also to write an article on this topic that is included in the tweet for a more in-depth discussion. This also explains one of the strengths of this particular case study of hashtag feminism, as it overcomes the limitations of Twitter's character limit, as mentioned in *Slutwalk*,<sup>44</sup> and uses the *TeenVOGUE* website as a platform of further information. This tweet serves as an example of how diversity of women is represented through #TeenVote2020, as it draws the attention to a social issue that a non-Western and non-white woman is concerned with during the elections. Also, as noted in the previous paragraph, the members are used as a soundboard for propagating ideas to the readers of *TeenVOGUE*, including perspectives from many different minority groups that the diverse readers can associate with.

Second, I will be looking into the question whether #TeenVote2020 should be seen as either slacktivism or activism. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, online activism is sometimes referred to as slacktivism, as it may only clear someone's conscience instead of actually having an impact in real life. As I am not measuring the actual progress that is made by looking at the outcome of the campaign, I will define whether #TeenVote2020 can be seen as activism or not, from a different perspective. Referring back to Taft in the introduction, she argued that different forms of activism are needed in order to include contributions from women of all classes, ethnicities and identities.<sup>45</sup> And as Loza already mentioned<sup>46</sup>, this form of activism that broadens the scope of feminism could be achieved through hashtag feminism.

In an article that was referred to in one of the tweets, *TeenVOGUE* mentioned that they have "covered the notable rise in youth activism and political engagement."<sup>47</sup> This observation complies with the theory of Festinger as

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<sup>43</sup> TeenVOGUE (@TeenVogue), Twitter, 2020.

<sup>44</sup> Mendes, "Slutwalk," 37.

<sup>45</sup> Mendes, "Slutwalk," 43.

<sup>46</sup> Loza, "Hashtag Feminism," 2.

<sup>47</sup> Teen VOGUE Staff, "Vogue/IPSOS Survey: What Young People Want From 2020: As Part of Our #TeenVote2020 Project, We're Excited to Share the Following Survey of 2000+

stated by Chen, Pain, Barner, that argues that, if people are participating in the discussions online using the hashtag to indicate their involvement, they are most likely to participate in offline activism as well.<sup>48</sup> In addition, Fischer mentions that people who feel oppressed can use social media, such as with hashtag feminism, to address issues that are not covered by traditional media and “apply pressure on state institutions.”<sup>49</sup> This applies to the main goal of the campaign, which is shedding light on how “young people feel about the presidential elections, much less politics and the social issues that matter to them.”<sup>50</sup> This is especially important for the aspect of hashtag feminism, as *TeenVOGUE* is giving women with different backgrounds a chance to speak up about the issues that matter to them. This is another reason why #TeenVote2020 should not be seen as slacktivism, as it is not merely a tool to create a public, but it enables more thorough discussions instead of just using or “re-tweeting” the hashtag.

Not only should #TeenVote2020 be seen as a form of activism because it enables women to participate in hashtag feminism, but also because of the content that it provides for its readers. The #TeenVote2020 lowers barriers for a larger group of women to participate in political discussions in general. Secondly, the content enables women to speak their minds about things they find important. The articles that are posted, such as the article mentioned before by Ava Johnson, could be seen as a source of knowledge for the readers to educate themselves and help them make a decision for the presidential elections. An example of how #TeenVote2020 enables women to engage in the discussion is by asking questions in their tweets, as seen here:

10 out of 12 #TeenVote2020 committee members – including an avid conservative – agree that @BernieSanders is far and away the top pick among candidates connecting with young Democratic voters. Do you agree?  
<https://t.co/T2wW3GEsDr?amp=1><sup>51</sup>

Here, the question whether you agree or not, is inviting you to engage in the discussion. If this would trigger a reader to think about their top pick for candidate, then the reader would be more likely to act consistently and therefore take action in real life as well, according to Festinger’s theory on consistency.<sup>52</sup>

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People, ages 18-34, conducted with IPSOS,” *TeenVOGUE*, February 20, 2020, [tnvge.co/HvR1TyR](http://tnvge.co/HvR1TyR).

<sup>48</sup> Chen, Pain and Barner, “Hashtag Feminism,” 201.

<sup>49</sup> Fischer, “#Free\_CeCe,” 762.

<sup>50</sup> Teen VOGUE Staff, “Introducing the Voter Committee.”

<sup>51</sup> TeenVOGUE (@TeenVogue), Twitter, 2020.

<sup>52</sup> Festinger, “Cognitive Dissonance,” 1.

Thus, #TeenVote2020 should not be seen as slacktivism because of three reasons. First, hashtag feminism can be used to address issues that are usually not covered by the media. Second, participation in online activism indicates a higher chance of engaging in offline activism as well, and finally, it gives the opportunity for a great diversity of women to let their voices be heard.

Even though the main purpose of #TeenVote2020 is encouraging young people to vote, the hashtag also does more than just this. #TeenVote2020 opens up conversation; it explores issues that some see as controversial, and most importantly it gives voice to minority groups. These aspects of this case of hashtag feminism can encourage, among other young people, readers of *TeenVOGUE* to get inspired, think about who to vote for, see what others find important, and more. Moreover, as this is a campaign that takes place in the virtual sphere, both the organization and the actual protest, it can create a safe environment for women to address issues that they care about. Here, the hashtag can reach all women with access to the Internet, and can include women who would normally not be able to take part in a real-life protest, because of their geographical location, lack of funds or safety issues. Moreover, when looking at the following tweet from March 23<sup>rd</sup>, another relevant aspect of this online campaign becomes clear:

“I just can’t tell you how surreal it is to cast a vote – to believe in and try to contribute to the future of your nation – in a time when the future doesn’t feel tangible anymore” - @\_anniegeng #TeenVote2020  
<https://t.co/Z319uHAa73?amp=1><sup>53</sup>

Committee member Annie Geng claims here “the future doesn’t feel tangible anymore,” which refers to the current situation during the pandemic outbreak of COVID-19. During the outbreak it becomes even more important that, as Mendes also mentioned on the #MeToo movement, the online sphere does not only serve as the place of the organization of activism, but also the actual place where the activism takes place as people are currently in quarantine. The activism here is the hashtag feminism that occurs with #TeenVote2020 as information is distributed and discussions are held online by a variety of women. By creating more awareness online about the elections and therefore increasing the chance of more people voting, young people are able to vote for someone whom they think will create a future in society for them that is as safe and convenient for them as can be, this applies especially to the minorities who are left out by the current government.

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<sup>53</sup> TeenVOGUE (@TeenVogue), Twitter, 2020.

## 6 Conclusion

This thesis is aimed at exploring how women of minority groups use #TeenVote2020 as hashtag feminism. Here, I looked into how #TeenVote2020 on the @TeenVogue Twitter contradicts the focus on white women that, according to Loza, is usually associated with hashtag feminism. By using a critical discourse analysis, I wanted to look into the inequality that is present in the representation amongst women in feminism. In this thesis I discussed that even though hashtag feminism has been used by women of color before to try and overcome inequality and the focus on white women, #TeenVote2020 functions as an example of how all sorts of women could be included in feminism. #TeenVote2020 enables women of color and those that are part of other minorities to be part of the discussion that concern the upcoming presidential election of the United States.

Dejmanee argued that something is considered activism when it creates progress on the ground, and one way of measuring this is by looking at the outcome of this campaign and its effect on the election. However, I consider that there has already been made progress when you look at the inclusion of the diverse women that participate in #TeenVote2020 that are now part of the conversation in hashtag feminism. When looking at the current debate, as seen in the theoretical framework, there was a problem that some women, such as those of color, felt oppressed by the mainstream media and white women. There already were types of resistance in the form of hashtag feminism, such as #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen, but #TeenVote2020 includes all women without the hashtag itself indicating resistance. It does so more implicitly by creating a sounding board of very different women who are spreading ideas that other readers might or might not agree with.

With this campaign, *TeenVOGUE* wants their young readers to be engaged in political discussion, as to maintain its goals of getting young people to vote, as the lack of young people voting was a problem in the previous election. Also, many of the texts that I have analyzed merely focus on the aspect of colored women, while not looking into the need for other minorities to be included as well. A weak point of this thesis is that not all women who might want to take part in the discussion are able to do this, because of, for example, a lack of resources for a phone or internet subscription, or the lack of digital skills to navigate on Twitter. However, as it is an online protest, more people are able to engage because they are not limited by, for example, their geographical location or feelings of being unsafe during a real-life protest. With this campaign, *TeenVOGUE* encourages young people to vote, but it also opens up conversation,

explores sometimes controversial issues that may be ignored by the mainstream media and gives amongst others, colored women a chance to speak up.

So where are we now? I consider #TeenVote2020 a promising step towards the right direction, as they include many different women in the campaign, instead of previous hashtags that were focused more on the inclusion itself (e.g. #YesAllWhiteWomen and #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen). Here, women of multiple ethnicities, creed or gender are included as well. Besides suggesting an analysis of the impact and outcome of #TeenVote2020 for further research as I have analyzed only a very small part of the tweets due to the limited timeframe, it is also interesting to look at the importance of this protest taking place online, especially during the current situation of COVID-19.

Even though #TeenVote2020 did not change the fact that feminism still does not include all women, it does make for an excellent example of how feminism should aim to be. The fourth wave of feminism, that is social media-based activism, made room for women to express their voice online. Referring back to Loza in the introduction, hashtag feminism could redefine feminism and make sure that the field of feminism includes *all* women.

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## 8 Appendix

This appendix presents the complete dataset of the tweets that were posted by @TeenVogue on Twitter from January 21<sup>st</sup> to April 14<sup>th</sup>. Here, the tweets that were exact duplicates have been left out, and only the first and original tweet is shown. In the Method chapter I described that I would only be using the tweets that I considered relevant for supporting my thesis. The tweets or links that I have used have been made bold.

Below the table of the tweets I also put an overview of the members of the Voter Committee and how they are presenting themselves and representing minorities if applicable.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Text</i>
21 jan 2020	<b>Introducing the Teen Vogue 2020 Youth Committee! Between now and November 3, they'll serve as our sounding board on the debates, primaries, inter-candidate dust-up, and everything else</b> <b>#TeenVote2020: <a href="https://t.co/bKc50YY">tnvge.co/bKc50YY</a></b>
23 jan 2020	To kick off our #TeenVote2020 coverage, we asked our committee what has defined the Trump era for them: <a href="https://t.co/xTIZ48eZq7?amp=1">https://t.co/xTIZ48eZq7?amp=1</a> .
27 jan 2020	As 2020 Youth Voter Committee member, @AvaTJohnson, explores "the American public appears to have moved on from their initial fear of warfare and impending tragedy – except for Iranian Americans." #TeenVote2020 <a href="https://t.co/Rhixxj5JQo?amp=1">https://t.co/Rhixxj5JQo?amp=1</a>
28 jan 2020	<b>"The United States claims to be fighting a global war on terrorism, but it has terrorized the people of Iran and other countries throughout the Middle East."</b> - @AvaTJohnsen #TeenVote2020 <a href="https://t.co/Rhixxj5JQo?amp=1">https://t.co/Rhixxj5JQo?amp=1</a>
20 feb: 2020	<b>As part of our #TeenVote2020 project, we partnered with @Ipsos to conduct a survey of 2,000+ people ages 18-34. We wanted to know more about what issues are most important to you, how you identify politically, and what is going to motivate you to vote:</b> <b><a href="https://t.co/HvR1TyR">tnvge.co/HvR1TyR</a></b>
20 feb 2020	Respondents agree that the top 3 most important issues for American political leaders to address are healthcare, the economy, and education – even if they disagree on the specific policy proposals that best address those issues. <a href="https://t.co/HvR1TyR">Tnvge.co/HvR1TyR</a> #TeenVote2020
20 feb 2020	"Abortion is health care. And access to reproductive health care – including safe, legal abortion – is key to young people deciding our own futures and planning our lives." #TeenVote2020 <a href="https://t.co/b8ILh10Pqx?amp=1">https://t.co/b8ILh10Pqx?amp=1</a>
20 feb 2020	Nearly 3 in 4 agree that our future is at risk, due to climate change AND 69% said they don't think the government will act quickly enough to stop it... Broken down by political affiliation <a href="https://t.co/PGBmyC7">tnvge.co/PGBmyC7</a> #TeenVote2020
20 feb 2020	Plans to reduce student debt, tackle climate change, and support for #MedicareForAll – !! all progressive policies !! – rank among the top issues that would boost support for 2020 presidential candidates: <a href="https://t.co/PGBmyC7">tnvge.co/PGBmyC7</a> & #TeenVote2020
20 feb 2020	What's the top issue that would boost YOUR support for a 2020 candidate? #TeenVote2020 Protect US manufactures (2.1%) Reduce student debt (16%) Support medicare for all (43.3%) Tackle climate change (38.6%)

20 feb 2020	Looking beyond the issues, it appears that young people (especially Democrats) do NOT want to see Donald Trump back in office! Tnvge.co/HvR1TyR #TeenVote2020
20 feb 2020	For the rest of our findings, dig into the Teen Vogue x @IpsosUS Young Voter Survey results #TeenVote2020 <a href="https://t.co/pLzvuUCGR8?amp=1">https://t.co/pLzvuUCGR8?amp=1</a>
20 feb 2020	To reiterate, as @SatansJacuzzi explores, young people across the political spectrum agree on a lot! #TeenVote2020 <a href="https://t.co/hVTH2A3EJY?amp=1">https://t.co/hVTH2A3EJY?amp=1</a>
21 feb 2020	And as @brittneymac15 points out, abortion is healthcare – and reproductive rights are the intersection of everything young people do care about. #TeenVote2020 <a href="https://t.co/PSA9910C91?amp=1">https://t.co/PSA9910C91?amp=1</a>
22 feb 2020	"Millenials and Gen Z are overall much more liberal than other adults #TeenVote2020 <a href="https://t.co/hVTH2A3EJY?amp=1">https://t.co/hVTH2A3EJY?amp=1</a>
24 feb 2020	Despite being told these are "divided times," we found an unexpected amount of consensus on priorities, issues, and policies you might not expect as part of out #TeenVote2020 project with Ipsos. <a href="https://t.co/to3oXHAILZ?amp=1">https://t.co/to3oXHAILZ?amp=1</a>
27 feb 2020	<b>10 out of 12 #TeenVote2020 committee members – including an avid conservative – agree that @BernieSanders is far and away the top pick among candidates connecting with young Democratic voters. Do you agree? <a href="https://t.co/T2wW3GEdr?amp=1">https://t.co/T2wW3GEdr?amp=1</a></b>
27 feb 2020	Which 2020 candidate do YOU think is doing the best job connecting to young voters? #TeenVote2020 Bernie: 68.8% Biden 3.7% Buttigieg 3.8% Warren 23.7%
28 feb 2020	What's been the WILDEST moment of the 2020 election so far? Watch as the #TeenVote2020 committee weighs in! <a href="https://t.co/T2wW3GEdr?amp=1">https://t.co/T2wW3GEdr?amp=1</a>
23 mrt 2020	"I just can't tell you how surreal it is to cast a vote – to believe in and try to contribute to the future of your nation – in a time when the future doesn't feel tangible anymore" - @_anniegeng #TeenVote2020 <a href="https://t.co/Z319uHAa73?amp=1">https://t.co/Z319uHAa73?amp=1</a>
24 mrt 2020	"I just don't even know what the next week, or even the next day, holds for me. The #TeenVote2020 committee on how #COVID19 has upended their lives. <a href="https://t.co/EjAz0RcxIO?amp=1">https://t.co/EjAz0RcxIO?amp=1</a>
14 apr 2020	"Such a disappointment." "War." "Petty." "Passionate." "Genuine." " Necessary." "Old." "Old." "Old." Watch as the #TeenVote2020 Committee sounds off on some of the biggest names in US politics. <a href="https://t.co/47jXoYfpS7?amp=1">https://t.co/47jXoYfpS7?amp=1</a>

Source: "#TeenVote2020," Twitter, accessed April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020,

[https://twitter.com/search?q=%23Teenvote2020&src=typed\\_query&f=live](https://twitter.com/search?q=%23Teenvote2020&src=typed_query&f=live)

Name	Age	Gender	Minority	Political association	Prospects of election
Ilhan Adan	18	She/Hers	African-American/Muslim	Leftist/Democrat	Looking forward to vote
Hanna Askarpour	16	She/Hers	Muslim	Economically left, socially libertarian, Democrat	See what Democratic candidates bring to the table
Annie Geng	21	She/Hers	Chinese-American	Liberal	Watch people of

			immigrant		color build a powerful voice
Ava Johnson	17	She/Hers	Iranian-American	Leftist and Democratic Socialist	Fearful of propaganda impact on elections and family in Iran
Jillian Kinder	22	She/Hers	Unstated	Young Conservative	More Republic women elected
Julissa Lagunes	21	She/Hers	Unstated	Does not want to label as left or right	Wants youth to vote
Kanyinsola Oye	19	She/Hers	African-American	Left Socialist, Democrat	Candidates to care about the Black community
Denisce Palacios	22	She/Hers	Latina immigrant	Progressive out of necessity	Fear or re-election of Trump and deportation
Ophelia Kai Pfeifer	19	They/Them	Bisexual and non-binary	Government that provides safety	Voting Trump out of office
Ruth Samuel	20	She/Hers	African-American	Democrat	Wanting to vote
Kiden-Aloyse Smith	18	She/Hers	African-American	Christian Liberal	Being able to vote
Syd Stephenson	22	They/Them	Disabled, transgender, non-binary lesbian	Leftist	Fear of re-election of Trump as he harms transgenders with his policies

Source: Teen VOGUE staff, "Introducing the *Teen Vogue* 2020 Committee: As Part of Our #TeenVote2020 Project, 12 Young People Will Be Our Sounding Board for All Things Related to the Presidential Campaign," *TeenVOGUE*, February 27, 2020, <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/teen-vote-2020-project>