

**#BRINGBACKOURGIRLS:
SOLIDARITY OR SELF-INTEREST?**
ONLINE FEMINIST MOVEMENTS
&
THIRD WORLD WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

#BRINGBACKOURGIRLS: SOLIDARITY OR SELF-INTEREST?

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BY

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Due to global interconnectedness and the rise of social media, humanitarian communication is said to have shifted from its groundings in the Politics of Pity towards Ironic Solidarity. Ironic Solidarity maintains participants act not to alleviate distant others' suffering, but to perform their own identities; thus, perpetuating the very problems they aim to eliminate. This thesis seeks to examine this claim in the context of Online Feminist Movements, using the #BringBackOurGirls movement as a case study. This hashtag rose to global prominence following the mass abduction of female students in Chibok, Nigeria, by the militant group, Boko Haram. This movement is examined in-depth to determine what led to its global prominence. Also examined is the impact of social media and mainstream media on the movement; the influence of its feminist ideals; and whether participants' actions were solidary or in self-interest. To address these aims, a selection of relevant Twitter tweets and mainstream media newspaper articles from four distinct periods were analysed through Critical Discourse Analysis. The results of this study found overarching discourses of the #BringBackOurGirls movement that suggest it primarily relied upon power dynamic discourses, which served to enforce the hegemonic relationship between the west and global south. Additionally, such power dynamic discourses within a third world feminist movement demonstrated that western first world feminism had usurped the movement, thereby further disenfranchising third world women. The power dynamic discourses showed the presence of the Politics of Pity within this humanitarian movement, showcasing that this remains a firm feature of humanitarian communication. However, Ironic Solidarity was additionally present, indicating that the two humanitarian communication approaches can exist concurrently. The presence of Ironic Solidarity also indicated that participants acted primarily in self-interest in their engagement with the #BringBackOurGirls movement.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AJ	Al Jazeera
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
MSM	Mainstream Media
OFM	Online Feminist Movement
OSM	Online Social Movement
TG	The Guardian
TNYT	The New York Times

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“Bring Back Our Girls”

This phrase was a plea for support. A cry for missing daughters and sisters. A display of hope at a desperate time.

The mass abduction of 276 female students in Chibok, Nigeria, at the hands of the militant group, Boko Haram, saw these four words reverberate around the world. “Bring Back Our Girls” united the global public in a quest for the freedom of the Chibok students – a pure humanitarian effort. Or, was it?

This research sought to examine humanitarian communication within the context of Online Feminist Movements (OFMs) to assess the mode through which participants contributed, and what impacts such participation might generate. The case study utilised in this research is the #BringBackOurGirls movement.

#BringBackOurGirls was an OFM that arose in May 2014, following the abduction of 276 female students in Chibok, Nigeria (Smith, 2015). The Nigerian-based militant group, Boko Haram, claimed responsibility for their abduction and stated that their opposition to western education, particularly for women, fuelled their actions (Oyewole, 2016). The perceived inaction of the Nigerian government saw the Nigerian public flock to social media, and share #BringBackOurGirls to rouse awareness for the

abducted students (Maxfield, 2015). #BringBackOurGirls amassed international support and came to represent feminist ideals for many.

The rise of social media has influenced the way individuals communicate, and information is disseminated (Ahmed *et al.*, 2016). From the perspective of humanitarian communication, social media have helped to trigger a shift from the Politics of Pity to an era of Ironic Solidarity (Chouliaraki, 2010). The Politics of Pity portrays distant others as victims to be pitied (Chouliaraki, 2010). Such representation disempowers distant others and hinders the formation of moral bonds on behalf of the spectator (Littler, 2008; Chouliaraki & Orgad, 2011). By contrast, Ironic Solidarity shifts towards a gaze of self-empowerment, where spectators choose to act on another's suffering due to the way it might benefit them personally (Chouliaraki, 2013a). However, such solidarity is considered ironic because it disregards the humanity of the sufferer and serves to perpetuate the injustices it aims to erase (Chouliaraki, 2011; Eagleton, 2009). As individuals become increasingly enamoured with self-expression, the adoption of cosmopolitan identities, in relation to distant suffering, could be harmed (Chouliaraki, 2008). Therefore, research concerning how individuals act within the realm of humanitarian communication is an important area of study.

Social media have also influenced feminist processes, with online platforms enabling greater dissemination and contributing to the development of diverse feminist identities (Keller, 2012). Little scholarly attention has been dedicated to interplay(s) between humanitarian communication and OFMs; this research sought to amend this gap.

#BringBackOurGirls is representative of a relatively unexamined grouping: third world women. There has been minimal academic attention given to third world women, particularly concerning their conceptions of feminism (Mohanty *et al.*, 1991). #BringBackOurGirls represented a feminist movement born out of the third world and embraced by the first world (Khoja-Moolji, 2015). As such, this research aimed to examine how such diffusion influenced the movement and impacted its core subjects – third world women.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1) How did interaction between mainstream media and social media shape the #BringBackOurGirls movement?

This research hypothesised social media was responsible for the mainstream media's (MSM) coverage of the #BringBackOurGirls movement. Such a result would signal a shift in MSM agenda-setting.

- 2) Were there differences in attitudes/sentiments between mainstream media and social media coverage of the #BringBackOurGirls movement? What do such differences, or similarities, indicate?

If social media were responsible for setting MSM's agenda, presumably the attitudes/sentiments expressed in MSM would be in alignment with those of social media. Again, such a result would indicate a shift in media agenda-setting.

- 3) What contributed to making the #BringBackOurGirls movement so globally relevant?

This research posited that audiences engaged with #BringBackOurGirls to such a degree due to the way it was presented. This research hypothesised that #BringBackOurGirls was presented through a lens of humanitarian communication that was counterproductive to the adoption of cosmopolitan identities. This approach made participants' involvement simple, but ultimately of little benefit.

- 4) What were the incentives behind people's involvement in the #BringBackOurGirls movement? Were participants acting in solidarity or self-interest?

This research hypothesised that individuals were incentivised to act in the #BringBackOurGirls movement for self-serving reasons, as per Ironic Solidarity. The research suggested that participant's actions were not solidary but instead propelled by self-interest.

- 5) What role, if any, did the inclusion of western first world feminism play in the #BringBackOurGirls movement? In what way(s) might this impact upon third world women?

Despite its global south origins, this research posited the #BringBackOurGirls' movement did not carry feminist traits from the third. Rather, those traits were replaced with first world feminism as the movement moved to an international audience. Thus, this research hypothesised that western first world feminism played an enormous role in

the #BringBackOurGirls movement, potentially resulting in detrimental effects on third world women.

METHODOLOGY

The primary mode of analysis for this research was Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) influenced by Fairclough's (1992; 1995; 2003) three-step framework. A sample of Twitter tweets and newspaper articles concerning the Chibok abduction and #BringBackOurGirls were analysed to identify the overarching discourses. CDA reveals how language is used and also abused in society – essentially, how language is used to create meaning (Widdowson, 1998). In the context of #BringBackOurGirls, a movement conducted online, and in MSM, the in-depth view CDA provides was beneficial in addressing the research questions. CDA is interested in how language contributes to, or perpetuates, power dynamics in society; as such, hegemonic forces are a key consideration for critical discourse analysts. Given this research followed a movement from the global south that spread to the west, CDA's ability to reveal and explain power dynamics was of great value. An additional quantitative analysis was employed to track the hashtag's trajectory and MSM coverage.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Chapter Two, Literature Review, provides a review of the literature associated with this research. The chapter begins with how Boko Haram rose to power in Nigeria, and then examines the associated impacts of their reign of terror. #BringBackOurGirls is then discussed in-depth, with particular attention paid to its feminist undertones. A section on feminism explores feminism's history and defines two branches that are significant in this research: western first world feminism, and third world feminism.

Online Social Movements (OSMs) are then examined; particularly social media's rise and the impact(s) this might render within humanitarian communication. MSM's response to a more technologised and globalised media sphere is also considered. The final section introduces solidarity and its importance within humanitarian communication. Presenting cosmopolitanism and its relevance, before addressing the Politics of Pity and Ironic Solidarity.

Chapter Three, Methodology, outlines the methodological approach of this research. CDA is discussed in greater depth, and its selection justified. What is to be analysed, and how it was collected and selected, is also addressed. A background of the selected MSM outlets is provided, and the Twitter data explained. A timeframe for this research is established, with four key periods selected for analysis. The manner the analysis will be performed is detailed, with the three-step framework proposed by Fairclough (1992; 1995; 2003) adopted in this research.

Chapter Four, Results, presents the results of this research. The results are presented per the time periods selected for analysis. The overarching discourses are introduced and explained.

Chapter Five, Discussion, interprets and discusses the results. This chapter directly references the research questions and seeks to answer them entirely. The relevant literature is revisited to contextualise the results. This chapter refers to the hypotheses of this research and interprets the relevance of the overarching findings.

Chapter Six, Conclusion, concludes this research and provides an overview of all discussed. This chapter seeks to identify any research limitations and offers suggestions for further research in this area.

This thesis aimed to study the #BringBackOurGirls movement to identify potential patterns within humanitarian communication as a result of widespread social media use. Particularly of interest were the impacts this movement might have on feminism, especially in the global south where feminism is traditionally comprised of broader aims. MSM's convergence with social media texts was examined to observe how traditional media might be adjusting in response to the new media dawn. However, the overarching goal of this research is to identify how individuals participated within #BringBackOurGirls and whether their actions can be considered solidarity or self-interest. In addressing this question, this research will be empowered to offer suggestions that might dissuade the future conduction of humanitarian action through OSMs or, in fact, encourage such undertakings.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

BOKO HARAM

A TUMULTUOUS HISTORY

Marred by decades of ethnic, religious, and economic tension, Nigeria is a nation with a complex history (Comolli, 2015: 23; Salaam, 2012). An outsider's perspective might attribute Nigeria's history of communal conflicts, and ethnoreligious violence, to tensions between citizens who are separated by their differences (Joy, 2015: 8). However, Walker (2012: 2) argues, much, if not all, of Nigeria's difficulties, stem from inherent weaknesses within political institutions and security services. According to the Failed States Index, an annual report published by the Fund for Peace, Nigeria is a nation "on the brink of total collapse" (Maiangwa *et al.*, 2012: 43). The ghosts of Nigeria's colonial past and a huge rift between the North and South serve to intensify Nigeria's struggles (Salaam, 2012: 147).

In response to the variety of endemic issues within Nigeria, uprisings have become commonplace (Adesoji, 2010: 103). Particularly in northern Nigeria, where the widespread mobilisation of faith-based identities often erupts into violence (Warner, 2012). Serving to highlight differences further and encourage communal violence, such religious groupings are especially popular with youth. Not only do they bring similar peoples together, they provide an ostensible explanation for the failures within Nigeria,

and offer alternatives (Zenn, 2014: 113). Such religious uprisings provide what Nigeria's government has failed to, and, as a result, the nation's "nascent democracy" is being tested (Anyadike, 2013: 21). With corruption rife, infrastructure decrepit, and economic opportunity stagnant, Nigeria is in a state of disrepair (Walker, 2012). This position has made Nigeria susceptible to criminal and terrorist activity, with perhaps the most notable example being the Islamic militant group, Boko Haram (Mainagwa *et al.*, 2012: 43; Salaam, 2012).

FORMATION OF BOKO HARAM

Boko Haram is a terrorist organisation, which self-identifies as a "religious revolution" (Voll, 2015: 1183). The name Boko Haram, translated as "the sacrilegious book" (Joy, 2015: 4), reflects the group's stance against western education; although the organisation officially calls itself *Jama 'atu Ablis Sunna await wal-jihad*, meaning "People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad" (Joy, 2015: 4). Founded in 2002 by Mohammed Yusuf, an Islamic cleric, the group was initially only active in Borno state; however, it has since spread throughout much of northern Nigeria (Salaam, 2012: 148).

Yusuf rose to notoriety in Borno state due to his literal and puritanic interpretations of the Qur'an; and through his popularity, he became a religious scholar of sorts (Voll, 2015: 1183). The initial intentions of Boko Haram were simply for the group to preach and teach Islam, however, under Yusuf's leadership, Boko Haram became extremist in nature (Khan & Hamidu, 2015: 23). Yusuf's teaching was captivating to audiences, as he reinforced beliefs western education was corrupting Islamic morals, and perpetuating inequality over Muslims (Zenn, 2014: 104). In placing blame on the

Nigerian government, and offering solutions to the social, political, and economic troubles plaguing northern Nigeria, Yusuf amassed a large following (Zenn, 2014).

Boko Haram's agenda is composed of four key features: opposition to western education; the use of jihad to create change; opposition to the modern statehood of Nigeria; and the desire to establish an Islamic caliphate (Azumah, 2015: 34; 42). Boko Haram resolved to establish an ideal Islamic society, a true caliphate, to combat the "moral and social decadence" they perceived to plague Nigerian society (Maiangwa *et al.*, 2012: 45; Voll, 2015: 1191). However, Boko Haram's envisioned society could only be achieved through the "establishment of unadulterated Sharia law" (Maiangwa, 2012: 42). While Sharia law was implemented in twelve Nigerian states in 1999, Boko Haram deemed it "insufficient" (Pham, 2012: 2) and sought to install a "pure" version of Sharia law (Comolli, 2015: 42). In the meantime, however, the group used the government-mandated version of sharia law to propagate their ideology; in some instances publically stoning and flogging individuals they accused to have violated moral, religious, and legal norms (Joy, 2015: 6).

Boko Haram justifies their violence through a "narrow, literalist interpretation of Islam" (Voll, 2015: 1190). While Boko Haram is considered to be a sectarian organisation, as the group's ideology stems from elements of the Qur'an, numerous Islamic leaders and scholars have chastised the group (Joy, 2015: 4). However, Boko Haram readily attacks decriers and has claimed responsibility for more Muslim deaths than Christian deaths (Walker, 2012: 2). The group has even murdered "venerated Islamic figures" (Siollun, 2015: n.p), such as emirs; an action Siollun (2015) claims would be "the equivalent of a Christian rebel killing a priest" (n.p). It is clear the group's ideology is not representative of the view of the majority of Muslims in Nigeria, and the

majority of Nigerian citizen's religious views do not align with those of Boko Haram (Rheault & Tortora, 2012).

While Boko Haram's interpretations of Islam and jihad differ immensely from historical Muslim understandings, Voll (2015) argues the group's actions are nothing new and are recognisable amongst "the long traditions of militant jihad in West and Central Africa" (1190). Umar (2012: 119) claims Boko Haram's rise to power is inextricably linked to religious fanaticism. According to Umar (2012), it is only under the particular 'brand' of Islam that Yusuf promoted that Boko Haram drew significant support. Salaam (2012) counters this view, arguing Boko Haram's insurgency cannot solely be blamed on religious fanaticism. Instead, it can be attributed to:

the combination of dynamic risk factors in the absence of protective factors, which make vulnerable young people turn into religious radicals or fanatics when seeking answers to the inadequacies in the polity and society at large (Salaam, 2012: 160).

With a host of issues present in Nigeria, such as abject poverty, formal education deficiency, unemployment, and corruption, feelings of frustration and alienation have emerged within the populous (Joy, 2015: 8-9). Boko Haram seemingly emerged at the right time and profited from these failures (*The Economist*, 2011). As such, Boko Haram's recruits have not simply been swayed by religious fanaticism, but by a combination of forces that have made violent extremism an attractive option. Pürçek (2014: 7) explains, while Boko Haram might describe themselves as a solely religious movement, political and economic motivations are interwoven in their campaign. To attribute Boko Haram's uprising to merely one factor would be simplistic. Elements of Nigeria's economic and political conditions, a colonial past, and Islamic history have all played a role in shaping Boko Haram into the group it has become (Thomson, 2012: 57; Walker, 2012: 13).

DEATH & REGENERATION

In spite of their radical ideology and accompanying violence, Boko Haram was said to have existed in a state of relative calm within Nigeria; however, this came to an end after riots in 2009 (Pham, 2012: 3). The riots began after a security raid on a Boko Haram compound, and in response, Boko Haram led a series of “reprisal attacks” against police, spanning four Nigerian states (Pham, 2012; Aliyu *et al.*, 2015). Police reacted aggressively, storming Boko Haram strongholds, and capturing important members of the group, including Boko Haram’s leader, Mohammed Yusuf (Adesoji, 2010; Pham, 2012).

Under police custody, Yusuf was subjected to beatings and interrogations, before being shot while “attempting to escape” (Pham, 2012: 3). Evidence later contradicted the police version of events. Yusuf was found to have been handcuffed at the time of his death, making his demise an “extrajudicial execution” (Maiangwa, 2012: 47) by Nigerian security forces. With their leader murdered, alongside several other prominent figures within the group, Boko Haram appeared defeated (Campbell, 2011; Thomson, 2012). Following the riots, Boko Haram receded from public attention; many believed the group was hopelessly fractured, and probably finished (Pham, 2012). As the group’s defeat was celebrated, Boko Haram was undergoing a major transformation, with the notoriously militant Abubakar Shekau now at the helm (Zenn, 2014: 107). A man feared, even by fellow Boko Haram members, due to his unpredictable temper and creative methods of torture (Smith, 2015). Far from being the final nail in Boko Haram’s coffin, Yusuf’s death proved to be “the trigger that enabled Shekau to mobilize his mentor’s followers to wage an insurgency” (Zenn, 2014: 113). The brazen murders of Boko Haram’s elite gave the movement their “martyrs” (Campbell, 2011: n.p), and intensified the belief the Nigerian state systematically victimised Muslims (Thurston, 2016: 17). In

the wake of 2009's harsh reprisals against Boko Haram, the group re-emerged in 2010, with greater reach and unprecedented levels of violence (Pham, 2012: 7).

BOKO HARAM TODAY

In 2010 Boko Haram sought to avenge the killing of their leader by subjecting northern Nigeria to a “campaign of terror” (Azumah, 2015: 42). The attacks were more daring and lethal than Boko Haram's previous *modus operandi* (Thomson, 2012). Boko Haram now resembled a terror cell, more than simply an armed militant movement. Implementing tactics, such as direct armed confrontation; drive-by shootings; targeted assassination; use of improvised explosive devices; suicide bombings; mass abduction; and sexual violence against women, enabled Boko Haram to gain momentum, and secure territory in northern Nigeria (Aliyu *et al.*, 2015: 312-313; Azumah, 2015: 42). Boko Haram's sudden strength and confidence struck fear into the populations of northern Nigeria. An attack on a fortified United Nations compound in 2011 resulted in the loss of 20 lives and cemented Boko Haram as a serious threat (Thomson, 2012: 47). In 2015 Boko Haram pledged allegiance to the Islamic State (Thurston, 2016), the so-called “poster boys of extremism and radicalisation” (Voll, 2015: 1183). As of early 2016, Boko Haram has taken responsibility for over 15,000 deaths in Nigeria and the surrounding countries of Niger, Chad, and Cameroon (Thurston, 2016: 5). The sheer quantity of death and suffering Boko Haram has caused over the past five years is “mind-boggling” (Siollun, 2015: n.p). Clearly, the group is resilient and adaptive (Thurston, 2016), yet the Nigerian government is reluctant to recognise Boko Haram as both a national and transnational problem (Pham, 2012: 1; 7).

RESPONSE OF NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT

In their attempts to weaken and destroy Boko Haram over the past few years, the Nigerian government has, ironically, helped the insurgency to flourish (Siollun, 2015). What began as a small, isolated, and poorly armed group of religious fanatics has since grown into “a perpetrator of death and destruction” (Comolli, 2015: 5). The tactics employed by the Nigerian government to combat the insurgency have proven to be counterproductive (Aliyu *et al.*, 2015: 315); with some attributing this to policymakers’ tendencies to treat Boko Haram solely as a security threat, and not acknowledge the group’s other dimensions (Thurston, 2016: 5; Solomon, 2012: 94). Zenn (2014: 114) agrees, claiming even if the Nigerian government can overpower Boko Haram militarily, without addressing the ideology that led to the group’s growth, another incarnation is likely to emerge. Indeed, it is possible that Nigeria can quash Boko Haram through military might alone, but, as evidenced by the death of Mohammed Yusuf, “state violence fuels [Boko Haram’s] narrative of victimhood” (Thurston, 2016: 28). Former Nigerian President, Goodluck Jonathan, undertook “an exclusively security-driven strategy for dealing with Boko Haram” (Campbell, 2011: n.p) from the outset of his term, commencing in April 2011. This was a move in alignment with the general tone of the Nigerian government, who, as Siollun (2015) puts it “have been looking for a silver bullet solution to crush the insurgency with a single blow” (n.p). However, Boko Haram, like all insurgencies, cannot be solved with mere military action. It is a terrorist group representative of social, political, and economic issues, and, as such, will not be overcome until these issues are addressed (Siollun, 2015). Economic liberation of the population is crucial in overcoming the Boko Haram insurgency. It is through “drip-fed investments on tangible projects” (Siollun, 2015: n.p) that young people will be disincentivised from joining the group, and Boko Haram will be undermined.

CONCLUSION

Rising out of a fractured nation, Boko Haram initially appeared an innocuous religious movement. Relegated to a few northern Nigerian regions, bearing crude arms, and composed of small numbers, the threat level the group posed was minimal. However, the extreme religious views of the sect, paired with seemingly unsolvable social, political, and economic issues within the nation, saw Boko Haram grow before transitioning towards violence (Loimeier, 2012). The inappropriate responses of the Nigerian government and security forces aided the group in this transition towards unprecedented levels of violence (Voll, 2015). Though driven by Islamic extremism, Boko Haram is not merely a religious uprising; the group provides a case study of what governments should *not* do when faced with an insurgency (Siollun, 2015). While Boko Haram has become a significant threat in Nigeria, in contrast to other major terror cells known the world over, this insurgency has flown somewhat under the global radar. However, this all changed on 14 April 2014, when Boko Haram abducted 276 female students in the northern Nigerian city of Chibok (Oyewole, 2016: 25).

#BRINGBACKOURGIRLS

ABDUCTION

Close to midnight on 15 April 2014, the students of the Government Girls Secondary School, in Chibok, northeastern Nigeria, had turned in for the night (Smith, 2015: 173; Pendergrass, 2015: 63). The school for teenage girls was comprised of both Christian and Muslim pupils, who had spent the day studying for their upcoming exams (Oyewole, 2016). As the students lay sleeping in their dormitory, men from the militant group Boko Haram made their way towards the town, dressed in military uniforms, and brandishing weapons (Smith, 2015). Overwhelming government soldiers with a sudden onset of shooting, the members of Boko Haram first targeted Chibok's government buildings, before arriving at the boarding school (Smith, 2015: 175). Boko Haram gathered students under a deceptive guise; witnesses claimed "They [said] to us, 'Don't worry, don't worry, come. We are security, we are soldiers, nothing can happen to you. We are here'" (Smith, 2015: 180). After gathering over 300 students, Boko Haram left Chibok, guns blazing, alerting their victims to the fact they were not in safe hands. While some of the kidnapped managed to escape, by jumping from trucks as Boko Haram sped away, 276 students were not as fortunate (Pendergrass, 2015: 63).

As Smith (2015) states, there are numerous explanations behind why Boko Haram conducted the mass abduction. The group is opposed to western education, especially for women. However, from a strategic perspective, the abduction also served as a way to embarrass the Nigerian government and demonstrate Boko Haram's newfound strength (183). By 5 May, with the students still missing, and little known about their abduction, the first claims of responsibility arrived (186). Boko Haram's

leader since 2009, Abubakar Shekau, released a video message detailing the students' abduction. In the message, Shekau referred to the kidnapped students as "slaves" (186) and threatened to sell them. Condemnation of western education by Shekau was also prominent in the video message (187). The Nigerian community was shocked, not only by Boko Haram's threats but by their government, who appeared indifferent to the entire situation (Pendergrass, 2015: 64). Blatant misinformation and limited resources devoted to the rescue mission showcased the government's lacklustre response (Smith, 2015).

OUTRAGE & ACTION

The Chibok abduction sent shockwaves through the Nigerian populous. The threat of Boko Haram now loomed larger than ever before, particularly in northern Nigeria. However, the Nigerian government had not responded in the manner that it had been expected to, and the abduction had "barely registered on the world's radar" (Smith, 2015: 183). The government seemed reluctant to launch a full-scale search for the missing students; the whole situation reeked of mismanagement, without even reliable estimations as to the number of abductees (183). The lacklustre response prompted outrage, and at a 4 May public address regarding the abduction, a Nigerian lawyer, Ibrahim Abdullahi, began tweeting the quotes of speakers (Maxfield, 2015). Abdullahi included the phrase "Bring Back Our Girls" (Maxfield, 2015: n.p) in hashtag form. #BringBackOurGirls started to gain notoriety in Nigeria, as more people became aware of the situation. As the hashtag spread across national borders, it reached *viral* status (Carter Olson, 2016). No longer relegated to the sidelines of Nigerian public discourse, the abduction had become a worldwide matter.

Within two weeks of its creation, Abdullahi's #BringBackOurGirls had been tweeted more than 1.3 million times (Oyewole, 2016: 27). The hashtag ignited a *cyber-activism* that brought the issue of the abduction, and Boko Haram, to international attention. #BringBackOurGirls became a rallying cry for the kidnapped students, with prominent celebrities and political figures tweeting the hashtag (Chiluwa & Ifukor, 2015: 268; Dixon, 2014: 35). *The Washington Post* reported that the hashtag had “now spread into a truly global social media phenomenon” (Taylor, 2014 cited in Carter Olson, 2016: 772-773). The plight of the kidnapped students and Boko Haram's violence was now prominent on the international political agenda, and the Nigerian government could no longer stand idle (Carter Olson, 2016: 773).

On the back of national and international pressure, the Nigerian government launched a rescue mission. Security agencies deployed search parties in the form of “a special forces team, the air force and local vigilante groups” (Oyewole, 2016: 27). The government efforts, however, appeared to be too little, too late (Smith, 2015). With no sign of the missing students and a shortage of assets to aid in locating them, the search bore few results. The futile pursuit continued, and while some of the missing students did emerge, their freedom was attributed to “lucky escapes” (Maxfield, 2015: n.p), not the rescue mission. Survivor testimonies shed light on the fate of the students still in Boko Haram's clutches, indicating many had “been married, radicalised and conscripted by the insurgents” (Oyewole, 2016: 28). Some of the abductees were used as instruments of suicide warfare, while the many Christian abductees had been forced to embrace Islam (28). While the “directionless” (Maxfield, 2015: n.p) search continued, hope for the students began to fade, with some members of the Nigerian community claiming, “the insurgents will never free all the girls” (Oyewole, 2016: 28).

TRANSITION TO A FEMINIST MOVEMENT

While #BringBackOurGirls alerted the international community to the plight of the Chibok students, it simultaneously sparked a discussion surrounding women's rights. The kidnapped students came to symbolise the struggles of women the world over, and the hashtag saw the kidnapping evolve into a "broader rhetoric about girls' education and rights in the global south" (Khoja-Moolji, 2015: 348).

Access to formal education in northeastern Nigeria is scarce, particularly for females, with only one in ten being considered literate (Smith, 2015: 175). The international community was disgusted with Boko Haram's blatant opposition to, and admonishment of, women's rights to education (Cristaldi & Pampanini, 2016: 580). Thus, the hashtag developed into a dual cause, to locate the kidnapped students, and also to draw attention to the barriers to formal education for girls (Chiluwa & Ifukor, 2015: 268).

At their core, the causes #BringBackOurGirls came to represent were undeniably feminist in nature. The hashtag made issues that had historically been important to the international women's movement prominent, such as "the exploitation of women and girls around the world, education for girls, and equal opportunities for women and girls in developing countries" (Carter Olson, 2016: 779). #BringBackOurGirls gave a face and a story to the ongoing struggles of females throughout the world, especially those in third world nations. The hashtag had begun as a way to aid in the safe return of the kidnapped students, but it soon became far more than merely a rescue based movement; it had developed into global feminist outcry (Chiluwa & Ifukor, 2015: 268).

Khoja-Moolji (2015) and Dixon (2014) consider #BringBackOurGirls to be an example of *hashtag feminism* in action. While feminism is often relegated to the sidelines of public discourse, through online activism, so-called hashtag feminism is emerging and becoming a crucial part of present day society (Dixon, 2014: 34). Hashtag feminism provides “a virtual space where victims of inequality can coexist together in a space that acknowledges their pain, narrative, and isolation” (Dixon, 2014: 34). Khoja-Moolji (2015) claims it is the transition towards hashtag feminism that aided in #BringBackOurGirls gaining notoriety on a global scale. Through hashtag feminism, the movement developed greater intentions and came to represent not only the Chibok students but also females who suffer under systems which “promote violence [...] and denial of formal education for girls” (Chiluwa & Ifukor, 2015: 268). The hashtag had brought overlooked issues to the surface, consequently developing discussions of feminism on a global scale, and placing pressure on governments to take action (Khoja-Moolji, 2015: 348).

#BRINGBACKOURGIRLS AS AN ONLINE SOCIAL MOVEMENT

From an outsider’s perspective, #BringBackOurGirls appears to have been a positive and successful OSM. The hashtag galvanised an online community, making a seemingly obscure issue a matter of international importance (Carter Olson, 2016). It is argued the hashtag was responsible for political change, with Carter Olson (2016: 775) claiming #BringBackOurGirls played a role in Nigerian President, Goodluck Jonathan, losing his re-election campaign in 2015. #BringBackOurGirls is also considered to have generated MSM coverage of the issue, in essence, “guiding the mainstream media’s attention and mobilizing public conversation” about the kidnapping (Carter Olson, 2016: 12). Additionally, women’s rights to education were propelled to the front of media and policy-makers’ agendas as a result of #BringBackOurGirls (13). In spite of these

supposed successes, however, critics argue this OSM cannot be considered entirely positive. Like any other social or political activism, OSMs have limitations.

According to Maxfield (2015), the biggest issue within #BringBackOurGirls is the presumption the campaign “maintained a single, stable meaning across contexts of race and nation” (n.p). Maxfield (2015) claims while the hashtag began as a “home-grown effort” (n.p), designed by Nigerian citizens on their behalf; it was essentially usurped by what he refers to as the “global north” (n.p). The global north represents a society of typically white, western, first world peoples. When the hashtag gained notoriety, Maxfield (2015) believes the campaign was undermined, and became a vehicle for archaic representations of peoples in the global south, as tropes of colonialism and imperialism emerged. Through western understandings of the hashtag, women in the global south were represented as “perpetual victims who lack agency and subject status” (Maxfield, 2015: n.p), positioned as in need of protection after suffering abuse at the hands of “dangerous, violent African men” (n.p). These reactions mirror the argument of Chilwa and Ifukor (2015), who claim those in the west feel they have a responsibility to protect vulnerable women and girls from violence and oppression (283). However, this can often mean suffering is exaggerated, and the forces that have led to the issue are overlooked (283).

Maxfield (2015) deems the very language present within the hashtag itself, such as “our” and “girls”, to enforce an uneven power structure, and distort its original aim(s). The word “our” sees the outsider claim the Chibok students as their own; thereby, assuming a sense of ownership and duty. Loken (2014) attributes this to a type of rights rhetoric, through which women’s needs are conceptualised as valid due to their relationship to other, more privileged agents. However, positioning women as worthy of

recognition and protection because “[they] could be someone’s daughter, sister, friend or mother” (Loken, 2014: 1100), completely undermines the feminist intentions of the hashtag, as it enforces a belief that women are only valuable through their potential to be someone else’s property (1100). Loken (2014) further explains, by claiming the Chibok students as “our girls” (1101), the west overlooked the intersections of race, class, and colonialism present within the OSM. The fact the kidnapped students were teenagers and young women, was also obscured through the use of the term “girls”. Such a term infantilises the students and portrays them as additionally vulnerable and weak (Chiluwa & Ifukor, 2015: 283). Again, this asserts the western actors’ position of authority. While the African victim is perceived as helpless and childlike, the westerner, in contrast, appears powerful and civilised (Maxfield, 2015: n.p).

According to Loken (2014: 1101) the manner in which westerners engaged with the hashtag, occurred in such a way that they failed to consider their imperial dynamics. While the hashtag began with third world understandings of feminism at its core, as it gained momentum in the first world, these values were seemingly overlooked. Maxfield (2015) reminds us that first world feminism has long been critiqued for employing iterations of feminism that “erase other women’s experiences, needs, and goals” (n.p). In Maxfield’s (2015) opinion, #BringBackOurGirls is no different. While the Nigerian community’s campaign recognised the kidnapped students “were individuals, young people with names, families, and futures” (n.p), Maxfield (2015) believes western activists, for the most part, saw the students as symbols. In their minds, the victims were a new recreation of a timeworn picture “the poor African, the oppressed woman of colour” (n.p). Maxfield (2015) argues that this perspective is embedded with racism and colonialism. Khoja-Moolji (2015) further explains western reactions to #BringBackOurGirls seemed to enact a narrative of “liberal feminist salvation” (347).

This is hardly a new phenomenon, and Ahmed (2010) attributes it to “prior affective situation” (40 cited in Khoja-Moolji, 2015: 348). That is, the claim individuals cannot be considered neutral bodies, and instead approach situations with their impressions of history, experiences, and prejudices. Thus, they act in accordance when approaching a situation such as #BringBackOurGirls. In ignoring third world feminist responses to the students’ kidnapping, westerners, arguably inadvertently, “rearticulate long-standing colonial and imperial conceptualisations” (Khoja-Moolji, 2015: 349).

Chiluwa and Ifukor (2015) urge that issues of *bandwagoning*, concerning the hashtag, are important to consider. While #BringBackOurGirls soared in popularity, assumedly many of those using the phrase in a show of solidarity were ignorant of the complexities of the Nigerian situation (275). While demanding action to rescue the victims through using the hashtag seemed simple and potentially effective, many of these activists lacked knowledge of Nigeria’s political problems, ethnic divides, details surrounding Boko Haram’s rise to power, and the other multitudes of issues facing the nation that played a role in the students’ disappearance. As such, the little effort some took seems inadequate. Many campaigners were firm in the belief that their contribution to the condemnation of Boko Haram, alongside their calls for the students’ freedom, had the potential to achieve positive results (Chiluwa & Ifukor, 2015: 269). Still, their social media activism, in spite of probable pure intent, can be considered slacktivism. Through their low-risk, low-cost action they have been granted emotional satisfaction, even though their action may have only consisted of clicking ‘retweet.’

In addition to Chiluwa and Ifukor’s (2015) claims of slacktivism present in #BringBackOurGirls, Carter Olson (2016) indicates the OSM displays features of “time-bound activism” (13). This is a form of activism that demands great attention for a small

amount time before those involved shift their attention to “the next big thing” (13). While #BringBackOurGirls soared in popularity for weeks, with over one million tweets featuring the hashtag published in the first week (Oyewole, 2016: 27), attention gradually waned as focus shifted towards other trending issues. The crucial issue within time-bound activism is the fact that an online movement can drop in popularity *before* palpable results are achieved. This is what Maxfield (2015) believes happened with #BringBackOurGirls. While it initially soared in popularity, eventually something else commanded the attention of the Twittersphere, and this happened before the students were rescued. With this knowledge, Maxfield (2015) argues the movement cannot be considered successful, as it failed in reaching its penultimate goal.

CONCLUSION

Through the abduction of 276 female students, Boko Haram displayed their non-tolerance for western education and women’s rights. Simultaneously, the militant group cemented themselves as a powerful insurgent threat within Nigeria. The Nigerian government’s subsequent response to the abduction drew outrage and disbelief in the nation. #BringBackOurGirls was developed in response, and amassed global attention. As the international community drove the hashtag to viral status, it came to represent more than merely the plight of the missing students; taking on a dual cause by highlighting the barriers to women’s education and rights (Carter Olson, 2016: 773). Despite global relevance, critics are reluctant to label the OSM a success. Maxfield (2015) is particularly sceptical of the hashtag, claiming the west overtook the movement. He argues, western participants failed to recognise the forces behind the abduction and approached the situation with the same tired, old frames, leading to issues of colonialism, imperialism, and stereotyping emerging in the movement. Other scholars remain critical

of western motivations for participation, noting the presence of slacktivist behaviour within the movement, as well as time-bound activism (Khoja-Moolji, 2015; Chiluwa & Ifukor, 2015). Opinions surrounding #BringBackOurGirls success differ significantly. Such differing perspectives warrant greater research of the movement and its impact(s).

FEMINISM

Feminism is a complex, constantly evolving field, which makes the term itself an unstable label (Dorer & Hipfl, 2013). However, in its most basic form, one can define feminism as the belief that women, solely because of their gender, are treated inequitably, as society tends to prioritise males. In a patriarchal system women become everything men supposedly are not: while men are seen as strong, women are weak; where men are active, women are passive (Gamble, 2001: vii). Feminism seeks to change this situation, and overcome the injustices of gender inequality (Gamble, 2001; Dorer & Hipfl, 2013). While feminism's core feature involves women acting in solidarity to overcome patriarchal oppression, feminism is not restricted to a female focus (Gamble, 2001). Instead, contemporary feminist concepts claim to be underpinned by themes of continuity, inclusivity, and multiplicity (Evans & Chamberlain, 2015: 396) and stress that all societal asymmetries should be of concern to feminists (Dorer & Hipfl, 2013).

Due to a long history, feminism is often cast in a series of waves. The wave metaphor alludes to the way efforts for social change tends to come in cycles (Rejer, 2014: 45). Scholars suggest the first wave began in 1860's and was hallmarked by the women's suffrage movement. In the late 1960's the second wave emerged. This wave stressed equal pay for equal work, introduced concepts of gender privilege, and led to the legalisation of abortion in many nations (Biklen *et al.*, 2008: 451). Despite acknowledgement of the many positive impacts second-wave feminism had upon women, it was critiqued for the way it "forced many women to choose between their racial and gendered identities" (Biklen *et al.*, 2008: 451). The blind spots and disinterest surrounding homosexuality within second-wave feminism, as well as a marginalisation of non-white women, saw scholars label second-wave feminism as "white feminism"

(Biklen *et al.*, 2008: 460). Third-wave feminism emerged in 1990's as an apparent remedy to the insufficiencies of previous waves; this was a theory aiming to expand the narrow features of second-wave activism (Rejer, 2014). In turning attention to varied women, this was a feminism that sought to be more inclusive and diverse (Lotz, 2003 cited in Yu, 2009; Rejer, 2014). However, Evans and Chamberlain (2015: 403) maintain while third-wave feminism claims to address the inadequacies of previous feminist waves, it does little to rectify them actively. McRobbie (2009) claims third wave feminism has created a divide of sorts between older and younger feminists, leading to disillusion with third wave feminism. In its place, McRobbie (2009) and Gens (2006) say is post-feminism, where the Internet facilitates communication, and the emergence of feminist voices in online spaces is occurring. Some commentators argue this can be considered a fourth-wave of feminism. However, whether online feminist activity constitutes a new wave is still debated (Munro, 2013: 23).

Regardless of which feminist wave we are said to be in, many disagree with wave discourse entirely and fail to identify with any wave (Evans & Chamberlain, 2015). Despite attempts to broaden feminist perspectives, the wave metaphor is said to be inherently exclusionary due to its US origins, and the way it highlights the role(s) of white, middle-class, heterosexual women (Rejer, 2014: 45). Transnational feminist practices, which transcend such divisions and see beyond western perspectives, are considered more appropriate today. Mohanty (2003) describes such practices as “feminism without borders” (n.p).

For this study, two broad forms of feminism will be defined. These two forms of feminist thought are considered crucial to this research; they are western first world feminism, and third world feminism. While the terms ‘first’ and ‘third’ world stir up some

political and philosophical discomfort, they are used to demonstrate the manner in which different feminist identities regard one another (Riley, 2013: 58). They also serve to recognise hegemony and privilege differences, which Mansoor (2016) stresses must be acknowledged within contemporary feminist discussion. In this instance, 'first' is a label indicating developed nations, the west, while 'third' is indicative of developing nations, the global south. Riley (2013: 58) points out, there are additional associations in play, namely 'first' being linked to 'white', and 'third' to 'non-white'. 'First' and 'third' are terms enabled their existence as a result of politically asymmetric relationships, built upon histories of colonialism (Ram, 1991: 91). While the 'third world' is indicative of a particular geographic location, in the context of what is referred to as 'third world feminism', it also incorporates minority peoples of the west (Mohanty *et al.*, 1991).

WESTERN FIRST WORLD FEMINISM

The classification of western first world feminism is an amalgamation of the feminisms dominant in the west. In defining this form of feminism, third-wave feminism, liberal feminism, and concepts of 'universal sisterhood' were drawn from. Due to its first world perspectives, and foundations in western society, this form of feminism is the most well-studied and mediatised feminism. Western first world feminism is supported by activists who are typically white, middle-class, and heterosexual. In contrast to feminisms that strive for justice on a grander scale, western first world feminism considers sex the most salient social category, and places gender equality as its central goal (Rejer, 2014: 47).

Western first world feminism is a version of feminism that critics claim obscures the participation of diverse voices. Evans and Chamberlain (2015) claim western

feminism operates under a form of exclusionary politics that place a focus on “the interests of white, middle-class, well-educated women” (405). Activists that do not fit the mould provided by western first world feminism, such as those who are non-white, non-middle-class, or non-heterosexual, struggle to identify with and to find a place within this form of feminism (Rejer, 2012: 21). Rejer (2012) claims the unacknowledged privilege and exclusion rife in this western first world feminism sees racism, classism, and homophobia ironically become hallmarks of a campaign for equality. With oppressive characteristics inherent within western first world feminism, the equality it seeks to achieve is realised only for those who adhere to the movement’s apparent ideal (Evans & Chamberlain, 2015); those outside this archetype are further oppressed. As a result, people not represented or respected by western first world feminism struggle to identify with this movement, as they perceive it to be trapped within the confines of western perspectives and experiences (Yu, 2009: 12). This is further supported by the ideology of ‘universal sisterhood’ that hallmarks western first world feminism.

Universal sisterhood places gender at its core and promotes itself as uniting women in a common struggle for their rights (Rejer, 2014: 47). However, while intended as a way to bring women together, critics argue universal sisterhood is, in fact, exclusionary (Rejer, 2014: 47). In grouping diverse women under the same umbrella, by using sex as their commonality, western first world feminism’s use of universal sisterhood neglects the many other dominant injustices that may be present. The claim that gender inequality is the single most important prejudice women can face does not resonate with everyone. Therefore, universal sisterhood evidences the inherent prejudices within western first world feminism itself.

Western first world feminism claims, to overcome patriarchal oppression, activists must work together and provide one another with mutual support (Gamble, 2001). However, in this effort to secure equality between the sexes, this concept of feminism has, in fact, created exclusionary barriers of its own. Neglecting to acknowledge “the efforts of women of colour, lesbian, and poor and working-class women” (Rejer, 2014: 45), it stresses the importance of feminist achievements by white, middle-class women. Despite an abundance of evidence that it lacks an inclusive outlook, this form of feminism considers itself to be the ‘right’ one. As a result, it is often inappropriately hailed as the solution to issues of women’s rights, even in non-western, non-first world settings. For example, while advocating for abortion rights is a mainstay of western first world feminism, Njoroge (2016) claims this does not resonate with African women, “many of whom are still grappling with issues of survival in a highly gendered context” (314). While western first world feminism seeks to address patriarchal inequities, such as the gender-pay gap, feminisms in the global south strive to address other struggles for gender equity. These struggles arise not primarily from patriarchal forces but other forms of oppressions, such “slavery, colonialism, neo-colonialism, poverty, illiteracy and disease” (Guy-Sheftall, 2003 cited in Njoroge, 2016: 314) This thesis seeks to prove that this incarnation of feminism was inappropriately offered to Nigerian society through the #BringBackOurGirls movement.

THIRD WORLD FEMINISM

Third world feminisms offer a stark contrast to the ideals of western first world feminism. These are iterations of feminism grounded upon the ideology of justice for all. In breaking out of the confines of a ‘universal sisterhood’ approach to feminism, third world feminisms favour an approach that works to better the entire community. Third

world feminists object to feminisms that portray men as the primary source of oppression (McEwan, 2001). Within third world feminisms “there is no single source of oppression; gender oppression is inextricably bound up with ‘race’ and class” (McEwan, 2001: 98). With notable differences to western first world feminism, it is no surprise that third world feminisms have developed in direct opposition to the western feminist ideals that are considered inadequate and inappropriate for the global south. While various perspectives and understandings surround feminism in the third world (Mohanty *et al.*, 1991), here applied to one mode, made up of the perceived integral features, is a version that will henceforth be referred to as third world feminism.

Within third world feminism, regarding oneself as a feminist or womanist does not exclude one from working alongside men, or aiding the male populous. Third world feminism believes in partnership between the sexes (Eisenstein, 2004). Through a focus on education, and working to combat hunger, poverty, and disease, third world feminism believes the entirety of society can benefit (Eisenstein, 2004: 207). Eisenstein (2004) regards third world feminism as feminism for humanity, one that strengthens and empowers women, through doing the same for their communities.

Third world feminism addresses what western feminism tends to overlook. Through the belief that women face complex and multiple oppressions, not simply universal patriarchy, third world feminism promotes the idea that methods of combating oppression must be developed to suit specific situations. There is an understanding that what works for some, may not work for all. Third world feminists tend to analyse the different oppression and resistance faced by women in the third world, in a manner attentive to “intersection[s] of gender, race, class, ethnicity, and nation pertaining to their locations” (Herr, 2014: 4). Such a response has been developed in clear opposition to

western first world feminism, which third world feminists claim cannot see beyond its viewpoint, making it an ill fit for third world feminist sensitivities (McEwan, 2001).

Third world feminism's opposition to what some may consider the 'traditional' mode of feminism represented by the western first world, stems from a chronic victimisation of women in the global south by western feminists (McEwan, 2001: 99). Western feminists have long been criticised for considering their limited, localised perspectives as the 'norm', thereby claiming "women in the South as tradition-bound victims of timeless, patriarchal cultures" (McEwan, 2001: 99). There is inherent irony in such opinion, as it is at odds with the inclusive intentions of feminism, and it fails to acknowledge the role of western society in creating and maintaining the oppressive conditions present in the global south. Such disregard of third world women's agency, and complex histories, have led scholars to critique western first world feminism as a "facet of imperialism", due the way it "imposes the Western perspective while failing to recognize the adverse affects of imperialism and colonialism [in the third world]" (Herr, 2014: 8). Western first world feminism is charged with denying African women's power within indigenous relational worlds (Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010). In contrast, third world feminism is defined by Mekgwe (2003, 7 cited in Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010: 618) as a discourse that "take cares to delineate those concerns that are peculiar to the African situation". In doing so, third world feminism "promotes the thinking and working together and interdependence between men and women that is necessary to address gender inequalities" (Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010: 630). Additionally, third world feminism covers expansive territory geographically, and in response consciously works to expand and accommodate for diverse feminist understandings throughout the global south. The result is a diverse form of feminism that actively advocates for women in a myriad of contexts (Njoroge, 2016: 315). Unlike the narrowly defined western first world feminism,

which insufficiently redresses oppression in the global south, third world feminism is a philosophy of social justice that promotes women as equal participants in struggles against racism, imperialism, and economic exploitation (Mohanty *et al.*, 1991: 315, 316).

CONCLUSION

Third world feminism has not been explored in as much depth as western feminisms. Western matters take precedence in academic research, relegating the global south to the sidelines, thereby enforcing colonial and imperial tropes. Mohanty *et al.* (1991: 3-4) explain while a large body of research regarding third world women exists, such female oriented study in a third world context fails to engage with feminist ideals in the region. In failing to dedicate adequate research to the feminist experiences of third world women, countless feminist discourses have been neglected. This has served to unintentionally strengthen the assertion that western feminist ideals are the only ones that matter. Confirming what Kurian (2001) believes to be the ‘grand narrative’ of feminism as “the story of western endeavour [which] relegates the experience of non-western women to the margins of feminist discourse” (66). The core intention of feminism, to strengthen and empower women, should have brought western women closer to women in the third world (Rehman & Hernandez, 2002: xxii cited in Yu, 2009: 11); instead, critics claim it has served to magnify differences. Rather than recognising the factors that have shaped third world women, western feminism condenses them to “symbol[s] of oppression, subordination, and victimhood” (Yu, 2009: 9). In ignoring the abilities of women in the global south, and their feminist histories, (Dosekun, 2015), western feminisms have perpetuated the “self/other, coloniser/colonised dichotomy” (Mekgwe, 2010: 193).

ONLINE MOVEMENTS

The advent of the Internet, and the virtual spaces it provides changed the modern world immeasurably. The answer to any question, interaction with almost any individual, and the ability to voice opinions, now lies at one's fingertips. However, in this era of information and communications technology, where Web 2.0 reigns supreme, how have social movements and social activism adapted? While a transition towards online engagement may appear positive, shortcomings become apparent when holding a magnifying lens to activism in digital spaces.

ONLINE SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Social movements can be described as informal networks, forged upon shared ideologies, which mobilise, through various methods of protest, to effect change (Porta & Diani, 2009 cited in Ahmed *et al.*, 2016). In discussing OSMs, the same definition essentially holds, although OSM activists have moved into the virtual world by conducting activism through the Internet (Loader, 2003 cited in Ahmed *et al.*, 2016). OSMs essentially display the same features as offline collective action – both involve a crowd sharing their outrage, opinions, and beliefs about a certain topic, before uniting into a social movement prepared for action, and eager to spark change (Ahmed *et al.*, 2016: 2). Differences do emerge though when considering the scale that online activism can attain. Aided by the Internet, online activism's reach enables a globalism that offline activism can seldom achieve (Breindl & Francq, 2008).

Online activism is reliant upon the Internet and utilises social media as its point of departure. With social media's ability to spread messages, and organise diverse publics,

it is an invaluable protest tool (Harlow, 2011: 227). Harlow (2011) notes that social media's role within OSMs is two-fold, as it "facilitate[s] traditional offline activism, enhancing a movement's existing repertoire [...] or it actually can create new forms of activism and resistance" (229). The latter change is perhaps most notable, as social media and various social networking sites are now the most common entrance to online activism (Harlow: 2011: 229). As a result, citizens are enabled greater participation in political processes (Breindl & Francq, 2008).

Much of the success of OSMs can be attributed to the creation of counterpublics. The notion of a counterpublic stems from the belief that society is composed of multiple and diverse publics, and as such, some publics are excluded from, or considered subordinate to, mainstream society (Leung & Lee, 2014: 343). Social media, in cooperation with OSMs, provide a space where counterpublics can thrive. Unlike in mainstream society, in the virtual world users are not limited to the information they are presented with; instead they "can actively construct the content they wish to receive or diffuse" (Breindl & Francq, 2008: 16-17). In this sense, OSMs become more than simply vehicles for protest, but a form of alternative media, wherein the voices of the marginalised can be heard (Castells, 2015). Social media and social networks are great tools for mobilising and organising; however, their discussion should not solely focus on such instrumentality. Castells (2015: 258) believes the real triumph of OSMs stems from the protection against repression, unhindered communication, and social progress enabled by the Internet. In facilitating a space for collective action and promoting counterpublics, the Internet facilitated a new era of activism. OSMs are not achieving reach due to the viral diffusion of their messages, but instead because they are triggering hope at the possibility of change (Castells, 2015: 252).

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social networking sites and other forms of social media are the most typical avenues through which OSMs gain momentum. The ease of access social media provides, and the seemingly limitless number of individuals contactable at the click of a mouse makes the creation of online communities simple (Castells, 2015: 2). There are numerous successful social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter, meaning the chance for engagement is never far away. However, Twitter is perhaps the most notable social media network concerning its facilitation of OSMs.

Twitter is a microblogging website established in 2006. Microblogging, defined as blogging on a smaller scale, is marked by three main characteristics: the dissemination of short text messages; instantaneous delivery; and subscriptions to receive updates (Jansen *et al.*, 2009: 3861 cited in Small, 2011: 874). Twitter enables users to send out status updates of 140 characters called ‘tweets’, in response to the question: ‘What’s happening?’ (Small, 2011: 874). Twitter boasts over 190 million individual users, and these users are more ethnically and racially diverse than the entire U.S. population (Papacharissi, 2012: 1993). Due to this, Twitter is heralded as “a platform that affords visibility to marginalised points of view” (Papacharissi, 2012: 1990). The great diversity and high number of users on Twitter have seen the site become a breeding ground of sorts for OSMs (Small, 2011). Bonilla and Rosa (2015) claim while older media forms enable audiences to experience social movements, the dialogicality of Twitter constructs feelings of direct participation, even when one is geographically or culturally distanced from an event (7). In enabling the presentation of so many diverse experiences and points of view, “Twitter does not just allow you to peer through a window; it allows you to look through manifold windows at once” (Bonilla & Rosa, 2015: 7).

Each day over 50 million tweets are published on Twitter; to organise this huge amount of information, Twitter encourages its users to use “hashtags” (Small, 2011: 874). Hashtags are Twitter’s version of a tag, designated by the hash (#) symbol. A hashtag is essentially a keyword that describes the content of a tweet and thus aids in searching (Small, 2011: 874). Hashtags are present on a variety of social networks, but their common adoption can be traced to the prominence Twitter initially placed on them (Brock, 2012: 538). Twitter provides tools to track hashtags, enabling users to identify what is trending, and encouraging them to join these conversations. Bruns and Burgess (2011) discuss, following or contributing to a hashtag conversation enables Twitter users to “communicate with a community of interest [...] without needing to go through the process of establishing a mutual follower/followee relationship” (2). In contrast to social media networks typically premised on communicating with people already known to users, Twitter has always encouraged interaction with strangers, and it is through hashtags that the majority of this interaction is initiated (Papacharissi, 2012). Moscato (2016: 5) believes hashtags play a prominent role in reaching out to people, deepening ties, and mobilising support. Due in part to the fact that hashtags are always embedded with discourse; therefore, by mere virtue of sending a tweet with a hashtag, the user invites a particular kind of audience attention (Moscato, 2016: 5).

The notability of hashtags, particularly in OSMs, has led to the coining of the phrase ‘hashtag activism.’ Hashtag activism sees Twitter users become social activists through sharing a hashtag related to a certain political or social movement. Hashtag activism is perhaps one of the easiest methods of displaying solidarity in an online space (Skoric, 2012: 83). Latina and Docherty (2014) discuss, thanks to hashtag activism, MSM is now appropriating hashtags as “news stories in their own right” (1104). Through hashtags, OSMs have the ability to expand from digital communities to the “real world”;

as they create an identifiable slogan, are easily tracked, and can be used on a multitude of social networks (Stache, 2015: 162). However, concerns have been raised about the impact of hashtag activism. Bonilla and Rosa (2015) caution that hashtag activism may be a poor substitute for “real activism” (8), as it may not encourage sustained action, and therefore cannot have a long-lasting impact. This argument is at odds with Castells (2015) claims, regarding online activism’s potential for real-world change. Begging the question: is hashtag activism slacktivism?

SLACKTIVISM

The term slacktivism is a combination of the words “slacker” and “activism” (Glenn, 2015: 81). Slacktivism can be defined as a willingness to participate in a relatively costless form of support for a social cause while displaying an unwillingness to devote significant effort to said social cause (Kristofferson *et al.*, 2014: 1149). Though primarily concerning engagement with social movements through social media, slacktivism can be applied to any low-cost form of activism (Kristofferson *et al.*, 2014). Slacktivism is premised on the idea that citizens are more inclined to participate in activism when involvement is easily accomplished, and there is a benefit for them personally (Skoric, 2012: 77). The usual benefit for the participant is the satisfaction derived “from having done something good for society” (Skoric, 2012: 78). Slacktivists receive the ‘feel-good’ feeling almost immediately after participating, and as such, the social cause that drew them to participate does not linger in their minds (Kristofferson *et al.*, 2014). The online action taken by the slacktivist, although at a much lower cost than traditional civic action, has been performed, and they are free to enjoy the satisfaction that comes with it (Lee & Hsieh, 2013). Meanwhile, the social cause they have participated in has received no real, meaningful contribution (Kristofferson *et al.*, 2014).

Kristofferson et al. (2014) refer to slacktivist behaviour as a show of “token support” (1150). Token support enables participants to affiliate with a cause through action often conducted by the click of a mouse. When support does not require a significant cost, effort or change in behaviour Kristofferson et al. (2014) consider it to make no significant contribution to the cause. According to McCafferty (2011: 17), the critical goals of social activist movements involve changing the hearts and minds of the public and impacting upon tangible change. Activism with the power to create change is organised in strong, robust structures. However, activism associated with social media is dependent upon so-called “weak tie” relationships (McCafferty, 2011: 18). Through slacktivist action, participants receive praise and social acknowledgement within their online circles, without performing any substantive feat (Skoric, 2012: 78, 79).

While it might be easy to criticise slacktivists for taking the easy route and failing to contribute to social movements properly, Landman (2008 cited in Skoric, 2012: 80) encourages understanding towards slacktivists. For the most part, Landman (2008) believes, slacktivists are genuine, well-meaning people, their downfall is their attraction to tasks that require minimal effort. Skoric (2012: 80) relates slacktivist action online to minimal action in the ‘real’ world. This minimal action includes slapping on a bumper sticker or wearing a wristband. These acts essentially share the motivations and benefits of tweeting a hashtag or clicking ‘like,’ those incentives being to impress others and fashion an identity for oneself. But social media enables this on a grander scale. Through slacktivist participation, Skoric (2012) notes the emergence of “hoped-for possible selves” (81) has become more apparent.

The projection of an identity that differs from one's true self is referred to as a hoped-for possible self. Skoric (2012) claims via the Internet this can progress to the projection of an unrealistic *ideal self*. Through the use of social media platforms, individuals are enabled to "actualize the identities they hope to establish, but are not able to do so in offline, face-to-face situations" (Skoric, 2012: 81). In fact, as social networks develop, participants are saturated with ever-expanding networks of people, greater opportunities for relationships, and new 'stages' for performance (Papacharissi, 2012: 1992). Participation in slacktivist action can help to forge such ideal selves and empower individuals to present OSMs on their social media accounts (McCafferty, 2011). Coulding-Jorgensen (2009 cited in Skoric, 2012: 81) explains that in the same manner individuals require certain items to furnish their homes, on social media individuals require cultural objects to aid in projecting the version of themselves they would prefer the public to see. This construction of identity through the guise of social activism signifies narcissism and draws into question an individual's motivation(s) for participating in OSMs. When slacktivism and the curation of an idealised identity appear present in these digital forms of engagement, one cannot help but ponder the consequences of these actions (Skoric, 2012: 77).

Slacktivism has led to significant levels of participation within social movements (Glenn, 2015: 82); however, slacktivist action is critiqued for having no real impact on social change, with some claiming it could perhaps weaken future civil action (Lee & Hsieh, 2013: 811). While participating in slacktivist action is simple and rewarding, these are the very attributes that may see participants fulfilled enough that they do not feel the need to take further social action (Lee & Hsieh, 2013). Thus, slacktivism may serve to play a role in eroding the quality of civic and political engagement (Skoric, 2012: 78).

MAINSTREAM MEDIA & NEW FORMS OF MEDIA

Historically, MSM such as newspapers, radio, and television have represented platforms for debate and influenced public agenda (Rogstad, 2016: 142). While MSM has historically been the source through which most individuals get their information (Kenix, 2011: 26), it is typically regarded in a negative sense. Atton (2002) explains, “there is a widespread, implicit assertion that the organizational and professional routines of the mainstream media produce a media system that is monolithic and inflexible” (492). Within this media system, representations of diverse or dissident voices are rarely present, and if they are, “such voices will be demonized and marginalized” (Atton, 2002: 492). Shaped by corporate forces, capitalism, consumerism, and patriarchy, MSM is motivated primarily by fiscal goals (Kenix, 2011: 19). Such economic motivations result in so-called “pack journalism” designed to maximise audiences, by creating formulaic content which does little for the marginalised groups in society (Kenix, 2011: 8, 19; Atton, 2002). MSM function as “gatekeepers” to the public agenda; meaning audiences learn about issues, and perceive their importance, based on how much attention, or lack thereof, an issue receives within MSM (Rogstad, 2016: 143). This example serves to illuminate MSM’s “hierarchies of access” (Glasgow University Media Group, 1976: 245 cited in Atton, 2002: 493), which until recently have prevailed unchallenged. Throughout the last decade, greater technologisation has disrupted typical journalism practices, and therefore, MSM (Farinosi & Treré, 2014).

Today, alternative forms of media are enabled through social networking sites and the proliferation of the Internet as a tool for communication. These spaces allow ordinary people to bypass, and potentially influence, traditional media flows (Mare, 2013). Enabling opportunities for drawing public attention to issues without having to pass through traditional MSM “gatekeepers” (Rogstad, 2016: 153). This development is

considered by some to be negative, with Mare (2013) claiming social media sites “[live] parasitically off the quality content produced by mainstream media” (87-88). Conversely, Rogstad (2016) argues MSM utilise social media sites to bolster their news coverage and interact with elite and nonelite sources on social media to pick up breaking news or uncover trends (143, 144).

The potential the emergence of new media has, regarding placing limits on MSM’s ability to set public agenda, is an issue of great debate (Dearing & Rogers, 1996 cited in Rogstad, 2016). Rogstad (2016) claims the new media landscape may have shifted towards an “*aggregated agenda*” (143; emphasis in original) through which journalism can be considered more reflective and interactive (Mare, 2013). This aggregated agenda may even see MSM develop a reliance of sorts upon new media forms. In contrast, Asur et al. (2011) claim social media simply filters and amplifies interesting news from MSM, thus further disseminating MSM agendas. Furthermore, in Rogstad’s (2016) study of Twitter and MSM outlets, the results revealed, “Twitter is highly concerned with mainstream media content [...] however, mainstream media is not very consumed with social media” (148). In a show of further conflict, the same study pointed to an instance where MSM shifted its focus after being criticised on Twitter. While Rogstad (2016) was reluctant to credit Twitter as the cause of this agenda shift, she commented, if this were the case, “we might be observing a change in the relationship between mainstream media and their audiences” (153).

There is much discontent regarding the emerging changes within media systems and agenda. While it is clear MSM’s grasp on audiences is loosening, due to more choice and representation for audiences, it remains a firm fixture of the media landscape. There also remains clear evidence, for both camps, pointing to MSM impacting new media

agenda, and new media impacting MSM agenda. Clearly, greater research into these MSM and social media interplays are crucial, particularly relating to agenda-setting.

FEMINISM & ONLINE SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

The feminist movement has especially benefitted from the rise of OSMs. Feminism has latched onto online activism, drawing on the opportunities the Internet presents for creating new understandings of community, activism, and even feminism itself (Keller, 2012: 430). OFMs have “unleashed a multiplicity of voices” demanding recognition of all facets of feminism (Clark, 2014: 1109). In particular, OFMs have appropriated hashtags as vehicles for expanding conversation (Clark, 2014). While traditional feminist movements have suffered criticism for their exclusionary traits, hashtag feminism serves to open up new spaces for groups silenced or those otherwise marginalised in conventional feminist movements (Clark, 2016: 2). No longer limited by the boundaries of space, OFMs transcend borders, thus creating global networks for feminist discussion and development (Keller, 2012: 443). Through the viral nature of various feminist hashtags, the collective action that online activism can facilitate has been made apparent. Clark (2016) claims, “social media enables active audience participation as opposed to passive consumption” (11); and within hashtag feminism’s discursive power, this is obvious. The 2017 International Women’s March, a protest facilitated by social networking and hashtag feminism, provides a great example of this power (Jamieson *et al.*, 2017).

While scholars praise feminism for utilising online activism as a space for the broadening of civil society and progress (Fotopoulou, 2016: 991), Tucz (2016: 155) warns of the inherent, often inescapable borders that can dictate online engagement.

While digital platforms are praised for “being borderless by nature” (Tuczu, 2016: 150), Keller (2012) points to the different kinds of borders that may be created. Tuczu (2016) explains, OFMs were quick to praise online activism as a space for all facets of feminist thought, however, in reality, the exclusionary practices of the offline world do not disappear in the online world (155, 157). Rhetoric regarding the globalisation of the feminist movement elides the social inequalities that can dictate access to technology, meaning those without Internet access cannot participate in OFMs, and as such, a plethora of significant voices remains silent (Keller, 2012: 444; Clark, 2016: 2). Despite hopes for more inclusionary feminist action through the Internet, OFMs may have unwittingly “preserved a Eurocentric logic of feminist politics” (Tuczu, 2016: 155). While many groups, particularly the feminist movement, have heralded the move to online platforms as the “great equaliser”, Tuczu (2016) stresses OSMs should be treated not as a magic cure, but instead as another opportunity to raise awareness.

CONCLUSION

The way OSMs utilise social media can have great influence. With the broad reach OSMs can achieve, through the interactivity and globalisation of social networking, social movements that are larger, more diverse, and better able to facilitate collective action are emerging. However, OSMs are not wholly positive; through the shift from traditional methods of action towards networked action, numerous issues have arisen. The ease of participation enabled by OSMs has seen online activism criticised as ‘feel-good’ activism and termed *slacktivism*. When action becomes simple and is broadcast in a public realm, it can become a performance of sorts. As a result, online activism can detract from issues at hand, leaving audiences more concerned about self-projection than focusing their action on a particular social issue. While OSMs may appear as the perfect

method through which to disseminate messages further, it is important to consider their imperfections. Though more diverse, and capable of generating greater engagement and participation, OSMs are limited in many respects. As online activism takes a more prominent place in the modern world, it is crucial that its influence is monitored and considered.

SOLIDARITY

Solidarity can be broadly understood as one type of communal relatedness; a social cohesion that draws from the moral obligations associated with belonging to a community (Derpmann, 2009: 305). When certain attributes are shared, a bond between members is established. Such identification between individuals consequently sees group members “feel obliged to promote the well-being of other members, even [at the risk of] incurring significant sacrifices for themselves” (Derpmann, 2009: 305). Chouliaraki (2011) claims the core feature of solidarity, the imperative to act towards vulnerable others without the expectation of reciprocation, is the “humanitarian claim *par excellence*” (364). There are numerous modes of solidarity, but they are all premised upon the promises people make to one another, promises which bind them together (Kennedy, 2006: 82). Derpmann (2009) believes the bond enabled through solidary action to be central to the success of modern democratic societies (305).

In discussing solidarity, it is important to note there can be different forms of solidary action. This discussion will touch on two, cosmopolitan and communitarian. A cosmopolitan solidarity involves the disposition to act towards vulnerable others in a manner “shaped by the moral imperative to act not only on people close to ‘us’ but also on distant others” (Chouliaraki, 2013a: 3). While a communitarian perspective of solidarity emphasises “a feeling in common” (Chouliaraki, 2008: 373 cited in Madianou, 2013: 252) with those whose suffering is depicted. Absent from this ‘common feeling’ may be an orientation to the distant other (Madianou, 2013). Contrastingly, cosmopolitan solidary action recognises and acts upon vulnerability solely because of a shared humanity (Chouliaraki, 2013b: 111, 112). Due to the lack of reflexivity and responsibility inherent to the communitarian view of solidarity, this research chooses to focus on the

cosmopolitan perspective (Madianou, 2013: 252), deeming this to be the ideal within humanitarian communication.

COSMOPOLITANISM

Cosmopolitanism, meaning “citizen of the world” (Ainley, 2008: 57), is forged upon the belief that all human beings belong to a single moral community. Through emphasising a need to protect fellow humans from universal vulnerabilities, cosmopolitanism promotes identification with distant strangers, (Chouliaraki, 2008: 387), whom we are encouraged to embrace due to our shared humanity (Linklater, 2007: 23, 27). Such identification and inclusion draw from Immanuel Kant’s belief that through our human existence we are all intimately connected, therefore “a violation of rights in *one* part of the world is felt *everywhere*” (Kant, 1991: 107-8 cited in Brown, 2009: 1; emphasis in original). To see beyond local perspectives, cosmopolitanism incorporates the concerns of various publics, thus creating an alternative non-communitarian public (Chouliaraki, 2008: 387).

Inherent to cosmopolitan thought is the notion that every person must be considered worthy of rights, simply by virtue of their humanity (Fine, 2007: 27). Cosmopolitans believe this commitment to human rights is central to a healthy, functioning global civil society (Derpmann, 2009: 310). As such, cosmopolitanism can be understood as the formation of a relationship between a spectator and a distant other (Chouliaraki, 2008: 374). Corpus Ong (2009) refers to this relationship as a “welcoming of difference” (449). However, he goes on to note, referencing the works of Chouliaraki (2006) and Silverstone (2002), that only some forms of cosmopolitanism enact the “moral turn” in this manner. As such, when a spectator witnesses the suffering of a

vulnerable other and is compelled to act to lessen their suffering, purely for virtue of their shared humanity, they are performing the ideal form of cosmopolitan solidarity. However, such cosmopolitan sensibilities cannot simply be adopted; their proliferation rests upon “the symbolic recognition of vulnerable others [and] the cultivation of our imaginative capacity to engage with the ‘otherness’ of their vulnerability” (Chouliaraki, 2013b: 112).

Some regard globalisation as a way of arousing cosmopolitan sensibilities on a global scale. Through globalisation, the boundaries of the community are extended, and distant suffering is brought into the lives of onlookers (Linklater, 2007: 22). With our world increasingly interconnected, interactions between peoples, and the facilitation of relationships are changing. Cosmopolitan thinkers welcome this change as cosmopolitanism is premised on the theory “the world is an interconnected and independent community...where our moral responsibility toward all humanity should be understood as being a universal and globalized concern” (Brown, 2009: 1). Contemporary cosmopolitan theorists claim through globalisation the ability to recognise suffering on a grander, global scale and react via cosmopolitan dispositions is enabled (Linklater, 2007: 27; Brown, 2009: 9-10). Brown (2009) dismisses this view as “morally utopian” (14) and “overly universal” (15), claiming instead cosmopolitan thought fails to acknowledge diversity and is “attempting world conquest” (15) given that aspirations of cosmopolitanism and globalisation work in tandem. While globalisation may have made spectators more aware of distant suffering, whether this awareness can stimulate feelings of obligation that will then translate into tangible action(s) remains problematic (Linklater, 2007: 24, 26). For example, globalisation, and social media alerted many to the progressive neurodegenerative disease, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), through a viral online campaign known the ‘Ice Bucket Challenge’. The challenge saw participants

film, and upload to social media, a video of themselves being doused with ice-cold water, pledging to donate to ALS charities, and nominating others to do the same (Adishes *et al.*, 2014). The funds raised through the campaign are credited with funding research that led to the discovery of a gene that contributes to the disease (“Ice Bucket Challenge funds gene discovery,” 2016). The Ice Bucket Challenge provides evidence of globalisation’s success in alerting people to distant suffering, stimulating a sense of obligation, and actively incurring tangible action; however, its achievement alone does not denote globalisation’s triumphs.

What Corpus Ong (2009: 461) refers to, as the “penultimate expression of cosmopolitan identity”, is *Ecstatic Cosmopolitanism*. While there are various forms of cosmopolitan action, it is Ecstatic Cosmopolitanism that this research also considers the ideal type of cosmopolitan expression. It is premised on appropriately communicating the predicament of the ‘other’ in a manner that fosters compassion, and advocates for what Silverstone (2002) refers to as “proper distance” between the viewer and the ‘other’. Ecstatic Cosmopolitanism recognises the asymmetrical power distributions inherent in media coverage and humanitarian action(s) and aims to eliminate these through accurate depictions of distant others (Corpus Ong, 2009). Through Ecstatic Cosmopolitanism’s ability to recognise difference it is possible to see how it might stimulate solidary action. Whether the adoption of Ecstatic Cosmopolitanism or similar solidary efforts, is achievable, especially in the realm of humanitarian communication, remains debated in academia.

Cosmopolitanism is often criticised as too idealistic and optimistic (Brown, 2009). The claim that humans will act to defend or protect their fellow man purely due to a moral obligation seems more fantastical than realistic (Chouliaraki, 2008). Chouliaraki

(2008) stresses, “the possibility of cosmopolitanism lies in the impossibility of representing the condition of distant suffering as suffering proper” (382). Publics are routinely bombarded with images of distant suffering, and this overburdening of misery does not always translate into cosmopolitan behaviour. The spectacle of suffering can, in fact, become unimportant, as “each piece of news on suffering is yet another story that reaches our screen, only to disappear into oblivion as soon as we zap to another channel” (Chouliaraki, 2008: 373). Such an occurrence, hailed as *compassion fatigue*, leaves audiences ambivalent to the suffering of distant others, and most move on (Linklater, 2007). Chouliaraki (2006) discusses the role of the type of news one views has in shaping their moral identity and response. What she terms “adventure news” and “ecstatic news” see the viewer engage a communitarian solidary response, as subjects are displayed in a manner that positions viewers to pity them. However, “emergency news” holds the potential for better representation of the other, enabling cosmopolitan bonds to form (Chouliaraki, 2006: 196). The most common forms of news are the ecstatic and adventure types; and due to their prominence, the likelihood of cosmopolitan engagement is diminished. Unfortunately, when suffering is represented so commonly there is no chance for identification, and spectators render the suffering unimportant.

Cosmopolitanism incorporates a near perfect view of humanity. The belief that humans can support one another, without expectation of reciprocity, simply due to moral bonds and obligations, conjures up an incredible mental image (Derpmann, 2009: 307). However, presently this is all cosmopolitanism can claim to be: an idealistic vision for humanity. Without representing suffering adequately, in a manner that reminds spectators of the inherent humanity of the vulnerable other, the obligation to ease their suffering lies dormant. As such, the utopian vision of a single, global community premised on shared humanity is yet to be realised (Held, 2010: 5).

OTHERNESS / THE POLITICS OF PITY

In representing the suffering of vulnerable others, the goal must not solely be an attempt for the audience to identify with the sufferer. Instead, humanitarian communication should intend to give justice to the moral claim of suffering (Chouliaraki, 2010: 107). However humanitarian communication is often built on a foundation of pity, where the so-called victim is cast as an “object of contemplation” (Chouliaraki, 2010: 110) for the spectator. Through such representation, the Politics of Pity essentially disempowers the sufferer by appropriating them within western discourses. As a result, the distance between victim and spectator is exacerbated, and tropes of colonialism and imperialism emerge (Littler, 2008; Chouliaraki, 2010: 110, 113).

There is difficulty involved with recognising unfamiliar others as distant others with humanity (Chouliaraki & Orgad, 2011: 341). Chouliaraki and Orgad (2011) highlight the importance of recognising the “irreparable distance between self and other” (342) that hinders the formation of moral bonds. Silverstone (2002) proposes a scheme of “proper distance”, a striking of a balance between separateness and connection with distant others. Through proper distance one is enabled to act ethically and morally, but the basis of these actions is respect. Even if so-called ‘proper distance’ is achieved, there lies impossibility in being able to imagine or represent the other in their terms (Chouliaraki & Orgad, 2011). Even in finding a way to mend these representations, humanitarian communication grounded in a Politics of Pity, where it is reliant upon on the cultural proximity of common humanity (Chouliaraki & Orgad, 2011), would still represent suffering in a manner that sees it become the “white man’s burden” (Chouliaraki, 2012: 4). This is due to how suffering is showcased through “heartbreaking

spectacles of human suffering”, where western audiences are invited to alleviate the depicted misery of the ‘other’ (Chouliaraki, 2012: 2). Littler (2008) refers to this as the “I feel your pain” (n.p) paradox and believes it serves only to reinforce unequal power dynamics. While Orgad (2011) claims such representations are a result of “the ritualistic orientation of the news” which plays a “fundamental role [in] creating and nourishing *distance*” (404; emphasis in original). Therefore when news represents suffering through the Politics of Pity, there is little hope of encouraging common humanity (Silverstone, 2005; Orgad, 2011). Instead, such representation serves to reflect and reproduce inequality, and emphasise difference (Chouliaraki, 2010: 109; Silverstone, 2007). The suffering other becomes an object of judgement (Chouliaraki, 2011: 364), with the spectator invited to decide whether their plight is worthy of recognition (Sontag, 2003: 109).

When solidarity is represented through the lens of pity, it becomes difficult for audiences to find reasons to ignite their empathetic responses (Chouliaraki & Orgad, 2011: 342). Pity takes a lot of energy, it is not rewarding, and nor is it enjoyable. This emotion has limited use, both to the sufferer and to the audience because it relies on a hierarchy of the grievability of life, and constrains possible action to a mere charitable response, serving to inhibit responses premised on the preferable politics of justice (Fenton, 2008). While the vulnerable other has no recourse to combat the Politics of Pity, the audience typically responds by no longer being moved by such depictions of suffering (Chouliaraki, 2012). They develop compassion fatigue, meaning humanitarian communication grounded in pity, fails to ignite their conscience (Sontag, 2003; Chouliaraki, 2011). When there is no moral outrage, there can be no moral response. Through the Politics of Pity, audiences are confronted with imagery designed to conjure up sympathy, and that is typically their first response, but when they are continually

exposed to depictions of marginalisation, the imagery becomes less shocking (Moeller, 1999; Chouliaraki, 2008: 373). This is compassion fatigue, or what Moeller (1999: 2) terms “I’ve seen this before” syndrome, in action. While spectators may have previously contributed and felt subsequent relief after fulfilling their perceived humanitarian obligation (Calhoun, 2008: 78) when the images keep coming in a steady stream, they begin to feel helpless (Chouliaraki, 2010: 108). The audience assumes their action was not valuable, and in response to their helplessness, they move on.

IRONIC SOLIDARITY

Chouliaraki (2013a: 20) believes humanitarian communication is shifting towards a paradigm of solidarity as irony. She considers this development to be a direct reaction to the Politics of Pity. Ironic Solidarity is anchored on the spectacle of others like us, making the suffering of others more interesting through an invitation for self-reflection (Chouliaraki, 2013a: 20).

Humanitarian communication’s movement from pity, towards irony, casts the typically western onlooker as a specific kind of public actor: an ironic spectator of vulnerable others (Chouliaraki, 2013a). According to Chouliaraki (2011), ironic spectators no longer perceive suffering and vulnerability as a “politics of injustice” (364), but instead as a “politics of the self” (364). Ironic spectators have the power to alleviate suffering, but act only if the action will benefit them (Fenton, 2008: 51). Such behaviour mimics slacktivism’s ‘feel-good’ feeling (Skoric, 2012; Kristofferson *et al.*, 2014). Hallmarks of the Politics of Pity remain within Ironic Solidarity, as vulnerable others are still represented as “annihilated figures who have no voice of their own” (Chouliaraki,

2011: 372); thus enforcing and maintaining the unequal relationship between the west and the global south.

Within Ironic Solidarity, the pure intentions of solidary action are ignored. When solidarity is presented as optional, and vulnerable others are stripped of their humanity, humanitarian communication is no longer about “habituating western publics into dispositions of care and responsibility to the world beyond our own” (Chouliaraki, 2011: 371). Ironic Solidarity is a movement away from the challenges of compassion fatigue. It replaces the “ethos of conviction” with a “closer-to-life altruism” of the everyday (Chouliaraki, 2011: 369); in what Eagleton (2009) claims to be “the banality of goodness” (273). Two properties are said to define this banal morality of Ironic Solidarity: self-distance and self-empowerment (Chouliaraki, 2011; Eagleton, 2009). Self-distance involves solidary action being enacted publically, and questions why one should act on suffering privately. Through self-empowerment, the individual taking action realises their humanity, while the “humanity of sufferer [remains] outside the remit of [their] empathetic imagination” (Chouliaraki, 2011: 369). This mode of solidarity has been termed ironic because of the way it perpetuates the injustices it aimed to eliminate. Ironic Solidarity fails to foster cosmopolitanism, as instead of acting without expectation of reciprocation, that is, acting without benefit to the self, the motivation for action within Ironic Solidarity is not for the other, but for the self (Fenton, 2008; Chouliaraki, 2013a). Humanitarian communication enacting Ironic Solidarity directs audiences towards engagement with vulnerable others, through a focus on the way humanitarian action can stimulate the humanity of the self. As a result, vulnerable others become not fellow humans in unjust predicaments, but vehicles for the self-empowerment of audiences (Chouliaraki, 2011). Vulnerable others may no longer be subject to the unethical gaze of the Politics of Pity. However, their struggle is still not being engaged with appropriately.

The paradigmatic shift within humanitarian communication, from pity to post-humanitarian irony, occurred not simply due to compassion fatigue and other limitations within the Politics of Pity, but also due to what audiences demand from all forms of communication today: self-expression (Chouliaraki, 2013a: 16). With the advent of digital technologies, media users now have the infrastructure to become producers of public communication, not merely consumers (Chouliaraki, 2013a). The strong desire of audiences to produce media content, to shape conversations in online spaces, and to promote their preferred identity online has in part led to the arrival of Ironic Solidarity within humanitarian communication. The technologisation of solidarity means supporting vulnerable others is now as easy as “tweeting personal emotion [...] clicking on the donation link [...] or clicking ‘like’ on a Facebook wall” (Chouliaraki, 2013a: 16). Chouliaraki (2013a) claims the way audiences engage with new media has brought about never before seen forms of public self-presentation; she brings our attention to *dramaturgical consciousness*, that is “the consciousness of our capacity to act ourselves out in front of unknown others” (16). Dramaturgical consciousness posits that the whole world might be a stage; as such, the persona that audiences project through new media becomes vital. Through Ironic Solidarity audiences not only believe they are acting appropriately, but they are doing this publically (Chouliaraki, 2013a). In keeping with Skoric’s (2012) aforementioned curation of idealised selves. As such, the online community these audiences interact with becomes aware of their inherent ‘goodness’ and humanity. As with other forms of humanitarian communication that do little to benefit the sufferer, Ironic Solidarity does not come at a sacrifice to the audience. Audiences may share a link, or retweet a statement of support, and feel fulfilled; their humanity has been acknowledged, not only by themselves but also by countless others (Sontag, 2003). Meanwhile, the vulnerable others’ plight remains tended to through a limited politics of

fleeting practices, whereby the spectator's "grant emotions", and the foundation of justice claims, are dispensed with.

SOLIDARITY IN ONLINE SPACES

Digital media has connected the world in a manner it has never been before. With opportunities for global interaction now so easy, the possibilities for solidarity on a grand scale seem almost infinite. With little need for resources or bureaucracy, Internet-based movements appear limitless, and while many embrace their arrival (Melucci, 1996), Tarrow (1998 cited in Fenton, 2007: 236) warns of the dangers associated with constructing global solidarity online.

Tarrow's (1996 cited in Fenton, 2007: 236) concern stems from the speed with which audiences can engage with OSMs. With so many issues being presented online, it can become difficult to forge long-standing commitment(s). Instead, audiences can jump on any bandwagon and shift between issues, losing interest when an issue is no longer prominent. There is no doubt that OSMs can empower those who participate in them, through encouraging the formation of communities and developing a new public sphere grounded in alternative media (Bennett, 2003: 20, 35). Melucci (1996) claims solidarity expressed through new communication technologies can transcend boundaries and promote political consciousness. The Black Lives Matter campaign serves as a great example of a sustained campaign facilitated by social media. This racially driven movement gathered support on social media, through the use of the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter. The campaign drew attention to racial divisions in the U.S., sparked mass protests, and garnered global support (Bonilla & Rosa, 2015). However, heightened levels of support and the empowerment of participants should not be the main priority

when it comes to achieving tangible solidarity (Bennett, 2003). Through focusing on the benefit to the audience, and enabling them to move on to the next hip crisis as they please, the solidarity of OSMs is decidedly ironic (Fenton, 2008; Chouliaraki, 2013a).

Despite hopes that the formation of solidarity online could achieve real change on a global scale (Melucci, 1996; Bennett, 2003), the same issues associated with solidarity on smaller scales remain. Again, the opportunity for difference in the lives of sufferers is not met, and the differences between audience and other are exacerbated. Fenton (2008: 52) reminds us, solidarity is about engaging beyond the click of a mouse. With OSMs struggling to facilitate adequate, meaningful engagement, their very purpose becomes questionable.

CONCLUSION

The forms of solidarity existing within humanitarian communication presently, such as Ironic Solidarity, and solidarity marked by a Politics of Pity, do little to ease the suffering of the vulnerable. These are modes of solidarity not built upon a bond of mutual commitment (Chouliaraki, 2008), but instead, are approaches that cement the audience as a saviour of sorts. Achieved through placing the audience's humanity at the forefront, therefore neglecting the already marginalised and enforcing difference. With such conceptions of solidarity at the core of contemporary humanitarian communication, there is little opportunity for the adoption of cosmopolitan sensibilities (Linklater, 2007). Negative forms of solidarity occur when suffering is represented improperly, meaning the chance to engage with others distant from our community is inaccessible. At present, engaging with humanitarian appeals has become more about showcasing an ideal form of oneself and imitating, rather than enacting, humanity (Chouliaraki & Orgad, 2011). Both

solidarity and cosmopolitanism describe ideals of human thought and action; they focus on the ways one should care, and demonstrate moral responsibility for the rights and welfare of fellow human beings (Derpmann, 2009). Only through representing suffering properly will appropriate solidarity and cosmopolitanism be achieved.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

CDA will be implemented as the primary method of analysis through which to address the research aims of this thesis. CDA seeks to reveal how language is used to create meaning, exercise power, and accomplish other kinds of communicative aims (Widdowson, 1998; Hansen & Machin, 2013). The mode of CDA drawn from is primarily influenced by the works of Fairclough (1992; 1995; 2003; 2006).

CDA takes a critical stance towards language and society (Hansen & Machin, 2013: 116), positing that there are always ulterior motives behind text choices, and through revealing these, one might influence social change (Hansen & Machin, 2013). CDA refers to these motives as discourses. Fairclough (2003) explains discourses are ways of representing aspects of the world, such as “the processes, relations, and structures of the material world, the ‘mental world’ of thoughts, feelings, beliefs and so forth, and the social world” (124). Discourse is something produced, circulated, distributed, and consumed in society. Such a discussion is incomplete without reference to the ideological effects and hegemonic processes in which discourse is a feature (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000).

Hegemony refers to the power achieved through the unequal construction of alliances. Agnew (2005) defines hegemony as the “enrolment of others in the exercise of

your power by convincing, cajoling, and coercing them that they should want what you want” (1-2). Hegemony is useful in describing the inequalities that exist between the west and the global south. These inequalities can be attributed to hegemony’s role in “binding together people, objects, and institutions around cultural norms and standards that emanate over time and space from seats of power occupied by authoritative actors” (Agnew, 2005: 2). Gramsci (1971) further expands on hegemony, claiming it appears as the “common sense” that guides one’s mundane understanding of the world and can lead to a “moral and political passivity” (333). In this theory of hegemony, “power can never be maintained by force or repression alone”, instead it is dependent upon coercion and consensus (Montesano Montessori, 2011: 171; Gramsci, 1992). The Gramscian view of hegemony sees it as operating primarily through language; and facilitated by prominent ideologies that originate in culture and through the will of the people (Montesano Montessori, 2011). This view involves the relocation of power from the traditional state institutions, to cultural industries such as education, the media, religious organisations, and arts (Glapka, 2010: 54; Gramsci, 1992: 91). Therefore, hegemony must be a central consideration within CDA, as the “social action of everyday life produces hegemonic effects” (Stoddart, 2007: 201).

The importance of power and hegemony within discourse is echoed by van Dijk (1993) and Titscher et al. (2000: 151; cited in Richardson, 2007: 29), who argue that in undertaking CDA, power should be a fundamental consideration, since power and ideologies affect each of the contextual levels of production, consumption, and understandings of discourse. CDA analyses discourses in relation to socio-historical context, and co-text; the “linguistic environment that surrounds a concrete text location” (Montesano Montessori, 2011: 174). Making it a method of textual analysis concerned with all forms of social inequality and injustice (Lazar, 2005: 2). As such, CDA can

provide insight into how powerful, or otherwise dominant, groups within society determine meaning, and the impact(s) this might yield.

Richardson (2007) claims critical discourse analysts “offer *interpretations* of the meanings of texts” (15; emphasis in original); text does not adhere to one static understanding, but rather its meaning is constructed through the interactions between producer, text, and consumer. As such, when language is examined via CDA these meanings are revealed. Such examination consists of relating texts to their conditions of production and consumption (Widdowson, 1998: 142). Regarding this study, one can expect this to be conducted by examining *who* has said *what*, as well as scrutinising the wider language choices utilised to create this meaning. As discussed, CDA’s focus involves identifying and interpreting dynamics of power. As such, van Dijk (1993) contends the most obvious discourse structures to be made up of “negative evaluations of *them*, or positive ones of *us*” (264; emphasis in original). In van Dijk’s (1993) example, “them” refers to the disempowered, and “us” indicates the producers, or primary consumers, of said discourse structures. The “us” and “them” dichotomy provides an example of the presence of hegemonic practices within discourse structures. This example also supports claims MSM and social media texts can be analysed for hegemonic elements, through identifying any structures of opposition and deciphering what these represent (Abalo, 2012; Susanti, 2016).

Essentially, hegemony within mediated texts is revealed through applying the methods of CDA. Indicating the theoretical premises of CDA align with Gramsci’s (1971; 1992) theory of hegemony (Glapka, 2010: 56). In applying this methodologically, one must scrutinise texts for their ideological underpinnings by studying argumentation; rhetorical figures; lexical style; storytelling elements; the structural emphasis of negative

action(s); and the selection and presentation of sources (van Dijk, 1993: 264; Glapka, 2010: 56). The thorough examination of such choices, as well as relating them back to the context(s) they were developed, can, in the context of this research, serve to reveal whether a text exhibits either a response of appropriate solidarity or self-interest. Is a text approaching the abduction through a gaze of shared humanity, or instead for self-serving reasons? For example, if a text within this research stated, “I feel bad for those kidnapped students. My heart is breaking”, one can recognise an emphasis placed on the self. Through the use of “I” and “my”, first person singular nominative pronouns, the text’s author becomes the main priority, despite the text appearing to be about the Chibok students. This portrayal of self-interest can be considered evidence of Ironic Solidarity, as it does little to alleviate the suffering of the kidnapped students, but casts the author in a positive light (Chouliaraki, 2013a). It is the lexical style, and the presentation of figures within this example, that draws one to this conclusion. Torfing (1999) states, cognitions and speech-acts “only become meaningful within a certain pre-established discourse” (84), and, like text, discourse is made up of an ensemble of signifying sequences through which meaning is continuously renegotiated (85). It is through the study of societal texts that one can decipher their meanings. In the context of this research, one can observe how CDA’s ability to identify such hegemonic processes and ideological elements can be of benefit.

JUSTIFICATION

In embarking upon critical social research, Fairclough (2003) urges one keep in mind the overarching aim of such an endeavour, presenting this aim as providing a:

better understanding of how societies work and produce both beneficial and detrimental effects, and of how the detrimental effects can be mitigated, if not eliminated (202-203)

Fairclough's (2003) suggestion was considered in selecting a method of analysis. Also helpful was the work of Bouvier (2015), who presents discourse approaches as the greatest modes of analysis in conducting social media research (150). Like Fairclough (2003), Bouvier (2015) places the comprehension of the social world as the central motivation of such research. The myriad of questions raised within critical social research, as a result of social media engagement, demonstrate the need for further research. Bouvier (2015: 150) encourages research that uncovers the manner through which values are shared, as well as the linguistic tools they are shared through, while simultaneously engaging with wider issues of power. As such, Bouvier's (2015) suggestion for those undertaking critical social research with a focus on social media, is to implement CDA. In considering the best manner to deepen one's understanding of social responses, and the connotations of such responses, CDA was revealed as the logical selection.

In examining the research questions of this study, it is evident they are mostly premised on deciphering attitudes, and analysing the societal impact of these. However, Research Question 1, which seeks to decipher how the interaction between MSM and social media shaped #BringBackOurGirls, will benefit more from a quantitative analysis, rather than CDA. Except Research Question 1, each of the research questions within this study requires a method of textual analysis and interpretation. Research Question 2 aims to investigate the differences in attitudes across mediums; Research Question 3 seeks to understand #BringBackOurGirls' global relevance; Research Question 4 addresses the motives for participation; and Research Question 5 examines the potential presence of modes of feminism within the movement, and the implications of that presence. This study regards CDA as central in addressing these research questions.

Seeking to understand the #BringBackOurGirls movement on a level beyond the hashtag, requires analysis of the relevant texts, what they project, and the implications of said projections. The best way to determine the attitudes or sentiments within texts is to draw out the discourses (Fairclough, 2003). In examining what cemented #BringBackOurGirls as an event of global significance, identifying and interpreting the underlying ideologies of the event is crucial. This study posits that engagement in OSMs is premised on ideals of either solidarity or self-interest; in determining which ideals underpinned #BringBackOurGirls, drawing out the discourses projected through engagement is of crucial importance. #BringBackOurGirls was heralded as an example of hashtag feminism, and an OFM. However, as noted in Chapter Two, western first world feminist ideals are often an improper fit for third world women. Examining the feminist perspectives, or lack thereof, within this movement, and the implications for those at the centre of this event, cannot occur without discourse analysis. Determining the manner in which people have engaged with an event, is reliant upon recognising the discourses they have projected through their engagement. Finally, deciphering the implications of feminist attitudes hinges upon properly understanding the attitudes, again through the discourses embedded within them. For these reasons, Research Questions 2 through 5 will be addressed through the use of CDA.

Hansen and Machin (2013) claim language is crucial to how we constitute the social world. The manner “we talk about the world influences the society we create, the knowledge we celebrate and despise, and the institutions we build” (113). As such, the salience of language cannot be underestimated. To understand social development, Fairclough (2003: 203) urges that text must be a central consideration. CDA is regarded as a great tool within textual analysis, as it provides a “multifunctional view of text” (Fairclough, 1995: 6). In considering the Chibok abduction and the accompanying

#BringBackOurGirls movement, one cannot overlook the fact that coverage was text-based. From global media attention to an internationally trending hashtag, language was crucial in defining and maintaining this event. Therefore, researching the intricacies of the texts pertinent to this event is necessary. The use of CDA can be described as holding a magnifying glass to #BringBackOurGirls, through which the underlying ideologies and hegemonic structures can be made visible (Hansen & Machin, 2013: 119). CDA is a form of analysis that enables great transparency (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000), and when approaching an event of such magnitude, CDA presents itself as the premier mode of textual analysis through which to analyse attitudes, perspectives, and societal consequences.

SAMPLE

The content to be analysed through CDA was sourced from Twitter tweets and online newspaper articles. Twitter was selected as it was the primary medium through which #BringBackOurGirls gained momentum. Furthermore, as a renowned microblogging website, which has widespread popularity around the world; it is inherently valuable in this study, as it contains the worldviews of many people (Zimmer & Proferes, 2014). Lippizzi et al. (2016) explain, while tweets may lack the richness and complexity of more structured messages, such as newspaper articles, the social commentary and diversity they provide makes them an invaluable research tool. As evidenced by the way Twitter has emerged as a powerful channel for measuring public behaviour and attitudes (Zimmer & Proferes, 2014: 250). Zimmer and Proferes (2014) claim academics have recognised Twitter's value as a research tool, and Twitter data is now routinely utilised "to gain a better understanding of its users, uses, and impacts on society and culture from a variety of perspectives" (251). In contrast, newspaper articles

are a more traditional and mainstream form of media and are typically perceived as more credible news sources than social media. However, newspapers are often heralded as representing the elite voices of society, due to ownership and vested political interests. Therefore, performing a tandem analysis of two distinct, yet crucially important, media forms can provide great insight into this event. Through analysing these sources, the dominant discourses will be revealed, allowing determinations to be made regarding the sentiments displayed on social media and in MSM. Comparing these media forms is a key element of Research Question 2. The comparison of social media and MSM may provide insight into whether the one influenced the other, regarding levels of coverage or the attitudes of coverage.

KEY DATES

Research for this thesis began in early 2016, just weeks before the second anniversary of the Chibok abduction. The timeframe for this research begins with the date of abduction on 15 April 2014, and ends at the second anniversary on 15 April 2016. To investigate how coverage of, and sentiment related to, the incident developed over time, four time periods during these two years were selected, with each period lasting five days. All of the articles, by three selected newspapers, published during these four time periods, and a randomly selected sample of 400 tweets, 100 per period, posted within the dates, were analysed. The sample was a purposive one; as the periods selected each represent periods of high engagement with the issue. The four dates are as follows:

15 – 20 APRIL 2014

Starting from the date the Chibok abduction occurred, this period was selected as it provides valuable insight into mainstream and online coverage of the incident *before* the creation of #BringBackOurGirls.

04 – 09 MAY 2014

This period marks the creation of #BringBackOurGirls. The period was a time of immense coverage in every media sphere. Analysis of this period may provide an understanding of the initial hopes for the hashtag and public reactions to it. Research suggests people engage with hashtags most significantly, regarding participant numbers, immediately following their inception (Bruns & Burgess, 2011). If #BringBackOurGirls adheres to this trend, this period should represent the point of peak coverage, both on Twitter and in MSM.

10 – 15 APRIL 2015

Representing the first anniversary of the abduction, analysis of articles and tweets from this period may convey perceptions regarding the still-missing students.

10 – 15 APRIL 2016

This period marks the second anniversary of the Chibok abduction. Exploring sentiment and coverage at this point is perhaps the best indication of how the story of the abduction and accompanying hashtag campaign have changed, or perhaps remained the same, as the years have progressed.

SELECTION CRITERIA & COLLECTION METHOD

TWITTER

Collecting retrospective Twitter data is an arduous task given the large amount of data one has to trawl through. Additional complications arise due to Twitter's policy on data retrieval, which imposes barriers to collecting past data using public freeware (Cho & Shin, 2014: 70). In dealing with a hashtag used so often, as is the case with #BringBackOurGirls, it is nearly impossible to gather the data necessary to perform a CDA, especially when working with specific dates. Recruiting a Twitter analytics company seemed the logical solution; however, this can be highly expensive. Fortunately, the Twitter data required for this study was kindly gifted by a fellow academic, who is also researching #BringBackOurGirls. They employed the Twitter analytics company, Crimson Hexagon, to gather a sample of tweets that met the criteria required for this research.

Crimson Hexagon gathers tweets using an Application Program Interface and Python scripts, designed to locate tweets using certain hashtags (Lippizzi *et al.*, 2016: 783; Kwon *et al.*, 2016: 206). The tweets do not simply contain the content of the tweet, but a significant amount of metadata including a user information, timestamp, location, and language (Lippizzi *et al.*, 2016: 786). Crimson Hexagon further searches through this information to locate the tweets matching additionally requested criteria, before providing a sample of the tweets, or all, depending on research needs.

When researching a hashtag, the research criteria are simplified into the keywords of said hashtag. As the purpose of this study involves #BringBackOurGirls, for the three selected periods that came *after* the creation of the hashtag, the hashtag itself was an

adequate search tool. However, the one selected period occurring *before* the creation of #BringBackOurGirls posed a problem. It was decided to source tweets from this period simply using #Chibok, as tweets throughout this period, using this hashtag, would more than likely reference the abduction. The selection criteria requested from Crimson Hexagon was simply that the tweets be in English language. Other criteria were not imposed, as the CDA of the tweets intended to identify overarching global discourse(s), not wholly specific sentiment.

The data from Crimson Hexagon provided a random sample of 400 total tweets; 100 tweets from each of the predetermined key periods of the study. These tweets, in their entirety, were then analysed via CDA. Tweets were not limited to exhibiting one discourse, the very function of discourse means multiple discourses can be present in a text.

NEWSPAPERS

Three prominent online newspapers were selected to source articles from. It was theorised that through this ‘triangulation of sources’ the research would be provided with a broad selection of MSM voices. In selecting these outlets, diversity and prominence was aimed for. This criterion led to the selection of the online editions of the United States’ *The New York Times* (TNYT), the United Kingdom’s *The Guardian* (TG), and Qatar’s *Al Jazeera* (AJ).

TNYT was selected as it is heralded as “the US national newspaper of record” (Roy, 2012: 558). Founded in 1851, TNYT is regarded as pivotal in shaping political discussion and considered to provide substantive reporting both nationally and

internationally (Usher, 2014). *TNYT*'s large readership, consisting of over 2 million daily readers both in the United States and abroad (The New York Times Company, 2015), warranted its selection for this study.

TG was selected due to the large audience it commands both at home and abroad. Having four times been named Newspaper of the Year at the British Press Awards, *TG*'s critical acclaim was also a contributing factor (Rawlinson, 2014). The newspaper prides itself on upholding core journalistic values, claiming "newspapers have a moral as well as a material existence" (Singer & Ashman, 2009: 4). *TG*'s reputation as "one of the UK's most influential newspapers" (Singer & Ashman, 2009: 4) further justified its inclusion in this study.

AJ, the predominantly Arabic-language news conglomerate, was selected as the final newspaper in this study. Since its inception nearly 20 years ago *AJ* has "pledged to present all viewpoints" (Miles, 2006: 20). The newspaper is considered to be a model of professionalism and objectivity in the Middle East (Miles, 2006). With scholars praising *AJ* for its encouragement of, and commitment to, free speech in the Middle East. With a large and ever-growing readership, making it the most visited website in the Arab world (*Al Jazeera*, 2012), *AJ*'s English-language online newspaper merited inclusion.

Articles selected for analysis from these news outlets were sourced via the online editions of each newspaper. The term 'article' is utilised in this study to represent all that was published by an outlet in their coverage of the Chibok abduction and #BringBackOurGirls. As such, this research consists not only of news articles, but also feature articles, editorials, columns, and opinion pieces. Such a breadth of inclusion is justified as this study is attempting to develop a comprehensive overview of how MSM

presented this event, meaning all manner of coverage is relevant. Articles within the study's set timeframe, and adhering to the selection criteria of certain key words, were chosen. Articles had to focus on explicitly, and not simply reference, the Chibok abduction to meet the criteria for inclusion. As such, key words and phrases seen as representative of the abduction were used as search terms. These included: Chibok; Nigeria Abduction; Nigeria Schoolgirl; Schoolgirl Abduction; Boko Haram; Bring Back Our Girls; and #BringBackOurGirls.

Articles from all three newspapers that met the criteria were catalogued by date, to provide data regarding the rate of coverage over the set two-year timeframe. Articles published during the four key periods of the two-year timeframe were then compiled, before being examined through CDA. A total of 79 articles matched these criteria: 22 were published by *TNYT*, 35 by *TG*, and 22 by *AJ*. Regarding a unit of analysis, that is, how much will be measured; the entire article was examined. As with the CDA of Twitter tweets, an article was not expected to exhibit just one discourse, although this result was acceptable, as a variety of discourses may be present within a text.

This study's primary concern involved examining the differences or similarities of discourse and rates of coverage between MSM and social media. Therefore, a contrasting of different outlets' coverage of this event was not performed. The selection of three, distinct online newspapers served to provide an amalgamation of MSM voices for this study. As such, the discourses within the articles and editorials of *TNYT*, *TG*, and *AJ* were combined to represent MSM perspective within the subsequent Results chapter.

METHOD

In performing CDA, one is scanning texts for traces of ideologically contentious elements, which might otherwise escape notice (Widdowson, 1998: 144). Such ideologically contentious elements may be in the form of hegemonic practices, such as the support or projection of one worldview while opposing or ignoring others (Glapka, 2010). Widdowson (1998) claims through CDA one is looking for “the subtlety of covert significance, [...] and this might be found lurking in the slightest linguistic nuance” (144). This study’s CDA begins with the most basic examination of the selected texts – simply reading them. As the analyser first reads a tweet or article, they begin to form an idea of the frames that text projects. Understanding these frames further and identifying concrete evidence of their presence, a process that sees them develop from basic frames to distinct discourses, is achieved through CDA. The initial examination provides valuable direction to an analyser, but essentially skims the surface of a text’s meaning(s). CDA provides the tools to look beyond the surface of text, and explore the obscured meanings; thus, providing conclusive findings. The CDA approach of this research was influenced by Fairclough’s (1992; 1995; 2003) three-dimensional framework for conceiving of and analysing discourse.

The first dimension studies the patterns and choices of vocabulary. It begins with what Fairclough (2003) terms *discourse-as-text*, the descriptive stage of CDA concerned with the formal properties of text. Through looking closely at language and grammar, one can reveal how such processes shape our understandings of events and persons (Hansen & Machin, 2013: 116). Richardson (2007) stresses the analysis of particular words should be the first stage of any discourse analysis, as it is the words that convey “the imprint of society and of value judgements” (47). As discussed in Chapter Two, Maxfield (2015) considers the very language within #BringBackOurGirls to be

representative of an unequal power structure, due to inherent ownership and authoritative elements. Words such as “girls” in reference to the Chibok students, and further descriptive tendencies that serve to impose such a hegemonic relationship, such as “extremist”, “helpless”, “corrupt”, and “duty”, would be of particular interest in this study’s CDA. These words depict an unequal relationship between the west and Nigeria in the global south. As such, their presence would be indicative of an ongoing hegemonic relationship, and evidence of narratives enforcing African ineptness and western obligation. This is in keeping with Fairclough’s (2003) first dimension of CDA that aims to recognise certain linguistic features prominent in text passages, picking up on instances of metaphor, modality, schemata, structure, and more (448). For example, the presence of metaphoric language such as “floundering in their response”, would indicate a disdain for the responders and signify their perceived ineptness. “Floundering”, meaning, of course, to falter or stumble, but also serves to stir up imagery of a wet fish of dry land. In this example, the response by those tasked with the students’ rescue is critiqued. Those carrying out this mission were primarily Nigerian government security forces; therefore, this language is indicative of an unequal power relationship. As it laments the actions of those in the global south from a western perspective. Thus, if a text analysed for this research was found to exhibit similar language features, one could deem the text to be ideologically contentious through its harmful representation(s).

The second dimension of Fairclough’s (2003) framework is *discourse-as-discursive practice*, whereby the analyst studies the linguistic objects of the text and ascertains the discourse(s) they intend to distribute (448). The second dimension seeks to interpret what the author intended to convey through the text. Regarding this thesis, the presence of attitudes counteractive to the adoption of appropriate solidary responses, or the advocating of western first world feminism, would be of particular interest. For example,

the presence of a western first world feminism ideology, within texts discussing #BringBackOurGirls, might be identified through content acknowledging the patriarchy as an oppressive tool, while simultaneously neglecting to consider the role of colonialism in contributing to instability within the African region. This may manifest through the attribution of the lack of progress, in locating the students, solely to Nigerian government inaction, without knowledge of the political climate within Nigeria. Or, through the directing of hatred towards Boko Haram, without consideration of the factors that have led to the rise of religious extremism in the region. Elements such as these would demonstrate western first world feminist ideals, as they would serve to cast the abduction solely as a result of patriarchy. Essentially, *discourse-as-discursive practice* is hinged upon reading the text, beyond the words, identifying the message(s) within, and dismantling those messages in such a way that the intended purpose of the text, the embedded ideology, is revealed.

The third and final dimension is *discourse-as-social-practice* which involves considering “the ideological effects and hegemonic processes in which discourse is a feature” (Fairclough, 2003: 449). This dimension requires the analyst to provide explanations for and make sense of, the implications the text may render; essentially, what may the embedded discourse achieve in society? In referring to the previous example, concerning western first world feminism, the presence of this ideology, and not the arguably more appropriate third world feminism, could have damaging consequences. #BringBackOurGirls has been heralded as a feminist movement, and it is born out of Africa, where, as discussed in Chapter Two, third world feminism is the most appropriate representation of African feminist ideals. The overwhelming presence of a western first world feminist discourse could undermine the aims and objectives of a third world feminist movement. Potentially disabling the movement from achieving the

change it so desires. In recognising the presence of particular discourses through CDA, this third dimension of Fairclough's (1992; 1995; 2003) framework urges the analyst to consider the societal ramifications of their presence.

Fairclough's (1992; 1995; 2003) three-dimensional framework is the most appropriate approach for this study, as it involves numerous points of analysis. It encourages the analyst first to uncover various patterns, then to decipher their meaning, and finally, to explain their relevance. When conducting CDA on such a large amount of different texts, from tweets with limited characters to extensive newspaper articles, a coherent analytical framework is invaluable. Significance cannot be read straight off texts; texts must instead be related to their historical contexts and social relations (Widdowson, 1998); this is why CDA seeks to uncover the use, as well the exploitation, of language. However, it is through Fairclough's (1992; 1995; 2003) framework, that one is provided with the means of conducting CDA comprehensively.

ADDITIONAL DATA COLLECTION

The incorporation of quantitative data is necessary to bolster the CDA findings of this study. In addition to a qualitative analysis, this research examines the rates of coverage from selected MSM outlets and the quantitative trajectory of #BringBackOurGirls online. Research Question 1 will be addressed through these quantitative findings.

The newspapers utilised in this research (*TNYT*; *TG*; *AJ*) and their coverage, concerning Boko Haram and Nigeria, during the six months before the abduction was reviewed and collated. This data provides averages concerning typical coverage patterns

for each outlet and enables comparison. The same process was then attributed to articles by said outlets, which fall within the aforementioned two-year period, which serves as the timeframe for this research. Articles that made explicit reference to Boko Haram; terrorism in Nigeria; Nigerian politics; Nigerian religious tension; and education in Nigeria, met the criteria for inclusion. This data might provide insights concerning the rise and fall of coverage surrounding the Chibok abduction amongst the selected MSM outlets. Furthermore, it enables comparison, concerning levels of coverage, between the newspapers.

The global trend of #BringBackOurGirls was also measured. While this study is primarily concerned with the hashtag as it behaved on Twitter, Twitter data related to the hashtag was unable to be used. This inability was due in part to financial constraints, as well as the discussed constraints on data collection imposed by Twitter (Cho & Shin, 2014). However, Google Trend data provided an adequate substitute. Google Trends offers free, globally accessible information relating to Google searches worldwide, either in real-time or retrospectively (Blakeman, 2013). Google's extraordinary levels of Internet penetration make it the most used search engine globally (Blakeman, 2013). Therefore, the data provides an adequate substitute through which to measure the hashtag's trend. Google Trends presents a search term's *interest over time* and as such was used to demonstrate the peaks and pits of the #BringBackOurGirls movement. To address Research Question 1, the ability to track #BringBackOurGirls' trajectory was invaluable.

CONCLUSION

Bouvier (2015) stresses text is crucial to better understanding issues of power, social order, and value sharing. As such CDA is useful because it "seeks to reveal how

language is used and abused in the exercise of power” (Widdowson, 1998: 136), and relates texts to their conditions of production and consumption. The selection of CDA as the primary method of analysis appeared logical when considering what was to be sampled. CDA has been routinely used a method of drawing out the attitudes within MSM (Richardson, 2007), and, more recently, social media texts (Zimmer & Proferes, 2014). This research is premised upon deciphering the sentiments within Twitter and online newspapers, two distinct, yet pervasive, media forms. Given the enormous role each plays in our current society, their significance cannot be underestimated. In the selection of MSM voices, diversity was aimed for, and this was achieved through choosing *TNYT*, *TG*, and *AJ*, newspapers representative of many perspectives. The decision to limit the sample to four distinct time periods was deliberate. Not only is such a sample size easier to manage, but it also allowed sentiment to be measured at different points of the event. Finally, by conducting CDA through Fairclough’s (1992; 1995; 2003) three-dimensional framework, this research will be bolstered by the provision of tools with which to analyse these texts thoroughly.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

The following chapter presents the results of this research and the outcome of the CDA of newspaper articles and tweets. The trends in coverage will first be presented, followed by the CDA. The purpose of this chapter is to present the key results of this research; Chapter Five will tend to the interpretation of said results.

TRENDS IN COVERAGE

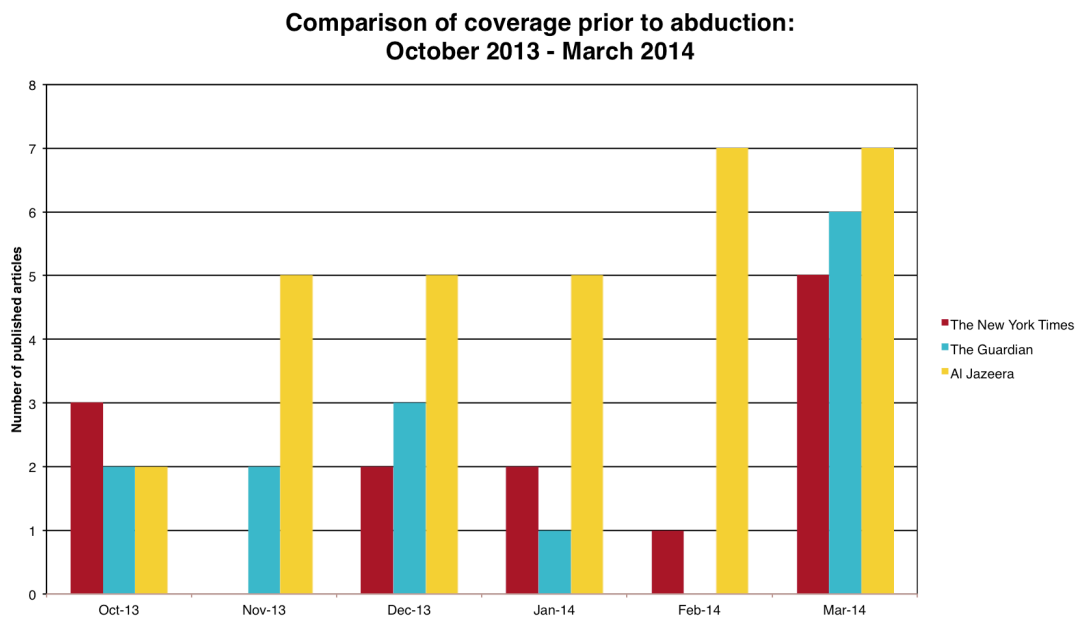


Figure 1 - Comparison of coverage prior to abduction

To appropriately measure a potential change in media coverage as a result of the Chibok abduction, it was necessary to look back at coverage before the incident. In this

case, the newspapers utilised in this research and their coverage, concerning Boko Haram and Nigeria, during the six months before the abduction, was collated.

AJ was the outlet that most frequently covered matters that met this criterion, with an average of 4.8 articles per month (Figure 1). Meanwhile, *TNYT* and *TG* averaged 2.16 and 2.5 articles per month, respectively. For the most part, these low averages demonstrate all outlets had little interest and considered Nigeria’s matters to be of minor importance. In an interesting aside, the month immediately before the abduction, March 2014, saw a spike in coverage for all outlets. While this spike is minimal, when considering the total number of articles these newspapers produce each month, it remains notable. Thus, despite relatively low levels of coverage, in the six months before the abduction, each outlet was still covering matters related to Nigeria and Boko Haram. While representing perhaps a mere ‘blip’ on the news radar of these newspapers, Nigeria and Boko Haram *were* on the radar.

**Comparison of abduction coverage:
April 2014 - April 2016**

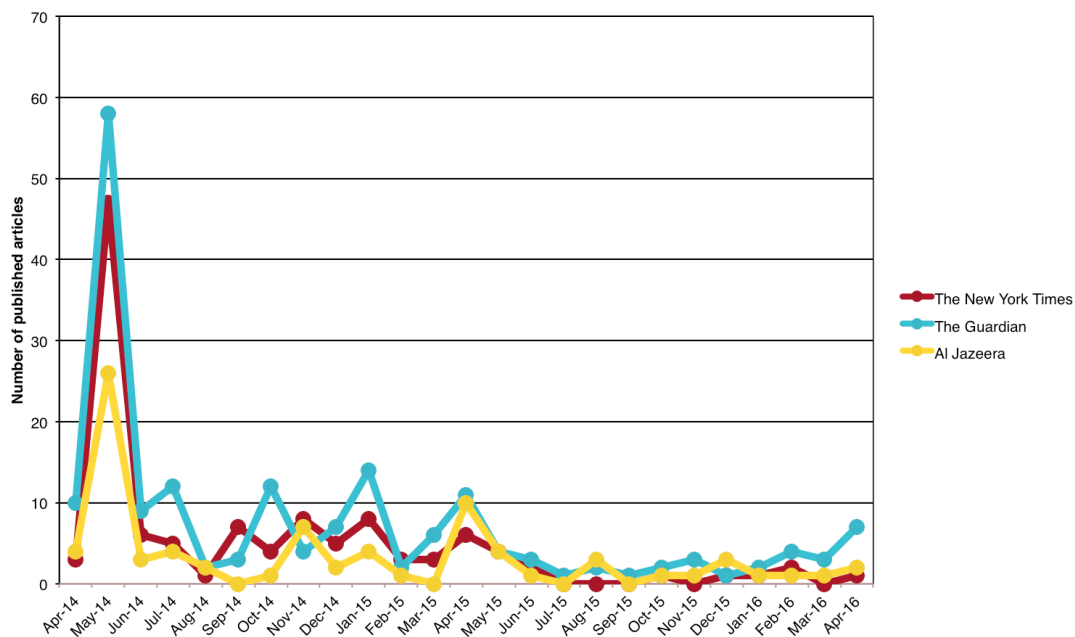


Figure 2 - Comparison of abduction coverage

The amount of abduction coverage, between chosen outlets, was examined over a two-year period (Figure 2). This period begins at the abduction in April 2014 and ends at the second anniversary in April 2016. The abduction occurred in April 2014, and coverage from each outlet for this month was minimal (Figure 2). *TG* produced ten articles about the abduction in April 2014, while *TNYT* published three, and *AJ* four. In contrast, May 2014 – the month after the abduction – saw a surge from all outlets in their coverage. *TG* led the coverage with 58 articles. *TNYT* published 47, and *AJ* produced 26 pieces. Coverage related to the abduction rose 670 percent in the month of May 2014 when compared to April 2014.

In the following months, coverage dropped off, and rates of coverage between the newspapers increasingly equalised. A further spike in coverage occurred at the first anniversary mark in April 2015, before dropping off again. This scarcity of coverage continued until the second anniversary of the abduction; while this represents a period of greater coverage, it did not meet the heights of the previous year. April 2015 saw a total of 27 articles published, while April 2016 accrued a total of ten articles. Over the two-year period, no month came close to rivalling the rate of coverage amassed in May 2014. The prolific MSM coverage of May 2014 is particularly notable when considering the abduction occurred the previous month. The fact the abduction garnered such immense coverage in May 2014 after initial nonchalance in April 2014, could indicate other factors influenced MSM's coverage.

#BringBackOurGirls trend globally: April 2014 - April 2016

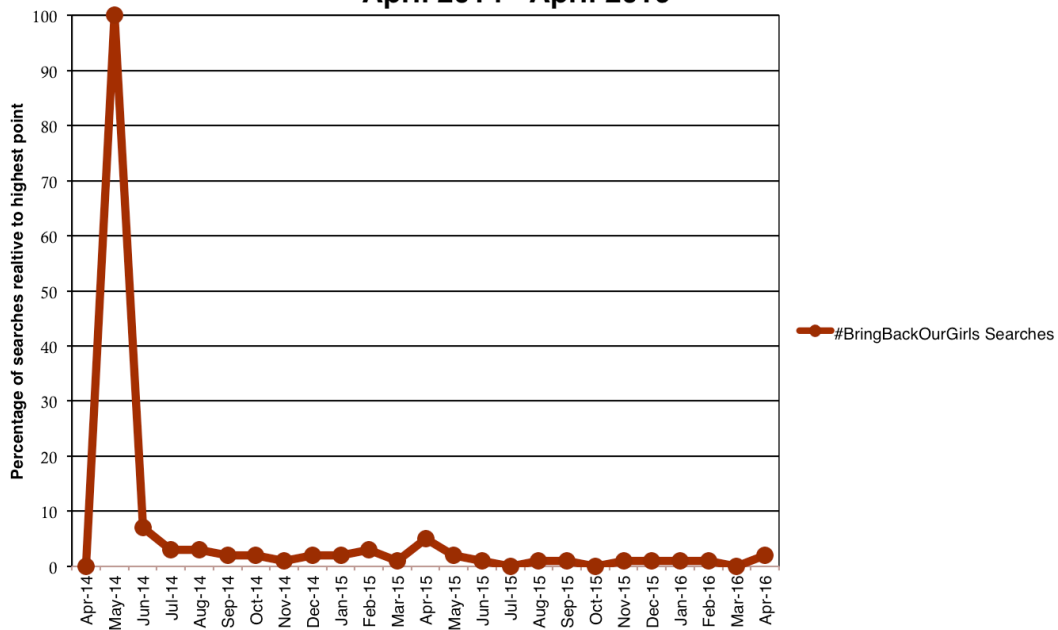


Figure 3 - #BringBackOurGirls trend globally

In examining the trajectory of #BringBackOurGirls globally, over the aforementioned two-year period, one notices stark similarities between MSM coverage of the abduction and online searches for #BringBackOurGirls (Figure 3). While Twitter data was unable to be used to map this trend from solely Twitter usage, Google Trends data provided a comparative substitute. Google Trends is based on Google searches and shows how often a search-term is entered, relative to the total search volume. Google Trends presents interest in #BringBackOurGirls as a search term *over time* and reveals that the hashtag was most searched for in May 2014. May 2014 represents the peak of searches and is assigned a value of 100. The assigned values represent the search interest relative to the highest point on the graph (Figure 3). Thus, with 100 as the peak set in May 2014, a search interest of 50 would indicate the search term was half as popular. Likewise, a score of zero would indicate the search term was less than one percent as popular as it was at the peak. Ergo, #BringBackOurGirls’ development from a search

interest of zero in April 2014 to a surge to the peak 100 in May 2014, followed by a rapid descent to the value of seven in June 2014, represents the rise and fall of this particular hashtag spectacularly. #BringBackOurGirls was met with a sudden flurry of activity at its creation in May 2014. However, immediately following this, interest diminished and searches waned. This descent into obscurity continued until April 2015, when the first anniversary occurred, and interest was briefly reignited. With a humble value of five attributed to this month, it is obvious the hashtag was not commanding the interest it did at its peak. A similar spike occurred on the second anniversary of the abduction; again, this revitalisation of activity was minor when compared to the peak in May 2014.

CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

As previously noted, four time periods were selected for CDA. The first period covers the initial abduction of the Chibok students in April 2014, the second follows the creation of #BringBackOurGirls in May 2014, while the third and fourth periods concern the first and second anniversaries of the abduction in April 2015 and 2016, respectively. Articles pertaining to these time periods from *TNYT*, *TG*, and *AJ*, were examined through CDA, with the results combined to form an overview of MSM discourse. Also, a selection of tweets featuring either #Chibok or #BringBackOurGirls during the same four periods were examined through CDA. As discussed, multiple discourses may be present in an article or tweet, the presence of one discourse does not elide another's. Discourses are not mutually exclusive and can bear similarities; concerning how they are identified or the impact(s) they might have. The nature of discourse is such that the overarching themes and identifying features of discourse do not change as a result of the text a discourse is located within.

ABDUCTION: 10 – 20 APRIL 2014

MAINSTREAM MEDIA:

The MSM outlets together published a total of nine articles during the Abduction Period. *TNYT* published two, *TG* three, and *AJ* four. CDA of all nine articles revealed the presence of four discourses.

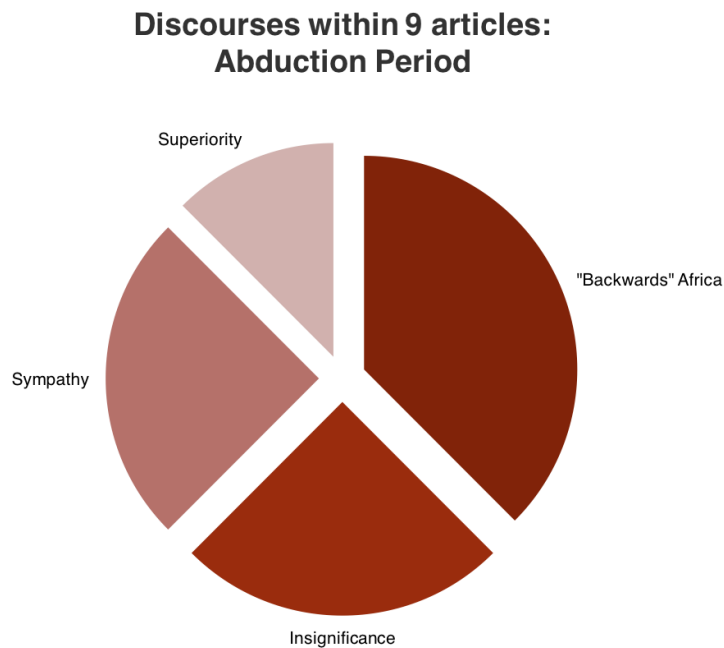


Figure 4 - Article Discourses: Abduction Period

'BACKWARDS' AFRICA

The 'Backwards' Africa discourse was present in six articles during the Abduction Period, making it the most featured discourse of this period. The 'Backwards' Africa discourse was characterised by a reliance on tropes of the “dark continent” (Bassil, 2011); the representation of violence as commonplace in Africa; and expectations of incompetence in response to the abduction. Patterns of over lexicalisation, the use of many synonymous terms when describing an issue, an effect that points to an intense

preoccupation, or problem, with said issue on behalf of the author (Fairclough, 2003), indicate the presence of this discourse. The 'Backwards' Africa is also identified through the presence of hyperbolic speech and negative adjectives (Hansen & Machin, 2013: 121). In an article in *TG* titled "Students Kidnapped" (2014), language such as "in a statement that gave no details"; "the military claims that they have cornered insurgents"; serve to signify African ineptness. The language features in these examples implore readers to make a value judgement about the subject(s) at the centre of the article, and position readers to regard the subject(s), in this case, Nigerians, as untrustworthy and incompetent. The article, "88 Nigeria schoolgirls abducted," (2014) further enforces the 'Backwards' Africa discourse, through demonstrating the unreliability of government officials. Immediately following a quote from the Nigerian defence ministry spokesman that claimed all but eight of the abducted students had been freed, *TG* stated, "He retracted that statement on Thursday" ("88 Nigeria schoolgirls abducted," 2014). The article ends at this point, and it is this impression of Nigerian governmental forces readers are left with. The Nigerian defence ministry spokesman presented unverified information as truth but later retracted the information. Obviously, *TG* was aware of inaccuracies in the initial statement at the time of publication, yet, the statement was published anyway; accompanied by a retraction notice. This action demonstrates the 'Backwards' Africa discourse, as it highlights the ineptness of a Nigerian in a position of power. *TG* article titled "Nigeria students' fate uncertain" (2014) states similarly, "The attacks undermine government and military claims that security forces are containing the uprising". When closing an article, one leaves their audience with a final view of the event, and as the examples above represent, this final impression is negative when finalising the text with the 'Backwards' Africa discourse. This discourse emanates ideological tropes of colonialism and imperialism. It is through these tropes that Basil (2011) considers the negative, untrue perception of Africa, as a dark continent of

“barbarity, backwardness, idleness, and inferiority” (377), to stem from. In projecting this ideology, MSM articles of the Abduction Period serve to contribute to a narrative of violent attacks as ordinary within African society. Particularly through the inclusion of death, and sexual assault statistics, which are presented matter-of-factly despite their sensitive subject matter(s). This is exemplified in the article titled, “Students kidnapped” (2014), through the statement “More than 1,500 people have been killed this year, compared to an estimated 3,600 between 2010 and 2013”. Inserting statistics without context other than the country, in which these travesties have occurred, indicates this is not uncommon news. This signals to readers that Nigeria is somewhere violence and tragedy is to be expected and exemplifies the ‘Backwards’ Africa discourse.

INSIGNIFICANCE

The Insignificance discourse was identified in four articles during the Abduction Period. The Insignificance discourse is indicative of an unequal power relationship, one that marks the Chibok abduction, and all those affected by it, as of marginal importance. This power dynamic draws attention to the hegemonic elements inherent within the Insignificance discourse (Agnew, 2005; Gramsci, 1971); hegemony was discussed in-depth in Chapter Three. One of the first features that point to the presence of the Insignificance discourse is the composition of the articles that adhered to the discourse. These articles were written in ‘press release’ format, where the article is of minimal length and minimal content, with authorship not attributed to a journalist, but a news organisation. Issues perceived to be important are covered in articles of significant length, and with coverage specifically attributed to a journalist. Articles in ‘press release’ format often include vague statements, with few details and little evidence of independent investigation. Therefore, ‘press release’ articles signify the event they address is not a high priority for the news outlet. Thus, MSM articles that adhere to this

description can be perceived as of minor importance, and this invokes the Insignificance discourse. *TNYT* article, “Nigeria: Dozens of Girls Kidnapped” (2014), includes language features pointing to uncertainty, such as “about 100 teenage girls”; “in what officials said”; “most of the teenage girls”. In this example, it appears the particulars of the event were not independently verified. This article is attributed to the *Associated Press*, and while common for major news outlets to utilise independent contractors, in this instance, it appears indicative of a lack of value being placed on the Nigerian region. The Insignificance discourse enforces a power dichotomy, which works to inform readers about who or what is of value. In this case, the Insignificance discourse positions an entire Africa region and its people, as a trivial aside, not worthy of significant coverage. From an ideological perspective, this enforces a hegemonic power dynamic. Such a dynamic is beneficial to the west and detrimental to the well-being of those in the global south (Agnew, 2005; Glapka, 2010). Blommaert and Bulcaen (2000) claim “discourse is an opaque power object in modern societies” (448), meaning it is obscured through established social conditions and norms. The presence of the Insignificance discourse within MSM reporting of a Nigerian event confirms this.

SYMPATHY

The Sympathy discourse was present in four articles during the Abduction Period. The Sympathy discourse was characterised by emotive language which directs audiences as to how they should respond; the inclusion of statistics that indicate a lower quality of life; and references to the young women at the heart of the abduction as “girls.” The Sympathy discourse works to orchestrate a reader’s emotional response(s) to an event. The use of language such as “unprecedented” and “slaughtered” (“88 Nigeria schoolgirls abducted,” 2014) serves to stir up pity for those who have endured the Chibok abduction. *TG’s* article, “Nigeria students’ fate still uncertain” (2014), involves a

discussion of the still-missing students. The article evokes emotive imagery within the statement, “The fate of more than 100 girls and young women abducted by Islamist extremists was thrown into uncertainty” (“Nigeria students’ fate uncertain,” 2014); such imagery serves to conjure up feelings of helplessness and sympathy. When accompanied by statements alluding to sexual assault and enslavement (“88 Nigeria schoolgirls abducted,” 2014), readers are left with no recourse but to pity the fate of these students. The Sympathy discourse works to create helpless, needy victims, and this is further developed in *TG*’s articles during this period, through references to the kidnapped students as “girls” or “schoolgirls.” This is despite the students being aged in their mid-teens, making them, for all intents and purposes, young women. With additional youthfulness and naiveté, comes greater sympathy. The Sympathy discourse should not be confused with empathy. Empathy is an emotional response where a person can identify with the plight of another, through ‘putting themselves in their shoes.’ Sympathy stems not from identification or similarity, but instead a marking of difference and invoking of pity for another. As such, the Sympathy discourse is visible through the inclusion of statistics that indicate the stark contrasts of life between the presumably western readers and the Nigerian subjects of these articles. For example:

Nigeria has Africa’s biggest economy but 70% of the population lives below the poverty line and the north-east suffers the most. Only 5% of children get to secondary school
(“Students kidnapped,” 2014)

This information serves to create a divide between western readers and the Nigerian subjects they are reading about. Through a focus on the poor quality of life in Nigeria, the readers are presented with a distinct difference between their realities and the Nigerian experience. The statistics are presented plainly; there is no way for a reader to identify with the subjects, as there is not enough information. Without a way to identify with the subject, an empathetic response cannot occur. However, the use of words such

as “poverty” and “suffers”, alongside the bleak statistics, may invoke a pity response and therefore exemplifies the Sympathy discourse. Within this marking of difference, there are evident hegemonic elements, which solidify the west in a position of power while positioning the ‘victims’ as helpless Africans in need of sympathy (Glapka, 2010). Thus, the presence of the Sympathy discourse indicates the establishment, or enforcement, of unequal power distributions that work to benefit western actors while further disempowering non-westerners.

SUPERIORITY

The Superiority discourse was present in two MSM articles during the Abduction Period. The Superiority discourse is demonstrated through language that serves to establish an unequal power relationship, the inclusion of negative ideological tropes, and speculation. The Superiority discourse and the Insignificance discourse bear similarities, as they are both recognised through the propelling of one subject over another. However, the Insignificance discourse is defined by features that seek to establish an event, or subject(s), as of little importance, and without weight or character. While similar, the Superiority discourse is primarily concerned with establishing a group or subject as higher in rank or greater than something else. Such differences may appear subtle, but this is the very nature of discourses; they are not mutually exclusive, as one discourse can appear in tandem with multiple others. Discourses flow into one another, especially when the ideologies they circulate are the same, or similar. The two articles that exhibited the Superiority discourse reported the Chibok abduction as an unremarkable, unsurprising event. Phrases such as “a new attack by Muslim militants” (“Nigeria: Dozens of Girls Kidnapped,” 2014) reported the kidnapping as commonplace through the use of “new attack.” Additionally, there is speculation about who is to blame, here credited as “Muslim militants” despite the lack of confirmation surrounding

the responsible party at this point; this indicates such violent activity is routine in this part of the world. This perspective is evidenced through the use of the word “new” in the description of the attack (“Nigeria: Dozens of Girls Kidnapped,” 2014), which communicates to readers that this is not the first instance of such violence. *TNYT*’s coverage goes so far as to acknowledge their lack of proof regarding who is responsible, and therefore confirming their inherent speculation, stating “Meanwhile, other people suspected of being Islamic militants on Wednesday killed 20 people” (“Nigeria: Teenagers Are Freed,” 2014). The brazen manner in which this speculation was included reinforces the Superiority discourse. Such a lack of evidence in reporting this event can indicate the subject(s) of the event are not significant, as coverage concerning empowered and significant figures would be unlikely to contain presumptions. Therefore, this coverage is indicative of a lack of value being placed on the non-western subject(s) at the issue’s centre. Given the MSM outlets are predominantly western, this can be perceived as evidence of superiority and hegemony. The MSM is at liberty to speculate and give their version of events, with limited proof, in a manner that might potentially reinforce negative tropes. In considering the actions of MSM, one can consider the Superiority discourse to be enacting a certain relationship. Within this relationship, an actor from a position of power (MSM) compounds the denigration of a disempowered figure or figures (Muslims, Nigerians), in alignment with definitions of hegemony as discussed in the Chapter Three. Furthermore, violence and religious extremism is indicated as regular in Nigeria through seemingly evidentiary language, such as “All schools in Borno State were closed three weeks ago because of increased attacks that have killed hundreds of students in the past year” (“Nigeria: Dozens of Girls Kidnapped,” 2014), which again asserts violence and death as commonplace, and signals the presence of the Superiority discourse. MSM seem to regard these events as regular occurrences, and as such, they respond by reporting the event without significant context

and explanation. Such reporting signals to readers that those impacted by the event are unimportant, and therefore establishes the western reader in a position of superiority over the subject in the global south; this is the Superiority discourse in action. The presence of the Superiority discourse at the Abduction Period says: a horrific event has occurred in Nigeria, where events of nature usually do; therefore, there is no need for outrage or an empathetic response as this happens frequently.

TWITTER:

CDA of the 100 sampled tweets featuring #Chibok for the Abduction Period identified seven prominent discourses. Some tweets from this period exhibited multiple discourses, while others failed to adhere to any specific discourse. What is most important to remember about this period is that it is *before* the creation of #BringBackOurGirls. Due to this, one can assume the #Chibok tweets to be made up of voices primarily from Nigeria, or other African nations, as this period comes before the international notoriety of the event.

Notably, 63 percent of the sampled tweets were retweets, meaning these Twitter users republished another user's tweet within their own (Zappavigna, 2012: 35). Nagarajan et al. explain, through retweeting, one marks the quoted text as notable and recommend it to their followers. However, while Twitter users who have retweeted the content might agree with the statement, one cannot completely consider this to be a true reflection of their sentiment(s), as they have not written the tweet themselves. The most prominent discourse within the tweets from the Abduction Period was the previously discussed 'Backwards' Africa discourse, with 58 percent of tweets fitting the criteria (Figure 5). The Sympathy discourse was present in 19 percent of these tweets, and the

Superiority discourse was found to be in six percent. In addition to these discourses above, a number of discourses absent in MSM coverage were discovered in these tweets. Namely, Disgust, Distrust, Prayer, and Optimism.

**Discourses within 100 sampled tweets:
Abduction Period**

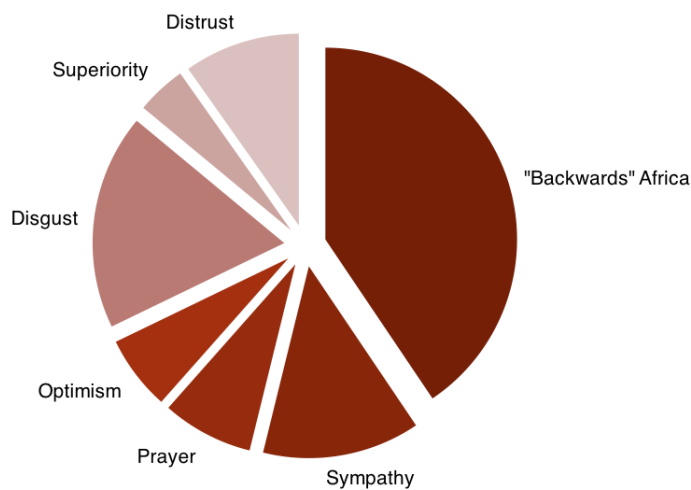


Figure 5 - Twitter Discourses: Abduction Period

DISGUST

The Disgust discourse was present in 25 percent of sampled tweets from the Abduction Period. The Disgust discourse is an emotional response of revulsion to the issue at hand, in this case, the Chibok abduction. As such, harsh language that points to revulsion and disdain, concerning the abduction, indicate the Disgust discourse. Tweet A32 represents this well, stating “For the sake of all that is decent, can someone pls [sic] tell GEJ’s officials to stop lying on the fate of the #Chibok girls?” GEJ is an acronym for the Nigerian President of the time, Goodluck Jonathan. The language choices of this tweet, particularly “For the sake of all that is decent”, sought to undermine the Nigerian officials, in particular, those who represented President Jonathan, by taking aim at their

credibility. This tweet also bears similarities to the 'Backwards' Africa discourse; through the way it points to incompetence within Nigerian authorities while expressing an absence of surprise at their action(s), or lack thereof. These discourses differ, as while the 'Backwards' Africa discourse serves to disenfranchise African peoples, the Disgust discourse involves the recognition of inappropriate behaviour through an emotional response. In the example tweet A32 provides, the primary discourse exhibited is the Disgust discourse. This is evidenced through what the author considers "decent". That is, the Nigerian officials' actions are perceived by the author as indecent, as they believe them to have lied about "the fate of the #Chibok girls". Similarly, tweet A13 poses the question, "Is it rocket science for #Nigeria to give the actual number and the names of the abducted girls in #chibok?" In doing so, representing the Disgust discourse, as well as the 'Backwards' Africa discourse. The use of metaphor here enables the author to designate Nigeria as the root of the problem while emphasising their perception of the shortcomings within the search, through drawing the comparison with rocket science. Furthermore, utilising the term "actual" discredits Nigerian authorities, and indicates ineptitude, highlighting the author's disdain at the handling of this situation. The author believes the compiling of accurate information, regarding the abduction, is a simple task; therefore, the Nigerian authorities' inability to accomplish this revolts the author. The language features within these tweets, from the use of inflammatory adjectives to metaphor, criticise the handling of the abduction and the forces that have led to the event. It is through these features that one can identify the presence of the Disgust discourse.

DISTRUST

The Distrust discourse was identified in 14 percent of tweets from this period. Characterised by a lack of faith in the services charged with the rescue mission, this

discourse bears striking similarities to the Disgust discourse. It too exhibited harsh language features, questioned commitment to the rescue mission, and was comprised with pseudo-threats. While the Disgust discourse is identifiable through an emotional response of revulsion, the Distrust discourse involves an erosion of faith which progresses into suspicion and distrust. Tweet A19 showcases the confusion and faithlessness of the Distrust discourse, stating “I don’t know who or what to believe again wallahi #chibok”. With “wallahi” translating to “I swear to God” (Parkinson & Farwaneh, 2003: 3). Tweet A64 also projects the Distrust discourse, by doubting the Nigerian government’s commitment to finding the girls, stating “#Nigerian government: you have to brink [*sic*] the kids back to their families in #chibok. Otherwise I won’t forgive you!” The attitudes expressed through these tweets demonstrate a lack of faith in the Nigerian government and security forces. Tweets adhering to the Distrust discourse share a sense of expectation regarding the missing students not being a priority for those who have the power to help them, as well as the belief those in positions of power will lie to them. The Distrust discourse features only in tweets critical of Nigerian, and wider African, security forces and government. This is important, as it is indicative of a targeted reaction. In taking aim at institutions and actors from the African region, and lamenting what is perceived as their inaction or mismanagement, a view of these actors as unworthy of trust emerges. This attack on credibility empowers other actors, such as those from the west, by marking them as more trustworthy by comparison. Therefore, there is an ideology present, steeped in the previously discussed hegemonic features, that works to empower one group over the other. Within this research, the west is the group continually instilled with power, while the disempowered are citizens of the global south. The Distrust discourse is obvious through language features that exhibit scepticism and target those tasked with the rescue mission. As a result of the Distrust discourse, an ideology that works to disempower these actors emerges.

PRAYER

The Prayer discourse was seen in 11 percent of tweets from the Abduction Period. Tweets featuring religious elements, whether explicit or otherwise, are classed as representative of the Prayer discourse. Regarding the abduction, those tweeting statements alluding to placing their faith in God/Allah, or simply stating they were ‘praying for’ the missing students, expressed the Prayer discourse. Tweet A8 states, “Please pray for their safe return”, in reference to the missing students, exemplifying prayer, or reliance on religion as a method of action. Tweet A11 is another example of this, tweeting “all but 8 girls from chibok have been found!!!! Still praying for the remaining 8! #chibok #nigeria”. Tweets referencing religion, prayer, God, or Allah, exemplify the Prayer discourse. Tweet A94 showcases this once more, stating “God we pray for their safety and freedom from captors”. The Prayer discourse sees religious expression, which for this research is regarded as minimal action, celebrated and relied upon in the search for the missing students. This religious expression occurs without tangible impact(s). Therefore, the presence of the Prayer discourse within the #BringBackOurGirls tweets, even in this minor manner, is necessary to highlight given the context of this research.

OPTIMISM

The Optimism discourse was identified in nine percent of tweets from this period. The use of positive language features, hyperbole, and presupposition, alongside generalised statements, indicated the presence of this discourse. The Optimism discourse involved expectations of a good outcome in relation to the student abduction, and this was marked by an obliviousness of sorts to the seriousness of the situation. This obliviousness inherent to the Optimism discourse serves to exemplify the

misinformation or lack of information that surrounded the abduction. Tweet A21 showcases this, stating “#GoodNews #Borno #Chibok”, believing the students to have been found. While tweet A94 remained ignorant to the gravity of the abduction, as well as the facts surrounding it, claiming “Most Of The Dozens Of Girls Abducted In Nigeria Are Free”, a statement as inaccurate as it was generalised. The Optimism discourse warrants discussion due to the way under-informed Twitter users discuss the event in question. With Twitter being heralded as a source for real-time news, such blatant falsities are certainly a cause for concern. The Optimism discourse removes the need for engagement with the abduction; obscuring it as ‘solved’ or otherwise tended to. For those directly impacted by the abduction, such misrepresentation and subsequent disengagement might prove detrimental to achieving their goals.

HASHTAG BEGINS: 4 – 9 MAY 2014

MAINSTREAM MEDIA:

As already noted, the Hashtag Begins Period saw a stark increase in coverage of the Chibok abduction by all MSM outlets. MSM published a total of 46 articles during this period. *TNYT* published 15 articles, *TG* published 21, and *AJ* printed ten articles. CDA of each article revealed the presence of seven discourses. Some these discourses have been discussed previously; they are the ‘Backwards’ Africa discourse present in 33 articles; the Superiority discourse present in 26 articles; and the Insignificance discourse present in two articles (Figure 6). Four new discourses were identified: Western Saviour, Self-awareness, Accomplishment, and Idealised Victim.

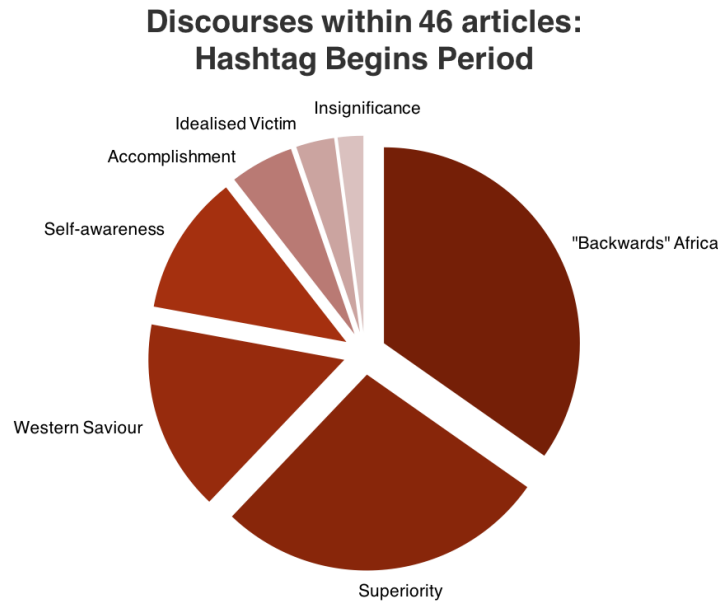


Figure 6 - Article Discourses: Hashtag Begins Period

WESTERN SAVIOUR

The Western Saviour discourse was revealed in 15 mainstream articles during Hashtag Begins Period. It bears similarities to both the Superiority discourse, through the way it also serves to elevate the actor above the perceived victim. In doing so, this discourse enacts hegemonic elements found within similar discourses, as it serves to empower one group above another. Within the Western Saviour discourse, the empowered group is the west, while the disempowered group is Nigeria and the wider African region, and the abducted students. The Western Saviour discourse is identifiable through suppression, and naming and reference features. Suppression, meaning what is purposely absent within a text that should be present. Through identifying suppression, one's attention is drawn to what is missing from a text, which in turn indicates what the author is attempting to distract from (Hansen & Machin, 2013: 130). Naming and reference features refer to how a subject is described in a text, with such presentation having a great bearing on how a reader perceives said subject. The Western Saviour

discourse was apparent through the neglect of the role of African powers in the search for the abducted students, and the focus on the efforts, and supposed successes, of western powers instead. Such aspects of the Western Saviour discourse indicate hegemonic elements, which reinforce an unequal power distribution. In the context of the Western Saviour discourse such hegemonic elements serve to project an ideology of the global south as unenlightened and helpless, and the west as the great redeemer (Bassil, 2011).

The role of suppression is central to the Western Saviour discourse. This is evidenced by the distinct absence of mentions of African nations and prominent African leaders within the articles. Such absence is odd when considering the event these articles discuss occurred on the African continent. Instead, what is most discussed is the role of Western powers in response to the event. *TG* article titled, “Nigeria president urges safe return” (2014), skimmed over the role of Nigerian authorities, and expressed disdain at their efforts, before focusing on the west, stating, “the US and Britain have promised unspecified help”. This is again showcased through the statement:

[the abduction] has woken up the world to what is happening in the region, with pledges of help from the US and UK. [...] Families have little faith in the Nigerian military, or the government, to find them (“Nigerian president urges safe return,” 2014)

As this excerpt showcases, when *TG* says “world” what they are referring to is the west, and this demonstrates just whom the newspaper considers the important figure. Clearly, the Western Saviour discourse is present here; the focus placed on western nations pledging help demonstrates this, and arcs back to the discussion of ideology and hegemony, which sees the west enabled and the global south disempowered. Additionally, the Superiority discourse is present here also, as signified by the ‘good’ actions of the west in juxtaposition with the ‘bad’ actions of Nigerian authorities, whom,

as *TG* claims, the families of the abducted students have little faith in. Although this was an event concerning the African region, the focus by MSM is the response from westerners. *TG* article by Mark (2014a) included a discussion, which revolved around outrage, not in Nigeria, but in major western cities, “the attacks have prompted international protests in New York and London”; and “the US viewed the abductions as an outrage”. While western actors are praised by MSM, when Nigeria or the African continent are mentioned, albeit rarely, the attitudes are less positive. Mark and Carroll’s (2014) article in *TG* further enforced the Western Saviour discourse, stating “In Chibok, desperate relatives welcomed news of assistance from the US and Britain”. The description of relatives as “desperate” serves here to enforce a narrative of westerners as heroic redeemers. Again, portraying Africans similarly to the ‘Backwards’ Africa discourse – as helpless figures in dire need. Through the Western Saviour discourse, African nations, or any regions that are not westernised, are depicted as in need of support, and their unwillingness to accept such support is considered idiotic. The Western Saviour discourse enforces colonial tropes and strengthens the hegemonic relationship between the west and the ‘rest’.

SELF-AWARENESS

The Self-awareness discourse was present in eleven MSM articles during the Hashtag Begins Period. It is characterised by a reflexivity of sorts, which sees authors take a critical view towards the rise of #BringBackOurGirls. Articles that question motivations for participation in the hashtag, or criticise the ‘bandwagoning’ of sorts that saw this story develop into headline news, are classed as exhibiting the Self-awareness discourse. *TNYT* writer, Nossiter (2014a), comments that the students’ abduction has “attracted rare international attention”. Nossiter’s (2014a) statement essentially comments on the peculiarity of this issue sparking such levels of coverage, as usually

matters of this kind, from this part of the world, are regarded unimportant by MSM. Additional comments in an editorial piece published by *TNYT*, alluded to MSM's initial apathy regarding the abduction, stating, "we in the news media world were also largely indifferent" (Kristof, 2014). This statement also works to attribute the sudden embracement of this news story to its rise on social media. However, the Self-awareness discourse also involves the lamenting of social media's role in highlighting this event, as Mackey's (2014) article in *TNYT* demonstrated through the statement, "Twitter, where the captivity is the cause of the day", about the rise of #BringBackOurGirls. Here, Mackey (2014) recognises social media's tendency to embrace causes, yet through labelling #BringBackOurGirls as the "cause of the day", simultaneously comments on the fact that online causes are typically not engaged with for significant periods of time. Furthermore, comments concerning OSMs, such as "too often, that kind of action helps no one so much as ourselves" (Dell'Antonia, 2014); and "[there are] limits to what hashtag activism, like bumper stickers and T-shirts, can achieve" (Mackey, 2014); recognise the limitations of online activism. The limitations suggested through MSM articles, discuss the tendency those engaging with OSMs have towards what this study regards to be Ironic Solidarity (Chouliaraki, 2013a). Ironically enough, the Self-awareness discourse also laments the discourses present in MSM coverage. An article by Brooks (2014), for the *TNYT*, takes aim at media representations of Africa that are untrue and unfounded, such as those maintained by the 'Backwards' Africa discourse. Brooks (2014) laments coverage that implies "Africa is this dark and lawless place where monstrous things are bound to happen. Those poor people need our help." Brooks' (2014) article goes on to claim westerners should not observe the African continent and its people as a place for one's fulfilment. That is, "[Africa] should not be seen as merely the basketcase continent where students, mission trips and celebrities can go to do good work" (Brooks, 2014). An awareness of the hegemonic elements, which consistently empower the west

over those in the global south, is evident in this article (Agnew, 2005; Glapka, 2010). MSM's recognition of their role in contributing to the perpetuation of colonial tropes, as well as a tendency to under-report issues in the global south, in tandem with the scrutiny of social media activism, demonstrates the Self-awareness discourse. The Self-awareness discourse involves a reflexive approach to media coverage and OSMs; it is inherently critical and examines the motivations for coverage and involvement. The Self-awareness discourse's presence is a stark contrast from accompanying discourses within MSM coverage of the Chibok abduction.

ACCOMPLISHMENT

The Accomplishment discourse was present in five articles during the Hashtag Begins Period. This discourse is identifiable through self-serving features; features that work to establish the actor(s) as of higher importance than those directly impacted. As such, the Accomplishment discourse is exhibited within claims that the suffering of abductees is over as a result of western intervention, and the celebration of #BringBackOurGirls as a 'success'. *TNYT*'s Dell'Antonia (2014) poses the question, "What Can I Do to #BringBackOurGirls?" in her article's headline. This serves to make the event about western actors, thus detracting from the students at the heart of the event. In doing so, this article ties in the Superiority discourse, leaving readers feeling that action is up to them. And what method of support does Dell'Antonia (2014) suggest? Further online activism and money; claiming, "[action] can come from our laptops, our raised voices and our wallets" (Dell'Antonia, 2014). The Accomplishment discourse is particularly evident in discussions surrounding the online activism surrounding this event. Although the abducted students were still missing, through the Accomplishment discourse the hashtag was championed for its role in focusing attention towards the abduction. *TNYT*'s article, "New Kidnapping Reported" (2014), states that

“It is heartening that with the help of social media, the crisis in Nigeria has finally captured international attention.” This statement points to such attention being the major goal and this being met a cause for celebration. Furthermore, Kristof (2014) of *TNYT*, refers to the hashtag as “grass-roots activism”, and praises it for “catapulting this news [...] onto the global agenda” in his editorial. Such language makes it appear that the quest is over, but gaining notoriety is just one minor way to aid the abducted students. Through such coverage, the central subjects are neglected. The Accomplishment discourse promotes engagement with the hashtag as the most important aspect of the event. Perhaps the best example of the Accomplishment discourse and its self-serving elements in action rests in Gross and Schulten’s (2014) literal ‘how-to’ guide regarding teaching children about the importance of engaging in hashtag activism. The article “Skills and Strategies | Engaging in Causes Via ‘Hashtag Activism’” (Gross & Schulten, 2014), highlights all forms of engagement with #BringBackOurGirls and urges children to participate, “submit a solidarity photo [to] tell the girls’ families that the thoughts of the world are with them”. Gross and Schulten’s (2014) article additionally claims “hashtag activism will save the kidnapped Nigerian girls”, and asks children to consider what other campaigns could be bolstered through the creating awareness online, “create your own social-media message [...] in support of a cause you care about”. Gross and Schulten’s (2014) guide to hashtag activism hales #BringBackOurGirls as a success that will save the Chibok students, which is inaccurate as, at this point, the hashtag had only served to raise awareness. The article fails to present tangible impact(s) of the hashtag, as the students remained in captivity at this point. Instead, Gross and Schulten’s (2014) article praises the hashtag for making this issue popular, which establishes notoriety, not the achievement of the students’ freedom, as the overarching aim of OSMs. The Accomplishment discourse rests upon a fulfilment of sorts. It provides audiences with a ‘good news’ spin of events, allowing them to feel less aggrieved. In their minds, the

situation might be awful, but westerners have taken action, and it is better now. Therefore, one need not dwell on it any longer. As the results indicate, where the Accomplishment discourse is present, the ongoing absence of the abducted students is ignored.

IDEALISED VICTIM

The Idealised Victim discourse was found in three articles from the Hashtag Begins Period. This discourse was identifiable through naming and reference features, and word choices, in particular, adjective selection. The Idealised Victim discourse seeks to present a certain impression of those impacted by an event, distilling them into a more attractive figure. However, doing so requires some condensing of the facts. As already discussed, referrals to the abducted students as “girls” or “schoolgirls” serve to neglect their maturity and instead positions them as naïve figures. In reality, these students were aged in their mid-teens and above. Considering there was little known about the abductees, other than their being female high school students, it would be wise not to make assumptions. However, as the prevalence of the Idealised Victim discourse showcases, MSM did not let a lack of information deter them from presenting a certain view of the students. Dell’Antonia’s (2014) article praised the students as “girls who risked much, knowingly, for education, and who were the stars of their families and villages.” Such a description paints the students as martyrs of sorts, who were aware of the horrors awaiting them, yet unwilling to let this stop them in their pursuit of education. Kristof’s (2014) editorial in *TNYT* also demonstrated this narrative, through the claim the abduction affected “several hundred girls whose only offense was to dream of becoming doctors, teachers or lawyers”. The emotive language within Kristof’s (2014) editorial positions readers to view the students as innocent and pure, and urges them to picture their dreams, which one has no way of verifying. References to the students as

“brave Nigerian girls” (Kristof, 2014) and “poor, frightened children” (Gladstone, 2014); implement colourful descriptions to help readers align themselves with their plight. The MSM has no way of knowing how the students were feeling, or what they had longed for before the abduction, so such descriptions served to provide readers with a pseudo-representation. A problematic and unrealistic representation designed to have readers react in a certain manner. As the examples above have highlighted, such representation of the students’ experience was wholly idealised, and thus indicates the presence of the Idealised Victim discourse.

TWITTER:

Of the sampled tweets from the Hashtag Begins Period, 66 percent were retweets. As discussed, this can cast doubt as to whether the tweets can be considered representative of the views of those who have shared them, as they are not the original authors (Zappavigna, 2012). This point in time also revealed an unseen phenomenon whereby tweets that only included the hashtag emerged. Here ten percent of sampled tweets consisted only of the text ‘#BringBackOurGirls’. The hashtag-only tweets reveal one in ten users, who participated in the hashtag at this point, felt the hashtag alone was enough to express their sentiment(s).

The presence of nine discourses was revealed in the analysis of tweets from the Hashtag Begin Period. Five such discourses have previously been discussed in-depth, but this period marked the discovery of four new discourses. The aforementioned Superiority discourse was identified in 33 percent of tweets, ‘Backwards’ Africa was present in 27 percent, Self-awareness in six percent, the Prayer discourse in five percent,

and the Insignificance discourse present in one percent (Figure 7). The other discourses are as follows.

Discourses within 100 sampled tweets: Hashtag Begins Period

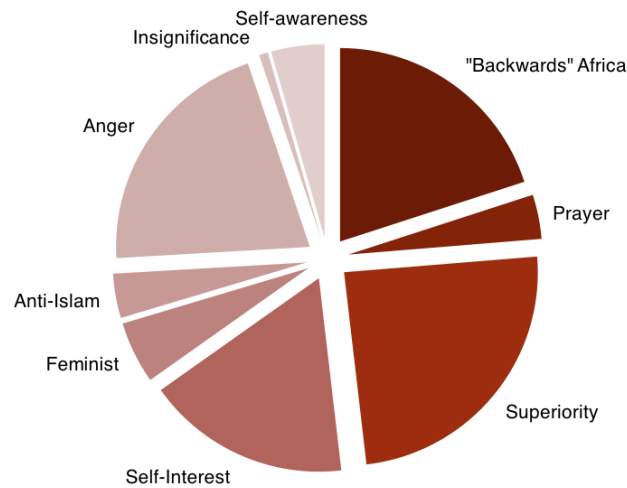


Figure 7 - Twitter Discourses: Hashtag Begins Period

ANGER

The Anger discourse was exhibited in 28 percent of tweets from the Hashtag Begins Period. The Anger discourse is marked by emotive language, hyperbole, metaphor, and grammatical features such as capitalisation, all of which indicate an emotionally charged response. This discourse was the second most prominent discourse within tweets from this period. Tweet B22 exemplifies the impassioned sentiment of the Anger discourse with this expletive-ridden statement “#BRINGBACKOURGIRLS You crazy mothafuckers [sic]”. The expletive is not clearly directed to any one figure; it may have been intended for Boko Haram or perhaps Nigerian government officials. While the author appears to be tweeting to aid the students’ return, the inherent rage of their words detracts from the students’ plight. Instead, the author’s emotive response takes

precedence. The Anger discourse is also showcased in tweet B48, which demands action at any cost, stating, “Nigeria needs to take it v [sic] seriously and eliminate these animals. The quicker the better...#BringBackOurGirls”. Tweets displaying the Anger discourse appeared motivated by a lack of progress and perceived disinterest from those whom tweeters felt could be of help in locating the students. Tweet B28 showcases this by stating “What are you waiting for @BarackObama @David_Cameron? Do something! #BringBackOurGirls #NIGERIA”. Such aggrieved responses point to Twitter users’ feelings of helplessness and frustration at those who they feel have the power to act. However, the Anger discourse is grounded in emotion, and thus is considered as potentially self-serving; as its inherent passion detracts from the situation at hand, and arguably does little to aid the Chibok students.

SELF-INTEREST

The Self-interest discourse was present in 23 percent of tweets from this period. The Self-interest discourse is identifiable due to naming and reference features that establish the author as the central focus of the tweet. Thus, making the author’s experience and emotion the ‘main event’ of the tweet. This is a selfish act, although it may be subconscious, which detracts from the issue at hand. Tweet B71 displays the Self-interest discourse by switching the focus from the missing students, to their emotion(s), stating, “My heart aches for people who are caught in the wrong place @ [sic] the wrong time”. Tweet B7 again detracts from those directly impacted, by instead placing focus on those who are sharing the hashtag, stating, “It’s important [...] that we keep up the pressure to find these girls. #BringBackOurGirls”. The Self-interest discourse bears similarities to that of the Anger discourse, as both lack evidence of tangible action that could benefit the abducted students and instead focus on the self.

FEMINIST

The Feminist discourse was present in 7 percent of tweets. This discourse's low prevalence is surprising, given #BringBackOurGirls was heralded as an OFM and an example of hashtag feminism. As such, it was expected this research would reveal a high occurrence of Feminist discourse(s), especially within tweets. The Feminist discourse is marked by references to women's rights, equality between the sexes, and discussions of female oppression. Use of emotive language, alongside empowering statements alluding to the need for change signifies its presence. Lexical analysis of these tweets saw the implementation of modality and narrative to project the feminist discourse. Tweet B26 represents this discourse through of use key phrases, here in the form of hashtags, aiming to represent inequality between the sexes and the danger females face, "#BringBackOurGirls #RescueOurGirls #GirlRising #ChildNotBride #RealMenDoNotBuyGirls #Nigeria #BokoHaram". Tweet B26's unabashed support for women, identifiable through the use of emotive hashtags, such as "rescue" and "rising" about women, showcase the Feminist discourse. Also, tweet B57 encourages the education of females, stating, "Access to education is a basic right & an unconscionable reason to target innocent girls". The intended narrative here, to draw attention to the issues facing women, when teamed with the modality of emotive wording, such as "unconscionable" and "innocent", signifies the presence of the Feminist discourse.

ANTI-ISLAM

An Anti-Islam discourse was observed in five percent of tweets from this period. Negative references to Islam characterised the discourse; the enforcement of harmful stereotypes of Islam; and insinuations Islam was to blame for violence. The Anti-Islam discourse was recognisable through the use of metaphor, and presupposition alongside rhetorical tropes. Tweet B33 exemplifies the Anti-Islam discourse through the claim,

“also they should not read that part that Mohammed married a 6yr old & started having sex with her at 9yrs old! Perv [*sic*] #BringBackOurGirls”. The tweet insinuates the Prophet Mohammed, the central figure of the Islam religion (Knysh, 2016), was a sexual deviant, and claims it is through having “read that part” of, what can be assumed to be a reference to the Qur’an, Islam’s religious text, that those who have kidnapped the students were compelled to act. Within this discourse, hegemonic traits are again recognisable; they follow the designation previously noted, which sees the west acting to disempower the global south (Agnew, 2006; Gramsci, 1971). In the west, the dominant religion is Christianity, so in an event already premised upon difference, this religious element becomes yet another point of dissimilarity. Negative tropes of Islam are frequent within the west, and this, albeit minor, display of the Anti-Islam discourse serves to reinforce these, as well as to further establish a hegemonic relationship beneficial to the west. The Anti-Islam discourse’s presence in tweets featuring #BringBackOurGirls at the Hashtag Begins Period did little to highlight the plight of the kidnapped students; instead, it served to attack a religion many of the students follow.

FIRST ANNIVERSARY: 10 – 15 APRIL 2015

MAINSTREAM MEDIA:

During the First Anniversary Period, a total of 16 articles were published by MSM. *TNYT* published four articles, while both *TG* and *AJ* published six articles. CDA identified the presence of seven discourses, with six discourses having been previously discussed. The most prominent discourse was the ‘Backwards’ Africa discourse which featured in 11 articles (Figure 8). The Feminist discourse and Western Saviour discourse were both present in eight articles. The Self-awareness discourse and Accomplishment

discourse were both found in four articles. The Sympathy discourse was identified in three articles. This period marked the first instance of the Victimisation discourse.

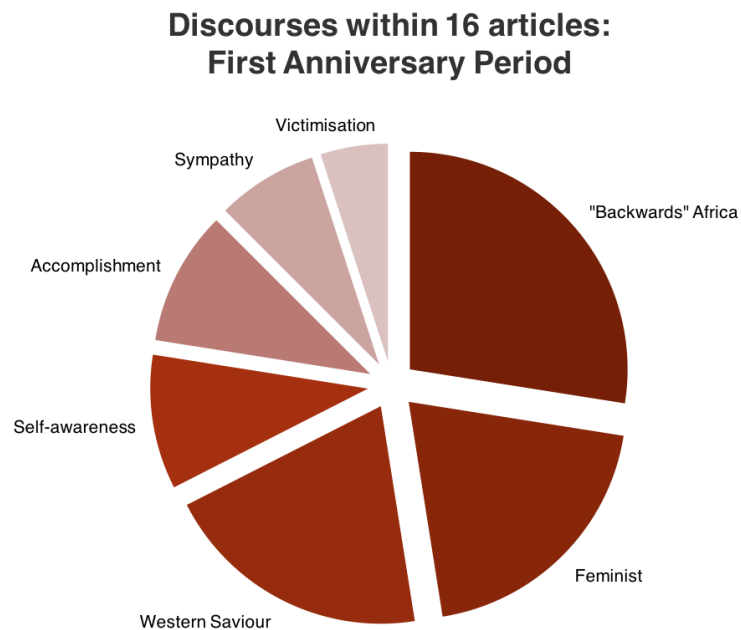


Figure 8 - Article Discourses: First Anniversary Period

VICTIMISATION

The Victimisation discourse was present in two MSM articles. The Victimisation discourse serves to reinforce the suffering of abductees through establishing a narrative about their ordeal. Through the use of graphic language, alongside naming and reference features, the Victimisation discourse is evident. Shetty's (2015) article in *TNYT* provides an example of this discourse in action, through discussing the probable circumstances abductees are in, where "Life in captivity consists of repeated rapes, sometimes by groups of up to six fighters"; "girls will be taught to use firearms, detonate bombs and attack villages". The described events make for uneasy reading. The probable purpose of the Victimisation discourse is to make the reader feel for the fate of the abducted

students, and this is achieved through statements such as, “the suffering of these women and girls [...] is beyond comprehension”. Again, the use of “girls” to reference the Chibok students, who in reality are mature, young women, occurs here. This labelling serves to create a narrative of helplessness and victimisation; thereby obscuring any agency of the abducted students through this needy representation. The Victimisation discourse cements the abducted students as symbols of suffering, it does not represent them accurately but instead serving to contribute to a narrative of ‘good’ versus ‘evil’. Through such discourse, ideologies benefitting the west can prevail.

TWITTER:

CDA of tweets during the First Anniversary Period revealed the presence of ten discourses. Eight were discourses previously examined, with the Sympathy discourse present in 37 percent of tweets; Self-interest in 25 percent; Superiority in 23 percent; 17 percent adhering to the ‘Backwards’ Africa discourse; ten percent exhibiting Self-awareness; the Feminist discourse present in seven percent; Insignificance in four percent; and the Prayer discourse featuring in three percent of tweets (Figure 9). The most prominent discourse of this period, accounting for 40 percent of tweets, was that of Frustration. While the Race discourse debuted marginally, with two percent of tweets exhibiting this discourse, making it the least prevalent tweet discourse of this period.

Tweets from the first anniversary also marked the emergence of a hashtag to accompany #BringBackOurGirls, that of #NeverToBeForgotten. This new hashtag, while not gaining as much momentum as the original #BringBackOurGirls, featured in 15 percent of tweets from this period. The number of tweets consisting solely of #BringBackOurGirls, as first recorded at the Hashtag Begins Period, dropped to two

percent at this point. The number of retweets – the republishing of another’s statement – however, rose to 72 percent.

Discourses within 100 sampled tweets: First Anniversary Period

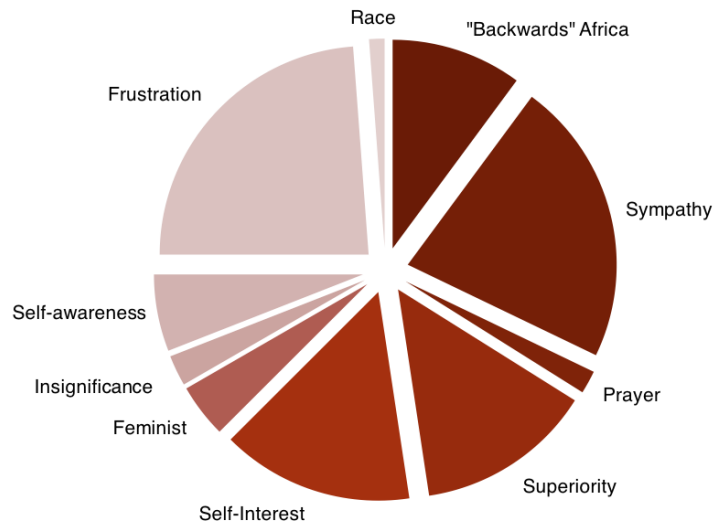


Figure 9 - Twitter Discourses: First Anniversary Period

FRUSTRATION

The Frustration discourse was present in 40 percent of tweets from the First Anniversary Period. The Frustration discourse was exhibited through tweets expressing exasperation with the elapsed time and lack of progress surrounding the Chibok abduction. Tweets that utilised language features such as metaphor, and emotive features indicative of disappointment, or uncertainty regarding how to act, signified the presence of this discourse. The Frustration discourse had not been seen up until this point, the first anniversary of the abduction, and it marked a stark shift in attitudes. The Frustration discourse was the most prominent Twitter discourse for this period, and this showcased a public struggling to understand a lack of progress, as well as a diminishment of resolve in locating the missing students. Tweet C26 exemplifies the Frustration discourse, in a

strongly worded, yet solemn statement, “Not d [*sic*] kind of anniversary we need. This wind of change won’t be complete until of [*sic*] girls are back. #bringbackourgirls #nevertobeforgotten”. The Frustration discourse was frequently found in tandem with the Self-awareness discourse, demonstrated by tweet C52, stating “Almost a year since the 200 Nigerian girls were kidnapped ... And still nothing. Just a hashtag. Wow. So heavy. #BringBackOurGirls”. The shock and dismay inherent in this tweet showcase frustration not only with the security forces who have failed to find the missing students, but with those who embraced #BringBackOurGirls on a social media level, but seemingly failed to act beyond this. While this is an example of the Self-awareness discourse, through recognising the limits of OSMs, the Frustration discourse is most evident here. The grammatical features of tweet C52 reinforce the Frustration discourse. Through the use of short, impactful sentences, with included periods (‘.’), there has been an attempt to mimic speech patterns; the tweet urges readers to read the tweet with the incorporated pauses, resulting in the “Wow.” and “So heavy.” resounding in readers’ minds. As such, tweet C52’s message is accentuated, and its inherent frustration is recognised. The author’s consideration of #BringBackOurGirls as accomplishing “nothing” and instead being “Just a hashtag” represents the emotion inherent in the Frustration discourse, but also potentially demonstrates elements of awareness at hashtag activism’s inability, in this case, to accomplish what it set out to do – rescue the students. The Frustration discourse is further exemplified through tweet C26’s statement; “this wind of change won’t be complete until the girls are back”. The wind of change is a metaphoric representation of #BringBackOurGirls as a whole. Through this statement, the author laments the fact the hashtag had not achieved its major goal. The Frustration discourse’s debut, and prevalence, at the First Anniversary Period, demonstrated the dismay of the public. The Frustration discourse’s prevalence was most probably due to a realisation of, and reaction to, the limits of online activism. However, in the same

manner, as the other emotionally charged discourses, the Frustration discourse also detracted from the plight of the missing students. The Frustration discourse did not highlight the students who had, at this point, been missing for an entire year, but instead focused on a public recoiling in the knowledge their hashtagging of #BringBackOurGirls had achieved very little.

RACE

The Race discourse was found in two percent of tweets from the First Anniversary Period. While not resoundingly prominent during this period, the Race discourse's presence demands discussion. The Race discourse was signified through tweets that highlighted racial elements and likened the abduction to prominent race-related topics. Often this was achieved ironically, through teaming #BringBackOurGirls, which at this point was being seen as a failure of sorts, with other activist hashtags. One prominent OSM during this time was the 'Black Lives Matter' movement, brought about by the deaths of unarmed black civilians at the hands of U.S. police officers (Rickford, 2016). In tweet C20, sarcasm and racial undertones are evident through the use of a happy face emoticon, followed by hashtags representing tragic deaths and events, all of which involve black civilians. Tweet C20 states, "Good Saturday, y'all. ☺ #BringBackOurGirls #MichaelBrown #EricGarner #TamirRice #AiyanaJones". This clear display of sarcasm, as demonstrated through the cheery statement "Good Saturday, ya'll", teamed with the hashtagged names, indicates a race driven motive, and therefore the Race discourse. The author, who is showcasing the suffering of these black civilians, thus includes positive statements, in the form of "Good Saturday" and the happy face emoticon, to contrast between the following hashtags. The students #BringBackOurGirls represents have been missing for over a year, and the following names, in hashtag form, are all deceased, having been killed by police. Their names are

on social media to serve as a reminder of the prejudice black people still face and are linked to the Black Lives Matter movement (Rickford, 2016). The optimistic elements are at odds with the accompanying hashtags that signify violence and suffering. Through the tool of sarcasm, the author of tweet C20 has attempted to draw salience to the issue of violence against blacks. Tweet C74 steers away from sarcasm as a tool to express racial sentiment, instead outwardly stating “#BlackLivesMatter” in their tweet. The inclusion of this statement alongside the #BringBackOurGirls hashtag, ties these events together, thus indicating that the author perceived the lack of progress surrounding the abduction to be racially motivated. While not incredibly widespread, the fact this discourse is present, even mildly, is indicative of a different conversation concerning the abduction, one absent in MSM coverage.

SECOND ANNIVERSARY: 10 – 15 APRIL 2016

MAINSTREAM MEDIA:

MSM published eight articles during the Second Anniversary Period. *TNYT* published one, *TG* printed five, and *AJ* published two. Five discourses were identified in these articles, with all five having been previously discussed. The “Backwards” Africa discourse was the most prevalent discourse again; identified in six articles. The Western Saviour discourse was present in five articles, and the Self-awareness discourse identified in two articles. The Accomplishment discourse and Sympathy discourse both featured in one article each, making these the least prolific MSM discourses of the Second Anniversary Period.

**Discourses within 8 articles:
Second Anniversary Period**

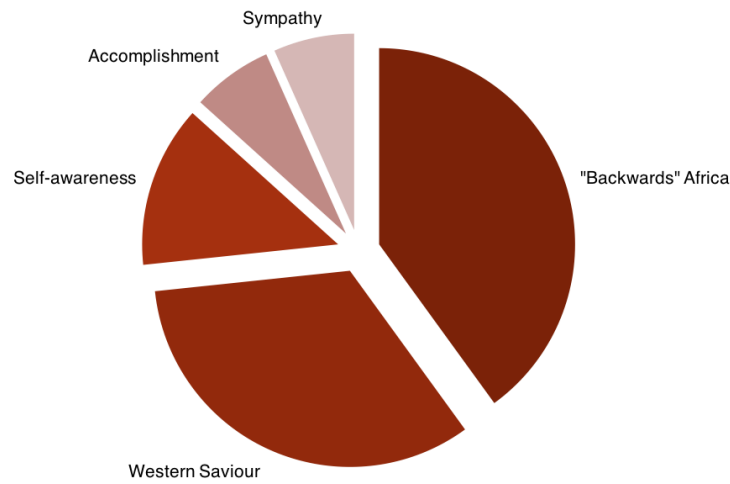


Figure 10 - Article Discourses: Second Anniversary Period

TWITTER:

In tweets from the Second Anniversary Period, ten discourses were identified. All were discourses featured in previous coverage, with the Sympathy discourse being the most prominent, present in 40 percent of tweets; ‘Backwards’ Africa featured in 27 percent; Self-interest accounted for 26 percent; the Frustration discourse was identified in 24 percent; the Feminist discourse in 12 percent; Superiority in 12 percent; Self-awareness in seven percent; Insignificance seven percent; Optimism seven percent; and the Prayer discourse accounting for just one percent (Figure 11).

#NeverToBeForgotten, the hashtag which emerged on Twitter during the First Anniversary Period was present again at this point. However, it was not as prominent. #NeverToBeForgotten was found in three percent of tweets, while #HopeEndures was introduced during this time. #HopeEndures was created in direct reference to the second anniversary of the Chibok abduction, as a means of continuing support for the

students' return in the same vein as #BringBackOurGirls originally had. However, it only featured in five percent of tweets. The number of hashtag-only tweets was six percent, while the largest proportion of retweets to date was revealed during this period, with 76 percent of tweets being retweets.

**Discourses within 100 sampled tweets:
Second Anniversary Period**

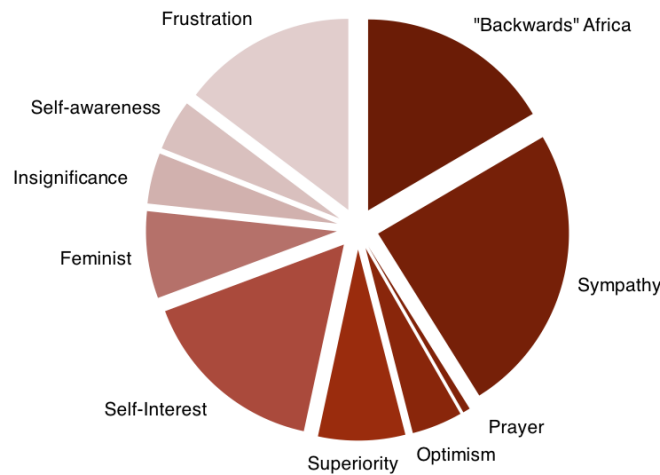


Figure 11 - Twitter Discourses: Second Anniversary Period

CONCLUSION

These results suggest the Chibok abduction was a news event propelled by social media through the #BringBackOurGirls; and comprised of a variety of distinct views. Before the abduction, MSM coverage of Nigeria and the Chibok region was minimal. Each MSM outlet demonstrated the same trend in this period – minimal coverage at the time of abduction; followed by immense attention during the month #BringBackOurGirls attained virality; before a rapid descent which saw coverage then occur only at the yearly anniversaries. As these results demonstrate, the focus the event received, following initial MSM apathy, is linked to the rise of #BringBackOurGirls on

Twitter. #BringBackOurGirls' trajectory is similar to the MSM outlets featured in this study; with massive growth and engagement in May 2014, before minimal engagement over the next two years, again featuring flurries of activity at the yearly anniversaries. Given MSM's initial apathy, and coverage of the abduction coming weeks after the event itself, at a time when #BringBackOurGirls was a dominant social media trend, this research posits #BringBackOurGirls influenced MSM coverage.

During the Abduction Period, the discourses revealed to be present in MSM were similar. For the most part, the discourses were those that served to enforce or encourage the hegemonic relationship between the west and the global south. That is discourses such as 'Backwards' Africa, Superiority, and Insignificance. However, analysis of Twitter tweets from the same period revealed the presence of a greater variety of discourse. In spite of this diversity, these discourses also served to reinforce stereotypes of the global south, and inscribed the west with power. As such, the discourses of the Abduction Period from both MSM and Twitter, are considered 'power dynamic' discourses, through the way they operate to disempower vulnerable groups while further promoting privileged groups.

The introduction of #BringBackOurGirls marked the beginning of a new period, one that saw the Chibok abduction develop into a major news event within MSM. However, this sudden increase in coverage did not see the discourses within MSM develop beyond the pre-discussed power dynamic discourses. While new discourses emerged, namely the Victimisation and Western Saviour discourses, these served to enforce the hegemonic relationship between the west and global south further. A notable exception was the emergence of the Self-awareness discourse. This was the only instance of a discourse within MSM not adhering to the power dynamic. Notably, despite this

period representing the beginning of #BringBackOurGirls, considered an OFM, there was no Feminist discourse present within MSM during this period. Meanwhile, on Twitter, #BringBackOurGirls was its peak of popularity, with widespread engagement globally. The variety of discourse found in tweets from the Hashtag Begins Period, exemplify the hashtag's popularity at this point. While the power dynamic discourses, present at the previous period, remained prominent; this period also marked the first, albeit minor, emergence of the Self-awareness discourse within online sentiment. The prevalence of emotionally grounded discourses, such as Anger and Self-interest, also grew at this point. It is important to note that the Hashtag Begins Period saw the emergence of the Feminist discourse in tweets, but only minimally.

The First Anniversary Period revealed the first presence of the Feminist discourse within MSM. However, the Feminist discourse was not as prominent as the ever-present discourses of 'Backwards' Africa and Western Saviour. The perceived achievements of #BringBackOurGirls were a major focus of MSM reporting for this period, as evidenced by the Accomplishment discourse. Tweets similarly exhibited the power dynamic discourses, yet in a more emotionally charged manner than previous periods, through the prevalence of the Frustration and Sympathy discourses. At this point, the Feminist discourse on Twitter stagnated.

The Second Anniversary Period once again saw MSM discourses remain grounded within larger, geo-political, power dynamics. Aside from the minor presence of Self-awareness, all MSM discourses were western serving. CDA of Twitter tweets at this period revealed the Feminist discourse's peak, and the Sympathy discourse became the most prevalent.

As these results demonstrate, MSM discourses primarily served to enforce unequal power dynamics. Power dynamics are evident through discourses focused on the west, and their actions, while positioning the global south as needy, inept, and wild. Twitter discourse bore similarities, with the power dynamic discourses continually being most prominent. However, the variety of voices provided by Twitter also yielded a greater assortment of responses, and thus, greater discourse diversity.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

The following chapter seeks to interpret the results of the CDA and quantitative analysis. In addressing the five research questions posed in Chapter One, such interpretation aims to align with the core research objectives of this thesis.

RESEARCH QUESTION 1

HOW DID INTERACTION BETWEEN MAINSTREAM MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA SHAPE THE #BRINGBACKOURGIRLS MOVEMENT?

#BringBackOurGirls involved both social media and MSM attention on a grand scale. However, initial MSM attention of the abduction was lacklustre (Figure 2). This lack of coverage echoed the trend of minimal reporting of the Nigerian region set by the three sampled mainstream news outlets in the six months before the abduction (Figure 1). In May 2014, MSM coverage skyrocketed, before plummeting the following month. Coincidentally, #BringBackOurGirls followed the same trend (Figure 3). It is not unusual for a news story to elicit high levels of coverage before returning to obscurity; although it is odd to see a news story command such extraordinary levels of coverage in the weeks *after* the incident occurred. Clearly, something compelled MSM outlets to dedicate coverage to the abduction in May 2014, following their minimal reporting during the previous month. As the results indicate, it is evident that something was the viral #BringBackOurGirls movement.

DID SOCIAL MEDIA SET THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA AGENDA?

Scholars differ regarding social media's ability to set MSM's agenda. Rogstad (2016) revealed MSM to have a greater influence on social media than the reverse. However, the same study found journalists integrate social media into their news reporting (Rogstad, 2016: 143), and indicated a correlation between negative Twitter sentiment and a shift of MSM's focus (153). Carter Olson (2016) claims, "social media undeniably influence public opinion and traditional media sources" (777). Furthermore, hashtag activism, which the #BringBackOurGirls movement is an example of, has been praised for its strength in moving issues from the margins of public discourse, and onto the MSM agenda (Carter Olson, 2016: 776; Atton, 2002). The MSM's sudden interest in the abduction in May 2014, followed by their subsequent indifference, provides evidence of this. Furthermore, this trend mirrors the hashtag's arc on social media. Therefore, in this case, social media has influenced MSM's news agenda.

This research revealed MSM coverage, regarding the Chibok abduction, rose by 670 percent in the month of May 2014 when compared to April 2014 (Figure 2). The rise in coverage occurred not at the time of the students' abduction, but at the point at which the hashtag designed to draw attention to their plight was gaining virality globally (Njoroge, 2016; Figure 3). In keeping with Hermida's (2012: 662) argument, which claims MSM relies on social networking sites, as reliable news outlets in their own right, and accurate reflections of society's interests. MSM was once heralded as the dominant influence on public concern, in keeping with McComb and Shaw's (1972) agenda-setting hypothesis, however social media now appears to have an independent agenda. Social media possesses the ability to draw public attention to issues that fall outside of the MSM

agenda; in a direct challenge to the “hierarchy of access” MSM have maintained (Glasgow University Media Group, 1976: 245 cited in Atton, 2002: 493). As this research indicates, social media have redirected the MSM focus. The virality of #BringBackOurGirls triggered a sudden and dramatic change concerning what the surveyed MSM outlets determined to be newsworthy. This is in keeping with Zappavigna’s (2015: 274-175) argument that hashtags are converging with mediated texts. It also lends weight to Latina and Docherty’s (2014) claim hashtags are “being appropriated by the established news media as new stories in themselves” (1104). What #BringBackOurGirls exemplifies is MSM’s loosening grip on public agenda-setting, and in fact, a shift towards the public setting MSM agendas through their social media engagement.

MAINSTREAM MEDIA REACTS TO SOCIAL MEDIA’S INFLUENCE

In examining the ways this interaction between MSM and social media shaped #BringBackOurGirls, one cannot overlook the role MSM itself played in propelling this issue to further notoriety. #BringBackOurGirls’ media coverage was initially situated only on social media platforms, but MSM’s embracement of the issue enabled it to spread further. This growth is in alignment with Kenix’s (2011) claim, “media coverage is central to the very existence of social movements” (42). The possibility of a social movement’s success is significantly harmed without widespread media attention (Kenix, 2011: 43). While engagement with social media is high and ever growing, there is a distinct public reliance on MSM (Kenix, 2016: 26). Therefore, MSM’s coverage of #BringBackOurGirls may have garnered further attention for the cause, enabling it to grow in popularity and strength.

Ahmed et al. (2016) discuss, while OSMs are born online and gradually travel to the offline, in what Zappavigna (2015) considers a convergence of sorts, their entry to the offline world is often unwelcomed. In fact, social media's role in focusing attention towards matters or demographics that would otherwise receive little notice might be considered a nuisance by MSM. Convergence forces a change in traditional media coverage habits, broadening the often-insular MSM gaze (Williams, 2015). #BringBackOurGirls has demonstrated how social media can have immense reach without dependence on traditional media gatekeepers (Rogstad, 2016). MSM is somewhat *forced* to also dedicate coverage to events and issues represented by social media campaigns when campaigns achieve such heights. It is embedded within this "bringing to light [of] situations that might have previously remained concealed in the economy and values of the traditional news media" (Madianou, 2013: 250) that the problem lies. While social media can spark MSM coverage, the way MSM portray a story may remain out of social media's grasp.

In performing a discourse analysis of MSM articles from four distinct periods of this event, it appeared that social media was responsible for influencing MSM coverage of the Chibok abduction. However, this social media influence, essentially setting the MSM agenda(s), did not give social media complete power. The way MSM presented the issue was, for the most part, out of social media's control. The results of the MSM CDA for the Abduction Period, demonstrate coverage was minimal. The prevalence of the discourses of Superiority, Insignificance, and 'Backwards' Africa served to enforce unequal power relations and cast the event as nothing out of the ordinary. The articles for the Abduction Period were of minimal length and substance, which pointed to the issue as unimportant. Furthermore, due to the event's origins, this manner of coverage enforced the hegemonic practices that have come to underpin relations between the west

and the global south (Gramsci, 1971). Such lacklustre coverage suggested the event did not fit in with the agendas of MSM, and, as such, they may have had little desire to dedicate thorough coverage to the abduction.

The next surveyed period, the Hashtag Begins Period, examined the point at which MSM began to dedicate greater coverage to the abduction, under the influence of the #BringBackOurGirls' virality. The discourses serving to perpetuate the hegemonic relationship, through which the west exerts dominance over the global south, remained in place within coverage from this period; in the form of Superiority; 'Backwards' Africa; and the emergence of the Western Saviour discourse. However, most notably, another discourse arose during this period, the Self-awareness discourse. While only minor, the Self-awareness discourse is highlighted in this discussion due to the way it portrayed social media negatively, and was openly critical of MSM, despite featuring within this very medium. As discussed in the Results chapter, the Self-awareness discourse criticised the limits of hashtag activism and lamented MSM's failure to dedicate coverage to the Chibok region at the time of the abduction. There was a definitive recognition of social media's role in turning the MSM's attention towards the event, and while this may appear positive for social media, MSM used the notoriety of #BringBackOurGirls to point out the shortcomings of the medium. The MSM was critical of social media trends doing little to help those that such activism aims to support; instead, MSM claimed those who reap the benefits are the activists themselves. In essence, MSM recognised the inherent Ironic Solidarity of contemporary OSMs. Hegemonic elements were rife within in MSM's coverage, but despite this MSM highlighted misrepresentations of Africa. Through the Self-awareness discourse, MSM claimed social media's representations of Africa as needy and primitive served to enforce difference between the west the global south. While the Self-awareness discourse also maintained a minor presence within the

sampled tweets, it is not as critical as it was in MSM. Concerning this research, such a finding indicates that while social media can influence MSM's coverage of an event, it has little bearing on how MSM then portray said event. In fact, influencing the MSM's agenda may even prove harmful for social media. MSM coverage of an issue, under the influence of social media trends, may propel an issue to further notoriety; as MSM audiences, some of whom are unaware of social media trends, are exposed to them (Rogstad, 2016). However, MSM can skew the intended narrative of a trend, which has the potential to erode the support of even the most dedicated activist.

TRAJECTORY AS AN INDICATION OF INFLUENCE

One of the most notable features of social media is its rapid dissemination of information. Such saturation online means issues or events can quickly become 'old news.' While in the traditional sphere of MSM, a news story might maintain headlines for weeks or even months, social media can see a trend quickly lose relevance, and be replaced. As such, if social media trends influence MSM, it will follow the same path (Mare, 2013). If MSM fails to respond, by not moving on to the next big thing, it is at risk of losing its audience. Social media, by comparison, provides a mix of news and information that is non-hierarchical and ever-changing (Hermida, 2012), making it an attractive alternative to MSM. van Laer and van Aelst (2010: 1163) note, regarding OSMs, growth in rapid support is almost always followed by an even faster decline in support. While it is somewhat easy to attract people to support online action, maintaining their attention within the fast-paced sphere of social media is not viable (van Laer & van Aelst, 2010). Regarding the #BringBackOurGirls movement, this means the hashtag's sudden deterioration in support (Figure 3) is not unusual. To prove social media influenced MSM coverage, we would expect to see the same descent at the same time.

Notably, each of the three MSM outlets adhered to this trend. *TNYT's*, *TG's*, and *AJ's* coverage related to the abduction and the popularity of #BringBackOurGirls declined in June 2014 (Figures 2, 3). Such a result suggests that MSM's coverage, in this case, was linked to the trajectory of the social media movement. As the hashtag became a prominent topic on social media, the issue gained MSM attention, and when online support dwindled, the MSM's coverage did too. This trend is maintained, by each of surveyed outlets, throughout the entire two-year period analysed; with peaks occurring at the anniversaries of the abduction, as social media interest was briefly reignited, followed by little to no coverage.

CONCLUSION

While #BringBackOurGirls initially emerged on the social media platform of Twitter, these results posit MSM coverage further bolstered the movement's influence. Initial coverage of the Chibok abduction on MSM was minor, demonstrating that this was an event outside of the mainstream news agenda. Although social media's ability to direct MSM coverage is contested (Rogstad, 2016), the results of this MSM's sudden interest in May 2014. The heights of coverage #BringBackOurGirls reached on social media, in tandem with MSM levels of coverage, appear responsible for propelling this issue from the margins to the centre of public discourse. However, it is worth noting that this coverage was not sustained. The trajectory of #BringBackOurGirls and MSM's coverage of the Chibok abduction both followed the same path: a sudden, prolific rise to notoriety, followed by an abrupt descent into minimal use and coverage. Hashtags have been heralded as news stories in their own right, and social media regarded as a new hub for news. The abduction exemplifies this. This story was plucked from obscurity, propelled forward on social media through a hashtag, and gained immense MSM

coverage in the process. However, MSM's Self-awareness discourse, identified during the Hashtag Begins Period, reveals a disdain for social media's setting of the news agenda, as well as MSM reflecting on why they had failed to regard the abduction as newsworthy from the outset.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2

WERE THERE DIFFERENCES IN ATTITUDES/SENTIMENTS BETWEEN MAINSTREAM MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE #BRINGBACKOURGIRLS MOVEMENT? WHAT DO SUCH DIFFERENCES, OR SIMILARITIES, INDICATE?

Examining the differences, or similarities, between distinct media forms' coverage of #BringBackOurGirls, is essential to understanding the movement itself. In this examination, the MSM refer to the combined coverage of the selected MSM newspapers. As such, difference between the sampled outlets (*TNYT*; *TG*; *AJ*) is not of significance. To examine the differences in attitudes or sentiments of MSM and social media coverage of #BringBackOurGirls, the CDA of articles and tweets was utilised. As the CDA results indicated, the sampled Twitter tweets expressed a greater diversity of discourse, while MSM tended to rely upon the same discourses throughout the two-year period. However, in spite of this difference of diversity, the prevailing discourses of MSM and Twitter were far more similar than different.

OVERARCHING DISCOURSES

The overarching discourses of this study were identified through combining the CDA results of the four sampled periods. The prevailing discourses of MSM were:

'Backwards' Africa; Western Saviour; and Superiority. Social media's overarching discourses were: 'Backwards' Africa; Sympathy; and Self-interest. The overarching discourses within MSM and social media were very similar, despite them emanating from different media platforms. MSM, in particular, tended to the event through a reliance on familiar tropes of the global south. Social media acted similarly, as evidenced by the 'Backwards' Africa discourse's prevalence. Notably, the 'Backwards' Africa discourse was the most prominent discourse within MSM *and* social media coverage. As discussed in Chapter Four, the 'Backwards' Africa discourse works to enforce a colonialist, imperialist response to the abduction; therefore, casting the event as common within the barbaric 'dark continent' it occurred (Bassil, 2011). The most prevalent discourses of both media forms are all those adhering to a power dynamic. These discourses work to empower one group above another, enacting a hegemonic relationship that seeks to disenfranchise an already subjugated group.

INTERPRETING DISCOURSES

Power dynamic discourses, as defined in this research, are discourses that serve to enact an unequal power relationship through ideological forces and the perpetuation of hegemony. As indicated by the CDA results, the most prominent discourses for both MSM and social media are discourses enacting this power dynamic. The 'Backwards' Africa discourse invents a version of Africa that elides the cultural complexities of the continent (Mekgwe, 2010). As such, the 'Backwards' Africa discourse constructs Africa and the wider global south within "a paradigm of difference" (Mekgwe, 2010: 191) that favours the west. The Western Saviour, Superiority, and Sympathy discourses act similarly, through the enforcement of difference between the west and the global south. Within these discourses, the west represents the 'self', the superior figure, while the

global south or Africa represents the 'other', a hapless victim, in need of western support (Hall, 1992: 318). Power dynamic discourses disenfranchise members of the global south, through casting them as 'other'. Othering, in this sense, establishes global south subjects as figures distanced from the west, both geographically and symbolically, therefore determining them to be inferior to westerners (Chilisa & Ntseane, 2010: 618). Such representations maintain a Eurocentric historical outlook, which serves to essentialise the cultures of the global south (Mekgwe, 2010: 193). Thus, enforcing the hegemonic relationship that Agnew (2005) posits to have mediated relations between the west and global south for centuries.

The Self-interest discourse adheres to the same hegemonic practices, although not as evidently. Self-interest is a self-serving discourse; it involves an actor making a distant others' plight about themselves, and how that plight this might impact upon them. It is through this emphasis on the self and ignorance of the other that the Self-interest discourse enables actors to exhibit power over the other; in the case of #BringBackOurGirls, the other represents the global south. When the global south is condensed to an object of contemplation, or an opportunity for a western actor to communicate their care for Africans (Tiplady Higgs, 2015: 345), the colonial and imperial dynamics that have shaped and governed the global south for centuries, are enforced. Therefore, power dynamic discourses serve not only to disenfranchise the already disenfranchised, but also to further fortify their positions of inferiority.

The most prevalent discourses of MSM and social media are all considered power dynamic discourses. This classification stems from the way they each serve to enforce an unequal power relationship. Such inequality is considered the perpetuation of a hegemonic relationship. The prevalence of discourses adhering to the power dynamic

definitions indicates MSM and social media approached #BringBackOurGirls similarly. With such prevalence suggesting #BringBackOurGirls was presented, and engaged with, in a manner accentuating and enforcing differences between the west and global south.

CHANGE OVER TIME

MSM discourses remained relatively constant over time, with 'Backwards' Africa maintaining the lead at each period. For the most part, all of the discourses revealed exhibited hegemonic traits, in alignment with the power dynamic definition. The introduction of non-power dynamic discourses did occur, but minimally. The Self-awareness discourse actively critiqued the unequal power distribution that accompanies media coverage of the global south, but this discourse was not abundantly present. The arrival of the Feminist discourse, at the First Anniversary Period, was again an opportunity to overcome the negativities of the power dynamic discourses. However, the Feminist discourse presence was relatively lacklustre, regarding overall prevalence and longevity; appearing minimally for one period. The Feminist discourse also aligned with the power dynamic discourse, and this will be discussed in greater depth subsequently. Therefore, MSM's coverage of the abduction and #BringBackOurGirls was linear throughout the two-year sample period. Other than two insignificant deviations, the power dynamic discourses reigned supreme throughout MSM coverage.

As noted earlier, social media coverage demonstrated a greater diversity of discourse than revealed within MSM. Such diversity is demonstrated through the high number of emotionally grounded discourses, such as Accomplishment; Disgust; Distrust; Optimism; Anger; and Frustration. While the most prevalent discourses were selected through which discourses maintained high propensity during three or more sampled

periods, social media's CDA results are interesting due to dramatic shifts from period to period. Although CDA of MSM articles consistently revealed the 'Backwards' Africa discourse to be the most prevalent discourse, social media's most dominant discourse changed at each period. The Abduction Period revealed 'Backwards' Africa as most prevalent; the Hashtag Begins Period identified the Sympathy discourse as dominant; the First Anniversary Period saw the Frustration discourse emerge as most prevalent, and the Second Anniversary Period revealed the Sympathy discourse to be most prevalent. As these results depict, the social media coverage was more fluid than MSM coverage. Sentiment and attitude shifts were common, and arc back the prevalence of emotionally grounded discourses. While emotionally grounded discourses are absent, for the most part, from MSM coverage, they were abundant within social media coverage. Such discourses enable an actor to share their feelings; something MSM shies away from to remain objective. The context of social media encourages the value sharing and intimacy attained through emotionally grounded discourses. The emotionally grounded discourses identified through this research's Twitter CDA again enforce hegemonic relationships, hence their classification as power dynamic discourses. So, while there might be a greater variety of discourses within social media coverage, they nonetheless served to perpetuate hegemony. The prevalence of power dynamic discourses within social media again points to similarities regarding how MSM and social media approached this event. Discourse differentiation may occur, but the discourses serve to create the same effects.

CONCLUSION

MSM and social media covered the Chibok abduction and #BringBackOurGirls through attitudes that served to 'other' and enforce unequal relations. The most prevalent discourses were power dynamic discourses that served to perpetuate the

hegemonic relationships that benefit the west and disenfranchise the global south. Both media forms relied upon tropes of the global south and Africa, which cast subjects from these regions as needy, barbaric, and inferior. Such inequity and discrimination have hallmarked communication between the west and global south for centuries, yet in our supposedly 'post-colonial' world, such practices have been eliminated (Heugh, 2011). However, as these results depict, such power dynamics featured dominantly within coverage from two distinct media forms.

RESEARCH QUESTION 3

WHAT CONTRIBUTED TO MAKING THE #BRINGBACKOURGIRLS MOVEMENT SO GLOBALLY RELEVANT?

The Chibok abduction did not ignite global outrage overnight. Analysis of the Abduction Period revealed MSM had portrayed the event as insignificant and dedicated little coverage to the matter. The same period saw minor engagement around #Chibok; where discourses of Disgust, Distrust, and Sympathy, showcased this event as significant to members of the public. The concern for the abducted Chibok students progressed into the creation of #BringBackOurGirls by the Nigerian community. The hashtag developed into something more and exploded in May 2014 (Figure 3). MSM coverage of the abduction, now with the additional angle of the hashtag, suddenly increased. MSM levels of coverage grew by 670 percent in May 2014, when compared to coverage in April 2014. So, what made #BringBackOurGirls so globally relevant?

SOCIAL MEDIA VIRALITY

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the fact MSM coverage increased so dramatically after the creation and success of #BringBackOurGirls, indicated the hashtag's virality played a role in focusing MSM attention. However, while this explains MSM coverage, it leaves the question of why the hashtag rose to prominence on social media unanswered. The creation of #BringBackOurGirls launched a discussion of the abduction, that was absent in other media reporting of the event. The hashtag amplified the outrage and discontent within the kidnapped students' communities and Nigeria as a whole. The emotion embedded within the tweets that featured the hashtag provided alternate views of the issue. In essence, #BringBackOurGirls created a mouthpiece for a counterpublic (Leung & Lee, 2014: 343). A counterpublic represents a collection of diverse voices that, for whatever reason, have been excluded from the mainstream public dialogue. Given the lack of attention the abduction received in MSM, at the Abduction Period, it was most certainly an issue relegated to the margins of global public discourse. Therefore, through #BringBackOurGirls a counterpublic was enabled and formalised. Castells (2015: 252) claims counterpublics, as established through social media, can garner immense levels of support through the manner they display injustice and trigger hope at the possibility of change. #BringBackOurGirls represented multiple injustices: the kidnap of female students; persecution based on gender; government inaction; and exclusion from the mainstream public agenda. Fotopoulou (2016: 991) claims digital networks are efficient, in mobilising support and growing in dissemination, due to the unique ways they frame public concerns. While MSM's framing of the abduction at the Abduction Period framed the event as unimportant (Figure 4), as evidenced by the minimal coverage and embedded discourses; #BringBackOurGirls represented the inherent injustices of the abduction and provided a space to challenge domination, share outrage, and feel connected (Castells, 2015: 257).

The participatory culture of social media, and the virtual groupings it enables, also contributes to the development of counterpublics in an online setting (Keller, 2012). The Internet is a “many-to-many medium” (van Laer & van Aelst, 2010: 1151), wherein ideas and issues diffuse on an unprecedented scale. While traditional forms of media previously dictated what issues were important, the advent of social media has reconceptualised the media consumer (Clark, 2016). #BringBackOurGirls exemplifies the participatory culture of social media. The hashtag represents an issue deemed unimportant by MSM but thrust into the spotlight through the recognition of its inherent injustices, as facilitated by the ability of media consumers to participate in the construction of cultural texts (Keller, 2012: 434). The #BringBackOurGirls movement offered an opportunity for empowerment, as involvement in the movement required making an affective statement in front of an audience. However, Keller (2012: 2000) argues in the context of a hashtag this potential for empowerment is greater still, as hashtags consist of more provocative statements, and one’s position is immediately identifiable. As such, the role of hashtag activism with this movement could also be responsible for its global relevance.

Hashtags enable social media users to “label the meanings they express” (Zappavigna, 2012: 1). Tagging online speech enables “*searchable talk*” (Zappavigna, 2012: 1; emphasis in original), wherein discourse is marked so that it might be found by others who share the same interests. Therefore, hashtags enable users to bond around particular values, as they signify who a user is, and what they represent. Thus, hashtagging is a result of the human desire for affiliation; it is a method of value sharing and meaning making within social networks (Zappavigna, 2012: 38; Zappavigna, 2013: 212). In the context of the #BringBackOurGirls, the hashtag activism it represented provided an

opportunity for participants to express their values, and project their identity in an online setting. As with other examples of hashtag activism, #BringBackOurGirls expanded from its online origins and into the real world; aided by its pre-established slogan, high levels of participation, and overall notoriety (Latina & Docherty, 2014; Stache, 2015). The opportunity for self-expression afforded by #BringBackOurGirls, teamed with its counterpublic roots, contributed to the development of the movement.

EASE OF PARTICIPATION

Traditionally, social movements required a great deal of effort, and were thus costly to the participant; concerning time dedicated, money spent, and physical factors, such as, attending protests. In contrast, OSMs are much easier to participate in and come at minimal cost to participants. For some participants of #BringBackOurGirls, participation involved clicking ‘retweet.’ In fact, the prevalence of retweets throughout the four time periods sampled in this research grew at every stage. Retweets continually accounted for over half of the sampled tweets at each period, including an especially high rate at the Second Anniversary Period, which revealed three out of every four tweets from the period was a retweet. Tweets that featured no text other than #BringBackOurGirls were also present, but not to the same degree. Such hashtag-only tweets indicate minimal action as they involve a participant only typing a hashtag without any other accompanying material. Harlow (2011) asks whether a member of an OSM can truly be dedicated to a cause if their action only consists of “clicking a mouse” (229) or copy-pasting something. In retweeting, or sharing a hashtag-only tweet, participants do not even have to go through the effort of crafting their own message. They simply disseminate another’s message further, in essence, letting the writer of said message speak for them too. #BringBackOurGirls’ high rates of retweeting, and presence of

hashtag-only tweets, are slacktivism. Slacktivism is a form of low-cost online action that requires little effort and achieves little (Glenn, 2015). Slacktivism's benefits stem from the way it makes a participant feel, with Lee and Hsieh (2013) comparing its effects to that of traditional civic action. However, slacktivism is considered a show of token support and may result in a lack of meaningful, costly engagement. While some participants of the #BringBackOurGirls movement were happy to share a hashtag, through tweeting or retweeting, assumedly this was the limit of their engagement. It was unlikely these participants would go on to undertake more meaningful contributions to the cause (Kristofferson *et al.*, 2014). #BringBackOurGirls was presented to the public as an act of protest and civic action that they could participate in easily, and that is exactly what the public did. The discourses discovered within Twitter tweets attest to this. The prevalence of self-serving discourses, such as Superiority; Sympathy; Prayer; Self-interest; and Accomplishment, instilled participants with the 'feel-good' feeling (Glenn, 2015) that the slacktivism is known for. Therefore, it appears that many of the participants of #BringBackOurGirls neglected the true purpose of the hashtag. #BringBackOurGirls became less about the abduction and its associated aims, (Khoja-Moolji, 2015), and more about self-expression. As such, the focus on the self that the embedded discourses of the tweets represent, emphasise the slacktivist nature of this movement.

REPRESENTATION OF THE GLOBAL SOUTH

#BringBackOurGirls' origins lie in the global south, in particular, Nigeria. As such, the movement's aims were designed to benefit this region. As the movement spread beyond its initial borders, people distanced from the realities of the global south

began to participate. The discourses embedded in #BringBackOurGirls on Twitter, demonstrate this change.

Power dynamic discourses of 'Backwards' Africa, Superiority, and Western Saviour, which were prevalent within tweets, enforce a hegemonic relationship between the west and global south, in a manner benefitting the west. This is a time-worn, familiar representation of the global south. Audiences recognise this imperialist and colonial depiction of Africa. It involves tropes of the continent as uncivilised and barbaric; stereotypes that should be combatted. However, such tropes provide a sense of security, as audiences know how to respond to such a matter. Many respond by further perpetuating such tropes, hence the continuation of the power dynamic discourses throughout the periods selected for analysis. It is through the perpetuation of these misrepresentations that #BringBackOurGirls rose to global prominence. When the event was cast through this lens, audiences recognised a longstanding representation. Thus, these audiences felt comfortable engaging with the movement in the same manner they would have a charity appeal for Oxfam – through a token gesture of support. In this case, the token gesture was sharing #BringBackOurGirls, being rewarded with slacktivism's 'feel-good' feeling, before losing interest in the event. When shrouded in power dynamic discourses, the inherent seriousness of the abduction as represented by #BringBackOurGirls was neglected. Audiences felt comfortable enacting slacktivist behaviour in response, as that is how tragedies in the global south are typically addressed, but this minimal gesture merely satiated their need for action, and they moved forward fulfilled, while the tragedy, despite its 'trending' status, remained untended.

CONCLUSION

The Chibok abduction represented by #BringBackOurGirls became a global event following the hashtag's virality on social media and MSM coverage. While this research points to MSM's coverage being influenced by the online trend of #BringBackOurGirls, the factors behind the hashtag's rise to global prominence were not as well understood. This research maintains the #BringBackOurGirls movement attained global virality through a combination of factors. Social media's role in establishing a counterpublic saw audiences engage with the injustices inherent within the abduction. The participatory nature of social media provided a space wherein emotional reactions could be shared, and hope at the possibility of change could be fostered. Also, the role of hashtag activism in this movement enabled value sharing which helped to disseminate the message further. The ease of access provided by social media, regarding contributing to this social movement, was also paramount in attaining global relevance. This was further bolstered by the slacktivist nature of participation within #BringBackOurGirls; with the click of a retweet button enabling participants to feel rewarded. Furthermore, the engagement of western audiences in a movement from the global south, manifested in reliance on tropes of Africa, as evidenced by the power dynamic discourses. The interactions audiences had with #BringBackOurGirls saw them recognise the familiar way in which to respond to such tragedy, and this familiarity made the movement more attractive to audiences. Without these factors, #BringBackOurGirls and the abduction may have remained on the periphery of global discourse. However, these reasons behind engagement do not, at first glance, showcase a public determined to 'bring back' the students. Maintaining an understanding of the factors that led to #BringBackOurGirls' relevance is important. However, relevance is not the central feature of humanitarian communication; understanding the incentives for involvement is just as vital.

RESEARCH QUESTION 4

WHAT WERE THE INCENTIVES BEHIND PEOPLE'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE #BRINGBACKOURGIRLS MOVEMENT? WERE PARTICIPANTS ACTING IN SOLIDARITY OR SELF-INTEREST?

The #BringBackOurGirls movement is a prime example of humanitarian communication in the new technological age. Humanitarian communication has always aimed to ignite a sense of solidarity. However, appropriate solidary action hinges upon the ignition of a cosmopolitan impulse. Chouliaraki (2008) defines cosmopolitanism as the promotion of identification with distant strangers who do not readily belong to one's community. In Chapter Two, this thesis deemed the ideal expression of solidarity to be Ecstatic Cosmopolitanism. Ecstatic Cosmopolitanism recognises the asymmetric power distributions that have long defined humanitarian communication and aims to eliminate these through depicting distant others accurately (Corpus Ong, 2009). The inequality Ecstatic Cosmopolitanism seeks to eliminate is defined as the Politics of Pity; which serves to disenfranchise vulnerable others by appropriating them within western discourses (Chouliaraki, 2010). The Politics of Pity exacerbates the distance between other and spectator, resulting in the emergence of tropes of imperialism and colonialism (Littler, 2008). While the Politics of Pity has long been a hallmark of humanitarian communication, Chouliaraki (2013a) posits this has now shifted towards a paradigm of solidarity as irony. Within Ironic Solidarity, the suffering of distant others becomes more tangible and interesting through the invitation for self-reflection (Chouliaraki, 2013a: 20). Thus, Ironic Solidarity is defined as public solidary action, wherein action has become an individual pursuit designed to reward the self in a way which can be publically recognised

(Eagleton, 2009; Chouliaraki, 2013a). This study maintains that Ecstatic Cosmopolitanism is the ideal solidary reaction, while Ironic Solidarity would display an individual to be acting in self-interest.

Before #BringBackOurGirls' rise to virality, the hashtag represented a small community determined to secure the freedom of the abducted students. #BringBackOurGirls' humble origins as a local Nigerian campaign are important to remember. The hashtag was initially a response to the perceived inaction of the Nigerian government, and as such intended to raise awareness in Nigeria for the students' plight. #BringBackOurGirls' development towards hashtag activism and humanitarian communication on a global scale, was unintentional (Maxfield, 2015). Madianou (2013) states social media use within humanitarian communication holds the promise of "fostering a cosmopolitan public" (250); in examining individuals' responses to #BringBackOurGirls, such a claim might be realised. However, as the hashtag bounced around the globe, it may have come to be represented, in different ways than intended. #BringBackOurGirls may have grown from pure solidary origins, but whether it continued to embody these traits is yet to be known. The next paragraphs seek to understand the incentives behind involvement in #BringBackOurGirls, and whether participants may have acted in solidarity or self-interest.

RESPONSE

In examining individuals' incentives behind involvement in the #BringBackOurGirls movement, MSM discourses are of little relevance. Instead this section is concerned with Twitter discourses; in particular, the discourses of Prayer; Anger; Self-interest; Sympathy; and Frustration.

The Twitter discourses announced above all bear striking similarities regarding the way they facilitate an individual focus. The tweets these discourses featured within generally displayed a sense of care for, and identification with, the plight of the distant others they addressed. CDA enabled a more in-depth examination of these tweets, revealing their discourses and self-serving natures. While these tweets appeared to display solidarity with #BringBackOurGirls and what it represented, the presence of certain discourses revealed these tweets were vehicles for performances of the self. Papacharissi (2012) believes Twitter provides a space for “individuals [to] perform the self in 140 characters or less” (1989). Within this space of self-performance, individuals can present an ideal version of themselves – an ideal that may not be truly reflective of oneself, but instead all the best parts (Muentert, 2014 cited in Alaoui, 2015: 32). The discourses of Prayer, Anger, Self-interest, Sympathy, and Frustration are elements of self-expressive communication, which focuses on “the emotionality of the [individual], rather than the vulnerability of the distant other as a key motivation for solidarity” (Chouliaraki, 2013a: 17). The formation of idealised selves aligns with Chouliaraki’s (2013a: 16) dramaturgical consciousness argument, which claims social media’s connectivity has enabled a theatre of sorts, wherein acts of solidarity become a performance of the self. Therefore, tweets from the #BringBackOurGirls movement that involve outbursts of anger, or share prayers for the abducted students, are not examples of solidary action but instead displays of self-interest. Through the performance of the self, individuals can imagine themselves as citizens who act and speak out in the name of a moral cause, without taking tangible action (Chouliaraki, 2012).

Within the performance of the self, the “hoped-for, possible selves” (Skoric, 2012: 81) inherent to the definition of slacktivism are apparent. Slacktivism is considered

a “pointless exercise” (Skoric, 2012: 77) because such action does not involve a financial or personal risk, but serves instead as a “form of light commitment that brings only social acknowledgement and praise” (78; Boltanski, 1999). This light commitment is demonstrated within the aforementioned Twitter discourses that steer away from the true aims of #BringBackOurGirls. Instead, tweets expressing these discourses focus on the benefit to the self; evidencing what Madianou (2013) labels a “fetishization of action” (260), removed from an understanding of the contexts or causes of suffering. While slacktivism provides individuals with that ‘feel-good’ feeling, their actions have produced no meaningful contribution, and their engagement will end before any tangible action is achieved (Skoric, 2012).

The #BringBackOurGirls movement achieved great support in May 2014, before numbers dropped and the movement stagnated (Figure 4). This occurrence provides evidence of Carter Olson’s (2016) claims that #BringBackOurGirls was an example of time-bound activism. Time-bound activism refers to the way activist movements amass huge support in a short amount of time, but fail to sustain such levels over time (Carter Olson, 2016; Chouliaraki, 2010: 117). Brock (2012) claims time-bound activism is a result of the “weak tie relationships” (531) enabled by Twitter. Weak tie relationships encourage initial support, but fail to engage individuals beyond this; meaning those who do participate in movements such as #BringBackOurGirls, do so not because they are invested in contributing to its aims, but due to current trends. The online activism of #BringBackOurGirls was not long-lasting, just a fleeting moment of awareness, quickly replaced by the next ‘hip’ issue (Bonilla & Rosa, 2015: 10); making it time-bound activism.

POLITICS OF PITY

The Politics of Pity within humanitarian communication was supposedly ousted by Ironic Solidarity (Chouliaraki, 2013a). However, the power dynamic discourses, as revealed in the tweets from #BringBackOurGirls, demonstrate hallmarks of the Politics of Pity. Within the Politics of Pity, Chouliaraki (2010) believes distant others are cast as “objects of contemplation” (110), and therefore, individuals fail to connect with the humanity of others (Boltanski, 1999). In this context, such representation enables distant others to be appropriated within western discourses. For instance, in examining the ‘Backwards’ Africa discourse, the analysis determined it portrayed Africa as a barbaric, ‘dark’ continent, wherein events such as the Chibok abduction occurred regularly (Bassil, 2011). The ‘Backwards’ Africa discourse is a power dynamic discourse, as it perpetuates the hegemonic relationship between the west and global south; in doing so, proliferating the colonial and imperial histories that work to disempower already vulnerable subjects. The presence of the Politics of Pity within participants’ involvement in #BringBackOurGirls, again demonstrates a lack of appropriate solidary engagement. While the Politics of Pity does not denote self-interest, it certainly does not convey Ecstatic Cosmopolitanism.

IRONIC SOLIDARITY

The majority of the discourses embedded within #BringBackOurGirls are those that fail to ignite the solidary ideal of Ecstatic Cosmopolitanism. In fact, many of the discourses (Prayer; Anger; Self-interest; Sympathy; Frustration) instead indicate participants of the #BringBackOurGirls movement acted not in solidarity, but instead self-interest. As such, there is a presence of Ironic Solidarity within #BringBackOurGirls.

#BringBackOurGirls sought to raise awareness of the injustices surrounding the Chibok abduction. Therefore, through participation in the movement one can assume an individual had aimed to eliminate said injustices. However, as indicated by the presence of Ironic Solidarity and the overwhelming presence of power dynamic discourses, these injustices (unequal power relations; lack of autonomy; insignificance) are perpetuated. The inequality perpetuated through Ironic Solidarity responses to the #BringBackOurGirls movement affirm the participants as superior actors, and those represented by the hashtag as unimportant, subordinate ‘others’. In keeping with Khoja-Moolji’s (2015) claim that what individuals who participated #BringBackOurGirls drew from, and rearticulated, “long-standing colonial and imperial conceptualizations” about Africans, third world women, and Muslims (349). Thus, enforcing the hegemonic relationship between the west and the global south (Agnew, 2005).

The presence of Ironic Solidarity reveals participants of #BringBackOurGirls used the online movement not to draw attention to the plight of abducted students, but instead to draw attention to themselves. Using the hashtag, and what it represented, as a tool of self-expression generated this attention. In making the hashtag about them – through drawing attention to how the event had affected them emotionally as in the Self-interest and Frustration discourses – participants displayed themselves as humanitarian actors. However, their action was minimal, and by focusing on themselves, they detracted the issue at hand: the abducted students. Madianou (2013) claims when individuals perform actions without a reflexive understanding of the issue at hand, any moral meaning is lost. As such, the cultivation of a cosmopolitan sensibility requires a reflexive awareness of the self and others (Madianou, 2013: 260-261). Through participants’ focus on self-expression, within #BringBackOurGirls, their capacity for reflexivity was undermined.

Ironic Solidarity is marked by a propensity toward minimal action, similar to slacktivist engagement, within humanitarian communication. The Prayer discourse exemplifies this minimal action superbly. Through the Prayer discourse participants again detract from the core aims of #BringBackOurGirls by championing a low-cost, low-commitment method of action, this study regards as ineffective. The Prayer discourse exemplifies Ironic Solidarity in action because it focuses on the self. Prayer, in the context of humanitarian communication, is slacktivism because it requires minimal effort from the participant but satiates their appetite for action. Additionally, the action, as showcased through the Prayer discourse, has no measurable effect on the situation; it is not of monetary value, nor is it tangible. Boltanski (1999: 17-18) claims speech can only be considered a form of action if it serves to reduce suffering; the Prayer discourse is therefore detached from action. For these reasons, the Prayer discourse is regarded as an expression of Ironic Solidarity and provides further evidence of participants acting in self-interest in response to #BringBackOurGirls.

CONCLUSION

While the online activism of the #BringBackOurGirls movement may have served to rouse awareness for its cause, awareness is not tangible. Twitter trends do not indicate palpable action. In the case of #BringBackOurGirls, it comprised simply of words on a screen (Boltanski, 1999). Participants engaged with #BringBackOurGirls but through the problematic responses of the Politics of Pity and Ironic Solidarity, not the cosmopolitan ideal of Ecstatic Cosmopolitanism. Within this response, the rights of 'distant others' are ignored, and the inequalities that plague relations between the west and the global south are enforced. Therefore, the benefits stemming from

#BringBackOurGirls were for its participants – who shared the hashtag and felt rewarded as a result – and not the movement’s central subjects. Fenton (2007: 235) claims solidarity is about engaging beyond the click of a mouse; and in the case of #BringBackOurGirls, this has not occurred. The majority of the abducted students remain missing, and rescue efforts have stagnated (Coughlan, 2017). As such, the abundant presence of the Politics of Pity and Ironic Solidarity indicate the incentives behind participants’ involvement #BringBackOurGirls were not appropriately solidary in nature; instead, participants acted in self-interest. This outcome is problematic, as Madianou (2013) warns:

without an understanding of the causes of humanitarian appeals and without a moral framework of engagement with distant others, action becomes almost meaningless at least when evaluated from a standpoint of cosmopolitan ethics (260)

RESEARCH QUESTION 5

WHAT ROLE, IF ANY, DID THE INCLUSION OF WESTERN FIRST WORLD FEMINISM PLAY IN THE #BRINGBACKOURGIRLS MOVEMENT? IN WHAT WAY(S) MIGHT THIS IMPACT UPON THIRD WORLD WOMEN?

#BringBackOurGirls was heralded as a feminist campaign and an example of hashtag feminism in action (Khoja-Moolji, 2015). It was such feminist attribution that influenced the direction of this thesis; as #BringBackOurGirls provided a grand example of an OFM in the context of humanitarian communication. By researching the hashtag in-depth, this study posited it would likely uncover the presence of feminist discourses that could provide grand insight(s) into the interplays between feminism and

humanitarian communication in the technological age. However, this was not the case. Instead, the CDA of Twitter tweets and MSM articles identified only the minimal presence of one broad Feminist discourse. Thereby, this finding casts doubt onto #BringBackOurGirls' strength as an OFM; but also provides the opportunity to decipher what this movement represented, or came to represent, and how this might impact those at the core, the movement's subjects: third world women.

As discussed, the majority of the discourses identified through this research's CDA were power dynamic in nature, in that they served to enforce hegemony. Amongst these discourses was the minor presence of the Feminist discourse. While the Feminist discourse demonstrated the key ideals of equality that underpin feminism, it was often found in tandem with power dynamic discourses. Such concurrence indicated the Feminist discourse exhibited traits of western first world feminism, rather than third world feminism. Given this was a supposedly third world feminist movement such a revelation is fascinating. #BringBackOurGirls began as a method of raising awareness about the abduction amongst the Nigerian community, but then became a rallying cry for women's rights in the global south. This research reveals that it took on another meaning through western involvement in the movement. As such, this research contends any elements of #BringBackOurGirls as a third world feminist movement were usurped by western first world feminism through the explicit appropriation of #BringBackOurGirls (Berents, 2016: 8).

ENFORCING HEGEMONY

While the feminist traits of this movement were predicted to be much more prevalent than CDA revealed them to be, their minimal presence still warrants

discussion. As established, #BringBackOurGirls' roots lie in the global south. As such, this movement was born out of the third world, but CDA has revealed its overarching discourses, as well as the Feminist discourse, to be inherently western in nature. Western first world feminism is steeped in a history of exclusion and prejudice (Rejer, 2012: 20). Yu (2009: 8) claims when western first world feminism encounters third world women, it continues to approach their issues within the context of western culture. As such, women in the third world are condensed into "symbol[s] of oppression, subordination and victimhood" (Yu, 2009: 9). Western first world feminism neglects third world women's cultural needs, and their sources of oppression. Instead demarcating the space between 'us' and 'them,' by establishing the west as "free" (Chowdhury, 2009: 52) and the global south as "powerless" (Mohanty, 1991: 57). Furthermore, while western first world feminism labels patriarchy as their main source of oppression, third world feminism is less concerned with patriarchal forces. Instead, third world feminism is "committed to each and every person" (Eisenstein, 2004: 207), making this feminism "a more inclusive notion of humanity" (207).

The presence of western traits within the Feminist discourse of #BringBackOurGirls served to usurp this third world feminist movement. The western gaze established third world women as helpless victims, in need of rescuing (McEwan, 2001: 99; Mansoor, 2016: 2-3). A continuation of what Spivak (1981: 155 cited in Mansoor, 2016) considers the establishment of third world women as colonial objects through hegemonic first world practices. This is hegemony in action. The west has usurped a movement fuelled by third world feminist goals and identities, and replaced it, albeit to a minor degree, with an ill-suited alternative: western first world feminism. As discussed, western first world feminism is focused primarily on the eradication of gender discrimination as the route to ending women's oppression. However, such a narrowly

defined feminism is “insufficient to redress the oppression of third world women” (Mohanty, 1991: 315); as third world women’s oppression is often linked to race relations and imperialism (314).

IMPACT ON THIRD WORLD WOMEN

Khoja-Moolji’s (2015) interpretation of the #BringBackOurGirls movement warned the involvement of western feminism would “produce an oversimplified analysis of the situation” (349). In prescribing western first world feminism as the ‘cure’ to the ailments represented by #BringBackOurGirls, the chance to comprehend and engage with the issues surrounding the abduction was neglected (Khoja-Moolji, 2015). The Feminist discourse instead represented the belief “that African women’s apparent suffering [could] be alleviated through white-Western intervention” (Tiplady Higgs, 2015: 345). As such, it served to obscure the fact women in the global south have their conceptions of feminism, alongside their local feminist identities and histories (Dosekun, 2015: 962).

The disregard for the autonomy, histories, and realities of third world women, as demonstrated by the Feminist discourse, is inherently harmful. McEwan (2001) considers it a form of ‘othering’ that enforces asymmetrical power distributions and serves to disenfranchise women in the global south. While western first world feminisms might claim to be committed to equality, through the usurpation of #BringBackOurGirls, they perpetuate the very injustices they seek to eliminate.

Transnational feminisms are important, but they must be appropriate and inclusive. Mohanty (2003) perceives appropriate transnational feminism to be built upon

strong feminist solidarities that are self-reflexive, and understanding of “the divisions of place, identity, class, work, belief, and so on” (251). Western first world feminism’s involvement may not have been so negative had it been enacted appropriately, in a manner respectful of the context(s) the movement had grown from. Similarly to Chouliaraki’s (2008) claim of Ecstatic Cosmopolitanism as the premier mode of solidary engagement, Dean (1996) posits an effective transnational feminism would stem from a reflexivity grounded in a “*mutual expectation of a responsible orientation to the relationship*” (29; emphasis in original). Transnational feminism should not grow from the common experience of pain or oppression, but instead from the ability to recognise, and empathise with, distant others in a manner of respect and responsibility (Dean, 1996: 177; 181). The manner through which western first world feminism usurped the feminist aims of #BringBackOurGirls further demonstrates the lack of appropriate solidary engagement within the movement as a whole. As a result, third world women were further marginalised. Third world feminist identities have been silenced through this usurpation, indicating to third world women their voices and opinions are of little value. Furthermore, the distance between women in the third world and their western ‘sisters’ has been further widened. This enforcement of difference may result in the impairment of third world women’s agency and ability (Mohanty, 1991; Ram, 1991).

Third world feminism possesses the ability to expose, and tend to, inequities in the global south. Third world feminists are best positioned to understand what action is necessary, and how to take it. The activism of #BringBackOurGirls evidences the ability and courage of third world feminist activists; it was a campaign that revealed the real struggles women in northern Nigerian face in their attempt to get an education (Njoroge, 2016: 322). Western actors, through non-solidary action, appropriated and undermined the campaign, and the actions of those who sparked it (Tiplady Higgs, 2015: 346). The

global south actors, striving for the freedom of the students, had their actions relegated to the sidelines, as the grand narrative of #BringBackOurGirls developed into a story of western endeavour (Kurian, 2001: 66) wherein third world feminist action and identity was undermined. This obscuring of identity and agency again reinforced the hegemonic relationship between the west and global south and perpetuated imperialism and colonialism (McEwan, 2001). Through the presence of western first world feminism within this third world feminist movement, third world women were further disenfranchised and alienated from global feminist practices (Berents, 2016; McEwan, 2001; Khoja-Moolji, 2015). The opportunity to implement effective and necessary change in their communities was seized. Third world women were cast in roles of powerlessness and inferiority through western intervention; signalling their actions and intentions were of less value than those of western origin. Such an indication could be capable of deterring activists in the global south from taking further civic or humanitarian action. Thus, enforcing western hegemony and limiting the possibility of civic and societal change in the global south – especially concerning feminist development.

CONCLUSION

The initial aim of #BringBackOurGirls was to secure the freedom of the abducted students. As the hashtag spread, its cause was redefined through the inclusion of third world feminist objectives. As #BringBackOurGirls achieved global notoriety, its aims were co-opted by western ideals with little regard for the movements' origins in the global south. This co-option, for the most part, neglected the feminist traits of the hashtag, aside from the minor presence of the Feminist discourse. The Feminist discourse was determined to be a power dynamic discourse and exhibited traits of

western first world feminism. As such, this research determined #BringBackOurGirls to be a third world feminist movement usurped by western first world feminism. #BringBackOurGirls' appropriation made the campaign merely another facet of imperialism (Herr, 2014), through which the west exhibited power over the global south. The research suggests co-option of #BringBackOurGirls is partly responsible for the movement's failure to achieve its set goals. As of March 2017, the majority of the abducted students remain at large (Coughlan, 2017), and access to education for women in northern Nigerian remains marginal (Zakari, 2016). While western feminists' participation in #BringBackOurGirls may have been an attempt at solidarity, it ultimately served to deepen the divide between the west and the global south.

CONCLUSION

The results indicate social media trends influenced MSM coverage of this event. However, while this influenced levels of coverage, it did not affect the manner of coverage. MSM sentiment remained fixed throughout the two-year sampled period, with coverage exuding the same power dynamic discourses. Social media similarly exhibited power dynamic discourses. However, these discourses varied at each sampled period, indicating social media sentiment to be less static. #BringBackOurGirls' global notoriety came as a result of hashtag activism's slacktivist nature, the ease of participation, and the familiar representations of the global south that were presented to audiences. The embedded discourses within MSM coverage and social media tweets indicated #BringBackOurGirls failed to foster appropriate cosmopolitan responses. Instead, these discourses served to perpetuate the problematic 'othering' inherent within the Politics of Pity. Additionally, CDA of the sampled tweets indicated online activists responded to the #BringBackOurGirls in self-interest, thereby revealing the presence of Ironic Solidarity. While #BringBackOurGirls was said to be an OFM with hallmarks of third world feminism, this research reveals feminism was not an overarching theme of the movement. However, the presence of a minor Feminist discourse did indicate that western first world feminism came to override any features of third world feminism. Over all, these results prove that while #BringBackOurGirls originated in the global south, its rise to global prominence saw westerners participate and skew the movement to enforce hegemonic practices, and further disenfranchise citizens of the global south. Therefore, the 'achievements' of the #BringBackOurGirls movement are in direct conflict with its initial aims.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

The following chapter seeks to discuss limitations of research, present suggestions for further research, and revisit previous chapters to unite the main points of this thesis.

LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH

This research used CDA as the primary mode of analysis. CDA is inherently subjective, meaning that a different analyst might render different results. As such, implementing a different form of analysis, one more quantitative and objective, such as Content Analysis, might have produced more robust results.

This research was additionally limited through the sample sizes permitted. CDA is a time-consuming form of analysis, as it cannot be automated. As such, the sample sizes of this research – regarding the number of tweets and articles analysed – were relatively small. Increasing the sample size might have broadened the perspectives presented. Thus, better supporting arguments relating to MSM and social media interaction, which this study recognises were minimal in this thesis.

Furthermore, the Twitter data utilised can include more metadata – such as gender, age, location, and more. Such information was deemed unnecessary in the context of this study but would have provided more to analyse. This study blamed westerners for their intervention in #BringBackOurGirls, yet there was no geographical

data attached to these tweets, making this argument relatively speculative. Additionally, the sampled tweets and articles were only English language texts. This study found an overabundance of western power dynamic discourses, but this might be attributed to only sampling English texts. Analysing texts from various languages may have altered the results.

This research was concerned with western involvement in a third world movement. However, the author of this study is herself a westerner. This study criticised the actions of westerners who intervened in this global south event but likely did not understand the region's history or needs. One may argue the author of this research has attempted to do the same; yet, they are similarly geographically and culturally isolated from the realities they have intervened in.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

It would be beneficial to further research prominent OSMs to identify the ways participants engage with them. While Ironic Solidarity was said to have replaced the Politics of Pity, this research found the two modes of humanitarian communication present concurrently. Therefore, researching this further and testing this claim may advance understandings of humanitarian communication.

As this research noted, there is much discontent in academia regarding social media's impact on MSM. This research revealed that while social media did influence MSM coverage, it did not influence the manner of coverage. Further studies that contrast social media and MSM coverage of events are necessary to create a robust scholarly

dialogue in this area. While this research provides valuable insight, to corroborate it further, greater research is necessary.

Further research, either concerning #BringBackOurGirls or other OSMs, might contrast the region where a movement began, with the areas in which it grew. For instance, performing CDA on relevant tweets from Nigeria during the #BringBackOurGirls movement, and those from a western nation. Such research might reveal different aims for a movement, and more thoroughly identify how ‘outside’ involvement might skew the original narrative(s) and aim(s) of an OSM.

While much scholarly attention has been paid to first world feminisms, third world feminisms have been neglected in academia (Mohanty, 1991). This research is one small step towards remedying this, but given this study’s broad content it was unable to examine third world feminisms in-depth. Greater dedication to researching feminisms in the global south may provide the tools to empower third world women further and enable these concepts of feminism to flourish.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In April 2014, the tensions and violence that have long impaired Nigeria spilled onto the global news agenda. Boko Haram’s abduction of 276 female students from the town of Chibok ignited outrage. Boko Haram’s influence, particularly in northern Nigeria, had been growing in response to a variety of endemic issues (Joy, 2015; Walker, 2012). The abduction represented merely another notch in the militant group’s belt, and the Nigerian government treated it as such by assigning minimal security forces to the rescue mission (Smith, 2015). However, the Nigerian public refused to let this atrocity be

overlooked; they responded by establishing #BringBackOurGirls (Maxfield, 2015). This hashtag was primarily designed to raise awareness for the missing students and aimed to propel the Nigerian government to action. However, also embedded within the hashtag were third world feminist objectives, particularly aims to secure access to education for women in Nigeria (Khoja-Moolji, 2015). #BringBackOurGirls surpassed its original expectations as it spread internationally on social media, and became an OFM (Carter Olson, 2016).

#BringBackOurGirls arose from what this thesis defined as third world feminism. Third world feminism is a community-focused feminism that claims oppression in the global south stems from a variety of sites, not merely patriarchal forces (Eisenstein, 2004; McEwan, 2001). Third world feminism is at odds with western first world feminism, which represents an amalgamation of feminisms dominant in the first world. Western first world feminism strives for justice on a grand scale and highlights gender equality as its enduring goal (Rejer, 2014). In the context of this research, these categories were deemed necessary for investigating #BringBackOurGirls' spread from its Nigerian origins, to global notoriety.

Also of interest was the way participants engaged with #BringBackOurGirls. OSMs have emerged relatively recently in the context of global communication, and such emergence has impacts for consumers, as well as traditional communication channels. Regarding humanitarian communication, this research discussed how theories in this field have developed in recent years, with some scholars indicating communication grounded in pity, labelled the Politics of Pity, has been ousted by a self-interested mode of solidarity, termed Ironic Solidarity (Chouliaraki, 2010; Chouliaraki, 2013a). This research maintained both modes of humanitarian communication are inadequate solidarity

responses, as they fail to ignite cosmopolitan ideals that focus on common humanity and a “welcoming of difference” (Corpus Ong, 2009: 449). In acknowledging this, the research sought to reveal the ways #BringBackOurGirls was engaged with, and how this might impact upon the third world women at the core of the movement.

To achieve the aims of this research, CDA was selected as the primary mode of analysis. CDA provides a multifunctional view of text, allowing analysis to reveal how language has been used to create meaning (Widdowson, 1998; Hansen & Machin, 2013). Fairclough’s (1992; 1995; 2003) three-dimensional framework provided the structure of the CDA, through which a sample of Twitter tweets and MSM articles from four distinct periods of the #BringBackOurGirls movement were analysed. Additional quantitative research was also employed, in the form of examining rates of MSM coverage, and the global trend of #BringBackOurGirls.

The results indicated the abduction was propelled to the forefront of global news by social media. MSM coverage was minimal before the virality of #BringBackOurGirls, but following global engagement with the hashtag, MSM coverage increased. MSM and social media both failed to sustain these heights. The CDA of articles and tweets revealed similar discourses, with the majority being classed as ‘power dynamic’ discourses – discourses that served to perpetuate the hegemonic relationship that exists between the west and global south. Surprisingly, the CDA found only the minor presence of the Feminist discourse within what was heralded as an OFM.

In interpreting the results of this analysis, the results were examined alongside the original research questions.

Research Question 1 sought to understand how interaction between MSM and social media shaped the #BringBackOurGirls movement. The results indicated that while social media influenced MSM's coverage of the event, MSM assisted in disseminating the movement further. Also, while social media influenced the mainstream news agenda, the manner of coverage remained outside social media's remit.

Research Question 2 looked at the difference in attitudes/sentiments between MSM and social media. The results indicated they were remarkably similar, as, for the most part, they served to perpetuate the unequal power relationship between the west and global south. In coverage of Nigeria, both MSM and social media relied upon depictions of the global south that enforced stereotypes of backwardness and inferiority. The reliance on these tropes was considered a perpetuation of western hegemony and the imperial, colonial histories that have long disenfranchised the global south.

Research Question 3 examined what made #BringBackOurGirls so globally relevant. The results indicated #BringBackOurGirls enabled a counterpublic's voice to be heard, while the participatory function of social media enabled emotional responses to flourish. The movement's grounding in hashtag activism enabled an ease of participation that encouraged slacktivism; while this made the movement popular, it is also responsible for the time-bound activism and lack of tangible change that stemmed from #BringBackOurGirls. The tropes of Africa, which the movement exhibited, were also credited with its success, as they provided a familiarity of sorts within which audiences were comfortable to act.

Research Question 4 sought to determine whether participants of #BringBackOurGirls acted in solidarity or self-interest. While the research hypothesised

that Ironic Solidarity had ousted the Politics of Pity, the results determined the two occurred concurrently in the #BringBackOurGirls movement. Where the Politics of Pity and Ironic Solidarity were present, participants failed to ignite an appropriate cosmopolitan reaction in response to distant suffering. Instead, these responses perpetuated hegemony, thus enforcing difference and distance. Where these modes of humanitarian communication were present, the solidary ideal of Ecstatic Cosmopolitanism was absent. As such, this research contended the majority of #BringBackOurGirls' participants acted in self-interest, not solidarity.

Research Question 5 investigated the role of western first world feminism in #BringBackOurGirls, and repercussions for third world women. The research determined that while the Feminist discourse was minimal, its presence alongside power dynamic discourses revealed it to exhibit more qualities of western first world feminism, than third world feminism. As #BringBackOurGirls began as a third world feminist movement, this finding demonstrated western first world feminism had usurped the movement. #BringBackOurGirls' appropriation disregarded the role(s) of third world women and minimised their contributions. As a result, third world women were further disenfranchised, and their conceptions of feminism were denigrated in favour of the ill-fitting western first world feminism. Such an impact again served to perpetuate the west's power over the global south.

Participation in an OSM might have the propensity to effect change, and as such movements become common the evidence to support this is growing (Skoric, 2012). It is undeniable that #BringBackOurGirls made an impact. The movement was headline news for a considerable amount of time and engaged a global community. However, in this case, an online trend cannot be considered palpable action or change. Change, for

the Chibok students and their communities, would be the achievement of freedom and the protection of education rights; triumphs yet to be realised. Instead, the #BringBackOurGirls movement exemplified the continued dominance of the west over the global south. #BringBackOurGirls was engaged with through stereotypes that depreciated and ‘othered’ citizens of the global south, resulting in the enforcement of western hegemony. Furthermore, the appropriation of the movement’s feminist aims demonstrated a complete disregard for the complexities and histories of women in the global south. As a result, third world women’s capacity to influence change in their communities may be diminished.

OSMs may be the new vehicles for humanitarian communication, but without appropriate solidary responses, any change achieved will be sullied by the inappropriate manner of participation. While Ecstatic Cosmopolitanism may appear an unattainable ideal, the appropriate representation of subjects and their causes is one step in the right direction. Through participants’ intrinsic self-interest, #BringBackOurGirls represented a less than ideal OSM. However, Nordlinger (2015) claims that while #BringBackOurGirls had its faults, he “can’t quite blame the hashtaggers, who, in their impotence, wanted to do something, or say something – wanted not to be bystanders. This is an honourable impulse” (28). The challenge this research poses to humanitarian communication and OSMs of the future is to act from informed positions and in appropriate solidarity, so as to channel these ‘honourable impulses’ effectively.

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