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NEW DIMENSIONS OF TRANSNATIONAL ACTIVISM

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this work is the result of an original research conducted by me under the joint supervision of the undersigned. References to all publications have been duly acknowledged. I am, however, solely responsible for any lapses, marginal or substantial, which may be found in this work.

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DEDICATION

For Oreoluwa and Shika

For Leah Sharibu

For the 'Chibok Girls'

For the Aboke Girls

For stolen girlhoods and all girls and women everywhere affected by conflict

May you know Equality. Respect. Safety. Inclusion. Empowerment.

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Many people made this journey possible. From start, to middle, to finish. Directly and indirectly, materially and symbolically. My victory is yours too. I am indebted to you all.

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ABSTRACT

The historic phenomenon of transnational activism, defined as political mobilisation across borders, has long been characterised by the agentic primacy of Global North political actors and professional advocacy by formal civil society organisations and networks. Bring Back Our Girls, the movement by Nigerian women for the rescue of Nigerian schoolgirls abducted by Boko Haram in 2014, is one of several new activisms that breaks this mould, marking a shift toward spontaneous, mass-based protests initiated and led by eclectic Global South actors and grounded in Global South contexts. Some recent scholarship recognises the North-South shift of transnational activist agency, yet much of it remains focused on NGO advocacy and social movements that originate in the Global North. This means that vital insights are missing from knowledge of how transnational resistance is happening today and what this means for international politics. It also signals an imperative to revisit dominant models and theories of transnational activism in order to update them. Using interviews with 27 Bring Back Our Girls leaders and participants, digital ethnography and content analysis, this study asks: what does Bring Back Our Girls reveal about the changing structure, motives and function of contemporary transnational activism? The case of Bring Back Our Girls affords empirical insights from an African-led activism for the rights of girls in an epistemic field centred on Global North activists and malestream actors. I argue that Bring Back Our Girls signals a new direction of transnational activism which I theorise as multimodal transconnective activism. This framework rests on three pillars: a mix of formal and informal actors in which constellations of informal social networks are prominent; individuals' motives for activist engagement as important but understudied drivers of transnational activism that stem from their personal and social identities, values, beliefs and

positionalities; and a shift in the relationship between Global South and North activists from dependence to collaboration, signalling a reconfiguration of core-periphery dynamics in terms of who 'owns' political problems and who leads their resolution.

ACRONYMS

AWDF	African Women's Development Fund
BBOG	Bring Back Our Girls
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
FEMNET	African Women's Development and Communication Network
INGO	International Non-governmental Organisation
IR	International Relations
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NOLA	Network of Labour Activism
RP	Research Participant
TAN	Transnational Advocacy Network
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States

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INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction and Problem Statement

On 14 April 2014, the armed group known as Boko Haram abducted 276 schoolgirls from their government school in Chibok, a town in Borno State, northeast Nigeria. The group had been responsible for extreme acts of violence since the conflict began in 2009, but the abduction catalysed the emergence of Bring Back Our Girls—a campaign for the return of the students which was started and led primarily by Nigerian women in various cities in Nigeria. Their activism began as loosely organised protests across Nigeria and with a hashtag, #BringBackOurGirls. It then spread quickly around the world as thousands of people from at least 50 geographically dispersed countries led related online and offline campaigns. According to Ibeh (2014b), 'at its peak, the #BringBackOurGirls movement spread to 69 countries with its strongest external online support coming from the United States, Britain and Canada'.

Bring Back Our Girls involved representatives of Nigerian civil society organisations and used familiar repertoires of organised resistance, such as protest marches, songs and petitions, to engage national and international governance institutions. Yet, in many ways, the group symbolises new patterns in the structure, form and function of transnational activism, defined as political mobilisation across national borders. Cammaerts (2015:7) prepares the ground for theorising these new directions by observing that today's transnational advocacy networks 'are becoming virtual, more fluid, more decentralised, more de-institutionalised and more global'. Bring Back Our Girls, like the North African uprisings and other contemporary movements, fits

this description: it was active online, spread quickly across state borders, did not have a central coordinating or operational structure and involved actors in many different parts of the world who participated for different reasons. However, close examination of the campaign offers deeper insights into changing structures of transnational resistance, motivations for engagement in activism and relations between Global South[1] and international actors.

Firstly, where considerable scholarship focuses on the activities of professional transnational advocacy networks and social movement organisations, Bring Back Our Girls reveals the growing role and importance in transnational relations of individual actors and informal networks, as opposed to states and formal organisations. The individuals who have led Bring Back Our Girls in different spaces have been predominantly Global South actors with international agency, leverage and presence, who thus had the ability to represent their interests in international contexts. Secondly, while collective identities influenced some people's decision to join Bring Back Our Girls, individual identities, personal values and interpersonal social relations were important motivating factors that underline the increasing significance of individuality and informality in transnational activism. Thirdly, Bring Back Our Girls' origin in Nigeria and the centrality of Global South actors in its transnational activities illustrate the decline of white saviourism, a corresponding rise in the transnational agencies of Global South actors and a shift from relations of dependence with Northern actors toward collaboration. All these factors reflect new directions of transnational activism, which are theorised in this study as multimodal transconnective action.

This new theoretical framework addresses the tendency in scholarship to segment different strands of transnational activism by building on the idea that Bring Back Our Girls is a form of transnational collective action that encompasses a diverse mix of actors and networks, motives and

modalities of participation and engagement. These new directions in transnational activism do not find resonance in the existing literature for two main reasons: first, a persistent focus on cases in countries of the Global North and second, 'malestream'[2] international relations meta-theories are more interested in collectivist formal organising and give little attention to women's movements.

Transnational activism is a historic phenomenon that dates to the uprisings of enslaved Africans in the 18th and 19th centuries (Santiago-Valles 2005; David 2007; Adi 2018). Since that time, it has been performed by individual and collective actors across the world using varied repertoires to achieve a range of objectives with different outcomes. Since the 2010 North African Spring, whose conceptualisation as the 'Arab Spring' obfuscates the African agency involved (Branch and Mampilly 2015:2-3)[3], activism across the world has surged (Branch and Mampilly 2015:2, 13), as has mass-based transnational activism by loosely connected individuals (Castells 2015).[4] Contemporary hyperglobalised contexts have produced new forms of resistance, in Africa and the rest of the world, that differ, as previously stated, from older traditional social movements in location, mobility, function and operation, and structure and scale (Cammaerts 2015:7). This growing pattern is at odds with theses about transnational advocacy that foreground the role and agency of Global North actors as advocates for Global South activisms, and the collectivist approaches and motives of engagement of professional advocacy institutions and networks.

Frameworks in which Global South actors seek out and rely on the agency of Northern advocates to represent their interests in international contexts, such as the boomerang model (Keck and Sikkink 1998, 1999; De Waal 2015) are problematic because they propound the idea that norms and political resources and support flow from Global North to South, whereas, in reality, this exchange is more reciprocal and multidimensional (Müller-Funk 2019; Pallas 2017; Pallas

and Nguyen 2018; Pallas and Bloodgood 2019; Petrova 2013; Rodríguez-Garavito 2015; Tsutsui and Smith unpublished).

Also, the prevailing focus of this scholarship on advocacy networks from the viewpoint of NGOs centres on an institutional level of analysis, overlooking the individual. While these factors remain salient in transnational politics to varied extents, the context in which they occur has changed as have the forms and functions of transnational activism itself. One major difference is that technological advances have collapsed communication barriers, making it easier for people in distant parts of the world to see, hear and engage with one another. Also, the grievousness of contemporary atrocities is inciting spontaneous responses by individuals compared to the more structured campaigns of NGOs. Further, increasing transnational mobility has expanded the agencies of Global South actors, making them less dependent on Northern advocates to represent them in Northern contexts. This combines with changing global norms about who has the right to speak for 'subalterns'.[5]

This study builds on existing scholarship on transnational activism through the lens of Bring Back Our Girls, an activism begun in Nigeria in 2014 by Nigerian women that attracted and compelled widespread global attention, action and support.

1.1 Research Question

What does Bring Back Our Girls reveal about the structure, interrelations and motives for participation in contemporary transnational activism?

1.2 Objectives

The main objective of this study is to signal new directions in transnational activism scholarship. To achieve this objective, the study adopts three approaches.

First, it examines the case of Bring Back Our Girls, an activism begun in Nigeria in 2014 by Nigerian women that attracted and compelled widespread global attention, action and support. This enables a contribution to existing knowledge about new directions and dimensions of transnational activism from the standpoint of an African campaign led by women—two perspectives that are underrepresented in international relations and transnational activism scholarship. The study obtains activist perspectives from Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States as a way of comparing diverse cultural, social and political viewpoints and enabling theorisation from the South.

Second, the study explores the structures of and interactions among the transnational actors who took part in Bring Back Our Girls in at least 50 cities around the world, focusing on the countries mentioned above. The aim of this is to show that the structure and operations of transnational activism have expanded from professional advocacy institutions and networks to include individual activists and informal groups who are motivated to participate by different sets of factors.

Third, this study catalogues and critically interrogates the factors that motivated geographically dispersed individuals to participate in Bring Back Our Girls, with a view to theorising individual motivations of engagement and participation in transnational activism. This strengthens the nexus between individual motivations and the collectivist ones that dominate

international relations scholarship on transnationalism, owing to the disciplinary inclination toward group or meta theories.

1.3 Justification and contributions to knowledge

Several scholars have noted the limited insights from the non-Global North in international relations that has translated into its overlooking of Global South knowledge (Acharya 2014; Acharya and Buzan 2007, 2010, 2017) and, specifically, African concepts, experiences and agencies (Bouka 2018, 2019; Obi 2012; Odoom and Andrews 2017; Smith 2012, 2017, 2018; Tieku 2012; Zondi 2018). This questions the internationality of international relations and compels efforts to theorise from the South, rather than engage in cyclical efforts to revalidate Eurocentric theories. It also speaks to the need for greater diversity and representation. This study contributes toward redressing representational deficits in international relations scholarship regarding the agency of individual African as against non-African and female actors that have drawn severe criticism of the limits of its relevance outside the Global North. By so doing, the study helps to invert the Eurocentric gaze of this scholarship and contributes toward decolonising the study of international relations—a key impulse of contemporary knowledge production and theorisation. By privileging the voices of African activists and telling the story of an activism created by Africans, this research brings African activisms into the purview of 'mainstream' scholarship and secures the place of Africa as a purveyor, not just a receiver, of transnational exchanges. This contributes toward a more objective view and holistic understanding of the dynamics of transnational activism.

Much of the knowledge on transnational activism in international relations scholarship focuses on civil society organisations, particularly NGOs and formal networks. This extends a historic preoccupation with collective entities as primary units of analysis that does not recognise how ordinary people and citizens, specifically women, have become more active on global stages, including through activism. By examining a case of contemporary activism that does not fit neatly within existing typologies of social movement actors, this study expands this categorisation, illustrating that new forms of transnational activism like Bring Back Our Girls are characterised more by connectivities of highly diverse and diffuse individuals and organisations than by collective identities. This finding advances discourses on which actors have legitimacy, agency, power and presence to lead resistance and pursue social change in international spaces.

By centering the perspectives of activists who supported Bring Back Our Girls in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States, this study contributes to an epistemic shift from reading the transnational as global or vertical to reading it as including regional or horizontal transnationalisation. This illuminates knowledge and ways of knowing, as identified by proponents of epistemologies of the South (e.g., Santos 2018), that are largely silent in current discourses. By so doing, this study also deconstructs the South-North relationship of dependence as presented in existing literature and demonstrates how it is becoming more collaborative.

Finally, although Bring Back Our Girls is the subject of a growing body of scholarship, this study is one of a very few studies that are based on primary data from interviews with Bring Back Our Girls activists in different geospatial contexts. It thus offers empirical insights from a range of geographically dispersed actors in and outside the Global South that expand the scope of perspectives from either Global North or Global South that characterises extant scholarship on

activism. The study highlights the involvement in Bring Back Our Girls of diasporan Africans, a further gap in knowledge within this scholarship, showing how these intersectional actors use their transnational agency to both further and constrain activism in their home contexts.

1.4 Overview of conceptual framework

This study is guided by two approaches: constructivism-interpretivism and decoloniality. As an approach that "challenges conventional understandings" and questions "liberal assumptions of truisms" (Lynch 2013:9), constructivism-interpretivism creates space for meaning making from Bring Back Our Girls that is not constrained by prevailing concepts of transnational activism. It is allied with decoloniality which calls for a revaluing and re-situation of knowledge from historically marginalised geographies of place and power in the aim of producing knowledge that is more comprehensive and inclusive of diversity and difference.

1.4.1 Interpretivism

According to Lynch (2013:2), interpretivism:

> 'focuses on the meaning of human experience—the variations in possible meanings for given events, how meaning is made through knowledge construction, how power and ethics constitute meaning, the implications of meaning for political and social phenomena'.

Interpretivism is critical to this study's engagement of the transnational activism literature, given its focus on infusing and interpreting perspectives that have hitherto not been centred in IR knowledge on this subject, including gender, the Global South, informality and the transnational agency of the individual. Interpretivism is the impulse behind my questioning in Chapter Four of

whether the taken-for-granted term, activism, applies to Bring Back Our Girls or whether the group represents something more, since many of its participants did not only confront political authorities but actively engaged in providing relief and empowerment to communities affected by the Boko Haram conflict. I also use interpretivism as a basis for conceptualising Bring Back Our Girls as multimodal, compared with current models of activism that define separate categories of activism with distinct characteristics.

As a field of knowledge, international relations faces renewed scrutiny concerning its partiality to Global Northern knowledge and ways of knowing (epistemologies), and their accompanying marginalisation of non-Northern narratives (Acharya 2014; Acharya and Buzan 2007, 2010, 2017; Zondi 2018). Tieku (2012), Smith (2012, 2017, 2018), Odoom and Andrews (2017) and Coleman and Tieku (2018) are among scholars who call out the invisibilisation of African IR knowledge. According to Acharya (2017), IR 'is not yet a truly global discipline that captures the full range of ideas, approaches and experiences of both Western and non-Western societies'. Some critique the discipline's gender bias, androcentrism or 'malestream' lens (Enloe 1990; Tickner 1997; Hudson 2005; Olonisakin, Barnes and Ikpe 2011; Hendricks 2015; Bouka 2018, 2019; Duriesmith 2020). Lynch (2019:268-9) argues that IR needs to confront its 'racialised constructions and imaginaries' that have historically constructed non-White, non-European and non-American people and knowledge as inferior. Collectively, these and other concerns embody the preoccupations of interpretivism as an approach to knowledge production.

1.4.2 Decoloniality

The decolonial lens that informs this study stems from a critical evaluation of the nature of Africa's historical and continuing relationship with the rest of the world. The purpose of taking a decolonial approach stems from the ongoing global decolonial turn in knowledge that demands

a re-viewing of who knows, what we think we know and the ways in which we arrive at that knowledge. Historically, across disciplines, Africa has been the site of extensive research by foreigners and yet simultaneously the subject of epistemic racism and erasure that have denied its traditional knowledges, its ability to know and its agency (Bates, Mudimbe and Barr 1993; Nyamnjoh 2017). This is what led Hountondji (2009:128), among other critical African and Global South thinkers to describe efforts by African scholars to rectify this marginalisation and orientalisation as 'extraverted' research that is externally oriented, intended first 'to meet the theoretical and practical needs of Northern societies'.

In considering the theoretical contributions of South Africa's Must Fall movements, Mpofu-Walsh (2016:82-82) writes:

> To understand the Must Fall movement's spread to Euro-America through the lenses of Gramsci, Foucault or Marx is already to misunderstand it. Certainly, 'traditional' theory can illuminate certain aspects of the movement, but it cannot capture its anti-hegemonic and unmistakable Southern bent. 'Fallism' is a nascent, complicated and emerging viewpoint, combining aspects of decolonial thought, black consciousness, radical feminism and pan-Africanism.

He goes on to suggest theory from the South (Santos 2018; also Hountondji 2009 - *épistemologies du sud*) as a plausible explanatory lens through which to view the global spread of Must Fall. Beyond the African identities of many participants in Bring Back Our Girls, the campaign has been ideologically and structurally different from Must Fall. It appears to be just another contemporary transnational activism. Yet the decolonial ethic is a call to look beyond the surface

to see if, in this case, the Africanness of social phenomena can produce new knowledge or change how we see the world. In other words, it queries: what can be learned from studying things as they are and not as Western theories and worldviews see them? To cite one example, northern theories do not consider how concepts like Pan-Africanism, an African norm, can explain transnational activism. However, several of the activists whom I interviewed in Africa and the US stated that they supported Bring Back Our Girls because they identified with the group as Black women of African descent. It is in this light that this study set out to explore what new insights a study of Bring Back Our Girls could make to existing knowledge on transnational activism.

1.5 Operationalisation of Key Concepts

1.5.1 Activism

Dictionary definitions of activism include: 'the use of direct and noticeable action to achieve a result, usually a political or social one' (Cambridge Dictionary online)[6], and 'the process of campaigning in public or working for an organization in order to bring about political or social change' (Merriam-Webster).[7] In the literature on transnational social movements, the word activism (Ilcan and Lacey 2013) is used interchangeably with words like civil society (Pallas 2010, 2013), advocacy (Keck and Sikkink 1999, Pallas 2013, 2017), campaign(ing), collective action (Della Porta and Tarrow 2005) and social movement (Martínez-Torres and Rosset, 2010; Riker and Sikkink, 2002). While these share some characteristics, they are not as coterminous as the literature suggests. Social movements are defined broadly as 'a sustained, organized public effort making collective claims on target authorities' (Tilly 2004b in Tarrow 2005:6), a definition that Tarrow points out does not fit all forms of transnational resistance. Advocacy conveys the idea of

organised, constructive engagement for change compared with the idea of activism as resistance and performative grievance that draws attention to issues but does not have transformative impact. Both are forms of collective action that are subsets of a broader constellation of social mobilisations by civil society.

In this study, the word 'activism' refers to both the performance of political resistance and new forms of collective action that are common across the world today. I explore other framings of collective action and what import these have on perspectives of Bring Back Our Girls.

1.5.2 Transnationalism and transnationality

Transnationalism is a multifaceted word that has been studied in different aspects by and across different disciplines (Vertovec 1999; Tedeschi, Vorobeva and Jauhiainen 2020), most prominently in studies on migration, regionalism and social movements. It has been variously defined as 'a social morphology, as a type of consciousness, a mode of cultural reproduction, an avenue of capital, a site of political engagement, and a reconstruction of 'place' or locality' (Vertovec 1999:1).

Nye and Keohane (1971) popularised the concept of transnationality within international relations. They defined transnational relations as 'contacts, coalitions, and interactions across state boundaries that are not controlled by the central foreign policy organs of government'. Their objective was to reconcile state-centric views of global politics with the 'good deal of intersocietal intercourse…[that] takes place without governmental control' (Nye and Keohane 1971:330-331). This view still finds salience today, especially in light of the increasing digitality of Bring Back Our Girls and similar movements, and how technological advances are shifting the frontiers of transnational political space. However, the intensive digitalisation of many aspects of international

politics, including activism, is expanding the focus of transnationalism beyond geographic state boundaries to include the sociopolitical space or 'virtual counterpublic' (Sabao and Chikara 2018) represented by the Internet, which exists 'above and beyond national, regional, or local societies' (Anheier 2007; Jordan 2011; Taylor 2002; Kaldor 2003).

Within the context of activism by NGOs and NGO networks that dominated research in the 1980s and 1990s, transnationality is defined in three ways: transnationality of place (events occur in multiple geographic locations), transnationality of person(s) (activism involves people from or living in different countries or/and who hold transnational identities) and transnationality of purpose (activism themes have transnational resonance). Together, these privilege spatiality and national identities and affiliations of social issues, activisms and activists. An example of the first category is local-national actors like Nigerian NGOs lobbying non-domestic actors like the transglobal oil company, Royal Dutch Shell whose headquarters are based outside Nigeria. The second category references, for example, networking partnerships between domestic actors like Egyptian NGOs and global international INGOs like Human Rights Watch to address human rights issues in Egypt (Pallas and Nguyen 2018). The global appeal of fighting for the release of helpless girls forcefully taken by violent armed men, as Bring Back Our Girls did, illustrates transnationality of purpose. What is common to these definitions is that in both scenarios, activism occurs either across borders or/and involves multiple nationalities co-situated in one locale. This study adds to these scenarios the transnationalism that occurs when multinational or diasporic non-state actors mobilise either in a single domestic context or with other multinational actors across borders, as occurred with Bring Back Our Girls events in the study's focal countries.

Transnationality in this epistemological context (international relations) is contested by some on the basis that it is no more than activity that takes place across the borders of two states.

For this reason, it is said to understate the broad range of spatialities in which supranational activisms occur (Anheier and Kaldor 2001:16; see also usage by Krause 2014). Anheier and Kaldor (2001) state that the word 'transnational' is antithetical to the term 'global' which implies the participation of people from every part of the world. This contrasts with the usage of transnational by other scholars (Pallas 2016; Ilcan and Lacey 2013; Della Porta and Tarrow 2005; Tarrow 2005; Khagram, Riker and Sikkink 2002; Keck and Sikkink 1999) to depict advocacy that occurs in different parts of the world, typically starting in one place and moving to others.

'Global' has been used anecdotally to denote the involvement of key Western and, sometimes, non-Western powers, in global phenomena like the #MeToo movement (Ajayi 2018b). Western observers deem this acceptable even if, as occurred with #MeToo, geopolitical spheres like Africa are not visibly represented in its spread. It is important here to acknowledge the import for spatial materiality in Africa of a concept that evokes colonial encounters across Westphalian geospatial borders that do not correspond with historic communal boundaries. Critical feminist scholars like Mohanty (1997b) and Grewal and Kaplan (1994, cited in Naples 2002:5-6) oppose the use of global to describe feminist movements on grounds that it universalises Western ways of mobilising, thereby eclipsing the diversity and agencies of women in other parts of the world (Akin-Aina 2012).

The local-global nexus that undergirds each of these concepts is present in Cammaerts' (2015) disaggregation of transnationality into three scales, namely trans-international, trans-national and glocal. However, his model fuses indicators of spatiality, local/national, regional, international, global, with the forms that activism takes. In sum, the common denominator to all these definitions is that the geographic borders of states determine what is transnational in the barest sense but there is disagreement about how well this term embodies activity at all trans-state

levels (regional, international, global). 'Transnational' is used throughout this study to mean activisms that: (a) occur in more than one country both within and across different geographic contexts (trans-African activism is as transnational as transglobal activism); (b) transpire in cyberspace, whether exclusively online or simultaneously online and offline; and (c) may be locally situated within a specific country but involve multiple nationalities or/and transnational targets.

1.6 Overview of Research Design and Methodology

This is a summary of methodological approaches which are detailed in Chapter Three. Data used for this study were collected between March 2019 and September 2020 using a qualitative approach. Following a deep reading of the vast repertoire of work on transnational activism, I gathered the data presented in this study using semi-structured interviews with 27 women and men who led or took part in Bring Back Our Girls events in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa and the US both physically using face-to-face interviews and digitally using WhatsApp, Skype, Facebook and Zoom. I interviewed Bring Back Our Girls coordinators as well as participants to obtain perspectives from different levels of activism. However, the absence of hierarchy in the amorphous structure of several mobilisations made the traditional concept of leader difficult to define and inapplicable to my methodology.

I identified participants by conducting searches on the Internet (Google), Facebook, YouTube and Twitter for Bring Back Our Girls or Bring Back Our Girls and the name of each focal country (example, Bring Back Our Girls Ghana). Internet searches often led to media articles about the Chibok abductions, the website and other news about the activism in Nigeria, and

analysis of the activism's effectiveness. Facebook searches led to pages by activisms in specific countries. I looked for the names of the administrators of each page or read posts by their followers to identify them. I then contacted them via Facebook messenger, email, WhatsApp or telephone, or combinations of all these. They were subsequently selected using purposive and snowball sampling.

I also collected and analysed over 600 social media data items posted by and about Bring Back Our Girls activists on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Given the abundance of this data, the time frame was April to October 2014—the six months in which Bring Back Our Girls was most active. This social media content was then manually content analysed to identify the main themes therein. These were used to develop thematic codes that form the structure of the discussion of findings in Chapters Six and Seven of the changing structures and forms of transnational activism, and the reasons why people in different countries supported Bring Back Our Girls.

1.7 Chapterisation

There are eight chapters in this study, beginning with this introduction (Chapter One). Chapter Two provides a background to the research that consists of the global and African political contexts in which Bring Back Our Girls emerged and a brief profile of the activism itself. Chapter Three comprises a detailed research design and methodology that included interviews with 27 activists in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa and the United States, and content analysis of their social media communications. Chapter Four contains a review of international relations literature on transnational activism while Chapter Five juxtaposes this scholarship with knowledge from African Studies, psychology, sociology and communications/media studies, drawing on

them all to formulate a new model of contemporary transnational activism. Chapters Six and Seven present detailed findings and discussions in relation to the study's research question: Chapter Six focuses on the structure, form and interrelations of contemporary transnational activism, while Chapter Seven centres on the motivations of participants in transnational activism. The study concludes in Chapter Eight by consolidating the theoretical implications of the study's findings and the contributions to knowledge of the transnationalisation of Bring Back Our Girls within the framework of elaborating theory from the South. Chapter Eight also provides indications for further research and makes policy-relevant recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

A CONTEXTUAL OVERVIEW OF BRING BACK OUR GIRLS

2.0 Introduction

This chapter situates Bring Back Our Girls in the multiple historical, social and political contexts in which it emerged. It begins with a historical overview of activism across borders from the 18th century to date that illustrates that Bring Back Our Girls continues a long history of transnational activism initiated and led by Global South actors. Empirical illustrations are drawn primarily from Africa and movements for Black emancipation. Examples include movements by enslaved Africans in the 18th and 19th centuries, the Anti-Apartheid movement, Pan-Africanism and Fallism, as well as indigenous rights movements in South America. A second section highlights key aspects of the moment in which Bring Back Our Girls occurred, namely: rising global activism and a backlash against democracy; Boko Haram, militarism and the global war on terror; the girling of development; feminism; and digital activism in the Internet age. In a third section, the chapter traces the emergence and development of Bring Back Our Girls and its significance within Nigeria and the broader global political and gender moment and contexts in which it emerged. This chronology of events prefaces the more detailed analysis of Bring Back Our Girls in the study's focal countries (Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, the US) in Chapter Six.

2.1 A Historical Overview of Transnational Activism

Social movement scholars historicise activism mainly by type or theme using a wave analysis to define what they see as major phases in the history of transnational activism. This

section uses both while bearing in mind the difficulty of identifying a verifiable starting point and separating purportedly old from new social movement actors, many of which have co-existed throughout history.

Some analysis suggests that transnational activism is a modern phenomenon that became more visible in the 1980s (Khagram, Riker and Sikkink 2002; Pallas 2018). This is a consequence of the predominant focus of much Global North scholarship on formal advocacy organising, predominantly by Northern actors, specifically non-governmental organisations (NGOs), which obscures its view of other forms. NGOs and NGO-led advocacy became more prominent in the 1980s (Obadare 2012), but transnational activism is a historic phenomenon that dates as far back as the 18th and 19th centuries, to the series of uprisings by enslaved Africans, more commonly known as 'rebellions', in the Caribbean, Latin America and the United States (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2020)[8]. These have not been counted in social movement scholarship because they are characterised as 'the most backward and fragmentary form of social defiance' (Santiago-Valles 2005:51). Their exclusion is further rationalised on grounds that they were not organised in a 'globally conscious manner' and did not 'include deliberate coordination' across multiple geographic spaces (Santiago-Valles 2005:51). This appears to be the reason that mainstream literature does not acknowledge informal anti-slavery efforts by Africans in Britain or initiatives like the Sons of Africa organisation formed by African abolitionists, Olaudah Equiano and Ottobah Cugoano. The latter was made up of different West Africans who organised together to address common problems and engage British political actors and other abolitionists in the movement to end slavery (Adi 2018:7).

Tarrow (2005:65-68) questions the transnationality of the 146 austerity protests that broke out in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia, the Middle East and Africa from 1976 to 1992, stating

that there was no evidence of 'transnational networks or solidarities' or 'unified organisation'. Quoting McMichael (1990:386), Santiago-Valles (2005:53) counters:

> The problem with this perspective is that such linkages "*presume* a 'whole' that governs its 'parts,'" rather than an approach that "progressively *constructs* a whole as a methodological procedure by giving context to historical phenomena."

In other words, because uprisings by enslaved people were not analysed in historical context, they were not considered to be either transnational or to constitute activism because they did not fit into hegemonic frames.

In Santiago-Valles' expansive view, conscious connectedness is 'only one form that such globally connected resistances can take' (Santiago-Valles 2005:55). He argues that the slave uprisings were global and transnationally connected in the multinational identities of participants as well as the global nature of enslavement and the global impact that the resistance of enslaved people had in Africa, the Americas and Europe (Santiago-Valles 2005:55). These uprisings or 'subaltern rebellions' represent the earliest form of what Santiago-Valles terms 'Afro-diasporic' resistance (Santiago-Valles 2005:51) that has recurred throughout history and is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

In the mid-19th century, there emerged an Anti-Slavery Coalition in which diverse actors, mainly from Europe and the Americas, mobilised to bring an end to the horrors of the slave trade (Keck and Sikkink 1999:92; Anheier and Kaldor 2001; David 2007). David (2007:368-9) distinguishes this from the less formal and structured anti-slave trade network that existed from the mid- to late 18th century and was more transnational in constitution. Gopal (2019) points out

that the formal abolitionist and decolonisation movements, or 'imperial initiative', continue to be credited with the liberation of the British empire, despite 'an abundance of histories of resistance'. Klotz (2002), for example, foregrounds the idea of social movements as transnational actors using a comparison of the abolitionist and Anti-Apartheid coalitions comprising advocacy networks, international organisations and corporations. In his study on transnational advocacy in the 18th century, David (2007:370, 378-9) examines the role of Quakers of which many leaders of the anti-slavery network were members, although the network later expanded to include Anglican and Methodist denominations. David examines how Quaker theology and thought about the moral injustice of slavery informed their involvement and the organisational links among members in America and England. He notes that numeric quasi-parity among members on both sides of the Atlantic meant that neither was superior (David (2007:372) and marks this 'organised' mobilisation as the onset of modern transnationalism (David 2007:369).

Under the rubric of metro-colonial activism, with a focus on humanitarian activism, De Waal (2015:24) cites non-violent resistance by Gandhi in South Africa and India; the campaign by the French-born British journalist, author, pacifist and politician, Edmund Morel against King Leopold of Belgium's misrule in Congo, and the transnational campaign against the Fascist invasion of Ethiopia. Gandhi and Morel illustrate the body of historical work on the figure of single individuals—political entrepreneurs or norm leaders in Keck and Sikkink's (1998) conception—as transnational activists, which Tarrow (2005) captures in his concept of rooted cosmopolitans.

Pan-Africanism is often discussed as a driver of national independence movements across Africa from the 1940s to 1970s, but it began life as a transatlantic movement in the late 19th century (Abdul-Raheem 1996) with the agitations of the descendants of enslaved Black people in the

diaspora to reunite with Black Africans on the continent (Mboukou 1983). Adi (2018:3-4) conceptualises this as two distinct strands, with one emerging from the African diaspora and the other in the context of the anti-colonial struggle, thereby showing the diversity and transnationality of Pan-Africanism's leaders and supporters. Its early thinkers were diasporan Blacks, including male and female figures like George Padmore, Marcus Garvey, W. E. B. Du Bois, Amy Ashwood and Amy Jacques Garvey (Blain, Leeds and Taylor 2016:140), among others, and initial meetings took place in Europe (Malisa and Nhengeze 2018).

Though the women cited above are known as prominent female pillars of Pan-Africanism, women as a whole have been excised from the movement's history, yet they were and remain vital participants in Pan-Africanist movements across the world, as demonstrated in dedicated volumes by Feminist Africa (2014, 2015) on feminism and Pan-Africanism. African women's invisibility from documented histories and narratives is the work of embedded gender biases and gendered disparities in the politics of knowledge production (Tsikata 2014: 97; Tamale 2020:2-4). Their erasure serves as an imperative to study movements by women in order to provide accurate records of history as well as enrich knowledge on activism from diverse perspectives.

The principles of Pan-Africanism are being rearticulated in Black Lives Matter and a global decolonial movement that gained renewed momentum with the Rhodes Must Fall protests in South Africa in 2015. The Anti-Apartheid movement is a major pillar of anti-colonialism and has been brought to life through transnational organising by varied organisations, as well as by global protests, such as those against the Sharpeville Massacre of 1960 when South African police shot and killed demonstrators in the township of Sharpeville protesting against the Apartheid regime's racist 'pass' laws (Lodge 2011). The Must Fall movement began in 2015 when Black South African university student, Chumani Maxwele threw human faeces on the statue of Cecil John Rhodes, the

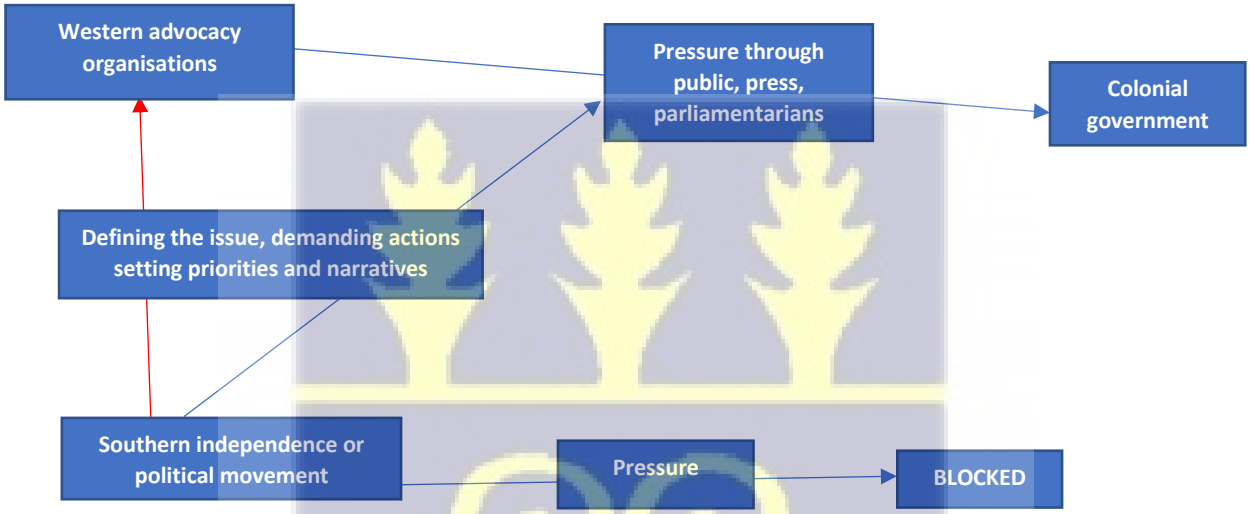
imperialist British businessman and politician at the University of Cape Town, in protest against the continued sense of disempowerment among the country's Black population (Luescher 2016:22; Nyamnjoh 2015:74). It then inspired other Fallist movements across the world, including in Northern countries (Nyamnjoh 2015, 2016; Adomako Ampofo 2016; Luescher 2016:23[9]; Wamai 2016; Ramaru 2017:94; Kambon and Appiagyei-Atua 2018; Sagar 2019). Fallism can be considered an ally movement to Black Lives Matter and thus part of a long and continuing global movement against the racial oppression of Black people everywhere (Adomako Ampofo 2015, 2016).

The next identifiable phase in the trajectory of transnational activism occurred between 1940 and 1960 with intercontinental organising at home and abroad (colonies and metropolitan centres) among anti-colonialists in Africa, Asia and Latin America, and leaders of the American civil rights movement. De Waal (2015:25) describes the 'ambivalent' relationships between anti-colonial movements and Northern human rights organisations, including between leaders of African and civil rights movements that embodied 'remarkable transcontinental solidarity and shared ownership'. In a model that looks like a precursor of Keck and Sikkink's famous boomerang model, De Waal shows how Southern actors sought the support of Northern actors to pressure colonial governments (De Waal 2015:25). Yet his depiction of the structure of this relationship in Figure 1 shows only relations between Southern independence movements and Northern advocacy organisations; it omits the transversal exchanges among Global South activists documented by Nkrumah (1963:132-140) and many others.[10]

Anti-colonial transnational activism was succeeded, in turn, by transnational movements against neo-colonialism in the 1970s, and human rights, war/militarism and

economic hardship/structural adjustment in the 1980s and 1990s. As is discussed below, the relationships and power dynamics among Northern and Southern actors, as well as the organisational structure of transnational activism modulated in each period. To cite one example, Italian nuns worked alongside the parents of schoolgirls abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army during Uganda's civil war in the late 1980s in a transnational activism that linked them with the United Nations system (De Temmerman 1995, 2000; Cook 2007) and

Figure 1: Anti-colonial solidarity model (De Waal 2015:25).



American and European political actors (De Temmerman 1995, Cook 2007).[11] During Liberia's protracted wars from 1989 to 2003, religious and diaspora groups were actively involved in the peace processes that ended the war, although, as Afolabi (2017:3, 158-171, 173-175) points out, the Liberian diaspora role was multifaceted and ambivalent. The transnational women's peace movement led by the Women in Peace Network and the Mano River Women's Peacebuilding Network that was so instrumental to brokering peace talks among warring factions is well documented (Fork Films et al 2008; Gbowee 2009; Medie 2016:3; Afolabi 2017).

In South America, transnational environmental and human rights organisations supported initial resistance by indigenous communities like the U'wa of Colombia that evolved into transnational political and legal confrontation of state governments over the exploitation of natural resources in their homelands (Rodríguez-Garavito and Arenas 2005).

The most recent epoch in transnational activism began in the early 21st century with movements like MeToo that began in the US. Global media presented MeToo as a catalyst for similar protests by women all over the world, including parts of Africa (Akoob and Allison 2018; Burke 2018; Busari and Idowu 2018; Nunn 2018). Ajayi (2018b) points out the saviourism inherent in this framing and its dismissal of the established national and transcontinental movements against gender violence across the continent.

From a Global North perspective, this period is marked by the change in direction of transnational activism from South-North to North-South as advocacy became increasingly driven by professional lobbyists who specialised in pleading the causes of distant suffering others with Northern governments and political actors. Examples include Kony2012, the campaign by the American NGO, Invisible Children, that aimed to 'make Kony famous' in the aim of getting him arrested (Mamdani 2012; Schomerus 2015).

Activisms like this appropriate the agency of Southern actors to organise on their own behalf (Ogunlesi 2014), as discussed by Khoja-Moolji (2015a, 2015b) in her exploration of what she calls the Western feminists' 'takeover' of Bring Back Our Girls and their subalternisation of the Nigerian activists who started it. They also effect the imposition of Northern cultural and political agendas on other parts of the world, as Mamdani (2009, 2012) discusses in his critique of the Save Darfur Movement, in which he asserts that the Lord's Resistance Army is 'a Ugandan problem calling for a Ugandan political solution' (Mamdani 2012). This period has also witnessed

a resurgence of a Fourth Wave of transnational feminist and women's rights advocacy. The Women's March of 2017 is one instance, although it stands out from other Northern-origin activisms in that it started as a national American protest and spread to other parts of the world.

From a Southern perspective, renewed fervour against autocratic governments and political leaders across Africa led to a wave of uprisings that started in North Africa and spread across parts of the Middle East, that have been conceptualised by corporate media as an 'Arab Spring' (Manji 2011:1). Writing in a volume on transnational feminism within the uprisings, Sadiqi (2016:1) remarks the complexity of defining North Africa and notes how the use of northern Africa in Northern mainstream literature indicates an association with Middle East and Mediterranean civilisations. Italian authors Camozzi, Cherubini, Leccardi and Rivetti (2017:1) acknowledge the inaccuracy of the Arab labelling but use it for referential convenience, often calling it the 'so-called Arab Spring' (see also Labidi 2016:195-6; Arfaoui 2016:221). Much of the existing analysis, predominantly by Northern and Arab scholars, is unquestioning of this labelling and contributes to a historic epistemicide against native Blacks in the region (Della Porta 2012).

Some scholars, notably Afro-Arab ones, are more critical and reflective of the mixed heritage of northern Africa, the intersectional identities and interests of those who took part, and the orientalist and Eurocentric tendencies of some research to conflate the region with contiguous Middle Eastern countries (Shihade 2012; Shihade, Fominaya and Cox 2012; Sjoberg and Whooley 2015; Sadiqi 2016; Elattir, El Allame and Tihm 2016; King 2019). Others note how the Arab label excises the synchronous uprisings in other parts of Africa, including Zimbabwe, Senegal, Madagascar, Mozambique and Uganda, that together form a collective response to experiences of multifaceted dispossession shared over many years (Manji 2011:1, 7, 11). According to Manji

(2011:1), the world did not witness an Arab Spring but an 'African awakening'—a concept that Branch and Mampilly (2015) echo in their book, *Africa Uprising*.

Branch and Mampilly (2015:2-3) argue that this obfuscation of Africans' political agency reflects a historic and continuing dismissal and legitimisation of the continent's protests as too primitive to constitute valid sites of activism research. African agency is further erased in light of the involvement of native Black groups and Black African migrants who have sought greener pastures or/and transit to Europe through North Africa (King 2019). Its other effect is to highlight the compression of the initiators of the uprisings as though they are homogenous groups, whereas they represent multiple identities, as studies on intersectionality in the Women's March indicate (Fisher, Dawn and Ray 2017; Moss and Maddrell 2017; Presly and Presswood 2017; Heaney 2019; Moni 2019).

2.2 Outlining the Context of Bring Back Our Girls

Bring Back Our Girls is viewed by many as a women's movement for girls' rights in Nigeria. Closer scrutiny reveals that it interpellates several themes, given the context in which it occurred. In this section, the study discusses (i) rising global activism and a backlash against democracy; (ii) Boko Haram, militarism and the global war on terror; (iii) feminism and the girling of development; and (iv) digital activism in the Internet age.

2.2.1 Rising global activism and a 'backlash against democracy'

Bring Back Our Girls emerged in the aftermath of the so-called 'Arab Spring'[12] in 2010, a period that coincided with the onset of the fourth wave of global democratisation marked by popular democracy movements and varied efforts by states to become 'functional electoral democracies'

(Hussain and Howard 2013; Abushouk 2016).[13] This narrative was triggered by uprisings that began in North Africa and spread across the continent and the ways in which they confronted and forced varying levels of reconfiguration of historically authoritarian governments. Mass-based individualised resistance surged as governments across the world tightened restrictions on organised civil society and narrowed the space for civic dissent and disobedience (Mamattah 2014)—what Elone (2013) terms a 'backlash against democracy'. The appearance of movements like Los Indignados or 15 May Movement in Spain, Black Lives Matter and MeToo in the US, and People Power in Uganda compelled research and theorising on the growing global autonomy and agency of individuals as drivers of political change. Yet analysis of the spontaneous and anomalous nature of these movements—Castells (2014) calls them rhizomatic—occurred largely outside the corpus of social movement scholarship, ostensibly because they did not fit existing typologies.

2.2.2 The Boko Haram conflict, militarism and the global war on terror

Some accounts trace the creation of the group known as Boko Haram to its founding in 2002 by Mohammed Yusuf. Others argue that it was formed as a non-violent group in 1995 by Abubakar Lawan and taken over while he was away studying in Saudi Arabia (Madike 2011; Ogbonnaya, Ogujiuba and Stiegler 2014; Onuoha 2014). A detailed insider account can be obtained from a 2018 book by the Islamic State in West Africa Province, a faction of Boko Haram (Zenn 2018; Al-Tamimi 2018). The name Boko Haram, loosely translated as 'Western education is sin/forbidden', is said to have been coined by Northern corporate media and is a distortion of the group's ideology that 'Western elites and their ways of doing things contradict Islam' (Thurston 2018:16). Its stated aim is to establish a regime whereby Sharia law is applied throughout Nigeria (Onuoha 2014:3-4), but in some ways it represents frustration at decades of

misrule by politically corrupt leaders and is entangled in Nigeria's complicated history (Matfess 2017; Ajayi 2020).

The group has committed sporadic violence against state and civilian targets since 2003. This escalated in 2009 when police killed 13 of its members during a funeral procession, allegedly for not wearing motorbike helmets (Onuoha 2014:4). This triggered retaliatory attacks across northeast Nigeria that ended with the police arrest and extrajudicial killing of Mohammed Yusuf, which drove the group underground and saw the emergence of a more radical leader, Abubakar Shekau. A splinter group known as the Islamic State West Africa Province emerged in 2015 under the leadership of Musa Al-Barnawi that directs its violence against the Nigerian military, not civilians (Stoddard 2019). In the deadly violence by both factions, tens of thousands have been killed, thousands of women, girls and men abducted, and millions displaced in Nigeria and neighbouring countries (Onuoha, 2010, 2011; International Crisis Group, 2010, 2014; Zenn and Pearson, 2014).

Boko Haram has directed different forms of systematic violence against women and girls as a prominent tactic of war throughout the conflict (Zenn and Pearson 2014; International Crisis Group, 2016, 2019; Matfess 2018; Ajayi 2020). In addition to the violence of abduction/disappearance, the group has weaponised women and girls as suicide bombers, sex slaves, forced wives, teachers of its ideology, weapons' smugglers, combatants and recruiters. Wide-ranging violence against women and girls has been a prominent tactic of war by Boko Haram throughout the conflict (International Crisis Group 2016, 2019; Ajayi 2020). The Chibok abductions were only one among many others that began long before the conflict started in 2009 (Pereira 2018, Ajayi 2020) but they gained international prominence, arguably from being the largest single and most spectacular abduction at the time. As discussed below, Boko Haram's

gendered violence reflects the normalisation of violence against women and girls during conflict which represents the continuation of such violence in militarised non-conflict contexts.

Boko Haram has reported transnational networks that are believed to have facilitated its spread and cross-border affiliations that make it a transnational phenomenon (Onuoha 2014; Isike and Isike 2018). Working with neighbouring governments in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin regions affected by the conflict, as well as countries like the US, the UK and France, Nigeria's government has fought hard to suppress and discredit Boko Haram, and appeared to gain military victory in 2018. This triumph was short-lived, however, as sporadic attacks throughout 2018 intensified in November 2018, causing a cycle of fresh violence throughout 2019. The geographic spread of Boko Haram and of the violence it has perpetrated show that although conflict has changed from inter- to intra-state, it still has wide transnational consequences (Onapajo et al. 2012; Onuoha 2014).

2.2.2.1 Rising global terror and a transnational counterwar

According to the Global Terrorism Index 2019, though terror-related deaths halved in the last four years, the number of affected countries is growing and far-right extremism and terrorism is rising. Terrorism is a controversial concept that defies common definition, but the practice of violence as politics is a historical phenomenon that has affected different parts of the world in different ways at different times. Prominent examples include revolutionary violence in 19th century Russia, the Northern Irish 'Troubles' and Islamist violence in Palestine, Afghanistan, Iraq and northern Nigeria, among others.

At a global level, concern over threats to US allies which escalated following terror attacks on US soil in September 2011 gave rise to a global war on terror. Since that time, the US has

worked with other 'counter-terror hegemons' [mainly the United Kingdom] (de Londras 2019[14]) to build a 'transnational counter-terrorism order' or political economy of counter-terrorism (Rosendorff and Sandler 2005 in de Londras 2019), made up of 'legal, institutional, technical and political manoeuvres'…'intended to instantiate on a global level an arrangement of social life that promotes certain goals or values' (de Londras 2019). In this framing, acts of terror and anyone who supports or prosecutes them are bad and must be dealt with severely—an idea that has been repeatedly articulated through rhetoric and action until it has attained the status of global norm. Resistance to terror is seen as a motive for Bring Back Our Girls as several affiliated mobilisations in different countries issued statements condemning human rights violations related to state encounters with terror and other forms of mass violence. US newspapers' coverage of Bring Back Our Girls framed the Boko Haram crisis as 'a potential new front in the US' ongoing war on terror' (Ofori-Parku and Moscato 2018:2491), mirroring American sentiment and explaining the government's militarised response.

At national levels, groups designated as terrorists, including Kenya's now defunct Mau and Nigeria's Boko Haram, have sparked debate about the legitimacy of their claims. Some see the Mau as embodying resistance to violent colonial occupation while Boko Haram is also partly viewed as an expression and performance of grievance against the historical marginalisation of northern Nigeria's poor. Yet the trope of terrorism as bad dominates global discourses and informs responses by state and non-state actors alike—including the headhunting and killings of Al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden, Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi[15], and other heads and members of groups designated as terrorists or seen to be sympathetic to their causes.[16]

All forms of terror increase women's and girls' vulnerability and precarity to sexual violence, and thus arouse strong feelings. So, too, does the conflation of terror with Islam and

radical Islamists, which feeds the idea that women and girls in affected countries need saving or Northern protection against violent, angry Muslim men. This was the impulse behind the global movement to save Amina Lawal, a Nigerian woman condemned to death by stoning for committing *zina* (adultery) in Katsina State, northern Nigeria in 2002 (BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights 2003; Pereira 2019).[17] The global uproar became so disruptive that Nigerian activists issued a statement correcting erroneous facts and requesting a pause (BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights 2003). All of this is undergirded by white saviourism, a moral code that normalises interventions, whether humanitarian or military, to save oppressed people from themselves (Kemedjio 2009 in Lynch 2019:278; Cole, 2012). White saviourism is also feeding thinking and practice around objections to Muslim girls' education—mostly by men—and positioning education as a solution to various challenges (Khoja-Moolji 2015b). Khoja-Moolji (2015b:348) writes about the 'comfortable fit between the narrative of the [Chibok] abductions and an 'all too familiar trope of the threat of Muslim terrorists, especially towards women'.

This restates Abu-Lughod's earlier thesis in the context of the Middle East (2002, 2013) that Northern narratives about saving Muslim women reduce them to a stereotyped singularity that obscures complicated historical and political dynamics, and the ways in which would-be saviours' policies and actions can contribute to difficult lived realities of those whom they purport to save (Abu-Lughod 2013).[18] Not all the Chibok students are Muslim, but the concept of their salvation as grounds for supporting Bring Back Our Girls and justification for military intervention is no less relevant.

2.2.2.2 Gender and the militarisation of politics

This study defines militarism as not just its association with war and armies, though Nigeria has a long history of military rule and violence—but its core ideology that constitutes 'powerful

norms of masculinity and femininity (Baderoon 2015), and is marked by an increasing willingness to use violence to enforce gender [and other] ideologies of appropriate behaviour and appearance (ibid) :

> 'the military and its expenditures…and the related socio-cultural, ideological and material changes…in societies…undergoing militarization. The conceptualisation of militarism applied here extends beyond the conventional focus on the security sector, security institutions and weaponry, to include changes in all aspects of social organization and subjectivity, including gender relations' (Mama and Okazawa-Rey 2012).

> the use of the threat of violence to settle political conflicts; the legitimization of state violence; the curtailment of freedom of opinion; the domination of military values over civilian life; the violation of human rights, extrajudicial killings, and the gross repression of the people (Chunakara 1994 in Ekine 2008).

Despite the absence of military rule in many countries, military tactics are apparent in democratic civilian governments' adoption of military tactics, attitudes and mindsets, equipment and language. Rising global militarisation is both a legacy of historical military trajectories and a symptom of the prevailing global malaise regarding terror(ism). States' militarised responses to this threat are creating new forms of insecurity for disempowered groups, especially women and threaten to revoke the gains of many years of women's rights activism (Mama 2012). Nowhere is this more manifest than in northeast Nigeria where the gloomy gender relations that characterise Nigeria are more pronounced and entrenched (Pereira 2019). Evidence of rising militarism abounds across Africa in multiple instances of excessive violence by state security actors against unarmed civilians, particularly women. These include the 2010 public gang rapes of women protesters in Guinea; police killings of striking miners in Marikana, South Africa (2012), and

brutalities against students protesting campus rapes and high fees (2015/6); heavy shows of police force during the Occupy Ghana protests (2014); Burundian police shootings of protesters in 2015; police teargassing of protesters in Kenya and Egypt (2016); police intimidation and harassment of Bring Back Our Girls protesters in Nigeria from 2014 to 2016, and arrests and killings of Oromo protesters in Ethiopia (2016) and rapes and further violence in Tigray in 2020/1.

In a recent journal article, Ajayi (2020) argues that the Chibok abductions are emblematic of a systematic campaign of violence against women and girls. In Nigeria, this has been led in the northeast chiefly by Boko Haram and other criminal elements but also by state security personnel. Successive Nigerian governments have been violent to or/and dismissive of Bring Back Our Girls and other women's mobilisations as well as women's security concerns overall. Together, these are a reflection of the normal gender dynamics in militarised contexts as outlined earlier (Oriola 2017). Emerging in this context, Bring Back Our Girls thus represents an important symbol of female and feminine resistance to a global militarised assault against the female gender and female bodies.

2.2.3 Women's organising, feminism and the girling of development

In some ways, Bring Back Our Girls continues long histories of women's organising globally, notably across Africa, against a range of issues—some related specifically to women, like the Aba Women's 'War'. These are discussed at length in Chapter Four. Bring Back Our Girls emerged in an epoch characterised by women's activism that is led by younger women and carries forward this legacy in a more aggressive way that some have described as fourth wave feminism (Ajayi 2018a). Especially in Africa, the emergence of all-women groups like Female IN (formerly Female in Nigeria) and PepperDem Ministries (in Ghana), and the growing spate of digital

feminist platforms like Eyala Blog, msafropolitan.com and the Africa Young Feminist blog Sauti, signal a change in the doing of feminist politics on the continent. However, it is unclear whether Bring Back Our Girls can be considered feminist solely because it was created and led mainly by women, supported by some feminists and fought primarily for the rights and rescue of kidnapped schoolgirls. Gouws (2015) and Gouws and Coetzee (2019) note the definitional dilemma involved in defining women's movements and distinguishing them from overtly feminist ones, even though the two are commonly conflated. While they tend to be based on women's gendered experiences of a range of issues, women's movements may or may not be feminist, depending on their stance toward patriarchy. In Gouws' (2015) view, a feminist movement 'uses a gendered power analysis and contests political, social and other arrangements of domination based on gender'. Notwithstanding, Bring Back Our Girls does represent an important instance of women-led activism and a lens through which apathy toward issues concerning women and girls, especially in Nigeria, can be observed. This is especially so given the depth of rejection, ridicule and resistance that many female members faced from family, friends and broader society because their activism was seen as defying gender stereotypes about appropriate behaviour for women.[19]

Bring Back Our Girls emerged a few years after an international focus on extremist violations of girls' and women's rights as illustrated by the shooting in Pakistan of Malala Yousafzai, who was vocal in her support of Bring Back Our Girls and led a solidarity visit to the group in Abuja in July 2014.[20,21] In a comparative analysis of global reactions to the shooting of Pakistani activist, Malala Yousafzai and the Chibok abductions, Khoja-Moolji (2015b:87) observes that where the development ecosystem has focused since the early 1970s on 'the potential of women in the Global South to combat poverty and promote development', the figure of the girl has recently replaced that of women as catalysts for development and poverty alleviation. In this

narrative, girls in the Global South—alternatively, Black and Brown girls—are seen as panaceas to development challenges like poverty and violence if they can access Northern education:

> girls often appear as "promissory objects" (Ahmed, 2010, p. 38)—that is, a range of promises from the alleviation of poverty, elimination of terrorism, societal progress, to family harmony, egalitarian families, and so forth accumulate in the figure of the girl. Even though the exact content of these promises may differ across cultures, geographies, and socioeconomic classes, it is the figure of the girl that emerges as a broad category that subsumes these differently constituted promises and desires. This transforms girls into objects with which our futures seem to be tied, thereby producing a social consensus around the need to protect and nurture girls. (Ahmed 2010:38, cited in Khoja-Moolji 2015:95).

This shift in focus from women to girls in the Global South rests on the assumption that access to education will empower girls to take decisions that will lead to greater autonomy and 'ultimately bring their nations out of abject poverty and violence (Khoja-Moolji 2015b:88). This has led to various development actors promoting girls' education as the solution to varied development challenges (Khoja-Moolji 2015b:88). This is a sea change from colonial Nigeria where concern for the welfare of girl street hawkers led to interventions to make them housewives compared to education and vocational support for boys (George 2018). Yet it is a simplistic proposition that does not take into account the structural and systemic nature of gender discrimination in affected societies.

The issue of girls' education in northern Nigeria has long been of interest to activists and policy makers. One third of all girls are out-of-school in Nigeria—over 5.5 million school-age girls (British Council 2014:20). Across the board, girls' literacy and numeracy rates are far lower

in the northeast and northwest compared to the southwest, with 'all Southern regions having significantly higher rates than Northern regions' (British Council 2014:21). Primary-secondary transition rates and dropout rates follow the same patterns (British Council 2014:20-22). Educational (e.g., accessibility, safety) and socioeconomic (e.g., poverty, child work) barriers contribute to these disparities. Sociocultural factors (gender norms and stereotypes, early marriage and pregnancy) also play an important role. In this context, the Chibok abductions revived historic debates about the educational access and status of girls in northern Nigeria as well as public attitudes to these issues in different parts of the country.

2.2.4 Digital activism in the Internet age

Digital politics has taken different forms since the Internet debuted in the 1970s. However, the extensive use of modern digital and social media in contemporary activism has been remarked as a major characteristic that distinguishes political resistance today (Castells 2014, Mutsvairo 2016). Recent forms of digital or cyberactivism, enabled by the growing spread of mobile technology and Internet access, have included hashtag activism, selfie protests, clicktivism and hacktivism, among many others. Across the world, all the movements that have occurred since the North African uprisings, including MustFall, MeToo, Occupy and Women's March, have involved significant online activity to varying effect. The South African MustFall movement ignited protests against academic racism in the US and UK, among other spaces. Tunisian political analyst, Youssef Cherif credits Facebook and Twitter with raising awareness and helping supporters of the uprising in that country find their voices and lose their fear, knowing that they could speak without state censure online (Jamjoom 2015). Bring Back Our Girls used social media to counter false state narratives about the toll of casualties in the Boko Haram conflict (Akume 2014). MeToo similarly

used social media to draw attention to movements against gender violence, though broadcast media narratives were dismissive of such movements outside the US (Ajayi 2018).

At national levels, Facebook and Twitter discourses helped sack Vice President Sam Sumana in Sierra Leone while in Kenya, Kenyans on Twitter used mockery, condemnation and humour (Nyabola 2016; Okoth 2020), like Nigerians used memes[22] to denounce corruption and confront other political anomalies (Yeku 2018). In many cases, online activism is believed to have helped mobilise hundreds of thousands of participants globally who made virtual noise and participated in offline protest activities. This has made resistance more global and fluid, and arguably facilitated interpersonal interactions among diverse actors in geographically dispersed spaces. It has also given room to arguably greater citizen power and voice, particularly by persons who would not normally have access to transnational public spheres. Yet, inasmuch as cyberactivism has helped intensify the visibility of, and therefore support for, new transnational movements, the synergy between online and offline activism shows that the digital has not replaced the analogue.

In Chapter Four, this study debates the implications for scholarship of this development, noting that it is making more visible the agencies of non-Western actors for initiating political change and influencing transnational contentious action. It is worth noting that in the expanding knowledge production on digital or cyber activism, African cases remain minimal. There is thus room to explore how African digital activism contributes to our understanding of the changing dimensions of activism across borders.

2.3 A Timeline of Bring Back Our Girls

At its peak, Bring Back Our Girls was a highly diffuse movement with diverse actors across the world holding events that were as connected as they were unconnected to organising in Nigeria. Today, a vastly diminished core of activists, primarily in Nigeria and the US, continue to hold sporadic events on milestone days and advocate on social media, but Bring Back Our Girls is today a shadow of its former self.[23] While it is difficult to establish an accurate sequence of events, interviews with Bring Back Our Girls participants and a content analysis of news and social media data enable an approximate chronology of early events.

On 15 April 2014, Nigerians awoke to the news that an unconfirmed number of female students had been kidnapped from their school in Chibok, Borno State in northeast Nigeria the previous day by Boko Haram. The number was later confirmed to be 276 after a few had escaped. The town is considered remote to Nigerians outside the northeast but is situated in a region bordering the Sahel that was once a vibrant trade and cultural hub for people in neighbouring countries (Abubakar 2017; Hiribarren 2017). In the ensuing pandemonium, as national and global actors shared messages of grief and solidarity, the Goodluck Jonathan government spread false claims that the kidnapping was a scam (Godwin 2015) and, later, that they had been rescued by the military (Ibeh 2014a). Amid the confusion, a number of Nigerian women began to take the first steps of response.

In Maiduguri, capital of the state from where the students were taken, Hamsatu Allamin, an activist, peacemaker and NGO coordinator, acting on a phone call from a colleague and native of Chibok, telephoned Professor Hauwa Abdu Biu, a civil society colleague, asking her to help coordinate a press conference to draw attention to the abductions.[24] According to Diaz (2017), 'The two hoped that the publicity would create international pressure on the government to do

more to find the girls and to dialogue with the insurgents to end the rampant violence that threatened the future of their country'.[25]

Six days later, on 20 April 2014, flanked by a mixed group of 18 women that included female politician, Honourable Asabe Bashir and Aisha Wakil alias 'Mama Boko Haram'[26], Biu read a press statement on behalf of the Women Peace and Security Network, the Borno outreach of BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights and other concerned women in Borno State.[27] The women condemned the abduction as harmful to girl child education, to 'future mothers', and to state and national development. They also condemned other abductions and attacks by Boko Haram, demanded that the group release all captives and offered their 'motherly support' toward rehabilitating members. The statement drew the attention of global media not only to Chibok but also to happenings in the northeast. This birthed a Northern-led research and humanitarian invasion that has had mixed outcomes for those worst affected by the conflict.[28] There followed some protests to State House in Maiduguri and a Borno precursor of Bring Back Our Girls that mobilised alongside activists in other states until the relationship broke down.[29] Activists in Borno State have since turned their attention more to helping women and girls affected by the conflict.

In suburban Abuja, female activist and politician, Hadiza Bala Usman, stunned by the public silence on the abductions, began to mobilise other female colleagues by email, including lawyer-activist, Maryam Uwais and Saudatu Mahdi, secretary-general of the Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative, a longstanding women's rights NGO.[30] In a radio interview with Robin Morgan, anchor of the US-based Women's Media Centre radio talk show in February 2015, Bala Usman said this about how Bring Back Our Girls started:

> "It was just me being concerned that nobody was raising any awareness about the girls' captivity. I remember over a few days after they were captured, the Nigerian military had

> come out to say that they had rescued them and I was so elated and excited, but immediately within hours later, it came back that the girls had not been rescued. So that really got a fire burning in me on the need to say these girls need to be rescued. We need to raise awareness for them; we cannot keep quiet about it. So we set up sent group emails, a few of us and we just galvanized and expanded on social media, invited everyone, and we had our first major protest march in Abuja on the 30th of April where we just said the government needs to rescue our Chibok girls… These are 276 young girls being abducted by Boko Haram while they were writing their examination. This is an appalling situation that a country should be at standstill if 200 young girls are kidnapped, but at that point our government was quiet. Our government was in denial. Our government was not doing anything to rescue the girls" (Women's Media Center 2015).[31]

Also in Abuja, Obiageli Ezekwesili, former Nigerian education minister and World Bank Vice President for Africa, provided inspiration for the term Bring Back Our Girls when she spoke the words, "Bring Back Our Daughters", leading the audience in a chant at a UNESCO World Book Capital event in Port Harcourt (Adesanmi 2014; Ibeh 2014b; Williamson, Andrews and Phillips 2014; Lyons, Robinson and Chorley 2014 in Hernández 2017:236). Abuja-based Nigerian lawyer, Ibrahim Abdullahi, tweeted the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls on 23 April 2014 and Ezekwesili retweeted it. His agency is important because some sources claimed that American filmmaker, Ramaa Mosley took credit for creating the hashtag (Adesanmi 2014; Maneater 2014; Wikipedia 2020; Williamson, Andrews and Philips 2014), although evidence suggests that she did not claim it as much as she failed to deny it when US media outlets erroneously attributed it to her (NBC News 2014). Adesanmi's (2014a, 2014b, 2020) discussion of how this scenario illustrates a longstanding appropriation of Africa's agency by Northern actors is elaborated in later chapters of this study.

The first Bring Back Our Girls protest in Nigeria, which held in Abuja on 30 April 2014—two weeks after the abductions, was destined for the National Assembly as elected representatives of the people. However, the activists did not reach their destination as the leadership of the National Assembly met them halfway, promising that they would convey the group's grievances to 'higher powers' (Rotinwa 2016). Subsequent protests were intermingled with the use of deliberate tactics that included daily sit-outs, social media campaigns/advocacy and media engagement. As one Bring Back Our Girls strategic team member explained:

> What came out into the media mostly that people see are the marches we did. Now, those marches were the activities or were the stakeholder engagement medium that we thought was effective for the kind of stakeholders that we were marching to…we know that the Nigerian government at the time, having denied that the girls had been abducted, it was necessary for us to create some embarrassing and uncomfortable climate—not one that we're going to sit with them behind closed doors and say we're just doing sympathy and all of that. We thought that the more we put it out there when we do marches, media would flood…we would flood the Unity Fountain and then, once the media comes, it's in our local channel and international channel, and it was strategic in passing the message not just that we've not forgotten about the Chibok Girls, but that we want the Nigerian government to act and ensure that the girls were brought back.[32]

The group chose the colour red to symbolise "alarm, danger, a warning". It also created a call and response chant that has evolved since 2014 into its current form and is a statement of why the group exists and what it is fighting for. This chant, which is analysed in greater detail in Chapter Six, contains tropes of civic responsibility and governmental duty and accountability to citizens.

Bring Back Our Girls subsequently tried to register with the Corporate Affairs Commission that oversees all corporative registrations in the country but the Goodluck Jonathan government

frustrated this effort by directing the commission to reject the application.[33] As revealed during interviews and by media reports, this formed part of a pattern of repressive tactics that the Jonathan and Buhari administrations used to try to subdue Bring Back Our Girls that included travel restrictions, sponsoring violent counterprotests, obstructing Bring Back Our Girls events and outright violence against Bring Back Our Girls members. This sabotage culminated in the closure in October 2019 of Unity Fountain where the group was based, allegedly for repairs (Sodiq 2019). The group then formed a strategic team, trademarked its name and continued to engage diverse audiences on social media and in its daily activities. Its leaders mapped stakeholders and corresponding strategies and began holding protests as a strategy to express their grievance and keep the abductions in the spotlight. Bring Back Our Girls and separate coalitions of women's rights and other civil society coalitions and networks met with the families of the Chibok students to offer support and find out their views to inform mobilisations.[34]

At the same time that Nigerians were organising in Abuja, protest groups were forming in other states across the country, notably Lagos, Benin, Borno, Osun, Oyo, Kaduna, Kano, Lagos and Port Harcourt (Olutokunbo et al. 2015 in Jibril 2015: 1–2; Okome 2017).[35] During interviews, several participants noted the significance, in a country with a history of ethnic division, that Nigerians came together across a wide geographic spread as well as within mobilisations in specific cities. One member of the strategy team told me during interviews, "It's an indication we could be united with the right kind of leadership and guidance. Bring Back Our Girls has broken that myth."[36] Another point to note is the socioeconomic diversity of Bring Back Our Girls; it was made up of civil servants, students, entrepreneurs, politicians, civil society actors and activists, prominent educated middle-class actors, professionals and members of the Chibok community.

Bring Back Our Girls had a very active digital life. It spread its message and mobilised support using a website—https://www.bringbackourgirls.ng, a dedicated Twitter account, @Bring Back Our Girls Nigeria and later, a dedicated Facebook page.[37] Participants also used their personal social media profiles to raise awareness of the abductions and to publicise and spread the protest. Various participants used e-petitioning on websites like Change.org, WhatsApp, Google+ and Instagram. Millions of people took part in a 'selfie protest'[38] that involved posting selfies of themselves holding placards bearing the words and hashtag Bring Back Our Girls (Jibril 2015; Smith 2015).[39] Based on Twitter analytics, as at 7 May 2014, #BringBackOurGirls had received 1.5 billion impressions and reached 440 million people worldwide (Plumptre 2014).[40] An estimated 440 million people were reached by the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls.[41] At the time of writing, its Facebook page, Bring Back Our Girls, was liked by 223,000 people and followed by 214,000.[42] Its Twitter account had 35,000 followers. In the early days of the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls, Abdullahi (2014)[43] said, "…this was not a coordinated campaign. It was a number of individuals in Nigeria tweeting to raise awareness in the hope that the international community would eventually take notice."

Outside Nigeria, the participation of international political and cultural figures, including then-US first lady Michelle Obama and many celebrities drew significant attention (Jibril 2015; Smith 2015; Ajayi 2016).[44] This study focuses on Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya and the US but people in at least 190 countries from all the major continents organised or/and took part in Bring Back Our Girls solidarity events online and offline. As knowledge about Bring Back Our Girls grew, several of its Nigerian leaders who can be considered transnational Africans, per Okome and Vaughn (2011:10), were invited to speak at high-profile events abroad and were interviewed by foreign media, bringing greater visibility to their activism. Bukola Shonibare and Hadiza Bala

Usman spoke at special events in the US, both in person and via telephone.[45] Shonibare addressed the UN General Assembly, Bring Back Our Girls Washington and New York and the Hudson Institute, while Hadiza spoke at the 65th annual Department of Public Information Conference in 2014.[46] In 2015, Obiageli Ezekwesili was recognised by TIME magazine as one of the 100 most influential people in recognition of her work with Bring Back Our Girls (Premium Times 2015). Transnational and diasporan Nigerians and other Africans co-led and participated in Bring Back Our Girls protests in cities across the US, Canada, the United Kingdom, Ghana, Kenya and many other countries. Then based in Germany, Nigerian Ifeyinwa Elueze's Change.org e-petition drew over a million signatures from all over the world.[47]

Today, though 112 of the Chibok students remain in captivity, what is left of Bring Back Our Girls in Nigeria and worldwide is a small core of activists who are keeping the campaign alive mainly on social media and through occasional events that seem to be most consistent in Abuja and Lagos.[48] Some activists outside Nigeria mark milestone anniversaries of the abductions with public activities like seminars and vigils. In Nigeria, this decline can be attributed chiefly to intra-group conflict over leadership and strategy that alienated some of the campaign's most active and influential members. Politicisation and the group's policy to rely on internal funds and not fundraise in order to maintain its independence was another contributing factor. As several participants indicated during interviews, there was not enough coordination and cohesion to sustain global participation, although it was so diffuse that it would have been difficult to organise effectively without a defined structure.

2.4 Conclusion

As this chapter has shown, Bring Back Our Girls emerged in a world in a state of flux with regard to rising global activism and a backlash against democracy; Boko Haram, militarism and the global war on terror; the girling of development; trends in women's and feminist organising; and digital activism in the Internet age. The timeline of Bring Back Our Girls events provided here is an overview that prefaces the more detailed exploration and analysis of Bring Back Our Girls emergence in Chapter Six. The primary purpose of this chapter has been to set the stage for the rest of the study regarding the social and political contexts in which Bring Back Our Girls emerged.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter details the methodology that guided this study. I begin by discussing research paradigms, approaches and design, explaining why each schema was chosen and how they were applied. This is followed by a description of the study population and participants, why and how the latter were selected, and the rationale for using particular methods. I also present the methods and tools used for data collection and analysis, outlining how and why each one was used and with what outcomes. The chapter ends with insights into challenges faced during the research and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Paradigms

Based on the assumptions that reality is multiply situated and socially constructed (Lincoln and Guba 1985), this study is grounded in the interpretivist-constructivist paradigms. In Chapter One, I identified epistemic gaps in the transnational activism literature regarding emerging movements that are grounded in the Global South and taking eclectic forms that are not reflected in current discourses. I thus set out to obtain and analyse data about what a study of the Nigerian-led transnational activism, Bring Back Our Girls (Bring Back Our Girls), reveals about how transnational activism is changing. The goal was to distil perspectives from those actors who were most closely involved with Bring Back Our Girls in order to understand their grounded interpretations of the dynamics of their activism. The contexts of Africa and the Global South, and

the diverse perspectives of the activists interviewed, especially those categorised as diasporan or afropolitan, are central to this inductive study.

3.2 Research Design

The foregoing informed the choice of a qualitative case study approach to study one central case of transnationalised African activism, Bring Back Our Girls. According to Yin (2014:2), the case study method is suitable in explanatory research (research that poses 'how' or 'why' questions) that requires deep study of social phenomena, where the researcher has little control over behavioural events and the study has a contemporary focus. The research outcomes may not be generalisable but they nevertheless fill critical gaps in knowledge on transnational activism that can inform broader future work on this subject.

Bring Back Our Girls was chosen because it forms part of an emerging type of activism that breaks the mould of institutionalised, professional advocacy by civil society organisations mainly in the Global North. Also, unlike many of the activisms discussed in extant literature, Bring Back Our Girls was started in Africa by Africans before gaining widespread transnational attention within and outside the continent. This factor enabled me to: (a) obtain and compare in-depth information about the ways in which Bring Back Our Girls represents new directions in transnational activism and (b) contribute to knowledge on transnational activism from the perspectives of activists outside the Global North.

Bring Back Our Girls is also an important case because it emerged in the militarised context of the armed conflict between Nigeria's government and the armed group, *Jama'atu ahlis sunna lidda'awati wal-jihad* or Boko Haram. Having identified militarisation as a factor common to many

postcolonial African states, this case allowed me to explore shared experiences of violence as one of the motives for participation in Bring Back Our Girls. Finally, Bring Back Our Girls was created and is led mainly by African women in protest at human rights violations of African women and girls, permitting a targeted interrogation of the nexuses between gender and participation in transnational activism.

3.3 Population of Interest

The population of interest for this study consisted of individuals who participated in Bring Back Our Girls protests, either online or offline, and were in a position to give insights into their motives and modalities of participation as well as the structure of their relations with one another. Internet sources indicated that this was a vast population spanning many countries, although there is no comprehensive data documenting how many people took part in Bring Back Our Girls and where. I therefore narrowed the scope by selecting four countries for which some data was readily available from different sources, namely Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, and the United States (US). I had intended to include South Africa where I identified four participants but only one person agreed to take part in the study.

The three African countries lend the perspectives of African activists who supported Bring Back Our Girls to existing media and scholarly narratives that privilege the involvement and influence of Global North figures like Michelle Obama. Kenya, like Nigeria, has an ongoing experience with violent extremism. Ghana has had only sporadic instances of extremist violence and thus offers contextual political contrast. The US is included because of its erstwhile position as a global cultural, economic and political superpower, and also to allow me to compare perspectives between Global North and South and actors that straddle both contexts. I included

insights from participants in Canada, South Africa and Tanzania who were willing to talk to me but did not come from the four focal countries.

3.4 Study Participants

The study sample consisted of 27 persons, comprising 23 women and four men, who participated in Bring Back Our Girls in either the four focal countries (Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, US) or the three that offered extra insights (Canada, South Africa, Tanzania). Participants had different nationalities but were selected primarily on the basis of the country where they had participated in Bring Back Our Girls. They played different roles in Bring Back Our Girls; some were leader-coordinators of national and transnational events while others simply took part in various events. Only a few identified as activists; most saw themselves as global citizens moved to protest by their concerns for the suffering of others. Participants' occupations ranged from student, to businesspersons, journalists, professional advocates and academics. Two participants were Caucasian, one was mixed race and the remaining 24 were Black, of whom all but one were of African origin. Table 1 contains an anonymised list of all participants.

Table 1: Anonymised list of research participants

Participant	Sex	Nationality	Research Location	Occupation
1. RP1	Female	Nigeria	Nigeria (Abuja)	Business
2. RP2	Female	Uganda	US	Student
3. RP3	Male	Ghana	Ghana (Accra)	Activist/Social welfare
4. RP4	Female	Nigeria	Nigeria (Abuja)	Lawyer/Activist

5. RP5	Male	US	US (New York)	Academic
6. RP6	Female	Ghana	Ghana	Civil society professional/Academic
7. RP7	Male	Nigeria	Nigeria (Abuja)	Scholar-Activist
8. RP8	Male	Ghana	Ghana (Accra)	Academic/Business
9. RP9	Female	Nigeria	Nigeria (Abuja)	Business
10. RP10	Female	Ghana	Ghana (Accra)	Activist
11. RP11	Female	Uganda	Kenya	Professional advocate
12. RP12	Female	Nigeria	Belgium	Industry
13. RP13	Female	Kenya	Kenya	Academic/ Activist
14. RP14	Female	South Africa	South Africa (Johannesburg)	Academic
15. RP15	Female	Nigerian-American	US (New York)	Academic/Activist
16. RP16	Female	Ethiopia	Ethiopia (Addis)	Civil society
17. RP17	Female	Nigerian-American	US (DC)	Activist/Architect
18. RP18	Female	Nigerian	Ghana (Accra)	Civil service
19. RP19	Female	Nigerian-American	US (New York)	Activist/Lawyer

20. RP20	Female	US	US (Los Angeles)	Creative industry
21. RP21	Female	Nigeria	Nigeria (Abuja)	Civil society
22. RP22	Male	Nigeria	Canada (Toronto)	Creative industry
23. RP23	Female	US	US (New York)	Child education
24. RP24	Female	Nigeria	US (Atlanta)	Singer
25. RP25	Female	Nigeria	Nigeria (Maiduguri)	Civil society
26. RP26	Female	Nigeria	Nigeria (Maiduguri)	Media
27. RP27	Female	Nigeria	Nigeria (Maiduguri)	Media

**RP = Research Participant*

3.1.1 Participant selection

The criterion for inclusion was active participation in and support of Bring Back Our Girls events, conceptualised as consistent leadership or/and coordination of a Bring Back Our Girls group, or active participation in physical or digital protest action. This criterion was set to avoid people who engaged in 'clicktivism' (loose or one-off participation) and ensure that those who took part in the study were involved enough to provide substantive inputs.

Activist leaders were selected using purposive sampling of persons identified through social and local and international news media reports about Bring Back Our Girls. I identified participants by conducting searches on the Internet (Google), Facebook and Twitter using the terms 'Bring Back Our Girls' or 'Bring Back Our Girls' and the name of each focal country (example, 'Bring Back Our Girls Ghana'). Internet searches often led to media articles about the

abductions, the website and other news about the activism in Nigeria, and analysis of the activism's effectiveness. Facebook searches led to pages by activisms in specific countries. I looked for the names of the administrators of each page or read posts by their followers to identify them. I then contacted them via Facebook Messenger, email, WhatsApp or telephone, or combinations of all these.

Participants were subsequently selected using purposive and snowball sampling. This was necessary because the consulted media articles privileged the roles and voices of Bring Back Our Girls leaders. Snowball sampling provided access to a broader group of activists. At the end of my interviews with activist leaders, I would ask for suggestions of other activists to talk to.

The sample size was not predetermined; it was arrived at through practical considerations of access to and contact with participants. As explained in the challenges section later in this chapter, I initially identified about 50 people who fit the criteria but I did not have access to some of them and several did not agree to participate in the study. The sample size is considered adequate as the purpose of the study is not to make generalisations in the tradition of quantitative research, but to derive insights from the perspectives of a specific group of actors in given contexts to help enrich knowledge on the subject of transnational activism.

It should be noted that while Bring Back Our Girls events took place in many different countries, some were more visible and easier to trace than others, depending on how much publicity they got and their social media presence. Their visibility depended partly on the profiles of the actors and networks involved, and partly on their ability to draw news and social media attention.

3.2 Data Collection

Data were collected from March 2019 through September 2020 using a review of extant literature, key informant interviews, netnography and digital content analysis of social media posts on Twitter and Facebook. Data were then analysed using a thematic analysis schema developed by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2012, 2013) and Clarke and Braun (2014, 2017). The purpose of using the underlisted mix of data sources was to enhance data credibility and enable validation (Patton, 1990 and Yin 2003).[49]

3.2.2 Review of existing literature

I began this study by conducting deep readings and reviews of existing literatures from international relations, sociology, communication studies and African Studies. This was necessary because the scholarship on this subject has become more diffuse in recent years and a thorough investigation required a multidisciplinary approach. This allowed me to identify the main tropes of argument as well as gaps in knowledge that informed the choice of topic and approaches to data collection. During interviews, some scholar-participants offered references to research by themselves and other writers that directed me to sources that I had not previously considered or thought to be relevant. After the first interview, I began to ask whether participants had reading suggestions. In this way, reviews of literature became a useful way to both fill gaps in memory and correct errors of fact, given that many of the interviews occurred within varying intervals after some activists had become less actively engaged with Bring Back Our Girls.

3.2.3 Key informant interviews

In keeping with established practices in social movement research (della Porta 2014), data were collected using semi-structured interviews with 27 participants in Nigeria (Abuja,

Maiduguri), Kenya (Nairobi), Ghana (Accra) and the US (Los Angeles, New York, Washington DC). Interviews were conducted in person and online using digital communication applications WhatsApp, Skype and Zoom when travel was not feasible. Interviews were used because they afforded me first-hand insights into the phenomena under investigation: the changing forms of transnational activism as seen through Bring Back Our Girls. Participants were asked questions about their motivations for becoming involved with Bring Back Our Girls, how they became involved, what roles they played and where and how they performed their activism, among others.

Interviews were also used to allow each activist informant to tell their stories in their own words in ways that reflect in the narratives in this study, particularly in the use of direct quotes. Further, by privileging the lived experiences and worldviews of participants, this study overturns the primacy traditionally accorded in international relations to interstate relations, whereas trends in transnational activism show, as long suggested by scholars like Nye and Keohane (1971), that non-state actors are increasingly important and influential in global politics. The study is more interested in the international relations of people than those of organisations and states that have hitherto dominated the study of this field.

The use of a semi-structured format allowed me to focus on the specific variables that I was interested in while leaving room for participants to reveal knowledge that I had either not thought about or considered to be relevant (Yin 2014). One example of such information was provided by several female activist participants in Maiduguri who said that although they were the first women in Nigeria to protest the Chibok abductions and petition the government to take action to release them, they did not receive as much attention as Bring Back Our Girls activists. This knowledge is significant because, as the findings show, it is important to chronicle the trajectory of activism correctly so as not to erase the agency of any actors.

I interviewed some participants more than once in order to establish accuracy and validity. In part, this was because affected participants had difficulty recollecting certain facts and events, given that they answered questions about events from 2014. This compelled the researcher to try to ascertain any missing information using digital information or to triangulate among interviews. Some interviews had to be split across days to allow more time and accommodate busy schedules.

3.2.3.1 Interview structure

Interviews were conducted in English using an interview schedule contained in the appendices to this study. Interviews involved direct questioning using open-ended questions which allowed participants the flexibility to construct their answers in ways that best reflected their experiences. Participants were encouraged to speak freely with minimal guidance from me.

Preliminary interviews revealed the need for slightly different questions for Bring Back Our Girls participants who mobilised on home territory and those who organised in other countries. For activists considered Diasporan or Afropolitan, the question of 'home' is subjective. I thus added questions about their self-identification and how their identities interacted with or influenced their involvement in Bring Back Our Girls.

The average length of interviews was 45–60 minutes. Interviews with activist leaders in Nigeria lasted up to 90 minutes. The interview schedule was divided into three sections. The first section began with non-invasive questions about individual profile, nationality, occupation and residence. I often initiated interviews with light conversation to establish trust and comfort. A second section probed participants' roles in Bring Back Our Girls. A third section explored transnational linkages and participants' relationships with Bring Back Our Girls actors in other countries. Sensitive questions were posed in the middle or at the end and were adjusted according

to participants' verbal and nonverbal responses. Questions were arranged as logically as possible. Interviews were kept short to minimise loss of interest, fatigue and undue interruption of participants' schedules. Where possible and with participants' prior permission, the researcher recorded interviews, particularly with fast talkers. These interviews were then transcribed verbatim, after which I read through all my notes and arranged participants' responses into themes related to the study's research question.

3.5.2 Community access

In Nigeria, I gained access to Bring Back Our Girls activists using personal and professional contacts built over 15 years while working in diverse civil society organisations across West Africa. I also made contact with Nigerian activists while accompanying two protest marches organised by Bring Back Our Girls-Nigeria in Abuja in September 2018. In this instance, participation was not so much a data collection tool as it was a way to build trust and facilitate the study of activism from the inside, per Juris' (2007; also, Carroll and Stephan 2017), model of 'militant ethnography'—a 'politically engaged participant observation that challenges the divide between researcher and activist'. I was aware from my background reading that the security services had been violent with Bring Back Our Girls in the past and paid due regard to my personal safety. In Ghana and Kenya, I established contact via participants' personal accounts on Facebook and Twitter, and through the group pages of Bring Back Our Girls support groups in each country. Social media contact was then followed up by requests for interviews by social media messaging (Facebook messenger, Twitter direct messages) email. In some cases, I had mutual contacts with participants, which offered an alternative contact option, but I did not have to use this as it might have introduced some bias. In two instances, one participant facilitated contact with two others

with whom she had conducted joint activism for Bring Back Our Girls in her city. Their responses were triangulated against one another and media narratives to ensure consistency.

3.6 Digital Media Research

Data were also obtained using digital media research or digitally mediated research methods, 'a methodological approach that incorporates internet-based data, while also including other communicative and social media platforms such as Instagram, Vine, Twitter, giffy, Periscope, and Facebook amongst others' (Hutchinson 2016:1). This approach was used because Bring Back Our Girls and its individual members were very active on Facebook and Twitter, and there was a lot of Bring Back Our Girls video content on YouTube.

I employed digital research to collect and analyse social media content from Facebook, Twitter and YouTube that was generated or shared by the study participants. I focused more on individual social media posts in line with my research interest in individual motivations for participation in Bring Back Our Girls. Given the abundance of this data, I collected posts that were produced within the time frame of April to October 2014—the six months in which Bring Back Our Girls was most active (determined using social media analytics). I also tracked and analysed posts by activists whom I was unable to interview. The posts were selected because they were related to Bring Back Our Girls. In total, over 600 posts by 28 activists who led or took active part in Bring Back Our Girls events in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and the US were collected and analysed.

I searched for this data on Facebook using searches in participants individual profiles using the terms 'Bring Back Our Girls' and a filter set to find posts made in 2014. Sometimes the latter method yielded posts not found in the first search. The use of social media content also enabled

me to see how participants were connected, especially on Facebook, either through mutual friends or followers on Twitter. This was helpful for understanding how participants were connected through different social media networks.

Digital data was used to supplement data collected from interviews. This was important because of memory gaps by some participants owing to the time that had lapsed (six years) since Bring Back Our Girls began.

3.6.1 Digital Ethnography

The researcher conducted some interviews using digital ethnography, namely the conduct of ethnographic research in online spaces (Pink, Horst, Postill, Hjorth, Lewis and Tacch 2015). This was necessary because Bring Back Our Girls forms part of a new form of activisms that are as active in physical space as they are in cyberspace. This has meant that Bring Back Our Girls groups and most of the individuals who supported the activism were and remain very active digitally. The Internet, particularly Facebook and Twitter, were therefore approached as digital fields.

Digital ethnography entailed scheduling and conducting selected interviews using a smart mobile telephone or/and a personal computer and digital technologies like Skype, Facebook and WhatsApp that offer new methods of data collection. They enabled me to extend myself virtually into participants' spaces using my face, hands, voice and actions, without being physically present, in ways that were not possible decades ago (Brinkman, Nyamnjoh and de Bruijn 2009). By so doing, I enacted, through the research process, the dual embodiment enabled by *netizenship*, whereby I could be physically present in one space and simultaneously tap into the lived experiences of participants in other geographically distanced spaces.

3.6.2 Digital archival research and Content analysis

I conducted digital archival research using repositories and archived content on YouTube (videos), websites (such as the ones by Bring Back Our Girls-Nigeria (http://bringbackourgirls.ng) and Bring Back Our Girls-New York (https://m.facebook.com/bringbackourgirls/?locale2=sv_SE); personal sites like those of Professor Mojúbàolú Olúfúnké Okome and congresswoman Frederica Wilson; sites containing US congressional hearing transcripts of activist testimonies and the Facebook and Twitter pages of group activisms and individual activists, where available. These are largely open access group pages with public content that is cited where used throughout this study.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethics Committee for the Humanities of the University of Ghana in June 2019. Prior to each interview, all participants were given a consent form to sign that informed them about the research and its purposes. They were informed that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw consent at any time with no negative consequences. For interviews conducted in person/face-to-face, consent forms were given for signing after I explained the purpose of the research and outlined ethical issues. Participants were informed about the possible risks of participating and the ways in which I would manage them. I explained my obligation to notify them if the risk assessment changed and to protect them if the need arose. For interviews conducted digitally/virtually, I sent the research summary and consent form by email to participants to sign ahead of each interview. No interviews were conducted without signed or verbal consent. No participants withdrew consent although I would have discarded their data if they had.

3.7.1 Confidentiality

A key feature of the Nigerian gender and political background to this study is the aggressive, sometimes violent, state response to Bring Back Our Girls activists. Also, the nature of some interview outcomes, for example, comments related to internal politics within specific Bring Back Our Girls mobilisations, was sensitive. Some participants said they 'would not mind' being named, ostensibly in the spirit of defiance of an authoritative state with limited tolerance for opposition. However, in order to protect them from possible government targeting, I took two precautionary steps. First, I sought permission from participants regarding what parts of their responses I could use, particularly when they indicated that they were speaking 'off-record'. Second, I anonymised all participants using the acronym RP for research participant and their ordinal numbers in the comprehensive list of all participants (e.g., RP25). Participants are numbered in the order in which they were interviewed. Only those statements that are publicly accessible are directly attributed.

3.7.2 Trustworthiness

As stated, I selected participants using searches for Bring Back Our Girls on Google, Facebook and Twitter. I obtained data using iterative processes that involved digital research on each participant (Google searches for media articles that stated who led or/and took part in Bring Back Our Girls events worldwide), interviews (some of which required follow-ups) and further digital research from the social media archives of individual and group activisms (reviews of posts on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube) that was used to validate the collected data. Respective interview outcomes were also compared and used to corroborate each other. I followed up with participants as much as possible during the writing process to validate their responses and inform

them of the progress and outcomes of my research. I interviewed group coordinators as well as members in a bid to obtain perspectives from different levels of activism. However, the absence of hierarchy in the amorphous structure of several mobilisations made the traditional concept of leader difficult to define and inapplicable to my methodology.

3.8 Data Analysis

All the data collected were analysed using a six-step thematic analysis framework advanced by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2012, 2013, 2014) and Clarke and Braun (2017). According to them, although there are other versions or models of thematic analysis, they developed their own 'primarily for use within a qualitative paradigm (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2013). Their template 'emphasises an organic approach to coding and theme development and the active role of the researcher in these processes' (Clarke and Braun 2017:297). They further state that thematic analysis is appropriate for inductive qualitative research because it allows the data to determine significant parts of the study compared to deductive approaches that are driven by theory (Clarke and Braun 2017:298). Thematic analysis also allows researchers to capture both explicit and underlying meaning (Clarke and Braun 2017:298), although care must be taken to prevent researcher bias from skewing results.

The six-step process advanced by Clarke and Braun (2017), and Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013) comprises transcription, coding, generating of themes, reviewing, defining and naming, and writing. I first transcribed all recorded interviews and audiovisual data, such as media interviews with individual Bring Back Our Girls activists on YouTube. The digital textual data obtained from the social media posts of activists was coded in the next phase. I then read the transcriptions several times, highlighting statements and words that corresponded with the study's research questions.

Next, I identified recurring ideas from which I generated several themes. After reviewing these themes to ensure relevance to the research question, I assigned final names to each theme before writing them up in my presentation and discussion of findings in Chapters Six and Seven of this study.

3.9 Methodological Challenges and Constraints

In this section, I detail some of the constraints that I experienced while gathering data obtained using the approaches and methods described earlier.

3.9.1 Availability of participants

It was more difficult than envisaged to secure interviews with some participants because many of them worked extremely demanding jobs. With several participants, even when I had been introduced by mutual personal contacts and gatekeepers, it took weeks and sometimes months to establish contact. Even when I did, they would often reschedule, compelling me to send repeated reminders by email, telephone, Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp. I had to conduct several interviews on the sidelines of meetings that participants were in, especially in Maiduguri. A few people accepted to be interviewed and could not be reached on the scheduled date and time. One female activist in Maiduguri initially accepted to be interviewed and later declined, giving no reason. She had earlier expressed concern about the disparity between the high rate of research interest by 'outsiders' in Maiduguri and the low levels of positive outcomes for the communities that she works with.[50] In addition to this, it was a little difficult to identify and access some participants outside Nigeria because of the loose structure of Bring Back Our Girls, a lack of documentation of names and the lack of central coordinating mechanisms at a global level.

3.9.2 Participants' difficulty recalling past events

The researcher found that while people were willing to speak about their activist experiences, a number of them had become less actively involved with Bring Back Our Girls or were no longer involved at all and struggled to recollect certain details. One activist repeatedly said that she had forgotten names or details and would need to check and revert. This is a risk when interviewing participants within a certain time lapse after their activism has ended or become less active.

3.9.3 Internet connectivity

Digital research relies heavily on digital communication technologies and is thus most suitable for use with participants in locales with stable power and connectivity and non-predatory data costs. Intermittently poor internet connectivity disrupted the flow of three virtual interviews. An interview in June 2019 began on Skype and shifted to WhatsApp after repeated network interruptions during the first 15 minutes. I was compelled to conclude the interview using a direct call to the participant's mobile telephone number after she complained that the interruptions were distracting.[51]

In a separate interview in September 2019, several attempts to use Skype failed as my network was unstable and I could not hear what the informant was saying. I then typed a suggestion to use WhatsApp voice notes as the network issues would affect the quality of a voice call. Thereafter, I restarted the interview and would hold down the WhatsApp microphone to record and send questions to the informant which she replied the same way. It worked well, allowing for a detailed conversation and gave the benefit of recordings that I could listen to repeatedly after the interview ended. However, it meant that both researcher and participant had to pause intermittently

to listen to one another's responses, some as long as seven minutes, which slowed the pace of exchange, eclipsed the immediacy of in-person conversation and stretched the total duration of the interview to about three hours. Both scenarios reveal that the risks with doing netnographic research include quality and reliability of internet data, interrupted speech and thought flow, antagonisation of research participants and the heavy time demands of using alternative or contingency approaches.

3.9.4 Digital data decay

A term that describes the impermanence of digital data which can and does disappear from cyberspace. At various stages in my research, I was unable to access a number of websites and social media pages because they no longer existed or the data I sought was no longer there. While there were sometimes other sources that provided the same data, this shows the risks involved in conducting digitally mediated research.

3.9.5 Digital access to data

Facebook's algorithms are such that although one can access some users' posts, it is difficult to do a thorough search of specific data unless one is friends with target persons on Facebook. This was a challenge with some participants who are no longer active on Facebook.

3.9.6 Global Coronavirus health crisis

The global shutdowns spurred by the outbreak and global spread of the coronavirus from March to August 2020 forced me to cancel my travel plans to Nigeria and Kenya to complete my

data collection. I resorted to conducting interviews by telephone and using communication applications like WhatsApp, Skype and Zoom.

CHAPTER FOUR

REVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS LITERATURE ON TRANSNATIONAL ACTIVISM

4.1 Introduction

States and relations among them have long been the dominant focus of international relations (IR) scholarship (Nye and Keohane 1971:329; Wong and Brown 2013:1016). In realist framings, the main agents in this structure are diplomats and soldiers driven by struggles for power. Nye and Keohane (1971), the first scholars to theorise transnational relations in the 1970s (Raustiala 2008:205), expand this framework, noting that interstate relations are influenced by the environment in which they occur. They also observe that states are not the only actors in this ecosystem and that the actions of non-state actors like multinational corporations 'affect the course of international events' (Nye and Keohane 1971:330). Their work recognises a shift that was emerging at the time from international to transnational relations in which the activities of multinational business enterprises, revolutionary movements, trade unions and scientific networks were considered important. The main objective of their introductory article to a volume on transnational relations, 'Transnational Relations and World Politics: An Introduction', is to explore the impact of transnational activity on states, yet it is an important pivot in orienting IR away from a state-centric view. Other IR scholars have since advanced the study of transnationalism by non-state actors; their work is the focus of this chapter.

The chapter is structured in four main parts, comprising discussions of conceptualisations of transnational activism, its structures and forms, the relationships among its actors, and pathways and motivations. I begin by exploring various constructions of what constitutes transnational

activism. I then collate dominant models of transnational activism in a taxonomy of different forms, highlighting the preoccupation of IR literature with formal non-state groups, notably NGOs. I also discuss how recent work is infusing into this statist field the transnational political activity of individual activists. I then proceed with a discussion of how IR scholarship frames the relationships and power[52] dynamics among the actors that make up dominant forms of activism. Central to this discussion is the literature around the *boomerang* model, as documented by Keck and Sikkink (1998, 1999), De Waal (2015) and others, that focuses on a vertical relationship between Southern and Northern actors. I also explore later work on the *inverse boomerang*, as theorised by scholars like Pallas (2016), that suggests that changing economic and political contexts have influenced greater North-South, South-South and North-North advocacy relationships. In a third section, I consider the factors that influence participation in transnational activism, noting that IR has focused more on normative and strategic motivations of formal collective actors, overlooking the motivations of looser mass-based groups and the individuals that comprise them. The chapter concludes with a synopsis of gaps and common threads derived from this discussion that informed the study and the choice of case and methods.

The chapter's central argument is that given IR's preoccupation with the state and formal non-state groups that are predominantly Northern, the new dimensions signalled by contemporary activisms like Bring Back Our Girls find limited resonance within established conceptual models and approaches to the study of transnationalism. Compared to the social movements, NGOs and NGO coalitions, and transnational advocacy networks that dominate IR scholarship, Bring Back Our Girls was more loosely structured, contained an eclectic mix of actors (what I theorise as multimodal) that relied on informal networks and relations, and was driven by the agency of Global South actors, notably 'afropolitans' (globalised Africans) and diasporan youth. This necessitates a

reviewing of transnational activism today and engagement with knowledge from other disciplines that is more open to, and thus more attuned to, new dimensions of activism.

4.2 Conceptualising Transnational Activism

Five factors are common to definitions of transnational activism: (i) contention or political action, (ii) typically by nonstate actors, (iii) directed against powerful actors, (iv) who are coordinated and connected—often in networks—and (v) operate in international or cross-border spatiality. Della Porta and Tarrow (2005:7) describe what they call 'transnational collective action' as 'coordinated international campaigns on the part of networks of activists against international actors, other states, or international institutions.' In similar vein, Ilcan and Lacey (2013:1) define transnational activism as a 'range of synchronized cross-border activities, campaigns, and movements on the part of networks of activists working counter to various state actors, international actors, or international institutions'.

In all these framings, there is an implied assumption of cohesion and homogeneity among participating organisations. This framework is an uneasy fit for conceptualising Bring Back Our Girls. The latter is a loose formation of diverse individuals and organisations with varying connections whose activism was not closely coordinated. In contrast, Keck and Sikkink emphasise the 'structured and structuring' dimensions of transnational advocacy networks. Also, their mapping of actors foregrounds groups and organisations with collective identities like churches, foundations, and regional and intergovernmental organisations, and they identify NGOs as playing a central role and initiating actions. In contrast, Bring Back Our Girls was started and led by individual activists with intermittent support from some civil society organisations like the African Women's Development and Communication Network, also known as FEMNET.

Several Bring Back Our Girls activists had individual transnational capital that did not depend on the agencies of transnational NGO networks. Also, there were convergences and divergences among Bring Back Our Girls' participants that stemmed from their intersectional identities, locations and worldviews. Third, relatedly, while Bring Back Our Girls shared a lot of information via social media and email, including informational materiel that they urged participants to use for their activities, the study's findings indicate that not every person who participated had access to this information or knew about the campaign. This contradicts Keck and Sikkink's indicator of 'dense webs of exchange of information, funding and other resources' (1998:2), as well as their idea that members of transnational advocacy networks are differently situated individuals who become acquainted over a considerable period of time and develop similar world views. Diani's (1992a; 2003a; 2004a) conception of social movement (cited in Della Porta and Diani 2015:20–29, see also Tilly 2004b:3–4, in Tarrow 2005:6) centres more on function and relationship than structure: 'a distinct social process, consisting of the mechanisms through which actors engaged in collective action: are involved in conflictual relations with clearly identified opponents, are linked by dense informal networks; share a distinct collective identity'. The notion of distinct collective identity sets social movements apart from other forms of transnational collective action. Its absence from parallel anti-austerity protests across Latin America in the 1980s leads Tarrow (2005:68) to conclude that these did not constitute a social movement. Some participants in Bring Back Our Girls were connected through multiple personal and professional networks, and were conscious of being part of a collective. Others had more amorphous/remote relationships outside these networks that trouble Diani's notion of collective identity.

The multiconnective structure of Bring Back Our Girls resonates somewhat with Zajak, Egels-Zanden and Piper's (2017) concept of networks of labour activism (NOLAs) as cross-border,

cross-organisational forms of transnational labour activism that bring together 'a multitude' of local and global groups with 'very different organizational structures, ideological backgrounds, interests and access to resources' (Zajak, Egels-Zanden and Piper 2017:905). Though their units of analysis are labour activist groups (as opposed to individuals and different types of activist organisations in Bring Back Our Girls), the concept of multiple, at times conflicting, agencies of different types of actors is salient. The novelty of NOLAs is that unlike the scholarly representation of transnational advocacy networks, they tend to originate in the Global South and intra-network relations are multilayered and multidimensional (p. 904). Ideological and other affinities do not guarantee cooperation just as conflict and differences may not prevent it. The structures of NOLAs are not fixed and modulate over time in tandem with their internal dynamics (Zajak, Egels-Zanden and Piper 2017:904).

Tarrow (2005:163–164) critiques the construct of network on grounds that it has both structural and purposive meanings that span opposite ends of a spectrum of, for example, strangers who have similar preferences but no connection and people who take coordinated action. He argues that networks offer 'mobilisation potential' for more purposive structures like coalitions—'collaborative, means-oriented arrangements that permit distinct organizational entities to pool resources in order to effect change'. His typology of event coalitions and other types examines different structures that vary in purpose and duration but are based on participants' consciousness of shared identities that do not reflect the realities of all Bring Back Our Girls participants.

With reference to online-based 'social collectives' and how the internet is altering the structures and modalities of collective action, Dolata and Schrape (2016:2) distinguish loosely between 'non-organized collectives and collective actors capable of intentional, strategic action'. Activity in the first category constitutes an 'aggregation of similar decisions and behaviours of

individuals', which may lead to mass activity and eventually to more organised collectives (Dolata and Schrape 2016:24). There is no organising core or deliberate intent to act together. In contrast, organised collectives are 'based on implicit and explicit rules, their members share a conscious feeling of togetherness, and they form regularly around formal organizational units' (Dolata and Schrape 2016:4). Dolata and Schrape distinguish masses (incidental collectives such as mass preference for Facebook), crowds (event-related, for example clicktivism) and partial-issue publics (such as temporary e-discussions on Twitter about viral issues) as three variants of both types of collective behaviour that illustrate momentary 'situational forms of the collective' (Dolata and Schrape 2016:5). As elaborated later in this chapter and in Chapter Three of this study, Dolata and Schrape (2016:5, 5–8) counter thinking about these collectives as 'spontaneous and volatile', arguing that technological infrastructures, particularly those of social media networks, influence how social collectives are formed and the ways in which they function.

The agency and structure of Bring Back Our Girls make it a complex blend of multiple forms of collective and connective action that do not conform neatly with dominant forms of activist organisations. It was started by individual activists in different states in Nigeria whose activities at that level were coordinated. Outside the country, different individuals and groups of people took part in different ways and for different reasons. Within countries individuals led multiple protests that employed some of the same repertoires (red clothing, banners with same messaging, marches, vigils, social media) but had no or limited communication with Bring Back Our Girls Nigeria where the campaign started. Thus, while Bring Back Our Girls can be said to have operated like a social movement and an advocacy network to varying extents at different times, it did not (consistently) take either form. Yet it is clearly more than a collection of protests given the symmetry of framing and repertoires and the fact that all Bring Back Our Girls protests

were about a specific incident in a single country. Herein lies the justification in line with Keck and Sikkink for this study's use of the grounded theory approach to explore Bring Back Our Girls and induce from empirical data possible new theoretical directions from a new form of transnational activism, given the shortcomings in international relations scholarship.

During fieldwork, I observed that participant activists alternately used different words to describe Bring Back Our Girls, with campaign, movement and advocacy being used most frequently. In light of long histories of collective action in Nigeria and Africa, and given the Northern derivations and etymologies of these terms, Bring Back Our Girls could be said to be all and none of these things. On one hand, Bring Back Our Girls possesses some characteristics associated with these external articulations of collective action.[53] On the other, these terms essentially encapsulate varying forms of social mobilisations in contexts different to Africa's and may thus not be the most accurate conveyors of this growing reality.

It must also be noted that Bring Back Our Girls had a distinct and active digital presence which was co-constitutive with its offline personality and activity. In both incarnations, its Nigerian creators liaised directly with a core group of actors in and outside the country. Their activism was also supported by diverse other actors who had no direct or sustained relationship with either the core collective or its founders. A layered perspective thus permits recognition of the multiple forms of collectives and collective action that took place within the ambit of Bring Back Our Girls. This suggests that new transnational activism is not as binary as scholarship suggests, nor does it transition neatly from one collective form to another, but different forms can co-occur and this is made possible by increasing levels of digital collectivity and collectivisation.

4.3 A Taxonomy of Transnational Activism Actors

This section discusses the architecture of transnational activism as identified by various IR scholars. Its purpose is to ground the literature review as a way to expose ontological, epistemological, conceptual and methodological gaps in the historic and contemporary conceptualisations of what constitutes global activism and who takes part in it. It also addresses the conceptual ambiguity created by some scholars' interchangeable use of the terms for different types of activism.

One of the most studied and theorised forms of transnational activism in IR is the transnational advocacy network, first propounded by Keck and Sikkink (1998, 1999), though the idea and its practice predated their conceptualisation. In their work on transnational advocacy in international and regional politics, Keck and Sikkink (1999:89) define transnational advocacy networks (TANs) as 'includes those actors working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services'. NGOs play a 'central role' in TANs which are made up of a range of mainly organisational actors (Keck and Sikkink 1999:91-92). TANs usually form and emerge around particular campaigns or claims (Keck and Sikkink 1999:93) and are driven by values or norms and activists' motives to further their organisational objectives (Keck and Sikkink 1999:93).

This early attempt to describe the structures of transnational activism is regarded by many in and outside IR as important (Murdie and Polizzi 2016; Tarrow 2019), has been widely cited and laid the foundation for much consequent theorising of the actors who drive activism across borders. The network concept retains salience in the study of transnational activism, including in recent work on resistance by transnational labour collectives. From the vantage point of collective organising by informal economy workers in Africa, Lindell (2010:209) suggests that transnational

activism by these actors today involves alliances with multiple actors, positions, agendas and identities that make up a complex 'networked politics of informality', occurring in different spatial contexts and with multiple layers and connections. Writing about networks of labour activism in Asia, Zajak, Egels-Zandén and Piper (2017) also note the eclectic nature of these actors and their exchanges. Both works embody a caution to not essentialise transnational actors or the ways in which they engage politically. Wong and Brown (2019) highlight how the Internet has given way to networks of disembodied activists who connect fluidly through loose social media digital networks of people who share common interests, as opposed to through NGOs or other formal organisations. Thus, we see that transnational activist networks are still active but becoming increasingly diverse, which necessitates the expansion of existing labels and concepts to accommodate new and evolving forms of activism.

Amid the historic preoccupation of relevant literature on collective activism, Tarrow's (2005:164) *New Transnational Activism* is one of the first to provide expansive theoretical coverage of a range of forms of transnational contention that includes individuals (Bob 2006:346). Tarrow is a professor of political science but his book is cited here because it draws heavily on IR scholarship and speaks to Keck and Sikkink's work in his attempt to broaden the constitution of transnational activism actors. He identifies four forms of transnational activism/transnational activist actors: rooted cosmopolitans, networks, coalitions and social movements. The latter three have received far greater scholarly attention than the first. Rooted cosmopolitans are individuals who simultaneously straddle their home contexts and engage in political contention in transnational contexts. This would include figures like Wangari Maathai, Nelson Mandela, many of the leaders of Bring Back Our Girls and, most recently, the individual youth activists for climate change across the world (Mogoatlhe 2020). In the context of Africa, this concept resonates with

Selasi's (2005) 'afropolitans'—a contested referent to African cosmopolitan emigrants—and Nyamnjoh's (2017:258-9) 'frontier Africans'—construed as straddling 'physical and cultural geographies' and navigating 'myriad margins of identity and belonging'. Both encapsulate the intersections between growing global mobilities and changing dynamics/politics of identity and belonging of African actors.

In *The New Transnational Activism*, Tarrow (2005:4-5) asserts that quantitative and qualitative factors separate new and old forms of activism. Activism has increased and involves wider ranges of ordinary people and elites, and domestic and international concerns. According to Tarrow, although globalisation accounts for some of these changes, it offers only a partial explanation; at the time that he wrote, there had been protests against economic injustice as well as successful ones against autocratic governance and human rights and for democracy (Tarrow 2005:6). Amid the changing configuration of international society, Tarrow credits the growth of transnational activism to the growth of rooted cosmopolitans, 'a stratum of individuals who travel regularly, read foreign books and journals, and become involved in networks of transactions abroad (Rosenau et al. 2003) refer to this group as 'cutting-edgers', individuals who contribute to diverse transnational processes and operate on the cutting edge of globalisation).

Social movements are conscious collectives of shared identities that make claims on target authorities using tested methods, typically within an identifiable structure (Tarrow 2005:6-7). Tarrow adopts Levi and Murphy's (2004: 5) definition of coalitions as 'Collaborative, means-oriented arrangements that permit distinct organizational entities to pool resources in order to effect change'. He identifies four types of coalitions that are determined and vary by depth and duration of cooperation among their constituents: instrumental coalitions, event coalitions, federated coalitions and campaign coalitions (Tarrow 2005:167-8). Instrumental coalitions are

characterised by short-term duration and low involvement. They exist only as long as the 'conjuncture of interest' that brings them together lasts (Tarrow 2005:167-8). Event coalitions like the Battle of Seattle are short-term too but with a higher level of involvement among groups with shared identities. Federated coalitions combine low involvement with long-term duration while campaign coalitions like the international landmines campaign combine high involvement with long-term cooperation.

Tarrow's conceptualisation of coalitions hints at an ascending scalar relationship among networks, coalitions and social movements—the three types of transnational activism that he discusses. Khagram, Riker and Sikkink (2002:6-10) explicitly theorise the relationships among four types or forms of transnational activism: international/transnational NGOs, transnational advocacy networks, transnational coalitions/campaigns and social movements. In their model, transnational advocacy networks are groupings of cross-border actors who are connected by shared values or concerns, dense exchanges and use of information, and a common discourse (Keck and Sikkink 1998, 1999). Transnational coalitions or campaigns and social movements are more structured. Coalitions or campaigns involve deeper transnational coordination and a greater degree of interaction about how to implement campaigns (strategies or tactics). Transnational social movements have the capacity for sustained and coordinated social mobilisation in more than one country to influence social change, often through protest or disruptive action (Khagram, Riker and Sikkink 2002:8).

The 'structured and structuring' function of networks, and synchronisation or coordination are considered key aspects of transnational activism by other influential scholars, notably Della Porta and Tarrow (2005:7) in their work on 'transnational collective action' and Ilcan and Lacey (2013:1). This does not reflect the more diffuse and multimodal forms of activism occurring across

the world today which demand new conceptual frameworks and methodological approaches that are being signalled by scholarship outside IR, specifically sociology and communication/media studies. Wong and Brown (2013), for instance, introduce the concept of extraordinary bandits (e-bandits), using the cases of WikiLeaks[54] and Anonymous[55] to illustrate the emergence of a new political actor that transgresses traditional conceptions of activism as street protests and opens up participation in ways that show that 'activism has outgrown organizations as the way by which individuals connect'. E-bandits are 'principled actors who capitalize on the Internet and other information technologies to lead disembodied, virtual attacks against physical targets in order to encourage political change'. Wong and Brown's groundbreaking work signals a growing recognition by IR scholars of the growing significance of individual actors in transnational activism.

The foregoing are actors traditionally recognised by a second generation of IR scholarship on transnational activism from the late 1990s to the early 2000s. A third generation writing since the mid-2000s documents the increasing involvement of new actors as well as new forms of activism by existing actors. Pallas and Bloodgood (2018:10)[56] note that transnational advocacy is 'no longer primarily about network relationships between Northern and Southern NGOs or CSOs' but now involves a wider range of types of actors, including local government actors, grassroots associations, churches, unions, professional associations and commercial enterprises. They recognise the increasing agency of all actors in the Global South and the ability of 'networked individuals connected via social media platforms' to mobilise effectively without formal network or organisational structures, Pallas and Bloodgood (2018) do not discuss them in detail.

Voller (2019, 2020) focuses attention on the 'emerging role of diaspora communities as a transnational civil society and the role they play as activists and campaigners'. His typology of

diasporan activists bears some resemblance to Tarrow's rooted cosmopolitans as transnational nationalists, but Voller discusses them as part of larger collectives as opposed to individuals. He notes that diasporas have gone beyond their traditional role of economic participation through remittances and that young diasporans want to be more involved in improving life in their home countries and can be found working jobs that can help fulfil this objective in various practical ways (Voller 2019). This idea is embodied in Müller-Funk's (2019:1113-1114) use of the concept of political remittances, defined as the political transmission of 'political principles, vocabulary and practices between two or more places', to describe contemporary diasporan transnationalism.

According to Voller (2019, 2020), this shift has been neglected by IR scholarship. It is interesting that Voller's examples of diaspora activism involve not protests or other forms of resistance and confrontation, but varied actions to improve living conditions, particularly for the most vulnerable, in communities in their home countries. This signals a shift in the construction of activism from confrontation through protests to transformation through hands-on engagement. Müller-Funk (2019) echoes this idea by distinguishing between Egyptian diasporans' participation in 'direct activism'—protests in Egypt—and 'indirect activism'—actions targeted at migrant communities in host countries. It is also important to note that diaspora activism is not cohesive nor always positive; Afolabi (2017) notes the prominent role played by Liberian diasporas in the US in both ending and fomenting conflict during the country's long civil war.

Diasporan activism, particularly by youth, is also the focus of Müller-Funk's (2019, 2020) work on Egypt. She proposes six categories of transnational activists, namely: the Revolutionary Traveller, the Politicised Student, the Coptic Community Leader, the R4bia[57] Activist, the Second-Generation Diaspora Activist and the Female Transnational Activist—all individual types who were involved in diaspora activism during Egypt's 2011 uprisings. Her schema expands the range

and diversity of individual activists beyond rooted cosmopolitans and celebrity activists. She also notes the importance of personal networks of individuals founded based on family ties and close social relations (Müller-Funk 2019:1116, 1125), broadening the discourses around how transnational networks form and whom they comprise.

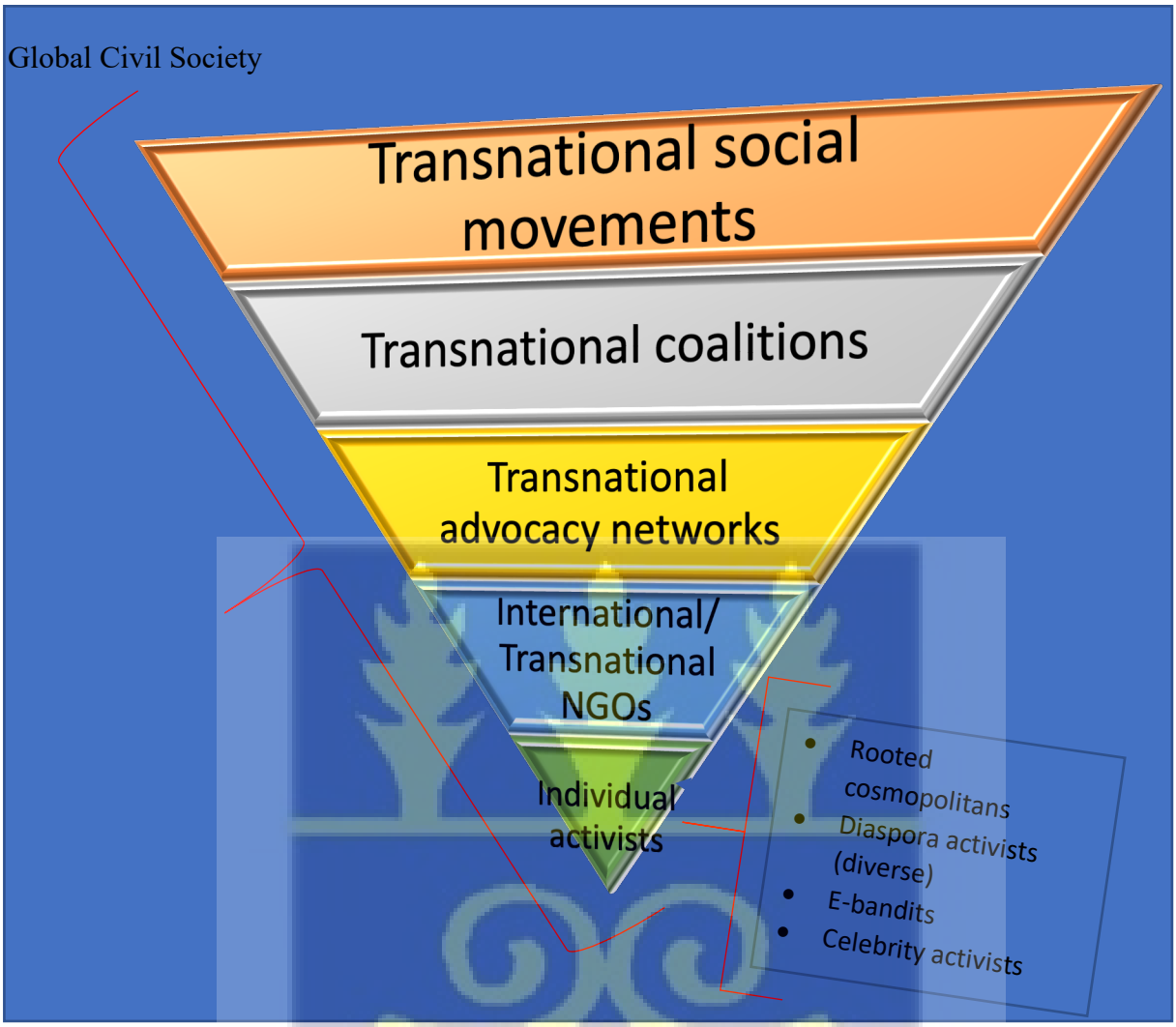
The pyramid in Figure 2 brings together multiple forms of transnational activism from across several generations of IR scholarship, from Keck and Sikkink (1998, 1999) to Voller (2019) and Müller-Funk (2019). It represents the known structured organisational forms of activism but excludes the more individualised and loose, mass-based forms that characterise campaigns like the Women's March and Bring Back Our Girls. Citing Hafner-Burton, Kahler and Montgomery (2009), Murdie and Polizzi (2016:8) suggest that this preoccupation with NGOs, particularly international ones, is a function of the difficulty of collecting data on non-international NGOs, exposing a methodological gap in the choice of cases on which this body of work is based. A further deficit that is not mentioned often is that much IR literature explores the impact of non-state transnationalism on states and is thus oriented more towards studying what can be considered tangible policy changes that are brought about over a period of time by durable organisational networks and coalitions. Compared to these, mobilisations without rigid structures tend to not last as long: they either become obsolete or transition into formal organisations.

As Tarrow (2005:7) rightly notes, each of the forms represented in Figure 2 exists on a spectrum. However, this study argues, with Khagram, Riker and Sikkink (2002:9), that these categories and their associated modalities are not fixed or mutually exclusive and can modulate from one form to another in either direction (i.e., from collective to individual and vice versa). The study also argues that contemporary activism is increasingly multimodal with different forms occurring simultaneously around the same issues and objectives.

The taxonomy of forms of transnational activism is presented within the broad context of global civil society, a contested yet prevalent analytical framework that pervades much IR scholarship on this subject. The changing meanings and forms of global civil society were the focus of a ten-year project led by Anheier, Glasius and Kaldor (2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012). While admitting that the concept means different things to different people, the authors (2001:2) offer several descriptive definitions, including that it 'posits the existence of a social sphere...above and beyond national, regional, or local societies'; it represents 'a supranational sphere of social and political participation in which citizens groups, social movements, and individuals engage in dialogue, debate, confrontation, and negotiation with each other and with various governmental actors—international, national, and local—as well as the business world.' This idea of a sociopolitical space where a plethora of actors engage in vibrant exchanges is common to most definitions of global civil society (Anheier 2007; Jordan 2011; Taylor 2002; Kaldor 2003).

Anheier, Glasius and Kaldor (2001:3) acknowledge that global civil society has changed in form and substance over the years. They acknowledge the existence of divergent perspectives of the concept from a 'counterweight' to global capitalism, through to the growth of professional advocacy and interest groups, to global humanitarianism and the 'growing connectedness of citizens' occasioned by traditional and social media, among other factors. On this point, Jordan (2011) queries whether the fact of cross-border activism is actually synonymous with the growth and consolidation of 'a genuine sense of global community, a global civic culture, or the emergence of global citizenship' or is it just a sign of 'national interests that are increasingly active in the global arena'. Global civil society or civic space is nonetheless a useful analytical framework within which to situate the diverse forms of transnational activism.

Figure 2: Taxonomy of transnational activism



Source: Author construct.

4.4 Relations among Transnational Activism Actors

Having outlined existing typologies of transnational activism, I now discuss some of the frameworks that have been used to depict the process of transnational activism and the relations among transnational participants, highlighting their main tropes and assumptions, and how they do or do not apply to Bring Back Our Girls.

4.4.1 The Boomerang Model and its variants

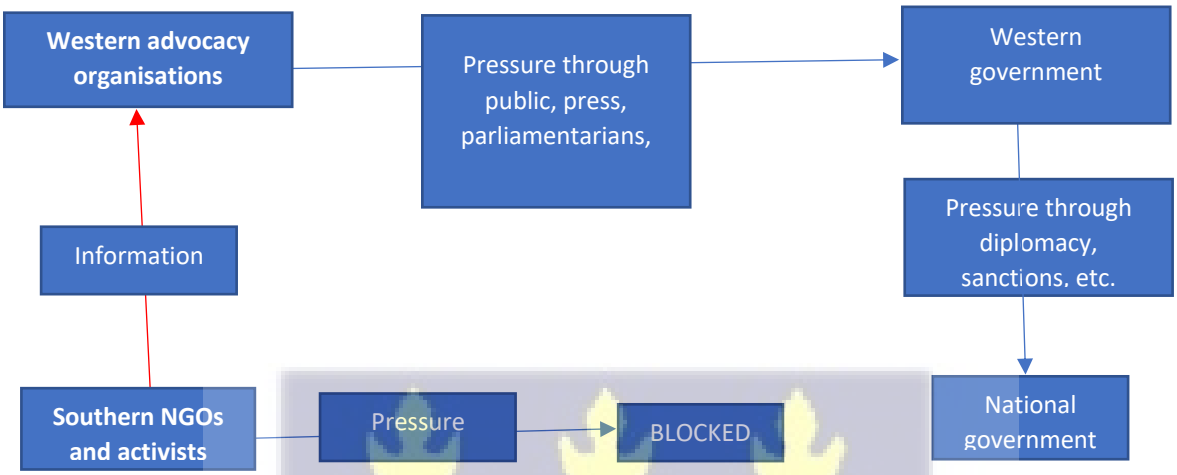
Although the boomerang was first theorised by Keck and Sikkink (1998, 1999), this review discusses it alongside a broad category of knowledge by scholars, including De Waal (2015) and Rodríguez-Garavito (2015), that critically engages the boomerang model in different contexts.

In Keck and Sikkink's framing, TANs are spaces that connect domestic activists from 'less developed' countries (Southern) with those from 'developed' countries (Northern) in situations where domestic governments are unresponsive to local actors. They call this the boomerang model (Keck and Sikkink 1999:93, see also Figure 3) in which Northern activists help to amplify Southern activists' demands—in response to requests from the latter—and provide material and symbolic resources, while deriving legitimacy for their involvement (Keck and Sikkink 1999:93). Keck and Sikkink (1999:91) present the relationships among these actors as 'voluntary, reciprocal and horizontal patterns of communication and exchange, implying the absence of power relations'.

In Keck and Sikkink's framing and De Waal's (2015:30) illustration of the boomerang model (Figure 3), transnational activism is presented as a process that transpires between Southern and Northern actors, with the relationship between them depicted as vertical and Northern advocacy organisations placed atop Southern NGOs and activists, indicating the flow of power as viewed by boomerang advocates. De Waal (2015) depicts the South-North relationship as one of client and patron, in which Southern actors depend for their image and wellbeing on foreign sponsors. The empirical basis of this, as noted by Pallas and Bloodgood (2019:1), is the erstwhile domination of transnational advocacy by international NGOs and the low capacity, expertise and resources of Southern civil society organisations to engage and access transnational political actors that created a need for and dependence on Northern actors. The agency of Southern actors in initiating transnational activisms by seeking out Northern actors is also assumed by Bob (2005) in

his work on Ogoniland protests and by Pallas and Urpelainen (2013) in their work on the forging of North-South alliances.

Figure 3: The Boomerang Model of Transnational Activism



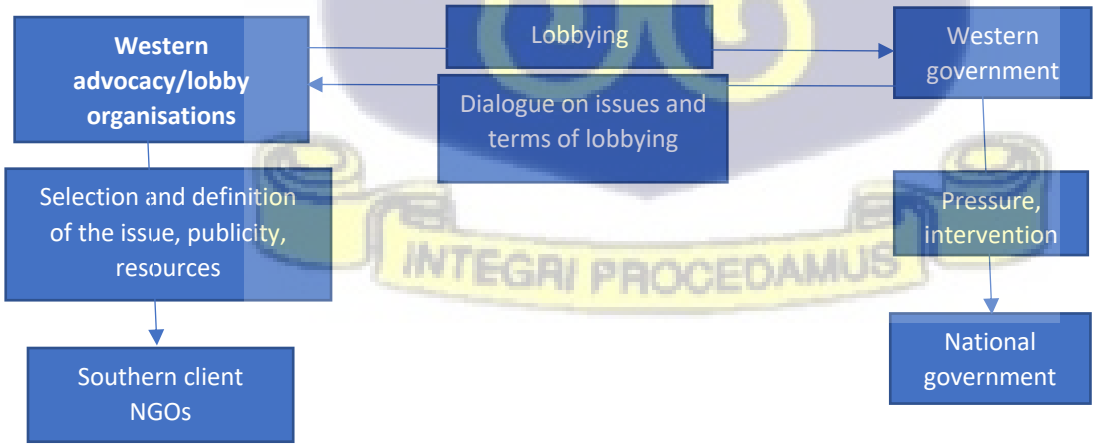
Source: De Waal (2015:30).

And yet the same scholars present the boomerang model as one in which relations are equitable and Southern actors have a say in the agenda and repertoires of action of the advocacy that derives from their appeals for help to Northern actors. But this assumption has been critiqued on several grounds. According to Routledge (2003), TANs are embedded in 'place-specific configurations of social relations and particular local histories, as well as local cultural and political contexts'. He also states in a co-authored work that TANs do not adequately problematise issues of power (Routledge, Cumbers and Nativel 2007). Collectively, these factors create room for contestations within TANs. Further, the fact that material and symbolic resources are constructed as flowing from North to South—what Sampson (2002:4 in Murdie and Polizzi 2016:7) terms 'benevolent colonialism'—defies the possibility of equality. As Carpenter (2007:114) notes, this 'colonial' view (see also Okech and Musindarwezo 2019:268) on the historical structural inequities that led to this) is optimistic and masks the politics that occur within and between

networks. She argues that transnational network actors are better understood and analysed as ideational figures that operate in bureaucratic and coalitional politics (Carpenter 2007:116). Petrova (2013:2) also remarks the bias in IR literature's framing of non-Global North actors primarily as recipients of activism when, in reality, it is multidirectional.

Allied to the boomerang are three models conceptualised by De Waal (2015:25, 26, 38): the anti-colonial solidarity model, the anti-neocolonial solidarity model and the insider policy lobby model. The first two are presented as antecedents of the boomerang model with the only differences being that the colonial government gave way to Western government and national governments replaced occupier/settler authorities. The insider policy lobby model is one in which 'advocacy is driven by a dominant Western NGO or network, run by specialised lobbyists who act as brokers with policymakers, adapting their agenda and methods to accord with the practicalities of that lobbying process' (De Waal (2015:37). Here, we see transnationalism flowing in parallel from North to South between state and non-state actors, but still within a hierarchy with the North on top and the South beneath. This model thus updates the boomerang without critiquing it or recognising how the power dynamics of transnational activism have changed.

Figure 4: The Insider Policy Lobby Model of Transnational Activism



Source: De Waal (2015:38).

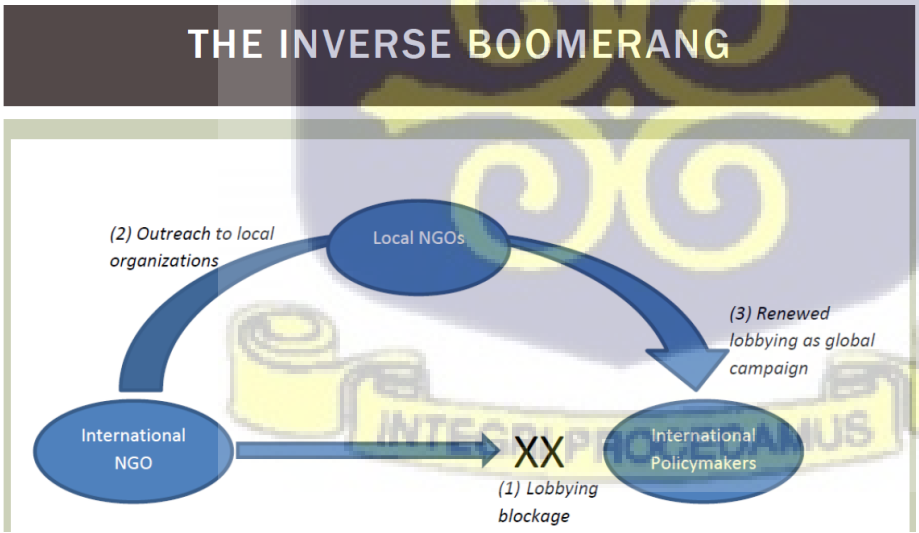
However, like the boomerang model, de Waal's anti-colonial, anti-neocolonial and humanitarian models all emphasise the dependence of southern activist organisations on northern ones, a relationship that does not reflect contemporary southern actors' increasingly more direct participation in northern contexts which does not depend on proxy northern actors—a change made possible in part by technological innovations that facilitate global access.

The stated thrust of De Waal's (2015) edited volume, *Advocacy in Conflict*: *Critical Perspectives on Transnational Activism*, is to show up how some Northern actors appropriate non-Northern campaigns, as reflected in the insider policy lobby model and to propound that this be done more ethically by ensuring that affected populations are included in activisms conducted on their behalf. However, the book does not confront the necessity of Northern advocates, their entitlement, or their saviourist arrogation of the right to mobilise on behalf of others from other parts of the world. Writing on African perspectives on transnational feminist organising, Tripp (2005:1) opines that this is because transnational is 'sometimes used as shorthand for Northern involvement in and influence on' activism in other parts of the world'. Global North leadership of an involvement in Global South activism has been shown to be controversial in situations where Northern and non-Northern norms clash among actors within the same movement, for example the movements against female genital cutting (Musalo 1997; Oba 2008; Cloward 2016) and homophobia (Ayoub 2014). Each of these scholars demonstrates the tensions that can exist between purportedly universal international human rights norms and the conflicting domestic cultural norms that influence behaviour in Southern contexts. Northern involvement is also seen as illogical and counterproductive in scenarios where Northern actors are implicated in the oppressions that have led to movements (Ndlovu 2019): Fallism is a case in point.[58] Further, Northern appropriation of Southern activism, as occurred with Kony2012 and Save Darfur, lays

bare the destructive power of simplistic narratives and the marginalisation of those most affected by unrest (Mamdani 2009; 2012). As Temper (2019) argues, campaigns that are not grounded among those most affected are not likely to last.

Building on De Waal's policy lobby model, Pallas (2016, 2018, 2019) is among scholars who argue that the boomerang is not mono-directional: it can originate in the North and fly toward the South. He theorises that in the inverted boomerang, also theorised by Temper (2018: 19-21) as the catapult model, Northern NGOs that face blockages in their efforts to influence Northern policymakers recruit Southern partners (who were not previously active on the issue), who then undertake advocacy as part of global campaigns. The principal actors in this framing remain NGOs. Northern actors determine the advocacy agenda and repertoires of action, and issues are presented from their perspectives, meaning that although Southern NGOs are positioned above international actors, the latter hold the reins of power and their Southern collaborators are seen more as victims than substantive partners.

Figure 5: The Inverse Boomerang.



Source: Pallas (2016).

Pallas suggests that the geographic timbres of relationships between Southern and Northern actors exist on a spectrum where the location of each actor determines the power that they hold within an activism. His key argument is that contextual analysis is central to understanding that historical assumptions about transnational advocacy reflect a set relationships and power structures that have become notably less common over time. This applies to Bring Back Our Girls which is a case of activism initiated and led primarily by Global South actors based mainly in Africa. Their agency as initiators and their autonomy ensured that they constructed the narratives around the Chibok abductions and their own resistance thereto in their own words and on their own terms, while Northern actors provided support. Bring Back Our Girls illustrates clearly a shift in the relations between South and North from dependence to collaboration that makes the boomerang concept redundant.

Tsutsui and Smith (unpublished:1, 20) advance the inverted boomerang thesis by theorising that relations among Northern and local (i.e., subnational) actors have changed from the boomerang or inverted boomerang to a double boomerang or sandwich effect in which both 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' advocacy by Southern and Northern activists is mutually constitutive and jointly promotes global human rights. They note that while the traditional boomerang still exists, albeit at a weaker capacity than in previous years (Tsutsui and Smith unpublished:19-20), bottom-up mobilisations at local and municipal levels are increasingly 'working to translate global norms into local practices, producing more immediate small-scale changes with a view to accumulating these changes across different locales to achieve global level transformation'. The sandwich effect is the combination of political pressure from above by global institutions and from below by grassroots mobilisations. Though this framing recognises the agency of Southern actors in influencing global political change, it does so from the premise that they are motivated chiefly by

norms from the Global North, thereby dismissing the role of ideas, beliefs and practices from the Global South.

Rodríguez-Garavito (2015) develops the boomerang concept even further by suggesting that beyond the traditional model by Keck and Sikkink (1998, 1999), the rise of social media and organisations in the Global South have created multiple boomerangs in which political pressure (for human rights change) flows 'from multiple geographic locations, and is simultaneously mobilized and directed towards different and multiple targets'. He distinguishes the 'internal boomerang' in which transnational NGOs based in the Global North like Amnesty International are expanding their institutional presence in the Global South, thereby internalising North-South channels of political power. In this model, though transnational actors are decentralising, they relate primarily with Southern affiliates of their brands. He also discusses the global virtual network in which e-activists and online advocacy platforms like Change.org mobilise pressure from decentralised crowds towards a variety of targets, both state and non-state. While power in this model is 'open, participatory, and peer-driven', this characteristic also makes it vulnerable to being short-lived, as exemplified by the Occupy Movement. The final model proposed by Rodríguez-Garavito (2015) is the "multiple boomerang" in which domestic NGOs mobilise political pressure from different geographic locations, often excluding actors from the Global North, towards different and multiple targets. He uses the example of Dejusticia, a coalition of Latin American NGOs that mobilised regional pressure for their governments to support the Inter-American Human Rights Commission. Multiple boomerangs are also occurring between Southern and Northern NGOs.

The main difference between this conceptualisation and Bring Back Our Girls is that Rodríguez-Garavito (2015) focuses on NGOs whereas Bring Back Our Girls is an eclectic mix of

organisational and individual actors, with the latter clearly holding the reins of leadership. His work reinforces the growing multipolarity of international politics and the diminishing centrality of the North in transnational activism. Müller-Funk (2019:1113-1114) uses the concept of political remittances to capture 'the potentially multidirectional flows of principles, vocabulary and practices taking place in transnational social fields, of which diaspora activists are a part'. She documents how Egyptian diasporan activism was led primarily by migrants living in Austria and France—albeit motivated by political remittances from Egypt—and directed from these host countries toward Egyptian migrants' home country, thereby disrupting both the boomerang model and its framing of transnationalism as flowing from Northern actors in the North to non-Northern actors in other parts of the world. The flows of transnational activism in the context of Egypt's uprisings was reciprocal. Such recent work and the political events that they describe can be said to be decolonising the study of transnational activism.

Recent work in IR builds on this recognition of the changing configuration of transnational activism, recognising the decreasing influence of Northern NGOs. Pallas and Nguyen (2018) show in their study of Vietnamese HIV/AIDS NGOs that their increased 'expertise, credibility, and high organisational capacity', advanced communication technology and increasing democratisation (p. 6), and by extension, their increasing agency and power, are enabling them to conduct transnational advocacy independently of Northern partners. These factors are also facilitating South-South advocacy. In the authors' view, this indicates that Southern NGOs' dependence on Western partners is decreasing, which leads them to predict that Southern actors in other contexts will rely increasingly less on Northern actors as their own capacities and positionalities continue to improve. In practice, as Pallas and Bloodgood (2019:12) observe in their theory of transscalar advocacy—advocacy that occurs simultaneously at different geographic levels, both national and

international activist organisations are shaped by interactions among diverse actors working at multiple scales, albeit their work retains the idea of a power hierarchy with the North on top and the South beneath it.

Pallas and Bloodgood's (2019) work on the future of transnational advocacy suggests that changing socioeconomic patterns are expanding North-North and South-South collaborations. Using the cases of Vietnamese HIV/AIDS NGOs, the Nuclear Abolition Network (Past and Present) and the Anti-deforestation Advocacy Networks after Activists Beyond Borders (H3), the authors hypothesise that Northern NGOs will retain leadership because of the structure and history of transnational activism. They also predict a growth in domestic Southern opposition to international NGOs as the former grow stronger and develop policy positions that conflict with those hitherto advocated by Northern actors. as a function of new restrictions on international NGO activities. These factors further explain the declining centrality and power of Northern actors.

One factor that they do not consider is how changing norms about representativity and who has the right and legitimacy to speak for whom in international politics, coupled with a renewed turn, notably in Africa, toward the paradigm of African Solutions to African Problems, are inflecting Southern perspectives toward Northern involvement. Ndiaye's (2019, 2020) work on neo-Pan-Africanism examines how African movements like Senegal's *Y'en a marre* are advocating for a new Pan Africanist philosophy that is populist instead of statist and bottom-up instead of top-down that enables ordinary Africans to partake in their own liberation. The principle of 'Nothing for/about Us Without Us' that anchors Ambrose et al's (2015) essay on the need to reclaim responsible activism may be an additional influencing factor. They explain it thus (2015:1): 'People affected by conflict, rights and other injustices should play the leading role in movements that advocate on their behalf'.

'Nothing for/about us without us' is invoked in response to advocacy campaigns like Kony2012, created by an American NGO, Invisible Children, to make Joseph Kony famous in order to get him arrested. The principle's influence is visible in the backlash against the campaign and demands for its termination on grounds that included the absence of Ugandans who were most affected by the conflict in their country. The Save Darfur Coalition/Movement was also an American-led and focused campaign to end genocide in South Sudan. Mamdani (2009) critiques it fiercely for distorting the conflict's narratives in order to justify the campaign's political agenda and for excluding those most affected by the conflict. Both campaigns embody a new form of transnational activism in which Northern actors not only focus their advocacy for others in Northern contexts but also arrogate to themselves the right to advocate on behalf of those distant others. The dominant actors in this framing are also NGOs. This differs from Bring Back Our Girls which included beneficiaries in its activism and engaged with war-affected communities to provide relief support.

Here, again, the narrowness of view comes through as South-South activism is not a new phenomenon; there are many Southern activist networks that have been operating across the Global South for decades. One example is the African Women's Development and Communication Network (or FEMNET)—some of whose members took part in Bring Back Our Girls in multiple countries in and outside Africa—a pan-African network that was set up by national women's networks in 1988 to coordinate African women's preparations for, and participation in, the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China, in 1995 (Wanyeki 2005, Badri and Tripp 2018). As Ajayi (2018) states in a reflection on the politics of transnational activism in the MeToo movement, non-Northern events do not derive their substance or existence from being acknowledged by Northern eyes and worldviews; they exist in spite of them.

4.5 Motivations for Participation in Transnational Activism by NGO Actors

The focus of the foregoing body of work on groups of actors means that it foregrounds the collective reasons why transnational activist groups emerge and why member NGOs opt to join them. These explanations fall into three main categories: ideological-normative reasons (global norms), political opportunity and rational/strategic/instrumental motives that are seen as furthering organisational aims.

4.5.1 Ideological-Normative motivations

Scholars in this group suggest that transnational activism by NGOs or social movements is driven mainly by solidarity with oppressed people and moral obligations to fight injustice that derive from shared identities and global norms—'collective expectations for the proper behaviour of actors with a given identity' (Klotz 1995, Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 2001; Keck and Sikkink 1998). Keck and Sikkink (1998:98-99) foreground human rights activism and note that TANs have 'organised most effectively around' issues involving 'bodily harm to vulnerable individuals' (normative) and 'legal equality of opportunity' (institutional). I discuss the latter further in the next section.

One of the problems with this view is the assumption that norms that are accepted in the Global North have universal legitimacy and acceptance. As Okech and Musindarwezo (2019) note in their article on the African Women's Development and Communication Network and transnational feminist organising in Africa, African women differ on what equality should look like. The authors note the 'tensions caused by the assertion that the pursuit of certain women's rights is elite based', a term 'often used as a placeholder for…externally generated interests that are disconnected from the 'real needs of women on the ground' (Okech and Musindarwezo

2019:257). The issues of contention include sexual and reproductive health rights, sexual orientation and gender identity (also Njoroge 2016:314). Transnational feminism is an interesting case because it is one within which there has been consistent resistance against the 'production of 'Third World women'' (Mohanty 1984, 2003) 'as the collective 'Other' through universal categories that position them as 'poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, and victimised' Okech and Musindarwezo (2019:258). It illustrates that norms are subjective and that even intra-network actors who seem to share a collective identity do not always view them the same way or consider them to be universally tenable—what Okech and Musindarwezo (2019:267) refer to as 'politics of difference'.

In their constructs, notably the norm life cycle first propounded by Finnemore and Sikkink (1998), these norms develop and diffuse from North to South. In contrast, critical scholars like Acharya (2004) and Coleman and Tieku (2018) argue that local and regional norms are equally potent and that Global South actors have and use their agency to adapt and counter Northern norms, and to develop and diffuse new ones based on local beliefs, values and practices. As Tieku points out in his review of informal IR (n.d.:10), early scholarship on norms gave the impression that they were written, arguably formal rules, whereas the definition cited earlier 'implicitly touched on informal normative practices'. He argues that the concept and practice of informality has been a pervasive subtext across several generations of IR scholars that has been marginalised in favour of ideas that help explain the actions of formal actors, mainly states and international institutions, and those primarily in the Global North.

Some scholars have advanced the related concepts of global consciousness and global citizenship as explanations of why transnational activism occurs. Pallas (2012:176) defines global citizenship as, 'a self-declared association with the peoples of the world that motivates its adherents

to act to address global needs as identified by their own individual moral or ethical codes, using ad hoc networks of like-minded individuals'. For him, it is an attitude and a 'post-national' identity that has historically created links among geographically dispersed people on the basis of shared interests and a common humanity. The inherent moral impulse of global citizenship rationalises transnational activism regarding matters that are normally considered to be of national interest. Global citizenship is not 'available to all' (Pallas 2012:170) as current global power disparities limit claims to this identity to individual elites, primarily from the Global North. On global consciousness, Smith (2015:37) speaks to the cognition of belonging to an international community and sharing in its norms and values: a global citizen connotes 'global responsibility and ownership of an issue'. It is this consciousness that accounts for whether external groups 'adopt' or are willing to support domestic activisms. Again, this conceptualisation assumes a level of universality in perspectives of global norms and cohesion among transnational actors that is not fully borne out by existing evidence. Smith's framing overlooks how diversities of identity, class, context, location and spatiality, and power inflect how diverse actors engage in transnational spaces.

Pallas' arguments do not take cognisance of shifts in identity patterns that see growing numbers of Africans who either hold citizenships of Northern countries or have increased access to the North and form cosmopolitan subgroups known in African and Cultural Studies as 'afropolitans' (Mbembe 2007; Eze 2014; Dabiri 2016; Mbembe and Balakrishnan 2016; Adjepong 2018; Balakrishnan 2017) or anthropology as 'frontier Africans' (Nyamnjoh 2015). These global citizens differ from Pallas' construct in the sense that they do not conceptualise their political action as proxy activism on behalf of others but as being in their own self-interest because they self-identify as belonging to multiple spaces. Further, although global citizenship is seen as an

antecedent of transnational collective action (Pallas 2012:175), global citizens, as he admits, are not a homogeneous group. This is illustrated later in this study's findings by alleged contestations over agency between Bring Back Our Girls-Nigeria and American activists.

According to De Waal (2015), three motivations define the ideational and practical space for transnational advocacy: personal salvation or fulfilment, preserving social order and power relations, and collective action for transforming society in pursuit of a more just order. The latter correlates with Pallas and Urpelainen's (2019) discussion of organisational missions of international NGOs as motivation for forming alliances with Southern domestic organisations. This notion has been critiqued on grounds that the motivations of international NGOs, seen as tools of neoliberalism (Manji and O'Coill 2002; Kamat 2004; Sadaqat 2017) and imperialism (Bennett 2005:215) are too complex to be framed as impartial (Leebaw 2007). Keohane and Nye (2001) state that some NGOs are 'self-selected and elite-driven', even though they claim to represent the public interest.

The point to make here is that formal norms and the framing of norms as formal do not take into account the factors that drive informal, primarily non-state actors that are not bound by such rules. Neither of these approaches considers the motivations of the individuals who make up both activist organisations and networks but more importantly the more diffuse forms of activism occurring globally today. This restates the imperative noted earlier for new concepts and methodologies that better reflect contemporary dimensions of transnational activism, which brings us back to Wong and Brown's concept of e-bandits. As they note, anyone can join e-banditry and many 'atypical activists' have joined hacktivist campaigns like Anonymous and WikiLeaks. The authors also rightly observe that the nature of this new political actor 'creates problems of coherence, lack of directed action, and multiple and multiplying goals'. In other words, it is

difficult to identify who is involved in e-banditry, since hacktivism thrives on disguising identities and because multiple actors join for varied reasons and it is not clear who is leading what, such political activity tends to lack coherence and strategic direction. Further, Wong and Brown (2013) discuss the disjuncture created by e-bandits' actions and motivations to keep the Internet free, which are denounced by states as criminality. This shows that what are considered norms are fluid and subjective and it calls for further exploration of new non-state forms of transnational activism as well as the factors that influence their participation.

Wong and Brown's (2013) theory of e-banditry signals a recognition in IR of how activists are connecting outside of organisations, which is the case with Bring Back Our Girls, as well as how the Internet is changing activism. It also signals that individual activists are not a coherent group. Of special note is their focus on the anonymising power of digital technologies—what they term the 'politics of no one'—and how this changes our ideas about who uses these tools and for what purposes. They also note the eclectic ideological appeal that e-bandit groups have, a common factor with Bring Back Our Girls whose cause had global resonance for diverse actors in multiple geographic contexts, many of whom were not professional activists. Again, it is arguably as difficult to identify a coherent group or network with anonymised identities (Wong and Brown 2013:1019) as it is for groups like Bring Back Our Girls whose followership is so intersectional as to defy fixed identities. However, Wong and Brown's (2013) work does not fully apply to Bring Back Our Girls for several reasons. First, Bring Back Our Girls actors do not hide their identities, which are infact key to the activism's validity. Second and relatedly, the visibility of individual actors and the connectivities among them are important for groups like Bring Back Our Girls that thrive on depth and breadth of visible political support. Third, while confronting political authority, Bring Back Our Girls was not subversive but sought to work alongside it to achieve its aims. There

is thus room for further study and theorising in IR of the different types of individual actors leading and participating in transnational activism today.

In her studies of Egyptian diasporan youth activists' involvement in the country's 2011 uprisings, Müller-Funk (2019:1120-1121) suggests that this kind of activism can be motivated by major political events in diasporans' home countries. For some Egyptian diasporans, the uprisings 'led to a renegotiation of their relationship to Egypt' while others saw their activism as 'a way to claim their right to multiple identity constructions' (see also Müller-Funk 2014:33-34). In other words, their activism was closely linked to their sense of self and their relationship with their country of origin, with their identity construction being shaped in part by events in their personal lives, among other factors (Müller-Funk 2019:1120-1121). Their experiences of the host country (discrimination and otherisation, for example), were also a contributing factor. Müller-Funk adds four other major motivations: symbolic support for activists on the ground in Egypt; the desire to serve as advocates for political activists and movements abroad by influencing public opinion in the receiving country; the urge to provide the European—and sometimes Egyptian—public with alternative information about Egypt; and the desire to participate in shaping the image of Egyptians living in the host country (Müller-Funk 2020).

In an earlier work, Müller-Funk (2014:49) notes that personal motivations, such as such as wanting to support politically active family members, were especially important for Egyptian women who took part in the uprisings. They were also influenced by their desire to 'create a more equal and just society'. We thus see a mix of emotional and aspirational factors that contrast with the more meta-level motivations of formal civil society groups and coalitions.

4.5.2 Rational, strategic or instrumental motivations

A separate body of work points to less idealistic and more material incentives, such as strategic alignment, organisational survival, resourcing, prestige and other perceived benefits: otherwise put, transnational actors are motivated to engage in activism because of perceived benefits to them and their organisations.

Keck and Sikkink (1998:90) are often cited for naming TANs as normative actors, but their work describes these networks as 'simultaneously principled and strategic' actors. The authors state that TANs are moved to action by both normative and legal-judicial logics, and that one of the reasons that they form is that members believe that networking will help achieve their campaign missions and goals (p. 93). However, they focus more on normative motivations. Keck and Sikkink (1999:92–94) state that advocacy networks in international politics are most likely to emerge when: (1) fractured state-civil society relations compel domestic activists to turn to external actors (the 'boomerang' model; (2) activists or 'political entrepreneurs' view networking as a means to promote their work and (3) international opportunities exist to form networks. The authors suggest that domestic and international NGOs take part in transnational advocacy networks in order to actualise the calculated benefits of collective action. In the boomerang model, domestic actors from 'less developed' countries' link up with actors in 'developed' countries who can amplify their claims and 'provide access, leverage and information (and often money)' that they might not otherwise have.

Bob (2002, 2005) builds on these arguments, asserting that strategic alignment is the greater rationale. In his view, global civil society—the main audience of transnational activism—'is not an open forum marked by altruism, but a harsh, Darwinian marketplace where legions of desperate groups vie for scarce attention, sympathy, and money' (2002:37). On this basis, people—

in this case mostly specialist advocacy organisations—support one activism over another according to how well their leaders 'market' their causes in a global marketplace of morality, how deeply these framings resonate with their organisational purposes ('missions and interests'), and whether they have the human and material capacity to provide adequate support. He discusses, for example, how Greenpeace and other international environmental organisations initially rejected the Ogoni movement's entreaties for support on grounds that the Niger Delta crisis was too political until Saro Wiwa's group reoriented its agitations away from 'contentious claims about minority rights in a poor, multiethnic developing state' and towards 'environmental grievances', with an emphasis on Shell's 'ecological warfare' (2002:40).

One challenge with Bob's framework is that he does not establish parameters for determining when national activists are making deliberate efforts to 'sell' their cause or simply expressing their motives. Further, his concepts emerge from studies of northern support for foreign activism and do not explain the involvement of actors from contexts that offer more moral than material support where relative power disparities are less pronounced. This premise of why Northern organisations actors form alliances recurs in Tarrow's (2005:164) model, in which he suggests, using a threats and opportunities model, that they form coalitions to 'take advantage of pooling resources' (Staggenborg 1986) and 'the joint political influence that they will gain from cooperation' (Hathaway and Meyer 1997:64 in Tarrow 2005). Cooperation is also incentivised by 'the need to combine against common threats' (McCammon and Campbell 2002 in Tarrow (2005).

In his 'inverse' boomerang model, Pallas (2017) argues that international actors derive legitimacy for their political actions on behalf of others from advocacy networks. This is important, given his point about the growing transnational agency of Southern actors (see also Pallas and Bloodgood 2018:10), which suggests a correlation between the context and motives of

transnational activism, with the latter being not static but dynamic in nature and varying by actor. In their work on the formation of North-South campaigns, Pallas and Urpelainen (2013) state that both Northern and Southern NGOs have different missions and interests, with Northern NGOs more likely to have 'well-defined' missions and Southern ones to be more flexible about options to further their cause. In Pallas and Urpelainen's (2013) model, NGOs are motivated either by participation, i.e., they value involvement, or outcome, i.e., driven by the need to successfully conclude a campaign. The missions of Northern advocacy NGOs depend on the 'incentives' offered by their constituents or supporters: incentives of 'participation' value the fact of taking part in an activity while incentives of 'outcome' reward the successful completion of an activity (Pallas and Urpelainen 2013:402). Northern NGOs further choose to support Southern campaigns that suit their agendas of achieving change in 'northern-authored policy' (Pallas and Urpelainen 2013:404) and attracting competitive donor funding. Though helpful for analysing institutional motives for participation in activism, neither Keck and Sikkink, nor Tarrow, nor Pallas and Urpelainen give insight into subgroup motives. Thus, NGOs' missions and interests determine their involvement in campaigns and their choice of partners.

Pallas and Bloodgood (2018:10) extend this idea, noting that advocacy is 'largely a strategic activity' in which organisations aim to maximise impact by working with 'powerful partners'. They argue, however, that power in the changing context of transnational advocacy is not the preserve of Northern actors, nor does it consist only of material considerations, but includes legitimacy, persuasiveness and capacity. The effect of this is to broaden the scope of which partners will be selected. Thus, while advocacy is motivated by strategic considerations, it is no longer a zero-sum power game between mainly helpless Southern actors and powerful Northern partners.

Petrova (2013) offers a different view in which both normative and material motivations coexist and are not mutually exclusive. Using a lifecycle analogy, she describes them as occurring along a spectrum in which early motivations are primarily normative but shift toward sustainability over a movement's lifecycle as its constituent actors grow in stature, influence and prominence. Petrova (2013:8) suggests that the nature of the mostly professional organisations that anchor transnational activism makes them likely to be resource-dependent and focused on organisational development. Such organisations which she terms 'the survival-driven kind' owe accountability more to 'the concerns and priorities of patrons' (i.e., donors) compared to 'the solidarity-driven type', which are motivated more by the needs and concerns of beneficiary constituents (Petrova 2013:7). She uses the example of Slovak and Polish organisations doing democracy promotion and human rights work in Eastern Europe to show how activists in both countries were moved to act by 'a strongly felt normative "obligation," a "sense of responsibility," and "a duty" to assist' that were borne of transnational contacts to other people struggling for democracy who shared the same values and challenges, and the shared pain of having lived under dictatorships (Petrova 2013:12). However, as resources dwindled and inter-organisational competition grew, some existing organisations began to privilege access to funding while others joined the movement because of money and prestige (Petrova 2013:14-20). She explains that this shift is not always intentional, driven as it is by a global governance system increasingly subject to fiscal uncertainty that compels competition for donor funding and imposes organisational pressures. In the same vein, Mitchell and Schmitz (2014:489) propound the concept of 'principled instrumentalism', which suggests that rational-strategic and normative-ideological considerations are not mutually exclusive.

Petrova (2013) widens the scope of explanations of why transnational actors become involved with activism by advancing the discourse beyond single-theory frameworks. She also notes the need for further exploration of this nexus, illustrating that women's rights activism as a subset of human rights shares some of these broader characteristics, but may have different motivations that need to be studied. Her rationale is that women's activism represents the needs of a specific oppressed group compared with movements that seek 'collective goods' for a more generic collective (Petrova 2013:23). Yet she focuses, like much IR scholarship, on the motivations of formal civil society groups and organisations, and not looser mass-based movements that that do not rely on organised civil society and are emerging owing to declining public trust in just such organisations (Mamattah 2014:5, 14), as evidenced by a vast body of work on the decline of civil society that is happening in the Global South and North (Cardinali 2018). Petrova further makes a case for recognising the agency of non-Northern actors as drivers and not only recipients of transnational activism, thus correcting the EuroAmerican bias of boomerang advocates. This objective helps fill the gap in knowledge regarding how non-Northern actors and organisations view transnational collaborations and why they engage in them (van Wessel, Naz and Sahoo 2020). In all, the foregoing works together compel an examination of what drives transnational activism by less structured civil society actors, depicted in this study as informal actors, that are the focus of this study.

In theorising how South-North NGO alliances form, Pallas and Urpelainen (2013) suggest that these are driven by a combination of organisational missions and interests. However, Southern NGOs tend to be more focused on outcomes because they are driven by the need to resolve specific local problems and are flexible about available options, while Northern NGOs which are better-

resourced and have more defined missions tend to prioritise partnering with Southern organisations that share their interests.

4.6 Informality in IR

The concept and practice of informality are a common thread in several generations of IR literature (Tieku, n.d.). With reference to transnational activism, informal governance is represented, albeit not explicitly in those terms, in a number of works on a range of transnational actors. According to Tieku, with reference to transnational activism, these include work on transnational advocacy networks (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Murdie and Polizzi, 2017), transgovernmental networks (Raustiala, 2002; Slaughter, 2004), epistemic communities (Haas, 1992; Cross, 2013) and transnational public-private partnerships and governance entrepreneurs (Börzel and Risse, 2005; Andonova, 2017). Tieku (n.d.:12-13) discusses how Cooper's (2012) work on 'celebrity activists' like Bono and Bob Geldof documents their increasing 'soft power' influence and involvement in international politics. It also illustrates how the informal positionality of these actors, a heterogenous group that he disaggregates, has a major bearing on how they operate, i.e., with flexibility and no obligation to follow official or formal protocols.

That informal transnational actors are not strictly guided by formal rules implies a need to study more closely their activities, how they operate and what influences their political engagement. This case is reinforced by the demonstrated influence of informality not only on informal actors but also on formal ones (Tieku n.d.:16). As Pauwelyn (2014) notes in his work on the World Trade Organisation, formal actors are driven as much by informal influences as by formal ones. Similarly, Pauwelyn, Wessel and Wouters (2014) observe in their work on the structures of international lawmaking that informal factors are becoming as weighty as formal ones

in the process of international lawmaking. Likewise, in scholarship by Börzel and Risse (2005) on transnational public-private partnerships and Andonova (2017) on governance entrepreneurs, we see the growing fusion of the so-called informal and the formal in various spheres of transnational activity. Tieku (2019a, 2019b) cautions against viewing this relationship through a binary lens, arguing that it is co-dependent.

Each of these works expands the discursive space for targeted study of informal transnationalism. However, except for Cooper (2012), none of them focuses on activism. Again, many of these scholars explore the influence of informality on formal actors, overlooking the importance of studying informality in itself and how informality influences informal actors. Further, many of these works are based on empirical cases of individuals and organisations in the Global North (Tieku n.d.:19, 26, 29), creating a gap in IR knowledge from Global South actors and contexts. These and other conceptual, methodological and epistemological gaps identified earlier in this chapter provided a fitting segue into the exploration in Chapter Five of non-IR knowledge addresses new dimensions of transnational activism with informality as a key focus.

It is worth briefly noting the body of IR work that discusses relationships between state/formal and non-state/informal actors that are not confrontational and oppositional but aimed at jointly addressing governance problems through cooperation and partnership. For example, though they do not use the term informality—they refer to non-state actors as 'private organisations'—Börzel and Risse (2005:1) observe that non-state actors have long been part of public-private partnerships, but IR only recently began to study them as partners as opposed to antagonists of states. Though this is not a core focus of this study, it attests to the historical importance of informal actors and the imperative to document their involvement in transnational politics in greater and more diverse detail.

There is an observable shift in approach in IR scholars' choice of cases from the non-North. For example, in their work on networks of labour activism in Asia, Zajak, Egels-Zandén and Piper (2017) argue that Global South labour activists are 'pioneering…new forms of networked labour agency', that involve multiple actors—labour rights NGOs, social movements, self-organised worker groups, or grassroots community organisations. Though these actors jointly advocate on labour rights, their respective missions and interests are intersectional. Pallas and Nguyen's (2018) article on HIV-AIDS NGO advocacy in Vietnam argues that Vietnamese NGOs led successful advocacy without depending on Northern actors or allies. The growing presence and voice of non-Northern scholars in this field is also to be remarked. Yet, NGO and NGO coalitions remain the empirical subjects of choice, leaving out activism by less structured entities.

4.7 The Ethics of Decoloniality and Theory from the South

In keeping with growing calls to decolonise knowledge, especially in fields like international relations that have been historically 'Western-centric' (Smith 2018:81, Bouka 2018, Tieku 2019; Lynch 2019), this study adopts a decolonial ethic that involves looking for potentially new explanations in hitherto underexplored spaces. This approach hinges on the following three core priorities. This study makes the case for individuals to be considered as central actors in transnational activism against the traditional focus on groups. It also expands the ontological lens of transnational activism beyond the Global North by deriving empirical insights from an African activism by women about violent extremism and girls' rights, thus broadening the discourse beyond broad issue-based collective action. This enables, among other things, an exploration of new facets of the global-'local' nexus (or the so-called glocalisation of world politics) and the dynamics of South-South as well as North-South solidarities. This approach also permits us to

view Bring Back Our Girls as an important symbol of a new form of digital politics and hashtag activism (Chiluwa and Ifukor 2015, Smith 2015, Olson 2016, Hernández 2017, Endong 2018, Ofori-Parku 2018, Njoroge 2016), that offers critical insights into how the use of digital and social media by African activists informs the transnational mobilisation/involvement of external actors—Nyabola's (2018) work on digital transformations of Kenyan politics is instructive.

The objective is not to essentialise or 'nativise' (Smith 2018:90) African activism but to broaden the scope of transnational activism scholarship in the search for new perspectives. Finally, this study spotlights Bring Back Our Girls as a potentially new form of hybrid activism that brings together NGOs or professional activists as well as diverse other actors in varying patterns of connectedness and sustained and one-off participation that merit further study. The theoretical prospects of each of these three aspects is discussed in detail with respect to the study's findings in chapters Six, Seven and Eight.

4.8 Conclusion: Continuities and Discontinuities in Transnational Activism

This chapter has discussed IR's treatment of transnational activism, looking at which actors are seen to have legitimacy, the nature of their relations and the geographies of power among them, as well as their motivations for engaging in transnational political action. In so doing, the following observations emerged.

Collective organised actors hold prominence in IR scholarship on transnational activism, including in recent work. Foremost among these are transnational advocacy networks but much has been written from a transnational perspective about social movements and coalitions. Recent studies are beginning to document the rising transnational capital of individuals and loosely

structured mass-based movements, notably digital ones, but this remains an understudied issue. This signals a need for further research on informal relationships and motivations as against NGOs and NGO coalitions.

With few exceptions, IR scholarship focuses on Northern empirical cases. Transnational activism by non-Northern actors, including but not limited to the Global South, is ignored by the so-called mainstream literature. This may be explained partly by the dominance of Northern scholars in transnational activism scholarship, which actors they recognise as having transnational agency and legitimacy, and how they construct transnationality, which is typically as involving the Global North. A further factor is Murdie and Polizzi's (2016) claim that data on non-Northern actors is scarce, which is supported by Bob's (2005, in Pallas and Bloodgood 2018:1) note that transnational advocacy campaigns involving Northern NGOs 'may be more visible or accessible to researchers based in the global North. It is also important to note the marginalisation by Northern IR scholars of knowledge by Southern actors, especially those from Africa, owing to epistemic dismissals of African activisms as 'riots' that cannot thus be studied alongside established frameworks for political action (Branch and Mampilly 2015). They argue that the reason that the agency for the North African uprisings was attributed to the Arab world is because Africa is considered 'too rural, too traditional and too bound by ethnicity' to be the site of modern political protest'.

Geographies of power are constructed within a global hierarchy headed by the Global North with the Global South beneath it. This is so even in frameworks that recognise that exchanges among actors in both contexts are increasingly flowing not just from North to South, but in both directions. Erstwhile relationships of dependence have weakened as southern actors have gained economic and technical agency, and technological advances have afforded greater

global mobility. It follows that no single model encapsulates the diverse and complex forms of transnational activism that occur around the world, regardless of where they originate or the identities and positionalities of those who create and support them.

The motivations for participating in transnational activism of organised civil societies in the Global South and North have evolved from solidarity based on global norms and shared identities to a blend of solidarity and strategic, which coexist in many instances. Though these two have been dominant frameworks in knowledge on participation, there is room to explore other causal factors, including the influence of sociopolitical environments and informal drivers of activism in looser mass-based groups. Further research on this topic should prioritise those groups that have not hitherto featured much in 'mainstream' discourses, notably the Global South and women.

Having thus identified why and how IR knowledge on transnational activism does not adequately accommodate its new dimensions, I focus in the next chapter on the explanations offered by non-IR scholarship, specifically sociology, communications studies and African Studies. Based on this, I propose a theoretical framework deriving from my findings from fieldwork and data that pulls together concepts from non-IR scholarship on new dimensions of transnational activism.

CHAPTER FIVE

(RE)SITUATING NON-NGO AGENCY IN TRANSNATIONAL ACTIVISM

5.0 Introduction

Having reviewed the international relations (IR) literature on transnational activism and identified gaps pertaining to its dominant subject and the agency of non-state, non-formal civil society actors, this chapter draws on knowledge from other disciplines on new dimensions of transnational activism, looking at three main foci: structure and form, processes and relations, and pathways and motivations. As Della Porta and Tarrow (2010:233-234) point out, the literature on transnational activism is vast and multidisciplinary, spanning political economy, economic and institutional sociology, and anthropology, among others. They also point out past transdisciplinary research by Keck and Sikkink (1998) and Risse, Ropp and Sikkink (1999) that recognises the deeper, more holistic insights to be gained from multidisciplinary research (Della Porta and Tarrow (2010:234, 245). Amid this mix, IR provides a useful baseline for understanding advocacy by formal organisations.

However, while there is growing recognition of the rising transnational agency and involvement of informal actors, its statist and collectivist biases have occluded in-depth study of these. According to Braun, Schindler and Wille (2019), this is the result of at least two factors: a historical preoccupation with the conceptual agency of states as international actors and an equally historical disagreement among IR scholars about which levels of analysis matter and how they should be studied. Della Porta and Tarrow (2010:232) claim that the NGO focus reflects the 'real world of the early to mid-Nineties' rather than selectiveness or exclusion by social movement scholars. On its own, IR scholarship on transnational activism provides an incomplete picture of a

vast and diverse phenomenon, thus making a case for including diverse insights from other disciplines. Given their sociocultural orientation, theories from sociology, psychology, African Studies and communications studies respond better to knowledge gaps in IR regarding new dimensions of transnational activism.

This chapter is structured in five parts. It begins by discussing how technological advances, specifically the Internet and social media, are altering the context of transnational activism across the world. While there have been limited attempts to assign definitive labels to the actors driving activism globally, several scholars have described some of the attributes that make contemporary activism qualitatively different from older forms; digitality is an important one. In a second section, I discuss new forms of transnational activism and who constitutes them as represented in non-IR literature. The concept of 'newness' is problematised in this section. Third, I examine relations among these transnational actors, followed by an exploration of pathways and motivations in Section Four. In a final section, I outline a conceptual-analytical framework that draws on key concepts from the reviewed literature before concluding.

5.1 The Changing Context of Transnational Activism

Several scholars, many in media and communication studies, have noted the emergence of a technologically-driven society in which all forms of public and private interactions, including activism (Mutsvairo 2016:3), are driven by digital communication and other technologies. Castells (2005:7) calls it the 'network society', defined as:

> 'a social structure based on networks operated by information and communication technologies based in microelectronics and digital computer networks that

generate, process, and distribute information on the basis of the knowledge accumulated in the nodes of the networks'.

This new society has several key features. It is marked by 'networked individualism' (Castells 2005:12) or 'networked sociality' (Srinavasan, Diepeveen and Karekwaivanane 2019:9), a pattern of individualism as the dominant culture and sociability that occurs within 'self-selected communication networks' or 'echo chambers' (Sunstein 2018); in other words, Internet users can choose who they interact with online based on their interests. Network societies are also marked by 'hypersocialism' (Castells 2005:11-12) with individuals being more socially active both online and offline because of internet facilitated virtual engagements. A third characteristic of network societies is 'self-driven mass communication', wherein individuals and groups are usurping the traditional role of mass media using horizontal communication networks like blogs, vlogs, pods, streaming, and other forms of interactive, computer-to-computer communication that enable them bypass older forms of communication and socialisation (Castells 2005:13; Cammaerts 2015:3). A fourth feature of networked society that tends to be discussed as an outcome of the foregoing three but is a substantive aspect in itself is increased or hyper-transnationality which manifests in a more diverse and broader spread of participants around the world.

Examples of rising transnationalism abound across the Global South but the same phenomenon is occurring in the rest of the world, albeit with different implications: in both spaces, it points to declining trust in organised civil society, but in the South in particular, this indicates growing agency and autonomy. However, while Northern and Southern scholars are writing about this, not many of them use transnationality as a central concept, suggesting a lingering bias in framings of transnationalism as involving North and South while South-South activism is

constructed as regional. This disjuncture is noted by Pallas and Bloodgood's (2018:1) observations that: (a) scholars of transnational advocacy outside the North are not commonly cited in the literature and (b) where unilateral action by Northern NGOs' on international issues is seen as transnational advocacy, action by non-Northern NGOs is only considered transnational if it involves Northern actors (Pallas and Bloodgood 2018:9-10). This denotes a shift from the transnationality of actors to the transnationality of advocacy. It exposes an epistemic gap but also partly explains why activism taking place outside the Global North is not visible in 'mainstream' transnational activism literature.

Sociologist Cardoso (2005) suggests that some countries like the US, Finland and Singapore can already be considered network societies while some others are in transition but a multi-author volume edited by Mutsvairo (2016) illustrates the growing importance of social media across Africa as attested by its 'vibrant digital cultures and practices (Mabewazara 2015:1, cited by Wasserman in Mutsvairo 2016:v). Communications scholar, Nyabola (2018:5) notes that in Kenya, digital spaces—especially social media (Omanga 2017)—are one of the most politically active. To back this, she cites a 2016 study that found that Twitter in Africa tends to be more political than other parts of the world (Portland Communications 2018). Nyabola (2018:127-156) discusses the pivotal role of social media in feminist activism in Kenya across a range of issues, including sexual violence and women's political involvement. This bears out in Nigerian English scholar, Yeku's (2018a, 2018b) work on how social media is enabling 'everyday citizens' in Nigeria to overcome marginality and subalternity by expressing and performing their political agency in less restricted online public spaces.

Against this background, the growing digitalisation of transnational activism is self-evident, although the nexus between digitalism and activism has been studied more widely at

national than global levels. It is important to state that digital activism has not supplanted traditional physical activism; rather, several scholars note that they are mutually constitutive (Nyabola 2018). The first thing to note is the construction of cyberspace as a public sphere (Papacharissi 2009), a virtual 'counter-public' (Sabao and Chikara, 2018) and the expanding locus of transnational politics (Endong 2018), building on Habermas' (1992) original concept. This is important because it alters conceptions of what constitutes transnationality, strengthening the case to look beyond the traditional thresholds of geographic state borders to the borderless space of the Internet which is organised more by interests and identities. Second, scholars have noted that the Internet has changed the constitution of transnational activism as well as the relations among those who take part in it.

Cammaerts (2015:7) notes that transnationalisation is one of several important impacts of social media on social movements and protest. He states that networked technologies offer new opportunities for activists and their organisations to mobilise transnationally, making transnational networks become 'more virtual, more fluid, more decentralised, more de-institutionalised and more global' Cammaerts (2015:7). Other scholars recognise and reiterate these changing aspects of transnational activism but have made limited effort to theorise the identities of the actors driving these changes, ostensibly because they are so diverse that it is difficult to condense them into neat categories.

5.2 Transnational Activism: 'New' Directions or New Forms?

Scholars disagree over whether the changing context of transnational activism has produced new forms or merely changed the ways that existing forms operate. In this section, I

discuss the divergent views of various scholars on these questions. It is difficult to conclude authoritatively without further research, but the literature reviewed so far indicates that older forms of transnational activism prevail, albeit in different processes and alliances with other actors, but environmental factors have also produced new hybrid actors that are qualitatively different in structure, inter-group relations and motivations, and thus require new theories.

Recent work on transnational activism is turning toward the changing forms of activism and exploring a qualitative departure from the institutionalised advocacy that dominates IR scholarship. Without essentialising current trends, non-IR literature has noted a resurgence of mass-based activism that involves loosely connected networks of actors in multiple geographic contexts doing activism simultaneously around the same issues but in ways that are structurally different from older forms of activism.

Based on his study of two cases of social justice activism, Bennett (2005:203) distinguishes two eras of transnational activism: a first generation of centralised coalitions of NGOs and social movements, and a second generation of 'inclusive organization models' that are 'relatively decentralized' and loosely interconnected, 'leaderless', and operate through technologically-enhanced networks that help expand the scale of their transnationalism. They consist of 'organizations and individuals who are more resistant to conventional social movement practices of coalition-formation, brokerage, framing, and establishing straightforward institutional relationships to influence policy'. He further states that first-generation forms of transnational activism are embedded in second-generation forms, thus forming hybrids that require the reformulation of older concepts of transnational activism as framed by Keck and Sikkink's generation (Bennett 2005:213).

Bennett (2005:204, 207) uses the case of a protest in Washington against the Iraq war in which an estimated 100,000 people who participated out of seven to 30 million people worldwide (Bennett 2005:207) expressed divergent opinions to illustrate that contemporary movements value diversity and subjectivity over ideology and conformity. Compared with older though still active movements that centre on specific issues and tend to comprise organisational actors with shared collective identities, new ones are more likely to include wide ranges of individual actors who engage directly (i.e., not through organisations) bring diverse issues to the same protest event (Bennett 2005:205). The main attributes of both eras of activism are summarised in Figure 6, copied from Bennett's text. Technology is enhancing activists' ability to reach new and wider audiences, but it is also producing new forms, e.g., meta or hyper organisations that exist mainly in digital form and processes and are a common feature of transnational protest networks (Bennett (2010:218).

Figure 6: Attributes of NGO-led and direct transnational activism

Defining Differences in Two Eras of Transnational Activism

	NGO Advocacy Order	*Direct Activism*
Scope	policy—issue—advocacy	diverse social justice agenda
Organization	NGO-centered issue networks	mass activism—multi-issue
Scale	limited by brokered coalitions	expanded by technology networks
Targets	government (all levels) some corporations	corporations, industrial sectors econ blocs (G7, WEF, IMF, WTO)
Tactics	strategic campaigns —limited political goals —turned on & off by lead orgs	permanent campaigns —diverse political goals —difficult to turn on & off
Goals	gov't (nat. & int'l) regulation	personal involvement in direct action
	establish information regimes	establish communication networks
	maintain organizational identity	hyper-orgs to empower individuals
Capacity	reform & crisis intervention	mass protest, value change

Source: Bennett (2010:214).

Bennett explores in some depth the benefits and risks of the hybridity embodied by new forms of transnational activism which include greater potential combined power and impact, and tensions and disengagement arising from differences in approach, political capital and values. However, his analysis of both sets of actors as groups does not permit him to look more closely at relationships within them, particularly among individuals within direct action movements. Bennett seems to assume, arguably because he engages from the perspective of US- and Europe-based actors, that new forms of activism are cohesive and thus does not address geographies of power and disparities in agency and representation between participants situated either mainly in the Global North or South.

In the same edited volume, drawing on Tarrow's (2005) earlier work and a term coined by Ghanaian-British philosopher Anthony Appiah (1996), Della Porta and Tarrow (2010) note the growing transnational importance of 'rooted cosmopolitans', defined as 'ordinary citizens' with multiple belongings and flexible identities, who are 'more commonly involved in domestic politics or movements' and who reach beyond their own home bases to join with millions of others around the world' (Della Porta and Tarrow 2005:228). This is evidenced by the millions of ordinary citizens who marched against the US war on Iraq in cities across Europe, the US and other continents—Africa and other Global South countries are not mentioned. However, Della Porta and Tarrow (2005:238) use the term as a catchall for a range of actors that includes immigrant activists actively involved in transnational politics, Global South labour activists who form alliances with Northern counterparts and transnational advocacy networks. Multiple identities are defined as 'overlapping memberships of loosely structured polycentric networks' and flexible identities are characterised by 'inclusiveness and a positive emphasis upon diversity and cross-fertilisation' (Della Porta and Tarrow 2010: 237).

Though they use the term 'emerging movements, the authors think it inutile to demonstrate their 'newness', preferring to identify novel characteristics, partly in recognition of the historic nature of transnational activism, as seen in the anti-slavery movement of the early nineteenth century (Della Porta and Tarrow 2010:228). For them, the most outstanding aspect of new transnationalism is the emergence of a group of people who are able to build linkages between resources and opportunities offered by their societies and those available in transnational contexts (Della Porta and Tarrow 2010:238, 240). Della Porta and Tarrow (2005:232) thus recognise the growing transnational agency of individuals, but, like many Northern scholars, their focus is on Global North actors and contexts, even if some of their actions are directed toward non-Northern issues. This is unexpected, given that they admit the Eurocentric weakness of previous scholarship on transnational activism—including by them.

The wave of uprisings that have come to be known as the 'Arab Spring'—a misnomer given their situation mainly in North Africa (Branch and Mampilly 2015)—took the form of spontaneous, diffuse protests and events with no clear central coordinating point. This trend of diffusion meant that vast groups and generations of 'ordinary' people took part, compared with the closed groups of professional transnational advocacy organisations and networks previously examined. It is worth noting here an observation by communications scholar, Mutsvairo (2016:6) who states that while activism has traditionally been the preserve of 'activists', ordinary citizens using social media and other technologies now self-identify as activists too.

The actors in the North African protests were mixed groups of multiracial-multicultural Black and Arab citizens (Amazigh/Berber, Copt, etc.) living across North Africa and its diasporas. Young people of North African origin joined protests with fellow citizens in North America and Europe (Camozzi, Cherubini, Leccardi and Rivetti 2015), among other Northern countries.

Second-generation young persons of North African descent, many of whom had been born in the West and identified as both North African and North American or European obscured the conceived binary between Northern and non-Northern identities in earlier activism research. Many participants were connected through personal social relations of family and friends (Smith, Krishna and Al-Sinan 2019), many of which were facilitated by social media networks, depicting the importance of informality in driving contemporary activism. Events took place in multiple geographic spaces in and outside North Africa that were either consciously coordinated or held in solidarity (Temlali 2011:47).

Participation ranged from embodied—being physically present at real-time events, to digital—liking and sharing posts on social media (Facebook, Twitter), and coordinating e-groups of organisers and protesters (Smith, Krishna and Al-Sinan 2019). Technological tools like social media facilitated global communication and mobilisation but the location and situation of the protests in cyberspace is significant to the idea of the digital sphere as an emerging virtual 'counter-public' that expands or pluralises physical spheres of political interaction and participation (Dahlgren 2006; Lee et al 2015; Nyabola 2018; Sabao and Chikara 2018).

Similar patterns recur in movements like Fallism, the South African-led movement to decolonise education and other aspects of everyday life in South Africa that has been extensively researched by scholars of African Studies, sociology and anthropology, to wit, Adomako Ampofo (2015, 2016), Nyamnjoh (2015), Luescher (2016), Wamai (2016). Participants were nationally and racially diverse in and outside South Africa and the Internet played a significant role in aiding mobilisation, documentation and communication. Its creative use of social media (Twitter and Facebook), according to Luescher (2016:23) attracted solidarity messages from other student

populations worldwide (Sosibo 2015 in Nyamnjoh 2015), including from the West Indies and the US (Nyamnjoh 2015:80; News24 2015 in Nyamnjoh 2015).

In addition to embodying a new pattern of mass-based deinstitutionalised transnational activism, Fallism is also instructive because of its global trajectory. It spread to the Global North and other parts of the world not because it appealed for foreign support, but because its framing resonated with other actors facing similar challenges (Ramaru 2017:94; Nyamnjoh 2015). Nyamnjoh (2015) suggests that the activism's framing of Black pain was instrumental in its spread to Europe and North America. As some have argued, because the help needed was internal, it would have been counterintuitive to seek help from the same imperialist powers that contributed to the prevailing state of things in South Africa. Thus, we see a shift in the power relations between North and South in the context of activism that influences political action by Northern actors but does not depend on their support. Some of these ideas are captured in Castells' work on new transnational networks.

5.2.1 Reconstructing transnational advocacy networks

Sociologist Castells' latest work, *Networks of Outrage and Hope* (2012) brings to light his observations about common patterns among what he terms 'new' transnational social movements, which he theorises as part of a global wave of activism that began in Iceland and Tunisia and is travelling around the world (Castells 2012a, 2012b). Drawing on the ideas of Touraine and Melucci, Castells (2014:97) de-emphasises the role of structure; he defines social movements more broadly by purpose, stating that they 'challenge the values and institutions of society outside of established institutional channels'—although they are not always progressive (Castells 2012a). In his view, these movements are characterised and connected by how physical place and mobile

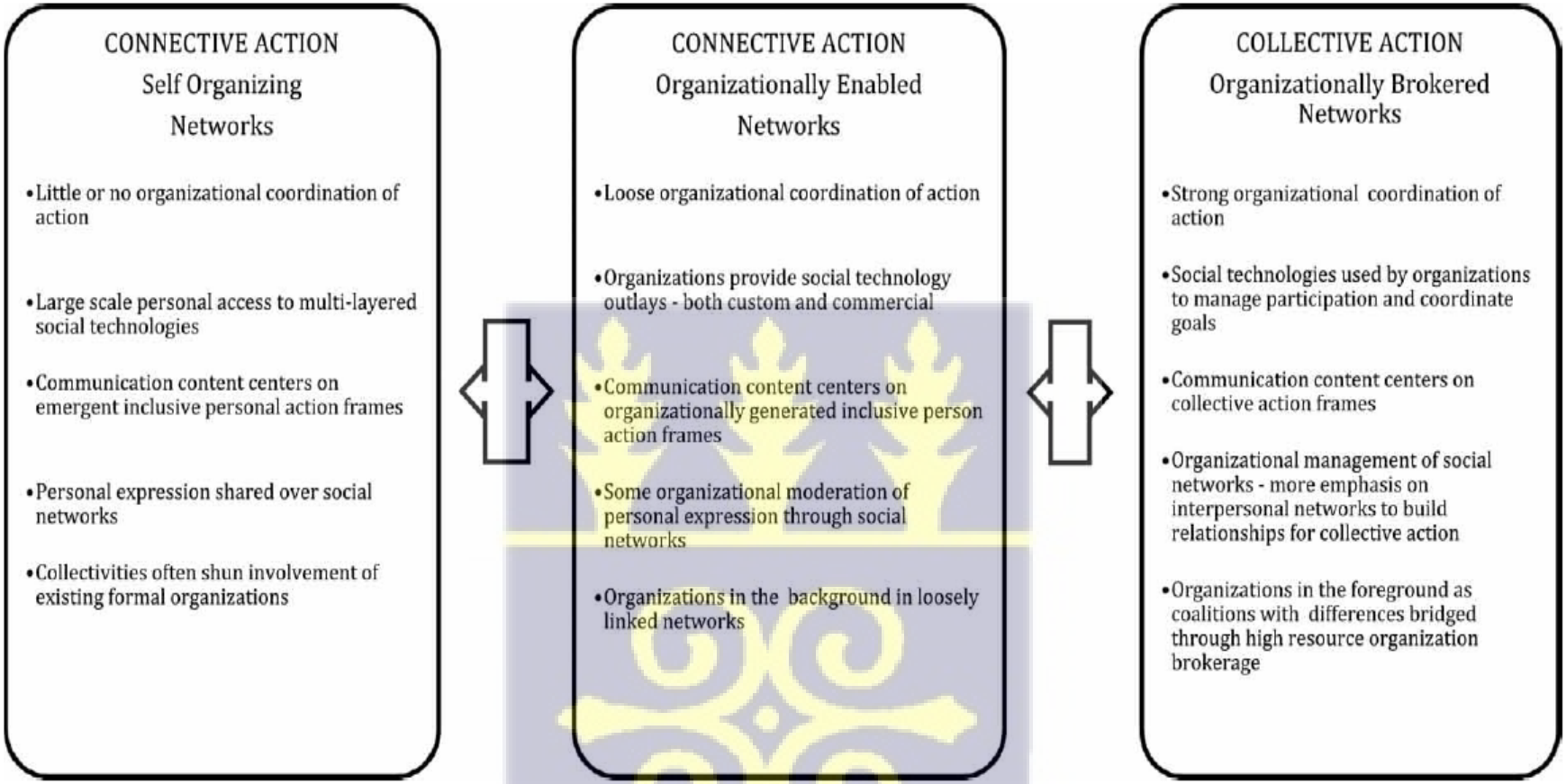
networks combine within them, as well as their horizontality, leaderlessness and rhizomatic (fluid, unfixed) nature, among other factors (Castells 2014).

Contrary to older movements that form around normative and instrumental motives, Castells sees new movements as driven by emotions or affective intelligence which centre on outrage at varied social conflict and optimism or hope about the prospects of a different future reality. Technological advancements are giving more agency and autonomy to individuals through self-communication and altering the form and functionality of social networks, making them more multimodal—they include online and offline groups and members of multiple personal (family, friends, hobby groups) networks, interactive and global-local (Castells 2012a). This approach allows for analysis that is inclusive and holistic and transcends the strictures created by assigning specific features to constructed forms of activism that are, in reality, not rigid.

Castells' work resonates with Bennett and Segerberg's (2012) concept of connective action which comes to fore through what they describe as the personalisation of contentious politics by the ways in which communication occurs across social media networks. They contrast this with the logic of collective action that characterises the deep organisation and development of collective identities associated with older, more traditional movements. They identify three ideal types of networks: (1) self-organising and (2) organisationally enabled networks which are defined by connective action, and (3) organisationally brokered networks which form around collective action (see Figure 2). This framework advances the discourse on networks beyond Keck and Sikkink's original framing. However—and this may be partly because Bennett and Segerberg's empirical case referents are all European or American—it presumes some amount of cohesion and singularity of model that do not fully explain the multimodal nature of activisms like Bring Back Our Girls occurring in other parts of the world.

This concept echoes anthropologist Nyamnjoh's (2015:259-259) notion of frontier Africans, a group that straddles 'myriad margins of identity and belonging...physical and cultural geographies' by virtue of the 'accelerated physical and social mobility afforded Africans and others by their creativity and technological innovations'. This speaks to the point made earlier about the futility of rigid binary categories of Northern and Southern actors. Related to Nyamnjoh's work is the controversial concept of Afropolitans first propounded by the Nigerian-American writer, Taiye Selasi (2005), a contested referent to African cosmopolitan emigrants.

Figure 7: Elements of connective and collective action networks.



Source: Bennett and Segerberg (2012:757).

Selasi defines this group as a racially and culturally eclectic group of young people born mostly outside Africa to parents who migrated in the 1960s and 1970s, and who now straddle multiple geographic and cultural worlds with diluted concepts of self and home. The concept has been strongly critiqued for being reductive and elitist (Tveit 2013; Dabiri 2014), and suggesting that cosmopolitanism is a quality imposed by the North (Musila 2016). It has support among some scholars who view it as 'a new phenomenology of Africanness and a way of being African in the world' (Gikandi 2011). Nevertheless, African diasporic identities and personalities play an important role in today's transnational activism.

In addition to the cases cited above, we find further evidence of this in new feminist movements, many of which are digitalised and known as cyberfeminism. In her profile of Female IN (FIN), a movement that evolved from the hashtag #BeingFemaleinNigeria to a transnational Facebook group with over a million members in 2017, Olofintuade (2017:163), a queer feminist activist and writer details how its founder, a Nigerian woman living in the United States started it by drawing on women in her circles who in turn invited women in their own circles, including on social media. Thus, we see the importance of personal social and social media networks in new forms of transnational activism. The group was led by Omolola with the support of selected Facebook administrators and moderators who enforced group rules, but FIN was not a formal structured organisation; it was a network of individual women characterised by varying depths of social ties or connectivities among its members. Olofintuade (2017) shows that these women joined the movement as individuals who shared the common identity of being Nigerian women and the common experience of gender discrimination. Yet their varied values and religious beliefs over matters like sexuality caused tensions that showed that their collective identity did not outweigh their intersectionality.

Olofintuade (2017:167-170) further notes that the group started as a safe space to give voice to oppressed women, but its leadership grew increasingly authoritarian and intolerant of contrary opinion as more women joined. This shows that tensions over identity and power exist in all activist

groups—even those whose members share cultural, racial and gender identities. It also strengthens the case for intersectionality as an analytical tool of transnational activism. It counters Castells' (2012a, 2012b, 2014) notion that new social movements are characterised by horizontality. Though his work suggests that new movements are less rigidly structured than NGO networks, emerging evidence shows that in some digital groups and interactions, there are clear hierarchies, albeit informal, that defy his concept.

5.3 Motivations for Participation in Transnational Activism by Individual Actors

Individual participation is a broad concept that is widely theorised across different disciplines and in relation to different events, including conflict and violence, institutionalised politics, organisations, sport, religion, development and a range of collective activities. Building on its usage in democratic theory, this study conceptualises participation to mean the active involvement of individuals in social or political action across borders with the intent to achieve set outcomes. The word 'active' is included to indicate that there are layers of involvement; these range from 'slacktivism', defined by Morozov (2009, in Fatkin and Lansdown, 2015:581), the 'lazy ineffectiveness of online activism", inferring the minimal effort, risk and time of online participation in activism (Smith, Krishna and Al-Sinan 2019:183-184). The other end of this scale of participation is characterised as active and involving investments in online activities or physical offline protests. The concept of participation stands in contrast to group-based approaches, predominantly in IR and sociology, in its focus on the micro-level, person-specific reasons why people get involved in activism.

This study builds on the theoretical impulses around political and civic participation and engagement elaborated by Barrett and Brunton-Smith (2014) and Barrett (2015) which recognise that both concepts emanate from 'complex interactions between macro, demographic, and psychological factors' and thus necessitate multi-level integrative theories to understand what drives them. Participation is construed in behavioural terms and used to denote 'participatory behaviours'

that are conventional (included voting and electioneering) and 'unconventional' (i.e., taking part in political protests). Engagement is constructed as psychological and indicates 'having an interest in, paying attention to, or having knowledge, beliefs, opinions, attitudes, or feelings about either political or civic matters' (Barrett and Brunton-Smith 2014:6). Engagement also takes different forms like membership of civic organisations, the consumption of news through different media (newspapers Internet, etc.) and 'holding opinions about and attitudes towards political or civic matters' (Barrett and Brunton-Smith 2014:6).

Political participation is 'activity that has the intent or effect of influencing either regional, national, or supranational governance' (Barrett and Brunton-Smith 2014:6). Four multi-level factors inform individual participation and engagement in collective action: macro factors (contextual factors like a country's characteristics), demographic factors (includes ethnicity and gender), social factors (related to membership of diverse social groups) and psychological factors (such as cognition, emotions and identification) (Barrett and Brunton-Smith 2014:8–18). This study expands the latter three in light of persistent knowledge gaps in micro or individual-level theories and the dominance of structural-institutional frameworks in relevant scholarship.

I use this framework because in contrast to existing knowledge on the predictors and incentives for individual participation in activism, Barrett's work adopts a holistic view that enables analysis of a wide range of factors at the national, regional and international levels that inform the dependent variable in this study. This integrative ethic is important because the study's participants are situated at each level with some of them operating transnationally.

The relationship between engagement and participation constructed in literature as mutually reinforcing whereby engagement leads to participation, but participation also enhances engagement.

5.3.1 Demographic factors

Individual demographic factors have hitherto not received extensive scholarly attention in IR because of a preponderance of research on group-level participation theories. In addition to the

examples of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, migrant generational status and gender that Barrett and Brunton-Smith (2014:9), this study's data point to the relevance of race, nationality, profession and parental status (includes gender of children as having girls seems to be correlated with the strength of parents' empathy with the families of the Chibok students).

Activists with higher socioeconomic status are considered to have higher levels of political and civic knowledge which translates to higher levels of participation as informed by the nexus between socioeconomic status, education and skills gained through formal employment (2014:9). This study adds to this that higher socioeconomic status facilitates transnational participation in activism but in protests related to inequality of opportunity, lower socioeconomic status might be the stronger factor.

One example of how ethnicity influences participation is ethnic groups' involvement with issues relating to their own groups or those of other ethnicities. For instance, ethnicity was one motive for participation in Bring Back Our Girls for African-origin migrant participants in the US who regularly engage in Nigerian and African diaspora activities. This was driven by their consciousness of geographic distance from 'motherlands' as well as their consciousness of belonging differently in a racially polarised society where they are profiled as Black with no regard to any cultural differentiations. This is closely tied to the concepts of nationality which this study introduces to Barrett and Brunton-Smith's framework. Nationality is important to the extent that it informs individual identification with a particular state or states if people have multiple nationalities. However, at a transnational level, the consciousness of belonging to a nationality that itself belongs to a broader collective ethnicity or identity, for example Africa(n), also influences participation. In this regard, the study introduces the concept of neo-Pan Africanism, operationalised as the transnational consciousness among ordinary people of the interconnectedness of African histories, knowledges and experiences. The emphasis on ordinary people distinguishes this idea from its state-dominated antecedent first advocated by Nkrumah (1965).

Gender has structural and cultural effects on participation. Barrett and Brunton-Smith (2014:10) suggest that higher education and labour force participation may mean that men are more likely to have the resources and capital needed for participation though they do not explain how this translates into actual action. Their stance is not corroborated by the greater involvement of women compared to men transnationally in Bring Back Our Girls which scholarship on women's activism suggests is enabled by women's interests in issues involving the female gender. This study upholds the authors' assertion, per Galligan (2012:10) that in order to interpret gendered 'patterns of participation', it is important to understand the 'cultural, social, and religious norms that determine gender roles within a society, and the differential opportunities to engage that are made available to women and to men. Research shows that women from societies where women and girls are oppressed, and who have themselves experienced gender-based oppression, are more likely to participate in actions that address gender inequity and injustice.

Race is not included as a factor in the models discussed earlier but it appears to be important in contexts of prevalent racial injustice, especially where correlations can be made among violent events in geographically disparate spaces. Parallels have been drawn, for instance, between racialised violence against Brown and Black bodies in the US and South Africa that led to the Must Fall and Black Lives Matter movements, and draw transnational connections among those who took part in them (Adomako Ampofo 2017).

Barrett and Brunton-Smith state that professional work can impart skills that inform participation. This study adds, in line with research on membership of activist organisations and previous activism as predictors of participation (Keck and Sikkink 1998, 1999), that being a professional activist influences participation by heightening awareness of social justice issues and facilitated mobilisation through established activist networks.

Parental status can be construed as a measure of socioeconomic status but in the particular case of Bring Back Our Girls (and other girls' rights activism), being a parent to a child of the same gender as those who are the subjects of political action is a determinant of participation.

5.3.2 Social factors

Social factors include the 'beliefs, attitudes, values, norms, discourses, and practices that individuals are susceptible to by virtue of their connections with different social actors (p. 13), what Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans (2013) call *social embeddedness*. These include family, schools, workplaces, peer groups, mass media and organisations to which people belong. Barrett and Brunton-Smith state that these social connections affect the knowledge that people are exposed to, including the normativity of political action itself as well as their exposure to mobilisation efforts. Barrett and Brunton-Smith (2014:14) emphasise that these connections represent only potential influences on prospective participants who are not passive recipients of social factors but 'agentic social actors' who actively construct their own systems of beliefs and attitudes from among the web of information offered by their environment (Bandura, 1986 in Barrett and Brunton-Smith 2014:14). Although activist organisations create campaigns to mobilise participation, increasingly easier access to international news is making it easier for individuals to self-mobilise even when they have not been targeted by activist groups. While they do not specify the content of these social factors, some examples from Bring Back Our Girls include anti-extremism, injustice, violence against women and girls, and solidarity.

The concept of *social capital* is key to understanding how social embeddedness influences individuals' decision to participate in activism. Social capital has three components: structural, relational and cognitive. Structural social capital 'refers to the presence or absence of network ties between actors and it essentially defines who people can reach' (Barrett and Brunton-Smith 2014:894). These are seen as more formal ties compared with relational capital which arises from the kinds of personal relationships built through historical interactions. *Cognitive capital*, also known as *raised consciousness*, is defined as 'a set of political beliefs and action orientations arising out of an awareness of similarity'. Della Porta and Diani (2006) disaggregate this into the identification of social actors with certain sets of principles and concerns (values), and 'how social actors assign meaning to their experience (cognition). Thus, the gender consciousness of Bring Back Our Girls'

female activists is a form of cognitive capital, based on shared understandings of belonging to a group that faces gendered oppression around the world, including that which led to the Chibok abductions.

Social stake or embeddedness, a concept also discussed by Della Porta and Diani (2006:117), influences protest primarily according to the amount of political discussion and types of information exchanged within networks. This makes it easier to share targeted messages that compel action. The influence of social network membership also features in Della Porta and Diani 2006:114), and Keck and Sikkink's (1999) work on transnational advocacy networks wherein they observe that activists were identified as having been involved in previous actions by virtue of 'shared pasts of activism' made possible by their memberships of activist social networks. In sum, although individuals have varying motives for engaging in protests, these motives are shaped by their embeddedness in diverse social networks whose values and information exchanges have a bearing on how they self-identify (identities), who they relate with, their moral or normative worldviews and their willingness to take action in furtherance of their beliefs. Although Barrett and Brunton-Smith do not explicitly theorise identity as a factor of participation, their ideas about the nexuses between group membership and attitudes and values speak to how individuals self-identify based on diverse social experiences in line with social identification theory.

Identity has to do with how people see themselves, including in relation to others comprising perceptions of sameness and difference (Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2013:890; Della Porta and Diani 2006:15). People have personal and social identities based on individual attributes and social memberships (Della Porta and Diani 2006:15). Social identity theory posits that people are moved to engage in collective action to the extent that they identify with the attributes of particular social groups. In addition to the conventional categories of the personal and social selves, this study introduces the concept of the digital self which denotes the ways in which participants to activism portray themselves in digital spaces. A second key identity category which has not been explored in discourses on transnational activism is the figure of the 'afropolitan', a compound term first coined

by writer Taye Selasi to denote cosmopolitan Africans who are equally situated in the continent and the Global North and play a role in transnational exchanges. This echoes Tarrow's (2005) 'rooted cosmopolitans'.

5.3.3 Psychological factors

Psychological factors comprise cognitive factors including 'political and civic knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, opinions, and social and cultural values' (Barrett and Brunton-Smith 2014:15). At the national level they talk about beliefs about good citizenship or civic duty which at a global level translates to ideas about global citizenship and the consciousness of interconnectedness and how this compels action on behalf of oppressed others. Barrett and Brunton-Smith (2014) also discuss the concept of efficacy which conveys individual perceptions of the potential impact of their participation. This is similar to Kollmuss and Agyeman's (2002:255–256) concept of the *locus of control* which represents an individual's perception of whether he or she has the ability to bring about change through his or her own behaviour'.

Negative and positive emotions have a bearing on participation (2014:16), as recognised by several sociologists (Jasper 1998, Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2013, Della Porta and Diani 200x). Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002:254–255) also acknowledge the influence of emotions on people's environmental actions. Jasper's (1998) theoretical schema consists of three principal types of emotions: reactive emotions, affective loyalties and moods.

Reactive emotions are conceptualised as 'automatic physiological reactions experienced in the body' that inform individual participation in protest (page). They include transitory individual responses to what Walsh (1981 in Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2013:888) terms 'an unexpected threat or inroad upon people's rights or circumstances', like anger at a government decision, grief at deaths, outrage at a development plan and shame (Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2013:406). Reactive emotions are seen as subjective and difficult to measure methodologically, especially with retroactive research.

In contrast, affective loyalties develop during protest, are more enduring and 'include affective ties among protest members and feelings toward institutions, people and practices outside the movement and its constituent groups' (Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2013:405). Examples are hatred, love, solidarity, trust and respect (Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2013:406). Affective ties reflect constructionist notions of emotions as cognitive because they depend on cognitive understandings of events, and also as deriving from shared social meanings. In this view, affective emotions are a 'socially prescribed set of responses' determined by 'social norms or shared expectations regarding appropriate behaviour' (Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2013:400). Such emotions arise from perceived infractions of moral rules (Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2013:401).

Moods fit on a continuum between reactive and affective emotions and include compassion, sympathy, pity, defiance, fear and hope (Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2013:406).

Social identifications have to do with 'experiencing a sense of belonging to a social group' which is embedded in having a 'sense of community' that itself includes people feeling that the community offers opportunities for participation (Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2013:26).

The final psychological factor in the integrative model is personal motivations and goals which are wide-ranging and include the need to express personal values and concern for a community. Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002:259–250) define motivations as 'the reason for a behaviour or a strong internal stimulus around which behaviour is organized'.

This framework is comprehensive because it reconciles into a single model different concepts that have been studied separately by different scholars across disciplines. However, unlike the boomerang model and other models identified by de Waal (2015:18–44) and Pallas (2017), among others, Barrett and Brunton-Smith's framework do not consider or represent the dynamics of interaction among activists in different parts of the world. Also, their model seems to assume a linear relationship between individual characteristics and the iterative processes of engagement and participation.

5.4 Digital activism and new theories of engagement

Changes in the forms and locus of activism are forcing scholars to rethink their conceptualisations of the concepts of engagement and participation. Emerging research on the relationship between computer-mediated communication and social media and activism highlights the ways in which technological advances have altered and continue to alter the practice of engagement in digital contexts. This is important in light of the increasing digitalisation of activism. Smith, Krishna and Al-Sinan (2019:185) suggest that individual *social media engagement, '*a psychological state through which an individual "becomes cognitively and emotionally absorbed" in the experience', leads to political action. Engagement can be cognitive, affective or behavioural (Smith, Krishna and Al-Sinan (2019:186) and is distinguished from regular social media activity or *slacktivism* ('lazy' activism that does not require much of users) (Smith, Krishna and Al-Sinan 2019:185). Social media engagement is constructed not as a fixed quality that is easily measured by the frequency and ways that social media users engage with digital content but as a process comprising antecedents, attributes and outcomes (Smith, Krishna and Al-Sinan 2019:190).

Antecedents are factors that precede and lead to engagement which 'comprise the needs and conditions of social media users'. Antecedents 'may originate either online or offline and are primarily social and informational'. People's emotional state and self-image, as well as their communicative competence (their ability to contribute digitally to protests using social media know-how) also function as antecedents. Attributes are 'the qualities of the social media experience that engender engagement', like aesthetic appeal and perceived usability by which social media users measure their digital experiences (Smith, Krishna and Al-Sinan 2019:191). Outcomes transcend social media likes or shares and can include factors like establishing and maintaining social connections. This study suggests that this type of outcome indicates that participation is influenced by normative as well as strategic considerations.

In addition to social media engagement, empowerment and social stake also inform participation. Empowerment can derive from several factors, including the consciousness of being

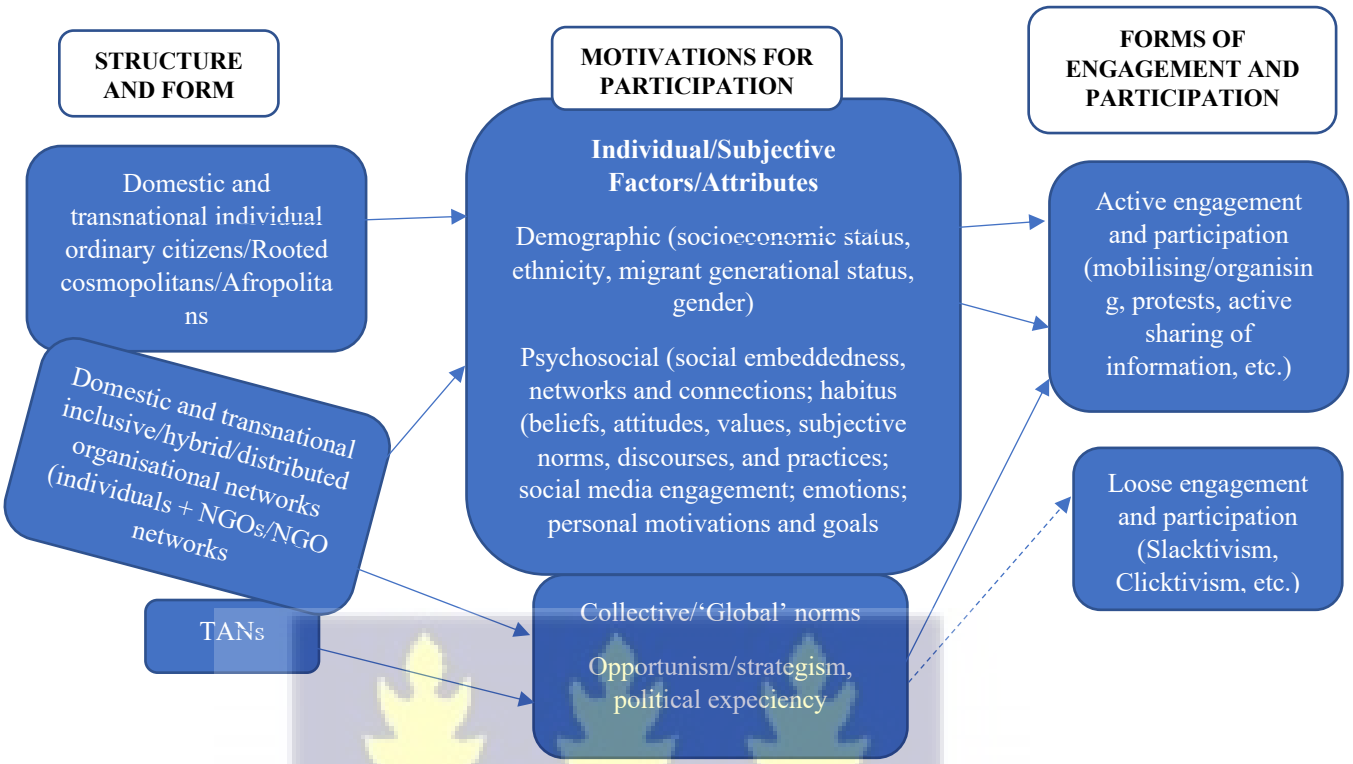
part of a collective and having the competence to be actively involved in curating information as part of digital activism. The idea of social stake or investment mirrors social embeddedness in digital contexts. It has to do with people's sense of belonging to digitally connected communities and the sense that their membership confers responsibilities to these social groups and commands support from them in the form of participation in activism in which these groups are involved.

5.5 Modelling New Forms of Transnational Activism

Based on the concepts and patterns discussed earlier, this section presents a theoretical model that presents salient factors that inform the changing structure and form, and motivations for participation of individuals in transnational activism. The model contains concepts that are present in IR, sociology, communication/media studies, environmental studies, African Studies and social psychology, with varying effects on the dependent variable, and is thus multidisciplinary. The model is also multilevel as it depicts the involvement of different actors. It is integrative, being based on multiple scholars' theories of the structures and forms, interrelations and motives for participation of the different 'actor constellations' per Zajak (2017:241) involved in contemporary transnational activism.

The model shows three main sets of actors driving contemporary transnational activism. The first set consists of domestic and transnational individual ordinary citizens or rooted cosmopolitans or Afropolitans or frontier Africans, in the context of Africa, who are placed at the top because in the literature, they are increasingly portrayed as the main agents who are initiating, organising, mobilising and leading transnational resistance. The second group of actors comprises transnational advocacy networks as seen across IR literature. They remain active although no longer in a leading capacity.

Figure 8: Integrative model of multimodal transconnective networks of change.



Source: Author construction from IR and non-IR literature reviewed in chapters Three and Four.

They are embedded in a third group of actors of mainly individual social networks known as inclusive or hybrid distributed networks, so called because they are dispersed and not as cohesive or coordinated as TANs. Compared to previous models of transnational activism that place Southern actors beneath Northern ones in a contrived hierarchy, the current model collapses this power geography, distinguishing only between the agency of individual against collective actors. Relations between Southern and Northern activists is seen as horizontal, not vertical.

The second part of this model presents motivations for participating in transnational activism and the factors that influence them. We see that individual actors are motivated by a range of demographic and psychosocial attributes, including ethnicity, gender, personal beliefs and values, social media engagement and emotions, while TANs are influenced mainly by both collective global norms and strategic considerations. Hybrid inclusive networks of individual activists and TANs are motivated by both individual and collective attributes.

The third part of this model features a scale of engagement and participation as theorised across IR and non-IR literature. Active engagement and participation involve all activity that shows commitment and a willingness to undergo some amount of risk. This is typically framed as physical or offline participation though there is growing recognition that digital participation can be regarded as active and is instrumental to effective offline mobilisation. Loose engagement and participation are typically conceived in terms of digital activity and include slacktivism and clicktivism. Both are often conflated but do not mean the same thing. The term, clicktivism, emanates from a bias against digital activism which is seen by some as half-hearted compared with physical involvement, whereas slacktivism describes digital activism that is not consistent. Individual forms of transnational activism can lead to either or both active and loose participation, but online activism is seen as more likely to lead to the latter. NGO activism is seen as more likely to be active but can also be loose, depending on its motivations. This model does not attempt to explain how or why the intensity of participation of different actors varies, nor how their attributes explain their involvement at different scales. Though an interesting subject of research, it is beyond the scope of this study. The model also does not view different scales of participation as static but as dynamic and evolving depending on the motivations of separate actors.

5.6 Conclusion

IR scholars have laid an important foundation of knowledge on transnational advocacy networks and what informs their actions. Though this field is increasingly cognisant of the transnational agency of non-state, non-formal organised actors, it retains two biases that make its narratives incomplete: a bias toward collective organised actors (NGOs and NGO coalitions) and another toward Northern actors, contexts and theories. Changing contexts of transnational activism as marked by hyperdigitality, declining trust in organised civil society and increasing Southern agency, among other factors, means that IR literature does not reflect accurately the current state of

transnational activism, which necessitates a rethinking of its frameworks through knowledge from other disciplines.

This chapter's exploration of knowledge from sociology, communications studies, psychology and African Studies builds on IR's theorising about the growing transnational involvement and agency of informal individual actors, showing how they mobilise and interact with each other as well as with formal transnational advocacy networks. This knowledge shows that these individuals are 'ordinary' citizens who do not necessarily identify as professional activists and are motivated by a wide range of personal attributes that do not feature in explanations of collective motivations. While there are commonalities, individual motivations are largely subjective and explain why diverse individuals holding divergent beliefs and identities can come together within a single protest but for different reasons. The chapter draws on both IR and non-IR literature to construct a model that brings together all this information in a coherent way. This model is subsequently tested against Bring Back Our Girls in chapters Six and Seven.

While non-IR disciplines advance knowledge on transnational activism beyond the boundaries and limitations of IR, they too tend to be centred on Northern actors and contexts, creating gaps regarding their relevance for non-Northern actors and contexts. This reinforces this chapter's premise that a multidisciplinary approach offers maximal understanding of diverse aspects of the state of contemporary transnational activism as no single disciplinary or theoretical framework suffices by itself.

CHAPTER SIX

'NEW' STRUCTURES AND FORMS OF TRANSNATIONAL ACTIVISM

6.0 Introduction

This is the first of two chapters that present and discuss the study's findings in relation to the research question: what does the study of Bring Back Our Girls reveal about the structure and form, interrelations and motivations for participation in transnational activism today? Both Chapters Six and Seven speak, in turn, to the structure and form of contemporary transnational activism, and the motives of participation as seen in Bring Back Our Girls (Chapter Seven), drawing on interviews with key informants in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and the United States (US), and content analysis and digital ethnographies of their social media engagement.

In this chapter, I discuss findings relating to the forms of activism that occurred in this study's four focal countries—Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and the US, and include highlights from Canada, Germany, South Africa and Tanzania to aid analysis of where or whether Bring Back Our Girls fits in taxonomies of transnational activism. The chapter begins by looking at the interactions and relationships between Bring Back Our Girls participants in each focal country before proceeding to discuss relationships between participants in these countries and Bring Back Our Girls' base in Nigeria. It ends with a discussion of what forms of activism Bring Back Our Girls represents vis-à-vis existing typologies. The events discussed here are not an exhaustive repertoire of all the Bring Back Our Girls events that occurred in these countries. The diffuse nature of these events within and outside Nigeria meant that several groups mobilised independently, making some more visible and easier to trace than others, depending on how much publicity they got and their social media presence. Their visibility depended, at least in part, on the duration and scale of their activism, the profiles of the actors and networks involved, and their ability to draw news and social media attention.

The most common forms of event were physical gatherings of participants in symbolic places commonly known as protests, although participants employed mixed methods in their activism (various field interviews 2018-2020; Aina et al 2019). Using the reported speech of the study's participants, these events are variously referred to as protests, rallies or marches. These formations were neither monodirectional nor linear; there were multiple crosscurrents of exchange among diverse actors within each focal country and between each one and the campaign's root in Nigeria. These are presented as sequentially as possible based on available data.

6.1 Bring Back Our Girls Nigeria

As indicated in Chapter Two of this study, Bring Back Our Girls began with a hashtag and physical protests in selected individual states by groups of individuals who mobilised their friends, family and professional contacts. A number of people joined after they found details of protests on social media; others joined randomly as they walked past live public events (interview, RP4, Abuja, 19 September 2018; interview, RP1, Abuja, 20 September 2018). These began independently and coalesced as groups across Nigeria tried to ensure some coherence in their messaging and repertoires.

Initial protests drew crowds of up to 1000 in Abuja which had dwindled to an average of 15-20 persons during my visit to Abuja:

> We've had a march where, oh my God, we were up to a thousand if I'm not exaggerating. If I have to maybe bring it down a bit, maybe 800 and the pictures are there to show online. And that was the beginning, 2014, particularly in 2014 and of course later part of 2014 beginning of 2015. After 1 year, people just started getting really tired. On the average then, we would have between 300 to 400 people come out daily for the daily sit-out and then it started going down down, you know, 100, 50, 20 and now it's so bad that we have maybe 5 people come out. (Interview, RP4, Abuja, 19 September 2018).

After the first protests in Abuja, a strategic group was formed that was made up of people appointed to certain positions from within the movement (interview, RP4, Abuja, 19 September

2019) and others who were invited to join by the leadership because of their socio-political capital as activists (interview, RP12, Abuja, 7 September 2020). This strategy group was responsible for mapping stakeholders and strategies for engagement as well as monitoring responses to Bring Back Our Girls' interventions (interview, RP9, Abuja, 19 September 2018). By several accounts, several prominent members left after a while because they felt that they were being marginalised by the leadership (interview, RP12, 7 September 2020) and not being given enough say in how the activism was being conducted (interview, RP9, Abuja, 19 September 2018).

Members alternately described Bring Back Our Girls as a campaign and movement. When I asked one member of the strategy group if the group was registered as an organisation, she replied:

> It was a loose movement, using your words. We did not register as an organisation because under the Jonathan administration then, it was like they gave an instruction to the CAC [corporate affairs commission] not to approve our name, so the only time that it became expedient for us to register again was when I think someone was using the Bring Back Our Girls hashtag to raise funds and that was against our norms. When we couldn't register it, what we did was to trademark the name Bring Back Our Girls and also, we didn't want to take the form of an NGO, we just wanted it to be a campaign and that's what it has been all along. (Interview, RP9, Abuja, 19 September 2018).

Several Bring Back Our Girls participants were affiliated with prominent civil society organisations (CSOs) doing work on various aspects of governance and human rights. While they did not join Bring Back Our Girls in their official capacities, a few drew parallels between their organisations' mandates and their reasons for participating in Bring Back Our Girls. RP28, for instance, had set up a CSO on women's and girls' human rights when the abductions happened and supported Bring Back Our Girls out of "moral conscience" and because it corresponded with her personal and professional objectives to "amplify the voices of women and girls" (interviews, RP28, New York, 30 June 2020). Some members were driven by the suffering they saw during visits to Chibok to form CSOs, but Bring Back Our Girls was not itself

an NGO. This was a factor of several things: first, there was no plan for long-term engagement because no one expected the abduction or their activism to last as long as it did. This resonated across the study's four focal countries, with many expressing how unprepared they were. Second, as RP9 stated, the strategic group made a deliberate decision to not become an NGO so as to avoid having to fundraise like most NGOs do. The group's activities were thus resourced internally from financial and in-kind donations by members with no external resource mobilisation.

Members of the strategy group were aware of some Bring Back Our Girls mobilisations in other countries which they described as "movements, not chapters per se" (interview, RP9, Abuja, 19 September 2018). When asked about the nature of their relations with these groups, RP9 noted that although these formations "identified with the global campaign and with the hashtag Bring Back Our Girls", they

> "had their own individualised kind of Bring Back Our Girls …so it wasn't regulated by us. Their activities were not planned with us. Most of what they do [sic] was to communicate with us here in Abuja, "we're doing this, we're doing that".

She shared how Bring Back Our Girls Nigeria once tried to collate the contacts of all Bring Back Our Girls organisers across the world in a bid to ensure that they could communicate certain information without having to put it in public domains, but the level of response was lower than expected. The group subsequently tried to reconcile the efforts of all these people on milestone days to create some coherence and strengthen visibility, but again, there was limited response (interview, RP9, Abuja, 19 September 2018).

Perspectives of Bring Back Our Girls organisers outside Nigeria about the campaign's global structure varied according to each participant's own relationship with Bring Back Our Girls Nigeria. Some participants saw themselves as supporting the activism in Nigeria and adopted the same messaging and repertoires, including publicity material like posters, placards and digital content. In

their view, Bring Back Our Girls was coordinated to some extent, though there was some flexibility in approach. When I shared that my sense was that protests were isolated and converged occasionally, RP28 responded:

> I think it was a little bit more coordinated than that. So we had an email chain where some of the leadership from all over were a part of and so efforts were coordinated in that way. So even if we were not doing the exact same thing, so let's say New York was doing a prayer vigil or Nigeria was doing a march, England was doing a sit-in or something like that, everybody still was independent enough to design whatever their mode of activism would be for that particular event, but it was still coordinated as far as the theme, some of the statements that were released and the ultimate demands that we were asking for. So I would say it wasn't quite as independent, so even when we wrote several letters to the president, we would try to use some of the same language just to keep it as consistent as possible. (Interview, RP28, New York, 30 June 2020).

Others had more tenuous linkages with Bring Back Our Girls Nigeria or none at all. Organisers in this category tended to be people who did not know about the protests in Nigeria (interview, RP6, Tanzania, 18 December 2019), did not know people on the ground (interview, RP20, Brussels, 4 September 2020) or did not have consistent communication with Bring Back Our Girls Nigeria (interview, RP31, Toronto, 2 October 2019). The intensity of Bring Back Our Girls activism has slowed and many participants have stopped engaging completely, but a small core of dedicated persons in different countries continues to mark milestone days with special events like lectures and to share information on social media to keep the abducted students in the public consciousness.

As noted, Bring Back Our Girls formations in Nigeria and globally were very active on social media. During my research, there were at least 20 different Facebook groups and Twitter handles bearing the name Bring Back Our Girls or having some bearing on the campaign for the return of the Chibok students. Also, the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls was one of the major factors that

propelled this campaign to international status. I conducted a digital mapping on social media which showed that many of the Nigerian Bring Back Our Girls organisers in various countries are connected to each other and to some non-Nigerian organisers in the study's focal countries. The thickest relationships are between Nigeria, the UK and North America. Some participants knew each other before Bring Back Our Girls (interview, RP23, New York, 20 June 2019); others became connected as a result of it (interview, RP28, New York, 30 June 2020; interview, RP29, Los Angeles, 25 July 2020). Beyond these connectivities, it was difficult to map the more diverse relationships that occurred temporarily and mainly on social media outside the frameworks of identifiable and more enduring Bring Back Our Girls formations.

6.2 Bring Back Our Girls in Ghana

There were several Bring Back Our Girls events in Accra, Ghana. The ones discussed in this section were identified using a Facebook search for Bring Back Our Girls Ghana and an Internet search on Google using the same terms. The former search led me to two pages: Bring Back Our Girls Ghana[lix] and Bring Back Our Girls Ghana-Candlelight Vigil, Sunday May 18th, 2014.[lx] The Internet/Google search yielded media articles for events by Ghanaian celebrities, media and school children. There was also an event by a group called Nigerians in Ghana which did not appear in the search but which I know about from having been invited to participate by one of the organisers with whom I was working at the same civil society organisation at the time.

6.2.1 'Bring Back Our Girls-Ghana'

This heading is in quote marks because although this group identified with the cause of Bring Back Our Girls Nigeria, its name does not indicate any formal affiliation beyond its intent to show solidarity. I found the organiser of Bring Back Our Girls-Ghana, RP16, a self-described educator, activist and founder of an NGO on youth education, through the group's Facebook page. She coordinated a Bring Back Our Girls Mothers' Solidarity March in Accra in May 2014 for which she mobilised participants on her personal Facebook page and through a group account that was created

by someone in her social media networks (interview, RP16, 6 January 2020).[lxi] The rally was attended by mixed groups of friends and professional contacts, many of them connected through Facebook. Members of the West Africa chapter of the African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) also attended so as to not duplicate efforts, though they had been planning a separate protest as part of a global coordinated effort by FEMNET members (interview, RP6, Accra, 11 June 2020). According to RP6 (interview, Accra, 11 June 2020), random people joined the rally as it progressed through Accra who did not appear to be part of the organising group or FEMNET. Other participants included Ghanaian celebrities, Gifty Anti and Becca, female political figures and transnational actors, including Ambassador Erieka Bennett (director of the Diaspora African Network) and multiple nationalities resident in Ghana at the time. The march was the group's only physical event; all subsequent activities were mainly online on its Facebook page (interview, RP16, Accra, 6 January 2020).

Its page description reads: 'When 200+ girls in one country have been kidnapped and their whereabouts unknown, that is a matter that affects everyone in the world. #233for234'.[lxii] During the 2.5 years in which the page was active (May 2014 to October 2016), its manager/administrator shared original and secondary informative posts and news articles about the Boko Haram crisis, posts from Bring Back Our Girls Nigeria and related events in France. She also shared motivational words, posts and quotes about the 'power of one' and urging people to take action. The page also marked milestone days like Day 590 on 25 November 2015, which it used to link Bring Back Our Girls with the annual global 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence[lxiii], a Global North-initiated cultural event.

6.2.2 Bring Back Our Girls Ghana – Candlelight Vigil

About a month after the Bring Back Our Girls Ghana protest, a group made up of mostly academics held a candlelight vigil at the Central Cafeteria on the campus of the University of Ghana. It was sponsored by the African Women's Development Fund, an African feminist organisation and member of FEMNET that organised networked protests across Africa. The organisers' stated

purpose, as described on its Facebook page, was to hold a vigil 'in continued solidarity with our Nigerian sisters and daughters…to demand action to bring them home'.[lxiv]

6.2.3 Bring Back Our Girls Protests by School Children

A Google search for Bring Back Our Girls Ghana yielded an archived media report by *Junior Graphic*, the youth version of the popular Ghanaian daily, *Daily Graphic*, in which it reported on a protest by 1420 students of the Ghana International School, a prestigious private school in Ghana with a multinational student representation from 47 countries.[lxv] According to the article, then principal Mrs. Diana Nyatepe-Coo initiated the "demonstration". In the same week (2 June), Education International (2014) reported that the Ghana National Association of Teachers, its national affiliate, had arranged an event to demand the release of the Chibok girls and to support their right to education. In all, 500 pupils and 52 teachers marched and prayed, and officials of the association made speeches framing the abductions as an obstacle to Education for All (Education International 2014). Both events are examples of one-off activities by individuals who came together solely for the purpose of lending their voices to the cause and were typical of many such events by school children across the world.

6.2.4 Nigerians in Ghana

Nigerians living in Ghana held a protest at the Nigeria High Commission in Accra on 20 May tagged #BringBackOurGirlsRallyGH. The invitation email was sent by Omolara Balogun, a Nigerian activist and civil society employee to all her colleague staff in an NGO where I was employed at the time. It read: 'We invite you to join Nigerians—living in Ghana—and other well-meaning citizens across the globe to show your love, support and solidarity to the agonizing parents of these girls at the #BringBackOurGirlsRallyGH…' (Balogun 2014). I was unable to attend because of travel commitments but I received a red t-shirt printed with the hashtag, #BringBackOurGirls and an image of an African girl with a tear in her eye. Wearing these t-shirts, a group of about 20 mostly Nigerians and a few Ghanaians marched to the Nigerian High Commission in Accra where they read a statement to the high commissioner. Thereafter, individual participants continued their activism in

individual capacities on Facebook and Twitter. Apart from one tweet by Balogun, there were no concerted digital efforts by this group (interview, RP27, 15 January 2020).

6.2.5 Other Bring Back Our Girls Episodes

On 23 May 2014, Ghanafilmindustry.com reported that Ghanaian actors and actresses had chanted "Bring Back Our Girls!" at the 2014 Vodafone Ghana Movie Awards (Sakib 2014). An Internet search did not yield any further information to suggest that this was anything but a short-lived episode, as were many celebrity interventions with this activism worldwide. The *Daily Graphic*, one of the most widely read daily newspapers with an active digital platform started a Change.org petition urging the swift rescue of the Chibok students and inviting Ghanaians to mobilise around this (Daily Graphic 2014). It is not clear why only 39 people signed but the reasons they give range from the humanity of the Chibok students to the immorality of the abductions and the need to protect women and girls from violence.

Apart from the Mothers' rally which involved FEMNET and the vigil by AWDF, most Bring Back Our Girls events in Ghana were fleeting and organised by loosely connected individuals who organised separately, albeit for the same cause and using similar symbolic and performative repertoires.

6.3 Bring Back Our Girls in Kenya

Bring Back Our Girls events in Kenya were organised by the African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), an African transnational NGO comprising mainly women's network or umbrella organisations[lxvi] and some individual members. FEMNET's involvement began with conversations on Facebook Messenger when RP21, a Kenyan woman and member of FEMNET, sent messages to several Facebook contacts suggesting that they take urgent and immediate collective action. In the ensuing spate of emails among women's and girls' rights organisations in Kenya, she suggested that FEMNET provide leadership of the efforts being

discussed because of its advocacy experience and the reach of its networks. Some of the women and men in this email conversation had collaborated in 2013 under the Justice for Liz campaign, a widespread protest over Kenyan police mishandling of the case of a 16-year-old brutally gang-raped by six men and left for dead in June 2013 (Rugene 2013 in Nyabola 2018:141-142).

FEMNET accepted to lead the process and RP25 began to send emails to members and co-coordinate with RP21 the planning of a solidarity march that formed part of a series of coordinated protests by its members across Africa during the week of 15 May 2014. During email conversations, it emerged that an independent group of activists had scheduled a separate same-day solidarity march for 8 May (interviews with the organisers were pending at the time of writing) (Musangi 2014a, 2014b).[lxvii] The solidarity march and day of action took place in Nairobi on 15 May 2014 and was led by the UNITE NGOs Africa Kenya, Akili Dada, Equality Now (an international NGO with offices in the US, Kenya, the UK and Lebanon), the Solidarity for African Women's Rights Coalition and FEMNET. Similar FEMNET configurations mobilised in over 20 African countries and globally as part of this event.[lxviii] While this bears some similarity to the transnational advocacy networks (TANs) theorised by Northern scholars, there are two significant differences. First, compared to vertical Southern requests for help to Northern advocates in TANs, in this case, African actors offered solidarity to fellow Africans in what could be construed as a horizontal relationship. Second, the nature of this relationship was more collegial than dependent. This corroborates critics of the boomerang model (Keck and Sikkink 1998, 1999: De Waal 2015) and its presumption that Southern actors are always dependent on Northern ones for help and support. It also highlights Pan Africanism and gender as identity-based motives for activism, which are discussed further in Chapter Seven. The FEMNET example expands the typology of TANs and legitimises African transnational networks as members of this category of transnational actors. It further shows that although NGOs are seen as a colonial construct and imperialist tool (Manji and O'Coill 2002; Kamat 2004; Shivji 2006, 2007; Sadaqat 2017), the identities of the persons who run them can make ideational motives as important as fulfilling organisational missions. In other words, to use Pallas and Urpelainen's

(2013) schema and Mitchell and Schmitz's (2014:489) concept of 'principled instrumentalism', missions, interests and values are not mutually exclusive.

In Nairobi, 'hundreds from all walks of life' joined the march, including members of the Nigerian Students Association in Kenya, represented by Felix Anene (Musambi 2014; interview, RP21, Nairobi, 7 October 2019) whom I contacted but did not participate in an interview. He and RP21 had met at a police station in Nairobi the day before the march where he went to get a police permit for a protest by the association (interview, RP21, Nairobi, 7 October 2019). RP21 informed him by email about the FEMNET march and he agreed to participate (interview, RP21, Nairobi, 7 October 2019).[lxix] While many participants were FEMNET members, they were joined by individual non-member Kenyans and Africans and other expatriates in Kenya, again reinforcing the point about individual transnational agency as well as the hybrid nature of contemporary transnational activism, given that organised civil society worked alongside independent activists to support Bring Back Our Girls. It also illustrates how increased migration has expanded the substance of transnationalism, such that protests anywhere today are likely to involve multiple nationalities living in national spaces other than their own.

In addition to individual activism by its members on the Internet and via social media, FEMNET also ran a blog titled #BringBackOurGirls where activists contributed written pieces until February 2016. FEMNET invited the Kenyan and global publics to submit creative pieces and take action, and provided sample social media messages and images. One post by Norah Felogene Anumo, 'Education Under Attack: #147NotJustaNumber #BringBackOurGirls', decries the killings of 20 teachers in Mandera and the terror attack on Garissa in which 213 people were killed in April 2015, linking both incidents with the Chibok abductions and an assault on education (FEMNET 2015). Her piece makes linkages between militarism as performed by violent armed groups and highlights its particular gendered effects on women and girls. The group also used Google Groups, Google Forms and Docs, and listservs, e.g., the Post-2015 Women's Coalition, showing just how vital digital communication has become to social mobilisations of this nature, especially those

involving persons situated in dispersed geographic locations. Social media mappings show that Bring back Our Girls activists in Kenya followed media reports on the Chibok abductions and what other activists were doing.

6.3.1 Transnational Linkages

There is evidence of early email communication between FEMNET and several Bring Back Our Girls Nigeria co-founders. Some of the latter are directors of FEMNET-member women's rights organisations in Nigeria and benefit from structured advocacy support from the mother FEMNET organisation.[lxx] This direct communication does not seem to have been sustained as the activism intensified. Pending further interviews, FEMNET appears to have liaised more with one Nigerian women's rights activist and NGO leader whose organisation worked more closely with Bring Back Our Girls Nigeria on the ground. This individual 'gave the FEMNET individual and organisational members updates on what was going on, on the ground' (RP21, email, 8 October 2019). Although the relationships were enabled by FEMNET membership, members in Kenya offered their solidarity to the larger Bring Back Our Girls activism which preceded FEMNET's involvement and comprised several broader social and professional networks, some of which overlapped. Although it was not directly affiliated with Bring Back Our Girls Nigeria, FEMNET tried to ensure some degree of consistency with activities in Nigeria in appearance, messaging and the designs of publicity material. In an email to the group, their graphic designer writes: 'We hope this, and the general aesthetic, are seen as consistent with what's been employed at other Bring Back Our Girls marches'.[lxxi] The Kenya experience illustrates the departure in structure and form from transnational advocacy networks that are 'bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services', and in which NGOs play a 'central role' (Keck and Sikkink 1999:91-92), to more dispersed forms that co-exist in looser albeit complementary transnational relationships.

6.4 Bring Back Our Girls in the US

In the US, I identified Bring Back Our Girls mobilisations in New York, Washington, Los Angeles, Atlanta and Utah that took either of two main forms: recurrent protests by loose but cohesive groups and civil society organisations that formed out of these events, and one-off physical events by individuals who did much of their activism on social media. There was some synergy among them to the extent that they used similar repertoires (i.e., red clothing and social media messaging), for example, activists from New York attended some joint events with their colleagues in Washington. They jointly picketed then Nigerian president Goodluck Jonathan during his visit to collect a humanitarian award from Barack Obama in 2016. However, mobilisations in the US were largely independent of each other, albeit targeted at the same objectives.

6.4.1 Bring Back Our Girls in New York

There were three Bring Back Our Girls groups in New York: Bring Back Our Girls-New York City and Bring Back Our Girls-New York, which were both started by Nigerian-Americans living in the US, and RockACrownfor234 which was started by a Haitian and a South African, also resident in the US.

As stated, Bring Back Our Girls-New York City was started by RP23, a professor and activist with two young Nigerian men whom she had met at a Bring Back Our Girls protest in New York by a South African woman (later identified as Gugulethu Mlambo), which informed her decision to take action (interview, RP23, New York, 20 June 2019). She knew some of the women in Bring Back Our Girls Abuja and Lagos professionally, so when she heard that they were mobilising, she expressed interest and took part in joint strategising, mainly through conference calls and emails. Hers was an eclectic group of 150-200 diverse nationalities, races and religions that held protests at the United Nations (UN) headquarters and Nigeria House, among other venues, and conducted advocacy with UN agencies like UN Women and the UN Population Fund, New York State and City officials, including the New York attorney-general, legislators like Nancy Pelosi and Karen Bach (some of whom joined protests) and congress members. Here, we see that Bring Back Our Girls

mobilised some of the same state actors as transnational advocacy networks by leveraging personal relationships. This indicates the power and influence of informal individual involvement in transnational politics. Also, the higher mobility of Africans, their presence in diaspora spaces and their multinationality enabled them to take up direct interactions with foreign political actors and representatives without needing to pass through Northern advocates, as depicted in old constructions of transnational advocacy networks. Northern advocates were involved but in a more associate capacity. After disbanding the group over personal fatigue and an unsustainable drain on her personal finances, RP23 continued to do much of her activism by herself, much of it online, with occasional media interviews on milestone days (interview, RP23, 20 June 2019).

While the above points to a shift in the use and location of agency and power dynamics between Global North and Global South actors, it also problematises the hitherto binary notions of North and South that now converge in the minds, bodies and identities of multiple generations of Nigerian-Americans who self-identify as belonging to both spaces. This increased use of transnational activist agency by such actors and their ability to attract global media attention also offers an antithesis to campaigns like Kony2012 that are arguably made possible by the absence of strong activism in transnational spaces by actors who are rooted in the contexts where the problems that give rise to them occur. Compared with the American masterminds of Kony2012 who proceeded on distorted assumptions about Joseph Kony and the Ugandan conflict, the diaspora Africans whom I interviewed were conscious of the contextual nuances of the Boko Haram conflict and its historical and broader ramifications for women's and girls' rights, and governance and citizenship in Nigeria. This consciousness is reflected in a media commentary on the Boko Haram crisis by a Nigerian-American women's rights advocate:

> What I genuinely want the West to appreciate is the fact that this fight goes beyond whether or not girls have the right to be educated in schools. It permeates into the warped mindset, into the antediluvian thinking and belief that women are less valuable than men and thus

> should be subjugated and disrespected. It is that mindset, that inequality of thought, that needs to be re-evaluated and condemned. (Idahosa 2014).

RP26 noted that Boko Haram was "part of a bigger conversation" while RP9 remarked that although Bring Back Our Girls began in Nigeria with a focus on the Chibok abductions, it ultimately "became that entry point into the conversation on the broader insurgency and insecurity, not just in the northeast as a region, but across Nigeria as well" (interview, RP9, Abuja, 19 September 2019; interview, RP26, Washington DC, 6 March 2020). Both RP23 and RP26 had cause to correct attempts by American media and political actors to distort narratives of the Boko Haram conflict into anti-Christian violence by Muslim fundamentalists.

Bring Back Our Girls-New York emerged after RP28 reached out to an African-American female friend who had posted on Facebook that she wanted to organise a march. Other people in and outside their social networks joined as the two women publicised their activities, but the group "ultimately became a combination of Muslim, Jewish and Christian women and then people who were just spiritual but didn't associate with any kind of religion" (interview, RP28, New York, 30 June 2020). Among the multiple nationalities who took part, Nigerians were "the least represented in all of those events" (interview, RP28, New York, 30 June 2020). At some point following the backlash faced by RP29 over the authenticity of her motives for supporting Bring Back Our Girls, Bring Back Our Girls-New York took over the administration of a page that had been set up by RP29 at the start of her activism (interview, RP29, Los Angeles, 25 July 2020).

This group merged briefly with Bring Back Our Girls-NYC but separated over disagreements about approach. Like Bring Back Our Girls-NYC, Bring Back Our Girls-New York was closely affiliated with Bring Back Our Girls-Abuja and conducted joint strategy and advocacy (interview, RP28, New York, 30 June 2020). This is another case in which loosely connected groups within groups of friends came together to protest after being mobilised by individuals on Facebook. The organiser was running an NGO for women's and girls' rights which she used to support her

participants were intersectional and transcended womanhood, maternality (Oriola 2020:6-7), spirituality and global citizenship, as opposed to single interest groups, as indicated by transnational activism scholarship.

In Washington DC, a Nigerian-American woman and architect organised a protest with her best friend and her mother that was organised via Facebook and attended by some 300 "people who were fired up, who were ready to be part of calling on the government to do something." In my interview with her, she shared her surprise at being designated as the protest leader because she had seen herself as merely coordinating, so she was taken aback when CNN's Athena Cage asked her what her group was about: "She's like so what is this group? I said, group? We're not a group, I just posted something" (interview, RP26, 6 March 2020)." Her reaction underscores the involvement of 'ordinary' people who did not identify as activists when they became involved with Bring Back Our Girls, marking another difference with the professional advocates who make up old transnational advocacy networks. RP26's explanation to journalists at that protest that the people present were "acting for accountability" regarding the Chibok students morphed into a now-defunct NGO set up to address broad issues of governance and rights in Nigeria that included the Chibok abductions. The group went on to organise further protests, engage with diaspora and US government actors, and partner with organisations set up by other Bring Back Our Girls leaders in Nigeria to support humanitarian relief efforts by fundraising for learning aids for displaced schoolchildren and teachers (interview, RP26, 6 March 2020). This type of engagement with conflict-affected communities was common among Bring Back Our Girls participants in Nigeria. It simultaneously signals a performance of resistance against a government defaulting in its responsibilities to its disadvantaged citizens and a form of activism that seems to help and to transform, not just confront and resist.

Related to the point made earlier about diaspora transnational activism as a counter to White saviourist advocacy in Northern contexts, RP26 envisioned her NGO as filling a representational void in African diasporan politics in the US:

> Everybody was asking me what the plan is and I was just like I'm just winging it at this point, but I realised that one thing was missing: there was the need for an organisation that could, without fear of impunity, actually be more of an activist group here that is willing to champion Africa issues, because as many Africa this Africa that groups that are in DC, there really isn't an activist group anymore that is championing Africa civil rights/Africa human rights injustice work. A lot of them have become more just policy and so I saw that a lot of people - the older people who were [in] the Anti-Apartheid movement - people were excited that there seems to be a new movement and younger people willing to champion this movement. (Interview, RP26, 6 March 2020).

Marches by RP29 in Los Angeles illustrate another instance of activism by groups of individuals who had diverse types of connections. She held initial marches with her daughter and her daughter's school friends, other young people whom she did not previously know and "a large group across LA that came together and helped…with the logistics of helping people plan their marches around the world" (interview, RP29, Los Angeles, 25 July 2020):

> I helped to organise a number of marches in LA and I also participated in other people's marches. There was [sic] a number of groups that were young [Nigerian] college kids and so I attended their marches, so we held marches, my daughter's school held marches. (Interview, RP29, Los Angeles, 25 July 2020).

In addition to marches that RP29 co-organised, she helped to facilitate at least 1200 marches in other countries that included "the smallest little groups, like people who were like three people on a street corner and it included bigger ones like Paris, and they did probably easily 20 different marches in Paris.[lxxii] There was a lot of countries where they didn't do just one but they did multiple" (interview, RP29, Los Angeles, 25 July 2020). She served as a liaison, helped to set up other Bring Back Our Girls Facebook groups for many countries and provided information and protest material to Bring Back Our Girls participants from around the world, essentially playing the same role that the secretariat of an NGO network would in similar circumstances.

> As these events were happening, I realised that there needed to be a central place for people to find information from the US specifically and so I started a Facebook page, Bring Back Our Girls and it became like a central hub. So I like spent most of my days just helping people to organise, like someone in Sweden in Stockholm wants to have a march and there was another person in Sweden, so I would connect them. I ended up doing a lot of just introducing people and creating little spaces where people could do the work they could do in their country. So that became my focus, to try to help amplify what the leaders in Abuja were doing by helping people in other parts of the world organise their marches and so they hopefully would make more impact. (Interview, RP29, Los Angeles, 25 July 2020).

This scenario gives some insights into the ways in which individual social media facilitated concentric circles of connections among people in different countries who did not know each other prior to becoming involved in Bring Back Our Girls. This illustrates Bennett and Segerberg's (2012) concept of connectivity, not collectivity, as the basis of new transnational activism. Otherwise stated, although masses of individuals held Bring back Our Girls events in their countries that were facilitated by individuals like RP29, these events were not centrally coordinated in the manner of older, more cohesive and organisationally-based forms. This indicates that Bring Back Our Girls represents a form of activism that is not accounted for by extant literature. It also reinforces the centrality of the individual in transnational mobilisation, as noted in Wong and Brown's (2013) study of e-bandits.

This pattern of recurrent protests by loosely connected groups of individuals also occurred in Canada where RP31 co-organised Bring Back Our Girls protests in Toronto and Ottawa, and used Facebook and Twitter to mobilise diverse groups that included her NGO and artiste colleagues (African and non-African Blacks), the Nigerian community, women's organisations, university students, politicians and various members of the diaspora. While she contacted Bring Back Our Girls Abuja early in her activism, this communication was not sustained and she did not connect with other Bring Back Our Girls activists in other countries because her focus was on getting people in

international level, maybe we might not be able to achieve the result that we achieved because we are super busy" (interview, RP31, Toronto, 2 September 2019).

The second type of activism that took place in the US is exemplified by two protests; a one-day #RockACrownfor234 rally co-organised in New York by South African Gugulethu Mlambo and Haitian Paola Mathé, and a one-day rally co-organised in Atlanta by three young Nigerian women (KokoAtDawn Productions 2014). Both events began with Facebook posts by their organisers that were shared and acted on by friends and friends of friends as well as other contacts. Among the hundreds of mostly women who took part in both events were people who knew each other as well as total strangers. Also in New York, Nkechie Ogbodo, president of Kechie's Project, an NGO that empowers underprivileged girls in Nigeria, organised vigils for the students (Frazier 2014; interview, RP23, New York, 20 June 2019). There were protests by other groups, including Nigerians in the Diaspora, a government-affiliated organisation and the Organisation to Save Nigeria.[lxxiii] In Washington, the international NGOs and advocacy organisations, Amnesty International US, the Africa Faith and Justice Network, and the Institute for Policy Studies sponsored a vigil involving Nigerian protesters.

Each of the Bring Back Our Girls groupings discussed previously were active on social media to varying extents and group leaders were instrumental in using their personal and group accounts to mobilise participants and share information. However, one of the factors that attracted expansive global following to Bring Back Our Girls was the mass of online support that it received from around the world, even though much of it was transitory and has been critiqued as slacktivism or clicktivism (unsustained digital participation in activism).

The foregoing discussion shows that there were different relationships between and among Bring Back Our Girls mobilisations within and across each focal country. The activism's Nigerian leaders developed and shared material (included logo and strategy documents) to activists within and outside Nigeria to facilitate, support and direct their efforts. This was part of efforts to embrace

and work with mobilisations outside Nigeria to create some form of coherence and global pressure force (interview, RP9, Abuja, 19 September 2018). The group shared this material directly to people identified from mobilisations as well as on its website and social media for public use. Some activists were able to see and access this material by following Bring Back Our Girls 's accounts. However, not all activists outside Nigeria used this material or responded to communications from Nigeria, suggesting that while they wanted to identify with the activism, they preferred to do it independently (interview, RP9, Abuja, 19 September 2018).

This explains why some groups appended their country name to Bring Back Our Girls, for example, Bring Back Our Girls -Ghana, while others simply used the name in their events. RP21 addressed the FEMNET Kenya group in one email as the 'Bring Back Our Girls Organising Family' and in another as 'Bring Back Our Girls 254', but said members declined to use the name formally as they did not see themselves as an appendage of the Nigerian group but as African sisters and brothers in solidarity (interview, RP21, Kisii, 7 October 2019). This points to an altered conceptualisation of social networks from professional advocacy organisations working cohesively to looser configurations of diverse actors working toward the same goal in less structured ways.

This point is buttressed by the disparate nature of Bring Back Our Girls mobilisations in Nigeria and abroad. In each country, there were individual and group protests, but each mobilisation was initiated by individuals, indicating the central role that non-state actors now play in transnational politics. Some of these were single events while others were more durable, although many except Nigeria stopped completely at varying intervals. In each country, independent activists worked alongside civil society organisations and international organisations to organise and finance protests. People mobilised and protested both online and offline, though more often than not their activities in both spaces were synchronised. They became involved through multiple intersectional social and professional relationships and networks constituted by nationality, migration status, personal values, gender, race, skill and class.

Unlike other African movements like Must Fall that focused more on issues that were local to respective contexts as they spread from South Africa to Europe, North America and eventually Ghana, Bring Back Our Girls mobilisations globally have been centred almost exclusively on the Chibok abductions with some references to similar incidents in respective contexts. What this suggests is that although violence against girls, particularly Black ones, is an issue that resonates globally, the specific incident of the mass abduction of a group of Nigerian girls in an African country remained the key focus of all forms of support around the world. In Chapter Six, I discuss how this problematises questions of ownership and agency and what this reveals about the motivations and worldviews of the different individuals who participated in Bring Back Our Girls in different parts of the world.

6.5 Pathways to Participation

In this section, I adapt Zajak's (2017:241) concepts of 'actor constellations' and pathways as the processes or paths of influence that lead to political outcomes (141-142) to illustrate what the study's findings indicate about the ways in which Bring Back Our Girls participants came to be involved with this campaign. I identify two broad groups of actors that are made up of what I call concentric social networks: tightly connected individuals made up of personal (family and friends) contacts, loosely connected individuals made up of professional contacts and unconnected individuals who may or may not know one another. The second broad category is made up of national and international NGOs and CSO advocacy networks.

The nature of these relationships and connections already provides some insights into how these actors' participation comes into being. Social media has been the main mobilisation space for all actors with many organisers stating that they galvanised interest by sharing both their grievances at the abductions and their intentions to hold events via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr and WhatsApp. Beyond this, personal contacts tended to become involved because they were invited by people close to them who shared similar values. As RP33 succinctly stated, individuals' "circles of

interaction and influence determine participation" (interview, 28 September 2020). Unconnected individuals who made up the majority of the thousands of people who shared social media content were users who viewed Bring Back Our Girls posts by virtue of being in digital spaces where they were shared.

Professional contacts, notably fellow members of advocacy NGOs and networks became involved not as a personal decision, even though they had strong personal convictions about the need for action, but because the leadership of their network made a decision to take action as a body that required collective compliance.

6.6 Transnational Power Relations

In focusing on the relations among the transnational actors who took part in Bring Back Our Girls in the study's focal countries, this section departs from existing research on the transnational purchase of Bring Back Our Girls (Oriola 2020) and the import of the involvement of what have been described as "imperial" Northern feminist actors (Loken 2014; Khoja-Moolji 2015a, 2015b; Olson 2015; Maxfield 2016; Murphy 2017). In this section, I discuss the power dynamics between Northern and Southern Bring Back Our Girls participants before considering the broader ties among participants in the four focal countries.

Bring Back Our Girls-Nigeria engaged with two broad sets of transnational actors (keeping in mind several leaders were transnational themselves): Nigerians in the diaspora on one hand, and, on the other, actors in respective local contexts with whom contact was sometimes facilitated by diasporan Nigerians. Recalling that the relationships between Southern and Northern activists is depicted in transnational activism scholarship as dependent in the boomerang model or peripheral in inverted boomerangs, Bring Back Our Girls -Nigeria's relationships with diasporan actors were more equitable: beyond minimal micro-level tensions, these actors complemented one another's work both online and in their respective geographic spaces. Their shared Nigerianness provided a sense of shared purpose towards and ownership of the problem posed by the abductions, and their

involvement with Bring Back Our Girls led many to develop personal friendships that outlived their activism. This is not to say that all diasporan Nigerians were connected to Bring Back Our Girls - Nigeria. RP20 independently created an e-petition that attracted over a million signatures and RP31 connected briefly with Nigeria but continued to mobilise after communication had ceased (interview RP20, Brussels, 4 September 2020; interview, RP31, Toronto, 2 September 2019). It also does not preclude differences that occurred, for example, over the group's policy to not fundraise or accept external funding, which RP23 suggested was naïve, too acquiescent to outsiders' perceptions of bias and contrary to Northern advocacy culture.

Bring Back Our Girls -Nigeria's relationships with other actors were more diverse and determined by the nature of engagement: the group engaged directly with foreign actors who provided tangible forms of support. Group leaders Hadiza Bala Usman, Obiageli Ezekwesili and Bukola Shonibare were among those invited to speak at high-profile events in the Global North, some of which were co-coordinated by diasporic Nigerians, and interviewed by foreign media. Bala Usman and Ezekwesili were among prominent Nigerian and other personalities who spoke at a conference at the City University of New York in December 2014. Bala Usman spoke at the 65th annual Department of Public Information Conference in 2014 while Shonibare addressed the UN General Assembly, Bring Back Our Girls -Washington and -New York, and the Hudson Institute, a prominent and influential American think tank.[lxxiv] Shonibare and Bala Usman spoke at special events in the US both in person and via telephone. Ezekwesili was selected by TIME magazine as one of the 100 most influential people in 2015 in recognition of her work with Bring Back Our Girls (Premium Times 2015). Florence Ozor addressed audiences in Colorado as part of a State Department global women's mentoring programme, in Uganda during a women's leadership retreat (Ozor 2014) and in Brussels at the conference on political empowerment of women in Africa in 2017 (Lunes 2017).

In Africa, Bring Back Our Girls had situational relationships with African actors. Some of the women who participated in protests in Nigeria were members of the Pan-African feminist

network FEMNET. They shared information with fellow members who organised protests in Kenya although this was on an individual basis and does not reflect a more formal relationship between both groups.

Bring Back Our Girls also engaged more remotely with persons who liked and shared content on Twitter and Facebook but did not deepen their participation by organising events or engaging physically with other Bring Back Our Girls sympathisers. Some scholars have critiqued this as being clicktivism/slacktivism, a form of lazy activism, but recent work conceptualises it as one of multiple forms of digital engagement that occur on a spectrum that should be measured using indicators of what actions people take and how they make meaning of them. In this situation, there was no direct consistent relationship with Bring Back Our Girls organisers and the thousands of people worldwide who engaged peripherally with the cause but there was a transitory relationship between the latter and the digital messaging that Bring Back Our Girls used to promote its activism. Citing Campbell (2015) in his study of narrative agency in #BlackLivesMatter, (Yang 2016:14) conceptualises as "serial" relationships like this in which "Individuals…have no set of attributes in common except their shared relationship to an external object, event, or, in other cases, to a law, an institution, a norm, a stereotype and so on."

6.6.1 Situating agency within transnational Bring Back Our Girls

As previously stated, the agencies of African transnational actors have varied depending on who started an activism and how dependent they were on foreign support. An analysis of transnational agency in Bring Back Our Girls presents a mixed picture. While Bring Back Our Girls actors in Nigeria appealed to and welcomed foreign support, the profiles of the group's Nigerian leaders on the ground were such that they had strong local leverage that made foreign support auxiliary. This was partly a function of the elite profiles of the women who frontlined Bring Back Our Girls in Nigeria and their ability to mobilise international attention and action through their equally elite personal and professional networks.

The retention of agency was also partly the upshot of a social media archive that allows actors like women who might otherwise be marginalised to own their narratives by representing their interests in global cyberspace which are documented and archived in their names. The particular form of digital activism that has become known as hashtag activism comprises the collectivisation of digital content that is unified by its use of identifiers known as hashtags that occur in temporal sequence and confer narrative agency on their users (Yang 2016). Digital research tools permit the mapping of hashtag users and their tracing to identify who first used what. Bring Back Our Girls 's policy to not fundraise from external actors should not be discounted as a further marker of autonomy given the experiences of most Global South NGOs in this regard (Petras 1999; Shivji 2006, 2007).

Feminist scholars have contested Bring Back Our Girls -Nigeria's narrative agency over its campaign and responses to its cause once it attained global virality. Maxfield (2016) notes the differences between what she identifies as "two versions" of Bring Back Our Girls, one each by Nigerian and diasporan actors, and White activists respectively. Essentially, she argues that actors in both groups worked counterpurposively: the first group was more aware of the complexities of the Boko Haram conflict and advocated for multifaceted responses led by Nigerian actors. These included the need for post-rescue rehabilitation for the students, security reforms and the improvement of girls' rights in Nigeria. In comparison, the second group is seen as having acted out a simplistic imperialist script in which the Chibok students and Nigerians—women especially—at risk of violence from Muslim terrorists, were oppressed others who needed to be saved through foreign military interventions (Spivak 1988; Khoja-Moolji 2015; Maxfield 2016:889-890).

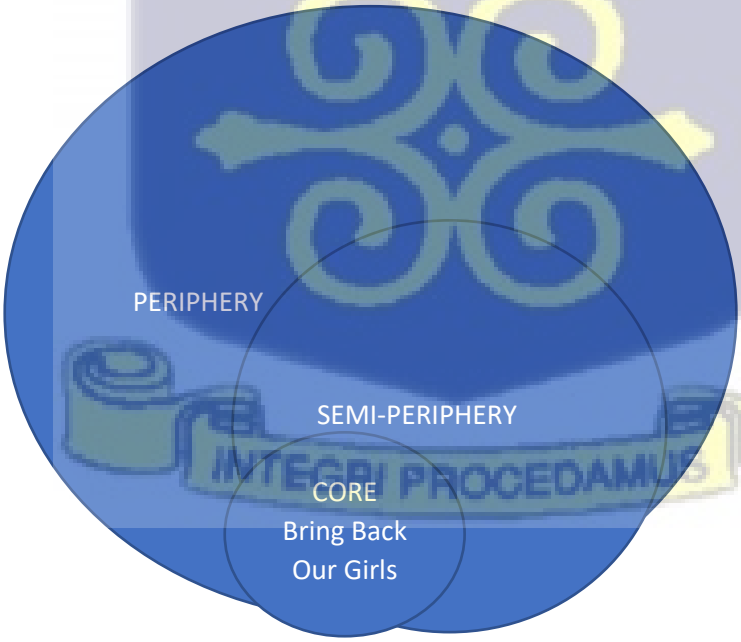
6.7 Conclusion: Toward a New Typology of Transnational Activism

Scholarship on transnational activism discusses typologies of actors as though they were distinct categories that occur in ascending sequence from one form to another. As depicted in Figure 1 in Chapter Four, which is reproduced here, the archetypal forms of activism documented in this

coalitions and transnational social movements. As noted, these are group and organisation-based formations that while still active in transnational political landscapes, are not at the forefront of the most visible forms of activism occurring across the world today.

Bring Back Our Girls was a complex mix of different forms of activism operating in different ways in different national and transnational contexts. At its core were cohorts of individuals with varying relationships with one another. The leaders of Bring Back Our Girls Abuja, Hadiza Bala-Usman and Obiageli Ezekwesili invited friends and professional contacts whom they knew from their careers in civil society and politics. At this level, Bring Back Our Girls 's core was made up of concentric circles of social and professional networks. Once Bring Back Our Girls began to hold protests and other public events, random passersby joined them as well as people who had heard of them over the news and social media. This layer of individuals was looser and less connected to the core of activists.

Figure 9: Matrix of Bring Back Our Girls networks



Source: Author construct from fieldwork data.

I conceptualise in Figure 9 the structure of Bring Back Our Girls as follows. It consisted of a core of

those who were loosely connected albeit using similar repertoires, and a periphery of those not connected at all in terms of direct exchanges of communication but who were advocating the same cause. Those accused of being clicktivists belong in this category. While there are overlaps with the taxonomy in Figure 1 in terms of the involvement of specific types of actors, Bring Back Our Girls is a hybrid and multimodal form of activism that is not represented in this model and the interactions among the different types of activism that occurred within Bring Back Our Girls did not follow an ascending pattern of transitions from one form to another; they all occurred simultaneously.

CHAPTER SEVEN

MOTIVES OF PARTICIPATION IN TRANSNATIONAL ACTIVISM

7.0 Introduction

In this second of two findings chapters, I present and discuss data relating to the motives of participation in Bring Back Our Girls of the various actors identified in Chapter Six. The data reveals that in addition to some shared beliefs about what constituted moral action, participants were mostly influenced by subjective individual factors, including identity, religion and personal upbringing and social embeddedness.

7.1 Social and Self-Identities

A focus on the identities of the persons who took part in Bring Back Our Girls in geographically dispersed spaces is apt in light of what is remarked throughout this study as the historic and continuing denial by White Western scholars on transnational activism of the agencies of Africans in representing Africa's political problems on international stages—what Adesanmi (2014, 2020) describes as 'owning' such problems. A focus on identities is also merited because of the diverse mixed-race and gender groups of people who took part in Bring Back Our Girls across the world that consisted of academics, politicians, civil servants, professional activists, creatives, lawyers, clerics, students and entrepreneurs from all over the world. Pointing to initial conflict over the ownership of the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls in which Ramaa Mosley, a White American who led protests in Los Angeles and played a central role in coordinating global events was accused of claiming ownership of Bring Back Our Girls (Maneater 2014), Adesanmi invokes the imperative to disaggregate all the voices affiliated with Bring Back Our Girls in order to unpack their varied perspectives. This tension over ownership is also addressed by feminist scholars who argue that judging by their calls for military intervention in Nigeria, "imperial feminists' appropriation" of Bring Back Our Girls did not constitute solidarity but subalternised the Chibok students as

2015a, 2015b; Olson 2015; Maxfield 2016; Murphy 2017), as is discussed in detail in a later section on transnational relations within Bring Back Our Girls .

This chapter takes an intersectional approach that enables mappings of different identity clusters, and deep analysis of individuals' motives for participation. The categorisation of social and self-identities is guided by two conceptual frameworks: Tajfel and Turner's (1986) work on social identity theory, and Crenshaw's (1991) notion of intersectionality help to dissect and understand the plural selves (Kahane 2009) that converged in the women and men interviewed for this study and collectively motivated their participation in Bring Back Our Girls.

7.1.1 Womanhood

For almost all participants, their identities, constructed intersectionally, were an important reason why they participated in Bring Back Our Girls events. The foremost of these identities was womanhood. 25 out of 27 study participants selected mainly through snowballing were women, which demonstrated a trend in the dominant gender of Bring Back Our Girls participants in the four focal countries and globally. It also reflects a historic pattern of women advocating for women's rights independently of broad-interest activist groups because these often do not centre women's interests and can reinscribe discriminatory norms and practices. This was the case with African independence and liberation movements in which women participated actively but did not receive the benefits of changes in women's rights and were erased from the narratives of those movements. The organiser of one Bring Back Our Girls -Ghana event told me, "In our culture, it's usually women who lead these things" (interview RP16, Accra, 6 January 2020), expressing a sense of collective moral obligation and invoking a performative norm to advocate as women for issues concerning other women in keeping with cultural habitus in her context.

As Ramaru (2015) writes about the Rhodes Must Fall protests in South Africa:

> Being a Black feminist in South Africa and within the movement was never easy. Very often, we had to deal with being told that we are "Black first" and we should leave our gender issues

> and feminist politics at the door. We were told that feminism is unAfrican and we needed to stop appropriating Western ideals if we were serious about decolonisation. This obviously meant that we constantly had to defend our right to exist within the space, and for Black feminism to be taken seriously in the movement.

She later adds that the movement became increasingly hostile as it expanded and that male members had sexually assaulted at least five womxn[lxxv] members by the end of 2015 (Ramaru 2015:95), leading them to "start organising and opening our own spaces", including through the use of naked protests (Ndlovu 2017). Ndelu, Dlakavu and Boswell (2017) also note how sexism and other vectors of discrimination and exclusion obstructed the collective of Fallist movements.

With Bring Back Our Girls, almost all the women interviewed expressed that they participated because, as women, they could not conceive of experiencing the kind of violence they heard or/and imagined that Boko Haram inflicted on the Chibok students. One participant's statement, "I was compelled to do this because I felt as a woman, it could be me" (interview, RP31, Toronto, 2 September 2019), encapsulates the sentiments of many women who took part in Bring Back Our Girls.

Femaleness was also a motive for participation to the extent that many women viewed Boko Haram as an emblem of contextual sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls and saw Bring Back Our Girls as an opportunity to resist this in other contexts. One African-American woman participant said:

> When they had the story with the [Chibok] girls, I was like, it's like our girls, 'cos we have a problem here in America. We have Black and Brown girls that are being sex trafficked too. They're being kidnapped and everything too every day. And nobody, you know, they talk about it but it's not a national thing because, you know, this is America. In this country, they used to bring enslaved women here to breed them, to basically rape them and force them to have children and when you read the stories about these young ladies, they're coming back with a baby. What do you mean? She left here a virgin, like you've forced my daughter to

> give birth, like this is unbelievable. So it's something for us to be concerned about, yes. (Interview, RP10, New York, 25 November 2019).

By likening Boko Haram's violence to colonial violations of the bodies of enslaved Black women, she and Scott (2014) interpolated the historic sexual exploitation of the bodies of Black women and girls and its historic motive for activism by Black women. She also rationalised her participation as a symbolic resistance to violence against African-American girls and the racialised silence that surrounds it, which is akin to the inattention to and silencing of advocacy around the Chibok students because they are not children of prominent Nigerians.

A Nigerian participant based in the US told me:

> …as if there was something to what I was saying that look, if we allow other people's children to be abducted, one day they're going to come and abduct ours, the school where my niece graduated from in Lagos State, actually some children were abducted from there. (Interview, RP23, 20 June 2019).

Both these women believed that their participation transcended the immediate cause of Bring Back Our Girls and provided an opportunity and presented a moral obligation for them to take a stand against violence against women and girls in other spaces. Using similar rhetoric, the gender unit at the University of the Western Cape announced ongoing protests as resistance against gender violence and opportunity to "build solidarity and make people conscious of what is happening locally and on the rest of the African continent":

> Gender violence is an on-going plight - the Nigerian girls are not the only girls whose rights have been violated. There is the practice of *ukuThwala* in South Africa where young girls are abducted and forced into marriage with older men – often with the consent of their parents – and in many cases it is not what the girls want. We have staff and students originating from Nigeria, and through showing solidarity we build community" (Hanes 2014).[lxxvi]

In like manner, Barbara Scott (2014), an African-American scholar-activist drew parallels with long-running abductions and trafficking of African-American girls in urban America.

Only a few women participants identified as feminist but almost all participants, men inclusive, saw themselves as being gender-aware and supporting the rights of women and girls.

7.1.2 Maternality

Parental status was a recurrent marker of personal identity that came up during interviews and was the collective logic of mobilisation for several Bring Back Our Girls events. In this sense, Bring Back Our Girls can be likened to the *Madres de la Plaza de Mayo*, a group of mothers who mobilised against disappearances of their children during prolonged military rule in Argentina starting in the 1970s (Torre 1996). The difference is that Bring Back Our Girls members' allusions to motherhood as a motive for participating were allegoric, given that their own children were not directly affected.

Participants with children, especially women, often referred to their status as parents, notably of girls, as part of their intersectional motives for participating in Bring Back Our Girls. A Ghanaian protest organiser told me:

> I was a fairly new mother. I know as a mother not knowing where your child is… It's happened to me before that I lost my child in a supermarket. It was only for a few seconds but it felt like a lifetime. I could identify with what the [Chibok] parents were going through. Mother's Day was coming and I remember thinking how would anyone commemorate without their child (interview RP16, Accra, 6 January 2020).

The significance of a Northern commemorative day in contexts like northeast Nigeria is debatable but this participant identified with the universal maternal sense of anguish that accompanies the loss of a child.

Some participants linked their status as mothers to other aspects of their lives and identities that influenced their participation in Bring Back Our Girls. A US-based Nigerian woman participant said:

> I have a young daughter who was a little bit younger than the girls at the time they were kidnapped and I was like this girl, she's gonna ask me one day, "Mum, this Bring Back Our Girls movement, what did you do? Cos this is what you claim to be about." (Interview, RP28, New York, 30 June 2020).

Implicit here are her consciousness of generational accountability to her own child as a mother but also her fidelity to her vocation as a known advocate for the rights of women and girls. She had previously identified herself as "someone who creates space for women. Generally, that's what I do and most of my work is focused on amplifying the voices of women, bringing them to the table" (interview, RP28, New York, 30 June 2020).

In the same vein, a Jewish-American woman shared:

> How could I look at my at the time 3-year-old son when he grows up and says, "What did you do when you found that out, mama?" I couldn't say, "I read the next article, I cried and prayed, and I left it alone." I couldn't do that. (Interview, RP32, New York, 25-6 August 2020).

Commenting in an interview on why she became involved with Bring Back Our Girls, Bukola Shonibare, one of the leaders of Bring Back Our Girls in Abuja, said:

> Being a girl in Nigeria is very difficult. I have a 6-year-old daughter and want to protect her from the fate of the Chibok girls, and from my own experiences, which include sexual assault and homelessness. I had to leave school and then fight my way to get an education in my 20s, all on my own. The government does nothing to protect the rights of women to have an education — and the one-year anniversary of the Chibok girls' abduction makes the world

This participant introduces the tropes of being a survivor of sexual violence and a woman who, having benefitted from education, believes in girls' rights to be educated.

A White American mother also said, "I decided to continue to stand up because I needed to set a good example for my children (Mosley 2016). Fathers expressed similar views. Andy Iheanacho, a Nigerian who took part in a protest in Utah said: "As a father it makes me angry. Words cannot describe…It's a terror against humanity (and) we need to speak up and stand."[lxxvii]

7.1.3 Nationality, diasporicity and other tropes of belonging

Participants cited their respective nationalities as motives for participating in Bring Back Our Girls, albeit from different standpoints. Some Nigerians said they took part because they felt connected and therefore affected as citizens. As one Nigerian-Canadian woman said:

> "I'm a Nigerian, you know. I'm a Nigerian-born artist though I've lived…outside the country since I was 18, but I mean, that is my root. I feel connected to my country and whatever affects people in my country, even if I don't live there, affects me as well. (Interview, RP31, Toronto, 2 September 2019).

A Nigerian-American woman based in the US described herself as a "reluctant immigrant" who has "never really left Nigeria and left Nigeria" and has remained involved in various activities over the years (Interview, RP23, New York, 20 June 2019). In addition to her nationality, she interpreted her participation as resistance to governance deficits caused by the government's inability to fulfil its responsibilities to Nigerian citizens under the social contract:

> I just find it unacceptable that we have a state and that state would allow citizens to be fair game to bandits and then throw up their arms and make all kinds of excuses as to why it is impossible to rescue them. For me, it caused agitation immediately and I felt that if this situation was not arrested immediately, Nigeria was going to be the worse for it. (Interview, RP23, New York, 20 June 2019).

This disappointment in the Nigerian government was echoed by another Nigerian-American participant:

> I never thought when I posted this thing on Facebook that I would end up dedicating five years of my life almost squarely towards calling for them to find these young women. And even though right now I'm not actively in that space anymore, it hasn't still stopped. I'm on the board of [NGO] of Nigeria so I do what I can to be able to continue the message as we need to have engaged citizens. We need to have informed citizens and we need to maybe, in some ways, redefine and reshape the social contract between us as Nigerian citizens and the Federal Government of Nigeria.

The motive of being affected as Nigerians translated into the idea that Nigerians had a duty to participate in Bring Back Our Girls: "I was thinking that all of us should do that, all of us Nigerians" (Interview, RP23, 20 June 2019), echoing Adesanmi's (2014, 2020) thesis that those closest to a situation should retain agency over not only the problem but also the response. Referring to two young men with whom she started Bring Back Our Girls -NYC, RP23 said:

> So I said to them, look, people who are not Nigerian are organising protests and we're participating. That's well and good but we also need to organise this thing and advocate for our people. (Interview, RP23, New York, 20 June 2019).

A Ghanaian participant similarly shared that "At that time, most of the noise was coming from outside, from people like Michelle Obama. I wondered if we were going to just sit down for others to do it for us" (interview, RP16, Accra, 6 January 2020).

This expectation that Nigerians should lead the response to a Nigerian problem was reflected in some Nigerian participants' disappointment at the low levels of Nigerians' participation both in and outside the country, both of which were attributed to what one diasporan Nigerian participant described as a "frayed constitution of compassion":

> I think this is one of those things that, you know, it's the same as it is in Nigeria. Even when we had marches in Nigeria, when I was in Nigeria I would attend, there's something that's been frayed in the constitution of compassion in Nigeria. It's as if this thing has to be affecting you personally before you're willing to come out and take a stand. I think that unfortunately is also reflected the same way that we're very tribalistic, very "what about me first?" Most Nigerians are their particular tribe first before they're Nigerians as opposed to America where people are proud to say…you know you don't hear people say I'm Texan-American or I'm Californian-American. People are proud to say I'm just American. (Interview, RP28, New York, 30 June 2020).

Another diasporan Nigerian suggested that some citizens are so disillusioned with the anomalies in the country that when they migrate to diasporas, they find ways to disconnect (interview, RP33, 28 September 2020). Those who retain a strong sense of and relationship with their home country have typically been raised in families that cultivated this consciousness and maintained relationships that nurtured this awareness (interview, RP33, 28 September 2020).

Thus, we see that while some Nigerians were deeply grounded in Nigeria and evinced a strong sense of Nigeria as home and were invested in transnational activities there, others had a more distant relationship and were less inclined to participate in certain political activities. This attitudinal disparity of diasporic Nigerians toward Bring Back Our Girls shows that diaspora constructions of identity and approaches to activism are heterogeneous and informed in part by identity constructs, which are in turn shaped by the politics of identity in their home spaces.

Some Africans explained their participation as a way of showing solidarity with Nigerians as fellow Africans; women referred to Bring Back Our Girls activists in Nigeria as "African sisters" and Nigeria as "basically a sister country" (interview RP16, Accra, 6 January 2020). A Kenyan participant shared that she felt connected to the Chibok students and the Nigerian protesters as the mother of a young daughter, former wife to a Nigerian man and as an African woman and women's rights activist who is familiar with the dynamics of gender violence by men against women in

African societies. In repeated interviews and emails, she referred to Nigerian women as "sisters" and said she felt the need to support their efforts to rescue the students (interviews, RP21, Kisii, 7 October 2019 and 13 January 2020).

African solidarity was the main motive of the involvement of individual participants like South African Gugulethu Mlambo[lxxviii] who led an early protest in New York's Union Square and the African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) which self-identifies as a Pan-African feminist network (interview, RP25, Nairobi, February 2020). Their conceptualisation of solidarity, a complex and multifaceted concept, connoted relationships between self and other that are shaped by feelings and perceptions of unity, sameness and interconnectedness. This contrasts with scholarly ascriptions of participation as pity by White participants towards voiceless and powerless subalternised "third world women" (Loken 2014; Khoja-Moolji 2015a, 2015b; Olson 2015; Maxfield 2016; Murphy 2017).

The discourse of subalternity, a concept propounded by Spivak (2011) pervades debate on and about agency in transnational activism vis-à-vis epistemic constructions of 'others' by social groups that perceive themselves to be more powerful. It finds particular resonance in scholarship about campaigns like Kony 2012 and Save Darfur (Mamdani 2009, de Waal 2015, Schomerus 2015), that foreground the presumptive agencies of predominantly White Northern actors in intervening in conflict situations, often without consulting and including people affected by or already taking action on the ground.

7.1.4 Humanitarianism and global citizenship

Some Africans and other nationalities self-identified as global citizens who joined Bring Back Our Girls because they saw it as "the right thing to do", even though it affected people different from them in a faraway place. Two White American women explained their participation thus:

> These girls are my sisters. Yeah, I'm here in Utah and they're in Africa, but I'm a global citizen. These girls are my sisters, they're my daughters, they're my friends and I can't live in a world where stuff like this happens and we don't do anything about it. (Morgan 2014).[lxxix]

> I decided to speak out because you don't need to be from a country to care about people of that country. You don't need to be Nigerian to care about 276 Nigerian schoolgirls. You don't need to be Syrian to care about Syrian refugees. You don't need to be Black to care about Black Lives Matter. You don't need to be Native American to care about Native American rights. (Mosley 2016).[lxxx]

In similar vein, when asked in an interview by BBC World "…why an American woman cared about the Nigerian girls", Ramaa Mosley answered, "My answer was simple: because I am human" (Mosley 2016).

For diasporan Nigerians who identified as global citizens, all of whom were involved in transnational practices like sending money home and supporting community work, participating in Bring Back Our Girls was a way for them a way to remain connected with home. For one woman, this was reinforced by her consciousness of not being seen as belonging in her adopted home of America: "I never have forgotten first and foremost I'm Nigerian, but when I meet people here, I just am…I'm Black" (interview, RP26, Washington DC, 6 March 2020).

The identity of the global citizen is defined as "someone who identifies as being part of an emerging world community and whose actions contribute to building this community's values and practices" (Israel 2013). It is troubled by the Fanonian (1952) idea that the colonial tangent of relations between Global North and South is so entrenched that offers of help by the former can only take the form of pity framed as salvationism towards weaker others. While Nigerian Bring Back Our Girls activists welcomed the participation of multiple nationalities and other identities, one White American participant suffered backlash when

resistance to anti-white saviourism although deeper analysis suggests that this may have been a tactic adopted by Bring Back Our Girls dissidents to delegitimise her participation as an outsider in a situation that they constructed to be domestic:

> I kept being told I don't belong here, I don't belong in this…I felt that there was a part of the work that I was doing that became too much about me personally and there was like a conflict between the colour of my skin and me wanting to advocate for this cause and so even though people didn't know anything about me, my father or my mother or anything about my background, it just became really…I just started to feel that I needed to support other leaders in the cause to be the ones to really be speaking up (interview RP29, Los Angeles, 25 July 2020).

The term white saviour industrial complex or white saviourism was coined by Nigerian-American author Teju Cole (2012) in response to the video of Kony 2012, a campaign by American NGO Invisible Children that aimed to "make Kony famous" in the aim of getting him arrested (Schomerus 2015). The campaign has been condemned by Mamdani (2009, 2012) for distorting by oversimplifying the narratives of the Ugandan conflict and excluding those worst affected by it. Mengistu (2012) calls the campaign a "self-serving omission of the extensive efforts" made by transnational actors over decades to solve the crisis. As he aptly notes, the name Invisible Children is akin to "the sentiments of the first colonists who claimed to have discovered the New World and Africa: We didn't know about it, therefore it didn't exist", and the solution to make Kony famous in America in order to bring him to justice is rightly derided as lacking nuance and depth.

Kony 2012 and white saviourism have been critiqued by White scholars too. De Waal (2015), a White British researcher on African politics is among authors in an edited volume who critique the campaign's removedness from the realities and nuances of Uganda's prolonged battle with the Lord's Resistance Army. Yet they do this from the premise that Invisible Children was acting on an inherent right to save the people of Uganda from Joseph Kony. The stated thrust of De Waal's book is to show up how Western activisms appropriate non-Western campaigns and to propound that this

be done in a more 'ethical' way that is more inclusive of domestic societies. However, the book does not confront Western advocates' arrogation of the right to mobilise on behalf of others from other parts of the world.

Applying this to RP29's experience, her desire to help was plain enough. However, being unaware of the power dynamics in which she became enmeshed by not defining more strongly her positionality as a supporter of Nigerian activists as opposed to an independent advocate, she ended up playing into the narrative of White saviourism and its tendency to erase the agencies of those who own the problem that is the subject of their activism. In her own words, although she was hurt by the backlash, she later came to understand/better appreciate the impact of her actions:

> I think in advocacy you have to examine your ego really carefully and I think that in the process of everything I went through, I don't know that I'm perfect but I think I've examined it and it's one of the reasons why with the Black Lives Matter movement that is happening here in the US, I've really been careful about what I do and how I do it is really to elevate the voices of the leaders of that movement and not try to in any way make it about something that is about me. That's the thing with advocacy and I just didn't recognise it until it took me years to finally understand this better but true advocacy is not just stepping in and acting but it's also really listening and learning and asking for guidance. And of course, you can't always do that, sometimes you have to…you can't just sit there if someone's drowning and be like somebody tell me if it's OK to rescue this child who's in the water, of course that would be ridiculous. But I think that it's really important for activists, especially if they're either not from the country or not intimately involved, to really pause and listen and learn. I knew nothing about Nigeria before this whole thing happened and I jumped in in a way that was really kind of ignorant and naïve. I don't regret being involved; I really regret how I did it. (Interview RP29, Los Angeles, 25 July 2020).

Although much of the focus of saviourist discourse has been on the philanthropic overtures of White advocates towards non-White populations and parts of the world, particularly Africa, there

the first to organise protests in Maiduguri after the incident. During fieldwork in Maiduguri in late 2018, I learned that the next set of protests against the abductions were not in Abuja as is popularly believed but in Maiduguri by women native to the state[lxxxi], some of whom now feel that they were sidelined by those in Abuja:

Another woman activist in Maiduguri remarked[lxxxii], "Those in Abuja didn't start Bring Back Our Girls; it started here… Allamin was the first to march to Government House. As another women's rights activist said:

> Where is Hadiza Bala? She was among those who started Bring Back Our Girls, the one they hijacked from Borno State and bring [sic] it to Abuja. When she was given the appointment with the Nigerian Ports Authority have you heard her voice again? No! These are people who are looking for relevance so that the federal government will give them some appointment.[lxxxiii]

A further manifestation of saviourism is seen in Bring Back Our Girls 's continued activism after some parents of the abducted Chibok students distanced themselves in an attempt to not antagonise the government so as to facilitate the rescue of their daughters (interview, RP9, Abuja, 19 September 2018; Oriola 2020:15). Given that these parents are the most directly affected by the abductions and Bring Back Our Girls purported to be acting on their behalf, it resurfaces Adesanmi's question about who owns the problem of the abductions and who has agency to act on it. It also further problematises the "our" in Bring Back Our Girls and illustrates the enactment at a national level of the transnational appropriations of agency and distortions of narratives that are associated with the white saviour industrial complex.

7.1.5 Race

The question of race and identity in this discourse extends to Blackness as a motive for some African Americans who participated in Bring Back Our Girls. An African-American participant and professor of history identified herself as "an American citizen of African origin, a descendant of enslaved Africans" who uses the collective referent "we" when teaching about Africa and sees

herself and the African-African community as a "chapter in the book [of Africa] and belonging to what she calls the "old African diaspora" (Interview, RP10, New York, 25 November 2019). This correlates with research that suggests that Black US House Representatives are far more likely to vocalize support for black-centred social movements like #blacklivesmatter and #bringbackourgirls than white representatives, and that black female representatives are more likely to support black female centred movements than all other racial and gender groups (Stout, Coulter and Edwards 2017). Representative Frederica Wilson, an African-American woman, was committed to Bring Back Our Girls from the start and still hosts a weekly event on her Twitter page where she brings together other congress people to advocate for the students' return (Faul 2015; interview, RP23, New York, 20 June 2020).

The connections and disconnections between African movements like Bring Back Our Girls and movements against violence on Black bodies like Black Lives Matter is discussed by Maxfield (2016:893) who notes that for some Bring Back Our Girls participants in the US, this racial trope "served as a foundation for solidarity and support". She cites one Nigerian who identifies with the Black Lives' movement but views subsuming Bring Back Our Girls under it as obscuring the latter's focus.

7.1.6 Profession

As diverse as their identities and motivations for participation were, this study's participants were united by their self-identities as supporters of justice, particularly for people who are not in a position to defend themselves. Several participants said they were motivated to participate in Bring Back Our Girls in order to be "a voice for the voiceless" (interview, RP26, Washington DC, 6 March 2020) or because the [Chibok] girls "needed my voice" (Mosley 2016).

Some participants were professional activists who worked for civil society organisations and networks whose work includes regular advocacy. As discussed in Chapter Seven, Bring Back Our Girls events in Kenya were organised by the African feminist network, FEMNET, which regularly

leads and supports advocacy on diverse aspects of women's and girls' rights. One such activism was the #JusticeforLiz campaign in 2013 over Kenyan police mishandling of the case of a 16-year-old girl brutally gang-raped by six men (Rugene 2013 in Nyabola 2018:141-142). Such people viewed their decisions to participate in Bring Back Our Girls as both a performance of their personal values and an extension of work that they do regularly to fight injustice in general and help women in particular. According to RP31, a Nigerian-Canadian founder of a women's rights NGO that empowers women through the arts who co-organised protests in Toronto and Ottawa, "as founder of xxx[lxxxiv]…and an artist-activist, I am compelled to do something because this is me" (Interview, RP31, Toronto, 2 September 2019).

RP33, also a singer and creative artiste, viewed her art (writing, storytelling and music) as a tool that she used in her activism and uses to "reconcile the diaspora with their home in Africa" (interview, RP33, 28 September 2020). I found her through her blog which she used to share information about Bring Back Our Girls events, including one that she attended in Atlanta (interview, RP33, 28 September 2020).

One participant, an academic, said:

> As a historian, I specialise in world history, African history and African American history and I've also taught world politics…these massive movements in world history and it was the intellectuals that played a major part—the universities, the professors, the students—and some of them were bold enough and courageous enough to step outside the four walls of the classroom and let those ideas circulate among society to spark. It's also a shift in the US in higher ed where we don't have that many full-time tenure track jobs so a lot of us more recent entries into academia, we're mostly part-time, so I think a lot of people are looking for alternative avenues for their scholarship and for me it was like this activism number one being concerned but two maybe I could just this is something that I could…use my scholarship in that way. (Interview, RP10, New York, 25 November 2019).

Though not many participants self-identified as activists nor were professional activists in the sense of working or having worked with non-governmental advocacy organisations, all evinced a strong sense of resistance to injustice. For some, this derived from having been raised by parents with community advocacy experience and strong social justice ethics:

> I was interested in activism from a young age, in issues like equality and climate change. I grew up in a family that was socially and politically active. My grandparents were communist. In the 1970s, my mum protested with students for democratic society, against the Vietnam War and for civil rights movements (interview RP29, Los Angeles, 25 July 2020).

Another Nigerian-American participant said:

> I would not be who I am today or move through the world the way I do without having been born into the family I was born into. I grew up with parents (Archbishops Margaret and Benson Idahosa) who taught me that one's life was not fully realised until it was grounded in the service and upliftment of others. I saw my parents move through their lives with both compassion and activism—it was what fuelled their existence. Although neither formally referred to themselves as "activists", that is what they were/are. They stood against injustice…. (Ijewere 2017).

Likewise, a Nigerian-American participant noted that her activism has been influenced by the activism and community engagement of her mother and grandmother (interview, RP33, 28 September 2020).

Despite having strong feelings about injustice and self-identifying as advocates for social justice, some leaders of Bring Back Our Girls events had no prior formal organising experience, as is evident in their surprise at the scale of response to their mobilisation efforts which took place mainly on social media. Gugulethu Mlambo said in an interview that she was 'amazed' at the 500+ turnout to her co-organised Rock A Crown rally in New York; "I thought it was just going to be me

participants, Bring Back Our Girls was their first time organising physical protest events and represented an opportunity to crystallise their activist inclinations:

> I know that this was a pivotal point of helping me get used to being out there and being vocal because I felt that the families, the people of that community and those girls, those young ladies, deserved somebody to stand up and speak for them because they could have been anybody and nobody because they're trying to be educated deserves to be threatened, to live in fear and also deserves to be treated like chattel. I'm a vehement defender of women, girls and human rights and when there's injustice anywhere in the world, it gets right under my skin. (Interview, RP26, Washington DC, 6 March 2020).

For such persons, their participation in Bring Back Our Girls was a catalyst that motivated them to create NGOs aimed at providing varied forms of relief to the families of the Chibok students as well as others affected by the Boko Haram conflict, even though this was not part of their original motives.

7.1.7 Faith

For some participants, their faith influenced their use of prayer and other religious ritual practices as part of their activism (interview, RP23, New York, 20 June 2019). For others, faith was a central organising logic that brought people together to support Bring Back Our Girls. The Bring Back Our Girls group in New York City

> ultimately became a combination of Muslim, Jewish and Christian women and then people who were just spiritual but didn't associate with any kind of religion. And so it was always very important for us, because most of the women in the group were of one of those three faiths, to incorporate our faith into it. So we would also have prayer rallies where we'd meet in all three spaces and pray for the girls and things like that. (Interview, RP28, New York, 30 June 2020).

For RP28, the Christian co-organiser of this group, “my faith is the underlying factor that guides most of my decisions, but I wouldn’t say it was the underlining determining factor here. I would’ve

gotten involved as a matter of moral conscience. My faith is what kept me connected to the cause" (Interview, RP28, New York, 30 June 2020).

A Jewish-American woman who created a faith-based group that merged with the secular one created by RP28 shared that her support of Bring Back Our Girls may have been influenced by her personal knowledge of the history of persecution of Jews in certain parts of the world. She shared that she comes "from a strong narrative about the holocaust in eastern Europe" and mentioned the facticity of her and her husband growing up in communities that were "very aware" of the oppression of soviet Jewry who could not practise their faith or leave the country unless they left everything behind (interview, RP32, New York, 25-6 August 2020).

What this reveal is that even though activists identified with certain global motives for participating, in this case faith, they did so for reasons that were mediated by their lived realities of their respective creeds.

7.1.8 Emotions

Participants expressed that emotions were a strong influence of their decisions to participate in Bring Back Our Girls. Feelings of anger, outrage, horror, sadness, grief, frustration, worry, shock, confusion, distress and disbelief at the abductions but also hope at the prospect of the students being rescued drove many participants to take some form of action. A few people, women notably, expressed that they had had initial physiological reactions that included the inability to sleep (interview RP29, Los Angeles, 25 July 2020).

The role of emotions in human behaviour, including activism has been highlighted by sociologists who theorise that negative and positive emotions have a bearing on participation (Jasper 1998; Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2013; Barrett and Brunton-Smith 2014:16; Della Porta and Diani 2005). The responses of the study participants validate this and reveal the range of emotional reactions that they experienced to the Chibok abductions as individuals.

7.1.9 Embodied resistance

Outside of their identities, participation in Bring Back Our Girls was informed by the need to take action that corresponded in weight with the gravity of the Chibok abductions. For several study participants, this meant using their bodies as social objects of resistance in physical protests in public spaces. The symbolism and significance of women protesting in public or embodied feminine resistance, particularly if they are seen to be aggressive, is arguably more provocative in the African context where women's participation in politics is still suboptimal, owing in part to the prevalence of gender norms in Nigeria's heavily male-dominated politics that centre the significance of women on private life and their reproductive abilities and expected gender roles.

Several participants felt a strong urge to "do something", driven largely by the Nigerian government's initial inertia and the limited early coverage of the abduction by national and international media. As noted earlier, several participants said they could not see themselves letting the situation pass without taking action:

> Unlike most people who thought that maybe the most effective way I could get involved is maybe to write op-eds, I felt it was important to be out there, to speak about it and to protest about it because this kind of situation is unacceptable and I thought about it as a mother, if these were my children, am I going to sit here and say I'm fasting and praying? Or am I going to sit here and say I'm writing op-ed? Would I not be making as much noise as possible to make sure that nobody forgets that my children are in captivity? (Interview, RP23, 20 June 2019).

> I felt like we can't just do things on social media, we have to show up in our physical bodies and be somewhere and so I helped to organise a number of marches in LA [Los Angeles] and I also participated in other people's marches. (Interview RP29, Los Angeles, 25 July 2020).

Both these participants expressed an ethic of embodied resistance that was reflected in many participants' responses:

> I simply was sort of a body, a person there in support. I paid attention to the issue and I just wanted to, when the opportunity was there, to just lend my voice to that, just have my presence speak that I was a concerned global citizen. (Interview, RP10, New York, 25 November 2019).

Allied to this was the belief shared by individual participants about the power of one—the ideal that one voice or person can make a difference. In the context of the culture of violence against women and girls, embodied resistance holds special significance for feminine defiance of the complacency that has previously characterised responses to gender violence (Aina et al. 2019).

7.1.10 Norms

Oriola (2020) and Aina et al. (2019) have written about the collective normative framings of Bring Back Our Girls which comprise mainly motherism, human rights, girls' rights to education and state failure. Many participants' responses indicated that there were overlaps between individual and group-level normative motivations. However, participants mentioned normative frames that influenced them as individuals that reflected in their approaches to participating in Bring Back Our Girls which have not received much attention in studies of this campaign. In addition to invoking and acting upon individual beliefs in norms that coincide with the group framings listed above, Bring Back Our Girls participants interpellated several values through their actions. These included the performative norm of women advocating for women's issues as explained earlier, Africans doing the same for African 'problems' and resistance to injustice even under threat of harm.

Regarding the latter, several Bring Back Our Girls participants reported having been threatened because of their activism. One Nigerian-American woman said" "For most of the time most of what we got were [sic] a lot of abuse. I got death threats, oh gosh I got death threats many

involvement with Bring Back Our Girls, Ramaa Mosley, a White American woman shared how she almost gave up until a Nigerian colleague told her, “not one of us who has been an outspoken member of this group has not received cyberbullying. This is what happens when you stop being a spectator to an injustice and you stand up” (Mosley 2016).

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION, ANALYSIS, POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.0 Introduction

I set out at the beginning of this study to update the literature on transnational activism with a focus on disrupting the hegemony of Northern perspectives on the structure and functions of transnational activism. The rationale for this was an observed disjuncture between the extant literature on transnational activism and recent occurrences of protests across borders, beginning from the North African uprisings. To achieve this, I selected the case of Bring Back Our Girls, an activism begun in Nigeria in 2014 by Nigerian women that attracted and compelled widespread global attention, action and support. This provided an opportunity to study a recent instance of transnational mobilisation from Global South to Global North, in order to examine what insights it offered for scholarship on this subject regarding new directions and dimensions of transnational activism from the standpoint of an African campaign led by women—two perspectives that are underrepresented in international relations and transnational activism scholarship.

Using interviews with 27 Bring Back Our Girls participants, I set out to examine new dimensions of transnational activism, focusing on the structure and form, and the motivations for participation in Bring Back Our Girls of geographically dispersed individuals. I also analysed the identities of and interactions among the transnational actors who took part in Bring Back Our Girls, with a focus on activist perspectives from four focal countries: Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria and the US, as a way of comparing diverse cultural, social and political viewpoints and enabling theorisation from the South.

In Chapter Six, I discussed in-depth the structure and form of Bring Back Our Girls mobilisations within and between these contexts using data from fieldwork. Using the same source, in Chapter Seven, I unpacked the motives for participation of individuals in each country, explaining

how multiple personal identity factors influenced their decision to support Bring Back Our Girls. In this concluding chapter, I draw on those findings to collate analysis regarding the significance of Bring Back Our Girls for the study of transnational activism today. This chapter begins with a discussion of key findings and contributions to knowledge and theory that speak to the study's main objectives, as captured in the research question. In a second section, I discuss implications for policy and further research, alongside recommendations for actualising these research and policy considerations.

8.1 Key Findings and Contributions to Knowledge and Theory

8.1.1 'New' Dimensions of Transnational Activism

As observed in Chapters Two and Four, knowledge on transnational activism in international relations (IR) scholarship by scholars like Keck and Sikkink (1998, 1999) and De Waal (2015) has historically focused on mobilisations by civil society organisations, particularly NGOs and formal advocacy networks. For a long time, scholarship on organised forms of collective action, by transnational advocacy networks, in particular, dominated these discussions. This included research by the likes of Pallas (2021, 2013, 2017) that acknowledged the changing patterns of power and agency, notably that Southern actors were becoming more active transnationally and less dependent on Northern ones. However, they remained focused on formal and collective actors and their mobilisations as central empirical cases. A third stream of scholars like Wong and Brown (2013) have begun to draw attention to the growing transnational presence and influence of individuals and looser forms of activism by e-bandits, for example, who are distinguished by the diffuse character of their unknown members. Yet such new forms of transnationality remain understudied in IR. Further, IR scholarship has been and remains centred on activism in the Global North and by Northern actors and organisations.

These gaps in IR knowledge warranted an examination in this study of relevant knowledge from Sociology, African Studies, Social Psychology and Media/Communication Studies. The

studies consulted across these disciplines showed a recognition of the growing digitalisation of social action, the increased and intense connections that this is facilitating, and the changing nature of activism from formal to informal and coordinated to loose. This scholarship also recognises the growing transnational agency of individuals and the greater influence of personal values compared with the rational-strategic and normative-ideological motives for NGO-led advocacy. Though these works collectively offer an analytical framework that better reflects the changing context and dynamics of transnational activism, it shares IR scholars' biases of Eurocentric empirical focus, buttressing the case for not only multidisciplinary study of transnational activism, but also new, more inclusive theoretical frameworks.

Examining the structures and forms of Bring Back Our Girls events in the four focal countries made clear that compared to the dominance of single forms, whether NGOs or mass crowds, Bring Back Our Girls did not consist of any single dominant forms of activism, whether in terms of mobilisation, operation or typology but was multimodal, involving multiple forms of activism occurring simultaneously. This multimodality comprised online and offline protests, prolonged and one-off participations, loose and networked NGO groupings, personal and professional connectivities, and indigenous and glocal identities. It is important to note that these typologies were not static and that in some countries, some of these forms (e.g., loose protests) transmuted into different forms (e.g., NGOs).

Pathways to participation in Bring Back Our Girls were more informal and digitalised than transnational advocacy networks. NGOs and NGO networks organised and supported events in some countries but individual agency in mobilising people in social networks, including on social media, meant that many of the individuals who participated in different spaces were part of concentric circles of friends and family members, and some professional contacts.

Finally, transnational relations between what was previously conceived in scholarship as a binary Global South and North, with the latter being dependent on the former for material and symbolic resources, were more equitable in Bring Back Our Girls. This was observed through the

participation of other Global South actors which was made possible by expanding the geographic scope of transnationality outside of the Global North. This shift in power dynamics was also seen to be a factor of the agency of Bring Back Our Girls' African leaders in starting this activism and leading its narratives as well as the role of social media in collectivising archives that can be searched in order to establish the narratival agency of content. The nexus between increased global mobility and growths in complex national identities serve to blur further the fluid boundary between North and South.

Participants in Bring Back Our Girls had multifarious motives for participation that included self- and social identities, norms and emotions. Where existing literature has privileged motives that derive from large/mass social identities like race, the intersectional approach used in thus study revealed the multiple identities of Bring Back Our Girls participants that converged to influence their decisions to participate.

By examining Bring Back Our Girls, a case of contemporary activism that does not fit neatly within existing typologies of social movement actors, this study expands categorisations of recognised forms of transnational activism. The study first propounds the idea that the concept of activism as social action for change does not adequately capture the full spectrum of what Bring Back Our Girls participants did, which included confrontation through protests and direct engagement and support to conflict-affected communities. Compared to traditional forms of activism and professional activists, Bring Back Our Girls participants were mostly ordinary people who saw themselves as connected to and affected by the causes that they were advocating. This extends to a second key finding that unlike traditional forms of transnational activism that were and remain led primarily by organised, highly coordinated and cohesive professionals and formal networks, newer forms like Bring Back Our Girls are more informal, diffuse, fluid, digital and populated by diverse types of actors who pursue the same causes but co-exist in networks with varying levels of connectedness to one another.

I theorise these as *multimodal transconnective networks of change*. Multimodality embodies the involvement of different actors and the multiple ways in which these networks engage, both online and offline, and with state (formal) and non-state (informal) actors. It also captures the fact that their activities transcend resistance and include the performance of actions that reflect their values as individuals and position them to help facilitate social change through a range of actions, not just protest and resistance. Transconnectivity refers to the shift from social actors connecting across borders to connecting through highly diverse networks of people from different countries, but who also represent different and multiple identities, and mobilise increasingly in borderless spaces like the Internet. Finally, networks of change acknowledges that groups like Bring Back Our Girls are not just activists but networks of actors that coalesce around the desire to effect positive change and who act on this through protest and resistance as well as direct transformative action and engagement with affected communities.

8.1.2 Theorising from the South and Decolonising International Relations

As noted earlier in the study, the limited insights in IR from non-Global North perspectives and, specifically, African concepts, experiences and agency, is well established (Acharya and Buzan 2007, 2010, 2017; Obi 2012; Tieku 2013; Acharya 2014; Odoom and Andrews 2017; Bouka 2018, 2019; Smith 2012, 2017, 2018; Zondi 2018). For this reason, many scholars have questioned the internationality of international relations and advocated for greater efforts to theorise from the South, rather than engage in cyclical efforts to revalidate Eurocentric theories. Without essentialising Africa or activism led by Africans and other Global South actors, this study has contributed toward redressing representational deficits in IR scholarship regarding the agency for social mobilisation and change of individual African as against non-African and female actors. By so doing, the study has helped to invert the Eurocentric gaze of this scholarship and contributed toward decolonising the study of IR—a key impulse of contemporary knowledge production and theorisation.

By privileging the voices of African and African diasporan activists, and by telling the story of an activism created by Africans, this research has brought African activisms into the purview of

'mainstream' scholarship and secured the place of Africa as a purveyor, not just a receiver, of transnational exchanges. This has contributed toward a more objective view and holistic understanding of the dynamics of transnational activism.

By centering the perspectives of activists who supported Bring Back Our Girls in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, and diasporan Africans in the United States, this study has illuminated the importance of Black identity, particularly Pan Africanism, as motivation for participating in transnational activism for the rights of Black people and people of African descent. The study has also contributed to an epistemic shift from reading the transnational as global or vertical to reading it as including regional or horizontal transnationalisation. This was done by showing the level of transnational activity that occurred within Africa compared to Northern media narratives that gave more publicity to Bring Back Our Girls activities in the Global North.

8.2 Policy Implications and Recommendations

This study's findings have a number of policy implications. I discuss three relating to the agency of Global South actors for taking action to address social problems in their own contexts, managing transnational capital and support, and knowledge production.

Bring Back Our Girls is an indication that individual Global South actors are increasingly exercising their collective agency to address problems that may be specific to their domestic contexts but have global resonance and ramifications. In addition to increasing ownership of informed responses from the ground, this has had the effect of allowing the construction and diffusion of comprehensive situational narratives that capture the complexities of conflict situations which tend to be oversimplified by external actors. These processes are facilitated by the increasing digitisation of all aspects of life. This has broadened avenues and scope of participation, and deepened cross-communication and connection, but it has also made activism prone to inflated support and visibility, and the distortion of narratives. To forestall these challenges and leverage opportunities, it is

important that Global South activists develop clear messaging and objectives that can be communicated and used to filter stakeholders and assess the relevance of offers of support. Strategies that succeeded with Bring Back Our Girls included creating a presence in cyberspace using a website and on social media to define what participants were about and who to contact to offer support. Its use of a specific hashtag further helped to map engagements which assisted the identification and confrontation of contrary narratives and actions.

As demonstrated by the wide scale of transnational participation in Bring Back Our Girls, international support can play an important role in escalating activism. However, it can also create false hope about participants' depths of engagement and potential impacts. External actors, especially in the Global North have a responsibility to ensure that offers of help are subsumed under the leadership of those affected and close to a conflict situation who understand contextual nuances and see the bigger picture. Global South activists can facilitate this by creating structures and strategies to help pursue their objectives effectively. Spontaneous protests have their merits, but structure and strategy can help ensure better sustainability, coherence and impact. Global South activists should also diversify the targets of their mobilising beyond the Global North as shifting power dynamics mean that there are influential actors and political spaces in other parts of the world that can help to enhance visibility at least and achieve objectives at best.

Finally, more research is needed on how contemporary transnational activism is functioning in different contexts, specifically those that are militarised, because they have particular implications for the safety and security of women and girls. It should be a norm to include and focus on protests and movements from the Global South as part of global discourses, not to essentialise or orientalise them but in order to obtain holistic insights into the prospects of emerging dimensions of civil society and civic engagement as forces against all manifestations of militarisation, including violence.

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ANNEXES

A. Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

Official Use only
Protocol number

Ethics Committee for Humanities (ECH)

PROTOCOL CONSENT FORM

Section A- BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Title of Study:	Through African Eyes: Bring Back Our Girls and the Politics of Transnational Activism
Principal Investigator:	Titilope Ajayi
Certified Protocol Number	ECH 109/18-19

Section B– CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

General Information about Research

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully and ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information.

The purpose of this study is to collect information to help the researcher conduct analysis about the politics of transnational activism. The data collected will help her complete her doctoral thesis.

You are invited to take part in this study through an interview to be scheduled at a time and place of your convenience. Prior to the interview, the researcher will provide you with a list of talking points to guide your discussion. The interview will last approximately 45 minutes. The researcher will take notes and request your permission if she needs to record or photograph you.

Benefits/Risks of the study

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study although the researcher anticipates that the knowledge that you provide will help to deepen understanding of how African activisms function and how they can influence politics positively.

Given its past reactions to some activisms, there is a potential risk of the Nigerian government targeting you for harassment. To mitigate this, the researcher commits to ensuring high levels of confidentiality, as explained further below.

Confidentiality

All the information that you provide during the interview will be anonymous. The researcher will seek to protect your identity by:
Holding interviews in safe and secure places.
Assigning code names or numbers for each participant to avoid identifying them by name in all research notes and documents.
Keeping interview transcripts in a secure encrypted file on the researcher's personal computer.
Ensuring that no other person has access to participants' data except the researcher and her supervisor.

Compensation

No compensation will be provided, in cash or kind, for taking part in this study.

Withdrawal from Study

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form. After you sign the consent form, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Withdrawing from this study will not affect you adversely. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be destroyed.

The researcher commits to notifying you or your legal representative, as appropriate, and in a timely manner, if information becomes available that may be relevant to your willingness to continue participation or withdraw.

The researcher may terminate your participation if it emerges that this will put you at risk. In this event, she will inform you seek your consent as to how to use any information that you have provided up to that point.

Contact for Additional Information

If you have any questions about this research, or in case of research-related injury, please contact:

Professor Akosua Adomako Ampofo
Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana
adomako@ug.edu.gh

Dr. Peace Medie
Legon Centre for International Affairs & Diplomacy,
University of Ghana
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Section C- PARTICIPANT AGREEMENT

"I have read or have had someone read all of the above, asked questions, received answers regarding participation in this study, and am willing to give consent for me, my child/ward to participate in this study. I will not have waived any of my rights by signing this consent form. Upon signing this consent form, I will receive a copy for my personal records."

_____

Name of Participant

_____ _____

Signature or mark of Participant Date

If participant cannot read and or understand the form themselves, a witness must sign here:

I was present while the benefits, risks and procedures were read to the volunteer. All questions were answered and the volunteer has agreed to take part in the research.

_____

Name of witness

_____ _____

Signature of witness / Mark Date

I certify that the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research have been explained to the above individual.

_____

Name of Person who Obtained Consent

_____ _____

Signature of Person Who Obtained Consent Date

B. Interview Schedule

Research introduction (questions for all interviews)

- Researcher self-introduction, explanation of study and signing of consent form

Participant profile

- Participants sociodemographic data (age, gender, nationality/ethnicity, education, work history, residence, how long there if abroad, etc.)

- Diaspora: Probe: How do you see/define yourself in relation to your home country and the country where you currently live? Has your sense of self changed in the years that you have lived abroad? If yes, how and why?

Participant role in/relationship with activism (general and specific)

- What role did you play in this activism?

- What actions did you take and why?

- Who was involved?

- Probe for identities, intersections and representations within group (ethnic, racial, religious, etc.)

- How long did you mobilise for?

- When and why did you stop?

- How did you become involved with this activism (look out for whether their explanations fall into transnational diasporic, religious or other 'category')?

- Probe for why, how their identity, networks etc. influenced their decision

- Probe for when they became involved and the nature of their relationship with the main activism if not stated in initial response

- Diaspora: probe how their identity influenced their solidarity

- Have you been involved with social advocacy/activisms before? Please explain.

- Probe for history of activism/social advocacy/community involvement?

- Are you affiliated with any civil society or advocacy organisations? What do they do?

- Diaspora: probe for links with any diaspora associations

Nature of activism and transnational linkages

- What was the geographic target of your activism?

- Who funded/resourced this activism?

- Who did you engage with outside the activism, how and why?

- Did you deliberately engage international actors? If yes, which ones and why?

- How did it impact your work and what you were advocating for?

- Has this activism been active online? If yes, on which platforms and why?

- Did you engage with other activisms on this topic (or others) outside of your home country/where your activism took place? If yes, which ones, how and why?

- Any mutations in cause and nature of activism and any changes in external engagement?

Closing questions

- Is there anyone else (other activists) you think I should talk to? Are you able to share their contacts?

- Do you have anything to add or ask me?

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[1] 'Global North' and 'Global South' are contested terms that emanate from the discourses around geographies of development and difference between what have been historically constructed as developed, advanced or rich states in Euro-America and underdeveloped or developing, backward and poor states in other parts of the world. These concepts are captured by the use of other terms like West and non-West. This study acknowledges this controversial history, the questionable relevance of such terms given shifting configurations of power and scholarship on the blurring boundaries between 'North' and 'South'. Usage of Global North and South in this paper connotes, per Mohanty (2002 cited in Khoja-Moolji 2015b:87), a metaphorical separation between parts of the world traditionally distinguished via binaries like 'haves' and 'have-nots'.

[2] A term coined by feminist sociologists to dewscribe the privileging of male perspecgtives in certain disciplines. Duriesmith (2019, 2020), Enloe (1990), Hudson (2005); Narain (2018), Pettman (2008) Tickner (1997) Olonisakin, Barnes and Ikpe (2011); Hendricks (2015); and Bouka (2018, 2019) are among feminist scholars who have noted historic empirical and citational silences on gender in IR.

[3] The authors offer a compelling explanation of why this protest wave was attributed to the Arab world and not to Africa. They argue that Africa has been overlooked in the literature on recent protests and its uprisings dismissed as riots because it is considered 'too rural, too traditional and too bound by ethnicity' to be the site of modern political protest.

[4] Alex De Waal (2015:22) notes the difficulty of 'measuring activism' in a commentary on the genealogies of transnational activism, but empirical studies indicate a rise in the frequency of transnational acts of resistance.

[5] The 'subaltern' discourse pervades debate on and about agency in TNAs vis-à-vis epistemic constructions of 'others' by hegemonic social groups. With the Nigerian TNA #BringBackOurGirls, for example, several authors note how depictions of the kidnapped students mutated as the activism transitioned from its Nigerian origins to a more Western hemisphere, converting them into stereotypical 'third world' females after the logic of imperialist justifications for interventions in non-Western societies to save voiceless, powerless others (Loken 2014; Olson 2015; Maxfield 2016; Khoja-Moolji 2015a, 2015b). Another example is Abu-Lughod's (2002, 2013) work on saving Muslim women where she questions the Western view of the veil as a symbol of oppression and the singular stereotyped image of the oppressed Muslim woman that overlooks the complex subjectivities and multiplicities of narratives that constitute Muslim women's lives. To extend this beyond the West, there are contestations over representation and legitimacy within non-Western activisms too.

[6] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/activism [15 April 2019].

[7] https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/activism [15 April 2019].

[8] https://www.britannica.com/topic/slave-rebellions [21 august 2020]

[9] Rhodes Must Fall inspired several hashtag movements, including #BlackStudentsMovement, #Luister, #PatriarchyMustFall, #ReformPukke, #SteynMustFall, #TheTransCollective and #TuksUprising (Luescher 2016:23).

[10] In his seminal work, *Africa Must Unite*, Nkrumah writes about how he worked alongside WEB DuBois and other early thinkers of Pan-Africanism. He also writes of his elation at welcoming delegates to the first Conference of Independent African States in Accra in 1958 and his feeling that 'at last Pan-Africanism had moved to the African continent where it really belonged' (1963:136).

[11] The Lord's Resistance Army abducted 139 teenage girls from St Mary's School Aboke in Northern Uganda in October 1996. The captors released 109 girls after the deputy headmistress, Sister Rachele Frassera, an Italian nun, followed and appealed to them. The LRA kept the remaining 30 who became soldiers and sex slaves.

12 Branch and Mampilly (2015) offer a compelling explanation of why this protest wave was attributed to the Arab world and not to Africa. They argue that Africa has been overlooked in the literature on recent protests and

its uprisings dismissed as riots because it is considered 'too rural, too traditional and too bound by ethnicity' to be the site of modern political protest.

13 For more on fourth wave democracy, see Abushouk, A. A. 2016, 24 February. 'The Arab Spring: A Fourth Wave of Democratization?' Digest of Middle East Studies, 25(1), https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/dome.12080# [accessed 10 April 2018].

[14] Fiona de Londras, 2019, 'The Transnational Counter-Terrorism Order: A Problematique', *Current Legal Problems* Vol 0 no 0:1-49.

[15] British Broadcasting Corporation. 2019. 'Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi: IS leader 'dead after US raid' in Syria', https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-50200339 [accessed 25 December 2019].

[16] With reference to figures like Dedan Kimathi, debates about the legitimacy of their killings and over their status as terrorists or freedom fighters shows relativity around these issues and a lack of normative consensus around these events. It also reveals how tenuous such claims are and how hard some parties have pushed to mobilise around and promote/universalise their view of reality.

17 Pereira (2019) writes about the sexual politics of zina and its selective application by implementers of Sharia in northern Nigeria.

[18] In her work on saving Muslim women, Abu-Lughod (2002, 2013) questions the Western view of the veil as a symbol of oppression and the singular stereotyped image of the oppressed Muslim woman that overlooks the complex subjectivities and multiplicities of narratives that constitute Muslim women's lives.

[19] Interviews with several Bring Back Our Girls members in Nigeria.

[20] Interview, member Bring Back Our Girls strategy team, September 2019.

[21] This study discusses the matters of celebrity activism and social media influencers in the preceding section.

[22] The meme (promounced Meem) is a unit of cultural information spread by imitation that was introduced in 1976 by British evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins (see https://www.britannica.com/topic/meme). In Internet terms, a meme is 'most often associated with an image or video that portrays a particular concept or idea that is then usually spread through online social platforms. That idea goes on to proliferate through social media, forums, instant messaging apps, and even news sites' (Martindale 2021). One example is the viral mimicry and mockery of an exaggerated bow by Cameroon's Minister for Sports and Physical Education Bidoung Kpwatt to Cameroon's President, Paul Biya, in 2016, that came to be known as the Bidoung Challenge. See https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-38290230

[23] Personal observation and interviews with several Bring Back Our Girls activists in the study's focal countries.

[24] Interview, women's rights activist and media personality, Maiduguri, October 2018;

[25] Allamin declined to speak with me during fieldwork in Maiduguri. This study relied on an incisive herstory written by Sue Diaz: 'The Woman Who Talks With Boko Haram--The Life and Work of Hamsatu Allamin of Nigeria', https://womenpeacemakers.atavist.com/the-woman-who-talks-with-boko-haram According to the Cambridge Dictionary, 'herstory' means 'history written from the point of view of women, and giving importance to their experiences and activities'. At its root is the idea that history privileges the perspectives of men.

[26] Wakil is a Nigerian woman of Igbo and Christian origin who moved to Maiduguri with her Muslim husband and befriended many original Boko Haram members as a mother figure while they were growing up, hence the moniker 'Mama Boko Haram' (Mother of Boko Haram). She is one of very few people who has access to the group. See Oduah, C. 2020. 'Mama Boko Haram': one woman's extraordinary mission to rescue 'her boys' from terrorism, The Guardian, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/09/mama-boko-haram-nigeria-maiduguri [9 January 2021].

[27] The full text of Allamin's statement can be accessed here: https://womenpeacemakers.atavist.com/the-woman-who-talks-with-boko-haram#chapter-2125302

[28] Negative effects include research fatigue and cynicism about the utility of research outcomes. Interview, RP32, November 2018.

[29] Interviews with activists in Maiduguri (September 2018) and New York (June 2019).

[30] Ayodeji Rotinwa on April 27, 2016 Inside a #BringBackOurGirls protest, https://thisisafrica.me/inside-a-bringbackourgirls-protest/ [23 June 2019].

[31] Women's Media Center WMC Live #114 : Sharon Isbin, Rossana D'Antonio, Hadiza Bala Usman. Original Airdate 14/2/2015. http://wmclive.libsyn.com/wmc-live-114-sharon-isbin-rossana-dantonio-hadiza-bala-usman-original-airdate-2142015

[32] Interview 19 October 2018, Abuja.

[33] Interview, Bring Back Our Girls strategy team member, Abuja, September 2018.

[34] Interview, Bring Back Our Girls strategy team member, Abuja, September 2018.

[35] Olutokunbo et al. (2015 in Jibril 2015: 1–2) state that as part of the on-going global campaign for Bring Back Our Girls, Hazel (2014), the National President of South Africa Association of Women Graduate (SAAWG) and other international organisations called on the Nigerian government for the release of the abducted girls. Organisations that are championing the call for the Bring Back Our Girls global campaign include: Women

Arise against Terror, African National Congress of Women's League South Africa, The Global Partnership for Education (GPE), UNICEF, United Nations, Amnesty International, Nigeria's National Orientation Agency, to mention but a few. Aside from organisations, there are world renowned celebrities and important personalities that joined the campaign. Prominent among them is the US First Lady, Michelle Obama who held a placard sign, reading "Bring Back Our Girls;" as solidarity for the global campaign for the safe rescue of the kidnapped Chibok girls. Also celebrities Chris Brown, Kerry Washington, and politicians David Cameron, Hillary Clinton (Chiluwa and Ifukor 2015:269).

[36] Interview, Bring Back Our Girls strategy team member, Abuja, September 2018.

[37] I found 28 public groups on Facebook that were either named Bring Back Our Girls or supported the campaign through posts on their pages.

[38] A selfie is 'an image that includes oneself (often with another person or as part of a group) and is taken by oneself using a digital camera especially for posting on social networks' (https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/selfie).

[39] The concept of selfie activism is acknowledged, mainly by studies in communication, as a new development in virtual activism made possible by the intersections of new technologies, evolving modes of political engagement, self-expression, and collective organisation that are reconfiguring traditional forms of and ideas about activism. Clare Sheehan, 2015, The Selfie Protest: A Visual Analysis of Activism in the Digital Age, Dissertation submitted to the Department of Media and Communications, London School of Economics and Political Science, August 2014, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the MSc in Media, Communication and Development, http://www.lse.ac.uk/media-and-communications/assets/documents/research/msc-dissertations/2014/Clare-Sheehan-MSc-Dissertation-Series-Formatted-Submission-AF.pdf [19 September 2019].

[40] Impressions include mentions and retweets of the hashtag. The hashtag trended in 7 countries and 50 cities but was mentioned in many more. #BringBackOurGirls was the No. 1 trend in Accra, Benin City, Ibadan, Kaduna, Kano, Kumasi, Lagos and Port Harcourt. It was the No. 2 trend in Soweto, Port Elizabeth, Nairobi and Mobassa; the No. 5 trend in Cape Town, Durban, Washington, Pretoria, Portsmouth, Middleborough and Hull and the No. 6 trend in Auckland, Bournemouth, Brighton, Bristol, Cardiff, Coventry, Edinburgh, Swansea, Preston, London, Leicester and Leeds. There were interesting mentions of #BringBackOurGirls in Krasnoyarsk (Russia), Shinjuku (Japan), Causeway Bay (Hong Kong), Guarapuava (Brazil), Havana (Cuba) and Jeddah (Saudi Arabia). Subomi Plumptre, 2014. Accessed 24 June 2019.

[41] https://twitter.com/BOG_Nigeria?s=20 According to Plumptre (2014), based on Twitter analytics, as at 7 May 2014, #BringBackOurGirls had received 1.5 billion impressions and reached 440 million people worldwide. It trended at varying levels in at least 31 cities across the world, including some in Nigeria.

[42] https://www.facebook.com/bringbackourgirls/?ti=as

[43] '#BBCtrending: How a million people called to #BringBackOurGirls', 6 May 2014 [19 June 2019].

[44] Olutokunbo, et al. (2015 in Jibril 2015: 1–2) state that as part of the on-going global campaign for Bring Back Our Girls, Hazel (2014), the National President of South Africa Association of Women Graduate (SAAWG) and other international organisations called on the Nigerian government for the release of the abducted girls. Organisations that are championing the call for the Bring Back Our Girls global campaign include: Women Arise against Terror, African National Congress of Women's League South Africa, The Global Partnership for Education (GPE), UNICEF, United Nations, Amnesty International, Nigeria's National Orientation Agency, to mention but a few. Aside from organisations, there are world renowned celebrities and important personalities that joined the campaign. Prominent among them is the US First Lady, Michelle Obama who held a placard sign, reading "Bring Back Our Girls;" as solidarity for the global campaign for the safe rescue of the kidnapped Chibok girls. Also celebrities Chris Brown, Kerry Washington, and politicians David Cameron, Hillary Clinton (Chiluwa and Ifukor 2015:269).

[45] A Panel Discussion: Chibok Girls, Not Forgotten, 14 April 2015, Voice of America, https://www.insidevoa.com/a/chibok-girls-not-forgotten/2711645.html, 16 July 2019

[46] Hadiza Bala Usman, 2014, 'I am the future', inspirational speech at the 65th annual Department of Public Information Conference, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J21-8KVC6ug 18 June 2019

[47] Ify Elueze, 2025, 'Bring Back Nigeria's 200 Missing School Girls #BringBackOurGirls', https://www.change.org/p/all-world-leaders-bring-back-nigeria-s-200-missing-school-girls-bringbackourgirls

[48] 57 escaped in the months following the abduction, two were rescued in May and November 2016 and January 2018, and Boko Haram freed 21 of them in October 2016 and a further 82 in May 2017.

[49]https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228621600_Qualitative_Case_Study_Methodology_Study_Design_and_Implementation_for_Novice_Researchers

[50] Personal communication, female activist, Maiduguri, October 2018.

[51] Personal interview by Skype and WhatsApp, RP15, June 2019.

[52] Power here conceived as soft power e.g., power to set agendas, construct narratives, engage and persuade in policy circles, etc.

[53] I thank Dr. Gideon Onuoha of Princeton University for bringing this to my attention at the Next Generation Social Sciences in Africa Doctoral Methodology Workshop in Accra, Ghana, in June 2019.
[54] 'A multi-national media organization and associated library founded by Julian Assange in 2006. WikiLeaks specializes in the analysis and publication of large datasets of censored or otherwise restricted official materials involving war, spying and corruption. It has so far published more than 10 million documents and associated analyses'. Source: https://wikileaks.org/What-is-WikiLeaks.html
[55] 'A decentralized international activist/hacktivist collective/movement that is widely known for its various cyber attacks against several governments, government institutions and government agencies, corporations, and the Church of Scientology'. Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anonymous_(group)
[56] Unpublished version shared by Pallas by email following his presentation at the ISTR international meeting in June 2018.
[57] R4bia is the name of the hand sign that became the symbol of the Egyptian uprisings in 2010/11. It simultaneously represents Rabia, the name of a respected female Muslim leader in Islamic history and the fourth child of her family, and Mohamed Morsi's being Egypt's fourth president. See https://www.aa.com.tr/en/world/multilingual-website-devoted-to-r4bia-sign-now-running/222902
[58] Point made during interview with Dr. Hlengiwe Ndlovu, one of the leaders of the Rhodes Must Fall Movement via WhatsApp on 22 September 2019.
[lix] https://www.facebook.com/bringbackourgirlsghana/?ti=as first accessed early 2017. Last accessed 7 January 2020. Liked by 783 people including Abdul Karim, a mutual Facebook contact.
[lx] https://www.facebook.com/Bring-Back-Our-Girls-Ghana-Candlelight-Vigil-Sunday-May-18th-2014-1402274813390094/?ti+as Liked by 639 people as at 7 January 2019 (access date), including Mawuli Dake, a known Ghanaian women's rights activist and mutual Facebook contact.
[lxi] At the time of writing, she had not honoured a follow-up interview scheduled for 14 January 2020. Subsequent attempts to reach her were unsuccessful.
[lxii] Organisers used the international dialing codes for both countries to symbolise Ghanaian support for Nigeria.
[lxiii] 16 Days is an annual international campaign used to mobilise individuals and organisations around the world for the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls. UN Women, '16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence', http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/take-action/16-days-of-activism [12 January 2020].
[lxiv] Bring Back Our Girls – Candlelight Vigil, Sunday May 18th, 2014, https://www.facebook.com/Bring-Back-Our-Girls-Ghana-Candlelight-Vigil-Sunday-May-18th-2014-1402274813390094/?ti=as [7 January 2020].
[lxv] Ghana International School website: https://gis.edu.gh/about/history/
[lxvi] https://femnet.org/about/
[lxvii] The second post was retweeted on Speak Ghana, a now defunct blog by 'young creative Ghanaians': https://speakghana.wordpress.com [8 October 2019].
[lxviii] http://bringbackourgirls.us/school-girl-march/ (this link is no longer accessible).
[lxix] Also email exchanges between RP14 and RP11 dated 21 and 22 July 2014 [8 October 2019].
[lxx] Email correspondences among Bring Back Our Girls members in Kenya and Nigeria shared confidentially with me during fieldwork.
[lxxi] Anonymous, 'Re: Strategising Meeting - #BringBackOurGirls – Flyer Update', email to organizing group, 14 May 2014 [8 October 2019].
[lxxii] In the Facebook page that she created, I found a list of 390 events that she helped to facilitate in 49 countries across the world. Some of these events held simultaneously in multiple countries. She mentioned 100 countries which suggests that not all events are listed on the Facebook page.
[lxxiii] Efforts to contact them were abortive.
[lxxiv] A think tank and research centre focused on nonpartisan analysis of US and international economic, security, and political issues. https://www.hudson.org/
[lxxv] An "intersectional alternative spelling of "woman"/"women" meant to include transwomen and non-white women." Urban Dictionary, https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=womxn [5 October 2020].
[lxxvi] https://www.uwc.ac.za/News/Pages/-Bring-back-our-girls.aspx
[lxxvii] Andy Iheanacho cited in KSL report on Utah Bring Back Our Girls rally https://www.ksl.com/article/29844955/bring-back-our-girls-utahns-rally-in-support-of-abducted-nigerians [30 September 2020].
[lxxviii] Gugulethu co-organised a 'Rock A Crown' rally at Union Square Park in New York City in May 2014 where participants wore African-style headwraps in honour of the Chibok students. Zainab Akande (2014), ''Bring Back Our Girls' Come to Union Square'', Voices of New York, http://voicesofny.org/2014/05/bringbackourgirls-comes-union-square/; https://youtu.be/J_hXMnc-Au8 in Ruth Morrison (2014), 'Bring Back Our Girls Hits New York City', What's the 411, https://www.whatsthe411.com/411tv2/on-the-town/item.601-bring-back-our-girls-rally-hits-new-york-city.html

[lxxix] Brittany Plothow who co-organised a Bring Back Our Girls rally in front of the Utah State Capitol with her friend, Erin Page. Cited in Emiley Morgan (2014), 'Bring back our girls: Utahns rally in support of abducted Nigerians',
[lxxx] At this point in the video of her talk, she bursts into tears.
[lxxxi] Interview, RP36, Maiduguri, September 2018.
[lxxxii] Interview, RP36, Maiduguri, September 2018.
[lxxxiii] Interview, RP34, Maiduguri, September 2018.
[lxxxiv] The name of her NGO is deliberately omitted to protect her identity.
[lxxxv] Akande, Zainab. 2014. "'Bring Back Our Girls' Comes to Union Square", Voices of NY, http://voicesofny.org/2014/05/bringbackourgirls-comes-union-square/