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## Acknowledgment

This dissertation is first and foremost dedicated to Molly and the bravery, vulnerability and resiliency in which she shared her life with me. This dissertation is also dedicated to the people of Gulu in Northern Uganda, who live boldly and without fear, who love wholly and deeply, and who give unremittingly to the world around them. Moreover, this dissertation is dedicated to the survivors of captivity all around the world. May their stories be told truthfully, powerfully and without restraint.

## Abstract

This study evaluates the impact of how global news conglomerates from the United Kingdom and the United States construct and frame girls' narratives as victims of conflict in the Global South. Through a dual contextual thematic analysis and critical discourse analysis, this study aims to evaluate the research question, 'What contradictory discourses are in evidence in representations of girls as victims of conflicts in the Global South by media outlets from the U.K. and the U.S.?' In evidencing how tropes of girlhood and development are imposed on the narratives of girls' abductions by Boko Haram in Nigeria and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda, twenty-six news articles were selected from four platforms from the UK and the US: *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. The analysis was conducted through a conceptual framework that fused postcolonialism, generally, postcolonial feminism and media representations of victims of conflict. Through exposing overarching themes and drawing out discursive practices that substantiate colonial ideologies, the analysis indicates that girls' narratives as victims of conflict are used in order to validate broader narratives suggesting the development of girls from the Global South, and the development of the Global South as a whole, to Western ideals of modernity, empowerment and achievement.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

He didn't choose where or when he was born.

But, because he's here, he matters.

... Years before Gavin was born, the course of my life changed entirely by another boy.

... After spending a few weeks with Jacob, he told me something I would never forget.

... Everything in my heart told me to do something. And so I made him a promise:



will be significant in working towards accurately representing girls from the Global South through combatting media frames, Western appropriations and dominant themes of modernity and development.

## 2.1 The Evolution of Global Girlhood

A prevailing theme in the literature explores the relationship between global girlhood, girl empowerment and the Girl Effect and how these Western concepts are appropriated in the Global South through the portrayal and representation of girls as victims. Sarah Banet-Weiser contextualizes the 'girl powering of development,' asserting that in the past two decades, there has been a significant increase in girl empowerment organizations (GEOs) in the US, which 'emerged at around the same time that empowering girls became a central theme in international development discourse; in the mid 2000s, the Nike Foundation coined the term the "Girl Effect" in partnership with the United Nations and the World Health Organization to demonstrate the significance of empowering girls in a global economy' (Banet-Weiser, 2015: 182). Emily Bent and Heather Switzer argue that the Nike Foundation coined the Girl Effect as a "rallying point" that put girls on the radar of philanthropists, CEOs, government leaders and other influential players in the development community' (Bent and

structural features of neo-liberal capitalism that produce the very global injustices that the Girl Effect purports to challenge' (Koffman and Gill, 2013: 86). Additionally, Koffman and Gill argue that the Girl Effect is not merely another theory or adaptation of development, but that it seeks to result in girls acquiring and embodying independency, agency and entrepreneurialism that form the core of Western discourses of girlhood (Koffman and Gill, 2013).

Agency, here, is connected to a postfeminist paradigm where choice, freedom and empowerment substantiate Western liberal ideologies in a broader women's empowerment movement. Rosalind Gill argues that the concept of empowerment is problematic in its commodification, namely, in 'a context in which fake "empowerment" is everywhere and in which feminist notions of it have been taken up and sold back to us emptied of their political force' (Gill, 2012: 743). Similarly, Rebecca C. Hains argues that in emphasizing certain aspects of femininity and independence from men as a cornerstone of empowerment, mainstream girl powe



## 2.2 Postcolonial Feminism

Many critiques of how theories of girlhood are appropriated to girls from the Global South stem from postcolonial feminism. In order to understand the impact of postcolonial feminism for the representation of girlhood, it is necessary to understand how postcolonial feminism situates itself as a critique against neoliberal feminism, post-feminism and, generally, feminisms of the West. Simidele Dosekun defines post-feminism as 'a contemporary cultural sensibility proclaiming that women are "now empowered," and celebrating and encouraging their consequent "freedom" to return to normatively feminine pursuits and to disavow feminism as no longer needed or desirable' (Dosekun, 2015: 960). Dosekun argues that post-feminism is malleable across national and cultural borders and is still able to be adapted to girls from the Global South who are able to buy into it (Dosekun, 2015: 966). However, her analysis problematically assumes that post-feminism is the appropriate avenue for awarding women and girls of the Global South equal representation to their Western counterparts. In this way, Dosekun's analysis diminishes, or altogether ignores, Western attempts to colonize the rest of the world through its dominant ideologies, culture and politics. Ultimately, Dosekun's analysis of post-feminism ignores theories of girlhood that cast girls who do not align with their objectives in the oppressive shadow of the West. Her analysis assumes that ideas of post-feminism are powerful because they originate from the West and, simultaneously, ignores realities that suggest that any idea about femininity and feminism would be equally powerful if it did not originate from the West. Similar to the notion of post-feminism, transnational feminism is posed as a solution to contradictory and oppositional feminisms, especially those that essentialize girls and women in the Global South. Johanna Brenner asserts that women from the Global South are impelled to defend their nations and cultures against Northern hegemony,



As such, other scholars challenge what feminism would look like if its movements were rooted in the



schemes, abductions, physical violence and sexual violence during wartime. Erin Baines exposes how gender relations contributed to the specific ways that the LRA perpetrated violence in Northern Uganda, where the roles of girls and boys as abductees in the rebel force 'are differentiated on the basis of sex and gender expectations: young men are more likely to become active combatants and young women are more likely to become forced "wives" and mothers' (Baines, 2011: 477). But, Baines argues that gender relations do not fix girls' roles in conflict; rather, gender relations intersect with different structures of power, privilege, race, ethnicity, age or class in order that girls assume many different roles and forms of agency in conflict (Baines, 2011: 481). Baines states that 'personal stories that bear witness to violence move beyond Manichean tendencies of telling a story of such horrendous circumstances, shedding light into the "half tints and complexities" of a contemporary grey zone. As such, they are unparalleled sources of information about the operations of gender, power, violence, and human agency' (Baines, 2011, 483).

Susan McKay exposes how gender norms of girls in conflict, in turn, essentialize the roles of girls in conflict to sex slaves and child-bearers. In doing so, she complicates how gender norms interplay with girls' roles in conflict, suggesting that girls, though once victimized through their abductions, may also display 'resiliency, agency, and ability to resist- although usually not successfully- their oppressors' (McKay, 2005: 391). However, although McKay exposes tensions in applying gender norms to girls in conflict, her analysis of girls' agency in conflict is problematic. While she refrains from framing girls who are abducted into conflict as victims and, thus, reducing them to objects, she falsely attributes them true agency. While some girls may choose to perpetuate violence and remain with their respective rebel forces, they do not do so under conditions of absolute freedom and autonomy. The 'agency' the girls are attributed when they choose to remain with rebel forces, then, is an agency that is not free of oppression, but is one that is afforded to them with limitations. While McKay argues that some girls, in fact, volunteered themselves to the rebel forces, she ignores the structures that surround the girls' 'choice' to enter into conflict. Furthermore, this structurally embedded choice, with limited scope and oppressive boundaries, is made more apparent when it is compared to the choices of girls in Western societies who are not faced with the same structural circumstances that would lead them to 'voluntarily' join an armed group (McKay, 2005: 388). Alternatively, Roxanne Krystalli argues how instances of sexual violence and rape in wartime reflect deeper-rooted structural violence in governments, systems of oppression, global hegemony and the imperialism of Western-defined ideals on non-Western societies. She declares that strategic rape 'may also occur when it is perceived to be permissible within a system even when there is no direct order. Violence can be strategic at any level of the hierarchy; even at the individual level, there are strategic decisions about rape taken on the basis of gender, ethnicity, race, religion, or other factors' (Krystalli, 2014: 592). Therefore, analyzing the roles of girls in conflict requires ideologies to be unlearned and

preconceived gender norms to be complicated so that girls are not prescribed a homogenous set of circumstances that award them the same gendered roles in conflict.

The aforementioned theories about the development of girls in the Global South, postcolonial theories of feminism and theories of the representation of gender and conflict intersect with theories of media representation, which necessarily impact how girls are framed as victims of conflict. Shani Orgad argues, 'For many people, media representations are the main, if not the only, place that they come to know the world' (Orgad, 2012: 254). Media framing and representations contribute to the construction of girls under a Western concept of girlhood which ultimately silences them and perpetuates the hegemonic privileging of Western voices over non-Western voices. Kasey Butcher explains that assuming Western ideals of girlhood ignores certain aspects of the systematic and essentialist construction of girls as vulnerable girls, 'namely that their youth and their assumed innocence makes them more vulnerable to those who seek to manipulate or abuse them. On the other hand, by constructing the girls as innocents, those who represent the victims also largely ignore the voices of the girls ... themselves, leaving the job of telling their stories to adults, the media and the government' (Butcher, 2015: 403). Consequently, overlooking how constructions of girlhood are produced and maintained through narratives and discourses of girls in conflict allows systems of power to remain in place, while empowering some girls at the expense of oppressing others 'separated by something as arbitrary as a border' (Butcher, 2015: 418). Similarly, Helen Barents argues that the way narratives are framed reflect deeper implications of power that are bound in

conglomerates to dictate narratives of girls from the Global South in order to validate broader ideologies of the need for the development of the Global South to Western standards of progress, modernity and empowerment. Therefore, in my study, I will fuse frameworks of postcolonialism that exposes Western imperialism, postcolonial feminism that exposes the hegemony of White and Western women and media representations of victims' narratives that employ tropes of girlhood that frame girls from the Global South as the objects of Western development. First, Christopher Pawling defines postcolonialism,

Therefore, applying a conceptual framework that exposes the dominance of the West in its colonization and oppression of the non-West reveals deeper insights about why the West intervenes in non-Western conflicts. Furthermore, a postcolonial feminist framework exposes why girls of the non-West become the objective interest of Western development. Finally, throughout the construction of the world's discourses, events and paradigms, there exists a Western imperialism that dominates, generally, the production of knowledge. If certain nations do not fall into a Western standard of development and progress, they are often cast into the periphery. The sharing and narrating of news occurs as a subset of this production of knowledge, where events are framed and information of those events is controlled according to Western interests, and through Western dominance of discourses and practices. Therefore, my study will draw from the aforementioned frameworks in order to analyze how the representation of victims and their stories by individuals from the West, groups or organizations from the West, or media platforms from the West impact upon the construction of knowledge surrounding these conflicts and girls themselves.

For this study, I selected two conflicts, girls' abductions by Boko Haram in Nigeria and the LRA in Uganda, in order to draw deeper parallels and oppositions about how theories of girlhood and development are imposed on various societies, groups and individuals within the Global South. Many scholars including Susan McKay argue that a growing interest in global girlhood has been illuminated by the work of international developmental organizations. Still, the experiences of girls

spreading and advancing developmental agendas, the framing of girls by powerful Western news conglomerates becomes essential to spreading discourses of Western development. As such, my study aims to examine the following research question:

What contradictory discourses are in evidence in representations of girls as victims of conflicts in the





Northern Uganda, framed the way I interpreted how Ugandans were represented in the news narratives selected for my study. I was also made aware of how familial, cultural, societal and educational institutions framed the worldviews I assumed while growing up in a Western society and how those views could be imposed on passages and larger narratives of victims' experiences in Global Southern conflicts.

### 4.3 Ethical Considerations

Since I was not dealing with human subjects, I acquired ethical approval from my supervisor and the Department of Media and Communications prior to conducting my analysis. In order to obtain a balance of ethical considerations throughout the analysis, I remained impartial, reflexive and transparent in my approach to the texts.

### 4.4 Research Design and Sampling

In order to draw out the significance of socially embedded constructs and the way discourses are framed and patterned to sustain dominant ideologies about girls as victims of conflict in Nigeria and Uganda, I conducted a methodology that combined both a contextual thematic analysis and a critical discourse analysis. Through this approach, I was able to draw out how structures of discourses are founded in and rely on overarching themes of Western imperialism, global norms of girlhood, Western ideals of modernity and development and othering. I chose to study two conflicts that, while exhibiting contextual and temporal differences, embody similarities within Global Southern societies that shed light on standards and principles that are purported as global norms by Western societies. While the peak of the LRA's abductions took place from the 1990s until merely a decade ago, Boko Haram's notorious abduction of schoolgirls occurred only three years ago. As such, these two conflicts, while different, evidence the social impact of representations of victims, especially those who are girls, in news narratives and the impact of individuals or groups from the West who assume the authority to narrate their experiences. Additionally, I chose to examine print news as opposed to news that was solely shared online since there still exists a strong imagined community around the consumption of feature news stories detailing conflicts around the world (Anderson, 1991; Thompson, 1995). I chose two platforms from the United Kingdom (UK) and two platforms from the United States (US). As a former colonial power, news platforms from the UK display deeply imbedded insinuations that justify UK intervention in both Nigerian and Ugandan conflicts. On the other hand, because of the dominant position of the US in global politics and economics, news



backgrounding, framing, omission, manipulation, discursive differences, presupposition and genre. Second, he applies frameworks to the sentence level, analyzing the identification of agents versus patients, the deletion or omission of agents, insinuations, topicalization and presuppositions. Finally,

These remarks rely on the statistical evidence purported by major development organizations, Unicef and WHO and, thus, development discourses and ideologies that distinguish the developed, advanced and disease-free West from the 'other', here Nigeria.

The narratives of girls' abductions by Boko Haram and the LRA generally acclaim Western ideals of development and use framing and topicalization that foreground the amount of aid that the West gives to African communities. In referring to the LRA raids in Northern Uganda, the British government is given the authority to intervene from the amount of monetary aid it gives to Uganda:

Therefore, because of the aid the UK contributes, and because it was a former colonial power, it has donned itself authority to help resolve Uganda's conflict with the LRA and to dictate the future of Uganda's economic and political stability and the betterment of its society. But, while the UK credits itself with legitimacy to intervene in the conflict in Northern Uganda, the narrative omits the amount of money and resources that the UK and other Western powers exploit from Uganda each year. In addition to using monetary value to incentivize its image of modernity and progress, the analysis indicates other ideals that acclaim the advanced West at the expense of homogenizing an inferior Africa. One Western ideal that is continually topicalized through a Western paradigm that contrasts its modernity against Africa's "traditionalism" is that of normalcy. In a feature story by [redacted], Grace Akallo travels to Washington DC to address Congress regarding the US' role in the conflict in Northern Uganda. While addressing Congress, Representative Diane Watson from California asks her:



credentials also don an authority and legitimacy by which they make remarks about the development of African communities and suggest solutions to conflicts that do not involve the West. Second, a prioritization of Western ideals is foregrounded through the presentation of information. The analysis indicates that, generally, information, statistical evidence, biases and opinions are presented in both the introductory and concluding paragraphs of news narratives. This technique situates information that falls between these sections as subsidiary. Audiences, then, will most likely remember what is presented first and last in the narratives.

## 5.2 Call to Western Intervention

Following from the larger narrative of Western modernity that is appropriated onto various communities affected by both the Boko Haram and LRA raids in Nigeria and Uganda, the analysis indicates a call to Western intervention. Western intervention is tropicalized in a number of ways throughout the news narratives. Often, narratives incentivize Western intervention through foregrounding the monetary aid contributed to the Ugandan and Nigerian economies:

Here, the conflict in Northern Uganda is depicted, in part, due to the neglect of Western powers to intervene and to rescue helpless communities subjected to the continual destruction of a rebel group incited by a corrupt and negligent government. Regarding the conflict with Boko Haram, the analysis indicates that remarks generally allude to Western intervention through superior knowledge of rehabilitation:





Here, the enlightenment of Western activists enables them to derive solutions for conflicts on another continent. The activism of Western agents actively victimizes the Ugandan and Nigerian governments, the communities affected by raids from Boko Haram and the LRA and, ultimately, the children, specifically girls, who are abducted and physically and sexually abused by the rebel groups.

### 5.3 Framing the 'Other'

From discourses that prioritize Western ideals, experiences and knowledge above those belonging to other communities throughout the world, various identities are presented as the 'other' throughout the news narratives. The analysis first suggests an instance of othering through discursive framing that polarizes the experiences of boys and those of girls. Through discursive and thematic framing, gender norms are topicalized in the articulation of women and girls' narratives as victims of Boko Haram and LRA abductions:

of a boy, who escaped captivity, at the expense of subjecting the experiences of girls who are continually re-victimized through shame and disempowerment. Generally, the analysis suggests that gender norms are used in a way that reduces the experiences of children in captivity in order to substantiate broader claims and ideologies of modernity, development, terrorism and empowerment. One narrative by [redacted] employs gender norms in order to radicalize the experience of a girl soldier who assumed certain aspects of the rebel force:

However, her choice is reduced to tropes of girlhood, framing her unconventional decision as a reaction to her loss of educational opportunity.

Another occurrence of othering that employs gender norms distinguishes younger women and girls from older women. Here, tropes of girlhood are contrasted against gender norms that frame older women as weak, used-up, unproductive to society, and undesirable:

Alternatively, the analysis indicates that othering in age occurs between girls themselves, where younger girls are also distinguished from older girls. Here, the analysis suggests that older girls embody more desirable characteristics and qualities for commander husbands:

Throughout the analysis, the distinction between [redacted] and [redacted] is a key element of the argument.

These remarks reflect a foregrounding of both go



The distinction of both groups of girls suggests that they embody certain attributes of girlhood that appeal to Western interests and ideologies of development, femininity and empowerment.

#### 5.4 Girls as passive recipients

The girls who have been abducted by Boko Haram and the LRA constitute one distinct group that is often presented as the 'other' in the data set. The analysis suggests that girls, as victims, are often portrayed as passive recipients of the actions of their abductors, of trauma, tragedy and abuse, of the shaming of their communities, of the neglect of their governments and of the development schemes of Western organizations and agents. First, the analysis indicates that girls' abductions are often topicalized in order to make a larger claim about their incompetent and irresponsible governments. Girls as victims, then, are reduced to objects that attempt to prove a point about the neglect of their governments and the need for Western intervention:

The analysis indicates that, often, girls' accounts do not shed light on their own experiences, but substantiate biases that feed dominant ideologies of terrorism. For instance, girls are often seen as objects or pawns in the government's negotiations with Boko Haram. They are framed as an essential part of the Nigerian government's victory over Boko Haram, but merely as parts of the plan.

Additionally, the analysis indicates that the girls' experiences in captivity and their rehabilitation after escaping from captivity are used objectively in order for Western ideals of enlightenment and modernity to confound tropes of global terrorism:

ashn into Post

Discursively, the girls themselves, as well as their experiences in captivity, are generalized and essentialized into a trap of victimization that does not allow them to amount to more than helpless objects in need of saving. Their experiences are generalized alongside other girls' experiences while Western agents, organizations and governments are named as responsible and active. While the girls are framed discursively as recipients of actions of other agents, whether evil, benign, or benevolent, their Western counterparts are not only named and legitimized through their accomplishments, titles and roles, but they are placed discursively as the subject purporting most, if not all, actions.

#### 5.5 Discourses of Western girlhood

The aforementioned themes presented in the analysis substantiate and amount to discourses and tropes of Western girlhood that are appropriated to non-Western girls. The analysis indicates that certain ideals of Western girlhood are continually foregrounded. First, the analysis suggests that girls are continually framed by descriptions that highlight their femininity, purity, innocence, gentleness and docility:





Here, girls display empowerment when they possess educational or career aspirations that achieve Western approval. However, the analysis indicates that, often, girls are either acclaimed or reprimanded according to the Western influenced ideals and ambitions they possess. For instance, if girls attain a certain educational status, they are depicted as empowered, ambitious and intelligent. But, if girls are forced to, or decide to, drop out of school due to trauma they endured in captivity, they are depicted as victims and they are often framed through negative connotations and condescending insinuations that their lives will never amount to what they could be with a 'proper' Western education:

Furthermore, Western ideals of education and achievement are framed as 'normal' and, therefore, embody a global norm of empowerment. The analysis indicates that ideals of a 'normal life' are continually topicalized, especially when they refer to girls growing up under simplicity, purity, innocence and normality, that is purported by Western values and ideologies imposed and appropriated onto non-Western societies.

## 6 CONCLUSION

Through a contextual thematic analysis, this study drew overarching themes that exposed how news sources privilege Western knowledge, epistemologies, ideologies and experiences over its non-Western counterparts. Through an additional critical discourse analysis, this study evidenced how discursive practices substantiate these broader themes, elevating the expertise and opinions of Western agents and organizations while silencing the very voices that these individuals or groups attempted to uncover through reporting on the abductions of girls by Boko Haram in Nigeria and the



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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1- Sampling

News Source	Narratives of LRA Abductions in Uganda	Narratives of Boko Haram Abductions in Nigeria
The Guardian	1996 “Devil’s Brides”	2014 “Half a year on, Chibok nightmare continues”
	1997 “Kidnapped to Kill”	2016 “Chibok schoolgirl’s private ordeal”
	2006 “G2: Mary was raped, tortured and imprisoned”	2016 “Boko Haram releases video”
	2015 “Polline Akello: ‘Kony commanded someone to look after me ... I was lucky’”	
Total: (7)	(4)	(3)
The Times	1997 “Ugandan rebels ‘use children as sex slaves’”	2016 “Kindapped Nigerian girls in video plea for freedom”
	2003 “‘They tied me up and hacked off my lips’”	2016 “Boko rape victims face baby stigma”
	2005 “‘I asked what happened to her. She just stared at the ground.’”	
	2011 “Abducted and forced to marry a crazed warlord- but I survived”	
Total: (6)	(4)	(2)

The New York Times	2004 "Escape from Rebels Leads to a Reunion in Uganda"	2014 "Tales of Escaped Girls Add to Worries in Nigeria"
	2005 "Charlotte, Grace, Janet and Caroline Come Home"	2015 "Former Captives in Nigeria Tell of Mass Rapes"

“a human being below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier”

**a) Freedom in decision-making**

**b) Possessing general aspirations/ ambitions**

**c) Drive to attain those aspirations**

**d) Innocence/ purity**

	<b>e) Women vs. men</b>
	<b>f) Weak vs. strong</b>
	<b>g) Christian vs. Islam</b>
<b>5) Terrorism</b>	<b>a) Boko Haram</b>
	<b>b) Islamic extremism</b>
	<b>c) Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)</b>

	<b>b) Shame</b>
	<b>c) Voiceless/ silenced</b>
	<b>d) Loss of innocence</b>
10) Sexual Violence	<b>a) Defilement</b>
	<b>b) Rape</b>
	<b>c) Forced prostitution</b>
	<b>d)</b>

	<b>k) Slavery</b>
	<b>l) Coercion</b>
	<b>m) None</b>

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