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# SOCIAL ACTIVISM THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA: THE CASE OF CHILD SOLDIERING IN THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

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**SOCIAL ACTIVISM THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA: THE CASE OF CHILD  
SOLDIERING IN THE GLOBAL CONTEXT**

By

**Mary Girges**

A Thesis  
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
through Sociology, Criminology and Anthropology  
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Master of Arts  
at the University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2013

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SOLDIERING IN THE GLOBAL CONTEXT**

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(September 12, 2013)

## DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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## ABSTRACT

The increased popularity of social networking among youth today has given rise to the potential for social activism through social media. Using the Social Constructionist perspective, this thesis examines how three popular Facebook pages construct the ‘problem’ of child soldiering. In particular, these Facebook pages made use of text, images, and links that invited members to cast negative judgment on the issue of child soldiering, which was further enhanced by connecting this problem to other issues plaguing children, such as poverty and lack of education. Moreover, techniques used to raise awareness and promote activism were primarily accomplished by providing images of volunteers accompanied by messages encouraging others to “get involved” or “make a difference.” This study contributes to the scholarly understanding of the role of social media in raising awareness of global issues and to the larger impact of the Internet in encouraging and facilitating advocacy.

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated in loving memory of the first person to introduce the extraordinary enterprise known as a higher education, my father: YOUSSEF GIRGES  
1959-2008

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The process of developing and writing this thesis was long, and it would not have been possible if not for the support and efforts of many individuals along the way.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The last few years have been marked by the emergence of a remarkable increase in the popularity of social networking and blogging among youth that has given rise to the potential for social activism through social media. Social media is an innovative venue for social activism. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Tumblr allow online users to share and broadcast information about interests and opinions to known contacts or the general public (Naaman, Becker, & Gravano, 2011; Java, Finin, Song, & Tseng, 2007). These networks are examples of how the successful use of the Internet might synergize, excite and challenge global issues (Kahn & Kellner, 2004). Social media platforms serve as an online area where members and users document their lives and the world around them. As well, platforms can become an area of discussion for a wide range of concerns that transcend school, work, home, or family, connecting users to a larger public discourse about issues of social and/or political importance. Social media is influential compared to other forms of 'traditional' media when it comes to spreading a message. Rather than using traditional approaches of media such as print or radio, social media platforms communicate on rapid innovation and changing platforms that all evolve in real time. When it comes to spreading a message by word of mouth, social media is readily available twenty-four hours a day making information accessible and obtainable at any time.

Child soldiering has been constructed as a problem at various times in history and literature suggests that child soldiering continues to grow. Some reports have stated that over 300,000 children under the age of eighteen, for more than two decades, served as child soldiers in fifty countries in every region of the world (Macmillan, 2009;

Schultheis, 2007; UNICEF, 1996; Tiefenbrun, 2007). Child participation in armed conflict is particularly found in developing countries where social, political and economic instability are common and more than half the population are children. While there is nothing new about child soldiers/child soldiering, the issue becomes how and why at particular historical moments the concern for child soldiers becomes sharply visible and serves as a time for social action and change. At these moments of heightened concern, child soldiering was framed as a 'problem' requiring all moral individuals to take a stand against the use of children in warfare. This type of heightened distress was evident during the KONY 2012 video campaign to make Joseph Kony, the leader of the Lord Resistance Army (LRA) infamous. He is wanted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for recruiting children as soldiers (Daily Mail Reported, 2012). Many social media users took to the Internet to help spread the message of this video.

Therefore, it is legitimate to ask: how is the problem of child soldiering constructed by social media platforms? As well, what techniques are utilized to raise awareness and promote activism? Perhaps, no force is more significant than that of mass media, especially social media networks. However, the popularity and impact of social media with regard to the problem of child soldiering has not been directly addressed by the scholarly community. This study was situated within the social constructionist perspective and explored and examined how popular social media platforms such as Facebook are being used by youth activists to raise global awareness. In particular, child soldiering was examined within the context of popular social media to better understand the processes by which such 'global' issues are brought to collective attention as a form of social activism.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### The Problem of Child Soldiers/Child Soldiering

Children are vulnerable human beings unable to resist abuse, and even death in war conflicted zones. Subsequently, they become victims in the exploitation of conflict. In the recent past, it is estimated that over 300,000 children under the age of eighteen have been serving as child soldiers, and others are displaced as a result of conflicts (Macmillan, 2009; Schultheis, 2007; UNICEF, 1996). Child soldiering is the practice of starving, beating, neglecting and de-humanizing children for the purpose of strengthening armed groups in war torn countries (Skinner, 1999; Cheney, 2005). In the last twenty years, modern conflict zones have seen combatants as young as the age of eight, male or female, recruited to fight (Skinner, 1999). Children conscripted into child soldiering are often abducted from their homes, tortured, and forced to become intoxicated with mind altering drugs in order to fight and kill (Tiefenbrun, 2007). These children are threatened with death or dismemberment if they do not fight and are also forced to carry out punishments on other children, kill offenders, and return to their own communities to witness or participate in the death or disfigurements of their own family members (Tiefenbrun, 2007; Skinner, 1999; Cheney, 2005). Children are forced to watch the punishment of other child soldiers who attempt to escape and in some cases these children are reportedly boiled alive, slaughtered, and others are forced to eat human flesh as part of their “training” (Skinner, 1999; Tiefenbrun, 2007). Child soldiers are often supplied with light weight and easy to operate weapons like the AK-47 (type of gun) to fight off offenders (Machel, 1996 as cited in Skinner, 1999). Child soldiers are victims of

brainwashing and brutal initiation who must follow commands in order to stay alive (Tiefenbrun, 2007).

Skinner (1999) reported that while children were recruited forcibly by taking them out of their schools or villages, children were frequently joining voluntarily (p. 13). Many of these children were under age combatants who would join to avenge the death of relatives killed by either side of the conflict. It was also noted that children joined the conflict in order to receive food, clothing, and shelter rather than being on the street in a war zone (Skinner, 1999; Macmillan, 2009). Voluntarism by children to join armed groups is viewed as an irrational action done by those too naïve to understand the consequences of their actions. Rather than face starvation or feel frightened and helplessness, children joined voluntarily even though the dangers of becoming wounded, permanently disabled or even death were recognized (Macmillan, 2009; Skinner, 1999).

While some children are trained to participate in armed conflict, female soldiers are taken to be wives (Breen, 2007) or become sex slaves (World Vision Uganda 2000, as cited in Cheney, 2005) to military commanders or even ‘soldiers’. In El Salvador, Ethiopia, and Uganda, almost one third of the child soldiers have been girls victimized by sexual violence on a daily basis (Tiefenbrun, 2007). These children are alienated from their communities, threatened and exposed to traumatic situations in order to become fearless and are unable to resist committing wartime atrocities.

Children’s participation in warfare has been documented in Cambodia, Palestine, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Columbia, and Afghanistan, among others (Skinner, 1999; UNICEF, 2005). Along with reports of child soldier use in certain countries, literature suggests that the use of children in warfare is not a new problem or

idea. Children have consistently participated in armed conflict as far back as 1212 (see Skinner, 1999). The use of children in warfare is perceived as an ongoing problem to the present day.

Despite many Conventions, human rights, and policy directives that aspire to be applicable to all the world's children, the use of children as soldiers continues to be reported. Many legal binding international provisions and principles were built on varied legal systems and cultural traditions to provide children with special protection from heinous acts such as abuse or manipulation (Lee, 1999). The 'problem' of child soldiering was recently highlighted with the viral campaign video called KONY 2012. The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), is a rebel group led by Joseph Kony. It originated in Northern Uganda, and is now scattered across the Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic and Southern Sudan, where innocent civilians are attacked, children are kidnapped, and forced to fight for the rebel forces (Akhavan, 2005; Daily Mail Reporter, 2012). The issue of the LRA's terror has been a problem for over twenty-four years (Akhavan, 2005). This twenty-eight minute video called for international action to stop the war criminal Joseph Kony who has a warrant of arrest in his name with the International Criminal Court (ICC). In order to accomplish this goal the video requested that all young activists share the video through various social networks. The Invisible Children organization, the founders of the video, wanted to launch a social movement to pressure governments to capture and stop Joseph Kony. Multiple activist groups such as Child Soldiers International noted that in the wake of KONY 2012 the issue of child soldiering has received more media attention now than it has been given for over five years (Smith, 2012). Sikes (2008) explains that in the Western world at least,

the state of ‘moral panic’ appears to prevail around children and their vulnerability. When the issue of child soldiering was identified as a ‘problem’ by social activists, the notion of whether this ‘problem’ was an objective reality was questioned. Moral panic can lead to behaviors likened to that of witch hunts of previous centuries or moral crusades seeking to purify the world through the abolition of what is viewed as a danger or threat (Sikes, 2008). Trying to capture Joseph Kony was a form of witch hunt initiated when the KONY 2012 video campaign went viral—anything shared across social networks that gets passed along rapidly— such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Tumblr. As social activists dug deeper into the issue they discovered that since 2005 the ICC indicted Joseph Kony for thirty-three charges, twelve of which are crimes against humanity, including murder, sexual enslavement, enslavement and rape (Harsch, 2006; Daily Mail Reporter, 2012). Twenty-one counts include cruel treatment of civilians, pillaging, and forced enlisting of children into the rebel ranks, are considered war crimes (Daily Mail Reporter, 2012).

Moments of intense concern tend to bring issues back to the fore. Child soldiering has always existed. However, it needs attention in order for social activists to use the public’s awareness of the issue to bring on a social movement for change. Using children on the battlefield is a human rights violation that rises to the level of slavery (Tiefenbrun, 2007). Although the number of children in warfare is only an estimate according to the literature, this does not take away from the fact that child soldiering is an alarming issue. Research indicated that the participation of children in armed conflict is a crisis that is purported to have claimed the lives of more than two million children, displaced six million children permanently, orphaned one million children , afflicted ten



million children with psychological trauma, and have caused over twelve million child refugees in the last decade (Tiefenbrun, 2007).

### Concern With The Rights and Well-Being of Children

Another area of interest in this research is what makes people with no personal and/or particular attachments want to rescue children and why are they viewed as savable? For centuries philanthropic agencies such as orphanages, asylums, and hospitals advanced from the development of private and public responses to relieve those in need, especially children. During the Byzantine era institutions such as orphanages were used to provide assistance to care and protect children (Miller, 2003). Generally, these institutions were built to meet the varied needs of those in distress, and provide a safe haven for children in need of assistance. The concern for children and their childhood began to see substantial interventions to protect children's well-being.

Zelizer (1994) examined the profound transformation in the economic and sentimental value of children which has been a taboo subject roughly since the 1920s. Additionally, Zelizer (1994) was able to explore the legal justification of children's life insurance policies and what the courts awarded parents in the event of a child's death. Zelizer (1994) argued that prior to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century children were primarily valued for their economic contribution to their households. As children became less economically useful (by spending more time in school, for example), they were increasingly valued for their contribution to the emotional economy of their family. Thus, to the extent that children's contributions are alien to the money economy, children are now literally 'priceless'; without price. Hence the problem, on the one hand moral and on the other hand legal, of placing a price (or cost) on a child's life for the purpose of

insurance or compensation in the event of death or injury. Scholars have drawn on an important distinction between “abstract knowledge of childhood and knowledge of particular children” (Lee, 1999, p.465). Decisions about particular children depended on the qualities of those children and on their own legitimacy (Lee, 1999).

The changing attitudes in the last hundred years towards children’s welfare have been intertwined with women’s welfare and women’s social condition (Mayall, 2000). Children’s needs arose in the context of mother-child relations (Mayall, 2000). In the last couple of decades the concept of children’s needs has justified interventions in the education of mothers, health promotion and social work practice to provide a firm basis of working towards protecting childhood (Mayall, 2000). The focus on child well-being observes a child’s needs, eradicating child poverty, improving the quality of life, preventing social exclusion, and promoting children’s rights (Statham & Chase, 2010). Recently, a study tracking the well-being of children according to a time series data from the *American Child and Youth Wellbeing Index* found a marked decline in overall well-being from 1980 to 1994 which was followed by a continuing increase until 2007 (Statham & Chase, 2010). This has led to the need to monitor children’s development and an unprecedented attention paid to children at home and at school at least in some Western societies (Mayall, 2000). Nowadays, there are many outlets and institutions dedicated to maximizing children’s performance and well-being.

Many different circumstances make children vulnerable and such challenges, such as a child’s lack of voice and the right to be heard is specifically recognized in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Of course, ‘having’ a right and being able to exercise that right are two different issues. Essentially, children are viewed as ‘becoming

adults'; unformed and incapable, nonetheless, the body of children's provisions and principles both at the international and domestic level, recognize that children are in need of special care and protection (Breen, 2007). Here, if children's voices are hard to hear "this can be read as a sign of their inability to represent themselves" (Lee, 1999, p.468). This need for special care and protection of children's well-being started from paternalistic decision making for young children. Equally, since children do not have sufficient knowledge about themselves or the world, a knowledgeable adult is needed to advocate on behalf of the children (Lee, 1999). Many international general provisions such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is a universally agreed set of non-negotiable standards and obligations, are designed to protect children from being abused and manipulated by an adult and serves to separate childhood from adulthood (Breen, 2007). The Convention established that a child is an individual entitled to a full range of rights which include: right to survival; to develop to the fullest; to be protected from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation; and to participate fully in family, cultural and social life (UNICEF, 2005). Children under the age of eighteen, without any distinction of sex should have access to full human rights (Breen, 2007; UNICEF, 2005).

However, the convention does make note that there are no definitions used to describe young people such as 'teenagers,' 'youth' or 'adolescents' in international law. When the word 'children' or 'child' is used in everyday language it implies small children, especially those less than ten years of age (Human Rights Education Associates [HREA], 2007). There have been organizations in the past that have tried to adopt working definitions in order to accommodate or separate a child from youth. An example of this is *The World Health Organisation* which uses 'adolescent' to refer to those aged

10-19; 'young person' aged 10-24 years; as well as 'youth' between the ages of 15-24 years (HREA, 2007). This distinction is important since the boundary between 'adolescent and 'young person' overlap and this continues to occur between 'young person' and 'youth.' This notion appears to be that at the age of fifteen a 'youth' can take care of themselves; even though some youth cannot vote or hold formal seats in a political assembly at the age of fifteen (Krishner, 2007).

While these distinctions change from location to location, separating a child from youth or a youth from adult is an issue that dates back to the sixteenth century. The ages of man have been discussed for centuries by writers such as Shakespeare, Dosso, and Hesiod to name a few. However, they all differed on the ages that separate a child from youth. For instance, Shakespeare divided the span of life of a man into twelve stages. Shakespeare spoke of these stages during the sixteenth century in Paris in which he displayed the beginning of life from a baby's days to the time of death (Standen, 1954). A man's life span was taken to be seventy-two years; each month of the calendar represented six years of life. The month of February represented the years from six to twelve when children are suppose to be in school (Standen, 1954). Prominently there are many other approaches to dividing the span of life and these distinctions differ in a field of linguistic uncertainty.

The practical problem is who counts as a child or youth? The twelve ages of man, for example, showed that this is quite rigidly defined by age. These separations have been socially constructed over time and continue to change as one universal definition has not been agreed upon. The issue on hand regarding child soldiers again challenges these definitions on what age do you separate a child from youth. These are children

doing adult-like actions such as carrying weapons, defending their force, or killing individuals. Child soldiers continue to be recruited roughly around the same young age of seven or eight (Skinner, 1999). There are studies that demonstrate this may be due to the opportunity for rebel forces to gain control and brainwash these children with fear and hopelessness (Akhavan, 2005; Schulthesis, 2007).

Just as the difficulty of distinction falls upon child soldiers being neither a child nor youth this same issue is found among youth groups. Youth groups may fall between the boundary of children and youth, or the boundary between youth and adult and these distinctions are obscure. These are politically engaged youth who cannot vote (depending on geographical locations), who are advocating for child soldiers. The category of youth is premised on the level of competence and responsibility the average 'youth' is thought capable of. Youth advocates against the use of children in warfare may often be the same age as the children they are rescuing. This puts youth who are neither children nor adults in an interesting position as political agents. The notion appears to be how to define child soldiers and youth advocates in a field of linguistic uncertainty as there are many approaches to define the span of life. The category of youth activism is further discussed under the title 'Social Media and Social Activism.'

With the phenomenon of child soldiering seemingly settled assumptions held by Western science and ethics are challenged. Once children have been recruited as soldiers, the level of protection afforded to these children weakens and they receive the same level of protection – or lack thereof – as adult combatants (Breen, 2007). Child soldiers create cognitive dissonance (at least in the West) because they are simultaneously viewed as innocent children and perverse adults. This is 'slaughter of the innocents' by the

innocents. Society is reluctant to treat them as children's opposite - adults - but treating them as incapable of speech and incapable of self-knowledge seems absurd. Child soldiers have lost the opportunity for an education, and warfare increases the chance of physical or psychological injury or even death. The concern over child soldiering is portrayed through literature, films and campaigns. There have been numerous accounts of child combatants coming forward and talking about their experiences in war-torn areas. Emmanuel Jal and Ishmael Beah are just a few examples of former child soldiers who have written about their painful ordeals to help raise awareness and to monitor the use of children as soldiers (Jal, 2009; Beah, 2007).

The continuity of child soldiers is reflected in the development of international law and international human rights (see Breen, 2007). Relevant legislation and international conventions, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and Geneva Convention IV (1949) reveal the perception of soldiering and the need for protection of children in armed conflict. Furthermore, such legislation states a universal recognition that the best interest of a child should be a primary principle (Kline, 1992). It is a prime consideration in the development of children's rights that legislation takes into account the child's overall welfare. However, scholars noted that children enlisting in the army (voluntarily or forced) do not have their full human rights protected (Breen, 2007).

Child soldiering/child soldiers have been seen as a symptom of a wider problem of the complete neglect of a whole generation (Tiefenbrun, 2007). Child soldiers continue to be stigmatized with representations of being evil monsters, bandits, and killers, which has only strengthened the concern of the activist for the victim. Global

inequalities are masked by a universalized representation of childhood. Child soldiering exposes this hollowness in the universal representation of protecting childhood for all children.

## Social Media and Social Activism

### *The Popularity of Social Media*

The beginning of the twenty-first century has been marked by the unprecedented development and use of technologies that support social interaction (Hansen, Shneiderman, & Smith, 2011). Social media platforms are also rapidly changing the information and communication dynamics of social activism. The popularity of social media outlets such as Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, and YouTube allow millions to post and view videos, messages, tweets, and pictures to connect them to the world and the people they care about. Shared content includes personal status updates, opinions and the ability to comment on mutual interests (Naaman, Boase, & Lai, 2010, as cited in Naaman, Becker, & Gravano, 2011). Social media networks continue to readily and easily connect diverse people with common interests worldwide. Moreover, individuals may access these platforms increasingly using mobile devices that can connect them to content anytime, anywhere (Hansen, Shneiderman, & Smith, 2011).

Social media can assist individuals to reach out to large groups through the use of popular networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and YouTube. Facebook was created in 2004 and by October 2012, Facebook reported to have reached one billion active users (Zuckerberg, 2012). Facebook membership allows users to present themselves in an online profile in order to share and connect with 'friends' worldwide. The typical user spends about twenty minutes a day on Facebook, and two-thirds of users

log in at least once a day (Cassidy, 2006; Needham & Company, 2007, as cited in Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007).

Similarly, the social networking site Twitter is a short-form messaging tool restricted to one hundred and forty characters or less. Twitter supports a hashtag annotation format (symbol #) so that conversations on hot topics using photos, music, or videos are categorized by themes all in one place (Naaman, Becker, & Gravano, 2011). Twitter has over five hundred million active users who tweet 1.058 billion times in a month according to a press statement released by Twitter in July 2012 (Valibhav, 2012). Of those five-hundred million active users, twenty-six percent are between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine, which is nearly double the rate among those aged thirty to forty-nine (Bullas, 2012).

On a slightly smaller scale than the other social media platforms is a micro blogging network site called Tumblr. Tumblr serves a different template as it has no length restrictions and blogs have the option to be posted by text, photo, quote, link, chat, audio, and video. An important feature of Tumblr is the community of bloggers who share their blogs with one another. As of 2013, Tumblr has passed ninety-six million blogs, and its users have produced more than forty billion blog posts (Tumblr, 2013). The primary users of Tumblr are between the ages of eighteen and thirty-four who make up forty-four percent of Tumblr users (eMarketer, 2011).

YouTube, on the other hand allows for posting of video clips, whereby billions of people discover, watch, and often originally create and share their videos (Naim, 2007). It is a forum for people to connect and inform one another about common interests across the globe. YouTube includes videos that are frivolous and serious posted by human



rights groups, terrorists, political campaigns and so forth (Naim, 2007). Although it was created a few years after Facebook in 2007, YouTube reported that seventy-two hours of video were uploaded every minute (YouTube, 2011). In addition, seventy percent of YouTube viewers/traffic comes from outside the United States which supports the idea that social media connects diverse groups of people worldwide (YouTube, 2011). As discussed above, these are a few examples of the popular and widely used social media platforms that may be used as an effective tool in assisting social and political activism because of the vast and diverse populations it reaches globally.

### *Youth Activism*

Adolescence in contemporary North American society involves transition and quality of a greater social responsibility (Krishner, 2007, p. 367). Youth have emerged and have been given a platform to contribute in combating local and global inequalities. Activism is the action for social, cultural, political, and nationalistic change (Yang, 2009). While some youth do not have the opportunity to vote or hold formal seats in political assemblies they continue to contribute to social action campaigns that give voice to their hopes, concerns, and dreams (Krishner, 2007).

For instance, poor and working class neighborhoods saw how youth of colour were working to improve failing schools in their neighboring areas (see Kwon, 2006; Larson & Hansen, 2005; Sherman, 2002 as cited in Kirshner, 2007). This was a great achievement for youth activists improving surrounding communities. Youth frequently recognize when society is in need of a wake-up call when the well-being of others may be in danger. Kirshner (2007) explains how “adolescents reflect on their surroundings and engage in complex moral reasoning” (p. 367) in order to make a social change in their

communities. A report released in 2006 from *Amnesty International* reviewed and highlighted the top issues American youth continue to be actively engaged in; the list contained issues of human rights, education, children's rights, social welfare, student union, and alternative media initiatives (Chana, 2007).

Studies have contributed that one of the defining features of youth activism today is its collective focus that involves the collective participation of groups of youth (see Flores-Gonzales, Rodriguez, & Rodriguez-Munz, 2006; Youniss & Hart, 2005 as cited in Kirshner, 2007). There is a shift in focus of individual to group work. Youth learn how to effectively work together in a group setting that allows youth to witness power in numbers (team work). From experience of collaboration on social issues, youth activists learned how to overcome issues related to race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientations (see Sullivan, 2007 as cited in Kirshner, 2007). This emphasis on overcoming barriers contributed to a sense of collective efficacy (Kirshner, 2007). Power now comes within a group of youth activists, as youth recognize the strength and achievement that comes from team-work. Similarly, Kirshner (2007) notes that youth distribute certain tasks to a range of participants and together the group is made an effective team.

Youth activists now take to the Internet to: design and distribute press release statements, create video campaigns, and organize protests online and offline in order to accomplish their goals of social action campaigns. For example, youth participants sought to reform schools in Chicago and organized a city-wide *Youth Summit* and lobbied the school board against a new high-stakes exam (see Watkins et al., 2007 as cited in Krishner, 2007, p. 370). When youth collaborate with one another and properly organize

social action campaigns this activity channels sociopolitical awareness and social change (Krishner, 2007).

Youth activists involved in social justice issues advocate for sociopolitical awareness of global problems in hopes of social change. Today, many of the social media activists are users under the age of thirty (Hensel, 2012). Youth are using social media platforms to voice concerns of global issues in order to see themselves as active agents in society. As Hensel (2012) notes youth are increasingly moving their activism online, especially given their use of social media. Social media platforms expose global interests of youth activists along with events and attitudes that are all seen in real time. Youth activism is still an emergent field in understanding how political participation of youth has taken on diverse forms outside of North America (see Chawla et al., 2005; Hart, 2006; Rajani, 2001 as cited in Krishner, 2007). Youth activists are looking beyond their neighborhood problems and are reaching out to global issues that are in need of social change and assistance. Research is just scratching the surface of how social media in fact produces real-life results in revolutions, social upheavals, conflicts, all within the context of youth activism online.

Social activism regarding child soldiering via online social media is an example of research that is required in broadening the sample of the effect of online youth activism. The problem of child soldiers has been raised by the campaign video to capture Kony to help children escape from the Ugandan rebel leader recruiting and using them as soldiers. Youth activists may be capable of illustrating how the issue of child soldiering/child soldiers should be treated as a collective responsibility. Conscripting

children as young as the age of eight creates a social problem around which youth activists can organize their own collective self-determination.

### *Gaps in the Literature*

Facebook constitutes a rich network for research interested in social media platforms as its heavy usage patterns and technological capacities link online and offline connections (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). Literature suggests that Facebook represents an understudied network that provides a basis for grassroots action to coordinate; and an area for activists to communicate (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Neumayer & Raffl, 2008). These virtual networks provide the opportunity for anyone to participate and engage in online political and social activism (Neumayer & Raffl, 2008). Participation on Facebook is a global phenomenon as Facebook continues to expand internationally and diversify its audience by adding more country-based networks (Ginger, 2008). The three major Facebook communities are the United States of America, United Kingdom and Canada (Neumayer & Raffl, 2008).

Previous research examined how networked computing systems affected offline social networks, yet recent literature advocates that there was an increase in the use of these systems designed as social networking tools (Lampe, Ellison, & Steinfield, 2008). Other research examined the history of these sites along with the demographic characteristics that can predict site usage (as cited in Lampe et al., 2008). Lampe et al. (2008) explains that research associated with social networking sites increased over the past several years; however, understanding the use of these sites becomes essential as they are more prevalent as an interaction landscape.

Additional research on social media platforms articulated that Facebook has become an increasingly common mean by which college aged members were communicating (Lampe et al., 2008). It was also common that social media platforms are used to share photos, organize groups, and stay in contact with other members through online profiles. The literature has studied the popularity of social networking sites, age groups, social capital implications, and concern with privacy settings. Previous studies of Facebook and other social networks observed snapshots of individual activities throughout the network. However, these studies did not capture particular moments or topics being shared throughout the Facebook network. Given the rapid use of Facebook in terms of users and features, it is important to contribute to the growing literature regarding the popularity of social networking sites. Through my research I examined how social media platforms such as Facebook were being utilized by youth to bring awareness to the issue of child soldiers/child soldiering.

### 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section seeks to further identify how social activists have been using ‘new spaces’ for social activism. The subsection that follows provides some previous theoretical insight into how the *Social Constructionism* perspective of the media helps to construct ‘reality’ and issues.

To say that something is socially constructed is to emphasize its dependence on contingent aspects such as reality and knowledge. Berger and Luckmann (1966) explain that ‘reality’ is a “quality appertaining to phenomena that we recognize as having a being independent of our own volition” (we cannot ‘wish them away’) as well, ‘knowledge’ is

“the certainty that phenomena’s are real and they posses specific characteristics” (p.13). For instance, facts about money, citizenship, and newspapers are socially constructed as none of these things could have existed without society and had society chose to construct them differently is possible. Through perception, individuals define the world around them and such definitions could be applied to problems/issues. For example, how were children defined as soldiers? It was not the act of defining children as capable of killing, but the definition may have resulted in society treating them or perceiving children as soldiers defending a cause. Therefore, while initial reality is soft as it is constructed, it can become hard in its effects.

According to Berger and Luckmann (1966) society is constructed through three stages; externalization, objectivation and internalization. Externalization is created by cultural products through social interaction and these products may be material products, social institutions, values or beliefs concerning a particular group. With objectivation products created in the first stage appear to take on their own reality, becoming independent of those who created them. Lastly, internalization is ‘objective facts’ about the cultural products that have been created. Now this occurs primarily through the process of social interaction (ways of society and individuals specific roles). Berger and Luckmann (1966) explain that because of this process of internalization, members of the same culture share an understanding of reality and rarely question the origins of their belief or the process in which these beliefs arose.

Social construction is not only applied to worldly items – facts and things – but our beliefs about them (Hacking, 1999). Consider the social construction of child soldiers as a ‘problem.’ Clearly, the intent is not to insist on the obvious fact that certain

children become soldiers as a consequence of social events and environments. Rather, the idea is to expose the way in which a particular belief has been shaped by social forces. A belief that there is a particular kind of child – child soldiers – that are deserving of being manipulated and abused for special attention.

Social constructionism is a perspective that believes that a great deal of human life exists due to social and interpersonal influences (Burr, 1995). This viewpoint takes a critical position towards the way individuals understand the world—including ourselves (Burr, 1995). Through this critical observation of the world we can challenge the view that “conventional knowledge is based upon objective, unbiased observations” (Burr, 1995, p.3). Scholars of social constructionism concentrate on investigating the social influences on communal and individual life.

Generally, social constructionists regard individuals as historically and culturally important, in specific times and places. Social constructionism regards that all other aspects of humanity are created, maintained, and destroyed in our interactions with others through time (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 1994). For instance, Burr (1995) articulates that the notion of childhood has undergone tremendous alterations, what was thought ‘natural’ for children has changed, and this reflects on what parents were expected to do for their children (p. 4). The literature review noted how the idea of children as innocents in need of adult protection is a relatively new concept. Changes in the time span of the last twenty years or so, viewed the radical consequences for how society protected childhood.

Burr (1995) explains that all the ways of understanding are historically and culturally relative. They are not only “specific to particular cultures and periods of history,” but they are viewed as products of that culture and history and become

dependent upon social and economic measures, prevailing in that culture at that specific time (Burr, 1995, p.4). The ways in which socialization and enculturation, among the people we know, become the most active in shaping a mutual existence with others (Burr, 1995). The importance of culture to social constructionists is embracing an understanding and explanation for the world as it is experienced and interpreted to exist.

Therefore, social problems may be viewed as a constructed phenomena and what constitutes a problem is the concern that the public feels about a given condition or issue (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 1994, p. 149). Spector and Kitsuse (1977) explain that social problems are constructed by the “activities of individuals or groups making assertions of grievances and claims with respect to some putative conditions” (as cited in Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 1994, p. 151). Social constructionist scholars note that the concerns about an issue do not necessarily correspond to the actual danger or threat posed by the issue. With social constructionism, culture is defined by what is permitted as appropriate, confirming, desirable and expected. It also defines issues as abnormal, deviant and inappropriate. Through this, culture refers to actual occurrences and social reality (Burr, 1995).

Social problems are produced by sociocultural circumstances (groups), social structures and societies (individuals and/or classes). Social problems may also be expressed through social activists, participation in social movements, consuming media stories about certain issues, social media and so forth (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 1994). This can be applied to child soldiering as a global problem as historical episodes represent explosions of concern at a particular time and place about the perceived threat of children being used to fight wars. Additionally, the construction of social problems,



specifically child soldiering, can be manifested in two ways depending on different circumstances and settings. The first is through the collective action and campaigns from members in society who bring attention to protest or change a given condition – social problems as social movements (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 1994, p. 152). This was seen in the campaign video KONY 2012 to bring awareness to the global phenomena of child soldiers/child soldiering. Second, public discussion of an issue in the media comes in the form of television news stories, documentaries and the use of social media platforms (See Becker 1963; Best 1990; as cited in Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 1994). The use of social media networks helps to construct child soldiering as a global issue. Social activists make use of the media and social media platforms. Social constructionism is a crucial avenue through which certain conditions are constructed and validated as social problems (Burr, 1995).

#### 4. METHODOLOGY

This research focused on Facebook as a social media platform in which activism regarding child soldiers/child soldiering took place. Facebook membership is independent of one another, however the content, often publicly shared, ranges from personal status updates to information sharing of any kind. Arguably, the most influential social media network is Facebook, as it encompasses colleges, universities, high schools and work places worldwide (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). Part of Facebook's success back in 2004 came from its student members, as it started out as a network for college and university undergraduates to chat (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). Facebook is commonly used by younger adults. A 2012 Pew Internet survey

reported that Facebook remains the most utilized social networking platform as eighty-three percent of social network users are between the ages of eighteen to twenty-nine (Duggan & Brenner, 2012).

With Facebook, users create an online profile that shows their friends and acquaintances information about themselves. Facebook enables its users to accumulate friends and interact with people they already know offline and they also have the option to meet new people online (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). Members are able to connect with friends by accessing each other's profiles, sending messages, sharing photographs and updating statuses about themselves. Another popular feature on Facebook is the ability to create and join virtual groups or pages. These pages/groups have the option to be available to the public or only accessed by invitations to join group discussions. Members of these groups/pages may share news stories, videos, and photos in which they can comment about the shared items. Similarly, is the 'Events' feature which allows friends to organize parties, fundraisers, and other occasions all on one page.

It is important to note that Facebook members virtually join groups' and pages based on common interests and beliefs (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). Facebook groups and pages have an overlapping feature set and essentially connect members with organizations, brands and so forth. The value of Facebook pages are similar to a member's profile for members have the ability to have friends, add pictures and access virtual 'walls' where other members can post about their common interests. Facebook groups follow a similar outline, yet users that desire to join groups must wait for an approval or invitation from the group administrators/creators. A positive side to studying Facebook pages is that these pages are indexed by external search engines such as

Google, which serve as a public profile and does not need permission to join or view the content (Zuckerberg, 2012). These pages also allow members to become more personalized with their options and show more content while Facebook groups do not provide this feature (Zuckerberg, 2012). Furthermore, Facebook pages allow their members to interact with one another without having them connect to a personal account; users also have the option to exceed Facebook's five-thousand friend cap which allows for these pages to reach and connect to a larger diverse population.

A special feature across Facebook is the 'Like' button that allows a user to share their content with friends on Facebook. When the member clicks the 'Like' button on their Facebook page or content from that page, a story will appear in the user's friends "News Feed" with a link back to the website. The 'Like' feature means that a connection is made between the page and the users and is a sample of the amount of members that have seen and liked the page content (Zuckerberg, 2012). For instance, Facebook has a total of one-hundred and twenty 'child soldiers' pages. These pages range from local community pages to non-profit organizations such as 'The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative'. From the one-hundred and twenty 'child soldier' pages only four required members to add the pages and the remaining pages were accessible to the public by the 'Like' button. To clarify, anyone from the general public or members can access and browse these pages even if they do not 'Like' the content. The smallest 'child soldiers' page in accordance to the number of likes (0) was a non-governmental organization (NGO) named 'Child Soldiers' that was created in January of 2013 which had no content posted on the page. On the other side, the most popular Facebook page in regards to child soldiering was a non-profit organization called 'Project: AK-47' which aims to

rescue child soldiers in Southeast Asia and Latin America. This Facebook page had a total of 5202 'Likes' at the time of research.

With over one billion active users and as the most used social networking platform, Facebook provided a deeper understanding of the activity of individuals (youth activists) on the Facebook network (Zuckerberg, 2012). Specifically, analyzing Facebook pages regarding child soldiers/child soldiering awareness techniques and activities done by activists.

### *The Method*

Dominant research methods for previously studying social media platforms consisted of quantitative user surveys as well as quantitative content analysis (Parker, Saundage & Yao Lee, 2011). While this is significant research, qualitative content analysis provides a richer insight into social media users' viewpoints, attitudes, feelings, beliefs and intentions towards specific content (Parker, Saundage, & Lee, 2011, p.2). Therefore, the main research question is how and to what extent Facebook pages are being used by youth activists to raise awareness on the global issue of child soldiers/child soldiering. The research used the framework of qualitative content analysis in order to examine user content on Facebook to establish and assist in understanding how the awareness of child soldiering was being constructed and networked. I have also examined visual communications and texts within these three Facebook pages. Visual communications include visual images, videos, and texts that consisted of posts, along with any comments and whether textual material is fact or opinion based. Content analysis is a popular method for examining cultural texts such as statuses and posts (Rose, 2007). Krippendorff (2004) explains that content analysis is a method that allows

for the comprehension of symbolic qualities of texts in which the texts refer to the wider cultural context, creating the bigger picture of which they are part. An advantage of content analysis is how relatively easy it was to gain access to social media networks in which it presents an objective account of events, themes, and issues that might not immediately be apparent to the researcher (Rose, 2007).

Through the use of content analysis, researchers take content based phenomena and establish explicit, implicit and/or multiple meanings into themes and categories (Krippendorff, 2004; Parker, Saundage, & Lee, 2011). The content analysis addresses questions such as ‘who are they’ as well as “what are they sharing” along with where, why, and when, which acknowledges the frequencies of the issues being examined. The primary unit of analysis will not be the entire Facebook page, but a timeline comparison during the first two months of the release of KONY 2012 video campaign (March 5<sup>th</sup> – May 5<sup>th</sup>) versus the first two months of the year 2013 (January 1<sup>st</sup> – March 1<sup>st</sup>). The timeline comparison analyzed the top three Facebook pages as stated earlier. Completing a timeline comparison assisted me to determine any differences in people’s behaviors over time regarding the issue.

A limitation of qualitative content analysis, as Rose (2007) acknowledges, is in relation to visual images. Although it focuses on the visual imagery itself it does not examine the ‘production or the audiencing of the images’ (Rose, 2007, p. 61). However, I took note of the images being portrayed, in order for the analysis to achieve replicability and validity that emerged from the content (Rose, 2007). The ultimate goal of my research was to arrive at categories, patterns, or themes which characterize the meaning and interpretation of the content being examined, whereby new categories were

discovered and old categories were recognized during the analysis (Parker, Saundage, & Lee, 2011).

Additionally, the use of other social media platforms such as Twitter was excluded from my projected research as Twitter does not allow users to access tweets that were written after four to six months. Another limitation regarding the use of Tumblr, Twitter, and YouTube is that when searching for a specific topic such as child soldiers problems were reported that the topic was improperly tagged or was not viewable in the search. To clarify, users may bookmark, hashtag, or name content that is not directly related to the topic being searched.

### *The Sample*

This thesis engages in a different approach from previous analyses of social media platforms. Rather than examining videos or micro blogging networks, I examined the top three Facebook child soldier pages in accordance to the most 'Likes' received. This sample represented the most used Facebook pages that were advocating for the awareness of child soldiers/child soldiering globally. The top three, over one thousand 'Likes', child soldier/child soldiering awareness pages are as follows, according to the most 'Likes'; 'Project: AK-47' (5202), The 'Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative' (1887) and 'Child Soldier Cycle' (1149). The reason for narrowing the Facebook page selections was that the top three pages were more likely to reach a larger audience since they have the most 'Likes' which suggested that more users accessed and were aware of the page content. The three Facebook pages should not be considered an extensive selection as many more Facebook pages could be included; however, due to the volume of work this amount will suffice for research purposes.

To get an overall stance of the three Facebook pages, I briefly examined the organizations that were in charge of creating and organizing the pages. The first organization named “Project: AK-47” is situated in regions of Southeast Asia that rescue and rehabilitate child soldiers (Project: AK-47, 2010). The organization provides these children with K-12 education, further vocational training or university education as well as provides resources to help their healing and growth into independent adults as stated in the website (Project: AK-47, 2010). The mission has been around for about fourteen years; however, it was officially formed as a non-profit organization in 2009. The organization has many projects involved in Mexico, Burma, Philippines and Sri Lanka trying to rescue child soldiers, build schools, and support minor soccer leagues for children in high risk situations (Project: AK-47, 2010). Project: AK-47’s website also supports a live blog with updates from volunteers or stories from ex-child soldiers as well as an online store to donate or buy hand-crafted apparel or jewelry made by former child soldiers. On the main webpage, Project: AK-47 finances and expenditures information were not made readily available.

The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative was founded by retired Canadian Lieutenant-general Roméo Dallaire in order to prevent the use and recruitment of child soldiers worldwide. The organization focuses on three core activities which are research, advocacy and security sector training all with the goal of prevention (The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative, 2013). The website stated that the organization works with military, peacekeeping forces and police in order to stop the cycle of children being recruited by armed groups. The mission is located at the Centre for Foreign Policy Studies at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Canada (The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers

Initiative, 2013). The mission is to continue, develop and implement new strategies and tactical guidance in order to gradually eradicate the use and recruitment of child soldiers worldwide in which they work with nation-states, communities and so forth to achieve their goal (The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative, 2013). In 2012, Child Soldier Initiative reported a total of \$621,813.97 in contributions with expenditures on programs of \$262,046.56 and the remaining amount went towards special events and general administration costs (The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative, 2013).

The last Facebook page I observed was Child Soldier Cycle which was founded in 2009 as a non-governmental and youth driven movement to raise awareness about the use of child soldiers in Central Africa, specifically around the conflict of the Lord's Resistance Army (Child Soldier Cycle, 2009). The mission stated that the organization influences the Canadian government and media about ending the use and recruitment of child soldiering. The campaign focuses on connecting with youth activists in their newest Campaign called 'Talk the Talk' to help send videos to members of Parliament about the ongoing conflict in Central Africa (Child Soldier Cycle, 2009). In addition, no information was provided regarding Child Soldier Cycle finances and expenditures.

All of the aforementioned Facebook pages assisted to discern youth activism awareness on social media platforms. It is important to understand how social media networks such as Facebook, related to youth activism through using the venue of online activism to advocate for child soldiers/child soldiering. Especially since child well-being has been a major topic of inquiry with the universalized representation of childhood and how global inequalities such as child soldiers has questioned this universal representation. To date, there has not been a comprehensive analysis of specific



Facebook pages, let alone an analysis concerning both child soldiering and youth activism on social media platforms.

### *Coding Scheme*

The coding scheme was designed based on the research questions mentioned above. The selection and structure of the variables follow what has been written about child soldiers. It analyzed the manifest content which is only what is explicitly stated in the text and not the contrast to the latent content which analyzed the hidden meaning behind the words. The first variable is the (1) “text” section which only notes the text written on the Facebook pages. The next variable is the (2) “links” category which organized only links posted. The third variable (3) “videos” are any posts that only included videos. The fourth variable (4) “images” are only posts of images. The next four variables are (5) “text/links”, (6) “text/videos”, (7) “text/images”, and (8) “text/links/images” which encompassed that texts were always accompanied by another variable during Facebook page posts. All posts recorded during the timeline comparison fell under one of these categories which made these categories appropriate to encompass all the data being recorded. The categories were able to cover a broad range of ways that mainstream media categorized the role and use of social media.

## 5. RESULTS

The following outlines the key findings of this study. For each section, the findings of the content analysis are outlined and the overall general findings of all the material are described, combined with the findings of the time period analysis.

These results do not outline every post related to child soldiering in the Facebook pages. Instead, they provided five trends or themes that emerged throughout the content analysis with regards to how the problem of child soldiering is constructed along with the techniques used to do so. The five themes are as follows: The Role of Internet Links in Facebook Pages, The Role of Major Figures in Facebook Pages, The Role of Social Networks in Facebook Pages, The Role of Participation in Facebook Pages, and The Role of Images in Facebook Pages. In total 179 posts are recorded from all three Facebook pages. The 2012 timeline from March 5<sup>th</sup> to May 5<sup>th</sup> recorded 35 posts while the 2013 timeline from January 1<sup>st</sup> to March 1<sup>st</sup> recorded the majority of posts at 144 across all three pages, see Table 1.

**Table 1** **FACEBOOK POSTS BY GROUP**

	<b>Project: AK-47</b>	<b>The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative</b>	<b>Child Soldier Cycle</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>2012 (March 5<sup>th</sup> to May 5<sup>th</sup>)</b>	3	24	8	35
<b>2013 (January 1<sup>st</sup> to March 1<sup>st</sup>)</b>	122	20	2	144
<b>Total</b>	125	44	10	179

*The Role of Internet Links in Facebook Pages*

The Facebook pages analyzed incorporated many posts in which Internet links are utilized to send readers to different social media platforms, news articles, videos, blogs

and so forth. The use of Internet links on these three pages supported the idea that Facebook is indeed a cross-pointing platform in which Facebook groups and pages could redirect readers to many different platforms and sites. This trend was found across all three Facebook pages: Project: AK-47, The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative, and Child Soldier Cycle.

However, when examining the individual Facebook pages, the types of Internet links varied from group to group. For instance, Project: AK-47 generally shared posts with Internet links to their own blog on their home website. These blogs included recent volunteer work done by Project: AK-47 regarding child soldiers or an interview with former child soldiers done through text or videos. Project: AK-47 was also the only Facebook page to post links to their online store where users have access to buy Project: AK-47 merchandise. The types of merchandise and their use will be discussed later in the section of “The Role of Participation in Facebook Pages.”

The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative (CSI) group also utilized Internet links. However, the majority of CSI’s posts included links to news articles about updates regarding child soldiering with the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) led by Joseph Kony. News articles posted on *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *Toronto Star*, and *CBC* were shared via links on CSI’s Facebook page on several occasions. For instance, one post had a link to *The New York Times* online newspaper talking about the arrest and conviction of a Congolese warlord who was convicted of using child soldiers for their rebel group. This Facebook page specifically posted links to publications completed by Roméo Dallaire about findings collected from recent training missions. Additionally,

CSI had links to interviews and stories about Dallaire's work and past experience with child soldiering and his progress towards ending the use of children in warfare.

Child Soldier Cycle's use of Internet links took up the majority of posts counted for the overall time period of 2012 and 2013 for their page. It should be noted that the Child Soldier Cycles' Facebook page recorded the lowest number of posts across all three pages. Child Soldier Cycle focused on posting links about the effect of the LRA. For instance, one link led readers to the *Human Rights Watch* webpage about how communities are displaced due to LRA's atrocities. Additionally, links to former child soldier stories were recorded.

In the 2012 time period, the KONY 2012 video campaign was released on YouTube. During this time period Child Soldier Cycle and CSI primarily focused their first few posts on links that spoke of the LRA and the KONY 2012 video release speaking of the rebel leader Joseph Kony. These news stories focused upon the dangers posed by Joseph Kony and presented convincing evidence of this threat by describing the history of the LRA, as well as incorporating analyst opinions offered by Roméo Dallaire and other UN specialists. No specific dangers were highlighted in the posts other than general comments about protecting children from violence, abuse and war. CSI posted an introduction paragraph along with the link to the expert panel event:

Join us and the Child Soldiers Initiative at 7pm on March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2012 at the Dalhousie University Club for an expert panel on the challenges posed by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Speakers include Philip Lancaster, Ledio Cakaj, Guillaume Lacaille, and Ron Atkinson, with closing remarks by LGen. (ret'd) Hon. Roméo Dallaire. (CSI 03-05-12)

The sheer importance of the issue of child soldiering was emphasized or brought to life again during the start of 2012. It was also noted that child soldiers would not end with

the arrest of Joseph Kony and that it required more knowledge about child soldiering and volunteer work towards ending the use of children in warfare. Child Soldier Cycle and CSI both shared links to news articles posted in *Huffington Post* and *Human Rights Watch* webpage's.

During the 2013 time period, many of the Internet links tended to reflect on the volunteer work needed and being completed to stop the use of child soldiers. Project: AK-47 was very adamant about posting weekly updates to their blog in which readers could follow the progress of their newest projects. The post would introduce Project: AK-47s' effort and underneath the content follows the link to their blog:

Here is an update on the work we have been doing in the Philippines. It's amazing to see what can happen when a community unites itself. (AK 01-14-13)

In addition, both CSI and Project: AK-47 share links to the stories of former child soldiers. These news links and interviews focused upon children describing the events of becoming a soldier at such a young age and these were provided by the organizations or third-party sources. Children would narrate the first time they killed and their escape from rebel and armed groups. Again these links were introduced by a small summary of the event, and at other times the title of the link was available for readers:

- (1) What do you do when you're 14 years old and Joseph Kony takes you as his wife? Anna Maria Tremonti shared the remarkable story of our friend Evelyn Amongy earlier this morning on *CBC Radio: The Current*. (CSI 01-07-13)
- (2) Michel Chikwanine sharing his story on *George Stroumboulopoulos Tonight*: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_kkvaRVktFg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_kkvaRVktFg) (CSC 03-05-12)

The organizations have obviously adjusted their choice of textual material to allow Facebook members to pursue the links and continue reading about these former child soldiers. With the exception of Project: AK-47, former child soldiers' stories were

shared on the Facebook pages. Project: AK- 47 tended to post about the continued and ongoing use of child soldiers. As well, the 2013 time period reveals that after 2012, Project: AK- 47 tended to focus on their volunteer work to differentiate between speaking about the issue of child soldiers and their volunteer ground work in affected regions.

### *The Role of Major Figures in Facebook Pages*

Major figures or “celebrities” are used in both Project: AK- 47 and CSI Facebook pages and campaigns. These major figures are seen as advocates, trustees, volunteers, donors, specialists, and publicists to the organizations. Whether the major figures were well known globally or not they are able to support the organizations by helping to reach new audiences with the message at hand. In this section both Facebook pages utilized major figures such as Mikky Eko, Josh Doyle, The Rock, Steve Lester, and Roméo Dallaire. Each figure brought their talent to the cause in order to construct the sensitive issue of child soldiering worldwide.

The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldier Initiative is the first indicator that a major figure such as Roméo Dallaire is heavily involved in the organization. As stated previously, CSI was founded by retired general Roméo Dallaire. Throughout the 2012 and 2013 timeline comparison many posts reflected Roméo Dallaire’s concerns regarding the use of children in warfare. Although the organization does not concentrate on a specific location in which children are known to be recruited as child soldiers, Dallaire’s issues are raised in international law and panels regarding the subject. For instance, in the 2012 timeline, a post indicated that Roméo Dallaire and Stephen Lewis were on TVO speaking on the problem of child soldiers. To clarify, Stephen Lewis is a politician, diplomat, author, and journalist who established the Stephen Lewis Foundation to assist

Africans suffering from the AIDS pandemic. His foundation is recognized for assisting vulnerable children and orphans that need access to education. In addition, CSI provided images of General Dallaire to the viewers and these often included portraits, sketches or images of Dallaire with other members of the organization.

Project: AK- 47 presented major figures under the name ‘Advocate Alliance Members’ on several occasions during the 2013 timeline comparison. Posts including information about these major figures were frequently accompanied by images. The list used photographs and sketches, displayed in black and white or different colors all posted by the administrator of the Facebook page. Included in different posts were YouTube videos or iTunes that depicted artists’ newest released music videos or songs. This was seen multiple times with ‘Advocate Alliance Member’ (hereafter AAM) singers Mikky Eko and Josh Doyle. The post included the iTunes music link along with any information introducing the AAM:

Check out our Project: AK-47 advocate Mikky Ekko! He is fresh on the music scene having just worked with Rihanna on their collaboration “Stay.” Listen to his latest EP on iTunes! (AK 02-17-13)

Additionally, Project: AK- 47 included Facebook posts congratulating advocates on their work or newest achievements:

- (1) We are so proud to see our Project AK-47 advocate Mikky Ekko performing LIVE on the Grammys with Rhianna!!! (AK 02-10-13)
- (2) We are so proud to see one of our artist alliance advocates Josh Doyle on Billboard! (AK 02-07-13)
- (3) Mikky Ekko talks about his Rihanna success and preparation for solo stardom in the article below. We are very grateful to have Mikky Ekko representing Project: AK-47 as part of our Advocate Alliance. (AK 01-18-13)

(4) The beautiful musical duo and Project: AK-47 advocates August York have launched their new website! You will find music and tour dates here! <http://augustyork.com/home> (AK 02-19-13)

Project: AK-47 used these announcements, texts, videos, and images in conjunction with one another to help support their AAMs. For instance, example number four (as seen above) included both a still image of the advocate's faces, as well as a link that purportedly redirected viewers to the advocate's webpage. Text was used to indicate that the artists were advocates for Project: AK-47. This was seen with all four examples in which the texts "Project: AK-47 advocates" or "Artist Alliance Advocate" was always stated in the sentence when introducing the major figures. By using these materials, Project: AK-47 was able to emphasize the use of major figures in their organizations and their involvement.

During the 2013 time period, Project: AK-47 AAMs were shown supporting 'gear' for their organization. These items were available online for purchase and the 'gear' included dog tags, hats, and shirts supporting the name of the organization. This was especially reflected in the dog tags which signified one of the 100,000 child soldiers affected in the Southeast Asia region. Major figures could be seen wearing more than one dog tag at a time on the same chain. For instance, a post introducing AAM Josh Doyle is followed by a three in one image displaying the artist wearing a hat, shirt and two or more dog tags. Both the hat and shirt were sporting the organizations name, Project: AK-47. Not only did major figures support the organization with their music or talent they exhibited items from the organization's online store. Again, images and text were used in conjunction with one another to help Project: AK-47 support their AAMs in order for the AAMs to support their cause.



### *The Role of Social Networks in Facebook Pages*

Facebook offers the opportunity for members to integrate other major platforms onto Facebook pages or groups. This allowed for Facebook to become an area of cross-pointing to other major platforms. In this section child soldier Facebook pages displayed three primary social networks that were cross-referenced numerous times; YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram. Each Facebook page utilized the option of cross-referencing to other social networks; Project: AK-47 cross-referenced to all three social networks, CSI mainly used Twitter and YouTube, while Child Soldier Cycle only used one social network, YouTube.

Facebook page CSI introduced to their members links and posts to Twitter and YouTube on several occasions. For instance, CSI posted about their newly created Twitter username that asked members to access and follow their new Twitter account. In addition, YouTube posts were included to watch videos relating to CSI's volunteer work:

In a video report by Al Jazeera, Nazanine Moshiri interviews our very own Tanya Zayed during one of our trainings in Musanze (CSI 03-21-12)

In this example, CSI posted the above content on their Facebook page introducing the video with the link following underneath. The content of video was redefined by the organization's choice to embed the video into the Facebook page. As a result of embedding the video, along with providing a hyperlink, members were given the option to watch the video link on Facebook or go directly to YouTube's webpage (where the uploader's text was available on the main site).

All three other social networks (stated previously) were found cross-referenced on Project: AK-47s page. Project: AK-47 placed a series of posts that included YouTube links that allowed users to access the video right on Facebook or be re-routed to

YouTube's main webpage. The majority of YouTube links included songs about the vulnerability and innocence of children as well as a series of video links to AAM's newest music videos or videos displaying the lyrics of a song. In addition to YouTube, Project: AK 47 also introduced Instagram to its users:

Are you following us on Instagram yet? Connect with us there to see photos of the work we are doing around the world. @projectak47 (AK 01-24-13)

Project: AK-47 used texts and images in conjunction with one another to help users to become aware of Project: AK-47 on Instagram. There is also the use of links that allowed users to access the webpage that Project: AK-47 created. To clarify, Instagram follows the same idea as Facebook, Tumblr, and Twitter which allows members to add friends or followers to their profile page. However, Instagram is mainly about taking pictures (new or old) and sharing it not only on Instagram, but other social media sites as well. It also allows members to write a small text about the photo before posting the image to an online profile account. By using these materials, Project: AK-47 was able to gain more followers/supporters on other social media networks other than Facebook.

Additionally, Project: AK-47 has one specific post which discusses how to make use of all the major venues of social media. The post included the use of graphics of all four social media venues logos (which are mentioned below). Project: AK-47 continues to ask its members to follow their organization on Twitter and Instagram; along with sharing YouTube videos and Facebook posts. The organization encourages members/users to share, like, and comment on all the major social media venues to help spread awareness about their campaign to save child soldiers in Southeast Asia.

Although the use of social networks were generally presented in the 2013 timeline period, it is important to note that it did not take away from the effectiveness of Facebook

cross-pointing to other platforms. For instance, Project: AK-47 only included posts of social media venues in the 2013 timeline. Child soldier Cycle followed the same trend in which YouTube videos were posted in the 2013 timeline. While CSI was the only Facebook page that utilized posts for other social media networks in both the 2012 and 2013 timeline; however, the majority of posts for other social platforms were noted in the 2013 time period.

In sum, the use of other social networks tended to reflect the strength of Facebook being an area of cross-referencing to other major social media platforms. According to the above examples, it is important to mention that these other social media venues become necessary for the child soldier Facebook pages to gain participation or involvement into their organizations. The theme of “The Role of Participation in Facebook Pages” provides further insight and information concerning the involvement of Facebook pages asking members to volunteer or participate in eradicating the use of child soldiers.

#### *The Role of Participation in Facebook Pages*

In general, Facebook pages rarely incorporated textual or visual material that was created by Facebook users or members. Instead, the Facebook pages tended to be accompanied with images captured by the organizations themselves, or images provided by active volunteer themselves. Additionally, links to materials such as blogs or resource pages, were incorporated into the Facebook posts.

Overall, only two Facebook pages, CSI and Project: AK-47, primarily relied on the use of posts to gain supporters and future volunteers. Participation techniques were a major trend throughout the 2012 and 2013 timeline comparison. This theme was

increasingly used by the Facebook pages in the 2013 timeline and during this latter time period an increase of the incorporation of participation posts was recorded. In order to engage the audience at hand users were continuously presented with two major phrases; “get involved” and “make a difference.” The majority of participation posts included the texts ‘get involved’ or ‘make a difference’, in which members were encouraged to join their organization, make donations, receive scholarships, job opportunities, and support child soldier events. The organizations expressed beliefs that joining their cause by the above routes would allow members to be presented to a world that needed their assistance. Especially, the need of volunteers assisting children exposed to risks and challenges that stand between them and a healthy empowered future.

Encouragements to participate in their organizations were accomplished in two ways. First, Project: AK-47 and CSI carefully selected and incorporated material in a manner that provided members with various volunteer opportunities that did not necessarily include travelling to affected regions. Facebook users were encouraged to “get involved” by purchasing ‘gear’ and/or merchandise from their online store. This specific trend was only recorded with Project: AK-47 Facebook page in which members could purchase Project: AK-47 ‘gear’ such as hats, dog tags, and shirts supporting the organization name and cause. Along with purchasing Project: AK-47 ‘gear’ posts encouraged members to support their cause by wearing their ‘gear’ amongst others to help spread awareness about child soldiers. This was emphasized when images presented AAM and volunteers around North America sporting Project: AK-47 ‘gear.’ Visual evidence included volunteers posing with Project: AK-47 dog tags or shirts.

In addition to purchasing Project: AK-47 ‘gear’ included encouragement to continue purchasing their merchandise (such as jewelry or dream catchers). For instance, one post included an image of a young girl sitting on the ground weaving a colorful blanket with text requesting support for this young girl’s (Southeast Asian) hand crafted colorful blanket business. While this material was used by Project: AK-47 to provide support for a young child business, it is important to note that this technique increased during holiday months:

Never give up, never lose hope and always have faith. Give someone hope for Valentine’s Day by purchasing a piece of beautiful jewelry from our store (AK 02-12-13)

This specific trend of selling merchandise on holidays was especially apparent and encouraged during the month of February for Valentine’s Day in the 2013 timeline. Facebook posted a link to the online store, an image of the merchandise being sold, and text introducing the reason why members should purchase the merchandise presented. Overall, the message during the month of February 2013 advised users that their support was saving children from the hands of rebel groups.

The option to “make a difference” in the lives of these child soldiers was not just left at purchasing online merchandise or ‘gear’ but it was also supported by requesting users for donations. Posted material tended to be more visual than textual in nature when organizations requested donations. Visual material included images or an image of child soldiering in the region of Southeast Asia. Incorporated with the image and/or images were a small message to users:

Burma has more Child Soldiers than any other country in Asia. We are trying to change this and by skipping a coffee can determine a child's identity as a kid or killer. Rescue a Child Soldier for \$7 a month (AK 01-26-13)

Project: AK-47 emphasized the significance of a monthly donation. Posts occasionally explained that paying a monthly donation of seven dollars members were helping the organization rescue child soldiers. Project: AK-47 also reached out to Facebook users for help in their organization by members donating to a specific project. This material - tended to be more textual in nature in which Project: AK-47 would mention the organization's newest and ongoing projects. Facebook users were given the option to donate on a monthly basis or send funds towards a specific project.

While the above techniques were observed within the Facebook page Project: AK-47 distinguished techniques were also noted for CSI presenting Facebook members with the opportunity to participate. For instance, CSIs organization included posts to apply for a scholarship:

Introducing a new scholarship for current and future graduate students at Dalhousie University. Visit our web site for more details. Application deadline is February 2nd, 2013. (CSI 01-02-13)

Members were prompted to apply to their scholarship which was created and funded by CSIs organization. Scholarship posts were recorded three times in the span of one month in the 2013 timeline period for CSIs Facebook page. These posts included only textual material encouraging members to apply before the deadline. The scholarship allowed interested members the opportunity for their research on child soldiers and children in challenging contexts to be financially supported by CSIs organization. In addition, CSI provided Facebook members with posts to apply for specific jobs within their organization. Textual material would notify users of a new position to work within CSI and that applications were being accepted and reviewed. Opportunities to participate were not only volunteer positions, but also a career within the organization.

Another technique to allow members to participate in eradicating the use of child soldiers was posts that included information about certain events presenting the issue of child soldiering. It is important to note that posts relaying information about events for organizations were located in North America for both Project: AK-47 and CSI pages. The content of the posts were presented in a manner that gave little information about the event through text:

(1) Check out this great event presented by the New York City Bar! May 24th, 7pm. Child Soldier Relief. Events. LINK (CSI 04-05-12)

(2) A great event coming- an evening of slam poetry and open mic happening on May 8<sup>th</sup> at 8pm at the Company House in Halifax! LIFE WITHIN ARMED GROUPS: A GENDERED PERSPECTIVE (CSI 05-03-12)

However, regardless of the minimal textual material, links were provided with posts to encourage members to research the event being exhibited. It also highlighted how members could support the cause by attending events to help stop the use of child soldiering. Essential to these techniques was the encouragement of sharing, liking, and commenting on posts that intrigued members. While comments were only that of encouragement to the organization it displayed that users were actively reading and supporting posts. For instance, Project: AK-47 saw a minimum of three likes to a maximum of forty-two likes per post. Facebook group CSI recorded a minimum of one share to a maximum of two-hundred and ten shares of a single post. The post with the most shares was an image quoting Kofi Annan (former United Nations Secretary General) about children being the future and the necessity to reclaim each and every one of them from battle. As a result of sharing and liking posts members allowed the material to be viewed on their Facebook news feed which is viewable to all friends/acquaintances.

The second trend for participation recorded for Project: AK-47 and CSI pages was the selection of Facebook posts which exposed members to current and completed abroad volunteer work, as well as the opportunity to ask any questions about the organization. In this case, participation of members in these two Facebook page organizations included the option to travel and be a part of traditional venues of activism in comparison to online activism. Furthermore, the techniques were mostly presented with visual and textual material along with hyperlinks throughout the 2012 and 2013 timeline comparison. Posts were equally presented in the same manner for 2012 and 2013.

Facebook posts emphasized current and past work of volunteers in their organization in different regions of the world. This was especially apparent within the Project: AK-47 Facebook page that continuously used text and images in conjunction with one another to allow members a glance of the active volunteer work being completed:

- (1) As donations have come in for our Mintosing school project, funds were sent to Mindanao to build two schools by the end of 2012 in the villages of Mintosing and Akbayan, located high in the mountains of Agusan del Sur. It is our goal to build 50 schools in the next 5 years in an effort to eliminate the use of child soldiers (AK 01-29-13)
- (2) This is the first school in the history of Mintosing. Thank you for helping us complete this project and protect children at risk! (AK 02-17-13)

The organizations incorporate text and visual material of the tasks at hand as evidence of completed and ongoing volunteer work. More specifically, instead of using images of the volunteers themselves, images would include children posing in front of the newly constructed schools. Posts included appreciation of past donations that assisted their organization in completing their projects in child soldier afflicted regions. To emphasize



volunteer efforts, hyperlinks were provided to blogs to further discuss the activities that the groups' at large or particular volunteers were completing:

The lives of child soldiers are filled with abuse, fear, hate, and violence. We have been working on the ground in Mindanao to build classrooms filled with students, minimizing the amount of child soldiers on the island. We are committed to breaking the cycle of hatred and violence. Will you join us? This is one way you can make a difference and help us in this effort: link. (AK 01-16-13)

The previous example more importantly expressed support to participate in their organizations by advising members to 'make a difference' in the lives of child soldiers. Not only were posts allowing further exposure to volunteer blogs through the hyperlinks it also allowed users to access the organizations webpage to discover how to 'make a difference' for child soldiers in Mindanao.

In contrast, Facebook posts provided users the potential to ask questions about the organization as well as questions regarding the 'problem' of child soldiering:

Want to learn how you can get involved? Recommended films and books? Learn about laws and treaties? How to create lesson plans relating to child soldiers issues? Have a look at our new resources page. (CSI 02-22-13)

Support for the material posted allowed users access to their organization's main webpage. The emphasis for users to "get involved" was seen simultaneously with posts pertaining material to continuous volunteer work. This was done in two ways; firstly the organization asked the audience questions pertaining to 'getting involved' or 'making a difference' in the lives of child soldiers. Questions such as 'What are you doing to help spread awareness of child soldiers?' There were also questions pertaining to the knowledge of members on the issue being supported by the organization. Secondly, questions were followed by textual material regarding the organization's volunteer work.

The content of posts included an emphasis of how the use of everyone's talent could help create and spread awareness along with rescuing child soldiers worldwide:

We are always looking for more volunteers and there are so many ways for you to get involved. The link below outlines just a few and we need your help and ideas! Click the link below to connect with us and use your talents to help us create awareness and rescue child soldiers all over the world. (AK 01-17-13)

The posts directly invite members to join their organization by using their talents to assist the cause. Along with the textual material included in the post, hyperlinks were always incorporated to the main webpage of the organization. The importance of activism and spreading awareness were especially apparent and recorded multiple times across Project: AK-47 and CSI Facebook pages. Moreover, both Facebook pages included posts of the above nature to provoke/produce an emotional reaction from members to volunteer and/or participate in their campaign whether it was through traditional activist venues or online support of the organization.

#### *The Role of Images in Facebook Pages*

In general, the use of images/visual material was heavily incorporated into all three Facebook page organizations. Facebook posts tended to be accompanied with images captured by the organizations themselves or professional image companies, such as Thierry Falise. Additionally, textual materials were simultaneously incorporated into posts that included images of children.

However, with regard to images, it is important to note that it was sometimes difficult to determine who produced the material. For instance, when posts included images provided by third parties such as advocates, the image was often cited as "one of our followers." This made it difficult to determine whether the image had been captured by professional image companies or by Facebook activists. While follower images were

rarely used, there were important differences across time periods with regard to how this material was incorporated into Facebook pages. For instance, images submitted by volunteers that incorporated how members were displaying Project: AK-47 'gear' was only noted in the 2013 time period, whereas, CSI and Child Soldier Cycle incorporated images from professional companies during 2012 and 2013 time lines.

The incorporation of images by Facebook pages were carefully selected and displayed in a manner that provided strong support for their organizations reason for stopping the use of child soldiering. While images generated negative stereotypes against rebel groups such as the LRA it served as evidence to the abuse and hardships child soldiers face.

While the previous themes included images of volunteers, major figures and so forth images often depicted children in vulnerable situations that imposed threats on their lives along with minimal text regarding the child's situation. For instance, a post with the caption "children should play and not fight" displayed an image of two young boys holding up swords posing for the camera. While this material was used by the Facebook organizations to show a glimpse of children in certain regions of the world, it is important to note that the majority of the images had been created with the intention for members to sympathize with the children and provide support to the organizations.

The use of images incorporating children in vulnerable situations is divided into three main categories. Numerous images constantly displayed emotions of fear, sadness, and tiredness among children and sometimes their families. The first category, displayed orphaned former child soldiers. These images included action shots of children travelling alone or with other younger siblings. For example, Project: AK-47 displayed an image of

two boys travelling on foot throughout the jungle in Southeast Asia (AK 01-31-13). The eldest brother was carrying his younger brother on his back. Both children had minimal clothing which was either too small or shredded. Another example saw the caption ‘children unmonitored are at high risks’ that displayed an image of two young children, one boy and one girl, under the age of ten playing on the side of a dirt road (AK 02-06-13). Again, these children wore clothes that were ragged and dirty. The textual material was a message that the dangers of children being left alone in remote areas includes rebel groups kidnapping children.

The second category recorded images of children in uniform carrying guns/weapons. Images of child soldier/child soldiers holding guns were viewed across all three Facebook pages. These images reaffirmed child soldiering and included action shots of children pointing their guns at the camera, as well as group shots of young children holding their weapons which had been enlarged from the original image in order to draw attention to the children’s faces and identities. For instance, Project: AK-47 posted textual material which was followed by the image of a young child soldier (boy) holding his gun over his shoulder staring directly to the camera:

What if this were the only life you knew because there were no other options?  
Help us give children like this the option of an education and protection over  
violence, abuse, and war.  
Child Soldier by Thierry Falise (AK 02-02-13)

Organizations provided images of this sort numerous times over the span of two months in both 2012 and 2013 time periods with the intention of viewing child soldiering in a negative light. Uniformed child soldiers were sometimes shown in vulnerable situations to again present evidence of the hardships these children face. For instance, Project: AK-47 and CSI Facebook pages depicted child soldiers roaming through trashcans and

garbage disposal sites in affected regions. The images were taken at a later hour which only allowed viewers the depiction of a child holding trash in their hands while the surrounding area was unclear. Interpretations of the image were clear which promoted young vulnerable children in troubling situations.

Lastly, photographs that depicted children and their families are posted throughout Project: AK-47 Facebook page in the Southeast Asia region. However, these images were not as prominent to the previous images relating to child soldiering. The images depicted poor families and their children in front of their homes. It is important to note that the homes of these families had roofs made of jungle leaves or tree barks. Furthermore, photographs depicted families staring directly into the camera. Smiles were absent and in their place were expressions of fear and sadness. Many of the images depicted families of more than 5 children with the youngest being a baby held by the parents or guardians. Captions of posts followed along the lines “families in need of hope” or “help us protect these children.” It was not until the 2013 time period in the second week of January that images depicting families began to be actively incorporated into the Facebook page.

Overall, the use of images depicting child soldiers or children in vulnerable situations was heavily incorporated into Project: AK-47 Facebook page. CSIs organization was second in using images of child soldiers specifically in uniform holding weapons while Child Soldier Cycle Facebook page used photographs of child soldiers in Burmese Armies and LRA rebel groups.

## 6. DISCUSSION

This section aims to interpret and discuss the results from the content analysis of the three Facebook child soldier pages. The discussion follows the two major research questions in numerical order, in which the first question looks at how the problem of child soldiering is constructed within Facebook pages while the second question looks at the techniques these Facebook pages use to raise awareness and call attention to the problem of child soldiering.

### *Research Question 1*

How is the problem of child soldiers/child soldiering constructed through social media platforms such as Facebook?

The problem of child soldiers/child soldiering is constructed in the Facebook pages examined through text and images as well as links to news articles and other social media platforms. Text, images and links work to invite members to cast negative judgement on the issue of child soldiering, which is further enhanced by connecting the ‘problem’ of child soldiering to other problems plaguing children in these countries, such as poverty and lack of education.

Specifically, the majority of Facebook posts relating to child soldiers textually and visually focused upon child soldiers’ experiences, ordeals, injuries, and surrounding environment as well as solutions to eradicating the use of children in warfare. These posts were portrayed in a negative manner and rarely presented the use of child soldiers in a positive manner. For example, the Facebook pages selected posts and incorporated material that provided strong support for their construction of the cruelty and hardships child soldiers face. Material that was generated was selected by the organizations (as no

other members/users could post on the page) that illustrated negative stereotypes of child soldiers which served to send an “against child soldiers” message. More specifically, posts of child soldiering tended to use marginalizing frames, heavily relied upon news sources, publications, articles, YouTube videos, and professional photographs to create impressions that child soldiering is an impending threat posed by rebel and armed groups along with other plaguing problems for children. It is generally recognized that the news media carries a certain bias, depending on the particular news source. The most common ways the bias manifests itself in the news are through word choice, omissions, the limiting of debate, framing of the story, and the use of sources (Goldberg, 2001). As a result, specific viewpoints are portrayed and news articles are not reported in an objective way. While the failure to represent all sides of the story may not be intentional bias by all news sources, readers do not get the whole picture. Typically, the presentation of news, specifically key world issues highlighted by Western countries, such as child soldiering, are discussed in terms of how they are perceived by the West rather than how they are perceived by the world. Particularly, Facebook pages’ reliance on mainstream sources (news articles), remained relatively stable (although somewhat changed); child soldiering was constructed negatively overall across time in the various posts.

Facebook pages constructed and created impressions to members that the use of children in warfare is a global issue that is interconnected with all countries and holds the potential for far-reaching impacts on children. Posts explained that the issue is beyond the capability of any one nation to resolve. Organizations framed child soldiering as a continuing, persistent problem, which will require years, decades, or even generations to

be resolved. This means that the textual anchoring displayed through Facebook supported that child soldiering continues to be a global issue.

However, while the ‘lump sum’ of results offered support that child soldiering is indeed a global issue, the examination of the organizations throughout all three Facebook pages revealed that the construction of child soldiers heavily relied on the Western view of the issue. Representations of child soldiers in the Western hemisphere were portrayed through the growing market of child soldiers in literature and films, along with the many campaigns and organizations that have focused their attention on war struck children (Schulthesis, 2007). The West has put an emphasis on the need to protect children’s welfare, and this changing attitude has been justified through interventions of promoting health, educating mothers, and the firm basis of protecting childhood (Mayall, 2000). Child soldiering contradicts the West’s view of protecting childhood as these children do not represent the universal representation of child welfare. A form of sympathy is attached to these children due to the idea that these children have been categorized as victims of war and not perpetrators of war crimes. It is to this nature that North America feels that they may have an obligation towards solving the problem of children being used in warfare in different regions all over the world. It is a global issue because of its prominence and location in regions such as Cambodia, Palestine, Croatia and Columbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Uganda, and Afghanistan (Skinner, 1999: UNICEF, 2005). As well, child soldiering has been recorded in over fifty countries around the world (Tiefenbrun, 2007). While cases of child soldiering have not been recorded in Canada or the United States in recent history, the Western world continues to bring attention to the issue. Child soldiering is an issue that affects Global South and Global North countries



more directly with first world countries such as Canada or the United States primarily calling attention to the issue. It is important to note that all three Facebook pages were based in North America; Project: AK-47 organization was established in the United States while CSI and Child Soldier Cycle are Canadian based organizations. These Facebook pages were the most successful as indicated by number of ‘Liked’ groups/pages on Facebook regarding the issue of child soldiering. Facebook groups/pages located in other regions (such as those mentioned previously) where the issue of child soldiering was reported were not displayed in the top ten most ‘Liked’ Facebook groups/pages. The construction of child soldiers and child soldiering presented through social media networks like Facebook is therefore primarily a Western view, not only portraying the issue as a global ‘problem, but an issue that is necessarily negative.

In contrast, while child soldiering is portrayed as a global issue the extent to which the issue reaches a global audience is unclear. The three Facebook pages located in the Western Hemisphere do suggest that the issue might not be reaching a global audience. Additionally, this aspect was not visually or textually displayed in the Facebook posts. Firstly, images concentrated on the issue the organization was advocating; the material displayed awareness for the issue, how to stop the problem along with how individuals may assist as volunteers. Secondly, no posts whether it be texts, images or even links displayed information regarding current volunteers such as their background information (place of birth, education and so forth). The omission of information about the audience in Facebook posts made it difficult to determine who the real audience was for these Facebook pages. While comments from users were available, only Facebook members (active profile/account) could access the Facebook profile in

two scenarios; one, if they were friends and two, the member's profile information is public. This could allow a better picture of the audience that likes, comments, and shares Facebook posts. One clear recommendation for future research is to incorporate active Facebook member's location to therefore identify the extent to which these issues are reaching a larger global audience. Additionally, assessing the organizations' active volunteers would allow for further clarification on the effect of a global reach through Facebook pages. As well, accessing more than one platform at once like YouTube comments would allow further analysis of the audience viewing the content.

This thesis further found that posts were usually accompanied by some form of Internet link that led readers to different social media platforms, news articles, YouTube videos, and blogs. For instance, Facebook members were exposed to news articles or publications discussing the ongoing recruitment of children into armed conflicts. Posts displaying articles in *Huffington Post* or *New York Times* were among the links shared across the Facebook pages. This news coverage also tended to take on the perspective that child soldiering is an issue that should be eradicated and concentrated on displaying the ongoing issues that these children continued to face. These posts often equated child soldiers to the life of violence, criminality and hopelessness of ever becoming free of their captors. Rather than discussing the history of child soldiering that occurred in these affected regions, or exploring the issues that drew these rebel or armed groups to use children, the Facebook pages primarily concentrated upon disapproving and rejecting the use of child soldiers. This disproportionate focus helped to construct child soldiering in a negative light. As well, the links provided support for the idea of child soldiers/child

soldiering as not only being a ‘problem’ around the globe, but a problem that needs to be resolved in the name of enhancing the well-being and welfare of children.

Furthermore, including links to other social networks serves to broaden the connectivity of organizations to attempt to reach a larger audience. Incorporating other social platforms promotes the potential for users to share and converse about the issue. This provides the opportunity for growth for the organizations through different channels and helps to expand the reach of their message to a certain audience. Cross-pointing to other social media sites allows organizations to concentrate on the most active users which are those under the age of thirty (Hensel, 2012). Youth are increasingly moving their activism online, especially given their prominent use of social media. Youth activists have taken to the Internet, specifically social media sites, to distribute and organize their social action campaigns. Organizations cross-pointing to other social networks through Facebook allowed their message to spread and be repeated among those youth activists. To be sure, Facebook remains the most utilized social networking platform with eighty-three percent of users between the ages of eighteen to twenty-nine (Duggan & Brenner, 2012).

The profile of the Facebook pages tended to present the organization as an advocate trying to rescue child soldiers, raise awareness, and promote advocacy. Furthermore, the organizations were likely to adjust their choice of textual material and links to allow members to pursue and continue reading the content displayed. Presenting current news articles, publications, or YouTube videos continued to add credence to the issue of child soldiering. It allowed organizations to present sources that are viewed credible by viewers since the sources presented information and work on the issue.

Specifically, posts were intended to gain an emotional response from viewers. By initiating an emotional and sympathetic reaction towards the use of children in warfare, this helped to perpetuate negative stereotypes of child soldiering. The users are invited to question the use of children in warfare, which allows them to perceive it as a problem; child soldiering then becomes symbolically disapproved by Facebook members/users.

In comparison to the negative stereotypes that were associated with child soldiering, posts that contained texts and links about government and rebel armed forces were generally constructed in a negative manner. Posts tended to produce convincing accounts of how both groups kidnapped and recruited children who would live a life of deviance, criminality, and mayhem. Facebook posts largely demonized and criminalized all rebel/armed groups or movements for their continued use of children in warfare. For instance, rebel groups such as the LRA were noted as a major force affecting communities in Africa highlighting the risk of attacks on children. Facebook pages encouraged the negative stereotypes of rebel/armed groups by raising the issue in international panels and publications. These reports often equated rebel/armed groups with violence and criminality towards children. While textual material constructed these groups as violent criminals, visual material provided further objection to the issue of child soldiering. Posts were accompanied by photographs that displayed young children, often under the age twelve, dressed in army uniforms and carrying weapons such as guns or swords. Images of children dressed in uniforms were often presented alone and in some cases photographs of a group of child soldiers were included. The power of these images evoked emotion as they represented the reality of children holding guns and their potential use of defending themselves. While the images were compelling enough to tell

a story, organizations continued to state the reason children were placed in these situations. These carefully selected images served to provide visual evidence and support for the Facebook pages' advocacy.

Though Facebook pages identified both rebel and government armed groups as a cause to child soldiering, the inclusion of poverty and a lack of education continued to construct child soldiers as a more credible problem. The issue of poverty along with child recruitment suggested that low development provides motivation for violence due to low opportunity. By lumping the issues of rebel and armed groups along with poverty and education, members were provided with displays of vulnerable children who have no other viable means to ensure a sustaining normal life away from warfare. Sympathy and motivation to help are likely to be evoked when posts presented arguments of economic deprivations and few viable life choices for children. Organizations aimed to educate members on the various harms and risks associated with this lifestyle and claimed to offer the solution by targeting rebel/armed groups and rescuing child soldiers. Other factors, such as the existence of refugee camps, lack of shelters, and no protection from the governments allowed children to be continuously exposed to violence and abuse. Facebook posts depicted children as easily accessible targets for armed groups seeking recruits. Poverty and education were among the two major factors presented as having a relationship to child soldier recruitment:

(1) This is a rugged planet we live on. Every child needs to be loved, protected, educated, and prepared for life. 1 billion children are living without these privileges. (AK 01-30-13)

(2) All children deserve to be free and to have the option of an education. This little smiling face will now have that chance. He was rescued in the Upper Mekong Basin region. (AK 02-09-13)

Facebook posts made a direct link between the socioeconomic status of the country and child soldiers. Though Facebook posts occasionally incorporated material produced and written by their organizations, the inclusion of original sources (by organizations) appeared to influence the hierarchy of credibility. The results of this thesis indicated that visual evidence - along with texts - produced different aspects of children in vulnerable situations. Specifically, images capturing children going through trash cans or garbage sites presented convincing evidence of the issue of child soldiering which was hard for members of Facebook or even the media to ignore. Children were also displayed in front of basic shelters/building for their homes and many of these children (all ages) were wearing ragged, dirty, and old clothing. These images helped to bring the victimization of child soldiers to the public's attention as well as advocating for the prevention of instances in which these children are put in such situations. Facebook organizations exercised immense control with regard to the selection, filtering, presentation, and manipulation of textual and visual material. The incorporation of material depicting children in vulnerable situations continued to add credibility that children have no other viable means to ensure a sustaining life because the threshold for joining an armed (be it government or rebel)group is presumed to occur due to the implications of a lack of education and poverty.

Finally, Facebook pages incorporated child soldiers under the category of 'vulnerable children' who continue to be largely ignored. This thesis found posts, such as images, videos, and texts that comprised a list of "other issues" affecting children that provided further creditability to the problem of child soldiering. The inclusion of "other issues" such as maritime piracy, human trafficking (specifically children and women),

and drug trafficking and violence appeared to be included sporadically throughout the Facebook pages. Facebook pages incorporated different issues affecting children to indicate the importance of organizations' presence and advocacy to help children. Additionally, coverage of other issues conveyed further disapproval and rejection of the use of children in armed conflicts. Overall, posts primarily displayed texts and links in conjunction with another or just textual based asking members a general question regarding the problem:

Did you know almost half of all pirates arrested around the world are children, some of whom were estimated to be just 11 years old? Read more in our latest publication, "Children and Youth in Marine Piracy: Causes, Consequences and the Way Forward." (CSI 01-21-13)

When did you first learn that human trafficking existed in our world? What was that moment like for you and how did it change your world view? (AK 01-14-13)

By addressing different problems children confront, these posts worked together to construct the use of children in warfare. The resistance towards child soldiering, predominately centered on the notions of mortality and deviance, where those individuals involved in recruiting are viewed as deviating from the constructed norm of childhood. The practice of human trafficking for instance fits a social construction of ideals that are again viewed as deviant, which therefore targets 'vulnerable children' and is not commonly accepted in the past or future by the international community. The constructions of child soldiering are quite contradictory in their focus, as it is assumed that child soldiering is a deviant act committed by rebel/armed groups, but not necessarily by the country recruiting, despite international provisions and regulations against the use of children in warfare. Organizations attempt to denounce government and rebel armed forces, display child soldiers in a vulnerable fashion, as well as reveal the involvement of

children in Maritime piracy, human trafficking, and drug trafficking and violence to encourage individuals to engage in advocacy and raise awareness for their cause of child soldiering.

### *Research question 2*

What techniques are being utilized to raise awareness and promote activism?

In the Facebook pages examined, raising awareness and promoting activism were primarily accomplished by providing images of volunteers accompanied by encouragement to ‘get involved’ and ‘make a difference’, as well as cross-pointing to other social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube.

The real power of social media platforms (for instance, Facebook) is in the idea that friends, coworkers, family members, fellow consumers, and everyone else around regardless of age, gender, class, or employment status, have access to social media tools such as Facebook pages/groups. Clearly access to social media networks is limited and may be extremely controlled in some countries. Nevertheless, activists can seize the opportunity to employ social media platforms to spur awareness and promote the need for activism.

The impact of images played an important role as one of the major techniques used by Facebook groups/pages to increase awareness and encourage others to get involved in their organizations. Members experience unseen aspects of organizations work that had the potential to capture and broadcast different features of the global context of child soldiering for the world to observe. Photographs displayed children, child soldiers, current volunteers as well as the organizations past and future projects. Facebook pages helped members visualize and actualize the ‘imminent’ threat faced by



child soldiers, as well as the continued need for social activists in their organizations. At the same time, activists were still visually constructed as being professional and completing their projects, as they were often shown in pictures standing or playing with children.

As this thesis found, Facebook pages may select and present certain kinds of images over others in order to emphasize a particular idea as well as to control the viewer's interpretation. Images may produce multiple interpretations that are all dependent upon the viewers' culture, ideologies and position in society. In this case the majority of images captured volunteers in two ways; firstly, volunteers were depicted in different places all over the world either assisting in the organizations projects or sporting 'gear' and/or merchandise supporting the cause; secondly, vivid and carefully selected graphics promoting their volunteer opportunities through the raising of hands. These images displayed passionate volunteers who wanted or want to make a contribution.

These photographs and graphic-like images evoked a sense of advocacy that can be very powerful and also heartfelt. While the age of volunteers was unclear such virtual material displayed the power of images in advocacy. Depictions of youth and young adults heavily involved in the organizations gave the impression that many people are involved in the cause. By encouraging other people to 'get involved' supplied a sense of excitement and passion for the opportunity of volunteering for a worthy cause. Graphics of people starting to raise their hands continued to encourage and enforce that many others were getting involved in the issue of child soldiering. Youth in particular recognize that activism today is a collective focus that involves the collective participation of youth (see Flores-Gonzales et al., 2006; Youniss & Hart, 2005 as cited in

Kirshner, 2007). This thesis recorded that volunteers are encouraged to join through the depiction of images of other effective volunteers. By presenting images of the collective participation of volunteers, - others- may be effectively encouraged to join as well.

In comparison to posts that were only images, posts that contained images and text tended to produce more convincing accounts, as the selected images often served as valuable evidence in conjunction with the messages of the organization's assertions. Instead of displaying only images, text was frequently used to anchor the meaning to images. The combination of media seemed to have garnered more 'Likes' that allowed posts that were images plus text to be more effective than posts that were only images. The results produced the continuous use of two major messages of "get involved" and/or "make a difference" throughout the Facebook pages. Instead of relying on long vigorous texts, the posts were more likely to rely on the continuous use of these short messages to reveal the benefits of volunteering. Reasons to "get involved" varied, however emphasis on the intrinsic satisfaction of contributing to their cause through volunteering or spreading awareness was a worthwhile feeling for all. As well, these messages promoted a genuine concern for both the individual and their social responsibility for the well-being of child soldiers. Not only did the messages promote the need for activism but they also encourage members to become advocates for their cause. As a result of "getting involved" and "making a difference" volunteers would gain a sense of satisfaction from their involvement, an opportunity to meet new people and friends, as well as gain a broader life experience by helping these 'vulnerable children'.

Furthermore, Facebook pages informed members that the option of becoming youth activists could be completed through traditional venues of ground work or helping

to promote awareness about child soldiers through social media outlets. The option to “make a difference” often included posts encouraging individuals to bring awareness to their friends and others through the purchase of ‘gear’ ( hats or shirts) and/or merchandise, donations, scholarships, and events advocating for child soldiering. The chance to assist in their organizations was not only left at volunteer or career opportunities but went one step further to commit to the organization through temporary means (as mentioned previously). The encouragement of individuals to contribute as a volunteer through social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter tended to display textual messages to members to comment, share, and like posts that collectively spread the message for their cause. In addition, by sharing posts that appeared on these Facebook pages, members allowed these messages to become visible in their “News Feed” and “Profile”. Active Facebook members could also ‘donate their status’ to the cause which is again viewable by all friends and acquaintances in their Facebook account. The concept of ‘donating their statuses’ is a feature across Facebook which allows members to discuss their thoughts, information, and even locations with their friends. By updating their status, the message is viewable on the users profile as well as in their “News Feed” which generates the opportunity of creating awareness and promoting a cause to their Facebook friends. Facebook posts occasionally included a hyperlink that allowed for the original message to be shared beyond Facebook and could be traced back to the original organizations. For instance, if posts were shared across Twitter, individuals would access the link and be re-directed to Facebook or the organization. These messages and descriptions frequently helped to give meaning and credibility to the organizations’ cause.

Overall, Facebook pages continued to keep individuals involved over time. This technique was accomplished by updating the organizations messages and/or posts through questions, videos, links, and updates about the continued need for social activism. Messages included questions or phrases such as, “Want to learn how to get involved?” or “We are always looking for more volunteers” or “What are you doing to help spread awareness of child soldiers?” Facebook organizations encouraged interested members to comment on messages or answer questions. This allowed members to empathize with the organization and the situation of child soldiering. In general, questions and phrases provided evidence to the legitimacy of their cause and its importance for the need to rescue child soldiers. It is important to note, that the examination of comments presented in the Facebook pages did not increase or take away from the organizations’ credibility. However, comments were a combination of encouragement to join, input on the issue, and reflection on the use of child soldiers.

Facebook continued to show its strength as a cross-pointing platform to other social media networks. Organizations utilized Facebook to introduce their membership to other social media sites such as Twitter and Instagram. Facebook allowed individuals to get involved through more than one social network. This technique connected users to different platforms about child soldiering that provided the opportunity to become followers or to ‘Like’ the organization on these different sites. Individuals were exposed to the cause and its importance to the global context of child soldiering through re-emphasizing the continuous messages of “getting involved” and “making a difference”. Facebook pages cross-referencing to other social networks exposed both the individual and social responsibility of members (whether it be Facebook, Twitter or Instagram).

Essentially, individuals were involved in more than one site at a time and the support of organizations could appear to have skewed numbers of followers. At this point, the organizations numbers of supporters becomes challenged as followers may overlap on more than one social media site. However, this did not take away from the technique of using Facebook to cross-reference to other social networks to allow members to support their different platforms and to inform individuals about the benefits of joining their cause.

Moreover, the number of posts recorded for all three Facebook pages differed according to the 2012 and 2013 timelines. This may be accredited to the idea that two Facebook pages, Project: AK-47 and CSI, were more activist centered pages; while Child Soldier Cycle page presented posts in the form of an informative based page. Additionally, Child Soldier Cycle produced posts up to February 10, 2013 and no further posts were recorded. The results concluded that the techniques used in Project: AK-47 and CSI provided the most opportunities and continued encouragement of individuals to get involved into the organization. Both Project: AK-47 and CSI pages had the most 'Likes' and this popularity may be due to the use of major figures/celebrities. Widely publicizing major figures throughout the Facebook pages added credibility and integrity to the organizations. Specifically, organizations supported major figures by producing posts about their assistance and support (displaying 'gear' and merchandise, scholarships, and their contribution through donations and talents). The Facebook pages incorporation of these major figures also appeared to help spread awareness and promote social activism as well as asking and encouraging other members to follow their footsteps.

Finally, youth appeared to be the most active to facilitate a change in the Facebook pages for child soldiering, and it is important to assess the overall quality of this achievement. Facebook pages focused on the availability and flexibility of youth. By increasing the visual and textual evidence portrayed through the Facebook pages it allowed members to join an event, listen to the radio/TV during all hours, as well as use other social networks to focus on youth participation in their causes. This is emphasized as Facebook users are between the ages of eighteen to twenty-nine (Duggan & Brenner, 2012). All of these different avenues allow individuals to extend past discussions and updates on Facebook to increase the level of knowledge they know about the issue and cause. Motivated and driven youth who are able to dedicate their time, talents, and energy are the types of volunteers these organizations are pursuing.

In sum, techniques promoting activism online or other venues along with spreading awareness displayed that Facebook pages utilized social media platforms to gain members and volunteers, as well as presented the issue of child soldiering as a global and generally negative issue. The results concluded that youth assisting in global problems such as child soldiering may be due to the close proximity of age of youth and child soldiers. The willingness of youth to travel or spend time in organizations such as these may be due to youth being shut out of participation in politics (voting) or other social issues. Youth in North America receive and obtain an education that allows them to address their futures in society and review global problems. While youth advocate for issues such as child soldiers throughout the Facebook pages, it should be emphasized that the motivation for youth's involvement in global/social issues is an unanswerable question. The passion for advocacy and participation requires a larger digression into the

psychology of motivation of what drives individuals to care about other people's children.

## 7. CONCLUSION

This thesis set out to examine social media platforms as they relate to activism and awareness of child soldiers/child soldiering. In analyzing the top three Facebook pages in accordance with the most 'Likes,' this research served to point to the growing potential of social media as a tool of activism. In particular, Facebook showed its strength as a cross-pointing platform to other social media networks, broadening the reach of activists' messages. Organizations utilized Facebook to introduce their members to other social media sites such as Twitter and Instagram and encouraged individuals to "get involved" through more than one social network.

Posts in the Facebook pages examined made use of text, images, and links that served to invite members to cast negative judgment on the issue of child soldiering, which was further enhanced by connecting the 'problem' of child soldiers to other issues plaguing children, such as poverty and lack of education. Moreover, techniques used to raise awareness and promote activism were primarily utilized by providing images of volunteers accompanied by messages encouraging others to "get involved" or "make a difference."

The limitations of Facebook were evident throughout this study, which points to the need for further research to not only record all posts textually but to take virtual snapshots of the Facebook posts. Facebook posts were no longer available across the pages for the 2013 timeline period. Research Question 1, as mentioned earlier, would

have benefited from incorporating active Facebook members' locations to identify the extent to which these issues are reaching a global audience. Assessing the organizations' active volunteers on Facebook would allow for further clarification on the potential of a global reach through Facebook pages. As well, accessing more than one platform at once, such as Facebook and YouTube comments, would allow further analysis of the audience viewing the content.

Additionally, this research would have benefitted from a larger sample (number of Facebook pages), but the timeframe and the focus on child soldiering as an issue limited the number of successful Facebook pages. Further research can learn from this study by widening the scope of the issue by including a larger number of Facebook pages and extending the timeframe. Focusing on one social media platform such as Facebook only scratches the surface of social activism via social media concerning child soldiers/child soldiering. Future research can include more than one platform to get a better picture of the global issue. Youth activism online may also be different than traditional routes of activism as it does not get the full picture of social change in action.

Findings in this research suggest that North America's supportive attitude towards rescuing child soldiers via an advocacy approach may influence perceptions that child soldiering is a global problem. Interestingly, the video campaign KONY 2012 did not significantly change social activist's attention on child soldiers in 2012. Facebook pages increased awareness regarding Joseph Kony and the LRA; however, efforts to rescue child soldiers in affected regions remained stagnant.

In order to spread the organization's message it was essential for members to comment, like, and share Facebook posts to ensure an outreach of their campaign.



However, this may not translate to on-the-ground activism as an effort in undertaking more active activism. The extent of activism or opportunities for activism given to members were limited to commenting and not posting; with respect to efforts of youth activists, future research could question if this form of activism is ‘passive activism’ or ‘slacktivism’ (Kersten, 2012). Moreover, the three organizations seem to be working in a relatively isolated fashion. Beyond the organizations efforts in their individual campaigns they did not promote collaborating with other organizations to accomplish goals or become part of a larger movement. For instance, no involvement was recorded in assisting the KONY 2012 campaign organization. What is the purpose of not affiliating with other organizations with similar campaigns? This question may be examined more fully since the dynamics of a collective focus of volunteers, networking, coordinating, and cooperating with one another may accomplish goals that could not be completed in isolation. The prospect of examining different social media platforms might reveal a difference in the capacity of organizations campaign reach.

This study contributes to the scholarly understanding of the role of social media in raising awareness of global issues and to the larger impact of the Internet in encouraging and facilitating advocacy. It is hardly a surprise that activism has increasingly moved online – and that this has assumed an increasingly interesting area of research.

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## APPENDICES

**TABLE A – EXAMPLE OF CHARTING FOR THE ROMÉO DALLAIRE CHILD SOLDIER INITIATIVE FACEBOOK PAGE**

The Romeo Dallaire group Categories.xlsx								
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1	The Romeo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative							
2	TEXT	LINKS	VIDEOS	IMAGES	TEXT/LINKS	TEXT/VIDEOS	TEXT/IMAGES	TEXT/LINKS/IMAGES
3							03/05- About CSI expert panel about LRA. Will be having speakers and Romeo. The picture is a poster of the event, time, place and title	
4					03/07- To learn about LRA to read the link they provide to see things are not as simple. Link goes to human security gateway for LRA			
5		03/07- Link to Visible ppl blog spot						
					03/08- About how influential organizations brought attention to the Kony if only they can do the same to help			

TABLE B – EXAMPLE OF CHARTING FOR PROJECT: AK-47 FACEBOOK PAGE

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
15					01/05- Text intro. Song link and to comment/share. Link to a song by Stever Lester						
16							01/05- Text every child needs hope with a pic showing a young girl staring				
17					01/05- leading to link about Philippine update-link about Ak project to build peace one tribe at a time						
18	01/05- a poem about CS "innocent child who aches for a refuge.."										

TABLE C – EXAMPLE OF CHARTING 2013 TIMELINE FOR THE ROMÉO DALLAIRE CHILD SOLDIER INITIATIVE FACEBOOK PAGE

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
						05/03- Same as above but going to the great event in Halifax with time and place	
January 1st to March 1st 2013							
				01/02- a new scholarship for students at Dalhouside Uni. To view the website for the application. The link goes to childsoldiers.org about Dallaire Child Soldier Scholarship for CSI			
				01/07- About being 14 yrs old and taken as a wife for Joseph Kony. The girls sharks her story to a women on CBC Radio: the current. The link goes to CBC called "To have and to			



## VITA AUCTORIS

Mary Girges was born in 1988 in Windsor, Ontario. She is the oldest of three children to Youssef and Magda Girges. In 2006, she graduated from St. Thomas of Villanova Secondary High School. In 2009, Mary was lucky enough to marry her partner in crime Mena Gaed. In 2011, she obtained her B.A. degree in Criminology with a minor in Political Science from the University of Windsor. Mary is currently a Master's degree candidate in Sociology at the University of Windsor and will be graduating in October 2013.

Mary was inspired to conduct this research due to her exposure to child soldiering while she was completing her undergraduate degree. She observed and researched the ordeals former child soldiers have experienced. Mary is personally grateful that she is able to incorporate her studies from Criminology and Sociology to further analyze the global issue of child soldiering that continues until this very day.